

Nineteenth-century Xhosa literature

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Of all the indigenous languages of South Africa - excluding English but including Afrikaans - Xhosa was the first to be systematically transcribed and printed, and the first to develop into a mature, well-established literature in print, a process that took place entirely in the nineteenth century. If we conceive of literature in terms of western models, however, as most critics have tended to do, we will miss this development almost entirely, for very few works of Xhosa creative literature - certainly no original poetry, novels or plays - appeared as books until late in the first decade of the twentieth century. Nonetheless, Xhosa verbal creativity expressed itself throughout the nineteenth century in oral forms well established in precolonial times and - initially in Christian mission journals but in the last two decades in independent secular newspapers - grew and flourished in print and came to speak powerfully in its own voice by the century's end. Drawing on information I have presented elsewhere,¹ I offer here a consideration of nineteenth-century Xhosa literature in three media: printed books, the spoken word and newspapers.

Literature in books

The story of creative literature printed in books - the staple of western European literary histories - can be swiftly told. The transcription of spoken Xhosa commenced with shipwrecked European sailors, travellers and hunters traversing the territory of Xhosa-speaking peoples: William Hubberly, for example, who was shipwrecked on the *Grosvenor* and spent four months in Xhosa territory in 1782, includes authenticating observations in his journal such as 'As we were going through a village, two of the natives brought out some milk, and wanted *zimbe* for it, the name they give their ornaments,' and 'As soon as we arrived, I was sent to get firewood, which they call *kuney*, and in the afternoon was stationed to look after the calves.'² The Swedish naturalist Anders Sparrman, who travelled in the Cape between 1772 and 1776, published in 1783 a list of over 60 words, which he collected near the Sunday's River.³ A more ambitious effort to record Xhosa vocabulary was undertaken by the pioneer missionary J.T. Vanderkemp, who compiled a list of some 600 words in the course of his stay in

1. Especially in J. Opland, *Xhosa Poets and Poetry* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1998).

2. P.R. Kirby, *A Sourcebook on the Wreck of the Grosvenor, East Indiaman* (Cape Town: Van Riebeeck Society, vol. 34, 1953), 95, 116.

3. A. Sparrman, *A Voyage to the Cape of Good Hope, 1772-1776* (Cape Town: Van Riebeeck Society reprint, 1977), vol. 1, 267-68, reprinted in J. Opland and P.T. Mtuzi, eds., *Izwi labantu* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1994), 60-61.

the chiefdom of Ngqika between July 1799 and December 1800.⁴

Apart from these word lists, Vanderkemp might well have been the first person to record coherent Xhosa sentences. In his diary entry for 30 October 1800, Ngqika appeals to the missionary for rain; Vanderkemp goes for a walk, and reflects, ‘then returned to Gika’s Caffrees and said “Jesus Christus, intakha Thiko, Inkoessi zal izoulou. Dia khou thetha au le: lo khou nika invoula, mina kossliwe.”’ (“Jesus Christ, the son of God, is Lord of Heaven. I will speak to him, and he will give rain; I cannot.”) His successor as missionary to the Xhosa people, Joseph Williams, died on 23 August 1818 after only two years in the field, and left no written legacy in Xhosa, but the succeeding mission station established by John Brownlee at Tyhume on 6 June 1820 bore considerable literary fruit. Brownlee was joined in November 1821 by two Scottish missionaries, W.R. Thomson and John Bennie. Bennie set himself to learning Dutch, and then turned to Xhosa, ‘reducing to form and rule this language which hitherto floated in the wind,’ as he put it.⁵ When a printing press arrived at Tyhume with John Ross in December 1823, Bennie was ready with his transcription of the Xhosa language: three days after its arrival, on 19 December 1823, the first sheets of printed Xhosa emerged from the press.

Printing was initially used largely for linguistic, educational and religious purposes. Didactic literature was translated from English originals: the first part of Bunyan’s *The pilgrim’s progress*, translated by Tiyo Soga, was published by the Lovedale Missionary Institution in 1867,⁶ and M.A. Stanford’s translation of Mrs Sherwood’s popular Sunday School novel *Susan Grey* was published under the title *UGcinashe* in Grahamstown in 1870, apart from sundry tracts and sermons. But no work of original Xhosa literature appeared as a book in the course of the nineteenth century - with three significant exceptions. Clearly intended for Xhosa-speaking readers in South Africa (unlike books directed at readers in Europe, such as Theal’s 1886 collection of Xhosa folktales, all of them in English translation), three little booklets in Xhosa emerged from the Anglican mission press at St Peter’s, Gwatyu: in 1875 *Incwadi yentsomi*, versions of Aesop’s fables, some English tales and a Xhosa folktale; in 1876 *Imbali zamam-Pondomisi akwa-Mditshwa*, three Mpondomise historical narratives; and in 1877 *Incwadi yentsomi (isiqendu sesibini)*, a second collection of largely Xhosa folktales. Significant as these three little booklets are, as the only Xhosa secular literature to be published as books throughout the nineteenth century, they attracted no attention, achieved little discernible distribution, and had no spread effect.

That brief survey would comprise the total history of nineteenth-century Xhosa literature in books, were it not for an intriguing footnote. One of the followers of Ntsikana (whom we shall meet later in this account) was Noyi, the

4. *Transactions of the LMS 1 (1795-1802)*, 447-58; see W.H.I. Bleek, *The Library of His Excellency Sir George Grey, KCB: Philology, vol. 1, part 1: South Africa* (London: Trubner, 1858), 175-76 for comments on early Xhosa vocabularies.

5. R.H.W. Shepherd, *Lovedale and literature for the Bantu: A brief history and a forecast* (Lovedale: Lovedale Press, 1945), 3.

6. See I. Hofmeyr, *The Portable Bunyan: A Transnational History of The Pilgrim’s Progress* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 2004), chapter 5.

son of Gciniswa. Noyi was one of the first five converts to be baptised at the Tyhume mission in June 1823, when he assumed the name Robert Balfour, and he accompanied the wagon that brought John Ross and the printing press from Cape Town to Tyhume later that year. In 1838, at Botwe, the publisher G.J. Pike set in print one gathering of eight pages of Noyi's *Iziqwenge zembali yamaXosa* ('fragments of Xhosa history'), including the first chapter and part of the second; the last page ends in the middle of a sentence.⁷ Nothing more was ever printed, and the book as a whole was never published. The first chapter presents Tshiwo, a descendant of Xhosa, as culture hero (he wages war and establishes peace, and confirms the nation by establishing laws), and the incomplete second chapter starts to tell the story of his son Phalo. John Bennie was involved in the transcription and translation of Noyi's oral narrative (by 1831 Noyi had not yet learned to read or write);⁸ in the manuscript in the Grey Collection, Bennie's signature appears below his proof corrections, in a hand different from both the Xhosa text and the initial translation, on which Bennie based a more fluent English version for the *Glasgow Missionary Record*.⁹ In the paratactic, episodic oral style of a Xhosa historical narrative (commencing with the words *Embalini kutiwa*, 'it is said in an *imbali*'), Noyi tells us that Tshiwo the son of Ngconde crossed the Kei to hunt, and settled there (the manuscript assigns 1670 as the date). Tshiwo established laws regulating witchcraft and incest and provided for his people during a drought. Noyi continues:

Emveni koko kwavëlana u-Gando no Tshiwo, gokwënza kwake u-Gando. Ube gumnci akabahlonëla abantu benkulu inkosi u-Tshiwo. Sapumake isicaka esikulu, satsho ku Tshiwo ukuti, 'Siyemka siya ku-Gando; wawuzëka ongawuzëkayo u-Gando wentshaba.' Satabata innyama, sayifaka emanzini, sayinika u-Tshiwo; sati, 'Yithla, Gwalandini.' Walilake u-Tshiwo.

Emveni koko u-Tshiwo waya ebotwe; wazikupa izihlangu nendwe ukuzuma u-Gando. Wawuhlaba umkosi; wasabake u-Gando, nabantu bake: wakuwël' i-Qonce, ne-Xesi, nom-Gwalana; ehamba besilwa, igxotwa eka-Tshiwo. Ayibuyanga noko kwada kwaya en-Nxuba kulandëlana. Kwasihlangu kwakusasa ezibukweni lika-Cihoshe; yakohlwa ukuwëla eka-Tshiwo, imëlwe gezibuko gu-Gando. Yalihrola iqinga eka-Tshiwo. Akëtwa amanxële angacalanye, namanëne angacalanye; yawëlake kwa-Cihoshe; yapalaza gokubinza eka-Gando: yanhyatywa eka-Tshiwo kwelozibuko lika-Cihoshe. Ayigobanga noko, zada zapëla izikali zika-Gando; yagxotwake eja-Gando, yanhyatywa gakumbi yona. Wazitimba u-Tshiwo, wabuya nazo. [1683.]¹⁰

7. See Bleek, *The Library of His Excellency Sir George Grey*, 80 and Opland, *Xhosa Poets and Poetry*, 335.

8. See D. Williams, *When Races Meet: The Life and Times of William Richie Thomson, Glasgow Missionary Society missionary, government agent and Dutch Reformed Church minister, 1794-1891* (Johannesburg: APB, 1967), 69.

9. Reproduced in J.K. Bokwe, *Ntsikana: The Story of an African Convert* (Lovedale: Lovedale Press, 1914), 36-39.

10. Opland and Mtuze, *Izwi labantu*, 64, from Grey Collection G10c13.

After this Tshiwo and Gando became opposed to one another, on account of Gando's actions.

He a petty chief and did not fear the people of the great chief Tshiwo. The great servant stood forth, and said to Tshiwo 'We are leaving we are going to Gando; Gando collected whatever enemies he could. He took meat, and dipped it in water, and gave it to Tshiwo; and said. 'Eat, Coward.*' Tshiwo wept.

After this Tshiwo went to the house of his great wife; he brought out shields and plumes of crane feathers to take Gando by surprise. He raised the war cry; Gando fled, and his people: until he crossed the Buffalo river, and the Keiskamma and the Mgwalana; keeping up a running fight, Tshiwo's army being worsted. But still it would not turn until they came to the Great Fish river following each other.

They met early the next morning at the ford of Cihoshe;+ Tshiwo's army could not cross, being opposed at the ford by Gando.

Tshiwo's army made use of artifice.

The left handed men were chosen and formed on one side, the right-handed men were also placed on one side; and then they crossed at Cihoshe. Gando's army threw many assagais: many of Tshiwo's men were killed at that ford of Cihoshe. But still they would not retreat until at length Gando had thrown all his assagais; Gando's was worsted, and many more of his men were killed. Tshiwo captured the cattle and returned with them [1683]

* Only cowards should eat cold meat. This was the only mode punishing Tshiwo for his cowardice.

+ The ford of Cihoshe divides the salt from the fresh water at the mouth of the Great Fish River.¹¹

Had *Iziqwenge zembali yamaXosa* been published, to Noyi would have fallen the credit as the author of the first secular book in Xhosa. Noyi died at Elujilo on 30 July 1872;¹² one of his direct descendants is Pallo Jordan, son of Phyllis Ntantala and A.C. Jordan.¹³

Oral literature

Folklore genres underpin the brief history of nineteenth-century literature in Xhosa books: Noyi's historical narrative proclaims itself as based on an *imbali*¹⁴ and the Gwatyu booklets contain Mpondomise historical legends as well as Xhosa folktales. Oral literature was fed into print in these booklets, and in the

11. Grey Collection G10c13.

12. *Kaffir Express*, 1 September 1872, 2.

13. See P. Ntantala, *A Life's Mosaic* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1992), 10.

14. See J.B. Peires, *The House of Phalo: A History of the Xhosa People in the Days of their Independence* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1981), 170-91.

next century in some of the earliest Xhosa books;¹⁵ English literature was also fed into print, as in the Xhosa translations from Bunyan and Mrs Sherwood, and of sundry religious tracts. Credit customarily accrues to the Scottish missionaries at Tyhume and their successors at Lovedale for initiating and establishing the printing of Xhosa literature. For example, a Xhosa praise poem (*izibongo*), produced by the great Thembu poet (*imbongi*) D.L.P. Yali-Manisi at a university conference in Durban in 1985, included these lines:

<p>Siyabulela thina basemaXhoseni Ngokufika kweento zooRose nezooBheni</p> <p>Ukuz' amaXhos' avulek' ingqondo</p> <p>Kulo mhla yaqal' ukubhalwa le ntetho</p> <p>Intethw' engqongqotho yasemaXhoseni</p>	<p>We Xhosa are ever grateful that men like Ross and Bennie came to ignite the mind of the Xhosa by first transcribing the language, the peerless language of the Xhosa.¹⁶</p>
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While it is certainly true that we owe a great debt to pioneer missionaries like John Bennie and John Ross, it must at the same time be recognised that before the arrival of the white colonists, before the introduction of western schools and writing and printing, Xhosa literature flourished in oral forms, forms that the missionaries sometimes drew on for their early publications. There is no reason to doubt that traditions of Xhosa folklore existed in precolonial times; they persisted throughout the nineteenth century, at times incorporating references to objects and behaviour introduced by white settlers, and survive and flourish to this day.

The tradition of court poetry can serve as an example. There were *iimbongi* at the great places of kings long before the arrival of European settlers. The earliest account of the performance of an *imbongi* is provided by the Wesleyan missionary James Whitworth, who visited Hintsas, king of the Gcaleka, with William Shaw on 6 April 1825 and recorded in his journal: 'At sunset a man proclaimed aloud the transactions of the day, which seems to be the usual custom, ending with "Our Captain is a great Captain. When the white men came to see him, he received them kindly, and gave them an ox to eat."' ¹⁷ His colleague Stephen Kay visited Mdushane in May 1825, and observed: 'Early the following morning I was awakened by the vociferous shouts of one of the heralds, who was proclaiming, with stentorian voice, the praises of his Chief, ascribing to him all the great deeds of the age, together with the majesty of the mightiest.' ¹⁸ These two performances clearly participate in a well-established tradition of poetry

15. For example W.B. Rubusana, ed., *Zemk'inkomo magwalandini* (Frome: the author, 1906); and H.M. Ndawo, ed., *Ixenye yentsomi zase zweni* (Marianhill: the author, 1920) and *Izibongo zenkosi zama-Hlubi nezama-Baca* (Marianhill: Marianhill Mission Press, 1928).

16. Opland, *Xhosa Poets and Poetry*, 163.

17. J. Whitworth, *Missionary Notices*, 120 (December 1825), 567.

18. S. Kay, *Travels and Researches in Kaffraria* (London: John Mason, 1833), 75.

produced at liminal times (dawn and sunset) in honour of the king and concerned with public events, customary poetic commemorations that could readily be extended to incorporate reference to the newsworthy arrival of a party of white missionaries.

References to *iimbongi* and accounts of their metaphoric, hyperbolic praises of dignitaries, highly metaphoric poetic responses (often improvised) to events of significance, can be found for most of the Xhosa-speaking groups throughout the nineteenth century, testifying to the universality and continuity of the tradition. Thomas Baines, for example, records a spontaneous Mfengu performance in praise of Henry Somerset. While on patrol with General Somerset in the 8th Frontier War, Baines narrowly missed capturing Oba son of Tyali, who abandoned, amongst other things, 'several head-dresses, each formed from the last joint of the wings of the Kafir crane, usually bestowed by the chief, as rewards of valour, upon the bravest warriors, and as such, most appropriately donned by the captors.' Baines continues in his journal entry for 2 July 1851:

The zeal and bravery of one of the Fingoes, a fine fellow rejoicing in the name of Zinanqua, and bearing, beside his musket, a weapon somewhat resembling an exaggerated reaping hook, elicited a passing remark from the General, which the elated warrior, exulting in the honour conferred upon him, repaid with an extravagant recital of the praises of the Great White Chief, whom he extolled above the skies for everything which, in his own estimation, was worthy of a soldier, and whose magnitude, he declared, exceeded that of the sun, moon and stars, and the visible heaven and earth together, summing up the almost endless catalogue by declaring that the white-headed Chief was 'the great teat' from which we all derived our nourishment. When we reached the camp the General directed him to be called, and in due form decorated him with a pair of the towering plumes that had been captured in the morning.¹⁹

Apart from Ntsikana, Zinanqua is the earliest Xhosa poet known to us by name.

In 1863, Walter Stanford, a fluent Xhosa speaker, attended the installation of the Thembu regent Ngangelizwe and noted the presence and royal performances of *iimbongi* among the Thembu. 'After an interval of silence,' he writes, '[when] even the various Imbongis who had been loud in their chorus of praise of the chief and [in] historic references were still, Joyi rose.'²⁰ Ten years later, in January 1873, *The Standard and Mail* carried a lavishly detailed description of a meeting between the Gcaleka king Kreli (son of Hintsisa) and the Secretary of Native Affairs, Charles Brownlee, at Fynn's residency, which graphically locates the *iimbongi* in the impressive royal entourage:

19. R.F. Kennedy, ed., *Thomas Baines' Journal of a Residence in Africa, 1842-1853* (Cape Town: Van Riebeeck Society, 1964), 204.

20. J.W. Macquarrie, ed., *The Reminiscences of Sir Walter Stanford, vol. 1: 1850-1885* (Cape Town: Van Riebeeck Society, 1958), 21.

At noon we learnt that Kreli the troublesome was saddling up, and shortly afterwards the movement of the groups on the hill tops showed that he was advancing. The pageant which Kreli had prepared for us then commenced. Simultaneously a great body on foot made its appearance below the ridge of the eastern hill, and a large number of horsemen, with Kreli at their head, charged down one of the northern valleys into the basin. Then the thousands poured in - from the distance apparently in good discipline, and with the regularity of well-trained troops, but as they neared we saw it was but the density of the masses which gave them that appearance. As Kreli passed along at the bottom of the hill the footmen of Mopassa swept down its green slopes like a great red cloud.

Behind Mr. Fynn's house Kreli drew in rein, and the whole body of horsemen paused for a few minutes during which time the *imbongi* - the wild minstrels of the rude chief - chanted his praises. These *improvisatori* with their huge shields of ox-hide and bundles of assegais were the very *beau ideal* of savage warriors, and would certainly, to my mind, be more dangerous in war than their brethren in arms whose weapons are ancient muskets that are more dangerous, I should imagine, to friends than foes. In a few minutes Kreli moved on again, and the footmen of Mopassa fell into the rear, making a body altogether of between 3,000 and 4,000 men. As this force moved onwards there came - out from the valley by which Kreli made his approach, bodies of warriors on foot advancing as if in companies. The whole of the forces having passed the marquee as if in review order crossed the rivulet that runs down the centre of the basin - on our extreme right. As they came up the slope of the hill to the marquee, the forces spread out, and the scene was a very picturesque one. In front Kreli and his councillors on horseback; on the right wing the *unbongi* [sic, clearly a misreading of *imbongi*], their shields on their arms, and their assegais in their hands; to the left men with guns and assegais, and behind a whole perfect forest of assegais.²¹

The Gcaleka *iimbongi*, like their Thembu counterparts, are associated with royal personages; their warlike bearing and military accoutrements make a deep impression on the English correspondent, as no doubt they were intended to.

Charles Brownlee features in another account from the same year: he receives a visit from the Mpondomise chief Mhlontlo while at Shawbury in 1873. The Mpondomise perform an intimidating 'war-dance,' 'all to the hum-drum tones of the chief's "bongo", who chanted his praise in the Kafir tongue.'²² Yet another reference from the same year tells of an *imbongi* accompanying the

21. *The Standard and Mail*, 18 January 1873.

22. P. 'A trip through Kafirland'. *Cape Monthly Magazine*, 1874-5 in A.M. Lewin-Robinson, ed., *Selected Articles from the Cape Monthly Magazine, 1870-76* (Cape Town: Van Riebeeck Society, 1978), 197.

Mfengu chief Veldtman Bikitsha to the Agricultural Show in Queenstown:

One Kafir institution we were glad to see was indulged in - that was the Imbongi or Praiser of the Chief. An elderly native, mounted on his little pony delivered a stirring harangue to his compatriots. Whether prose or poetry we are not able to say; but judging from the attention it received it was a decided success.²³

Not quite as imposing, perhaps, as the Gcaleka *iimbongi* accompanying Kreli, the Mfengu poet on his pony yet manages to rouse his audience's enthusiasm for his praises of the chief.

In 1876 Walter Stanford was formally introduced to Dalasile as the new magistrate: in the afternoon, at All Saints' mission in Thembuland, 'approaching bodies of horsemen and footmen betokened the coming of the chief himself and his attendant sub-chiefs, councillors and people. The mounted men approached towards the mission church by circuitous movements which were not ungraceful. The men sang their war song and the "imbongi" or bard rhythmically chanted his praises of his chief with allusions to the past history of the tribe.'²⁴ Nine years later, in a tense meeting with Msingapantsi in 1885, the Bhaca chief reached for his rifle: 'Then Nontsizwagane, in fantastic get-up, the imbongi of Msingapantsi must needs begin his exciting poesy. Him I had chased from the meeting and the absurd manner in which he trotted off with policeman Sigadi after him with a stick made the assemblage burst into laughter. It was a critical moment but the laughter saved the situation.'²⁵ Invested with European administrative authority, Stanford's intervention reduces the *imbongi's* status to the level of a buffoon,²⁶ but other poets retained their dignity in impressive royal displays of power. At the end of the century, John Henderson Soga (Tiygo Soga's son) notes: '... the Pondos state that, on a certain day in 1895, the chief Sigcawu went to confer with the magistrate at Flagstaff and, in accordance with Pondo custom, was accompanied by a large armed retinue. On reaching their destination, in order to cel'amehlo ("to ask eyes") that is, to make an impression, they circled round Flagstaff several times, the while the court-praiser (*imbongi*) was shouting the praises of his chief.'²⁷

Praise poems survive for many of the nineteenth-century leaders, all the more interesting because they apportion blame as well as praise. The Dange chief Rambalamatye son of Tokwe, for example, was vilified by the *imbongi* for his collaboration with oppressive colonial officials:

23. *Argus*, 10 June 1873, 3-4.

24. J.W. Macquarrie, ed., *The Reminiscences of Sir Walter Stanford*, vol. 1, 54.

25. J.W. Macquarrie *The Reminiscences of Sir Walter Stanford*, vol. 2: 1885-1929 (Cape Town: Van Riebeeck Society, 1962), 22.

26. See also William Charles Scully's account of a Bhaca *imbongi* in *Further Reminiscences of a South African Pioneer* (London: Unwin, 1913).

27. J.H. Soga, *The South-eastern Bantu* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1930), 328.

<p>Ngu-Bálakisi, uso-Ráfukazwe liyabátalwa, Uso-Búkwe kancwad' ebál' izi-alam.</p> <p>Ngu qóqó fusakazi, umnyenyeka,</p> <p>Umbéla kama-Xánti, Upíkis' abantu bemqongqota.</p> <p>Uruxesh' onenkani wakulo-Nyanti, Ugomb' ihlwihlwili, Ugqoboz' izulu ngesibili.²⁸</p>	<p>He's Barracks that rake in tax, the book of books recording paupers. He's a dark refuge for absconders who steals for his masters, confronting those who question him. Nyanti's irascible caterpillar, who flays off gobs of blood, who barges through the heav- ens.²⁹</p>
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The *imbongi's* depiction of Ngqika son of Mlawu, another collaborator with whites and shameful abductor of his uncle Ndlambe's wife Thuthula, is equally caustic:

<p>Nguso-Tshul' ubembe, uhlek' abaneligqo,</p> <p>Upámbani nencúka zigoduka, Untsimangwana yakwa-Nkwebu, Unyok' emnyam' ecanď' isiziba. Ngu xálang' elimapík'w' amdaka, Untloyiy' onendlwane wase majojweni, Uxámakaz' olupóndo lunye— Luka Ngcengulana—elifel' efusini.</p> <p>Ngumafuman' alumbóle nase-Mpembeni, Ukála akanameva pofu bat' uyahlaba. Liramncwa elidla umzi liwukányela,</p> <p>Lisiti udliwa ngu-Nyelenzi no-Makábalekile;</p> <p>Umvalo obuvalel' inkomo zika-Pálo,</p> <p>Owowuvula ngowozek' ityala. Nguso-Qaco, untshikintshikikazi; Ulima bemsusa ing' asindawo yake.</p> <p>Oka-Matshitshilili, uvumb' eligxot' izizwe.</p>	<p>He's Wagging Tongue, slagging men off behind their backs. He's chummy with scavengers, an imp familiar with strangers, a black snake cleaving the pool. He's a foul-winged vulture, a kite at rest in swampland, a one-horned leguan spurned by his kin and abandoned. He loves to snuffle in trivia, a thornless aloe that still pricks, a wild beast denying he devours his own home, saying Myelenzi and Makhabalekile did it. He's the bar barring Phalo's cattle: woe betide the one who raised it. He's an irascible grumbler; he's chased off his land when he ploughs. Dogged, his stench expels nations.</p>
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28. W.B. Rubusana, ed., *Zem'inkomo magwalandini* (2nd edition, the author: 1911), 285.

29. J. Opland, *Xhosa Poets and Poetry*, 309-10.

Pum' entangeni wabe inkomo,

Ubumlala-nj'unyok' ubusiti woyiva
pin' imbátu kwedini?³⁰

Leave the boys' hut and distrib-
ute cattle!

Did you expect our thanks,
kid, when you laid your own
mother?³¹

Poetry associated with chiefs and kings flourished in well-established traditions before the arrival of whites in Xhosa-speaking territory. The tradition was sufficiently flexible to incorporate references to the intrusive foreigners and their phenomena, persisted throughout the nineteenth century, survived the apartheid years and continues in performance today. Much the same can probably be argued for all precolonial Xhosa genres of folklore, which readily adapted to reflect social change. Riddles, for example, like

Ndina' ziduli zam zimhlope zikulo lonke elimiweyo zikúlu -
Zizindlu zecawa

What are the big white termite heaps found all over the
country? - Churches

or

Ndina' mntu wam uhleli kwanti etafeni, akatétí namntu - Ibakane
Who stands far out on the veld, without ever talking to anyone - A
beacon³²

or the bird game

Uyazaz' intaka?
Ndiyazaz' intaka.
Waz' intaka ni?
Ndiyalaz' inya?ini.
Ulazi ngokuba liténi?
Ngokuba linxila.
Ngokuba?
Amehlo abomvu.

Do you know the birds?
I know the birds.
Which one do you know?
I know the glossy starling.
How do you know it?
Because it's a drunkard.
Why?
Look at its red eyes.³³

So too, undoubtedly, for the persistence and adaptation of folktales, historical legends, speeches and songs.

One of the most popular and widespread of songs is the Great Hymn of Ntsikana.³⁴ Ntsikana was probably influenced by the preaching of Dr Vanderkemp, and settled with his followers at Joseph Williams's mission.³⁵ He maintained a distinctive community of worship, integral to which was the sing-

30. W.B. Rubusana, *Zemk'inkomo magwalandini*, 245-6.

31. J. Opland, ed., *Words That Circle Words: A Choice of South African Oral Poetry* (Johannesburg: Ad Donker, 1992), 217-18.

32. R. Godfrey, 'Lexicography: Kaffir Riddles', *The Blythwood Review* (August 1927), 96.

33. R. Godfrey, 'Lexicography: Kafir Kindergarten: The Bird Game', *The Blythwood Review* (October 1927), 120.

34. See D. Dargie, 'The Music of Ntsikana', *South African Journal of Musicology*, vol. 2, 1982, 7-27.

ing of four hymns; the most popular has become his Great Hymn, always sung, but clearly in form an *izibongo* to Christ.³⁶ After Ntsikana's death in May 1821, his followers made their way to Tyhume. The text of the hymn they sang was first transcribed there by John Brownlee, and included in Brownlee's appendix to Thompson's *Travels and Adventures in Southern Africa* published in 1827:

Ulin guba inkulu siambata tina,
 Ulodali bom' uadali pezula,
 Umdala uadala idala izula,
 Yebinza inquis zixeliela:
 UTIKA umkula gozizulinè,
 Yebinza inquis nozilimele.
 Umze uakonana subizièle,

Umkokeli ua sikokeli tina,
 Uenze infama zenza ga bomi;
 Imali inkula subizièle,
 Wena wena q'aba inyaniza,
 Wena wena kaka linyaniza,
 Wena wena klati linyaniza;
 Ulodali bom' uadali pezula,
 Umdala uadala idala izula.

He who is our mantle of comfort,
 The giver of life, ancient on high,
 He is the Creator of the Heavens,
 And the ever-burning stars:
 GOD is mighty in the heavens,
 And whirls the stars around the sky
 We call on him in his dwelling-
 place,
 That he may be our mighty leader,,
 For he maketh the blind to see;
 We adore him as the only good,
 For he alone is a sure defence,
 He alone is a trusty shield,
 He alone is our bush of refuge:
 Even HE, - the giver of life on high,
 Who is the Creator of the heavens.³⁷

Not only is Ntsikana's Great Hymn important as the earliest extant Xhosa poem, composed before the establishment of the Tyhume mission, but Ntsikana's followers and their descendants played significant roles in the history of Xhosa literature. Noyi and Matshaya, who were among the first five converts baptised by Brownlee in 1823, both dictated narratives, Noyi to John Bennie, as we have seen, Matshaya an autobiographical statement to James Laing.³⁸ John Muir Vimbe was in the first class admitted to Lovedale when it opened in 1841; he contributed some twenty articles to the Xhosa newspapers *Indaba* and *Isigidimi samaXosa*. Soga's son Tiyo translated Bunyan and wrote articles for *Indaba*. The grandson of Peyi was William Wellington Gqoba, whom we shall meet later. Dukwana, Ntsikana's son, assisted with the production of *Ikwezi*; Ntsikana's grandson William Kobe contributed to *Indaba* and *Isigidimi*. And the list could be extended.³⁹

35. See B. Holt, *Joseph Williams and the Pioneer Mission to the South-eastern Bantu* (Lovedale: Lovedale Press, 1954).
 36. See J. Hodgson, *Ntsikana's 'Great Hymn': A Xhosa Expression of Christianity in the Early Nineteenth Century Eastern Cape* (Cape Town: Centre for African Studies, University of Cape Town, Communications Series No. 4).
 37. G. Thompson, *Travels and Adventures in Southern Africa* (Cape Town: Van Riebeeck Society reprint, 1968), 214.
 38. J.K. Bokwe, *Ntsikana*, 32-35.
 39. See A.C. Jordan, *Towards an African Literature: The Emergence of Literary Form in Xhosa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 43-51.

Literature in newspapers

Books were not much used in the nineteenth century as a vehicle of Xhosa literature, and forms of Xhosa folklore are essentially ephemeral; the true development and flowering of a permanent Xhosa literature in print took place not in books but in newspapers,⁴⁰ and was itself a by-product of a growing literacy that emanated from mission schools, a literacy whose moment of inception is captured by Vanderkemp. On 2 December 1799 Vanderkemp notes in his journal that ‘When I was in the wood writing, Pao, the wife of a Caffree captain, came to me, and desired me to teach her to write her name; the letters she then formed were, as I think, the first written in Caffreland by a native.’⁴¹ The first three Xhosa newspapers, *Umshumayeli wendaba* (1837-41, Wesleyan), *Isibuto samavo* (1843-44, Wesleyan) and *Ikwezi* (1844-45, Lovedale) were primarily designed to provide reading material for the products of mission schools. William Shaw reported on the foundation of *Umshumayeli*: ‘It is not a vehicle of any kind of politics, although it bears this title, - but contains accounts of occurrences which happen either in Kaffraria or elsewhere, likely to be interesting to the natives, and which at the same time affords opportunities of conveying important truths to their minds in a manner at once intelligible and interesting to them.’⁴² The early Xhosa journals were collections of articles rather than newspapers as we know them today, but they did establish a reading public and involve them in a community of readers outside the classroom. And they did encourage native speakers of Xhosa to take their first hesitant steps in putting word to paper for readers they could not see before them. *Isitunywa*, for example, regularly issued an appeal: ‘Communications are requested on all subjects connected with the literary and religious advancement of the Kafir race.’

The first pieces of writing published by native speakers were four letters composed by students at the Morley mission, which appeared in the fourth issue of *Umshumayeli* in March 1838: the pupils are named as Betsy Shaw, David Qokoyi, Job Yoyosi and Xelo, and their letters were solicited and submitted to the newspaper by the missionary Samuel Palmer. A few months later, Xelo and another Morley pupil, Joje, created in class a lively dialogue about the benefits of writing and printing; Palmer transcribed the dialogue and submitted it to *Umshumayeli*, where it was published in the seventh issue in January 1839. Lazy wants to spend the day chatting to Student, but Student declines his invitation:

Um-Fundi: Hayi ke, 'M-Nqeni di ya esikolweni mina.
Um-Nqeni: Uyakw'enza ni esikolweni?
F: Diyaku funda enncwadini.
N: Uyaku funda ni?

40. See Opland, *Xhosa Poets and Poetry*, chapter 11.

41. VanderKemp, *Transaction of the Missionary Society*, 407.

42. *Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society Report*, 1838, 65.

- F: Do funda uku lesesha, noku bala.
 N: Ukubala sendi kw'azi, nakuba dinga yanga esikolweni.
 Ukulesesha, kodwa, andi kw'azi. Kuku ti ni ke oko?
 F: Uku lesesha kuku teta nenncwadi: zi ti imbali zezinto, zi bekwe
 enncwadini; a ze a ti umtu aku kangela, a bone ukuba zi ko, a
 zi funde, a z'azi; a ti gomnye umhla a be sele z'azi, a zi tyele
 abanye abantu.
 N: Zi twa ni uku bekwa enncwadini, zinto e zi tetwa gomlomo je
 imbali?
 F: Kw'enziwa impawana e zi ncikanana; zi ti impawu zi be
 gamagama amazwi a su'ba e fun'uku tetwa.

- Student: Oh no, Lazy, I'm off to school.
 Lazy: What are you going to do at school?
 Student: I'm going to learn from books.
 Lazy: What are you going to learn?
 Student: I'm going to learn how to read and write.
 Lazy: I can count already, though I've never been to school. But read-
 ing I can't do. What is it?
 Student: Reading is talking to books: they tell stories about things, which
 are put in books; when someone looks at them he sees they're
 there, he studies and he understands; he reads and knows what
 they're all about, and then he can tell other people.
 Lazy: How can they be put in books? Aren't stories things spoken with
 the mouth?
 Student: Little marks are made, and these marks are words saying what's
 being said.

Lazy is impressed.

- N: Inncwadi i kwa gumtu, yinto ni?
 F: Nantsi: yi le'nto e di yi pete esanghleni.
 N: Iya teta, ku sini?
 F: Iya teta ebantwini a sukuba be kw'azi uku yi kangela. Uya yi
 bona na le'migcana e mnyamana enncwadini apa?
 N: Diya yi bona, kambe.
 F: He, Le migcana i kwa zimpawu e dandi te, Zi gamagama amaz-
 wi: zindaba ke ezi.
 N: Le'migcana i kwa yinteteko yenncwadi?
 F: I kwa yiyo.⁴³

43. *Umshumayeli wendaba* 7 (January 1839), 4-5.

Lazy: Is a book like a person? What is it?
 Student: Here, it's what I have in my hand.
 Lazy: Can it talk?
 Student: It does talk to people who can read it. Can you see these lines in this book?
 Lazy: Yes, I can see them.
 Student: Well, these lines are the marks which I said are words. This is the news.
 Lazy: Are these lines the way the book speaks?
 Student: Exactly.⁴⁴

Lazy resolves to attend school in order to learn how to read and write. Later, in April 1839, someone who signs himself as Jivashe contributes to *Umshumayeli* a narrative account of the Mfecane. In January 1844, *Isibuto* carries another dialogue, written by an unnamed Mfengu writer; the seventh and final issue (July 1844) includes a personal narrative by M. Malisa about the smallpox epidemic. Before 1850, then, Xhosa speakers were drawn into the world of print through missionary periodicals.

The next two newspapers, *Isitunywa sennyanga* (1850, Wesleyan) and *Indaba* (1862-65, Lovedale), encouraged and extended this process, though the missionary editors still maintained strict control of the content. J.W. Appleyard, the editor of *Isitunywa*, noted that: 'The circulation of this paper averaged nearly 800 copies, of which about 500 were supplied to Kafirs and other natives using the Kafir language.'⁴⁵ *Isitunywa* had the appearance of a modern newspaper, with advertisements and livelier news than its predecessors; its last issue (December 1850) carried eleven Xhosa letters from readers, one of them by Elias Xelo of Morley, one of the first Xhosa writers on record, who had earlier contributed to *Umshumayeli*. *Indaba* establishes for the first time the literary reputations of regular contributors like Tiyo Soga (writing as UNonjiba waseluhlangeni, 'the dove of the nation'), John Muir Vimbe and William Kobe Ntsikana: the Xhosa man of letters was starting to emerge.

Soga contributed eight essays to *Indaba* between 1862 and 1864. His stories and anecdotes break readily into enlivening dialogue, in the manner of the *imbali*. He deploys the same oral imagery for reading as Xelo and Joje do. For example, in his first contribution, Soga compares *Indaba* to a traveller entering their rural homes with news; in his second contribution he refers to his readers as 'You who are speaking to this book'.⁴⁶ Later, however, he comes to speak in his own voice, addressing his readers directly through questions, in arguments and by exhortation. He is occasionally witty, at times he testifies to harsh encounters between black and white, but above all in a time of culture clash and change, he urges in his Xhosa readers dignity and pride in their traditions:

44. Opland, *Xhosa Poets and Poetry*, 233.

45. Bleek, *The Library of His Excellency Sir George Grey*, 88.

46. D. Williams, *Umfundisi: A Biography of Tiyo Soga, 1829-1871* (Lovedale: Lovedale Press, 1978), 154.

Bangako mhlaumbi sakuteta ngokuti inkosi zibuliseni, ngokubuliswa kwazo, bati siteta ngochuku. Batsho pantsi! Ayiluchuku lonto kuzo kunje! Ziyilindele. Inkosi azikutandi ukubizwa ngamagama azo. Kuzituka oko. Magqoboka, eza-Maxhosa inkosi, neza-Belungu ezipete a-Maxhosa, zibuliswa ngokutiwa - 'Ah Bani - ah nkosi!' 'Molo nkosi! Royindara nkosi.' Kodwa ukuba kube kugwetywa siti, sibe siyakuti - U-'Molo, no-Royindara - Rolindara, Royinani - Rolinani,' intshembenxa zamazwi olunye uhlanga, maziguzulwe kuti apa. Sibe siyakuti masizekele isibuliso, esikulu, sasekaya kwa-Zulu, apo savela ngakona, siti ukuba koyinkosi asitshongo ukuti - 'Ah nkosi!' Siti - 'Sakubona nkosi' - Siti kuluntu, 'Sakubona!' - 'Sakubona wetu,' - 'Sakubona sihlobo.'

Siyabuzake siti, niyazibulisana inkosi zenu, makolwa, nani bantu bezikolo, ngezo zibuliso, zazekayo kuzo nakuni, ukuba zinika imbeko? Xa kungenjalo, kungokuba kwakutenina kanene?...

Tulani iminqwazi kwinkosi, kubanumzana, nakumanene ase-Mlungwini, niwise kakuhle ngenthloko, noko ningatetanga. Nenjenjalo kumtu omhlope ofanelekileyo, ihla kamnandi londawo; - Siyala kodwa ukuba nenjenjalo kumaxhigxa, nakumagxagxa, anga nidhlule ngabantu. Lo 'Molo Sweli' wa-Maxhosa kwakuti-tu Mlungu lowo, yingcapukisa mxhelo.⁴⁷

There may be some of you who will think that we are entering the sphere of trifles when we say greet your chiefs with their traditional salutations. Those who think so are wrong. To the chiefs these are not trifles. They expect this sign of respect. Chiefs do not like to be addressed by name. This is an insult to them. Believers, Xhosa chiefs and for that matter even European chiefs who administer Bantu affairs have their traditional salutations like Aa! Daluxolo or Honourable Sir! or Mhleka! or Your Worship! Again if we had a say in this matter we would suggest that words like molo (good morning), rhyindarha (gooi dag), rhyinani (gooi nag) clumsy words of Xhosarising foreign words should be eliminated from our language. I would suggest the more familiar greetings of Kwazulu (Zululand) from where we originally came. There they greet with Aa! Nkosi (Hail Chief) or Sakubona, Nkosi (We behold you Chief) and to ordinary people they simply say, 'Saubona!' (We see you or Good-day). We want to know if you greet your chiefs with their traditional salutations you who are converts to Christianity, you the dwellers in Mission stations. If you no longer do this what caused you to abandon this fine practice? ...

Raise your hats to chiefs and respectable people. To White gentlemen bow your heads gently even though you do not utter a word. Do that to White people who deserve this. This is pleasing. But we do not advise this even to poor Whites of no repute who are no better than yourselves. This 'Morning Sir' of the Xhosa

47. *Indaba* no. 2 (6 June 1864), 354.

48. Translated by J.J.R. Jolobe in D. Williams, *Umfundisi*, 174-5.

people whenever they see a White face is very annoying.⁴⁸

In the pages of *Indaba*'s successor, Lovedale's *Isigidimi samaXosa* (1870-88), the struggle for control of content was engaged. James Stewart, Principal of Lovedale, initially inhibited free literary expression and political commentary, but especially after the 23-year-old John Tengo Jabavu was appointed editor in 1881, the floodgates were subjected to pressure. Stewart wanted *Isigidimi* to be free of political content, but this policy was increasingly at variance with the desires of its readers, who had become sensitive to the potential power of the press. None expressed this potential more eloquently than Isaac Williams Wauchope. The last frontier war had ended in 1878. Wauchope called for a transformation of the military struggle: in 1882 he wrote an angry letter about white abuse of the Xhosa chiefs to *Isigidimi*, asking his Xhosa readers provocatively: 'Where are the poets and orators today?' In conclusion, he offered the following poem, commencing with an allusion to a traditional rallying call to arms in response to a cattle raid, *Zemk' iinkomo, magwalandini!* 'There go your cattle, you cowards!':

Zimkile! Mfo wohlanga,
Putuma, putuma;
Yishiy' imfakadolo,
Putuma ngosiba;
Tabat' ipepa ne inki,
Lik'aka lako elo.

They've gone! Compatriot,
Chase them! Chase them!
Lay down the musket,
Use pen to chase them;
Seize paper and ink:
That's your shield.

Ayemk' amalungelo,
Qubula usiba;
Nx'asha, nx'asha, nge inki,
Hlala esitulweni,
Ungangeni kwa Hoho
Dubula ngo siba.

There go your rights!
Grab a pen,
Load and reload it with ink;
Sit in your chair,
Don't head for Hoho:
Fire your pen.

Tambeka umhlati ke,
Bambelel' ebunzi;
Zigqale inyaniso,
Umise ngo mx'olo;
Bek' izito ungalwi,
Umsindo liyilo.

Impress the page,
Engage your mind;
Focus on facts,
And speak loud and clear;
Don't rush into battle:
Anger speaks with a stutter.⁴⁹

On both sides of his family, Wauchope had strong connections with the pioneering Christian missionaries to the Xhosa people. His great-grandmother and grandmother were early disciples of Vanderkemp, following him to Bethelsdorp in 1802; Wauchope's grandfather Citashe lived near Joseph Williams's mission. In August 1882 Wauchope responded to an invitation to chair

49. *Isigidimi samaXosa*, 1 June 1882, 5; Opland, *Xhosa Poets and Poetry*, 226-7.

a meeting designed to establish a black organisation in response to the foundation in 1879 of the Afrikaner Bond. In September, Imbumba Yamanyama was formed in Port Elizabeth, after the Native Educational Association (formed in 1879) the earliest formal political association for blacks in South Africa; Wauchope served as the first Secretary. Imbumba yamanyama is one of Ntsikana's images, a symbol of national unity. It refers to the scrapings from the inside of a pelt that when compacted form an indissoluble ball: it came to represent a political ideal in which diverse black groupings might be welded together into one nation. In March 1884 *Isigidimi* printed a poem by Wauchope (writing under the pseudonym Silwangangubo-nye) in praise of the fledgeling political organisation in which the revered Ntsikana summons the nation to unite like a ball from scrapings, in the unity that Imbumba Yamanyama offers:

IMBUMBA YAMANYAMA.

A BALL FROM SCRAPINGS

Walil' umzi akwatywa
Mhla sashiywa ngu Ntsikana;
Wancw'atywa ke waselelwa
Washiyw' apo kwagodukwa.

All the village wailed and fasted
on the day Ntsikana left us;
he was buried, covered over,
left there when we journeyed homeward.

Amhlope pantsi komhlaba
Amatamb' ento ka Gaba,
Yahlum' inc'a kwelo dlaka
Lomlwel' omkulu wohlanga.

White they lie beneath the earth,
the bones of Gabha's offspring,
grass arose upon his grave,
a great champion of the nation.

Kant' useko usateta,
Izwi lake linamava,
Linencasa linomkita
Ele 'Mbumba Yamanyama.'

Yet he lives and keeps on speaking
in a voice rich with experience,
sounding sonorous and lovely,
talking of 'A Ball from Scrapings.'

Kanivuke nipakame
'Sapo ndini lwakwa 'Mbombo,'
Nilandele eli lizwi
Lomtyangampo wo Manyano.

Rouse yourselves and stand erect,
all who dwell on Ngqika land,
Take your lead from what this voice says,
'Unity' its constant call.

Kanivuke nipakame
'Sapo ndini lo Tukela,
Kuba nani nasulelwa
Lishwa lomzi wakwa P'alo.

Rouse yourselves and stand erect,
all who dwell on Zulu land,
you have also been affected
by the house of Phalo's loss.

Mazipole izilonda
He, nenqala zentyano;
Siyazalana sibanye,
Sikuluma 'lwimi lunye.

The time has come to tend our wounds,
animosities and grudges;
we're all related, common stock,
we all speak a common tongue.

Safelwa ngu Krestu Emnye,
Sine lifa linye Ngaye:
Umanyano lungamandla -
Olwe 'Mbumba Yamanyama.' ...

All on his own Christ died for us,
leaving one legacy to us:
power can be found in union,
power of 'A Ball from Scrapings' ...

Shukumani ningalali
Bafundisi abantsundu,
Kunje sakulila ngani
Xa lupaleley' uhlanga.

Keep on stirring, you black teachers,
never pausing in your efforts;
we of course will always blame you
when the nation lies in ruins.

Lumanyano ngokwe Mfundo!
Nants' Imbumba itelela
Yixobise, yinkwe' yako,
Yifundise eli Dabi.

Learning fosters our unity,
now Imbumba strengthens the cause,
arm it as you would your offspring,
teach it how to fight this battle.⁵⁰

Wauchope was one of the leading figures in the emergent Xhosa political and literary elite in the last two decades of the century. His earliest contribution to a newspaper was an article on the abuse of liquor in *Isigidimi* in July 1874. Wauchope contributed to *Imvo zabantsundu* in 1891 and 1892 an extended discussion of Xhosa proverbs, a number of hymns in 1896, and numerous historical articles, and in 1895 won a competition for the best narrative poem.⁵¹ Wauchope's subversive monograph *The natives and their missionaries* was published by Lovedale in 1908.⁵² He drowned on the *Mendi* in the English Channel on 21 February 1917, and is in fact the legendary hero who marshalled the doomed volunteers for a death drill on the decks of the sinking troopship.⁵³

In the same literary competition that recognised Wauchope in 1895, the prize for the best religious poem was won by Jonas Ntsiko, a prolific poet and contributor to *Isigidimi* and *Imvo* from 1875 onwards, who often wrote under the pseudonym Uhadi waseluhlangeni ('The musical bow of the nation'). Jordan testifies to Ntsiko's popularity amongst readers:

It seems that no controversy could be brought to a close in *Isigidimi* until 'Hadi' had made his contribution. If he did not write, either the other participants or interested readers suggested that it was about time he did so. As a rule his contribution to any discussion was in the form of a prose essay, but he often concluded with a poem inspired by a subject under discussion.⁵⁴

50. *Isigidimi samaXosa*, 1 March 1884, 2; cf. T.J. Thompson, *Touching the Heart: Xhosa Missionaries to Malawi, 1876-1888* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 2000), 195-6.

51. *Imvo*, 11 April 1895, 2.

52. See Opland, 'Fighting with the Pen: The Appropriation of the Press by early Xhosa Writers' in J.A. Draper, ed., *Orality, Literacy and Colonialism in Southern Africa* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature and Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2003), 31-38.

53. See Opland, 'Isaac Williams Wauchope' in N.E. Sonderling, ed., *The New Dictionary of South African Biography* (Pretoria: Vista University Press, 1999), 237-9 and Thompson, *Touching the Heart*, especially chapter 8.

54. Jordan, *Towards an African Literature*, 91-92.

Under the editorship of John Tengo Jabavu, *Isigidimi* came under increasing attack from its readers for its refusal to be drawn into controversial political issues. A lively debate ensued in the correspondence columns, involving Wauchope, Meshach Pelem and others, to which Ntsiko contributed in 1883:

Andilapho ke noko, indawo endingayo yile yokungathi phakathi kwesi*Gidimi* nabafundileyo abaPhesheya kweNciba, akukho kubukana kukhulu. Isizathu ngathi sesi—uluhle olufundileyo luthi, ubuhlanga besi*Gidimi* alubuqondi. Isi*Gidimi* sibuthuntu malungana neendaba zolawulo. Imvo yaso ingakwabaMhlophe, ngohlobo lokuba athi ovakalisa ngaso umoya ongecala elintsundu, simqondise ukuba akanguye owasekhaya. Umfo owakha wabuzela uLangalibalele wathi esavele ngempumlo ihagile samntywilisa buphuthuphuthu phantsi kwamanzi okuthi cwaka; wathi owathi leyo nkosi yibhokhwe ilwa nendlovu wabekwa, nentetho yakhe yahlokoma kwimilomo ngemilomo encomayo. Ngathi luthi uluhle lwakowenu ngezi mini uhlanga luphethweyo ezandleni, ngezi mini zeemfazwe eziphela kade, noxolo olufutshane luphe ngexesha elifanelekileyo, ubude nobubanzi nobuphakamo beendaba zasebandla. Kanjalo tshayela ibala lamadoda anezimvo ngezimvo azixoxele kulo iindaba azayamene kangaka nentlalo-ntle yawo kwanaye wonke umntu ontsundu ukuze size kuyazi into esiyenzayo. Kuloo nkundla kovala amaciko, neembongi zohlanga eziya kubonga ngecala lethu, nangelinye icala. Kunani na kwakukhe kuvele neyakwaMkatshane ithi:

Vukani bantwana
 Bentab' eBosiko,
 Seyikhal' ingcuka
 Ingcuk' emhlophe,
 Ibawel' amathambo
 'Mathambo kaMshweshwe,
 Mshweshw' onubuthongo
 Phezul' entabeni.
 Siyarhol' isisu
 Ngamathamb' enkosi,
 Ubomv' umlomo
 Kuxhap' uSandile ...⁵⁵

I am discussing the hostility that exists between *Isigidimi* and its readers across the Kei. The reason would seem to be this, that the younger intellectuals say they can never make out the true nationality of *Isigidimi*. *Isigidimi* never takes up a clear stand on political matters. It sides with the whites, for whenever a writer voices the feelings of the blacks, *Isigidimi* immediately makes him understand that he belongs to the side of the enemy. For instance, a writer who

55. Opland and Mutze, eds., *Izwi labantu*, 89 from *Isigidimi*, 2 April 1883, 4.

tried to put in a word for Langalibalele (a Hlubi chief) was quickly immersed under the waters of silence: while another writer, who expressed the idea that Langalibalele was a mere goat trying to fight against an elephant, was given praise and his words were echoed far and wide.

In these days, when the nation is sickening to death, in these days of long-lasting wars and short-lived peace, it is demanded of you by the youth of your fatherland that you give them the length and breadth and depth of national news. Moreover, it is demanded of you that you make a clearing in your paper, a clearing that you have to keep clean for men of conflicting views, so that in this clearing they may discuss all the matters that so affect their welfare and the welfare of all the blacks. Only then shall we know what we are doing. As a result of this practice, there will emerge in this clearing national orators and bards, some praising our side, and others praising the other side. Why cannot a bard emerge for once from the people of Mokhachane (Basuto) and sing as follows:

Arise, ye sons of the Mountain-at-Night!
 The hyena howls, the white hyena,
 All ravenous for the bones of Moshoeshoe,
 Of Moshoeshoe who sleeps high up on the mountain.

Its belly hangs heavy and drags on the ground,
 All gorged with the bones of warrior-kings;
 Its mouth is red with the blood of Sandile ...⁵⁶

Ntsiko served as a deacon at St John's Mission in Umtata for a number of years, but his licence was withdrawn when he became blind. He then worked as an interpreter for the magistrate in Tsolo and died in 1918.

John Tengo Jabavu was appointed as editor of *Isigidimi* at the age of 23 in 1881. His own political style and the policy imposed upon him by Stewart made him a controversial editor, although he welcomed literary contributions in his pages and set standards for them. In October 1884, *Isigidimi* carried a poem by Thomas Mqanda, which criticised Jabavu for his involvement in white politics:

Manditi kuwe: -	Let me say to you,
Sayama ngentab' omlungukazi,	Always lounging in Cape Town
Le kutiwa yi Kapa;	On the white woman's mountain:
Hamba nyoka emnyama,	Go, black snake
Ecanda isiziba,	Cleaving pools,
Uye kulomzi apo sibulawa kona.	Back to the homes we're slaughtered in.
Jong'indlela zamagwangqa,	Study the white man's ways
Jongwa yimfakadolo;	And a musket will study you,
Lukozi lumapiko angqangqasholo	You strong-winged hawk. ⁵⁷

56. Jordan, *Towards an African Literature*, 93-94.

57. Opland, *Xhosa Poets and Poetry*, 241.

Wauchope and Ntsiko invariably chose western metrical forms for their poetry: this is the first published Xhosa poem modeled on the style of *izibongo*, criticising its subject and deploying in the third and eighth lines traditional animal metaphors (the black snake can be found in Ngqika's *izibongo*, quoted earlier). In the next month, November 1884, Jabavu commenced publishing his own newspaper, *Imvo zabantsundu*, in King William's Town, while W.W. Gqoba assumed the editorship of *Isigidimi* at Lovedale. Keen rivalry between *Imvo* and *Isigidimi* ensued for four years, until *Isigidimi* ceased publication shortly after Gqoba's sudden death in April 1888, but *Isigidimi*'s antagonism to *Imvo* was resumed by *Izwi labantu*, a newspaper controlled by W.B. Rubusana, Nathaniel Cyril Mhala and A.K. Soga, which was published in East London from 1897 to 1909. Mission newspapers, which had nurtured and brought Xhosa writing to maturity, died with *Isigidimi* in 1888.

William Wellington Gqoba⁵⁸ was a lively editor of *Isigidimi*, free of the confrontational controversy attendant on Jabavu; he presided over an unprecedented efflorescence of literary and ethnographic contributions, many of which he provoked by his editorial comments and his own writings. Gqoba's literary career effectively commenced after he assumed the editorship of *Isigidimi*; he contributed religious poetry (especially poems of consolation on the death of parishioners), humorous stories, historical articles on the Xhosa and Mfengu peoples and on the cattle-killing episode of 1856-7, explanations of Xhosa proverbs and two extended poems serialised in 1885 and 1888 that for a long time stood as the most sustained poetic achievements in Xhosa.

Gqoba's 'Ingxoxo enkulu ngemfundo' ('Great debate on education') was the most ambitious and sustained work of original Xhosa literature in its time, and remained so until the appearance of the first Xhosa novels a full generation later. It originally appeared in installments in *Isigidimi* shortly after Gqoba assumed editorship of the paper, commencing in January 1885 and concluding in the August issue of that year. In total, the poem ran to 1150 lines. In its form, 'Ingxoxo enkulu ngemfundo' signalled its identification with English literary tradition: it is written throughout in trochaic octosyllabics, a strict form quite foreign to Xhosa tradition. It acknowledges a debt too to Bunyan's *The pilgrim's progress*, which had been translated into Xhosa by Tiyo Soga, in that the participants are given allegorical names like Bookworm, Sharptongue, Cockeye, Dimwit and Die for Truth. The debate takes place under a chairman who introduces the topic and sums up at the end, with speakers politely taking turns, so the whole poem has the appearance of a Christian work participating in disciplined western cultural tradition. Furthermore, the chairman, an old, well-educated, thrifty and successful farmer named Thankless, is ultimately swayed by the debate: initially, as his name implies, he is sceptical of the benefits of the white education he has enjoyed, but by the time all fifteen speakers have had their say, Thankless appears to have changed his mind and comes down firmly in favour of the white educational enterprise. The poem ends with these lines:

58. See Opland, 'William Wellington Gqoba' in N.E. Sonderling, ed., *The New Dictionary of South African Biography* (Pretoria: Vista University Press, 1999), 38-40.

Ndoyisiwe kupelile,
Zinyaniso ndifeziwe,
Yon' imfundo iyalala.
Ndiqondile ngeligala.

I've been wholly whipped and beaten,
Truths have vanquished all my problems,
Plenteous is this education,
I have reached an understanding.

Masifund' ukubulela,
Ndigalele ndafincela,
Mna ke ndiyaqukumbela,
Zenixele emakaya
Masitande amagwangqa,
Amabandla apesheya.⁵⁹

Let's acquire appreciation,
I have poured it out then drunk it,
Now I've made an end of speaking:
Won't you spread the word through homesteads,
Let us show our love for white men,
Tribes who travelled over oceans.

In form and structure, therefore, Gqoba's poem gives every appearance of being a piece of pious propaganda. In depicting a debate on the issue, however, Gqoba is free to express a wide range of opinion. As A.C. Jordan remarked,

There is an interesting variety of participants and therefore a variety of opinions, left, centre, and right, shading into each other. In this long discussion, no one says that the blacks are getting a square deal from the whites. The best defense that the extreme right can put up is that things are not so bad, and that if the ingrates will only exercise patience, the best is yet to be.⁶⁰

Against this lukewarm defence of education is ranged an eloquent and outspoken set of arguments that moves easily on from the sphere of education to white attitudes and policies in general. The first spokesman for the left, for example, Bazamehlo ('Cockeye'), who is the second participant in the debate, scathingly argues in part against the differential system of education James Stewart introduced at Lovedale after 1870.

Ababantu bayaketa,
Kuyinene inanamhla,
Es'kuleni ndinonyana,
Sel'egqibe nomunyaka.

All aren't equal to these people,
That's the truth now plain and simple.
I've a son who is a schoolboy,
His first year's already finished.

Isi-Grike akasazi,
Si-Latini, akasazi,
Si-Hebere, akasazi,
Ukukumsha akakwazi.

Greek's a language unfamiliar,
Latin's also unfamiliar,
Hebrew's also unfamiliar,
He's not learnt a foreign language.

Wonke umntu onengqondo,
Engotanda kwa nemfundo,
Woziqonda ezindawo

Everyone with understanding,
With a love of education,
Will know all about these matters

59. *Isigidimi samaXosa*, 1 August 1885, 61.

60. Jordan, *Towards an African Literature*, 67.

Azimisiley' ubawo.
Kule ngxoxo ndixabene
Nezwi lika-*Sweligukwe*.
Makavuswe amakwele,
Ozintuli baqatshuzwe.

Put in place for us by Daddy.
This debate has made me quarrel
With the speech pronounced by Guileless.
Bring it all into the open:
Let the dust rise as we argue.

Ababantu ba Pesheya,
Ngabaze kusibulala,
Basihlute nomuhlaba,
Asinawo namakaya.⁶¹

Over oceans came these people
Set in purpose just to kill us,
Take by force our very country:
We no longer have our homesteads.

Others speak fondly of precolonial times, criticise taxes and low black wages, alcoholism and dispossession. At the height of the debate, Scorched by Fire rises in anger to attack the suggestion that blacks should be grateful to whites.

Ndincamile ndonakele
Mz' wakowetu okunene
Ngamadoda atetile
Ab' ebonga amagwangqa.
Kanti noko lon' ikete
Noko sebe likanyele
Liko lona okunene
Kwinto zonke ngokumhlope.
Fan'selana sekupina
Umnt' omnyama esebenza.
Ekolisa, sele qwela,
Won'umvuzo uyintshenu,
Okunene kut'we kunu.
Oligwangqa uyinkosi
Nakuw' pina umsebenzi.
Fan'selana esidenge
Abantsundu bemqwelile,
Nange ngqondo bemdlulile,
Kupelile wozuziswa,
Umuvuzo owangala
Kwanegunya lokupata
Abantsundu, abamnyama.
Kwanelizwe xa lifile
Bomiselwa izidenge,
'Zingazange ziyibone
Lento kut'wa iyimfazwe,

I despair. I'm all unravelled.
Really, house of my own people,
One by one the men have spoken,
Singing praises of the paleskins.
They maintain discrimination
Is a figment of our fancy,
But it really does affect us
Patently in every aspect.
Everywhere that people get to
You can find a black man working.
Usually, when he's all finished,
What he's earned amounts to nothing,
Any point it had is blunted.
As for paleskin he's the boss man
Everywhere there're people working.
He could be the greatest dummy,
Even though blacks finish sooner,
Even though their brains surpass his,
He alone will be rewarded,
Earning heaps and heaps of wages
And authority and power
Over darkskins, over black folk.
When the country's on armed footing
Blacks are posted under dummies
Who have never had experience
Of a wartime situation,

61. *Isigidimi samaXosa*, 1 January 1885, 5.

Bapatisw' okwabantwana,
Ngezabokwe betyatyushwa;
Bat'we cintsi ngeqoshana
Bengo Vula ozindlela,

Amagwangqa etyetyiswa.
Kwi-ofisi kukwanjalo
Abantsundu, tú nto, nto, nto
Kwanalapo bay' zuzayo.
Niti kodwa makowetu
Alibala elintsundu,
Masifihle, masincwabe
Ezondawo zimuhlope?
Siteta nje kukw' i-Bondi
Ebuqili buyindoqo;
Ifungele, ibinquele
Ukuti e-Palamente,
Ezimali zifundisa
Oluhlanga lumunyama,
Mazihlutwe, mazipele.
Ngamanina law' anjalo?
Eyona nto soba nayo,
Imihlaba sel' inabo,
Ozigusha, nozinkomo,
Zonk' izintw' ebesinazo,
Bajojisa ngale mfundo?
Pendulani Sweligukwe
Bazamehlo, Felinene,
Sibulele ndawonina?
Nale voti ikwanjalo,
Kukw' ikete kwa nakuyo,
Asivunywa kany' impela
Tina bantu abamnyama.
Pikisani ezindawo
Sihlangene kule ngxoxo;
Nditsho ngoko ke manene
Ukuti sendincamile.
Okukona kukudala
Ungenile kweli gwangqa
Kokukona ungumfiki,
Kokukona ungumzini.
Ndiyapinda ndiyabuza
Kuni bandla elimnyama,
Nihlangene ngeli gala,
Sibulele ndawonina,
Ubukaya bubupina?

Just like children blacks bear burdens,
While they're urged along with sjamboks
With mere crumbs by way of profit
Though they might have blazed the path-
ways:

Only white men fill their pockets.
It's no different in an office:
While blacks garner nothing, nothing,
Even there whites rake in earnings.
What then do you say, my people,
With a dark skin as your colour,
Must we cover, must we bury
Everything to do with white men?
As we talk a Bond's been set up,
Artfulness is its one cure-all;
Oaths it's sworn, it's set its sights on
Getting Parliament to plunder
All the funds it's set aside for
Educating this black nation,
Terminating them completely.
What kind of people live like this?
What is left to us of value?
All the land is theirs already,
All the sheep and all the cattle,
Everything we own's their quarry,
Hounded by this education.
Won't you answer me then, Guileless,
And you, Cockeye, Die for Truth too,
Where's the forum to give thanks in?
It's no different with this voting,
Rooted in discrimination,
We're completely unaccepted,
People black like all of us are.
Quarrel as we might on these points,
We have met in this discussion;
So then gentlemen I'm saying
That despair's already claimed me.
Just as long as you continue
To have dealings with this paleskin,
Just so long you'll be a stranger
Just so long a new arrival.
Once again I pose my question
To you nations of black people,
Gathered here before this meerkat,
Where's the forum to give thanks in?
Where are we to live together?

Ezindawo zamaqetsu
 Aziko-na ke mawetu?
 Nawo onke lamasheyi,
 Siwenzelwa em-Lungwini?
 Xa kulapo kuyinene
 Sonke, sonke simanyene
 Kuba sonke sikatele,
 Masiwal' amaqebeqe
 Nakwezo zi-Palamente,
 Ngokuteta ngezw' elinye
 Ukucasa zonk' indawo
 Zembulawo ezinjalo,
 Asiboni mubulelo.⁶²

All these places with their pitfalls,
 Do they not exist, my people?
 What about all these deceptions
 Fashioned for us in white places?
 So then, it's the truth I'm speaking,
 All of us, we're all united,
 Since we're all of us exhausted;
 Let us fight these machinations,
 In those Parliaments if need be,
 With one voice let's do our talking
 Damning every single item
 Of destructive legislation.
 No appreciation's called for.

This defiant nationalistic appeal for black unity, for the political mobilisation of blacks in opposition to white discrimination, appears in a fictional debate poem in a mission newspaper with a strict policy of excluding political comment. Despite the chairman's capitulation and concession of defeat at the conclusion of the debate, despite the benign facade of form and structure, Gqoba aired incisive criticism in his poem.

By the turn of the century, then, before the publication of Xhosa books commenced in earnest, Xhosa literature had matured in the pages of newspapers. Major Xhosa authors had emerged, who were free to write what they chose in the styles they favoured. They included writers of prose and poetry like Nkohlal Falati, Gqoba, Arthur Gabriel Nyovane, William Kobe Ntsikana, Jonas Ntsiko, M.K. Mtakati, John Knox Bokwe, Brownlee John Ross, I.W. Wauchope and one who was to become the greatest and most versatile of them all, S.E.K. Mqhayi, who, writing initially as Imbongi yakwaGompo, made his appearance in the pages of *Izwi*. One of the earliest Xhosa books containing original creative literature, Rubusana's *Zemk'inkomo magwalandini* (1906) celebrates this generation of authors, for much of it is comprised of poetry and prose that originally appeared in the pages of *Isigidimi*, *Imvo* and especially *Izwi*. This brief survey does scant justice to the power, richness and variety of Xhosa literature, in oral and written media, by the turn of the century, a century that had also witnessed in its first quarter the first transcription and printing of 'the peerless language of the Xhosa'.

62. *Isigidimi samaXosa*, 1 May 1885, 35.