

### **Inkwenkwezi efihlakeleyo.**

K. Sello Duiker (Xolisa Guzula, transl.).

Cape Town: Penguin, 2023, 241 pp.

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Reviewing a translation raises several important questions. Does one review the translation as an independent work of art, in which you judge it on its own merits for style and fluency in the target language? Do you review the translation against the original text with a focus on the accurate translation of the intent of the source language? To what extent does the reviewer judge how the translator captures the cultural expressions, readability and all the nuances of literary works? I believe a combination of these approaches provides valuable insights. Guided by Wardle’s framework—as explained in her 2020 article “Reviewing the Reviewers: (Re)Translations and the Literary Press”—the aim of this review is to assess the translation on its own merits focusing mainly on readability and cultural resonance. The second aspect is to assess the extent to which the original text has been preserved. The final aspect of the review is to comment on the technical aspect of translated text.

*Inkwenkwezi efihlakeleyo* is the 2023 Xhosa translation of K. Sello Duiker’s South African novel, *The hidden star*. It is in essence a story of self-discovery. Nolitye, an 11-year-old who lives with her mother Thembi, ventures into the dark areas of the Phola township in an adventure that seeks to restore balance to nature by removing magical stones from the bad hands. Nolitye, whose name loosely translates to “the keeper of the stone” or “the keeper of knowledge”, has developed a hobby of collecting stones. This is indeed in line with naming practices amongst speakers of Bantu languages, where children are expected to follow the traits associated with their names. At the beginning of the novel, Nolitye’s life is that of a typical 11-year-old who lives in a shack in a crowded township. Everything sounds typical, the drunk men who sing at night, the stray dogs and cats that scavenge for food, and the

neighbours who know each other’s names. However, as the novel develops, the reader is captured regardless of their age. The novel relates to both young and old in that the stories weave together fiction, realism, and magic. As Nolitye learns about the magical powers of one of the stones, she also discovers the powers that she has, such as standing up to bullies, speaking to animals, fighting witches, as well as restoring peace by discovering and rescuing missing children.

On the subject of the clarity of translation, this novel reads well. It is very easy to understand because the translator has used common words that the speakers of the language understand. The language used generally allows for a nice flow when reading, with punctuation facilitating pauses where sentences tend to be longer. The tone is consistent throughout the book.

In terms of the cultural nuances, the translation reflects the typical linguistic landscape of Phola, a mixture of English as reflected in the names of the dogs, Afrikaans, as in *Moeder* (the head teacher), Sesotho, as in *Mamani* and *Ntate* Matthews, *MaMokoena* and the majority of names in isiXhosa, including *Thembi*, *Nolitye* and *Mamtonga*, to mention some. In addition to this, because the setting of the novel is in a multilingual area, it feels natural to have a combination of all these languages in one text.

The next aspect of this review is the comparison of the source text and the target text. While the combination of languages facilitates the translation of cultures, some phrases feel socio-linguistically misplaced. For example, when using Sesotho, it is often unacceptable for a child to use an elder’s name without prefixing a kinship term as is the case with *Ntate Mokoena*. There are many instances for example “Dumela MaMokoena” (26) and “Dumela MaZwane” (28) where Nolitye greets older people without saying Mme or Mama. This is the unfortunate transportation of the English culture into Sesotho and then into isiXhosa via translation. While the translator stayed true to the text, it sits uncomfortably in isiXhosa, but perhaps that was what the original text wanted to convey.

Regarding the technical aspects of *Inkwenkwezi efihlakeleyo*, the orthographic convention does not adhere to the standards prescribed by PanSALB in 2019. For instance, the auxiliary verb in the future tense is frequently separated from the predicate. Additionally, while there are some typographical errors throughout the text, pages 88–90 require revision for future editions. Lastly, the author’s birth year is incorrectly

stated as 1994 on the final page, which will also need to be corrected.

In conclusion, Xolisa Guzula's translation of this novel offers access to a classic children's story that explores societal issues in a unique manner, reminiscent of traditional *iintsomi* (folktales) but with its own distinctive approach. Through themes such as bullying, poverty, and witchcraft, the story explores complex social challenges. This work exemplifies a

fresh and innovative reinvention of post-1994 literature, contributing meaningfully to contemporary narratives.

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