

A BRIEF SURVEY OF NINETEENTH-CENTURY XHOSA LITERATURE

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Abstract

The Xhosa language was systematically transcribed and printed for the first time in 1823. Most of the early Xhosa books were didactic (religious, educational or linguistic), and were generally produced by mission presses; creative poetry, fiction and drama really started appearing in books only in the first decade of the twentieth century. Throughout the nineteenth century, however, Xhosa literature continued to flourish in an oral state, as it had done in precolonial times; and, as literacy spread, a series of mission newspapers encouraged Xhosa writers. The last two decades of the nineteenth century saw the development in independent newspapers of a mature Xhosa literature by outstanding poets and prose writers such as William Kobe Ntsikana, John Muir Vimbe, W.W. Gqoba, Jonas Ntsiko, I.W. Wauchope and S.E.K. Mqhayi.

Of all the vernacular languages of South Africa—excluding English but including Afrikaans—Xhosa is the first to be systematically transcribed and printed, and the first to develop into a mature, well-established literature in print, a process that takes place entirely in the nineteenth century. If we view literary productions through western eyes, however, we will miss this development almost entirely, for very few works of Xhosa creative literature—certainly no original poetry, novels or plays—appear in books until the first decade of the twentieth century. Yet Xhosa verbal creativity continues to express itself throughout the nineteenth century in oral forms well established in precolonial times and—initially in mission journals but in the last two decades in independent periodicals—grows and flourishes in print and comes to speak powerfully in its own voice. This paper, drawing on information I have presented elsewhere (especially in Opland 1998), attempts to do no more than offer a survey of nineteenth-century Xhosa literature in three media: the spoken word, and the printed word in books and in newspapers.

The story of creative literature printed in books can be swiftly told. Shipwrecked sailors, travellers and hunters traversing Xhosa territory occasionally recorded Xhosa words: the Swedish naturalist Anders Sparrman, for example, who travelled in the Cape between 1772 and 1776, published in 1783 a list of over 60 words, which he collected near the Sunday's River (Opland & Mtuze 1994: 60-61); another effort to record the Xhosa language was undertaken by the pioneer missionary J.T. van der Kemp, who compiled a vocabulary of some 700 words in the course of his stay in the chiefdom of Ngqika in 1799 and 1800. Nothing came of Van der Kemp's linguistic effort: his vocabulary remained unpublished. His successor as missionary to the Xhosa people, Joseph Williams, died in 1818 after only two years in the field, and left no written legacy in Xhosa, but the Tyhume mission established by John Brownlee in 1820 bore much literary fruit. Brownlee was joined in November 1821 by two Scottish missionaries, W.R. Thomson and John Bennie. Bennie set himself to learning Dutch, and then turned to Xhosa, "reducing to form and rule this language which hitherto floated in the wind" (Shepherd 1945: 3). When a printing press arrived at Tyhume with John Ross in December 1823, Bennie was ready with his transcription of the Xhosa language: three days after its arrival, on 19 December 1823, the first sheets of printed Xhosa emerged from the press.

Printing was initially used largely for linguistic, educational and religious purposes. Didactic literature appeared in translation from English originals: the first part of Bunyan's *The pilgrim's progress*, translated by Tiyo Soga, was published by the Lovedale Missionary Institution in 1867, and M.A. Stanford's translation of the novel *Susan Grey* under the title *UGcinashe* was published in Grahamstown in 1870, apart from sundry tracts and sermons. No other work of Xhosa literature appeared in a book in the course of the 19th century, with three significant exceptions. A scholarly interest in England in the growing field of folklore probably accounts for Henry Callaway's two invaluable collections of Zulu lore in 1868 and 1870, and George McCall Theal's collection of Xhosa folktales (all of them in English translation) in 1886, and perhaps too for three little booklets in Xhosa that emerged from the Anglican mission press at St Peter's, Gwatyu, in 1875 (versions of

Aesop's fables, some English tales and a Xhosa folktale), in 1876 (a history of Mditshwa's Mpondomise) and in 1877 (a second collection of largely Xhosa folktales). Significant as these three little books are, as the only secular literature to be published in Xhosa throughout the 19th century, they achieved little discernible distribution, and had no spread effect.

That would amount to the total history of 19th-century Xhosa literature in books, were it not for an intriguing footnote. One of the followers of Ntsikana, whom we shall meet again in this account, was Noyi, the son of Gciniswa. Noyi was one of the first five converts baptised at Tyhume in June 1823, when he assumed the name Robert Balfour, and he accompanied the wagon that brought John Ross and the printing press from Cape Town to Tyhume later that year. In 1838 at Botwe G.J. Pike set one gathering of eight pages of Noyi's fragments of Xhosa history under the title *Iziqwenge zembali yamaXosa*, including the first chapter and part of the second; the eighth page ends in the middle of a sentence (see Opland 1998: 335). As far as is known, nothing more was ever printed, and the book was never published. The first chapter tells of Tshiwo, a descendant of Xhosa, as peace-maker, nation-builder and law-giver, and the incomplete second chapter starts to tell the story of his son Phalo. John Bennie may have transcribed and translated Noyi's narrative (by 1831 Noyi had not yet learned to read or write: see Williams 1967: 69). In the paratactic oral style of a Xhosa historical narrative (it commences with the words *Embalini kutiwa*, it is said in an *imbali*), Noyi tells us that Tshiwo the son of Ngconde crossed the Kei to hunt, and settled there (the manuscript assigns 1670 as the date). Tshiwo established laws regulating witchcraft and incest and provided for his people during a drought.

Emveni koko kwavēlana u-Gando no Tshiwo, gokwēnza kwake u-Gando. Ube gumnci akabahlonēla abantu benkulu inkosi u-Tshiwo. Sapumake isicaka esikulu, satsho ku Tshiwo ukuti, "Siyemka siya ku-Gando; wawuzēka ongawuzēkayo u-Gando wentshaba." Satabata innyama, sayifaka emanzini, sayinika u-Tshiwo; sati, "Yithla, Gwalandini." Walilake u-Tshiwo.

Emveni koko u-Tshiwo waya ebotwe; wazikupa izihlangu nendwe ukuzuma u-Gando. Wawuhlaba umkosi; wasabake u-Gando, nabantu bake: wakuwēl' i-Qonce, ne-Xesi, nom-Gwalana; ehamba besilwa, igxotwa eka-Tshiwo. Ayibuyanga noko kwada kwaya en-Nxuba kulandēlana. Kwasihlangana kwakusasa ezibukweni lika-Cihoshe; yakohlwa ukuwēla eka-Tshiwo, imēlwe gezibuko gu-Gando. Yalihrola iqinga eka-Tshiwo. Akētwa amanxēle angacalanye, namanēne angacalanye; yawēlake kwa-Cihoshe; yapalaza gokubinza eka-Gando: yanhyatywa eka-Tshiwo kwelozibuko lika-Cihoshe. Ayigobanga noko, zada zapēla izikali zika-Gando; yagxotwake eja-Gando, yanhyatywa gakumbi yona. Wazitimba u-Tshiwo, wabuya nazo. [1683.] (Opland & Mtuze 1994: 64, from Grey Collection G10c13)

After this Tshiwo and Gando became opposed to one another, on account of Gando's actions. He was a petty chief and did not fear the people of the great chief Tshiwo. The great servant stood forth, and said to

Tshiwo “We are leaving we are going to Gando; Gando collected whatever enemies he could. He took meat, and dipped it in water, and gave it to Tshiwo; and said. “Eat, Coward.”* Tshiwo wept.

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

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

Tshiwo’s army made use of artifice.

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

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

+ The ford of Cihoshe divides the salt from the fresh water at the mouth of the Great Fish River (Grey Collection G10c13)

Had *Iziqwenge zembali yamaXosa* been published, to Noyi would have fallen the credit as the author of the first secular book in Xhosa. Noyi died at Elujilo on 30 July 1872 (*Kaffir Express* 1 September 1872: 2); one of his direct descendants is Pallo Jordan.

Folklore genres inform the brief history of 19th-century literature in Xhosa books: Noyi’s narrative is easily recognised as an oral form (see Peires 1981: 170-91) and the Gwatyu booklets contain another history as well as Xhosa folktales. More histories and folktales remain unpublished in the Grey Collection in the South African Library in Cape Town. A Xhosa praise poem, *izibongo*, produced by the great poet (*imbongi*) D.L.P. Yali-Manisi at a university conference in Durban in 1985 included these lines:

Siyabulela thina basemaXhoseni	We Xhosa are ever grateful
Ngokufika kweento zooRose nezooBheni	that men like Ross and Bennie
Ukuz’ amaXhos’ avulek’ ingqondo	came to ignite the mind of the Xhosa
Kulo mhla yaqal’ ukubhalwa le ntetho	by first transcribing the language,
Intethw’ engqongqotho yasemaXhoseni	the peerless language of the Xhosa.

(Opland 1998: 163)

While it is certainly true that we owe a great debt to pioneer missionaries like John Bennie and John Ross, before the arrival of the white colonists, before western schools and writing and printing were introduced, Xhosa literature flourished. There is no reason to doubt that traditions of Xhosa folklore existed in precolonial times; they have persisted throughout the 19th century, at times incorporating references to objects and situations introduced by white settlers, and survive and flourish to this day.

There were *imbongi* at the great places of kings long before the arrival of European settlers. The earliest account of the performance of an *imbongi* is provided by the Wesleyan missionary James Whitworth, who visited Hintsá, king of the Gcaleka, with William Shaw on 6 April 1825 and recorded in his journal: “At sunset a man proclaimed aloud the transactions of the day, which seems to be the usual custom, ending with ‘Our Captain is a great Captain. When the white men came to see him, he received them kindly, and gave them an ox to eat’” (Whitworth 1825). His colleague Stephen Kay visited Mdushane in May 1825, and observed: “Early the following morning I was awakened by the vociferous shouts of one of the heralds, who was proclaiming, with stentorian voice, the praises of his Chief, ascribing to him all the great deeds of the age, together with the majesty of the mightiest” (Kay 1833: 75). References to *imbongi* and accounts of their metaphoric, hyperbolic praises of dignitaries, poetic commemorations—often improvised—of events of significance, can be found for most of the Xhosa-speaking groups throughout the 19th century, testifying to the universality and continuity of the tradition. On 2 July 1851, for example, while on patrol with General Somerset in the 8th Frontier War, Thomas Baines narrowly missed capturing Oba son of Tyali, who abandoned, amongst other things, “several head-dresses, each formed from the last joint of the wings of the Kafir crane, usually bestowed by the chief, as rewards of valour, upon the bravest warriors, and as such, most appropriately donned by the captors.” Baines continues in his Journal:

The zeal and bravery of one of the Fingoes, a fine fellow rejoicing in the name of Zinanqua, and bearing, beside his musket, a weapon somewhat resembling an exaggerated reaping hook, elicited a passing remark from the General, which the elated warrior, exulting in the honour conferred upon him, repaid with an extravagant recital of the praises of the Great White Chief, whom he extolled above the skies for everything which, in his own estimation, was worthy of a soldier, and whose magnitude, he declared, exceeded that of the sun, moon and stars, and the visible heaven and earth together, summing up the almost endless catalogue by declaring that the white-headed Chief was ‘the great teat’ from which we all derived our nourishment. When we reached the camp the General directed him to be called, and in due form decorated him with a pair of the towering plumes that had been captured in the morning. (Baines 1964: 204)

In 1863, Walter Stanford, a fluent Xhosa speaker, attended the installation of the Thembu regent Ngangelizwe. “After an interval of silence,” he writes, “[when] even the various Imbongis who had been loud in their chorus of praise of the chief and [in] historic references were still, Joyi rose” (Macquarrie 1958: 21). Ten years later, in January 1873, *The Standard and Mail* carried a lavishly detailed description of a meeting between the Gcaleka king Kreli and the Secretary of Native Affairs, Charles Brownlee, at Fynn’s residency, which graphically locates the *imbongi* in the ostentatious royal entourage:

At noon we learnt that Kreli the troublesome was saddling up, and shortly afterwards the movement of the groups on the hill tops showed that he was advancing. The pageant which Kreli had prepared for us then commenced. Simultaneously a great body of foot made its appearance below the ridge of

the eastern hill, and a large number of horsemen, with Kreli at their head, charged down one of the northern valleys into the basin. Then the thousands poured in—from the distance apparently in good discipline, and with the regularity of well-trained troops, but as they neared we saw it was but the density of the masses which gave them that appearance. As Kreli passed along at the bottom of the hill the footmen of Mopassa swept down its green slopes like a great red cloud. Behind Mr. Fynn's house Kreli drew in rein, and the whole body of horsemen paused for a few minutes during which time the *imbongi*—the wild minstrels of the rude chief—chanted his praises. These *improvisatori* with their huge shields of ox-hide and bundles of assegais were the very *beau ideal* of savage warriors, and would certainly, to my mind, be more dangerous in war than their brethren in arms whose weapons are ancient muskets that are more dangerous, I should imagine, to friends than foes. In a few minutes Kreli moved on again, and the footmen of Mopassa fell into the rear, making a body altogether of between 3,000 and 4,000 men. As this force moved onwards there came—out from the valley by which Kreli made his approach, bodies of warriors on foot advancing as if in companies. The whole of the forces having passed the marquee as if in review order crossed the rivulet that runs down the centre of the basin—on our extreme right. As they came up the slope of the hill to the marquee, the forces spread out, and the scene was a very picturesque one. In front Kreli and his councillors on horseback; on the right wing the *unbongi* [sic], their shields on their arms, and their assegais in their hands; to the left men with guns and assegais, and behind a whole perfect forest of assegais. (*The Standard and Mail*, 18 January 1873)

Brownlee features in another account from the same year: he receives a visit from the Mpondomise chief Mhlontlo while at Shawbury in 1873. The Mpondomise perform an intimidating “war-dance,” “all to the humdrum tones of the chief’s ‘bongo’, who chanted his praise in the Kafir tongue” (P 1874-5). Yet another reference from the same year tells of an *imbongi* accompanying the Mfengu chief Veldtman Bikitsha to the Agricultural Show in Queenstown:

One Kafir institution we were glad to see was indulged in—that was the Imbongi or Praiser of the Chief. An elderly native, mounted on his little pony delivered a stirring harangue to his compatriots. Whether prose or poetry we are not able to say; but judging from the attention it received it was a decided success. (*Argus* 10 June 1873, 3-4)

In 1876 Walter Stanford was formally introduced to Dalasile as the new magistrate: in the afternoon, at All Saints’ mission in Thembuland, “approaching bodies of horsemen and footmen betokened the coming of the chief himself and his attendant sub-chiefs, councillors and people. The mounted men approached towards the mission church by circuitous movements which were not ungraceful. The men sang their war song and the ‘imbongi’ or bard rhythmically chanted his praises of his chief with allusions to the past history of the tribe” (Macquarrie 1958: 54). Later, in a tense meeting with Msingapantsi in 1885, the Bhaca chief reached for his rifle: “Then Nontsizwagane, in fantastic get-up, the imbongi of Msingapantsi

must needs begin his exciting poesy. Him I had chased from the meeting and the absurd manner in which he trotted off with policeman Sigadi after him with a stick made the assemblage burst into laughter. It was a critical moment but the laughter saved the situation” (Macquarrie 1962: 22). And, at the end of the century, an *imbongi* features in a Mpondo royal entourage: “. . . the Pondos state that, on a certain day in 1895, the chief Sigcawu went to confer with the magistrate at Flagstaff and, in accordance with Pondo custom, was accompanied by a large armed retinue. On reaching their destination, in order to cel’amehlo (“to ask eyes”) that is, to make an impression, they circled round Flagstaff several times, the while the court-praiser (*imbongi*) was shouting the praises of his chief” (Soga 1930: 328).

Praise poems (*izibongo*) survive for many of the 19th-century leaders, all the more interesting because they apportion praise as well as blame. Rambalamatye the son of Tokwe, for example, was vilified by the *imbongi* for his collaboration with oppressive colonial officials:

NguBhalakisi, usoRhafukazwe liyabhatalwa,	He's Barracks that rake in tax,
UsoBhukwe kancwad' ebhal' izi-alam.	the book of books recording paupers.
Nguqhoqho fusakazi, umnyenyeka,	He's a dark refuge for absconders
Umbhela kamaXhanti.	who steals for his masters,
Uphikis' abantu bemqongqotha.	confronting those who question him.
Ukruxesh' onenkani wakuloNyanti,	Nyanti's quarrelsome caterpillar,
Ugomb' ihlwihlwili,	who flays off gobs of blood,
Ugqoboz' izulu ngesibili.	who barges through the heavens.

(Opland 1998: 309-10)

The *imbongi's* depiction of Ngqika son of Mlawu, another collaborator with whites and shameful abductor of his uncle Ndlambe's wife Thuthula, is equally caustic:

NgusoTshul' ubembe, uhlek' abaneligqo,	His tongue wags, mocking men behind their backs.
Uphambana neengcuka zigoduka,	He's chummy with scavengers,
Untsimangwana yakwaNkwebu,	an imp consorting with strangers,
Unyok' emnyam' eand' isiziba.	a black snake cleaving the pool.
Nguxhalang' elimaphikw' amdaka,	He's a foul-winged vulture,
Untloyiy' onendlwane wasemajojweni,	a kite at rest in swampland,
Uxamakaz' oluphondo lunye—	a one-horned leguan
LukaNgcengulana—elifel' efusini.	spurned by his kin and abandoned.
Ngumafuman' alumbole naseMpembeni,	He loves to snuffle in trivia,
Ukhala akanameva phofu bath' uyahlaba.	a thornless aloe that still pricks,
Lirhamncwa elidla umzi liwukhanyela,	a wild beast denying he consumes his own home,
Lisithi udliwa nguNyelenzi noMakhabalekile;	saying Myelenzi and Makhabalekile did it.
Umvalo obuval' iinkomo zikaPhalo,	He's the bar barring Phalo's cattle:
Owowuvula ngowozek' ityala.	woe betide the one who raised it.
NgusoQaco, untshikintshikikazi;	He's an irascible grumbler;

Ulima bensusa ing' asindawo yakhe.	he's chased off his land when he ploughs.
OkaMatshitshilili, uvumb' eligxoth' izizwe.	Dogged, his stench expels nations.
Phum' entangeni wabe iinkomo,	Leave the boys' hut and distribute cattle!
Ubumlala nj' unyok' ubusithi woyiva phi n' imbathu kwedini?	Did you expect open arms, kid,
	when you laid your own mother?

(Opland & Mtuze 1994: 50 from Rubusana 1911: 245-56; Opland 1992: 217-18)

Poetry was not the only form of creative speech. Children might amuse themselves by asking each other riddles that depend on metaphoric associations:

Ndinabantu babini, omnye uthi ndimphambili, omnye ndimphambili—Inyawo
Who are the two fellows who keep saying to each other, "I'm in front"?—The feet
or that record social change:

Ndinaziduli zam zimhlophe zikulo lonke elimiweyo zikhulu—Zizindlu zecawa
What are the big white termite heaps found all over the country?—Churches
(Godfrey 1927a: 96)

or that incorporate distinctive characteristics of the birds of the veld:

Uyazaz' iintaka?	Do you know the birds?
Ndiyazaz' iintaka.	I know the birds.
Waz' intaka ni?	Which one do you know?
Ndiyazaz' inyarhini.	I know the glossy starling.
Ulazi ngokuba litheni?	How do you know it?
Ngokuba linxila.	Because it's a drunkard.
Ngokuba?	Why?
Amehlo abomvu.	Look at its red eyes.

(Godfrey 1927b: 120)

Up to the present day, women tell their grandchildren stories (*iintsomi*) about the unscrupulous trickster Hlakanyana, an anti-hero who provides a model of how one should not behave, for Hlakanyana lies, steals, eats and murders insatiably; a speech (*intetho*) before relatives in the presence of beer welcomes a migrant labourer home from war and thanks him for his efforts, and brings him back into association with his ancestors (see McAllister 1981); songs (*iingoma*) express emotion or social criticism whether they are sung by one person or by masses at a rally or on a protest march; and clan poems (*iziduko*) serve to secure the place of individuals in society, assert their identity and confirm their social relationships, encapsulating the history of the clan. Historical narratives (*amabali*) may well be in decline, but little research has been undertaken on them as a genre.

One of the most popular and widespread of songs is the Great Hymn of Ntsikana. Ntsikana was probably influenced by the preaching of Dr Van der Kemp, and settled with his followers at Williams's mission. He maintained a distinctive community of worship, integral to which was the singing of four hymns; the

most popular has become his Great Hymn, always sung, but clearly in form an izibongo to Christ. After Ntsikana's death in 1821, his followers made their way to Tyhume. The text was first transcribed by John Brownlee, and included in Brownlee's appendix to Thompson's *Travels and adventures* published in 1827. Not only is Ntsikana's Great Hymn important as the earliest extant Xhosa poem, but Ntsikana's followers played significant roles in the history of Xhosa literature. Noyi and Matshaya, who were among the first five converts baptised by Brownlee in 1823, both dictated narratives, Noyi to John Bennie, as we have seen, Matshaya an account of Ntsikana to James Laing. John Muir Vimbe was in the first class admitted to Lovedale when it opened in 1841; he contributed some 20 articles to the Xhosa newspapers *Indaba* and *Isigidimi samaXosa*. Soga's son Tiyo translated Bunyan and wrote articles for *Indaba*. The grandson of Peyi was William Wellington Gqoba, whom we shall meet later. Dukwana, Ntsikana's son, assisted with the production of *Ikwezi*; Ntsikana's grandson William Kobe contributed to *Indaba* and *Isigidimi*. And the list could be extended.

Although these forms of Xhosa folklore are occasionally referred to or recorded, they are essentially ephemeral; they underpin in form and structure much of the early writing which, in the 19th century is to be found not in books but in newspapers. The first three Xhosa newspapers, *Umshumayeli wendaba* (1837-41, Wesleyan), *Isibuto samavo* (1843-44, Wesleyan) and *Ikwezi* (1844-45, Lovedale) were primarily designed to provide reading material for the products of mission schools. They were more like magazines than newspapers, but they did establish a reading public and involve them in a community of readers outside the classroom. And they did encourage native speakers of Xhosa to take their first hesitant steps in putting word to paper for readers they could not see before them. The first pieces of writing published by native speakers were four letters composed by students at the Morley mission, which appeared in the fourth issue of *Umshumayeli* in March 1838: the pupils are named as Betsy Shaw, David Qokoyi, Job Yoyosi and Xelo. A few months later, Xelo and another Morley pupil, Joje, created a lively dialogue about the benefits of writing and printing; their teacher transcribed the dialogue and submitted it to *Umshumayeli*, where it was published in the seventh issue in January 1839. Lazy wants to spend the day chatting to Student, but Student declines his invitation:

Um-Fundi: Hayi ke, 'M-Nqeni di ya esikolweni mina.

Um-Nqeni: Uyakw'enza ni esikolweni?

F. Diyaku funda enncwadini.

N. Uyaku funda ni?

F. Do funda uku lesesha, noku bala.

N. Ukubala sendi kw'azi, nakuba dinga yanga esikolweni. Ukulesesha, kodwa, andi kw'azi. Kuku ti ni ke oko?

F. Uku lesesha kuku teta nenncwadi: zi ti imbali zezinto, zi bekwe enncwadini; a ze a ti umtu aku kangela, a bone ukuba zi ko, a zi funde, a z'azi; a ti gomnye umhla a be sele z'azi, a zi tyele abanye abantu.

N. Zi twa ni uku bekwa enncwadini, zinto e zi tetwa gomlomo je imbali?

F. Kw'enziwa impawana e zi ncikanana; zi ti impawu zi be gamagama amazwi a su'ba e fun'uku tetwa.

Student: Oh no, Lazy, I'm off to school.

Lazy: What are you going to do at school?

Student: I'm going to study in books.

Lazy: What are you going to study?

Student: I'm going to learn how to read and write.

Lazy: I can count already, though I've never been to school. But reading I can't do. What is it?

Student: Reading is talking to books: they tell stories about things, which are put in books; when someone looks at them he sees they're there, he studies and he understands; he reads and knows what they're all about, and then he can tell other people.

Lazy: How can they be put in books? Aren't stories things spoken with the mouth?

Student: Little marks are made, and these marks are words saying what's being said.

Lazy is impressed.

N. Inncwadi i kwa gumtu, yinto ni?

F. Nantsi: yi le'nto e di yi pete esanghleni.

N. Iya teta, ku sini?

F. Iya teta ebantwini a sukuba be kw'azi uku yi kangela. Uya yi bona na le'migcana e mnyamana enncwadini apa?

N. Diya yi bona, kambe.

F. He, Le migcana i kwa zimpawu e dandi te, Zi gamagama amazwi: zindaba ke ezi.

N. Le'migcana i kwa yinteteko yenncwadi?

F. I kwa yiyo. (Opland & Mtuze 68-69 from *Umshumayeli wendaba 7* (January 1839): 4-5)

Lazy: Is a book like a person? What is it?

Student: Here, it's what I have in my hand.

Lazy: Can it talk?

Student: It does talk to people who can read it. Can you see these lines in this book?

Lazy: Yes, I can see them.

Student: Well, these lines are the marks which I said are words. This is the news.

Lazy: Are these lines the way the book speaks?

Student: Exactly. (Opland 1998: 233)

Lazy resolves to attend school in order to learn how to read and write. Later, in April 1839, someone who signs himself as Jivashe contributes to *Umshumayeli* a narrative of the Mfecane. In January 1844, *Isibuto* carries another dialogue, written by an unnamed Mfengu writer; the seventh and final issue (July 1844)

includes a personal narrative by M. Malisa about the smallpox epidemic. Before 1850, then, Xhosa speakers are drawn into the world of print through missionary periodicals.

The next two newspapers, *Isitunywa sennyanga* (1850, Wesleyan) and *Indaba* (1862-65, Lovedale), encouraged and extended this process, though the missionary editors still maintained strict control of the content. The last issue of *Isitunywa* (December 1850) carried eleven Xhosa letters from readers, one of them by Elias Xelo of Morley, one of the first Xhosa writers on record, who had earlier contributed to *Umshumayeli*. *Indaba* establishes for the first time the literary reputations of regular contributors like Tiyo Soga (writing as UNonjiba waseluhlangeni), John Muir Vimbe and William Kobe Ntsikana: the Xhosa man of letters was starting to emerge.

Soga contributed eight essays to *Indaba* from 1862-64. His stories and anecdotes are enlivened by dialogue. He deploys the same oral imagery for reading as Xelo and Joje do. For example, in his first contribution, Soga compared *Indaba* to a traveller entering their rural homes with news; in his second contribution he refers to his readers as “You who are speaking to this book” (Williams 1978: 154). Later, however, he speaks in his own voice, addressing his readers directly through questions, in arguments and by exhortation. He is occasionally witty, at time he testifies to harsh encounters between black and white, but most often in a time of culture clash and change he urges in his Xhosa readers dignity and pride in their traditions:

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

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

Tulani iminqwazi kwinkosi, kubanumzana, nakumanene ase-Mlungwini, niwise kakuhle ngenthloko, noko ningatetanga. Nenjenjalo kumtu omhlope ofanelekileyo, ihla kamnandi londawo; —Siyala kodwa ukuba nenjenjalo kumaxhigxa, nakumagxagxa, anga nidhlule ngabantu. Lo “Molo Sweli” wa-Maxhosa kwakuti-tu Mlungu lowo, yingcapukisa mxhelo. (*Indaba* 2:6 June 1864, 354)

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

Raise your hats to chiefs and respectable people. To White gentlemen bow your heads gently even though you do not utter a word. Do that to White people who deserve this. This is pleasing. But we do not advise this even to poor Whites of no repute who are no better than yourselves. This ‘Morning Sir’ of the Xhosa people whenever they see a White face is very annoying. (translated by J.J.R. Jolobe in Williams 1978: 174-5)

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

Zimkile! Mfo wohlanga,	They’ve gone! Compatriot,
Putuma, putuma;	Chase them! Chase them!
Yishiy’ imfakadolo,	Lay down the musket,
Putuma ngosiba;	Use pen to chase them;
Tabat’ ipepa ne inki,	Seize paper and ink:
Lik’aka lako elo.	That’s your shield.
Ayemk’ amalungelo,	There go your rights!
Qubula usiba;	Grab a pen,

Nx'asha, nx'asha, nge inki,
Hlala esitulweni,
Ungangeni kwa Hoho
Dubula ngo siba.

Load and reload it with ink;
Sit in your chair,
Don't head for Hoho:
Fire your pen.

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

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

(*Isigidimi samaXosa*, 1 June 1882: 5; Opland 1998: 226-27)

On both sides of his family, Wauchope had strong connections with the pioneering Christian missionaries to the Xhosa people. His great-grandmother and grandmother were early disciples of Dr Van der Kemp, following him to Bethelsdorp in 1802; Wauchope's grandfather Citashe lived near Joseph Williams's mission. In August 1882 Wauchope responded to an invitation to chair a meeting designed to establish a black organisation in response to the foundation in 1879 of the Afrikaner Bond. In September, Imbumba Yamanyama was formed in Port Elizabeth, after the Native Educational Association (formed in 1879) the earliest formal political association for blacks in South Africa; Wauchope served as the first Secretary. *Imbumba yamanyama* is one of Ntsikana's images, a symbol of national unity. It refers to the scrapings from the inside of a pelt that when compacted form an indissoluble ball: it came to represent a political ideal in which diverse black groupings might be welded together into one nation. In March 1884 *Isigidimi* printed a poem by Wauchope (writing under the pseudonym Silwangangubo-nye) in praise of the fledgling political organisation in which he acknowledges Ntsikana as a source of inspiration and identifies education as the key to the nationalistic struggle:

IMBUMBA YAMANYAMA.

A BALL FROM SCRAPINGS

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

Our home wailed and there was fasting
On the day Ntsikana left us;
He was buried, covered over,
He was left there, we turned homewards.

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

White they are beneath the surface,
The bones of the son of Gabha,
Grass arose upon the grave of
A great fighter for the nation.

Kant' useko usateta,

Yet he lives and keeps on speaking

Izwi lake linamava,
Linencasa linomkita
Ele 'Mbumba Yamanyama.'

In a voice of rich experience,
Sounding sweetly and appealing,
Talking of "a ball from scrapings."

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

Rouse yourselves and stand up proudly,
All you children of the Ngqika,
Take your lead from what this voice says,
"Unity" its constant call.

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

Rouse yourselves and stand up proudly,
All you children of the Zulu,
You have also been afflicted
By the house of Phalo's mishap.

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

Yes, it's time our wounds were mended,
Animosities and grudges;
We're related, we're all one stock,
Speaking in a common language.

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

In His Oneness Christ died for us,
Leaving to us this about Him:
Great strength can be found in union,
Power of "a ball from scrapings" . . .

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

Keep on stirring, you black teachers,
Never pausing in your efforts,
So it is when we bewail you,
With the nation lying shattered.

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

Union's found through education,
There Imbumba joins our ranks,
Give it weapons, it's your offspring,
Teach it how to fight this battle.

(*Isigidimi samaXosa*, 1 March 1884: 2; cf. Thompson 2000: 195-6)

Wauchope was one of the leading figures in the emergent Xhosa political and literary elite in the last two decades of the 19th century. His earliest contribution to a newspaper was an article on the abuse of liquor in *Isigidimi* in July 1874. Wauchope contributed to *Imvo zabantsundu* in 1891 and 1892 an extended discussion of Xhosa proverbs, a number of hymns in 1896, and numerous historical articles, and in 1895

won a competition for the best narrative poem (*Imvo* 11 April 1895: 2). Wauchope's subversive monograph *The natives and their missionaries* was published by Lovedale in 1908. He drowned on the *Mendi* in the English Channel on 21 February 1917, and is in fact the legendary hero who marshalled the doomed volunteers for a death drill on the decks of the sinking troopship (see Opland 199b and Thompson, especially chapter 8).

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

It seems that no controversy could be brought to a close in *Isigidimi* until "Hadi" had made his contribution. If he did not write, either the other participants or interested readers suggested that it was about time he did so. As a rule his contribution to any discussion was in the form of a prose essay, but he often concluded with a poem inspired by a subject under discussion (Jordan 1973: 91-92)

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

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

Vukani bantwana
Bentab' eBosiko,
Seyikhal' ingcuka
Ingcuk' emhlophe,
Ibawel' amathambo
'Mathambo kaMshweshwe,

Mshweshw' onubuthongo
Phezul' entabeni.
Siyarhol' isisu
Ngamathamb' enkosi,
Ubomv' umlomo
Kuxhap' uSandile. . . . (Opland & Mtuze 1994: 89 from *Isigidimi* 2 April 1883: 4)

I am discussing the hostility that exists between *Isigidimi* and its readers across the Kei. The reason would seem to be this, that the younger intellectuals say they can never make out the true nationality of *Isigidimi*. *Isigidimi* never takes up a clear stand on political matters. It sides with the whites, for whenever a writer voices the feelings of the blacks, *Isigidimi* immediately makes him understand that he belongs to the side of the enemy. For instance, a writer who tried to put in a word for Langalibalele (a Hlubi chief) was quickly immersed under the waters of silence: while another writer, who expressed the idea that Langalibalele was a mere goat trying to fight against an elephant, was given praise and his words were echoed far and wide.

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

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

Its belly hangs heavy and drags on the ground,
All gorged with the bones of warrior-kings;
Its mouth is red with the blood of Sandile. . . . (Jordan 1973: 93-4)

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

John Tengo Jabavu was appointed as editor of *Isigidimi* at the age of 23 in 1881. His own political style and the policy imposed upon him by Stewart made him a controversial editor, although he welcomed

literary contributions in his pages and set standards for them. In October 1884, *Isigidimi* carried a poem by Thomas Mqanda, which criticised Jabavu for his involvement in white politics:

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

(Opland 1998: 241)

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

William Wellington Gqoba (see Opland 1999a) was a lively editor of *Isigidimi*, free of the confrontational controversy attendant on Jabavu; he presided over an unprecedented efflorescence of literary and ethnographic contributions, many of which he provoked by his editorial comments and his own writings. Gqoba’s literary career effectively commenced after he assumed the editorship of *Isigidimi*; he contributed religious poetry (especially poems of consolation on the death of parishioners), humorous stories, historical articles on the Xhosa and Mfengu peoples and on the cattle-killing episode of 1856-7, explanations of Xhosa proverbs and two extended poems serialised in 1885 and 1888 that for a long time stood as the most sustained poetic achievements in Xhosa.

Gqoba’s *Ingxoxo enkulu ngemfundo* (“Great debate on education”) was the most ambitious and sustained work of original Xhosa literature in its time, and remained so until the appearance of the first Xhosa novels a full generation later. It originally appeared in installments in *Isigidimi* shortly after Gqoba assumed editorship of the paper, commencing in January 1885 and concluding in the August issue of that year. In total, the poem ran to 1150 lines. In its form, “The great debate on education” signalled its identification with English literary tradition: it is written throughout in trochaic octosyllabics, a form

quite foreign to Xhosa tradition. It acknowledges a debt too to Bunyan's *The pilgrim's progress*, which had been translated into Xhosa by Tiyo Soga, in that the participants are given allegorical names like Bookworm, Sharptongue, Squint-Eye, Dimwit and Die for Truth. The debate takes place under a chairman who introduces the topic and sums up at the end, with speakers politely taking turns, so the whole poem has the appearance of a Christian work participating in disciplined western cultural tradition. Furthermore, the chairman, an old, well educated, thrifty and successful farmer named Thankless, is ultimately swayed by the debate: initially, as his name implies, he is sceptical of the benefits of the white education he has enjoyed, but by the time all 15 speakers have had their say, Thankless appears to have changed his mind and comes down firmly in favour of the white educational enterprise. The poem ends with these lines:

Ndoysiwe kupelile,	I've been wholly whipped and beaten,
Zinyaniso ndifeziwe,	Truths have vanquished all my problems,
Yon' imfundo iyalala.	Plenteous is this education,
Ndiqondile ngeligala.	I have reached an understanding.
Masifund' ukubulela,	Let's acquire appreciation,
Ndigalele ndafincela,	I have poured it out then drunk it,
Mna ke ndiyaqukumbela,	Now I've made an end of speaking:
Zenixele emakaya	Won't you spread the word through homesteads,
Masitande amagwangqa,	Let us show our love for white men,
Amabandla apesheya.	Tribes who travelled over oceans.

(*Isigidimi samaXosa* 1 August 1885: 61)

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

There is an interesting variety of participants and therefore a variety of opinions, left, centre, and right, shading into each other. In this long discussion, no one says that the blacks are getting a square deal from the whites. The best defense that the extreme right can put up is that things are not so bad, and that if the ingrates will only exercise patience, the best is yet to be. (Jordan 1973: 67)

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

Ababantu bayaketa,	All aren't equal to these people,
Kuyinene inanamhla,	That's the truth now plain and simple.
Es'kuleni ndinonyana,	I've a son who is a schoolboy,
Sel'egqibe nomunyaka.	His first year's already finished.

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

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

Wonke umntu onengqondo,
Engotanda kwa nemfundo,
Woziqonda ezindawo
Azimisiley' ubawo.

Everyone with understanding,
With a love of education,
Will know all about these matters
Put in place for us by Daddy.

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

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

Ababantu ba Pesheya,
Ngabaze kusibulala,
Basihlute nomuhlabana,
Asinawo namakaya.

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

(*Isigidimi samaXosa*, 1 January 1885: 5)

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

Ndincamile ndonakele
Mz' wakowetu okunene
Ngamadoda atetile
Ab' ebonga amagwangqa.
Kanti noko lon' ikete
Noko sebe likanyele
Liko lona okunene
Kwinto zonke ngokumhlope.
Fan'selana sekupina
Umnt' omnyama esebenza.
Ekolisa, sele qwela,
Won'umvuzo uyintshenu,
Okunene kut'we kunu.
Oligwangqa uyinkosi

I despair. I'm all unravelled.
Really, house of my own people,
One by one the men have spoken,
Singing praises of the paleskins.
They maintain discrimination
Is a figment of our fancy,
But it really does affect us
Patently in every aspect.
Everywhere that people get to
You can find a black man working.
Usually, when he's all finished,
What he's earned amounts to nothing,
Any point it had is blunted.
As for paleskin he's the boss man

Nakuw' pina umsebenzi.
 Fan'selana esidenge
 Abantsundu bemqwelile,
 Nange ngqondo bemdlulile,
 Kupelile wozuziswa,
 Umuvuzo owangala
 Kwanegunya lokupata
 Abantsundu, abamnyama.
 Kwanelizwe xa lifile
 Bomiselwa izidenge,
 'Zingazange ziyibone
 Lento kut'wa iyimfazwe,
 Bapatish' okwabantwana,
 Ngezabokwe betyatyushwa;
 Bat'we cintsi ngeqoshana
 Bengo Vula ozindlela,
 Amagwangqa etyetyiswa.
 Kwi-ofisi kukwanjalo
 Abantsundu, tú nto, nto, nto
 Kwanalapo bay' zuzayo.
 Niti kodwa makowetu
 Alibala elintsundu,
 Masifihle, masincwabe
 Ezondawo zimuhlope?
 Siteta nje kukw' i-Bondi
 Ebuqili buyindoqo;
 Ifungele, ibinqele
 Ukuti e-Palamente,
 Ezimali zifundisa
 Oluhlanga lumunyama,
 Mazihlutwe, mazipele.
 Ngamanina law' anjalo?
 Eyona nto soba nayo,
 Imihlaba sel' inabo,
 Ozigusha, nozinkomo,
 Zonk' izintw' ebesinazo,
 Bajojisa ngale mfundo?
 Pendulani Sweligukwe

Everywhere there're people working.
 He could be the greatest dummy,
 Even though blacks finish sooner,
 Even though their brains surpass his,
 He alone will be rewarded,
 Earning heaps and heaps of wages
 And authority and power
 Over darkskins, over black folk.
 When the country's on armed footing
 Blacks are posted under dummies
 Who have never had experience
 Of a wartime situation,
 Just like children blacks bear burdens,
 While they're urged along with sjamboks
 With mere crumbs by way of profit
 Though they might have blazed the pathways:
 Only white men fill their pockets.
 It's no different in an office:
 While blacks garner nothing, nothing,
 Even there whites rake in earnings.
 What then do you say, my people,
 With a dark skin as your colour,
 Must we cover, must we bury
 Everything to do with white men?
 As we talk a Bond's been set up,
 Artfulness is its one cure-all;
 Oaths it's sworn, it's set its sights on
 Getting Parliament to plunder
 All the funds it's set aside for
 Educating this black nation,
 Terminating them completely.
 What kind of people live like this?
 What is left to us of value?
 All the land is theirs already,
 All the sheep and all the cattle,
 Everything we own's their quarry,
 Hounded by this education.
 Won't you answer me then, Guileless,

Bazamehlo, Felinene,
 Sibulele ndawonina?
 Nale voti ikwanjalo,
 Kukw' ikete kwa nakuyo,
 Asivunywa kany' impela
 Tina bantu abamnyama.
 Pikisani ezindawo
 Sihlangene kule ngxoxo;
 Nditsho ngoko ke manene
 Ukuti sendincamile.
 Okukona kukudala
 Ungenile kweli gwangqa
 Kokukona ungumfiki,
 Kokukona ungumzini.
 Ndiyapinda ndiyabuza
 Kuni bandla elimnyama,
 Nihlangene ngeli gala,
 Sibulele ndawonina,
 Ubukaya bubupina?
 Ezindawo zamaqetsu
 Aziko-na ke mawetu?
 Nawo onke lamasheyi,
 Siwenzelwa em-Lungwini?
 Xa kulapo kuyinene
 Sonke, sonke simanyene
 Kuba sonke sikatele,
 Masiwal' amagqebeqe
 Nakwezo zi-Palamente,
 Ngokuteta ngezwe elinye
 Ukucasa zonk' indawo
 Zembulawo ezinjalo,
 Asiboni mubulelo.

(Isigidimi samaXosa, 1 May 1885: 35)

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

And you, Squint-Eye, Die for Truth too,
 Where's the forum to give thanks in?
 It's no different with this voting,
 Rooted in discrimination,
 We're completely unaccepted,
 People black like all of us are.
 Quarrel as we might on these points,
 We have met in this discussion;
 So then gentlemen I'm saying
 That despair's already claimed me.
 Just as long as you continue
 To have dealings with this paleskin,
 Just so long you'll be a stranger
 Just so long a new arrival.
 Once again I pose my question
 To you nations of black people,
 Gathered here before this meerkat,
 Where's the forum to give thanks in?
 Where are we to live together?
 All these places with their pitfalls,
 Do they not exist, my people?
 What about all these deceptions
 Fashioned for us in white places?
 So then, it's the truth I'm speaking,
 All of us, we're all united,
 Since we're all of us exhausted;
 Let us fight these machinations,
 In those Parliaments if need be,
 With one voice let's do our talking
 Damning every single item
 Of destructive legislation.
 No appreciation's called for.

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

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