

Retelling the stories: the impact of Aesop's fables on the development of Xhosa children's literature

Koliswa Moropa

Department of African Languages, University of South Africa, P.O. Box 392, UNISA, 0003, South Africa
e-mail: moropck@unisa.ac.za

The aim of this article is to trace how Aesop's fables impacted on the development of Xhosa children's literature from the 1920s. The questions which come to mind about Aesop's fables are: How were Aesop's fables incorporated into Xhosa children's literature? Why did the poets write some of the fables in poetic form? What does poetic form contribute which prose narrative does not? In an attempt to answer the above questions, a brief account of Aesop's life is outlined. The appearance of his fables in Xhosa literature is traced from the emergence of the *Stewart Xhosa Readers* in the 1920s, their translation from English into Xhosa in the 1950s up to a period when these fables appeared as narrative poems. Three poems selected randomly from the anthologies of Sinxo in *Thoba Sikutyele* 1959, Manyase in *Umlu kaPhalo* 1960 and Jolobe in *Indyebo Yesihobe* 1970 are analysed.

Eli nqaku lijolise ekuphicotheni indima yeentsomi zika-Aesop kuphuhliso loncwadi lwabantwana lwesiXhosa. Imibuzo ethi qatha ngeentsomi zika-Aesop yile: Kwenzeka njani na ukuba ezi ntsomi zezibe yinxalenye yoncwadi lwesiXhosa lwabantwana? Yintoni eyenza ukuba iimbongi zosiba zizibhale ezi ntsomi njengemibongo? Yintoni na le ifumanekayo kwisihobe engekho kwibali nje? Injongo yeli nqaku iya kufezekiswa ngokuba kunikwe imbali emfutshane ngo-Aesop, ekungacaci neam nokuba wayekhona na, ukuze emva koko kulandwe umkhondo wezi ntsomi ukususela kwixesha le*Stewart Xhosa Readers* ngethuba lowe-1920, uguqulelo lwazo esiXhoseni kwithuba lowe-1950 kuze kuthi ga kwixesha lokubhalwa kwazo okwesihobe. Umbhali ugqibela ngokuhlalutya imibongo emithathu ekhethwe nje kwingqokelela yemibongo yezi mbongi zosiba zilandelayo, uSinxo ku*Thoba Sikutyele*, uManyase ku*Mlu kaPhalo* 1960 noJolobe kwi*Indyebo Yesihobe* 1970.

Introduction

Children's literature is defined by Georgiou (1969:4) as

... a portion of literature that, like an avalanche, has gathered itself, from generation to generation, from adult books or parts of them and from the literatures of widely separated times and peoples, those materials that meet the developmental needs and interests of children at different stages of their growth.

Georgiou (1969) divides children's literature into three categories, namely fictional books, factual books and poetry. He refers to folktales, fairy tales, myths, legends and fables as the 'universal literature' of children and he views literature for children as a contribution to the enrichment of life. One of the aims of children's literature is to transmit sound moral values and attitudes communicated through characters and also to provide experiences that enrich a child's insight into self as he/she searches and encounters that self in stories that allow for identification.

During the missionary era translation was used as a method of developing the literature of the language in general. Jolobe translated 114 of Aesop's fables from English into Xhosa and these were published in 1953 by Lovedale Press. Jolobe's aim with this translation was to ensure that these fables be passed on from one generation to the next by parents who read and told the stories to children who were still unable to read. In a survey conducted in the Department of African Languages at Unisa, Xhosa seems to be the only African language in South Africa into which these fables were translated. Though there is no certainty about who Aesop was, Aesop's life is briefly outlined so as to sketch his association with the fable. The appearance of Aesop's fables in Xhosa children's literature is traced from the emergence of the *Stewart Xhosa Readers* in the 1920s to the period when these fables appeared as narrative poems. The article ends by giving a brief outline of the state of the art.

Aesop and the fables

There is no certainty about who Aesop was, and there is much scepticism as to whether in fact he ever existed. To some scholars the name represents nothing more than an imaginary inventor of the fable. However, according to historical documentation, of all the fabulists who have entertained and instructed mankind, Aesop's name stands supreme. The history of this remarkable person who is said to have lived 572 years before Christ and about 100 years before Herodotus, the Greek historian, has been surrounded by mystery. His birth place is fixed at Cotieum in Phrygia Major. It seems as if Aesop, who was originally a shepherd's boy, rose from the position of a slave to great fame. He lived in the service of Xanthus and Judman on the island of Samos and afterwards in Athens. Aesop is also mentioned as speaking in a public capacity to the Athenians at the time when the Pistratus seized upon their liberties. Upon each of these occasions his address was unique in that he introduced a fable in his speech in a witty and exciting manner (Bewick, 1903). Richardson (1975) states that there are inconsistencies which are difficult to reconcile in the chronology in the account of Aesop's life. Some scholars have Aesop as Lochman. There is great similarity between the history of Lochman as reported by the Eastern writers and that of Aesop as written by the Greeks. They were both thin, both were slaves, both were famous for their wisdom and both delivered their maxims in the same manner, that is, by way of apologue. The apologue was certainly the favourite mode of teaching in the East long before any other kind of learning was known to the Greeks.

According to the Eastern writers Lochman lived during the reign of Solomon, whereas the Greeks saw him to have been a contemporary with Croesus, King of Lydia and Solon, the Athenian legislator. From the history of their lives and the comparison of their fables, there is reason to believe that Lochman and Aesop were the same person. Richardson (1975) believes that the Greeks stole Aesop from the orientals because they are known to have been 'notorious thieves' and to have altered every point of ancient history which they were able to turn to their own advantage. Stern (1970:10) cites L'Estrange who in 1692 wrote:

We have had the history of Aesop so many times over and over and dressed up so many several ways; that it would be but labour-lost to multiply unprofitable conjectures upon a tradition of so great uncertainty. And particularly concerning the authority, even the greater part of those compositions that pass the world in his name. For the story has come to us so dark and doubtful that it is impossible to distinguish the original from the copy. And to say which of the fables are Aesop's and which are not ... There are diverse inconsistencies upon the point of chronology in the account of his life which the whole earth can never reconcile ...

There is no certainty whether the versions of the fables we have were written down by Aesop or by his contemporaries. Aesop's name was so closely associated with this kind of story that any fable came to be spoken of as the fable of Aesop (Hanford, 1954). All fables were automatically ascribed to Aesop even those which were current before his time and those going into circulation after he died. It is not known how many he himself created (Roche, 1982). For a long time Aesop's fables were handed down by the uncertain channel of oral tradition. Demetrius Phalereus, a philosopher in Athens about 300 BC, is said to have made the first collection of these fables. Phaedrus, a slave by birth who was admitted by Augustus to the honours of a freed man, imitated many of these fables in Latin iambs at the beginning of the Christian era. Aphthonius, a rhetorician of Antioch also wrote a treatise on, and converted into Latin prose some of these fables. The rhetoricians and philosophers were accustomed to giving the fables of Aesop as an exercise to their scholars. Students were encouraged to discuss the moral of the tale, and to practise and perfect themselves in style and rules of grammar by writing new and various versions of the fables. Ausonius, the latest poet of eminence in the Western Empire, wrote some of the fables in verse.

Seven centuries passed before the next era which revitalised the fables of Aesop. During this period these fables seem to have suffered an eclipse, to have disappeared and been forgotten. It was at the commencement of the 14th century when the Byzantine emperors were the great patrons of learning, that one finds tribute paid to the name and memory of Aesop. The fables of Aesop were given new life and took their place beside the Holy Bible and the ancient classic authors in the minds of the great students of that time.

The greatest advance towards a revitalisation of the *Fables of Aesop*, securing them a place in the literature of the world, was made in the early part of the 17th century. In 1610 a learned Swiss, Isaac Nicholas Nevelet, published a third printed edition of these fables in a work called *Mythologica Aesopica*. This was the most complete collection of Aesopian fables ever yet published. This volume of Nevelet forms a complete *Corpus Fabularum Aesopicarum*, and to Nevelet's labours Aesop owes his restoration to universal favour as one of the wise moralists and great teachers of mankind. During the interval of three centuries which has elapsed since the publication of Nevelet's volume, no book, with the exception of the *Holy Bible*, has had a wider circulation than *Aesop's Fables*. They have been translated into many languages. At present, they are not only engrafted in the civilised world but are familiar as household words in daily conversations (Townsend, 1968).

Aesop's fables in Xhosa children's literature

Taking into account that Xhosa written literature owes its existence to missionaries whose main aim was to propagate the gospel, there is no doubt that literature taught at schools during the missionary era promoted morality. The authors whose manuscripts served the missionaries' interests received preference. Because of the missionary influence, the authors were compelled to be derivative rather than original. They were powerfully influenced by whatever literary models were available to them. Lindfors (1973) says that the authors whose manuscripts served evangelistic purposes were rewarded with quick publication. The publication of Aesop's fables in the *Stewart Xhosa Readers* supports this viewpoint. The *Stewart Xhosa Readers* were first published in the 1920s and were revised in the 1960s. According to Shepherd (1955) the *Stewart Xhosa Readers* which were prepared under the editorship of W.G. Bennie, late Chief Inspector for Native Education of the Cape Province, were of outstanding merit. They were well graded according to difficulty of reading matter, and calculated to sustain the interest of children from the beginning. The following are examples of Aesop's fables which are found in the *Stewart Readers*:

(1)	<i>Umlimi okhohlakeleyo</i>	The cruel farmer	Reader for preschoolers
(2)	<i>Impungutye engenamsila</i>	The fox without a tail	Std 1 Reader
(3)	<i>Undlebende namasele</i>	The donkey and frogs	Std 1 Reader
(4)	<i>Impungutye nebhokhwe</i>	The fox and the goat	Std 1 Reader
(5)	<i>Inkawu neekati ezimbini</i>	The monkey and the two cats	Std 2 Reader
(6)	<i>Iimpungutye neediliya</i>	The fox and the grapes	Std 2 Reader
(7)	<i>Amabhongo kaNomathemba</i>	The ambitions of Nomathemba	Std 3 Reader
(8)	<i>Umanyano</i>	Unity	Std 4 Reader
(9)	<i>Isele nenkabi yenkomo</i>	The frog and an ox	Std 4 Reader
(10)	<i>Urhanisi onamaqanda egolide</i>	The duck with golden eggs	Std 6 Reader

In *Imfene kaDebeza* (1925) (a collection of short plays) by Sinxo there are two plays which are based on Aesop's fables. They are *lingozi zokumangala* ('The danger of lodging a complaint') and *Irhinirhongo* ('One smeared with mud'). Jolobe translated 114 of Aesop's fables from English into Xhosa and these were published as *lintsomi zika-Aesop* in 1953 by Lovedale Press. The three poets, Jolobe, Manyase and Sinxo who wrote some of Aesop's fables in poetic form, grew up in the rural areas of the Eastern Cape and story-telling was part of their culture. It is therefore certain that they came into contact with Aesop's fables during their school days both as students and teachers. No doubt they enjoyed reading Aesop's fables as they were already familiar with animal tales in their own environment. The fables dealt with characters around them and talked about matters connected with folklore. Satyo (1977:11) says about Sinxo:

Even the title of his collection THOBA SIKUTYELE has some very subtle connotations of the usual opening words in folktales because it calls on someone to listen to some story. The idea is made clearer by the subtitle through which the author states that he is going to give the reader narrative poems.

Jolobe's other source of inspiration must have been his translation of the fables. One of Jolobe's aims of translating these fables was that they be passed on orally from one generation to the next. Jolobe must have realised that as people were being westernised, the culture of story-telling was gradually dying out and this was one way of preserving it. Jolobe and Sinxo identify poems based on Aesop's fables in their collections as '*usekelwe kwintsomi ka-Aesop*' (based on Aesop's fable) and as '*mbali ka-Aesop*' (Aesop's story) respectively. Manyase does not identify them. Jolobe and Sinxo might have identified these poems to secure publication as Jafta (1982:25) writes.

Any material recommended for schools must conform to certain requirements, for example having a clear message, often didactic; must have no political or religious controversy and must use acceptable language that is typical of a Christian society etc.

In the above paragraphs an attempt has been made to show how Aesop's fables were incorporated into Xhosa literature. We also observe that translation was another method of developing the literature of the language. Mqhayi (1945) in his introduction to *UAdonisi Wasentlango* writes:

Ma icace into yokuba iincwadi ezingentetho yethu zimbalwa kakhulu – isizwe esingenazincwadi zaso ke asihambeli phambili nakuyiphi na into.

'It must be clear that there are very few books in our language – a nation which does not have its own books does not develop in any area.'

Some of the books that were translated by Jolobe from English into Xhosa are:

- (11) *Up from slavery* by B.T. Washington as *Ukuphakama Ukusuka Ebukhobokeni*
- (12) *Maya the bee* by W. Bonsels as *UMaya amahla-ndinyuka enyosi*
- (13) *King Solomon's mines* by Sir Henry Rider Haggard as *Imigodi kaKumkani uSolomon* in 1951
- (14) *Aesop's fables* as *Iintsomi Zika-Aesop* in 1953.

Sinxo also translated some books from English into Xhosa. Here are some examples:

- (15) *A certain woman (She)* by Sir Henry Rider Haggard as *Uzibaningashekazi*
- (16) *The prisoner of Zenda* by Anthony Hope as *Umbanjwa WaseZenda*
- (17) *The life of Abraham Lincoln* by Mary Hamilton as *Ubomi Buka-Abraham Lincoln*
- (18) *Robinson Crusoe* by Daniel Defoe as *URobinson Crusoe* 1960.¹

In the section that follows an attempt is made to establish why the poets wrote the fables in poetic form. Imagery is carefully studied because in order to comprehend poetry, the reader has to comprehend the logic of imagery. Imagery is central to poetry because it is a device that enables the poet to achieve complexity and force in his/her verse through associating an object or idea with other areas of life. It is a tool that helps the critic to probe the inner workings of the human mind (Peck & Coyle, 1984).

Stylistic analysis

According to Georgiou (1969) stories in verse which are sometimes called verse stories or story poems are popular with children. They cover a wide range of themes from soul-stirring accounts of human conflicts to hilariously funny stories. But, regardless of the theme or style of verse, as poetic works they all express a feeling of the rhythm of language as it underlies and reinforces the message, the humour and the ideas behind the words. A story in verse is poetically effective. The story is presented with characters, either told in third person or presented through what the characters say or think. The personalities of people who are sometimes struggling with themselves or circumstances are revealed. A poem is a mechanism for creating certain effects and completing certain constructions of insight and awareness through the medium of the language.

In the past stories have been told in poetic form because rhythm and rhyme served as an aid to memory as well as quickly catching the ear of an audience. Even today the poet has a story to tell, a character to reveal and he/she does that by using poetic devices: the meter to catch the mood and imagery to compact detail. He/she is able to present facts in an imaginative rather than accurate form as people expect in prose. In poetry the poet is assisted by the use of imagery and explains his/her thoughts through the use of symbols (Stein, 1975). Peck and Coyle (1984:55) write:

Looking at a narrative poem you might find yourself going through three stages: first reading it simply as a story; second looking for the simple idea the story seems to put across; third looking at the complicated details the poet introduces which suggest that life is always more complicated than any story or moral pattern we might trace in it.

When we read a poem we respond to several things. Initially we follow the argument or story and try to decide what the poem is about. Once we get hold of the poem's theme, we examine some of the subtleties and how it creates its effect upon the reader. We also look at what the poet does with the language. When analysing a poem one has to report on the basic images used and how they ground the poem in a particular experience and context. The term 'imagery' not only covers the basic elements of presenting the situation but the figurative language in poetry. Poetry as a language of true emotion succeeds where ordinary speech fails to communicate those urgent and subtle feelings that are most essentially human. In order to appreciate poetry, the logic of imagery must be appreciated, the way it allows a poem to suggest things a bald statement might not. Poetic images awaken certain emotional responses. They imply attitudes and suggest moods. The eye-catching devices that have been used in these poems are dialogue and personification.

Dialogue in narrative poetry

Certain techniques employed by playwrights in the past have been used by poets for works clearly not intended to be staged. One such technique is dialogue. Dialogue is found in dramatic poetry. Dramatic poetry, like narrative poetry, tells a story. In dramatic poetry the poet lets one or more of the characters act out the story from a perspective outside the action. A dramatic poem presents a framework of a character involved in that action.

Dramatic poetry can be conceived as a story intended for presentation on a stage and the speeches are in character rather than in the person of the poet. The words are arranged in dialogue form as if to be spoken, but the stage becomes the unlimited stage of the reader's imagination. For the reader, dramatic poetry provides an opportunity to hear the imagined thoughts of characters who lack the poet's gift or opportunity of expression. Poetic dialogue refers to the employment of someone else's voice by the poet so as to provide the reader an opportunity to hear the imagined thoughts of characters.

The adoption of someone else's voice is an attempt by the poet to break out of his consciousness and reach out to the world of another. Bergman and Epstein (1983:79) write: 'One of the frustrations of being human is that we cannot escape who we are, no matter how much we like or dislike ourselves.'

Poets choose dramatic personae not only to reveal different sides of their personalities but to speak for those who cannot speak for themselves. Scholes (1969) states that the line between the dramatic and the narrative elements in a poem is not always clear, but a narrative poem gives us a story as told by a narrator from a perspective outside the action, while a dramatic poem presents a fragment of an action or story through the voice or point of view of that character involved in that action. He further mentions that there is a strong tendency toward the dramatic in short verse narratives to present more dialogue or action in relation to description than we would expect to find in prose fiction dealing with the same subject matter.

Personification

Bergman and Epstein (1983:147) proclaim that poets have developed a number of ways to make abstractions more concrete and familiar and one of the simplest ways is personification. They give two reasons for using personification:

First, we are better able to recognise attributes when they are given to an animal. An owl can be wiser, a cricket sillier and a lion braver than a human could be. Second, we take a certain delight in such transformation.

Moody (1968) states that in the process of making the meaning clearer and dramatic some writers go so far as to think and write some ideas as though they were living people with human qualities. This is an effective way of presenting an idea strikingly. Peck and Coyle (1984:143) write:

Personification makes the idea seem solid so that we can grasp and understand it but it also serves to relate the season to human life so that the theme becomes relevant to us.

Personification in its stronger use is the treatment of inanimate objects as humans with an intention of bringing out certain qualities in the object. It assigns human attributes to lifeless objects. Cohen (1973:52) writes:

... the coupling of inanimate or abstract forces or concepts with human behaviour evokes images that generally would not be expected.

An analysis of three poems which have been selected randomly from the anthologies of Jolobe, Manyase and Sinxo follows.

Dialogue and personification in Jolobe's *Inkululeko* (Freedom)²

In *Inkululeko* ('Freedom') the dog and the wolf engage in a dialogue throughout the poem. Bergman and Epstein (1983) see this as an example of dramatic lyric where two speakers are employed and sometimes the words of a primary persona call for an answer. This results in a lively conversation in poetry known as dramatic dialogue. Dramatic dialogue is an effective form for exploring contrasts in personality and viewpoint. In the above poem a wolf in quest of prey happens to fall in with a well-fed dog. The wolf praises the dog and says:

*'Ingathi wonwabile,
Unentlalo emnandi, mhlob'am kwikhaya lakho'* "You seem to be happy,
You are well-provided for, my friend at your home"

The poet delineates an environment where a dog is unaware that he is oppressed by his master. The dog's main concern is food that his master provides. The dog remarks:

*'Andisebenzi nzima, itshiloinja leyo
'Andikhalazeli nto, ndingumlindi wekhaya
Ngawo lo msetyenzana, inkosi yam indipha
Indawo yokulala nokutya okondlayo'* "I'm not working hard,' said the dog
'I don't have any complaints, I am a watchdog
By performing the minor duty my master provides me
With accommodation and nourishing food'"

The wolf is impressed and the dog says that if he follows him he will change for the better. The wolf agrees but as they are jogging along he notices the hair worn off around the dog's neck. When the wolf enquires the cause, the dog says:

*'Ungothuki yile nto
Kukuhluhlwa yintambo ejikela intamo
Kuba ndibotshelwe ngetyathanga endlwini
Endilinda kuyo imini nobusuku.'* "Don't be astonished by this
I am rubbed by the rope around the neck
Because I am fastened with a chain in the house
Where I watch day and night."

The wolf is taken aback and exclaims:

*'Intambo netyathanga!!
Hamba wedwa, mhlobo wam, ndixolele ithambo
Elingenanyama koko ndibe nenkululeko
Kunokutya kamnandi ndingobotshelweyo.'* "A rope and a chain!!
Go alone, my friend. I prefer a bone
That has no meat and have freedom
To delicious food while being tied up."

The wolf resolves not to partake of any sumptuous fare with a chain around his neck for half a meal with liberty is preferable to a full one without freedom. In the above dialogue, the dog represents people who sell their liberty for a crust. Such people are easily blinded by a glare of gorgeous appearance and cannot discern the inconveniences.

Dialogue and personification in Manyase's *Unonkala nentsapho* ('A crab and her family')³

In *Unonkala nentsapho* ('A crab and her family') a crab wants her children to move straight in a more becoming and sprightly manner and not crawl sidelong in a way so contrary to the rest of the world. She says:

*'Bantwana bam, lusatshana lwam
Ndoba phi kukuqeqesha?'* "My children, my young family
How will I discipline you?"

She insists that they walk straight.

*'Hambani kakuhle ke nina
Ningaxel' abakwaNkala
Aph' ebumelwaneni benu
Bayahamba ngamacala'* "You should walk straight
Do not be like the Crab family
In your neighbourhood
They walk sideways"

Personification is shown by the employment of the capital N in *Nkala* and the possessive locative *bakwaNkala* which is formed from the locative *kwaNkala*. The locative formative *kwa-* is used to refer to a person's place or homestead. The children try to walk straight but are not successful. They sit down and cry and are punished by their mother. This leads to a conflict between the two parties. The children lose their temper and say to the mother:

*'Lunjani n' olwakh' uhambo?
Sibonise sikhangele
Sidiniwe kukunyamezel' umvambo
Sibonise sikhangele
Sesiya kuhamba njengawe.'* "How is your walk?
Show us so that we can see
We are tired of enduring pain
Show us so that we can see
We will walk like you."

The crab walked sideways and the children did the same. She punished them nevertheless not realising that this was an inherited trait. It is pointless to instruct our children to walk by one rule if we go by another. The good precepts which we may lay down will be bestowed in vain if they see by our conduct that we pursue a contrary course to that which we recommend to them.

Dialogue and personification in Sinxo's *Abangalahlekelwa nto* (Those who lose nothing)⁴

In *Abangalahlekelwa nto* (Those who lose nothing) a countryman is with his ass when he hears that the enemy is at hand. He advises that they run away. The ass refuses and says:

<i>'Ndibalekeni na?</i>	““Why should I run away?
<i>Ndophoswa yini na</i>	What will I miss
<i>Lwakufik' utshaba</i>	When the enemy comes
<i>Ndingenanto nje mna</i>	Having nothing
<i>Ndingaphoswa yiyo?</i>	That I shall miss?
<i>Nokuba lwafika</i>	Even if he arrives
<i>Olu tshaba lwakho</i>	This enemy of yours
<i>Lusaya kundenza</i>	He will do
<i>Laa nto ubuyenza</i>	What you have been doing
<i>Ukundithwalisa</i>	Loading me
<i>Imithwal' enzima.</i>	With heavy loads
<i>Iyafana ngoko</i>	It is the same therefore
<i>Nokuba yiyiphi</i>	Whoever he is
<i>Inkos' emhlabeni:</i>	Chief on earth:
<i>Ndoba sisicaka</i>	I will be a servant
<i>Esofa sibotshwa</i>	That will die chained
<i>Ngoko andihambi!</i>	Therefore I am not going!” ”

The above speech can be referred to as a dramatic monologue because this poem is written in the form of a speech of an individual character. An imaginary speaker addresses an audience. Zillman (1966:154) says that in a dramatic monologue others are present but what they say or do must be indicated only in the words of the single speaker. Conflict should exist either within the speaker's mind or between the speaker and others. This sort of poem is closely related to a soliloquy in a play where a character appears alone on stage and by a sort of unspoken compact between the dramatist and his audience, is permitted to utter his thoughts and describe the impressions passing through his mind. Rosenthal (1955:149) writes:

One of the conventions of the dramatic monologue that helps to make this effect possible is that nothing may be presented in the way of explanation from the outside. Everything must be given in the direct words of a speaker upon whom, as it were, we suddenly begin to eavesdrop in the middle of a dramatic situation.

Furthermore the speaker must be imagined as totally unaware of our listening and while he says a great deal to intrigue he may say nothing directly to enlighten us.

In the above poem the ass addresses the audience. The poem takes place at a critical moment of the speaker's life and offers an indirect revelation of his temperament and personality. It gives us a particular person in a particular situation and presents aloud the physical and emotional character of that situation. The ass's speech expresses the feeling that people in a state of servitude or oppression experience little encouragement to exert themselves either in favour or defence of their oppressors in times of danger. Sometimes the poets do not always like to offer their immediate and self-revealing response to life, as is the case in lyric poetry but prefer to explore their ideas through the medium of a story. Stein (1975) says that the reason for poetry beyond the delightful sounds and charming images, is the creation of a language to say something the poet finds ordinary language cannot say. Language of poetry skilfully stimulates the imagination to arouse deep feelings.

Conclusion

Aesop's fables which formerly had been used for instruction in rhetoric, later became didactic stories for children's

edification and entertainment. In the poems analysed above, the poets have made abstractions more concrete by using personification and dialogue. A poem is a mechanism for creating certain effects and completing certain constructions of insight and awareness through the medium of the language. The stories are not told for their own sake, they have implications. The process of writing ideas as if animals were living people makes the meaning clearer and relevant to children. Aesop's fables are still found in children's literature as the *Stewart Xhosa Readers*, also known as *lincwadi zakwaSomgxada*, and are still in circulation. Children's literature in Xhosa and other African languages in South Africa has been developed through the educational system. Some of the Xhosa Readers which are found in the academic libraries are *Oxford Xhosa Readers*, *IAfrika*, *Amabalana neentsomi*, *UThandi noNomsa*, *Imvomvo*, *Sifunda IsiXhosa* etc. Translation is still used to develop children's literature in African languages in general and Xhosa in particular. For example in 1994 to 1995 over fifty children's books were translated from English into Xhosa, Zulu and Setswana by Knowledge Unlimited publishers. Some of the books translated were Walt Disney books for example *Lion King* and *101 Dalmatians*. Since African language literatures are young as compared to English literature, literary translation contributes to the development of these languages.

Notes

- 1 The books in examples 15–18, where a year of publication is not indicated were published by The Bantu's Publishing Home in Johannesburg.
- 2 Fable: *The dog and the wolf* (Bewick, 1903)
The wages of treachery (Hanford, 1954)
The dog and a wolf (Stern, 1970); (Richardson, 1975)
- 3 Fable: *The two crabs* (Bewick, 1903)
Oononkala ababini (Jolobe, 1953)
Example is better than precept (Hanford, 1954)
The crab and its mother (Townsend, 1968)
- 4 Fable: *Umfo wasemaphandleni nondlebende wakhe* (Jolobe, 1953)
The countryman and an ass (Richardson, 1975)

References

- Bergman, D. & Epstein, D.M. 1983. *The Heath guide to poetry*. Canada: DC Heath and Co.
- Bewick, T. 1903. *The fables of Aesop and others*. London: Methuen and Co.
- Bongela, 1997. *Imvomvo*. Cape Town: Maskew Miller Longman.
- Bonsels, W. 1912. *Maya the bee*. New York: Thomas Seltzer.
- Cohen, B. B. 1973. *Writing about literature*. Illinois: Scott, Foreman & Co.
- Defoe, D. 1719. *Robinson Crusoe*. London: Dent.
- De Villiers, F.J. Date unknown. *IAfrika*. Johannesburg: Via Africa Publishers.
- De Villiers, F.J. 1966. *UThandi noNomsa*. Johannesburg: Via Africa Publishers.
- Dreyer, Hoyana, Jolobe & Nabe *Sifunda IsiXhosa*. Cape Town: Kagiso Education.
- Georgiou, C. 1969. *Children and their literature*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall Inc.
- Haggard, H.R. 1885. *King Solomon's Mines*. London: Cassells.
- Haggard, H.R. 1887. *A certain woman (She)*. London: Cassells.
- Hanford, S.A. 1954. *Fables of Aesop*. Middlesex: Harmondsworth.
- Hamilton, M. *The life of Abraham Lincoln*.
- Hope, A. 1894. *The prisoner of Zenda*. Bristol: Arrowsmith.
- Jafta, D.N. 1982. The Xhosa novelist and the challenge of the day. *South African Journal of African Languages* 2(2): 56–74.
- Jafta, D. N. 1986. *Ubuqholo Besihobe*. Pretoria: Acacia.
- Jolobe, J.J.R. Date unknown. *Ukuphakama Ukusuka Ebukhokeni*. Johannesburg: The Bantu's Publishing Home.
- Jolobe, J.J.R. Date unknown. *UMaya amahla-ndinyuka enyosi*. Johannesburg: The Bantu's Publishing Home.
- Jolobe, J.J.R. 1951. *Imigodi kaKumkani uSolomon*. Johannesburg: The Bantu's Publishing Home.
- Jolobe, J.J.R. 1953. *Iintsomi Zika-Aesop*. Alice: Lovedale Press.
- Lindfors, B. 1973. *Folklore in Nigerian literature*. New York: African Publishing Co.
- Mdledle, B.B. Date unknown. *Sifunda isiXhosa*. Johannesburg: Bona Press.
- Moody, H.L.B. 1968. *Literary appreciation*. London: Longman Group Ltd.

- Mqhayi, S.E.K. 1945. *UAdonisi Wasentlango*. Alice: Lovedale Press.
- Pahl, H.W. & Dazana, S. 1997. *Oxford Xhosa readers*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press South Africa
- Peck, J. & Coyle, M. 1984. *Literary terms and criticism*. London: Macmillan.
- Richardson, S. 1975. *Aesop's fables*. New York & London: Garland Publishing, Inc.
- Roche, P. 1982. *New tales from Aesop*. Indiana: University of Dordre Dame Press.
- Rosenthal, M.L. & Smith, A.J.M. 1955. *Exploring poetry*. Canada: Collier-Macmillan Ltd.
- Satyo, S.C. 1977. *Traditional concepts and literary conventions in Sinxo's works*. Unpublished MA thesis. Pretoria: University of South Africa.
- Scholes, R. 1969. *Elements of poetry*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Shepherd, R.H.W. 1955. *Bantu literature and life*. Alice: Lovedale Press.
- Sinxo, G.B. Date unknown. *Uzibaningashakazi*. Johannesburg: The Bantu's Publishing Home.
- Sinxo, G.B. Date unknown. *Umbanjwa waseZenda*. Afrikaanse Pers.
- Sinxo, G.B. Date unknown. *UBomi buka-Abraham Lincoln*. Johannesburg: The Bantu's Publishing Home.
- Sinxo, G.B. 1960. *URobinson Crusoe*. Miller.
- Stein, A. 1975. *The uses of poetry*. USA: Holt, Rinehart & Winston Inc.
- Stern, S. 1970. *The life and fables of Aesop*. London: Stanmore Press.
- Stewart Xhosa Readers*. 1960. Alice: Lovedale Press.
- Townsend, G. F. 1968. *Aesop's fables*. USA: Doubleday, Inc.
- Washington, B.T. 1901. *Up from slavery*. New York: Double Day.
- Walt Disney Co. 1994. *Lion King*. Published in Xhosa: 1995. Knowledge Unlimited Publishers.
- Walt Disney Co. 1991. *101 Dalmations*. Published in Xhosa: 1995. Knowledge Unlimited Publishers.
- Zillman, L.J. 1966. *The art and craft of poetry*. New York: MacMillan and Co.

Addendum

Poems based on Aesop's fables

Thoba Sikutyele by GB Sinxo 1959

<i>Ukusukela iinto zabantu</i>	'Running after other people's business'
<i>Umanyano ngamandla</i>	'Unity is strength'
<i>Isikhuni nomkhwezeli</i>	'The fire stick and the fire maker'
<i>Ukuziqhayisa</i>	'To pride oneself'
<i>Ukuthanda ukunconywa</i>	'To like to be praised'
<i>Owabulawa kukuthetha</i>	'One killed by talking'
<i>Oshumayela angenz</i>	'One who preaches without practice'
<i>Iimpungutye neediliya</i>	'The fox and the grapes'
<i>Lumkela ongakwaziyo</i>	'Beware of the unknown'
<i>Iingozi zoovumazonke</i>	'Dangers of having no opinion'
<i>Indlalo embi</i>	'Bad play'
<i>Abangalahlekelwa nto</i>	'Those who lose nothing'
<i>Akukho kufa kunjani</i>	'No death that is different'
<i>Kuncedwa ozincedayo</i>	'One helped is one who helps oneself'
<i>Wabokujonga naphezulu</i>	'Look up also'
<i>Iingozi zokumangala</i>	'Dangers of lodging a complaint'

Umlu KaPhalo by L.T. Manyase 1960

<i>Mini iintaka zazinyulela inkosi</i>	'The day birds elected their king'
<i>Unonkala nentsapho</i>	'The crab and her family'
<i>Iimpungutye engenamsila</i>	'The fox without a tail'
<i>Inja nesela</i>	'The dog and the thief'

Indyebo Yesihobe by J.J.R. Jolobe 1970

<i>Inyaniso</i>	'Truth'
-----------------	---------

<i>Ukuzingisa</i>	'Perseverance'
<i>Umazi weengcinga</i>	'The one who knows thoughts'
<i>Inkululeko</i>	'Freedom'
<i>Umanyano</i>	'Unity'
<i>Ukuthanda ukumangala</i>	'To like to lodge a complaint'
<i>Icebo elihle lelisebenzisekayo</i>	'Good advice is usable'

Table 1: Fables on which the poems are based

Poem	Fable
1. <i>Ukusukela iinto zabantu</i> 'Running after other people's business'	1. <i>Substance and shadow</i> (Hanford, 1954) <i>The dog and his own reflection</i> (Roche, 1982) <i>The dog and the shadow</i> (Bewick, 1903) <i>A dog and a shadow</i> (Richardson, 1975); (Stern, 1970)
2. <i>Umanyano ngamandla</i> 'Unity is strength'	2. & 3. <i>The man and his sons</i> (Kent, 1991) <i>The father and his sons</i> (Townsend, 1968)
3. <i>Umanyano</i> 'Unity'	<i>A father and his sons</i> (Stern, 1970); (Richardson, 1975)
4. <i>Isikhuni nomkhwezeli</i> 'The fire stick and the fire maker'	4. <i>The burner burnt</i> (Hanford, 1954) <i>The farmer and the fox</i> (Townsend, 1968)
5. <i>Ukuziqhayisa</i> 'To pride oneself'	5. <i>Slow but sure</i> (Hanford, 1954) <i>The hare and the tortoise</i> (Kent, 1991); (Roche 1982); (Townsend, 1968) <i>A hare and a tortoise</i> (Stern, 1970) <i>Umvundla nofudo</i> (Jolobe, 1953)
6. <i>Ukuthanda ukuncomywa</i> 'To like to be praised'	6. <i>The fox and the crow</i> (Bewick, 1903); (Roche 1982); (Townsend, 1968) <i>Impungutye nehlungulu</i> (Jolobe, 1953)
7. <i>Oshumayela angenzi</i> 'One who preaches without practice'	7. & 8. <i>Example is better than precept</i> (Hanford, 1954) <i>The two crabs</i> (Bewick, 1903)
8. <i>Unonkala nentsapho</i> 'The crab and her family'	<i>The crab and its mother</i> (Townsend, 1968) <i>The crab and his mother</i> (Kent, 1991) <i>Oononkala ababini</i> (Jolobe, 1953)
9. <i>Impungutye engenamsila</i> 'The fox without a tail'	9. <i>Cut off your tails to save my face</i> (Hanford, 1954) <i>The fox without a tail</i> (Bewick, 1903) <i>A fox who had lost his tail</i> (Townsend, 1968) <i>A fox that lost his tail</i> (Stern, 1970); (Richardson, 1975) <i>Impungutye eyalahlekelwa ngumsila</i> (Jolobe, 1953)
10. <i>Inja nesela</i> 'The dog and the thief'	10. <i>A dog and a thief</i> (Stern, 1970)
11. <i>Inyaniso</i> 'Truth'	11. <i>Crying wolf too often</i> (Hanford, 1954) <i>A boy and false alarms</i> (Stern, 1970); (Richardson, 1975) <i>A boy who cried 'wolf'</i> (Roche, 1982) <i>'Ingcuka! Ingcuka!'</i> (Jolobe, 1953)

12. <i>Inkululeko</i> 'Freedom'	12. <i>The wages of treachery</i> (Hanford, 1954) <i>The dog and a wolf</i> (Stern, 1970); (Richardson, 1975) <i>The dog and the wolf</i> (Bewick, 1903) <i>Ingcuka nenja</i> (Jolobe, 1953)
13. <i>Ukuzingisa</i> 'Perseverance'	13. <i>Slow but sure</i> (Hanford, 1954) <i>The hare and the tortoise</i> (Kent, 1991); (Roche 1982); (Townsend, 1968)
14. <i>Umazi weengcinga</i> 'The one who knows thought'	14. <i>Mercury and the woodman</i> (Kent, 1991) <i>Mercury and the carpenter</i> (Richardson, 1975) <i>UMercury nomchweli</i> (Jolobe, 1953) <i>Honesty is the best policy</i> (Hanford, 1954)
15. <i>Icebo elihle lelisebenzisekayo</i> 'Good advice is usable'	15. <i>The mice in council</i> (Kent 1991); (Townsend, 1968) <i>Ukubophelela intsimbi ekatini</i> (Jolobe, 1953)
16. <i>Impungutye neediliya</i> 'The fox and the grapes'	16. <i>The fox and the grapes</i> (Bewick, 1903); (Kent, 1991); (Roche, 1982) <i>Sour grapes</i> (Hanford, 1954) <i>A fox and grapes</i> (Stern, 1970); (Richardson, 1975) <i>Impungutye neediliya</i> (Jolobe, 1953)
17. <i>Owabulawa kukuthetha</i> 'One killed by talking'	17. <i>The tortoise and the eagle</i> (Townsend, 1968)
18. <i>Iingozi zovumazonke</i> 'Dangers of having no opinion'	18. <i>The miller, his son and their ass</i> (Bewick, 1903); (Townsend, 1968) <i>The man, the boy and the donkey</i> (Roche, 1982) <i>Ixhego nondlebende</i> (Jolobe, 1953)
19. <i>Abangalahlekelwa nto</i> 'Those who lose nothing'	19. <i>The countryman and an ass</i> (Richardson, 1975) <i>Umfo wasemaphandleni nondlebende wakhe</i> (Jolobe, 1953)
20. <i>Akukho kufa kunjani</i> 'No death is different'	20. <i>A merchant and a mariner</i> (Richardson, 1975)
21. <i>Indlalo embi</i> 'Bad play'	21. <i>The boys and the frogs</i> (Bewick, 1903), (Richardson 1975); (Townsend, 1968) <i>Amakhwenkwe namasele</i> (Jolobe, 1953)
22. <i>Kuncedwa ozincedayo</i> 'One helped is one who helps oneself'	22. <i>Hercules and the carter</i> (Bewick, 1903) <i>Hercules and the wagoner</i> (Kent, 1991); (Townsend, 1968) <i>UHercules nomqhubi wenqwelo</i> (Jolobe, 1953)
23. <i>Lumkela ongakwaziyo</i> 'Beware of the unknown'	23. <i>Intlanzi nesigcadelo</i> (Jolobe, 1953)
24. <i>Mini iintaka zazinyulel' inkosi</i> 'The day birds elected their king'	24. <i>The frogs asking for a king</i> (Townsend, 1968) <i>We get the rulers we deserve</i> (Hanford, 1954)
25. <i>Iingozi zokumangala</i> 'Dangers of lodging a complaint'	25. & 26. <i>Inkawu neekati ezimbini</i> (Stewart Xhosa Readers-Std 2)
26. <i>Ukuthanda ukumangala</i> 'To like lodging a complaint'	

Copyright of South African Journal of African Languages is the property of University of Port Elizabeth, Department of African Languages and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.