

**Antjie Krog and Sindiwe Magona**

Antjie Krog is Professor in the Faculty of Arts at the University of the Western Cape.

Email: akrog@uwc.ac.za

Sindiwe Magona teaches creative writing at the University of the Western Cape.

email: smagona@mweb.co.za

## Mqhayi's chapter and verse: *Kees van die Kalahari* becoming *u-Adonisi wasentlango*

### Mqhayi's chapter and verse: *Kees van die Kalahari* becoming *u-Adonisi wasentlango*

Xhosa's best and most well-known imbongi and poet, S. E. K. Mqhayi, once translated an Afrikaans book *Kees van die Kalahari* into Xhosa—a story about the trials and tribulations of a leader baboon and his tribe. The Xhosa translation had been prescribed for generations of pupils and became one of the language's most well-known texts. As part of a larger project which will compare the two texts in their totality, this essay is a preliminary exercise to determine the history of the translated text and more specifically to explore what Mqhayi's possible translation strategies could have been which rendered the book so 'home-grown'. According to Sindiwe Magona, 'It was prescribed to me in high school and I taught it, but neither I, nor my colleagues, realised that it was a translation. And even now, there is no feeling that behind this text there is another one, it feels so authentic!' There are in fact two other texts: the original English text which spawned the well-known Afrikaans book *Kees van die Kalahari*, written/translated by the brothers S. B. and G. C. Hobson. The Afrikaans text won the coveted Afrikaans Hertzog Prize for prose and was reprinted 33 times. **Keywords:** *Kees van die Kalahari*, S. B. and G. C. Hobson, S. E. K. Mqhayi, translation strategy, translation, *u-Adonisi wasentlango*.

Two English speaking boys grew up in the districts of Graaff-Reinet and Aberdeen where they explored with their coloured Afrikaans-speaking companions the behaviour of the arid veld and its inhabitants. The younger brother used these experiences to fabricate stories for his daughter who later begged him to write it down. When the older brother read the text, he was adamant that the natural language for these adventures was Afrikaans and translated the story. His text, *Kees van die Kalahari*, was published in 1929 together with the English version *Adoons of the Kalahari*. Apart from introducing a new kind of animal story into Afrikaans literature, the Afrikaans book won the prestigious Hertzog Prize for best prose, was reprinted 33 times and sold over hundred thousand copies from 1929 and 1971, featuring on the Afrikaans prescribed lists of provincial education departments.

Then a legendary Xhosa poet and writer translated the story after which *u-Adonisi Wasentlango* also topped the Xhosa prescribed list for many years.

In this article we trace the documented route of the Xhosa translation and because it built up such a formidable Xhosa reputation over the years, we explore the ways S. E. K. Mqhayi used to make the translation more than a mere replica of the original.

Samuel Edward Krune Mqhayi, known as the 'father of Xhosa poetry', was born on 1 December 1875 near Gqumahashe, Eastern Cape. When he was thirteen years old, according to A. C. Jordan, he could recite the full translated version of the first chapter of John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* which, for many Xhosa speakers, was their first encounter with the novel as a literary genre and a translated work (Ntuli and Swanepoel 31, 20). Trained as a teacher at Lovedale College, Mqhayi also assisted in editing journals in Xhosa. Barely thirty years old, he was appointed to the Xhosa Bible Revision Board where he contributed to the standardization of Xhosa grammar. Although regarded mainly as an imbongi, he subsequently became a full-time author and poet and between 1896 and 1944, and regularly contributed to Xhosa newspapers.

In 1907 he wrote *U-Samson* (Samson), considered by some to be the first novel in Xhosa, followed by among others *Ityala lama-wele* (The Lawsuit of the Twins, 1914) a defense of Xhosa law before European administration; *Imihobe nemibongo* (Songs of Joy and Lullabies, 1927); *U-Don Jadu* (Don Jadu, 1929) describing a utopian multiracial state that combines elements of Western society and Xhosa culture, *U-Mqhayi wase Ntab'ozuko* (Mqhayi of the Mountain of Beauty, 1939) an autobiography; and a collection of poems *Inzuzo* (Reward, 1942). His contribution as imbongi earned him the title of *Imbongi yakwaGompo* (The Poet of Gompo) and later, *Imbongi yesizwe* (The poet of the nation), but because his poetry became so far-reaching, transcending even South Africa's borders, he was finally bestowed the title *Imbongi yesizwe jikelele* (The poet of the nation all over) (Opland 259).

Samuel Bonnin Hobson was born in 1888 as the eldest of five sons and the younger Geo Hobson two years later. On a farm in Graaff-Reinet their home language was English, but the farm labourers and their school friends were Afrikaans. The initial plot of *Kees van die Kalahari* was done in English by George, then expanded and retold in Afrikaans by Sam. The first publication was the Afrikaans text. Sam explained their working method: "The inspiration is 90% my brother's, the language and style is mine. I merely retold what he has given in my hand." In his history of Afrikaans literature, J. C. Kannemeyer (220) describes their work as immensely valuable in terms of accurate observation and description of small game in the desert world.

Samuel Hobson, the elder brother, became the Inspector of Schools for the Albany district and lived in Grahamstown. It was probably in this capacity that he first came into contact with the Lovedale Missionary Institution, its head Dr R. H. W. Shepherd, and the Lovedale Press. The Hobson papers donated to the Nasionale Afrikaans Letterkunde Navorsingsentrum gives no indication of any contact between Hobson, Lovedale or Mqhayi.<sup>1</sup> The first trace we could find of the translation was in The Lovedale Press papers housed in the Cory library.<sup>2</sup>

The first document referring to the manuscript is dated 17 April 1945. In his own handwriting on memo paper for the Director of Publications, Dr Shepherd scribbled a few notes: "urgently wanted a prescribed book to go ahead; blocks—consult with

Van Schaik; Usual terms; draw up form of agreement—both to sign; translated from Afrikaans; Bam favourably on MS; revisited orthography—time 25 hours.” The title of the manuscript appeared for the first time on the only surviving page of an unsigned letter, dated 27 April, 1945, sent from The Lovedale Press to the Director of Publications, Dr Shepherd:

Re: ADONISI WASE NTLANGO—HOBSON.

This MS is estimate to make a book of about 80 pages, allowing eight pages for illustrations. I recommend that we publish a 5000 edition at 1/3 and allow a discount of 33 and a third per cent to the Requisite Store and 20 per cent to the trade.

Wasting no time, three days later Shepherd sends a letter to Samuel Hobson conveying the title, plus the preface as written by Mqhayi—which also makes this letter the first confirmation of Mqhayi as the translator.

What is peculiar about the letter is that Mqhayi is initialled as: S. R. K. Mqhayi, while he was Samuel Edward Krune (S. E. K.) Mqhayi. According to Opland (87), Mqhayi was baptised Samuel, as his father was a Christian; when he entered school he was given the name Edward and Krune was added as his grandfather and lineage name. The mistake of S. R. K. is repeated in Hobson’s handwritten response. Was Mqhayi only known to them by his surname? It seems improbable that these two gentlemen working with Native Education and the printing of books for ‘Natives’ would not have known his correct initials. However, in his article “Renaissance Men: Ntsikana, A. C. Jordan, S. E. K. Mqayi and South Africa’s Cultural Awakening”, Peter Midgley refers to the ‘tumultuous’ relationship between Mqhayi and The Lovedale Press. Throughout his life the writer “regularly clashed with Shepherd who never liked Mqhayi” so Shepherd perhaps didn’t care too much to remember the correct initials (Midgley 232).

In the same letter to Hobson, confirming Mqhayi as translator, Shepherd translates Mqhayi’s preface for Hobson as follows:

the title is: *U-Adonisi of the Desert. Compiled from famous stories by G. C. and S. B. Hobson.*

The Preface reads:—Pupils who attend school and those who are out of school, education can be likened to a sea. It has no end and there is no definite route which you can follow. Here is a book for you to read—this book is written about wild animals and it is more or less like a fable. Read it carefully and enlarge upon it, and you may gain by it.

I have been asked by the education authorities to translate it into your own language as it has already been translated into other languages. Let it be clear to you that books in your own language are more useful to you than books which are written in other languages. Yours ever, SRK Mqhayi

Shepherd's English translation of the last sentence is incorrect. The original Xhosa as finally printed in *u-Adonisi wasentlango* is far more broadminded: "let it be clear that books in our language are very few—a nation without books does not go forward in anything."

Five days later Hobson responds with a signed agreement from Cape Town where he was stationed to become Chief Inspector for Native Education. He wanted a few changes: "Show the author of the book as S. R. K. Mqhayi (sic)—this with a view to get the book prescribed"; he also wanted the subtitle G.C. and S.B. Hobson, to change into "the Hobson brothers published by J.L. van Schaik Ltd. Pretoria". He further suggests that Mqhayi's preface be kept even if only to get the "Yours ever, SRK Mqhayi". But we certainly must cut out (omit) the lines "I have been asked by the education authorities to translate it into your own language as it has already been translated into other languages."

Despite Shepherd's assurance (18 May 1945) that it was true that their object was "not profit but the spread of literature" he nevertheless hoped on 4 March, 1947 that, as one of their "early post-war books" that it would have "great popularity among the Bantu people." Hobson was quite blunt in his motivation for indicating Mqhayi as the *main* author of the book, namely "to get (it) prescribed." Equally straightforward was Mqhayi in publicly naming the two reasons why he agreed to do the translation. As an ageing and probably waning seventy year old, he effectively dismissed any suggestion that his writing powers were failing him, or that this is what he personally wanted to write about. He did it because he was asked and for the sake of knowledge and the sake of Xhosa. It is interesting to note that none of Hobson's requests about changes to Mqhayi's foreword had been carried out. It could be that Mqhayi refused, but it could also be that he was already too infirm to be bothered—he died on 29 July 1945 and would not see the finished product. The translation must have been the last major creative act he completed before his death.

From the documents of The Lovedale Press we learn that more than a year after Mqhayi's death, VM (or UM?) Bam from Middledrift Secondary School had spent 30 hours 20 minutes to unify the orthography, and on 3 February 1947 he finished reading the proofs in 15 hours 30 minutes. In one of the letters Shepherd told Hobson that Bam thought it a good text.

### Comparing texts

A comparison between the Xhosa text and the Afrikaans and English ones, immediately makes clear that Mqhayi worked from the English text. The paragraph breaks of the English and Xhosa texts visually look similar on the page and the paragraphs themselves seem to have more or less the same length. The first chapter in Afrikaans takes up three pages, while the English and Xhosa, in the same font, only two and a half pages.

One also realizes immediately that the English version is, shall one say, sparse—sometimes to the extent that it reads like an impoverished version:

- *Afrikaans text*: Meteens deins die ou verskrik terug. Amper, amper het hy onwetend 'n groot wyfie met 'n maandoue babetjie aan haar bors gestoor. Sy laat ook sommer haar tande sien en terwyl die oë gevaarlik fonkel krimp sy haar inmekaar om hom te bevlie. 'n Oomblik aarsel Kees, waag dit darem en gaan met 'n gerusstellende uff-uff langs die moeder sit. Sy bedaar ook dadelik—die moederhart is oortuig dat die ou brandwag dit goed bedoel—en skuif met 'n sagte gesteun teen hom aan.

- *Translation from Xhosa*: Suddenly the old one staggers back. Nearly, nearly he disturbed unknowingly a large female with a one month old baby at her breast. Immediately she let him see her teeth and her eyes glitter dangerously, shrinking her body in order to attack him. For a moment he waits, but then risks sitting down next to her with a soothing uff-uff. She immediately calms down—the mother heart convinced that the old sentinel means it well—and shifts against him with a soft grunt.

- *English text*: In cuffing aside a batch of baboons, however, he made the dangerous mistake of disturbing a full grown female with a three weeks (sic) old baby at her breast. The old fellow jumped aside as if stung, stood a moment pretending to look around, then, muttering softly, approached and settled down beside her. Slowly the watchful mother relaxed her rigid fighting attitude, and with a low and friendly grunt snuggled up beside him.

One can see how the Afrikaans uses small and precise detail to create an atmosphere, while the English let go of the detail and mainly formulate the atmosphere.

Writing fiction about animals is a strong development in Afrikaans literature as can be seen from G. R. von Wielligh's recordings of Bushmen and animal stories, the many hunting tales among farmers, the translation of the epic of the mythical Dutch fox, Reynard, into Afrikaans and the work of Sangiro who was regarded as the best animal story writer of his time (Kannemeyer 212–3).

Tales about animals also form part and parcel of traditional African folk tales. A. C. Jordan (14) classifies South African tales into three genres: *iintsomi* (referring to the fictitious, mythological and fantastical often including animals and birds and mostly told by women), the *amabali* (referring to the legendary) and *imilando* (referring to historical events) with the last two mainly told by men. Jordan (15) says that animal tales were also told by herd boys in the pasture to alleviate boredom and they often had more time to observe animal behaviour.

One can therefore say that in both the Afrikaans and Xhosa traditions, animals play an important role in storytelling. Today's field of the role of the animal within literature, the animal gaze etc., has broadened immensely and will be the focus of a subsequent article.

### **U-Adonisi wasentlango**

One of the oldest contestations around translation is the issue of faithfulness to the original text, but over the years translation theorists have refined many of these arguments and assumptions. We want to look at the translation of the first chapter by focusing on the goal of Mqhayi, then determine how he asserts himself.

Christiane Nord (19), together with Hans Vermeer, suggests that “translation is an intentional interaction [...] first and foremost intended to change an existing state of affairs.” They identify “intention” in order “to change” something. So the first question to be asked is: did Mqhayi want to change something and if so, what? In their explication of skopos theory Reiss and Vermeer try to solve the eternal dilemmas of free versus faithful translation: “Each text is produced for a given purpose and should serve that purpose.” (Vermeer as translated by Nord 20) They insist that this does not mean a complete debasement of the source text: “What the *Skopos* states is that one must translate, consciously and consistently, in accordance with some principle respecting the target text. *The theory does not state what the principle is: this must be decided separately in each specific case.*” (Nord 30, our emphasis)

We are aware that goal-orientated translation has been heavily criticized as a functionalist approach that did not respect the original, produced ‘mercenary experts’, was marked by cultural relativism and according to Theo Hermans was purely a theory of adaptation that did not really work in literary translations. In his contribution “Norms and the Determination of Translation: A Theoretical Framework” Hermans traces how the yardsticks have changed over time: “fidelity” to the text had first been replaced by “equivalence” and currently by “norms” (Alvarez 25). Hermans does not use the Vermeer/Reiss/Nord concept of “principle” guiding the process, but prefers the word “norm”. “Norms are psychological and social entities.” Within the process of translation norms tell the translator how s/he ought to behave within translation as a communicative act. Norms “imply that there is, among the array of possible options, a particular course of action which is more or less strongly preferred because the community has agreed to accept it as ‘proper’ or ‘correct’ or ‘appropriate’” (Alvarez 30).

By analysing the first chapter of *u-Adonisi wasentlango* one can already see how, based on an agreed course of action, certain translation choices by Mqhayi point to a particular set of norms. The first chapter of *u-Adonisi wasentlango* and the English text consists of eleven short paragraphs spread over two pages. The chapter is titled “uDyakophu” (“Jacob” is also the first chapter’s title in English but the Afrikaans is “Die Brandwag” —The Sentinel) places us in the midst of a baboon tribe. We are there. We see the older head baboon as sentinel, leader and guard. The strength of this opening chapter lies in the vivid description of uDyakophu. He is placed within a specific area within which his movements are immediately convincing, typical, at home and unique. His constant observance, his guiding of the troop, his light-footedness combined with a certain authority, is convincing and assist the reader to visualise uDyakophu.

Hermans warns that one should

take it for granted that translating requires constant decision making by the translator on a number of levels and over a period of time. This process of decision making is governed by norms to prevent the process from going haywire with at random choices. Compiling these norms and obeying them takes place in the translator's head and remains invisible. (Alvarez 28)

Among the things in the translator's head could be considerations such as: what is materially possible in terms of physical factors; what is socially, politically, culturally and/or ideologically feasible e.g. what is likely to be tolerated, permitted, encouraged or demanded by the readers or those who control the means of production and distribution.

Translating into Xhosa was by no means something novel. Mqhayi had been intimately involved since a very young age with the impact of good translation via the Bible and *Pilgrim's Progress*. As a young educated man he assisted a later translation and revision of the "Union" version of the Bible, and thus found himself within the intercultural traffic of translation familiar with the complex structures of political power, interests and attitudes. He also had to be aware of the requirements of for example the Education department, the body that prescribed books and the authors Hobson and Hobson.

It is not surprising therefore, that right from the very first word, one can see Mqhayi's translation strategy emerging. The Afrikaans text opens with: "Bô ... gom!", the traditional, albeit onomatopoeic, word for the sound a baboon makes in Afrikaans. This well-known Afrikaans word, with its unusual *ô* is taken over in the English text. But Mqhayi breaks away, he coins a new word—an onomatopoeic—'Dyo-o-o-rhom!' The effect, when read aloud, of the two words *boggom* and *dyorhom*, is uncannily close (the *rh* in *dyorhom* is pronounced *g* like the Scottish *loch*)—baboon talk translated into human speech—yet also different and immediately Mqhayi makes a few important points as translator: a boss boy baboon in Xhosa sounds differently from one in English and Afrikaans; by making a new word, he is resisting the original writer's word, while at the same time estranging (through coining a new word) the text from the target audience. But, and this is very important, estranging in a familiar way—Mqhayi is not Xhosafying the English, but creates a new word imbedded in Xhosa so that the text is at once both foreign (as a new word) and familiar (because the building blocks for the new word is Xhosa and not Afrikaans or English).

Foreignisation is an important concept in translation discourse, but we want to point at Homi Bhabha's specific focus on the effect of such a foreign element: it "reveals the interstitial" and in the end "destroy(s) the original's structures of reference to political power and ownership" (227). The use of the word *dyorhom* is therefore asserting the translator's power in this in-between-space of translation to make his

own word and through that decision began to subvert the political power and ownership of those who initially created and published the original text, namely white authority and its influence on the prescribed market. The choice of the word therefore becomes a kind of philosophical choice more to do with hegemony than purely linguistic problems of fidelity to the source text (see also Carbonell 79). So the onomatopoeia *dyorhom* opening the chapter is like a red flag right at the beginning of the text: I am making it my own text, but new, yet familiar, for my target audience.

Onomatopoeia is of course an essential part of ideophones. Doke describes the ideophone as “A vivid representation of an idea in sound [...] a word, often onomatopoeic, which describes a predicate, qualificative or adverb in respect to manner, colour, sound, smell, action, state or intensity.” (Doke 118 as quoted in Voeltz and Kilian-Hatz). Crystal (189) on the other hand defines an ideophone as a “term used in linguistics and phonetics for any vivid representation of an idea in sound, such as occurs through onomatopoeia.”

It is further more important to remember that Xhosa literature communicates on a literal and figurative level. This outstanding metaphorical quality of the African languages had been underlined in the nineteenth century already by French missionary, Eugene Casalis (307): “The language (Sesotho), from its energetic precision, is admirably adapted to the sententious style, and the element of metaphor has entered so abundantly into its composition, that one can hardly speak it without unconsciously acquiring the habit of expressing one’s thoughts in a figurative manner.” In Xhosa the most often quoted example of such metaphorical meaning is of course the Xhosa name of Nelson Mandela: *Rholihlahla* = pulled branch (literal), troublemaker (figurative). But there are several other examples: *wela* = to cross over (literal), to die (figurative); *umoya* = air/wind (literal); spirit (figurative); *Ndiyazidla* = I eat myself (literal); I am proud (figurative); *Ukutshona* = to set [sun]; to drown/go down (literal); to die (figurative).

So when Mqhayi uses *hlokoma lendun’ enkulu* just after the powerful *dyorhom* opening sound, the English text simply says “the imperious bark of the sentinel”. In order to denote both rank and sound, Mqhayi chooses the word *hlokoma* and combines it with *lendun’ enkulu* to form an extraordinary rich combination of meanings. To fully gather as much as possible from both the literal and figurative meanings, the phrase in English could be translated as: “this sound was the resounding sound of an august, venerable, stout, corpulent induna/male dog/black mine overseer AND somebody of great magnitude.” Added to that is the following: that the few words chosen also indicate that the leader is male, thus giving us the gender of the leader—something not present in the English text.

Glancing through the opening chapter one is immediately struck by how many of the vowels have been replaced by apostrophes. This technique of Mqhayi sharpens the sound of the expressions so that the baboon is described in a way that mimics power, speed and gusto.



The backbone of Mqhayi's translation strategy emerges clearest in the places where he diverts from the English text. Towards the end of the first paragraph, a subtle deviation from the original appears. In English the baboon leader faces "north, south and east" before he gazes 'steadily towards where the sun was setting' ("west" is therefore only implied). In the Xhosa translation, he faces "all four corners of the earth (*iimbombo zone zelizwe*), before he '*wajonga nzo ekutshoneni kwelanga ...*'. (*wajonga*: paying attention, being lookably beautiful; [This word carries within it both an inner and an outer quality: one is so acutely paying attention that it is a pleasure to watch such a person watching!]; *nzo*: look with vigour, look fixedly without blinking; *ekutshoneni*: from the word *tshôna* meaning go deep down vertically, pierce like an assegai, eyes so deep seated that they disappear/drown; *kwelanga*: as if to see the sun, as if to see it for the last time before dying.) Trying to accommodate this rich texture of meanings, the sentence could be translated as: "The induna baboon sits alert, it is beautiful to watch him, looking with such vigour as if his eyes are piercing like assegais, eyes that are so deep-seated they seem to drown from the sight of the setting sun—in fact the baboon looks at it as if he sees it for the last time before dying."

The third paragraph is equally innovative: "An hour passed" is very exact. Mqhayi discards the notion of hours on a watch, and does *not* say: *kwedlula iyure* (an hour passed) as in the English text, but focuses more on the duration of time, the long, tediousness of the happenings ...: *Yasisidala ke eso*: means such a long time that it is endless. Underlining the endlessness of the time, Mqhayi uses an ideophone to strengthen the notion that the sentinel is looking over there for hours in a way of "sinking like a stone in the river". The important thing here, which the translator achieves with such ease, is the sense of things, the timelessness and complete absorption of the baboon in his job of observing.

Mqhayi ignores the idea that the induna's eyes were expressionless as in the English text. He (quite rightly?) suggests that if you are keeping the guard, if you are watching the sun set, your eyes can hardly be expressionless—perhaps only to those 'foreign' to baboons. To describe a baboon's eyes as expressionless also suggests a kind of human judgement on the inner life of an animal.

Spread throughout the text are the famous ideophones Mqhayi has become known for and which form a substantial presence in the Xhosa dictionary. In chapter 1 we have the word *cucutheka*—an onomatopoeic expressing titter and giggle which are produced from the chest, a kind of growling chatter. It is a wonderful word imitating the light tongue and palate sounds mixed with chest growlings. Other ideophones are *xaka* (sprawling untidily) from *xakalala*; *thuzu*—*harrumph* (guttural sound indicating that everything is at peace) and from the word *qhuzu* used only for humans. Although the picture of what is happening is faithful to the English text, it displays a richness of vocabulary that can only delight the keen student of the language. Mqhayi

enhances the text by making use of that which is or sounds familiar, yet is not regular: a half-grown baboon is known as *intwana yemfene*, but this precise word would have stilted the story of a world charmed and ruled by uDyakophu. Instead of saying ‘half-grown baboon’, Mqhayi says: a small piece, yet a piece which can be felt, of a baboon (*intwana* is the diminutive of thing). The same happens with the English description of how this half grown baboon attempted a somersault and then stood upright and looked over his shoulder. Mqhayi uses *yajonga ngemva* and does not allow the young baboon to simply ‘land’ as in the English text—he literally “expands” (*xaka*) next to the older one. Sounds of distress uttered by the young baboon allows Mqhayi again to play with ideophones: *khwina* is more whine than screaming after the older baboon; *shumpula* means pinching between thumb and forefinger while his eyes rove from side to side without moving his head. To describe the way in which the sentinel finally settles among the rest of his tribe for the night, a new and still very unfamiliar ideophone is used: *izithe gilili* (*ukuzifihla*—to hide oneself); indicating the way in which the baboon falls flat in order to avoid being seen by the enemy or to fall down as if dead. The phrase “...calmly set about” is translated as *ngokuzikholwa okukhulu* which literally means “with great conceit”. In other words: with great decisive confidence the old baboon fallingly pushes open a place for himself among the others.

The chapter ends with an exquisite picture of the restoration of order—reminding the reader that baboons are living creatures. Baby Adonis snuggles (*wazijwenya*) between his mother’s legs and arms and new, brilliantly chosen words indicate the peacefulness with which mother and son fall asleep: *erhathaza ngelipholileyo*. (*Wazijwenya* is an impressive description—meaning to flop down and snuggle up as if lightly thrown from a little distance, flopping down on a bed as if you are in a weak state and to sleep softly like a lamp; *erhathaza*: making sounds through the nose as if with a cleft palate or a serious cold; *ngelipholileyo*: calm down, is consoled to such an extent that even wounds heal.) A full translation could read: “The little baboon flops on his mother like a soft toy while she makes soothing cleft-palate sounds which calms him down to such an extent that any wounds he might have had, heal.”

The last paragraph in the chapter is extremely well rendered. The reader is taken to see the setting sun ... second by second; compare the different renderings:

- *The English version*: “The last fleck of crimson disappeared in the wake of sunset. Far out west, amongst the dunes, the bare wind-swept trees loomed strange and ghostlike in the fading light. Gradually darkness engulfed the berg, and sweeping steadily westward enfolded the sandy plains.”
- *The Xhosa version*: “The last level-falling rays extinguish slowly and softly like a lamp dies, like eyes being closed into darkness. In the dusk (literally the time when rabbits run) the trees are covered in a sunset dust, dry and chapped like winter lips crying out for balm, appearing spooky like the lighting bird.”

The last sentence in English original reads: “The evening breeze died down and the calm of great open stretches hung breathless above the sleeping baboons.”

In Xhosa the last sentence reads: “rustling above the large expansion where the baboons lie fallow, lie asleep soft like snow. As these creatures of the veld fall asleep they are embraced by a light breeze filled with *impepho*.” (*Impepho*—the herb *Helichrysum odoratissimum*—is spread on the floor as bedding for young girls to keep evil spirits away. It also means fresh air.)

This sentence is filled with the elegance of peaceful sleeping and ancestral protection in comparison with the barking, food searching and sense of danger and unease with which the story opens.

Mqhayi not only rendered a beautiful translation, but also did something far-reaching: he endowed uDyakophu with much more human characteristics than the original text. At some point one finds the translator softening negative assessments about the baboon. When the authors suggest his eyes are “expressionless”, Mqhayi translates it differently. When the authors suggest that the baboon shows his hideous lips, the translator suggests that a kind of knowing smile is playing across his face. More radical however is Mqhayi use of the human class indication in *umduna omkhulu*—an unusual way to transmogrify. The word *omdala*—also human class—turns the baboon from an animal into an old chap. By using the human class Mqhayi has pulled the baboon into the realm of humanity. He translates a text about a not-much-loved kind of animal in a way that creates a new space for the reader in which a new relationship with this ‘other’ could be formed.

One’s own space is mapped by what lies outside; in Mqhayi’s case whites and how whites see animals. One’s space derives coherence and tactile configuration from the pressure of the external; therefore the translator should “situate precisely and convey intact the ‘otherness’ of the original” (Alvarez 2). Portraying the older baboon with more kindness, one can say that Mqhayi preserved his own knowledge and relationship with animals against the dominant knowledge of the two white writers, and through it assists his readers in ‘becoming minor’ as part of a positive collective experience. “‘Becoming minor is not a question of essence [...] but a question of subject position.’

Such a position articulates ‘alternative practices and values that are embedded in the often-damaged,’ -fragmentary, -hampered, or -occluded work of minorities”, and having been “coerced into a negative, generic subject position, the oppressed individual transforms it into a positive collective one” (Abdul JanMohamed and David Lloyd as quoted by Bhabha 229).

Mqhayi’s kind of translation could be described as a political act in the sense which Álvarez and Vidal (1) mean: to come to terms with ‘otherness’ in such a way that the reader, through the inspirational use of a mother tongue, could grow ‘new organs’ of hearing the other. The conventions of the reader is continually split and

decentred so that she finds herself crossing cultural frontiers into new spaces in which new relationships are possible.

Finally, Mqhayi's set of norms, guiding him towards his stated goal can be formulated as follows: accepting the request from authorities implies sticking close to the original text. At the same time, the norms will be determined by the target audience: who they are, what they know, how they behave and how much newness they can absorb will assist him in the way he renders the text to enhance the efficacy of their search for knowledge in their mother tongue.

On these norms he formed his strategy: The target audience's context is largely oral and alive with storytelling and praise singing, it is also a first generation of readers. Mqhayi, who is regarded as the first oral poet to "exploit fully the new technology of printing" (Opland 94), vivified and animated the characters and their settings with imaginative language and new creations. He stuck to the original very closely, but used his impressive linguistic and poetic artistry to give it a life far beyond the English text. The vivid descriptions pull the reader into the story. Once there, the journey begins to knowledge of how the animals live, how they are like us, how kindness and caring exist among these non-human animals. Mqhayi was not busy with a transcreation (creating a new text which follows the original like a shadow) but breathed vibrant life into a very limp English body.

We have only looked at the first chapter of *u-Adonisi wasentlango*. But by tracing a tiny sample, two and a half pages of 65, one can already see how a steady focus on the source text, a clear goal orientation and the freedom of choosing the norms can make a remarkable literary work possible for a gifted translator.

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#### Notes

1. NALN categorised the correspondence of Samuel Hobson consisting of newspaper clippings as batch 666/106.
2. The Cory Library, Rhodes University, categorised the correspondence of The Lovedale Press as batch 16,408.

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