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Challenges in translating RL Peteni's Xhosa¹ novel *Kwazidenge* into Afrikaans

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In a multilingual country like South Africa, translation from one of the official languages into another plays a major role, particularly in the public sector or the public domain. The purpose is to inform the everyday citizen, through his/her mother tongue, about basic information relevant to the citizen's general life. When it comes to literary translation, the context is different. English has slowly worked its way into being the most prominent language in South Africa at nearly all levels of life. Authors of literary works also realise that there is a prominent readership in English, both in South Africa and elsewhere, and if a work is written in one of the other 10 official languages, there are often attempts to have them translated into English. Few works, however, are translated from the indigenous languages into Afrikaans. Afrikaans maintains a fairly prominent adult readership aside from prescribed work at school. The purpose of this article is to highlight some of the challenges facing a translator (in this case the current author) working from Xhosa (RL Peteni's *Kwazidenge*) to Afrikaans (*Roep van die ramshoring*) in the context of literary translation, as well as the process followed by the publisher.

Introduction

South Africa is a multilingual country. There are 11 official languages, namely English, Afrikaans, Zulu, Xhosa, Ndebele, Swazi, Southern Sotho, Northern Sotho (Pedi), Tswana, Venda and Tsonga. That in turn suggests that literature can be produced in any of those languages. Adult readership is probably the strongest in English and Afrikaans, despite the overwhelming population figures of some of the indigenous languages like Zulu and Xhosa. Many African authors realise this and attempt to write in English, making their writing available to a larger readership. The technique and ability to write a work in English which readers would find acceptable is far more challenging than one may think. It is difficult for any author—even those writing in their mother tongue—to produce successful literary works of art.

Making a literary work of art from the South African indigenous languages available in Afrikaans through translation is rare. English works often appear in Afrikaans translations, although some authors, like André P Brink, work simultaneously in both Afrikaans and English. An obvious explanation for this state of affairs is the lack of Afrikaans skills by the indigenous language authors; they may want their work translated into Afrikaans, but the available translators are few. One seldom sees an Afrikaans translation from a Zulu or Xhosa text. The opposite is equally rare: there are few translators around with the ability to translate an Afrikaans text into Zulu or Xhosa. An early exception was the translation of the Hobson brothers' *Kees van die Kalahari* into the Xhosa version *u-Adonisi wasentlango* by the well known SEK Mqhayi (see Krog & Magona, 2015).

The translation of André P Brink's *Droë wit seisoen* into Xhosa by Kenneth Mdana under the title *Umqwebedu* (1991)

was also an exception. The Xhosa title is similar in meaning to the Afrikaans one. It is not clear why this project was undertaken, because it is fairly well known that the Xhosa adult readership is not big (see Boshoff, 2003). There also do not appear to be any reviews of the translation (personal communication from André P Brink). It is also true that Brink's work also appeared in English (*A dry white season* [translated by Brink himself]) and Mdana may have worked from the English translation.

One yardstick to assess the success and popularity of the work of authors from South Africa is to look at the various translations in various languages of a given work of art, particularly English and Afrikaans authors. There are many examples. One of the best examples was Nadine Gordimer, who passed away in 2014 at the age of 90. She won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1991 and was known for her staunch antagonism against injustice, power abuse and discrimination. She wrote 15 novels and 12 collections of short stories. She produced her work in English, and her books have been published in 40 languages. That is a remarkable achievement and an excellent example of how translation can cross language and cultural barriers (see Prins, 2014; Coetsee, 2014).

Background: Xhosa translations into Afrikaans

The novel, *Ingqumbo yeminyanya*, by Archibald Campbell Jordan that was published by Lovedale Press in 1940, was considered by many as being ahead of its time. It was praised by many critics as an exceptional and significant contribution to Xhosa literature and for a very long time was considered the most successful work in the indigenous African languages in terms of its content, plot and characterisation, as well as the effective cultural portrayal of the amaXhosa in their contact with Westernisation. Later,

Jordan, with the help of his wife, translated the Xhosa version into English, entitled *The wrath of the ancestors* (1980).

Inspired by the translation of the work into English, I attempted an Afrikaans translation from Xhosa which was eventually published in 1995 by the copyright holders, Lovedale Press, with a more or less direct translation of the Xhosa title into Afrikaans, i.e. *Die toorn van die voorvaders*. The translation was entered into the category of 'Akademieprys vir Vertaalde Werk' [Academy Prize for Translated Work] from the 'Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns' [the South African Academy of Science and Art] and won the award in 1998. SATI (South African Translators' Institute) also awarded me with their 3rd prize in their tri-annual competition for any translation for the same work. I attempted an article in which I tried to outline the type of problems an Afrikaans translator experienced when translating from Xhosa (see Neethling, 1997).

The choice of *Kwazidenge*

I then attempted another Afrikaans translation of a Xhosa novel. Just as in the case of *Die toorn van die voorvaders*, I thought that such an undertaking could assist in bringing communities together across linguistic borders. Mtuzi (1993: 11), talking about his own translation of his Xhosa novelette, *Alitshoni lingaphumi*, into English, echoed the same sentiments:

Current developments in the socio-political arena make it increasingly important for linguists to focus on the interchange between the indigenous languages and the two dominant languages, English and Afrikaans.

It was difficult to choose a particular book, but after discussing the matter with a number of Xhosa-speaking colleagues, I came to the conclusion that RL Peteni's *Kwazidenge*, published by David Philip Publishers in 1980, might be a good one. The particular theme and plot, the language used, the cultural background and character depiction impressed me. At that point I had not realised that Peteni first wrote *Hill of fools* (1976) and then translated his English novel himself into Xhosa with the title as *Kwazidenge*; I thought that *Kwazidenge* was the first and the original one. I later learned that *Hill of fools* was considered the first novel in English by a Xhosa speaker. In a review of the English *Hill of fools*, Guy Butler (1976: 8) stated the following:

The *Hill of fools* is to my knowledge our first regional novel in English by a black writer. The canvass is small—two feuding villages—one Thembu, the other the Hlubi—in the Ciskei. The theme is as old as the hills: the destruction of young love by inherited hatreds...The power of the book lies in its presentation of people in known relationships, the loves and loyalties, the rivalries and hatreds of a still cohesive rural community.

These were obviously also the features to be found in *Kwazidenge* that drew me into choosing the book for translation. I realised that very few Afrikaans speakers would know much about the Hlubi and the Thembu on both sides of the Xesi river in the Ciskei, nor much about the typical and traditional cultural backgrounds and lifestyles of those two groups. The Romeo and Juliet theme (see Wright, 2004)

provided a link to Western literature but its unique portrayal made the choice attractive.

When I started with the translation some years ago, I had not bothered to find a publisher beforehand who could have encouraged me. With the translation of Jordan's *Ingqumbo yeminyanya* into *Die toorn van die voorvaders*, I had an interested publisher lined up, but the publisher holding the copyright would not relinquish the rights and eventually published the translation themselves. When I had finished with the *Kwazidenge* translation, I also had a publisher lined up and who was very keen to publish the translation, but in this case the copyright holders insisted on selling the publication rights at an enormous amount which discouraged the South African publisher from proceeding. That caused a delay of a few years.

When Pearson, however, eventually entered the scene, with Maskew Miller Longman (MML) and Heinemann as part of the group, the copyright difficulty vanished and I could submit the manuscript to the Afrikaans section of MML, who immediately accepted it. The Afrikaans text, with the title *Roep van die ramshoring*, appeared towards the end of 2013.

Title of translation

Although this contribution is about the challenges I faced when translating *Kwazidenge* into Afrikaans, I will occasionally also refer to the challenges I had when translating *Ingqumbo yeminyanya* into Afrikaans (see Neethling, 1997). Here and there the challenges were comparable, particularly regarding the retention of Xhosa vocabulary, and finding the right idiomatic expression in Afrikaans for Xhosa sayings.

The title of any literary work of art demands careful consideration. The content of the book in one way or another 'prescribes' the title. Peteni named his English novel *Hill of fools*, probably for two reasons: the first was the hill from which the young boys planned their attack alongside the Xesi river, and the events in the book that often told of unwise and ill-judged decisions that led to extreme disaster and misfortune. Peteni called his Xhosa translation *Kwazidenge*, a toponym in that area. The Xhosa word *izidenge* refers to 'silly, unwise, stupid characters'. He therefore, more or less, retained the meaning of the English title, calling it in Xhosa, *Kwazidenge*, 'At the place of the unwise people'. In my translation of Jordan's *Ingqumbo yeminyanya* it became obvious that I should simply use a literal Afrikaans translation which I did, that is, *Die toorn van die voorvaders*. That title neatly summarised the quintessential consequences of events.

In the case of *Kwazidenge*, I soon realised I had to find another title. In the end, my choice fell on *Roep van die ramshoring* [Call of the ram's horn], because, in my humble opinion, the call of the ram's horn sets in motion the distasteful, heartbreaking and violent events that takes the book to its sad and tragic end. The publishers had no problem with the choice. The conflicts and violence arising in the book because of the animosity between the Thembu and Hlubi inhabitants, as well as conflicts among the Hlubi or the Thembu themselves, have led to some contributions by inter alia, Swaffman (1976), Butler (1976), Kaschula (1993), Blayi (1999), Wright (2004) and Nyamende (2010). Swaffman in his contribution (1976) called the events a 'Ciskeian tragedy'.

Translation theory and strategies

Different translators will have different views on how a text, the source text (ST), should be translated into the target text (TT). Valles (2013) quotes Hatim and Munday (2004: 6), who define translation as

the process and the product of transferring a written text from source language (SL) to target language (TL) conducted by a translator in a specific socio-cultural context together with the cognitive, linguistic, cultural and ideological phenomena that are integral to the process and the product.

Eugene Nida is considered the pioneer in developing translation theory, and particularly in the two approaches called 'dynamic equivalence' and 'formal equivalence' (see Nida, 2004). The dynamic approach (also known as functional equivalence) attempts to convey the thought expressed in a source text (if necessary, at the expense of literalness, original word order, the source text's grammatical voice, etc.), while the formal approach attempts to render the text word-for-word (if necessary, at the expense of natural expression in the target language). The two approaches represent emphasis, respectively, on readability and on literal fidelity to the source text. This theory, along with other theories of correspondence in translating, are elaborated in the essay *Principles of correspondence* (Nida, 2004: 153) where he begins by asserting that given that

no two languages are identical, either in the meanings given to corresponding symbols or in the ways in which symbols are arranged in phrases and sentences, it stands to reason that there can be no absolute correspondence between languages. Hence, there can be no fully exact translations.

While the impact of a translation may be close to the original, there can be no exact equivalence in the detail.

When one is dealing with two languages from different language families, the challenges become greater. The Xhosa language (ST) in *Kwazidenge* belongs to the Bantu family of languages, whereas the Afrikaans language (TT) belongs to the Indo-European family of languages. From a linguistic point of view, they share very little. Haque (2013) outlines this problem:

However, when the source and target languages belong to different cultural groups, the first problem faced by the prose-translator is finding terms in his or her own language that express the highest level of faithfulness possible to the meaning of certain words.

Haque (2013) also suggests that the translation of prose is the most trying type of translation:

Many people think that the translation of literary works is one of the highest forms of rendition because it is more than simply the translation of text. A literary translator must also be skilled enough to translate feelings, cultural nuances, humour and other delicate elements of a piece of work. In fact, the translators do not translate meanings but the messages. That is why, the text must be considered in its totality.

One of the main questions will always be whether all aspects featuring in the source text should also feature in the target text. My point of departure is to prefer to translate

everything present in the source text into the target text unless there are compelling reasons not to do so. The only way forward then is to exclude certain parts. Peteni, in the preface to the English translation of *Ingqumbo yeminyanya*, namely *The wrath of the ancestors* (1980: iii), states that a translation can at best be only a poor imitation of the original and that the power and the soul of the original text cannot be recaptured in the English version. In a way, he then also acknowledged that his own translation of *Hill of fools* into his own mother tongue, Xhosa, may have fallen short. Many modern day translators, no matter with which languages they work, may challenge this statement. There are many translation prizes nowadays and expert translators perform admirably. It does remain true, however, that the original text remains in the primary position.

Naudé (2005) investigated how existing translations as well as recent translations by students into English, Southern Sotho, Xhosa and Zulu performed within the framework of descriptive translation studies (DTS). The main purpose was to determine the strategies of cultural submission, that is, how cultural knowledge is controlled, shaped and constructed by translations. Translations into Afrikaans from any language did not feature, whereas only one work was discussed that was translated from Afrikaans into English. There were two translations from English into Xhosa, and these might be applicable to some extent. Where appropriate, some of the findings will be discussed.

A study that preceded Naudé was that of Danso (2002), quoted in Naudé (2005). It was an analysis of the translation strategies utilised by Reverend JJR Jolobe (1902–1976) when translating Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's mines* into the Xhosa work called *Imigodi kaKumkani uSolomon* (1968). Haggard (1856–1925) wrote the novel in 1885, a work weighted with the entire spectrum of colonialist and imperialist beliefs of the day. Haggard lived in South Africa for a few years and held a position in the colonial government. The story was inspired by an interpretation of the Zimbabwe ruins, and relates the fictitious adventures of an English explorer among mythical lost tribes (see Naudé, 2005: 43). His main aim was to maintain and expand the British colonisation and resultant domination in foreign territories.

According to Naudé (op. cit.) the reason for translating the book into Xhosa was the sudden and urgent need for more books in Xhosa because of the introduction of Bantu Education in 1953 during the apartheid era. Jolobe, however, had to substitute a number of references that were unacceptable with culturally innocuous terms in the Xhosa culture, and hence also for the projected readership. The racist background displayed by Haggard with terms such as 'Kaffirs', 'boys', 'slaves', 'natives' and 'savages' had to be replaced by acceptable terms such as *abantu abamnyama* (black people), etc. Kinship terms also had to be 'rehabilitated' in the target culture (see Naudé, 2005: 35).

My translation of Peteni's *Kwazidenge* obviously did not yield such challenges. The source text did not contain these unacceptable terms because events took place in two typical Xhosa villages and if swearing or foul language occurred, it was not unusual in the context, and I had no difficulty in translating that into Afrikaans, using typical Afrikaans sayings. Many of the main characters were young people, and they

often resorted to insulting, swearing or simply telling things as they saw it. Early in the book (Chapter 1, p. 2), Diliza tells Zuziwe: *Uyabhuda ngoku* (You are speaking nonsense now). In the Afrikaans I used the term 'twak', part of an idiomatic expression: 'Jy praat nou twak'. A little later, Diliza referred to Zuziwe as *sifebendini*. It is quite a strong insult, because *isifebe* refers to a 'fornicator' or 'harlot' with the suffix *-ndini* rubbing it in (see below). I used the Afrikaans 'jou sleg ding', which is common when referring to a female who is considered as promiscuous. This type of conversation among the youth is not unusual, should the context warrant it.

Not long after that, once Bhuqa has left, Zuziwe is confronted by two other girls, wanting to know about her relationship with Bhuqa (p. 11). They call her *ntombindini*, an insulting term. In Xhosa the suffix *-ndini* is often used to stress a negative quality, or insignificance. I resorted to the English term 'girlie' which contains more or less the same underlying feelings. For the Xhosa *asizontsana* ['we are not babies'] I used the Afrikaans idiomatic expression 'Ons is nie onder 'n kalkoen uitgebroei nie' [literally: We weren't bred from under a turkey], which suggests they are already knowledgeable about the circumstances. When Ntombi and Nomi also used the term *sifebendini* as Diliza had done, I used the Afrikaans term 'flerrie', a term used to refer to a female fond of flirting with men. The two girls went even further and called Zuziwe a (*l*)*ihule*, a whore. In turn, I used the Afrikaans terms 'klein hoertjie' and 'slet', both conveying the same meaning. 'Klein' ('small') was used to emphasise the youth of Zuziwe, and then the diminutive 'hoertjie' seems to fit better than 'hoer'.

The above explains why it is not a cultural adaptation that is taking place in the Afrikaans translation. It is merely a transferral from the source language (SL) to the target language (TL), and retaining the Xhosa context and lifestyle. The translation tried to find typical Afrikaans equivalents for typical Xhosa expressions. In general, that was not difficult. In a few cases, I retained a Xhosa expression, followed by the Afrikaans interpretation. In Chapter 1 (p. 3) *Thix' onofefe!*, was followed by 'Liewe hemel!/Goeie genade!' In other cases I retained forms of address like *tata*, *bawo*, *sis*, *bhuti* and *sana*: these are typical Xhosa forms of address and I felt it lent some authenticity to the translation transferred from the source text.

Naudé (2005: 42) regards the process of contrasting, that is, searching for differences, as taking place against a background of sameness. This sameness is considered as the *constant*, whereas the differences are considered as *variables*. The constant is traditionally referred to as the *tertium comparationis*. Aspects of culture, such as ecology (animals, plants, trees, rivers), material culture or artefacts (food, clothes, housing, traditional medicine), social culture (work and leisure), organisations (customs, social and religious ideas) and gestures and habits, all form part of the *tertium comparationis*. It was not difficult to find appropriate Afrikaans equivalents for these concepts. Many of the Xhosa terms for these concepts were used in the Afrikaans text and were included at the back of the book under 'Woordelyste' [word lists] and eventually 'Xhosa-woorde met verklarings' [Xhosa words with explanations]. This was merely to assist Afrikaans readers with the actual meaning of the Xhosa word(s) that appeared in italics in the Afrikaans

text. Regarding the names of the characters, I left these unchanged. Xhosa names are often semantically transparent and contribute to the depiction of characters (see Kaschula, 1993: 125–126). In hindsight I should perhaps have added the names and their meanings to the word list at the back.

Mlonyeni and Naudé (2004), followed by another contribution by Naudé (2005) that essentially was a summary of the first work, also analysed the translation of Anthony Hope's *The prisoner of Zenda* into Xhosa by GB Sinxo as *Umbanjwa waseZenda* (1958). The English text was published in 1894 and the Xhosa translation in 1958. The focus was on how the foreign culture pertaining to issues like food, clothes and social customs is represented in the target text. Mlonyeni and Naudé hypothesise that the English material and social culture were transferred to Xhosa, with no attempt at acculturating the original work to the material and social circumstances of the target culture. Regarding the question why Sinxo retained the foreign culture in the Xhosa translation, the answer provided is that the translator exhibited a need to introduce the source text's cultural system to the target text's system (see Naudé, 2005: 49). Unique culture-specific terms were transferred into the target text by way of loan words, for example 'wine' becomes *iwayini*, etc. Through this transferral, also mentioned above regarding my translation, the target language is enriched. This approach by Sinxo was largely applied by me in my own translation, although I did include some Xhosa items in the Afrikaans translation to give it an authentic ring. Afrikaans readers are introduced to a 'new' culture and lifestyle through the medium of their own language.

One should also not forget the actual dates of the original source text in my case, 1980, with the translation in 2013. In 2013, the situation in South Africa had changed dramatically after full democracy since 1994, and various cultural groups in South Africa are much more aware of the other, and have an idea, if only a vague perception, of existing cultural practices among various cultural groups. Improved technology, for example television, contributes to the awareness of the other groups, and there are often events where the 'new' South Africa displays all the various cultures and practices that are still upheld. The main reason for the translation was precisely to expose the typical Xhosa context in the late 70s in a given area, and within a given context, creating a tragic Romeo and Juliet story that I hoped would appeal to many readers. This 'western' theme was enough to provide a 'transferral translation' from Xhosa to Afrikaans.

Omissions and adaptations

Earlier I stated that my personal view about what should be translated and what not, should ideally cover the full source text unless there are compelling reasons for not translating particular aspects. In my much earlier translation of AC Jordan's *Ingqumbo yeminyanya* into the Afrikaans *Die toorn van die voorvaders* (1995), I encountered the use of the third person narrator with all its advantages such as omniscience, but which often gave way to 'authorial intrusions' throughout the text. I had no hesitation in omitting all those cases. It would not have been acceptable to an Afrikaans readership (see Neethling, 1997: 20). Fortunately Peteni did not make use of such authorial intrusions.

It is, of course, impossible to account for all the possible difficulties and challenges encountered in translating any novel, particularly within the confinements of a journal contribution. One should also remember that publishers have the right to appoint language practitioners or editors in finalising a manuscript. I had no idea who these individuals might be until I received communication, usually by email from the editors. Their comments, particularly by one editor, often had to do with me using a past tense form (as in *Kwazidenge*) whereas in Afrikaans it was more customary to employ the so-called 'historical present (tense)'. I will give one example:

Kwazidenge (p. 24):

Waziva engonwabanga emphefumlweni uDakada. Akumka uMvangeli nonyaka wakhe, **wabuyela** kwinqugwala lakhe lokulala, **wafika** umfazi engekho, esazama ukuthuzela intombi yakhe. **Wandlala** ukhuko, **wambatha**, ezama ukulala. **Abuhlanga** ubuthongo, **waphuthelwa** ixesha elide, **walala** ukukhala kweenkukhu zokuqala.

Roep van die ramshoring (p. 25):

Die hele situasie **laat** 'n bitter smaak in Dakada se mond. Toe Mvangeli en Duma terug is huis toe, **gaan** hy na sy slaaphut, maar daar is niemand nie. MamTolo het vir Ntombi gaan troos in die meisies se hut. Hy **gooi** sy slaapmat oop, **trek** die komberse oor hom en **probeer slaap**. Maar die slaap **wil nie kom nie**. Eers na die eerste hanekraai **raak** hy aan die slaap.

(The situation leaves Dakada with a bitter taste in his mouth. After Mvangeli and Duma had gone home, he goes to his hut, but there is nobody. MamTolo has gone to comfort Ntombi in the girls' hut. He opens his sleeping mat, covers himself with the blankets and tries to sleep. But he cannot sleep. He falls asleep after the first cock had crowed – translation BN)

In this extract from *Kwazidenge* all the past tense forms are highlighted and italicised. In the extract from *Roep van die ramshoring* all those past tense forms are replaced by the historical present. The most common definition of the historical present, is the use of a verb phrase in the present tense when narrating past events. In narratives, the historical present is often used to create an effect of immediacy. It has the effect of making past events more vivid. I adjusted all the cases the editor pointed out to me.

I made some adjustments to the table of contents, '*Izalathiso*', listed as 16 chapters, each with its own heading. Chapter 7 had the Xhosa heading as '*Velabahleke*'. Even Xhosa speakers would have some difficulty in interpreting this saying, except for its literal translation, meaning '(it) appears and they laugh'. In the context of the story it was the name of a traditional love potion that the herbal doctor prepared for Ntabeni which he had to give to Zuziwe to help her change her mind regarding their relationship. I called it '*Die liefdesdoepa*' in Afrikaans. '*Doepa*' is an old Afrikaans word meaning 'magic potion'.

Chapter 8 is called '*Nimbulale*' ('...and kill him'). This is the instruction of Ntabeni to the Hlubi boys to help him get rid of Bhuqa, the Thembu who is in love with Zuziwe, and whom he wanted to marry. I felt uncomfortable with the literal translation such as '*Maak hom dood/vermoor hom*'. I changed it to '*Ntabeni slaan terug*' ('Ntabeni hits back').

Chapter 11 Peteni calls '*Igqwirhakazi*' ('The female witchdoctor'). After Katana's death one of the men at the funeral points out that it was because of witchcraft, and everybody realises he is suggesting that MamTolo, Dakada's wife, is responsible for Katana's death. For me, the funeral of Katana was more important than this aspect, and I simply called the chapter '*Die begrafnis*' ('The funeral').

Chapter 14 is called '*AmaBhele*'. It concerns a meeting of the amaBhele clan to discuss the future of Zuziwe and Ntabeni. I called it '*Die familiebyeenkoms*' ('The family gathering') which describes more aptly why they came together.

Chapter 16 is called '*Ubuhle bakhe*' ('Her beauty'). Although the reference is clearly to Zuziwe who had died after an unsuccessful abortion, I was not that comfortable with that heading after her death. I wanted to call it '*Zuziwe se begrafnis*' ('The funeral of Zuziwe') because it was a hugely tragic death of a beautiful young girl with many talents. The editors, however, simply called it '*Nog 'n begrafnis*' ('Another funeral'), since Chapter 11 was called '*Die begrafnis*', the funeral. It was suggested by the editors that my proposed heading would give away the turn of events, but that was not entirely true, because Zuziwe's death had in fact been reported at the end of Chapter 15 (p. 121).

These adaptations were rather small and not really that significant, but I nevertheless felt more comfortable once I had made them and when the editors had accepted them. Other translators may well have chosen other options.

In Chapter 3, at the home of Mvangeli and MaMiya, one of the editors suggested that two relatively small sections be deleted. In *Kwazidenge* (p. 26), Mvangeli goes to sleep and snores quite heavily and audibly, to such an extent that Peteni compares him with a backfiring motor car. The following morning when they all get up, Mvangeli leads his family with the morning worship. He picks a hymn and they all start singing, all eight verses. They sing various parts, from soprano to alto to tenor. He then reads from the Bible, and then they are on their knees, praying.

I was not concerned about leaving out the snoring issue, because it did not contribute to the plot as such, although it might have played a small part in characterisation. It was therefore left out. I felt more strongly about the singing. The amaXhosa are fond of singing and I felt it contributed to the exposure of Xhosa culture, although this was in a religious context. The editor who proposed leaving this out accepted my explanation and it was retained.

The adaptations and omissions were therefore on a very limited scale, and I personally felt relieved that the target text, the Afrikaans one, by and large consistently reflected the contents of the source text, the Xhosa one.

Conclusion

The translation of one novel from one language into another is not an easy task. Different languages function in many different ways, and interpreting the actual sense and meaning in the source text is the first challenge one faces. After that it is equally challenging to find the right and most appropriate expressions in the target text. Idiomatic expressions vary in different languages and one has to carefully consider various options.

Finding the right text for translation purposes, is not always that easy. Peteni's original English version, *Hill of fools* (1976) impressed Guy Butler (1976: 8):

The wry compassion, the sly humour, the creation of locale and character, the ability to move from close-ups to long shots (as in the faction fight), the firm but simple plotting, all leave this reader waiting eagerly for Mr. Peteni's next.

These issues also impressed me in *Kwazidenge* and hence that novel was chosen. Whether the Afrikaans translation *Roep van die ramshoring* was equally successful, remains to be seen, but despite all the challenges and, at times, difficulties, it was a rewarding experience. What also struck me, was the occurrence of various subthemes in *Kwazidenge*, written as *Hill of fools* first in 1976, that are also common in present-day South Africa. It was as if Peteni had a prophetic vision. South Africa is currently plagued by issues such as the futility of violence at a macro level with groups against other groups, as well as at a micro level within a more familial context or between individuals (see Kaschula, 1993: 119), promiscuity among the youth, the questionable role of religion, circumcision (and the mortality connected with it nowadays), parental guidance or lack thereof towards their children, as well as the effectiveness or not of the legal system.

The overriding principle, however, that prompted the translation was the multicultural and multilingual nature of South Africa. Although there is some slow improvement, not enough is being done by English- and Afrikaans-speaking South Africans to familiarise themselves with the indigenous cultures and languages of their country. Translations could play an important role in bridging the cultural divide and perhaps in stimulating greater interest in existing but relatively unknown cultures and languages.

Note

1. The current practice promoted in South Africa is to include the noun class prefix *isi-* when referring to the Xhosa language, irrespective of what particular language is used. I do not support this view. The full form *isiXhosa* is only technically correct when one is speaking the language. It is still common practice to speak of 'Xhosa' or 'Zulu' when speaking in, for example, English and Afrikaans.

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