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Intellectualisation of isiXhosa literature: the case of Jeff Opland

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The origins of the intellectualisation of written isiXhosa literature are often attributed to the missionaries John Ross and John Bennie. They set up a printing press in the Tyhume Valley which later became known as Lovedale Press. They introduced written isiXhosa in 1823 and for this they are acknowledged as the first to write and publish in isiXhosa. This article attempts to trace this intellectualisation process of isiXhosa literature, concentrating on a critique and assessment of the life-long work of Professor Jeff Opland, who has contributed enormously to the present understanding of both oral and written isiXhosa literature. It is argued in this article that his corpus of books and academic articles require some contextualisation within the broader debate of the continued intellectualisation of isiXhosa language and literature. Reference is also made to the Opland isiXhosa literature archive and its contribution to the further intellectualisation of isiXhosa literature. It is suggested in this article that Opland is one of the greatest contributors to academic debates concerning isiXhosa literature and history. *Izibongo* or oral poems written by, and about Jeff Opland are analysed to further enhance the context of his contribution. **Keywords:** intellectualisation; isiXhosa literature; Jeff Opland; oral literature.

Introduction

The development and intellectualisation of isiXhosa literature has come about as a result of the contribution of many scholars and literary artists, performers and authors. Ownership of the intellectualisation of isiXhosa literature therefore belongs to the collective whole. Even so, certain individuals have been pivotal in this intellectualisation process. The earliest known oral performers such as Ntsikana ka Ghaba, the earliest missionary who wrote the language down, creating the first orthography (John Bennie), through to great literary artists and intellectuals such as S. E. K. Mqhayi and A. C. Jordan, all have played a role in the awakenings of isiXhosa literature. Early authors and scholars include W. B. Rubusana, Guybon Sinxo, J. J. R. Jolobe, and Tiyo Soga, while more recent scholars and authors are Peter Mtuze, Abner Nyamende, Sindiwe Magona, Zolani Mkiva, Thenjiswa Ntwana, Siphwiwo Mahala, Zanemvula Sydney Zotwana and Jeff Opland, including the youngest published poet in isiXhosa, Samkelo Mcandi—to all a great debt is owed.

It is the purpose of this article to briefly define the notion of intellectualisation, and to contextualise the growth of isiXhosa literature before introducing Jeff Opland and his literary archive. A poem written by Opland in honour of an *imbongi*, the late

D. L. P. Yali-Manisi and then a poem performed by Chief Burns-Ncamashe in honour of Opland is critiqued.

Intellectualisation in relation to isiXhosa language and literature

Although Opland has often expressed disdain for the academic and intellectual world, it is necessary to place him within this world to which he has contributed. Opland's *The Dassie and the Hunter. A South African Meeting* (2005) is a good example of both Manisi's and Opland's skepticism of the academic initiative. The value of this work is critiqued later in this article. The term intellectualisation in this context represents a two-fold process. Firstly, the academic is required to access the world of oral and written literature and to have a clear grasp of its practitioners and the content of their material. Secondly, the academic needs to engage with this material in order to place it on a national and international platform, thereby further intellectualising the material for public consumption and critique and growing intellectual debate in the field, contributing to the growth and recognition of isiXhosa. It is argued in this article that Opland has succeeded on both counts, though not without some controversy as indicated later in this article.

In more general terms, Alexander (*Intellectualisation* 21) notes that one must also take into account the "considerable and significant contribution which creative writing and journalism are quietly making towards the intellectualisation of African languages." This is true even today, especially with languages such as isiZulu where the *Isolezwe* newspaper has been a great success story. An isiXhosa version of this newspaper is now also being published. Alexander ("Potential role" 6–24) further recognises the need to work with the Academy of African languages (ACALAN) to intellectualise our languages through translation efforts across the continent. This is a process which needs to be revisited and re-invigorated continentally. In relation to isiXhosa literature, Opland has been at the forefront of such endeavours with his more recent bilingual works that honour great poets such as Nontsizi Mqgqwetho (*The Nation's Bounty: The Xhosa Poetry of Nontsizi Mqgqwetho*, 2007) and S. E. K. Mqhayi (*Abantu besizwe: Historical and Biographical Writings, 1902–1944, SEK Mqhayi*, 2009). A scholastic version of thirty of Mqgqwetho's poems was edited by Opland and Nyamende and published by Macmillan and Wits University Press as part of the African Treasury Series under the title *Hayi usizi kwizwe lenu, Nontsisi!* The book *Abantu Besizwe* was awarded the English Academy of Southern Africa's Sol Plaatje Prize for Translation in 2009. This is a notable achievement indeed in the process of further intellectualising isiXhosa literature. The most recent of these works dealing with early isiXhosa writers was published by UKZN Press in 2016 and it deals with the life and work of John Solilo: *John Solilo. Umoya Wembongi. Collected Poems (1922-1935)*, edited by Jeff Opland and Peter Mtuze.

Intellectualisation is then a developing concept which requires further definition

and refinement on an on-going basis. It is arguably about the process of language policy implementation and how such implementation can influence the growth of for example isiXhosa literature. In other words, the development of terminologies for various scientific and literary fields is important. The use of translation as a method to further literary intellectualisation creates opportunities in this regard. This includes the intellectualisation as represented through Opland's work as well as postgraduate research and theses where terminologies are being developed and literary genres are being intellectualised (Ngqayiyana; Mostert; Sam; Makhathini; Nteso). Furthermore, the use of Human Language Technology to develop languages and literatures, for example the work done by translate.org is of vital importance. The use of translate@thons has also resulted in some success stories, for example the translation of google into isiXhosa at Rhodes. This relationship between literature, auriture and technology has been defined as technauriture in the intellectualisation process (Kaschula and Mostert).

Alongside these initiatives would be the creative writers who continually add visibility to African languages, supported by multilingual prizes and competitions such as the M-Net Book Awards and the Maskew-Miller Longman Awards. Intellectualisation is therefore many stitches in a single tapestry. Furthermore, it requires a collective effort as stated by Finlayson and Madiba (48): "Planned language intellectualisation in South Africa involves individuals, quasi-governmental (parastatal) and non-governmental agencies." This would then include the Departments of Arts and Culture, the Departments of Basic Education, Higher Education and Training as well as Science and Technology who now fund the National Research Foundation (NRF) SARChI Chair in the intellectualisation of African Languages. Intellectualisation also directly involves parastatals such as the South African Broadcasting Cooperation (SABC) and the Pan South African Language Board (PanSALB).

In order for intellectualisation to succeed, we need to see the languages of the nation as "part of its natural resources [...] on the same level as its petroleum, minerals and other natural resources" (Wolff). Individuals such as translators, interpreters, writers, and church leaders play an important part in term creation and language use. In this regard one should take into serious contention the proliferation of indigenous languages being used on social network sites and more generally on the internet by individuals who are consciously and unconsciously involved in both status planning and intellectualisation through the process of technauriture (Dlutu).

In terms of literary intellectualisation, Jeff Opland is playing a significant and vital role, more especially in the unearthing and publishing of previously little-known isiXhosa writers and their works as well as translating these works into English. Such works will be explored in a later section of this article.

isiXhosa literary history in the context of Jeff Opland's life and work

Jeff Opland was born in Cape Town on 26 July, 1943. He obtained his PhD from the University of Cape Town in 1973. His innovative doctoral dissertation compared the Anglo-Saxon and amaXhosa (Mfengu, Gcaleka, Thembu and Bhaca) traditions of oral poetry in order to show how the amaXhosa living tradition could throw some light on the now extinct Anglo-Saxon texts as well as the tradition itself. The dissertation culminated in his first book, *Anglo-Saxon Oral Poetry: A Study of the Traditions* which was published in 1980. Opland then continued teaching and conducting research at numerous institutions. These included the University of Cape Town, the Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies in Toronto, Yale University, Rhodes University, Vassar College, Charterhouse School and the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. He is presently a visiting professor at Rhodes University.

Jeff Opland is by far the best known literary scholar when it comes to Eastern Cape literature. He has produced thirteen major books and a total of 91 academic journal publications. His most recent works include *William Wellington Gqoba* (2015), edited and translated by Opland, Kuse and Maseko as well as *D. L. P. Yali-Manisi* (2015) edited and translated by Opland and Maseko and the work on John Solilo. Selected works will be referred to throughout this article and a critique of *The Dassie and the Hunter* appears towards the end of the article.

For the purposes of gaining an understanding of the historical eras within which isiXhosa literature developed, it is necessary to see Opland's contribution in relation to this historical backdrop. Five literary eras are recognised in this article as forming the context of the intellectualisation of isiXhosa literature. This builds on the work of Albert Gérard (*Four African literatures. Xhosa, Sotho, Zulu, Amharic*, 1971) who recognised four eras of writing in isiXhosa literary history, beginning in 1810. It is also important to see these various eras against a historical backdrop as each era is influenced by various socio-political events. The first era is that of the missionary influence, from 1799 to 1860. The arrival of Van der Kemp in the Eastern Cape in 1799 saw the conversion of Ntsikana, the first Xhosa convert who composed four short hymns. Ntsikana then used the tradition to praise God in the same way as he would have praised a chief (Kaschula, "Preachers and Poets" 71). As a result he is accredited with the first isiXhosa hymns, which are still sung in the Presbyterian Church today (Hodgson 24–40). But it was the Reverend John Ross who provided the real impetus for the initial development of written isiXhosa literature during this era. He arrived in Cape Town in September 1823 and he brought with him "a small Ruthven printing press, with a quantity of type, paper and ink" (Shepherd 3). It was at Tyhume that the first isiXhosa was written down and printed, three days after Ross's arrival with the press.

With the missionaries also came inhibitions. These inhibitions placed on the natural development or intellectualisation of isiXhosa literature by the missionaries is best

illustrated in Jeff Opland's work ("Publication") where he analyses the circumstances surrounding the publication of A. C. Jordan's novel, *Ingqumbo yeminyanya* (The wrath of the ancestors) as well as Jordan's later work, *Kwezo mpindo zeTsitsa* (On the banks of the Tsitsa). It is clear that Shepherd, the missionary publisher, did not agree with the ending of Jordan's novel. The suicide committed by the main characters is seen as the ultimate triumph of evil over good. The book was finally published in its unaltered form after Jordan refused to accede to Shepherd's request for a different ending. The book appeared in March 1940 (Opland, "Publication" 139). Shepherd did write to Jordan on May 6, 1938 indicating the following: "We would have preferred to see the story end in a different fashion. There is a suggestion of the triumph of evil over good. I understand, however, that you have fully discussed this with Mr. Bennie and that you do not see your way, from an artistic point of view, to alter the end."

This letter suggests a more subtle attempt at interference and manipulation of plot and ending. This was also the oppressive view taken by school administrators, particularly the Controller of Stores in the Department of the Administrator, Cape Province who responded on November 21, 1940, in a written letter to Lovedale Press that "the Department is not prepared to accept for inclusion in the catalogue of books and requisites approved for use in the primary schools your publication *Ingqumbo Yeminyanya*, and the fee paid by you at the time this book was submitted is accordingly forfeited." One can only assume that the reason for this rejection was that the book was thought not to be suitable for school children as it subtly espoused traditional values, including respect for the elders and for Mpondomise traditions. Nevertheless, the book went on to become a classic not only in isiXhosa but also in various translations (Opland, *Xhosa Oral Poetry*; "Publication").

But it was with his second book that there was an inordinate delay in publishing. Shepherd received the manuscript in 1946 and verbally agreed to publish it, but it was never published by him. The book of essays and short stories, *Kwezo Mpindo zeTsitsa* (On the banks of the Tsitsa) only appeared in 1972, after A. C. Jordan's death and long after Shepherd had left Lovedale. The question as to whether this was a deliberate snub by Shepherd of Jordan and his literary writing remains unanswered, but has been extensively covered in Opland's earlier work, more specifically in his book *Xhosa Oral Poetry: Aspects of a Black South African Tradition* (1983). Opland (*Xhosa Oral Poetry*; "Publication") shows us that although the missionaries can be attributed with the first written intellectualisation of isiXhosa literature, they can also be attributed ironically with the first oppression and manipulation of the development of the written word.

The second literary era involved the influence of newspapers from 1860 to 1910. Opland points out that "in any literary history of Xhosa, we cannot properly ignore the contribution of newspapers to the development of Xhosa literature" ("Xhosa literature" 126). This has been extensively documented by Opland ("Xhosa literature";

Xhosa Oral Poetry). It was during this era (prior to the emergence of secular books in isiXhosa) that Opland argues that isiXhosa literature was relatively uninhibited, especially as isiXhosa newspaper editors like William Gqoba emerged in the 1880s.

The newspaper industry continued publishing literature, but after 1956 the papers were no longer independent. Lovedale has until recently been the major publisher of isiXhosa books. The later collapse of the newspaper industry led to the direct apartheid control over publishing of isiXhosa books and hence the loss of independence of the book in isiXhosa literature, at least in terms of thematic repertoire. This amounted then to a partial and manipulated literary intellectualisation process.

Through the newspaper medium, newly literate isiXhosa writers, for example, Tiyo Soga, W. W. Gqoba, W. B. Rubusana, John Tengo Jabavu, Cyril Mhala, S. E. K. Mqhayi and many others were encouraged to submit poetry, much of it Christian in nature, to newspapers/journals such as *Indaba*. It is some of these authors who now form part of Jeff Opland's contemporary intellectualisation initiative.

The third era underpinning the intellectualisation of isiXhosa literature was the emergence and influence of creative writers, from 1910 to 1950. This period saw the emergence of creative works such as novels. This period saw a continued publication of newspapers alongside the publication of books. It was then only in the 20th century that the genre of imaginary prose fiction was introduced, predominantly by S. E. K. Mqhayi. He is considered to be one of the founders of the isiXhosa novel with his first work *uSamson* (1907, Samson). His novel *Ityala lama-wele* (1914, The law-suit of the twins) made him accepted as one of the best isiXhosa writers—even today. The contemporary work of Opland essentially pays homage and further intellectualises this great poet.

Opland's book, *Abantu Besizwe* (2009) is an excellent example of such intellectualisation. The access given by Opland to Mqhayi's previously unpublished material to doctoral students such as Mazwi is further evidence of the continuing intellectualisation process. This thesis was completed and awarded by Rhodes University in April 2017.

A younger generation of writers also emerged during the 1920s, writers such as G. B. Sinxo and J. J. R. Jolobe. However, one of the most renowned isiXhosa novels, *Inqumbo yeminyanya* (The Wrath of the Ancestors) by A. C. Jordan was not to appear until World War 2, as pointed out above. Many of these early novelists were still thematically controlled by the missionaries, though they began to experiment in style. Satyo (74) states the following: "These writers deliberately took the bare Gospel narratives and clothed them in realistic detail in order to 'localise' them and make them intelligible to the Xhosas. Books like *UNolishwa* (1930) and *UNomathamsangqa Nosigebenqa* (1937) by H. M. Ndawo and *Umzali Wolahleko* (1933) by G. B. Sinxo, and *Intombi Yolahleko* (1953) by E. F. Gwashu are good examples of such works."

The fourth literary era saw the influence of emerging publishing houses, from 1950 to 1990. This period saw a movement away from Lovedale Press to new publishing

houses. Printing presses such as Oxford University Press, Shuter and Shooter, Heinemann, Via Afrika, Juta, Maskew Miller Longman and MacMillan Boleswa began publishing works in the indigenous languages. These creative works were aimed mainly at the school market. But even though there was this diversification in terms of publishing houses, the thematic repertoire of these creative works remained controlled, not by missionaries anymore, but by apartheid authorities and the controlling language boards which insisted on material which was politically and socially neutral. The commissioning editors for African language publications in these mainstream publishing companies were initially white and monolingual. The readers who vetted the material were isiXhosa speakers, often conservative writers themselves who upheld the apartheid status quo in terms of what could and could not be published. And so, I believe, a cycle was created which fed “law-abiding” and conservative material into the school market, thereby again affecting and controlling the intellectualisation of isiXhosa literature.

The fifth and most recent era underpinning the intellectualisation process is the influence of transformation in South African society, from about 1990 onwards. This period saw the setting up of black run printing presses such as Skotaville and more recently in 2002, New Africa Publishing emerged under the leadership of then director, Brian Wafawarowa, funded by black empowerment group NAIL and Johnnic. In the 1990s, black directors began taking up positions in previously white owned companies. Black commissioning editors were employed and mother-tongue editors began working on works in their own languages. The Department of Arts and Culture has also initiated literary magazines such as *Artist* (2013) and supported the publishing house, Realties Xhosa, in order to boost the intellectualisation of indigenous language literary genres, particularly in isiXhosa.

Jeff Opland continues to contribute to the transformation era by going back into history, producing works about authors who have not been fully researched and bringing them back into the transformation era, authors such as Nontsizi Mqgwetho, S. E. K. Mqhayi, William Gqoba, D. L. P Yali-Manisi, John Solilo and so on. By doing this Opland creates continuity between the initial two eras of isiXhosa literature and the contemporary transformation era.

What is clear from the above literary eras is the importance of Opland’s work throughout these five eras. His in-depth knowledge of the early missionary work is encapsulated in his book *Xhosa Oral Poetry*. The rich empirical data which are held in the Opland archives have yet to be fully tapped in order to properly trace the intellectualisation of isiXhosa literature. This is discussed below. There is no doubt that Opland, through his meticulous research and record keeping, holds the key to a thorough history of isiXhosa literature. In recognition of all this work, Jeff Opland was awarded the Order of Ikhamanga (Silver) by the Presidency in April 2017.

The Opland isiXhosa literature archive

Much of the above information can be found in the Opland literary archives, probably one of the largest archives when it comes to this literature. Some of the authors that he has collected material about such as S. E. K. Mqhayi are in fact national treasures. Opland's work *Abantu Besizwe* presents a remarkable cross-section of Mqhayi's work in translation. Mqhayi is probably the greatest author that South Africa has produced. He was known as the poet of the nation, thereby acknowledging him as a national asset.

The material in the Opland collection needs to be further intellectualised in order to produce manuscripts about important authors (now still unknown) whose material is contained in this archive. As mentioned earlier, Opland has published six editions and translations of isiXhosa texts containing the poetry of Nontsizi Mgqwetho (2007), the writings of Isaac Williams Wauchope (2008), with Abner Nyamende, historical and biographical essays by S. E. K. Mqhayi (2009), a book on William Wellington Gqoba (2015), and another containing historical poems by D. L. P. Yali-Manisi (2015) as well as a book on the life and work of John Solilo (2016). Mgqwetho produced over a hundred poems in the 1920s, the first woman to write isiXhosa poetry of substance. Aspects of Wauchope's biography have been known to political historians, but his remarkable life is established for the first time in detail: he is a major 19th-century isiXhosa author, the first to write systematic philosophy (in a series of articles drawing ethical principles from Xhosa proverbs), and he dies in 1917 as the hero of the SS *Mendi* sunk in the English Channel.

Mqhayi is the greatest of all figures in isiXhosa literature, but a vast quantity of his output has been lost or remains obscure. Opland's volume is based largely on unknown material. The first new volume of Mqhayi's writing to be published in sixty years establishes his credentials as a prominent South African historian and author. All three volumes are drawn from material in the Opland Collection of isiXhosa Literature. Further volumes will be produced, based on the works of the likes of Ntsiko, William Kobe Ntsikana and John Muir Vimbe, none of whom published an isiXhosa book in his lifetime, except for Solilo and Bokwe, but all of whom are crucial to an appreciation of the history and intellectualisation of isiXhosa literature and the emergence of an African elite in the Eastern Cape. To this end, Opland holds the key and it is hoped that further works will emerge in his lifetime, celebrating, critiquing and consolidating the important work of these isiXhosa authors.

A series of publications such as these, based on the same style used in *Abantu Besizwe* would place isiXhosa literature properly before the general and academic public, and offer fresh and exciting material for study, material free from control or interference by mission presses or educational authorities as suggested earlier. In the years to come, Opland (Manuscript proposal) hopes to be involved with "editing, translating and publishing a wealth of obscure Xhosa historical and literary texts" and

to “establish my Collection as a research resource independent of my presence, to celebrate Xhosa literature accurately conceived, and to involve students and scholars in its study.” When completed, this will indeed be the most remarkable achievement in the intellectualisation process of isiXhosa literature.

The following titles are projected for the series envisaged by Opland. Each volume will contain a diplomatic edition of the text with facing translation, full annotation and a detailed introduction. It is envisaged that MA and PhD students will be drawn to complete research using the Opland Collection as empirical data and that many more books will emanate from this collaboration. Examples of such students would be Thulani Nxasana-Mkhize and Ntosh Mazwi whose theses were completed in 2017. This approach could be replicated for all South African vernacular languages and used as the basis of accurate literary histories.

The first author in need of further intellectualisation, according to Opland, is William Gqoba. The title of the book is *Isizwe esinembali* (A Nation with a History), the collected works of W. W. Gqoba (1840–88). It was published in 2015 by UKZN Press. He was one of the dominant figures in isiXhosa literature in the 19th century; though he never published a book, he contributed (as editor) to the Lovedale newspaper *Isigidimi samaXosa* eleven poems (including two long serialised poems in the form of a debate that express the tensions in the community between indigenous and European systems of values). He also wrote historical and cultural articles (including two extended and detailed histories of the amaXhosa peoples and of KwaZulu, and a statement on the causes of the cattle-killing of 1856–7). This book has been completed and published by UKZN Press. It is edited and translated by Jeff Opland, Wandile Kuse and Pamela Maseko.

Some of this material was published in W. B. Rubusana (ed.), *Zemk' inkomo magwalandini* (1906, Your cows are stolen, you cowards), but, according to Opland (Manuscript proposal) Rubusana was a cavalier editor, freely altering the text, excising and inserting passages. Only the abridged edition of this anthology, which excludes all the poetry, is now in print, published by the Lovedale Press in 1966. In 2002 New Africa Books published a version of the book edited by S. C. Satyo.

Another recent text is *Iimbali zamanyange* (Tales of our Ancestors), eight narrative and historical poems by D. L. P. Yali-Manisi (1926–99), the dominant isiXhosa poet of the latter half of the 20th century, though only one of his five published books is now in print and all are virtually unknown. This book is also a 2015 UKZN Press publication. The poems, which refer in date to the period from 1800 to 1880, include an epic poem on the War of Mlanjeni (1850–3), an extended poem produced spontaneously on the history of the Thembu people and a second spontaneous poem on the cattle-killing of 1856–7. The epic on the War of Mlanjeni, *Imfazwe kaMlanjeni*, is in print, published by Nasou in 2003, but negotiations are under way to withdraw it from circulation and to transfer the rights to the heirs, or at least to secure permission to reproduce the isiXhosa text of the poem.

A further text in process is *Uhadi waseluhlangeni* (The Harp of the Nation), the poetry of Jonas Ntsiko, published between 1873 and 1916. According to Opland (Manuscript proposal) Ntsiko was ordained after three years of study at St Augustine's Canterbury, and served thereafter as deacon in the St John's diocese in Mthatha until blindness forced his retirement from the ministry. He then assisted the magistrate in Tsolo until his death in 1918. According to Opland (Manuscript proposal), with Gqoba, Ntsiko was the most powerful poet of his generation, but unlike Gqoba, his poetry was never republished and is completely unknown. The volume contains sixty-eight items, poems as well as social, political and linguistic articles. The book is being edited and translated by Jeff Opland and Pamela Maseko.

A further envisaged text as part of the intellectualisation process is *Izibongo zabantu* (Poems of people) some thirty poems by S. E. K. Mqhayi (1875–1945). This follows on from Jeff Opland's edition and translation of Mqhayi's historical and biographical prose, *Abantu besizwe* (People of the Nation). The volume contains poems by Mqhayi largely published in newspapers but never subsequently republished, and hence almost completely unknown. As mentioned earlier the material provides the subject of a doctoral thesis by Ntosh Mazwi to be edited and translated for the series by Jeff Opland and Mazwi, the thesis now having been completed. This arrangement can be replicated for further volumes in the series.

Another book on the life and work of John Solilo was published in 2016 as part of the UKZN Series. This was the first volume of isiXhosa poetry by a single author. It was published in 1925, and is now lost. According to Opland (Manuscript proposal) Solilo, an Anglican minister who served in Cradock and Uitenhage, contributed poetry and letters to newspapers under his own name, but also submitted regular news columns from Cradock under the pseudonym *Kwanguyeyi*. Although the original volume of verse is now unobtainable, a carbon copy of the typescript was located, and forms the basis of the new edition and translation, supplemented by other writings.

A diplomatic edition of Mqhayi's classic novel *Ityala lamarwele* (The Law Suit of the twins), first published in 1914 by the Lovedale Press but frequently altered in succeeding editions, not always with the author's consent, is also envisaged. According to Opland (Manuscript proposal) an abridged edition of the novel for schools has now completely supplanted the full text, which is no longer in print (a situation that defies Mqhayi's expressed wishes). The volume will restore the full text, as far as possible in accordance with Mqhayi's intentions.

Another pending publication is *Imbali yamaHlubi*, the history of the Hlubi people, by H. M. Ndawo (1883–1949), author of four novels and editor of three volumes of folklore. The manuscript has never been published, and would provide an important addition to Ndawo's published works and a significant historical statement. It is proposed to include in the volume Ndawo's *Iziduko zamaHlubi* (Hlubi clans) published by the Lovedale Press in 1939 and long out of print.

Yet a further possibility is *Izono zoyise* (The Sins of the Father), by G. B. Sinxo, a newspaper editor, anthologist and prolific author of novels and plays between 1921 and 1956. The volume will contain the eponymous novel, serialised in fourteen instalments in *The Bantu World* between October 1934 and March 1935 and not subsequently published, together with two other items by Sinxo: *Imfene kaDebeza* (Debeza's baboon) and *U-Jinoyi netitshalakazi* (Jinoyi and the lady teacher). According to Opland (Manuscript proposal) the former is the first version, completely overlooked, of a short play subsequently published in 1960 by Oxford University Press. The earlier version, published in 1925 by Lovedale Institution Press, is in verse, while the latter is a fragmentary narrative poem, also completely overlooked.

Another publication as part of intellectualising and creating an appropriate isiXhosa literary history would be a selection of early writings from the first isiXhosa periodicals, such as *Umshumayeli wendaba* (1837–41), *Isibuto samavo* (1843–4), *Ikwezi* (1844–5) and *Isitunywa sennyanga* (1850), published by Wesleyan and Scottish missionaries and initially largely written by them but increasingly containing the first contributions by native speakers of isiXhosa. A book could also be produced about Mqhayi's, *Izijingqe* ("Crumbs") and miscellaneous contributions to newspapers by the greatest of Xhosa writers. Opland (Manuscript proposal) is of the opinion that several volumes could be produced of items that have not been subsequently reprinted, poetry, political articles and social commentary.

The Opland collection can also contribute to isiXhosa intellectualisation through the field of lexicography. Articles on isiXhosa folklore, lexicography and grammar contributed by Robert Godfrey to *The Blythwood Review* and *The Christian Express* between 1920 and 1934 could be republished and contribute to discussions on isiXhosa orthography and terminology development. Godfrey revised what was for many years the standard dictionary of isiXhosa in 1915, and started the series of articles as a supplement to the dictionary, but it expanded in scope and incorporated contributions from readers. Opland (Manuscript proposal) notes that the articles are in English, but discuss isiXhosa words and folklore. A selection of such words was published by Witwatersrand University Press as *Birdlore of the Eastern Cape Province* (1941), long out of print. This material also formed part of an article on John Bennie in *Bantu Studies*, but the balance, containing rich and unusual information, remains neglected. It is proposed to publish the series in full, edited by Jeff Opland. Permission was sought some thirty years ago from Godfrey's daughter to reprint the articles, but no reply was forthcoming.

The collected historical writings of John Muir Vimbe and William Kobe Ntsikana, published in newspapers between 1864 and 1888 (Vimbe) and 1864 and 1911 (Ntsikana), valuable in being the earliest historical statements written by native isiXhosa speakers are also in need of publication and intellectualisation. Likewise *Imbali nentsomi*, (Histories and Folktales), three anonymous booklets published by St Peter's Mission Press at Gwatyu, the first secular books published in isiXhosa

are held in the Opland archive and are in need of publication. All three have been completely overlooked. The press released two volumes of folktales under the title *Incwadi yentsomi* (A Book of Tales), in 1875 and 1877, the former containing translations of twenty tales by Aesop, six isiXhosa tales and versions of two English tales, the latter containing a further forty-six isiXhosa tales.

These were the first isiXhosa folktales to be published. Furthermore, *Imbali zamam-Pondomisi akwa-Mditshwa* (Histories of the Mpondomise of Mditshwa), published in 1876, contains three ethnic histories of an isiXhosa-speaking group, the earliest examples of the genre to be published in books and this material in the Opland archive requires intellectualisation. Another example would be an epic poem on the first bishops of the Ethiopian Church, as yet unpublished, by D. L. P. Yali-Manisi.

Further examples contained in the archive would be selected contributions to newspapers by John Knox Bokwe (1855–1922), eminent isiXhosa composer, together with Bokwe's cantata on Nehemiah, *Indoda yamadoda* (Man among Men), one of the earliest original creative works published in isiXhosa (1905). Opland (Manuscript proposal) notes that a parallel series will, by and large, consist of selections from the academic series in revised isiXhosa orthography, with brief introductions and notes in isiXhosa, designed for school and university use. The material in I. W. Wauchope's *Izintsonkoto zamaqalo* (1891–2, The Implication of Proverbs) contains detailed cultural commentaries on proverbs of recognisable antiquity designed to demonstrate that the isiXhosa-speaking peoples had a coherent ethical system before the arrival of white settlers and, as such, contain the earliest philosophical writing in isiXhosa. According to Opland's manuscript proposal further publications could explore S. E. K. Mqhayi's biographical essays on historical rulers and leading personalities; Mqhayi's biographical essays on his contemporaries, black and white, rulers and commoners, male and female; Nontsizi Mgqwetho's (1920–4) thirty poems by the earliest and greatest published female isiXhosa poet with an introduction reflecting the latest information on her life; D. L. P. Yali-Manisi's *Yaphum' ingqina* (The Hunting Party goes out), a collection of poetry published in 1980 in a print run of 300, poorly distributed and now out of print; John Solilo's *Izala* (1925) the first volume of poetry by a single poet; G. B. Sinxo, *Izono zooyise* (The Sins of the Fathers), a novel serialised in a newspaper; W. W. Gqoba's *Iingxoxo* (Debates), two extended poems in the form of debates; and Jonas Ntsiko, selected poetry. According to Opland's proposal "these books will resemble the already published *Hayi usizi kwizwe lenu, Nontsizi!*, a selection of Mgqwetho's poetry edited by Opland and Nyamende, 2009".

It is clear from the above that the Opland archive holds the key to the further intellectualisation of isiXhosa literature, building on works such as *The Dassie and the Hunter*. This is in my opinion one of Opland's greatest, and yet most undervalued and misunderstood work. The intellectualisation of the Opland Archive will contribute greatly to the completion of isiXhosa literary historiography and all attempts

should be made to do so. Appreciation for this intellectualisation based on literary and personal relationships is perhaps best represented in the following two poems, a poem written by Opland in honour of D. L. P. Yali-Manisi as well as a poem in honour of Opland himself.

A poem by, and for Opland

The first poem which is analysed below best depicts Opland's humble interpretation of his relationship with the great D. L. P. (David) Yali-Manisi (hereafter Manisi), and their contribution to the intellectualisation of isiXhosa literature. This is done through a depiction of his relationship with his research subject, but also through the recognition of the contribution to literary history made by the relationship that was born between the late Manisi and Opland, spanning a period of thirty years. The poem appropriately appears at the beginning of the book *The Dassie and the Hunter* in English and then at the end of the book in isiXhosa, bringing together the intellectual meeting of two people, two cultures, and two languages in an ultimate understanding.

Without seeming to do so, I've praised him:
he's Phakamile who elevated me,
he's a tough thong of the Ncotshe clan.
Peace, son of Ndala,
of Momane, of Msundusidumbu,
of Te, ...
I'm no poet, I'm a child,
those who know me call me a baby
but just you pay heed to my words:
go then, much loved son of mine,
take the black dog-headed stick,
go, Ncotshe's Ncotshe,
he's The sky thundered when he was made a man,
he's an accomplished scholar, an expert,
he's one whose honed learning's like stars.
A flashing star informed us,
he's the flashing star right in the kraal,
it flashed across the Zingxondo and Lukhanji mountains,
and the whole country trembled.
A star flashed and entered a cloud.
Go in peace, Ndaba's drum beater,
rest in peace, Beating Heart,
today you're ready to settle
and lay down the weapons you fought with...

please say this land of Phalo's healed,
 please say that diverse flocks have been gathered,
 say black sticks have been drawn from the dung,
 say this Africa's come home.
 I wish we could meet, and meet again.
 I'm finished!
 I conclude and stand firm,
 confirmed and immutable.

In this poem Opland offers a depiction of Manisi as an intellectual giant. One is also conscious of Manisi's depiction of Opland where he is described as being like-minded. In relation to Manisi this can be seen as ironic in the sense that a man with no tertiary education is so compared, but this is in keeping with Opland's disdain for conventional academia, thereby inviting a much wider interpretation. Manisi is equated to the stars, an accomplished scholar and expert. Opland legitimises Manisi's intellectual wealth in a manner which does not require books and learning as being a part of the intellectualisation of isiXhosa literature, from orality to literacy and beyond. The family history of Manisi is drawn into the poem, as well as his location. The reference to the thundering sky, the stars and flocks of animals are all reminiscent of traditional isiXhosa *izibongo*. This forces the notion of orality as being an integral part of the academe, alongside the written word.

The following extracts are taken from a poem written by Chief Burns-Ncamashe, a famous *imbongi* with whom Opland worked very closely. This relationship is well researched and contained as a case study in the seminal book *Xhosa Oral Poetry*. Burns-Ncamashe begins by outlining the reasons as to why he has produced this poem, thereby encapsulating the importance of Opland's work regarding the intellectualisation of isiXhosa literature:

"Ngenye indlela uPulufesa lo u phezu kwelinge elihle lokwandisa iincwadi zezibongo zesiXhosa [...] Kukho ngoku nenkqubo yokuthi izibongo nezinye izibhalwa zeelwimi ezithile zigqulelwa esiNgesi. Linyathelo elibaluleke kakhulu eli kuba umphefumlo neengcinga zababhali ziza kwaziwa nazezinye izizwe. Kubonakala ngathi nalo umsebenzi uwuphethe ngengqondo uPulufesa lo."¹

Usimba, ugrumba, uphanda uphutha-phutha!
 Ngathi sisemnyamen' esi sitya kukudal' usifuna!
 Yenza id' ibonwe kaloku le nt' uyibhomeleyo,
 Uyijokileyo, ubonakal' uzilahlele wonke kuyo!
 ... Ukub' ibiyidayimani ngeseyisezandleni;
 Le nt' inobugolide kuyw' apha ngexabiso?
 Uth' ukumaHlubi ube ukumaBhele,

Uth' ukumaZizi ube ukumaZotsho,
Uth' ukwimiQgayi ube ukwimiTshiza,
Uth' ukumaHala ub' ukumaRharhabe,
Uth' ukumaGcaleka ube ukumaBhaca ...

2.

Kukuhl' enyuka phakathi kosapho lukaPhalo,
Yena mnt' utyabuk' iinyawo zada zacandeka?

3.

Kambe ndiyazoyika mn' iimbongi zakwaXhosa,
Zahlukile kwezasemLungwini sakukhangela,
Ngamabandl' awambath' iingub' ezinoboya?

6.

Ewe, tyhini! Bayabulel' abaThembu, nkomo kaOplandi,
BanoTayitile kaMabhunu phakathi kwabo ...

7.

Ziyabulel' izizwe, izizwe zithi nangamso, Pulofesa!
Ndanelisekile, Njinga yolwazi lwezibongo,
Le migudu yakho iza kuzalis' amathunga?
Uzingel' inikisi, ungeyixeli nale nt' uyifunayo phakathi kwamaXhosa!
... Izibongo zezangxa nezoongqaza uzihlanganisile,
Uza kwaziw' umxholo nomphefumlo wazo lilizwe ...
Thin' indod' intle nokub' ubuso bubomvu,
Iyinwana nokuba sisilo esimehlo mane;
Uz' uthi gqolo ngale ndlela sewuyiqalile,
Ulwe ngamandla nalo mle usibekel' izibongo,
Uhlamb' isinyama sazo kuze kuvel' intlahla;
Uvuthulul' ezaleni ezi nto zilahlwe komakwazo,
Kub' ixabiso leembongi latshitsh' emaXhoseni,
Seliyinto yezityudino neetitshala ezincwadini,
Kusenzelw' iimviwo zeziqibi nezidanga zemfundo;
Kodwa ke wena, thole lenkuz' eMhlophe,
Uyibhaqil' indyebo esebeleni lezibongo?
Watyaph' uzalwe, ufunde mfondin' ud' ube nofundo.
Kukubelek' izibongo zeembongi zekowethu lam,
Kukubelek' imbongi zekowethu lam
Zekowethu lam, zekowethu lam
Ndeenci-ncincincilili-i-i!²

In this poem the *imbongi* praises Opland for the work that he doing in order to preserve the amaXhosa oral tradition. He is referred to as a white bull, an educated

man. Even so the *imbongi* subtly criticises the effects of education on oral tradition, sarcastically referring to oral traditions now being contained in books and being examinable. Opland is praised for taking these traditions “from the breast” or source from where they come. There are some critical references to Opland’s red complexion and glasses which the poet uses as a form of “othering” in the sense that Opland has come from outside the amaXhosa culture and has succeeded in embedding himself in amaXhosa oral traditions. Similarly, in another poem about Opland produced as early as 1978 by the *imbongi* Mbutuma (he too forms a case study in the book *Xhosa Oral Poetry*) the poet appropriately refers to Opland as “Devourer of books of the whites to the last word. Devourer of the books of the blacks to the last word” (Opland, *Words that Circle Words* 272).

A critique of *The Dassie and the Hunter*

What follows is a critique of a particular book written by Opland, namely, *The Dassie and the Hunter. A South African Meeting* (2005) which contains one of the poems analysed above. The reason for choosing this text is because it does not resemble any of Jeff Opland’s previous academic works. There is no similarity in style, and to some extent content. His previous books, namely, *Xhosa Oral Poetry: Aspects of a Black South African Tradition* (Cambridge University Press, 1983), and *Xhosa Poets and Poetry* (David Philip, 1998, soon to be republished by UKZN Press), were written as purely scientific, academic works. *The Dassie and the Hunter* amounts to a subtle snub of academia and its restrictive rules as indicated at the beginning of this article. Though written by Opland, it is as if he and his research subject, Manisi, have colluded to make this work different and special, in a personal mystical way, disregarding academia etiquette, weaving a more creative, poetic tapestry. This makes the book an interesting read and it is a valuable contribution to the intellectualisation of isiXhosa literature, taking the oral and committing it to writing but at the same time freeing it from the confines of the academe. In style and content, it is neither rigorously academic, solely biographical, nor purely creative. It evades classification and is individualistic, much like the oral poet it represents.

This book appropriately begins with a lament, analysed above, written in English but in traditional isiXhosa *izibongo* style, for the late poet Manisi, and it ends with an isiXhosa version of the lament. In between the versions of this lament, the reader is introduced to the complex and intertwined lives of Opland and Manisi. It has to be remembered that this was a time when apartheid discouraged cross-racial relationships from being formed. It is important that this context be constantly borne in mind by the reader. This context informs the nature of the relationship being formed. Although portrayed by some as stereotypical and having a controversial *baasskap* mentality, their relationship was genuine and exploratory.

The book has no chapters. It resembles more a collection of personal essays or

sections, with each essay creatively titled. "The evil spirit of tribalism" introduces one to Manisi. This is done against the backdrop of the life and work of the great Xhosa poet, S. E. K. Mqhayi, in order to show how his work inspired and influenced that of Manisi. Opland also refers to the history of the time, the emergence of the homelands, the later release of Mandela from prison and so on. The book takes one on a historical, personal and poetic journey. This makes the book challenging and complex for the reader. Throughout the book the author laments the fact that Manisi, on the eve of South Africa's liberation from apartheid, "lapsed into obscurity, and faded from view like a star swept by clouds" (27). Nevertheless, Opland manages to place Manisi back onto the centre stage of South African poetry and will continue to do so with the further envisaged publications as outlined above, as well as the 2015 UKZN publication based on the life and work of Manisi. *The Dassie and the Hunter* is clear evidence of the greatness of this South African poet.

The next essay in the book, "That is a Thembu", traces Manisi's early poetic career. It also traces his relationship with Kaizer Matanzima, who later became leader of "independent" Transkei. This section explains historically how Manisi emerged as Matanzima's praise singer. It also shows how their relationship was terminated due to political differences. One is also introduced to a Mr Arosi who seems to have had a profound influence on the initial discovery of Manisi's poetic talent.

The third "essay", "I do it on your behalf", introduces Opland's first meeting with Manisi. This section also contains exciting juxtapositions of their individual lives, the author in Cape Town, the poet in the rural Khundulu valley, miles apart.

"Yish goes the caterpillar" is perhaps the most controversial. Here Manisi is placed in artificial contexts by the author and asked to perform. The author later acknowledges that this was not the correct approach and that he "never again suggested to Manisi a topic of any of his oral poems [...] henceforth I merely accepted and celebrated his capacity to do so" (114).

The fifth essay "Let's clasp each other's hand", explores the growing interdependent relationship between Opland and Manisi. An extended poem in honour of Transkei's independence and Matanzima is introduced here. Given the ambivalent relationship between Manisi and Matanzima this poem is acknowledged by both Opland and Manisi as controversial, making the poet feel "ashamed" (149). Nevertheless, apartheid and Matanzima aside, it remains an important poem, depicting a certain era, and it should be seen in that context. One is introduced to the work of the Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER, Rhodes University), which was later to become, dare I say, the "intellectual" home of both Manisi and Opland.

The next essay, "I wish we could meet, and meet again" sees Manisi acknowledging that, "It is the hunter who knows the dassie's crannies" (206). This is reflected in the title of the book, encapsulating the allusive, yet co-dependent relationship between Opland and Manisi. The next section, "Reclaiming lost sticks", sees Manisi appointed

as a research officer at the ISER. This appointment facilitated the publication of much of his poetry and contributed greatly to the intellectualisation of isiXhosa literature through a number of publications.

The eighth section, "Everyone lies, but especially poets", explores Manisi's relationship with the University of Transkei, his appointment at the ISER having come to an end, as well as his journey to Vassar College in America, where he joins Opland in order to give a number of performances. Their relationship is received as stereotypical, causing much debate and controversy: "the work of a white man in black tradition" (271). As previously stated, the historical context of this relationship should not be ignored. The book shows the genuine intrigue, interest and well-being that existed between these individuals. Opland remains supportive of Manisi, even when Manisi is dismissed from his employment for drunkenness. Opland, like a friend, chooses to support Manisi and his poetic talent, rather than accepting the reasoning of the employer. Indeed, poetic genius or creative talent often succumb to the need to survive, to earn money. It is seldom a happy and comfortable relationship. This is depicted in the life of Manisi.

The following section, "Ndiyindoda, I am a man", further explores the American experiences against the perceived American stereotypes of South Africans, as well as the hostility of black South Africans in America towards Manisi's relationship with Opland. At another level, the tragic death of Manisi's second wife unfolds. Finally, "I have nothing to say", sees Mandela released from prison, and Manisi's growing infirmity and isolation. It also contains some recollection on his life and work by various individuals. Towards the end of the book the style grows increasingly poetic and lyrical, much like Manisi's poetry: "In performance he came alive, he was freed of the constraints of social intercourse [...] what he said and the way that he said it demanded attention and marked him as a man of stature, a true son of soil of Africa, and one of its greatest poets" (387).

Opland has chosen to ignore academic convention in this novel book. There is no index, no bibliography or references, but the style is refreshing, personal, if self-indulgent at times, yet the book is striking and beautifully written. It is for all intents and purposes "a style which takes into account Manisi's suspicion, disdain and distrust of their pretensions and technical jargon" (108). The book is to my mind an innovative, creative, compelling, personal and exciting read, and it remains one of Opland's most significant contributions to the intellectualisation of isiXhosa literature, documenting and bringing to life one of South Africa's greatest poets.

Conclusion

It is argued in this article that the Opland archival collection and the work that has, and is being done by Jeff Opland and colleagues as part of the UKZN Press Publications of the Opland Collection of Xhosa Literature, is greatly contributing

to the further intellectualisation of isiXhosa literature. He is an innovative scholar whose work needs to be analysed against a complicated South African historical backdrop. This work was recognised by the Presidency in his award of the Order of Ikhamanga (Silver) in 2017. It remains impossible to do justice to Opland's corpus of work and to his contribution to the intellectualisation of isiXhosa literature in this single article. However, there is no doubt that the literary research to which Jeff Opland has committed his entire life, and the research that he continues to champion as outlined in this article, holds the key to a more complete intellectualisation of isiXhosa literature.

Notes

1. In other words, the Professor is in the process of growing the publication in the field of Xhosa oral poetry ... There is even the idea now to translate this poetry into English. This is very important because that will mean that this poetry will be known by other nations. It is clear that all of this work is led directly by the intellect of Professor Opland.
2. ... You're moving around farms and cities of amaXhosa people, / Digging, unearthing and researching! / As if this dish for which you have been searching for so long remains in the dark! / Eventually this hidden thing will be revealed, / The one you are looking for, the one you have thrown yourself into! / ... If it was diamond it would already be in your hands; / Does this thing resemble gold by its value? / You are travelling from the Hlubi's to the Bhele's, / From the Zizi's to the Zotsho's / From the Gqayi's to the Tshiza's / From the Hala's to the Rharhabe's, / From the Gcaleka's to the Bhaca's ... / 2. / You are the one that goes up and down within Phalo's household, / This person's feet ache and are cracked? ... / 3. / I'm afraid of the praise singers from the Xhosa, / They're different from English poets upon inspection, / They're wrapped in woolen blankets? ... / 6. / Yes, indeed! The Thembu's are saying thank you to Opland the bull, / They have Title Mabhunu among them ... / 7. / The nations give thanks, saying even tomorrow Professor! / I'm satisfied with you Professor of oral literature, / Are these efforts you been making going to fill all the pales? / You are searching and you are giving, not knowing what you are looking for among amaXhosa! / You've collected the poems of Ngxa's and Nogqaza, / Their themes and meaning will be known by the world ... / This man is handsome even though his face is red, / He's handsome even though he's a beast with four eyes; / Continue on this path you've started, / And fight so hard to preserve izibongo, / And wash away ignorance so that wisdom emerges; / Shake things up and throw them back home, / Because the value of praise singing has changed for the Xhosa, / It's something for students and teachers in books, / Which involves exams and educational degrees; / But you, calf of the white bull, / You've found the richness of oral praise singing from its source. / You ate here and were born, learn friend until you are educated. / You've carried on your back the izibongo of our praise singers, / You've carried on your back our iimbongi / Of my land, of my land / I disappear!

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