



Post-apartheid representations of youth in the Zulu novel *Kungasa ngifile*

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Abstract

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In this article representation of black African youth in the Zulu novel "Kungasa ngifile" is examined. The view is presented that the novel, though seeming to be politically neutral, deals with images of the youth that have ideological concerns in terms of theme, plot action and character portrayal. Such ideological modes of representation seem to be in tune with the present call for moral rejuvenation and the empowerment of the youth who lost opportunities during the liberation struggle. In this respect, the novel backs positive post-apartheid cultural forms.

Opsomming

Postapartheidvoorstellings van die jeug in die Zoeloe-roman *Kungasa ngifile*

In hierdie artikel word ondersoek ingestel na die voorstelling van die swart Afrika-jeug in die Zoeloe-roman "Kungasa ngifile". Daar word aangevoer dat die roman, hoewel dit skynbaar polities neutraal is, die temas, storielyn en karakteruitbeelding gebruik om 'n beeld van die jeug voor te hou wat met ideologiese belange besiel is. Hierdie ideologiese voorstellingsmodusse weerspieël skynbaar die huidige oproep tot morele vernuwning en die bemagtiging van die jeug, wat geleenthede tydens die vryheidstryd verloor het. Sodoende plaas die roman postapartheid kulturele vorme in 'n positiewe lig.

1. Introduction

Representations of the black African youth in novels in African languages in Southern Africa have always been inescapably linked to historical and cultural foundations and as such, can be understood to be concerned with ideological issues. The representations are ideological in the sense that thematic concerns, plot action and character portrayal deal with social, political, economic and cultural productions and reproductions that aim to normalise, totalise and naturalise assumptions, values and norms of the time. Such modes of portraying the black African youngsters are evident in three modern literary periods of African literature in South Africa: the missionary literary period, which is "roughly from the early 1800s to the beginning of the twentieth century" (Ntuli & Swanepoel, 1993:6), the apartheid literary period, which encompasses literary texts written under apartheid's repressive laws and violent conditions and the post-apartheid literary period, which commences with the inception of democracy in 1994.

The purpose of this article in investigating representations of black African youth¹ in the literary periods identified above, is to attempt to capture common patterns trends and developments in them. The intension is to demonstrate how *Kungasa ngifile* is representative of the novels that deal with traditional and moral issues within the post-apartheid ideological framework.

The article proceeds with the representations of youth in missionary novels and will concentrate on Thomas Mofolo's trilogy *Moeti wa botjhabela* (1907), *Pitseng* (1910) and *Chaka* (1925).

2. Representations of youth in missionary novels

The earliest novels in the African languages of Southern Africa represent youth in terms of the "moral question of the struggle between good and bad" (Bodunde, 2001:1). Such novels aim to teach the youth to be good Christians through the didactic message that is often overt in nature in terms of plot structure, theme and character. Thomas Mofolo's characters in *Moeti wa botjhabela*, *Pitseng* and *Chaka* are represented in the following somewhat simple plot actions apparently for moral concerns:

1 Henceforth will be used interchangeably with "youth", "young people" and "youngsters".

- *Moeti wa botjhabela*:
 - Fekisi's problems with corruption and killings in Lesotho.
 - Fekisi's quest, travel and problems in the wilderness.
 - Fekisi's conversion to Christianity and subsequent death and entrance into heaven.
- *Pitseng*:
 - Katse's life in Pitseng.
 - The travels of Alfred.
 - Alfred's marriage to Aria in Pitseng and Katse's death.
- *Chaka*:
 - The childhood of Chaka.
 - Chaka's development into a warrior.
 - Chaka as a king and his death.

Mofolo apparently portrays *individual* characters that are larger than life and different from other members of their community with an aim to emphasise the triumph of good over bad. They therefore assume allegorical status.

3. Representations of youth in novels published during the apartheid era

A high percentage of the African novels written during the apartheid literary period represent the youngster as the prodigal son. The typical situation in the novel is that of a male protagonist who rebels against his rural parents and moves to urban areas where he is corrupted and frustrated. In a high percentage of the novels, the young rebel eventually goes back home and becomes a moral, respectable and dignified person who lives happily ever after, as if he were a fairytale character. By contrast, the rebel who does not eventually go back home, is portrayed as a tragic character who meets his fate because of going against his parents' wishes. This presents an obvious moral lesson.

In such novels thematic issues, plot action and character portrayal reveal obvious didactic and political interests. Such themes evidently supported the apartheid policies that were enforced by stringent laws, such as the Population Registration Act and the Group Areas Act. The explicit message was that the reader's place was in the

rural areas. This attempt was in line with the political endeavour to ethnicise and tribalise black Africans as heterogeneous groups that belonged in different "Bantustans". On the other hand, the white man was racialised and homogenised as the "master race" with the claim to common South African citizenship.

Such novels are amazingly silent about rural poverty and other social problems that resulted from the obsession with race and ethnicity, which became the foundations of open discrimination. Little is also said about labour exploitation and the devastation wrought by forced removals, which characterised apartheid's "tribalisation" mission.

Furthermore, there was concern about the youth moving to the towns on the part of parents in all population groups in Southern Africa during the period of industrialisation; hence the "Jim-goes-to-town" novel became common across languages and borders. Tsabedze (1996) observes that in Nyembezi trilogy *Inkinsela yaseMngungundlovu* (1961), *Ubudoda abukhulelwa* (1966) and *Mntanami, mntanami* (1975) the town is seen as corrupting the youth whilst the country fosters morals. Moeketsi and Zulu (2003) have observed that the Basotho youth who leave the rural areas to go to urban areas, are generally represented in a simple plot structure: good in rural areas and bad in urban areas, then turning to good again in the rural areas. Mathonsi (2002:210) has observed that a similar pattern "runs through much of Zulu, Xhosa and Venda literatures" and he points out that in Kubheka's Zulu novel *Ulaka lwabaNguni*, life on the farm is presented as a better life.

Be that as it may, the literary texts dealing with the problems of urbanisation and industrialisation show the youth's loss of innocence once they arrive in towns. In his novel *The Madonna of Excelsior*, Zakes Mda (2002:142) notes that this apartheid propaganda was broadcast by the "Radio Bantu of the South African Broadcasting Corporation. Dramatic stories of heroes who fought against ungodly terrorists in the bush. Stories that extolled the virtues of those who chose to stay in the rural homelands, rather than go to the cities to make nuisance of themselves there."

The literature of this period also presents youth grappling with problems around the struggle between African and Western cultures. The struggle takes forms such as forced and arranged marriages, initiation and belief systems. Mathonsi (2002:208) points out that "conflict between tradition and modernisation, or African versus Western ways of life ... constitutes a constant motif in most

early literatures” of African languages. Depending on the preferred dichotomy, the writers of such novels often choose plot structures that privilege either the African or the Western system and therefore portray characters that are somewhat lifeless, because of the forced and privileged notion.

It seems that both missionary and apartheid representations of youths in the African language novel were in vogue with the ideological modes of interpretation of the time. The fact that the novel is obviously “speaking for” missionaries and apartheid policies, shows collusion and conformity. Thus, the literary texts impose religious and political views that “involve certain assumptions, prejudices, blindnesses and insights, all of which have a historical provenance, but exclude other possibly equally valid statements” (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 1998:73). Considering that there was some form of religious and political opposition, the colluding and conforming modes of representation can be taken to be “speaking against” the represented subjects, namely “the ready-made audience of helpless schoolchildren” (Gérard, 1983:56), because the literary texts – “most of which read like Sunday school tracts” (Chapman, 1996:218, footnote 12) - are “writing[s] produced for schools” (Chapman, 1996:216) ‘and consequently do not address serious social issues. Gérard (1983:55) contends that such a situation resulted from

... the status granted to the vernaculars in the so-called ‘Bantu’ education in the early fifties – together with the demands of censorship – [was] certainly not conducive to mature writing dealing responsibly with real problems of the social structure.

Chapman (1996:216) thus states:

... a challenge facing South Africa in future is the resuscitation of African-language literature as an intelligent, adult activity.

Such was the African literature of “writers in shackles”, as Ntuli (1987) rightly observes. Post-apartheid African language literature is now regarded as an intelligent adult activity and it is certainly no longer “a profitable commercial proposition” (Gérard, 1983:55) with blatant didactic messages meant for the “helpless schoolchildren” (Gérard, 1983:56). The literature of African languages was freed from the apartheid chains from 1990, with the unbanning of political activity in South Africa, as is evident from the studies by Grobler (1995), Canonici (1998), Swanepoel (1998; 1999), Zulu (1999), Mathonsi (2002) and Groenewald (2004). Yet, it is important to note that the post-apartheid African language novel has somewhat

overenthusiastically reacted to the views that African languages literature is immature and childish and not sufficiently committed to social effects. As a result, an unfairly high percentage of the novels are adult rather than youth novels and both types are concerned with social issues.

4. Representations of youth in the post-apartheid novel

The black African youth in most of the post-apartheid African language novels are represented in line with the ideology of the liberation movement – an indication that such novels were probably written during the struggle years. The youth later become involved in the liberation struggle. Perhaps Jadezweni (2001:180) has a point in maintaining that some African language writers have felt that they, too, were to “fight [apartheid] with the pen” for their ultimate freedom. Such writers, Jadezweni (2001:180) observes, felt that “instead of choosing the route to violent action or taking arms”, should rather “mobilise a huge number of [African language] speakers to express their resistance to oppression”. They wrote as spokespersons of the masses, adding an opposing voice to the domination and degradation that marked apartheid. Jadezweni (2001:180) points out that the writers saw literature as the “most effective weapon” against apartheid ideology. In this signification, literature was perceived as the weapon of struggle.

Following this consciousness-raising primary function of literature, the youth in most post-apartheid novels, are represented as liberation fighters. In this regards it can be said that the “socio-political events of the apartheid era have become the major subject matter for the African languages novel of the 1990s” (Zulu, 1999:10). The Xhosa novels *Iqhina lomtshato* (*The knot of marriage* – 1995) by Mayosi, *Ukhozi olumaphiko* (*The eagle with huge wings* – 1996) by Saule and *Koda kube nini na?* (*How long?* – 1998) by Ngewu, for example, represent youth as liberation fighters. In the same way, Mngadi’s Zulu novel, *Asikho ndawo bakithi* (*We are nothing* – 1996) portrays the youth as victims of the apartheid land and urban areas acts. *Iziboshwa zothando* (*Prisoners of love* – 2003) by the same author, presents miscegenation and interracial love between black African woman and Afrikaner man during the height of apartheid. Two Sesotho novels, *Nonyana ya tshepo* (*The bird of hope* – 1997) by Zulu and Mohapi’s *Lehlaba la lephako* (*The pangs of hunger* – 1999) represent black and white conflict on white-owned farms – in Zulu’s novel of the apartheid era and in Mohapi’s novel of the post-apartheid South Africa. Maake’s Sesotho youth novel *Kodiyamalla*

(*Dirge* – 1999) explores the “love relationship of the two main characters, Teboho and Dimakatso, that takes place in the midst of high-frequency violent clashes between hostel dwellers and the township residents of the East Rand” (Zulu, 2002:274).

On the other hand, Ngewu’s novel, *Koda kube nini?* shows some measure of disillusionment with and pessimism on account of some social issues of the democratic South Africa. The protagonist in the novel is a young liberation fighter who returns from exile to a free South, during which he was involved in guerrilla activities. He joins the former apartheid defence force and is shocked to learn that apartheid is intact in that department. He tries to change the situation, but is kicked out and goes to his former homeland, Transkei, and there witnesses abject poverty and degradation – an utter embarrassment to the democratic country for which he fought. Mngadi’s novel, *Kuyoqhuma nhlamvana (Time will tell* – 2004) is similarly critical of post-apartheid crime and corruption in the police force. The novel represents corrupt young police force members that disrupt the fine work against crime.

But modes of youth representation that promote racial harmony, reconstruction and reconciliation in post-apartheid South Africa have emerged in two youth novels published in 1998, namely Bhengu’s Zulu novel *Itshwele lempangele (The chick of the guinea fowl)* and *Pshesheya kweTsitsa*, the Xhosa novel by Kaschula and Maseko, (translated by Kaschula as *The Tsita River and beyond*). In the Zulu novel interracial stereotypes and love between a young Zulu man and a young Indian woman are explored. The couple adopts a white orphan boy, Paul. The birth of their “coloured” daughter symbolises the victory of interracial marriages and multiculturalism in post-apartheid South Africa.

Likewise, *Pshesheya kweTsitsa* (Kaschula, 2003:64) presents the

... concept of unknown relationships in order to find a point of connectedness between two ostensibly different worlds, which are trying to innately find a common voice. This is presented in the novel through the use of two voices, that of an English-speaking youth, David, and that of a Xhosa-speaking youth,

Themba. These voices trace the characters' development from growing up in a rural area to attending school in an urban area.²

Representations of youth in *Kungasa ngifile* will now be examined.

4.1 Representations of youth in *Kungasa ngifile*

The Zulu youth novel *Kungasa ngifile* (*Over my dead body*) by E.D.M. Sibiyi was published in 2002 by Tafelberg. The novel won the 2002 Silver Medal awarded by Tafelberg in the IsiZulu Youth Novel category and has been shortlisted, according to the M-Net Book Prize announcement of 17 June 2004, as one of three novels out of twelve for the final selection of the 2004 M-Net Book Prize Winner. This is some indication that *Kungasa ngifile* has made a mark as a youth novel of the 2000s.

How does *Kungasa ngifile* represent post-apartheid black African youth? The novel raises issues concerned with moral consciousness with regard to post-apartheid black African youth. It apparently joins the voices that call for moral regeneration. Magwaza (2004:41) observes "there is a national outcry in South Africa regarding ... prevailing low morals" because "South Africa is going through a process which could be described as a form of moral degradation". The novel raises the readers' awareness of the moral degradation affecting the youth and it affirms the possibility of positive change among the youth whose values and morals have been eroded and corrupted in the fight against apartheid. The novelist calls for a return to Zulu customs (p. 84-85) that were suspended during the liberation struggle as Bhengu (1995:5) indicated:

[The youth's] involvement in the struggle was less by design than it was a spontaneous response to the abnormal conditions imposed by the apartheid system. In particular, the alienation of the black South African youth from mainstream economic, political and social life evoked angry responses ranging from disaffection [with] school work, classroom disobedience, school boycotts, 'stayaways', toyi-toyi, and battles with police to social crime and gangsterism.

2 For the latest developments in the literary history of African languages in Southern Africa, see Bill and Mthumba (2001), articles published in *South African Journal of African Languages* 23(2) and Groenewald (2004).

The youth's fixation on the struggle for liberation resulted in moral decay, disciplinary problems and a somewhat unbridgeable generation gap, as Campbell (1994:1) indicates:

Parents complained that they had no control over their children. They referred repeatedly to the breakdown of respect, which they cited as the pillar of traditional African social relations. Closely related to this issue was evidence of the transformation of structures of authority/obedience within families, as well as the changing face of traditional defined hierarchical power relations of age and gender.

It is clear that the results of the ill-disciplined struggle days still negatively affect post-apartheid's quest for national reconciliation and moral rejuvenation. Magwaza (2004:41) points out that "many people, from all walks of life, have raised concerns about the social state of moral decline in South Africa". Consequently, there is serious concern on the part of the post-apartheid community about developing affirmative interventions for apartheid's "lost generation": "defiant heroes and heroines who boycotted and burnt their way indelibly into human history" – "a generation of highly politicised young people leading the struggle in the streets of the townships" (Bhengu, 1995:7).

Since the inception of democracy, the defiant heroes and heroines have come to be called the "marginalised youth". Bhengu (1995:5) describes the term *marginalised* as "youth who are school dropouts". Msomi (2004:17) calls them

the 'forgotten', disillusioned and often jobless former 'young lions' who feel hard done by because they do not share the spoils of a revolution they sacrificed their formative years for.

Therefore, as Bhengu (1995:9) points out, there is a move to show the youth that they are owed redress because of their sacrifice and involvement in the liberation of South Africa:

Clearly, the dramatic impact of the interaction between South African youth and the apartheid system reveals the enormous debt that the new South Africa owes to the youth who stood at the forefront of the struggle for liberation. The debt comprises not only what South Africa gained, but what the youth of South Africa have lost in sacrifices and suffering.

The post-apartheid problems of the "marginalised youth" that need to be addressed, according to Bhengu (1995:3), are diverse:

- the youth are being victimised by unfair labour practices;
- the imprisoned youth complain about the dearth of educational facilities in prisons;
- young mothers complain of being shunned by school officials and family friends after falling pregnant;
- pregnant youth and young mothers and the HIV positive youth complain about the lack of support services.

The urgent need for compensation is unmistakable in the youth policy document:

These expressions of pain, alienation and desire for assistance underscore the urgency of the need to redress the multiple and complex problems confronting youth in South Africa (Bhengu, 1995:3).

In view of such problems, a National Youth Commission was set up to deal with the after-effects of apartheid on the youth and to continually search for constructive, empowering and affirmative solutions and descriptions. Sibiyá's novel, *Kungasa ngifile* gives the impression of joining this call. Through its thematic matter, plot action and characterisation the novel advocates the renewal of traditional African morals and values that should redefine the liberated youth. In order to achieve this objective, the youth in *Kungasa ngifile* are represented in terms of the good/bad dichotomy. The protagonist, Senzo, and his girlfriend, Nokuthula, epitomise sexually moral young women and men who uphold traditional African values and virtues – Zitha, young MaMemela and her lover, Zondi, stand for sexually immoral youngsters. The debauched Zitha is portrayed as a young man who has many girlfriends, *izintombi uxhaxha* (p. 11), in order to impress his friends. This was the case since he was in grade six – *ibanga lesithupha* (p. 10). Eventually, three of his many girlfriends became pregnant and he thought that he was unfortunate. His father forced him to marry one of them and to leave school prematurely and he, as a married youngster, has to live with the consequences of his depraved past:

Nami ngiyalikhalela ithuba lami engalilahlayo. Ubusoka bami bangilethela izindleko ezinkulu. Futhi ubungane lobu buyahlupha. Mina ngabaneshwa elingandile. Ukukhulelisa izintombi ezintathu ngesikhathi esisodwa akuyiyona into encane. Nobaba angimsoli ngokungiyekisa isikole. Wayengeke akwazi ukondla izingane zami kanye nami (Sibiyá, 2002:11).

[I regret the time I wasted. My popularity with girls brought in heavy expenses. But it was also the problem of friends. I was unfortunate in an unusual way. To impregnate three girls within a short time is not a trivial matter. I do not grudge my father for making me leave school prematurely. He could have not managed to support me and my children.]

In this way, youngsters are represented as being under peer group pressure to do the wrong things or to impress others with their wayward behaviour. They are constructed as particularly deviant and deficient in common sense, so that they indulge in pre-marital sex, become school dropouts, experience the problems of teenage pregnancies and consequently become adolescent parents who are maintained by their parents together with their children. Those who do not get married, obviously become single adolescent parents. Because the youth are school dropouts, they are presented as failing to obtain the high-quality jobs they could have had if they were better educated. Good education is considered in the novel as admittance to high-class work, which enormously improves quality of life and prospects for self-worth for black African youth. Senzo, who is studying and working at a university, stands for this view about the value of education in the African community in South Africa. Zitha is represented as a youth who regrets being lead astray by his peers. He feels that, because of trying to impress his friends by devoting his precious time to girls instead of school books, he has lost the opportunity to be better, like his friend. He lives with the punishment, as the reader learns:

Wukududana okuhluphayo. Uma usemncane usuke ujatshuliswe ukuthi unezintombi uxhaxha ungazi ukuthi konke lokhu kunomthelela ekusaseni lakho (Sibiya, 2002:11).

[The problem is to flatter one another. If you are young, you get joy that you have many girlfriends and you forget that that has negative results on your future.]

In the same way, young MaMemela and Zondi are represented as sexually active and the older MaMemela is presented as a mother who lives with the negative consequences of her dissipated youth. When she was a maiden, she fell in love with Zondi, who was a soccer star and consequently was loved by many girls who were his fans. Whenever he scored a goal, they used to shout “*uzolalala la*” (p. 23) (he will sleep here) – indicating that they were openly inviting him to sleep with them. There was some sort of competition to win his heart and bask in his fame. He therefore had too many girlfriends (*wayenezintombi uxhaxha* – p. 24) and despite that, added

MaMemela, then known as Zanele, to his list. She became pregnant and aborted the child (p. 24). After her marriage to Mhlungu, Zondi blackmailed her to get her back and she became pregnant with Senzo. Seeing Senzo always stirs her guilty conscience, because she committed adultery in Mhlungu's household. In the novel the deceit is rendered as *ihlazo leminyakanyaka* (p. 64 – the disgrace of many years ago).

In this regard, MaMemela is represented as disreputable and she symbolises the youth who indulge in pre-marital sex, because of peer pressure and the adulation of the famous. The result of her behaviour was pregnancy and the abortion of her unwanted child to escape the shame. In this regard, the novel appears to say that pre-marital sex leads to teenage pregnancy and abortion, which are regarded as against Zulu "traditional behavioural guidelines for respectful behaviour" (Campbell, 1994:61). It has been pointed out that "such a girl is seen as having loose morals. She has lost face, which is a disgrace to her parents and family" (Zulu, 2000:281).

It is clear therefore, that the novel supports traditional Zulu custom that requires that the youth practise abstinence from sex as Campbell (1994:61) indicates:

According to [traditional Zulu] family recipes for living, a respectable young woman should abstain from sexual relationships for as long as possible. The emphasis on abstinence was justified on one or both of two grounds. The first justification for sexual abstinence related to matters of reputation. The reputation of a young woman and to a certain extent the reputation of her family was linked to her sexual virtue. Sexual virtue involved either abstaining from sexual relationships altogether or in the case of sexually active women, remaining faithful to one boyfriend at a time. The second justification for sexual abstinence was a pragmatic one, and related to the support for children.

Such decent behaviour does not only promote respect for young persons, but also for their families. The protagonists of the novel, Senzo, and his lover, Nokuthula, are embodiments of the espoused Zulu tradition. Nokuthula is represented in the novel as a Zulu girl who is the epitome of self-respect and respect for her community – values known as *ukuzihlonipha* and *ukuhlonipha* respectively in Zulu. Her social behaviour reveals her as restrained and righteous in the knowledge that she has one lover, Senzo, and that both of them abstain from sex, and from displaying in public that they are lovers:

Babethandana kungamajuba sibili. Nokho babevumelene ukuthi uthando lwabo akuzukuba lona lolu lokuhamba kubanjwana yonke indlela sengathi kuyabukiswa. Babevumelene ngokuthi abakwenzayo bakwenze emakhosombeni hhayi ngoba besaba yini kodwa ngoba bezihlonipha futhi behlonipha nothando lwabo (Sibiya, 2002:8-9).

[They loved each other like doves. But they agreed that their love would not be displayed by holding each other's hands in public as if they wanted to draw attention. They agreed that matters of their love should be private, not because they were afraid, but because they respected themselves and their love.]

...savumelana ngokuthi siluhloniphe uthando lwethu kanjalo nemizimba yethu (Sibiya, 2002:9).

[We agreed that we should respect our love, and so our bodies.]

Furthermore, unlike the dishonest MaMemela, Nokuthula is represented in the novel as a girl with self-worth who behaves with dignity:

Inhlonipho nesizotha ayenaso [uNokuthula] kwakumshiya uSenzo esangene (Sibiya, 2002:8).

[Nokuthula's respect and dignity made Senzo mad.]

... wayeziphethe kahle uNokuthula (Sibiya, 2002:9).

[Nokuthula practises good behaviour.]

Phela wumfazi lowaya. Intombi ngempela leya. Ngagadla ngehluleka, kulikhuni kuyitshe (Sibiya, 2002:12).

[She is indeed a woman. She is a real maiden. I courted her and eventually gave up.]

...akaqomile nhlobo (Sibiya, 2002:13).

[She has no lover.]

... ingane kaZondi iyisibonelo esihle esigodini sonke (Sibiya, 2002:59-60).

[Zondi's child is a good example in the entire region.]

Nokuthula's good behaviour becomes a motif signifying a post-apartheid girl who behaves according to the long-standing Zulu customs of sexual abstinence and self-respect. These customs were eroded by intergenerational gaps resulting from the fight for liberation and Bhengu (1995:10) describes it as follows:

Another effect of violence is that it eroded traditional relationships between elders and the youth in communities ...

In the novel's enterprise to restore long-established relationships of respect between adults and their children in communities, Nokuthula and her boyfriend, Senzo, are represented as a loving couple that do not make their love an eyesore to the community, by displaying in public that they are lovers. As a young Zulu man who is deeply in love with a maiden, Senzo treats Nokuthula with respect and dignity by encouraging sexual abstinence before marriage. He is unlike many promiscuous young Zulu men who are proud to be called *amasoka*, i.e. popular with young women. In this way, the novel disproves the deep-rooted Zulu tradition that "women were expected to be faithful to one sexual partner, men were not. Women carried the burden of worries about pregnancy, men did not" (Campbell, 1994:28). Evidently, the novel promotes gender-balanced post-apartheid codes of conduct for both young men and women: sexual abstinence before marriage is for both partners.

The novel also seems to be saying that self-respect, whether you are male or female, involves non-promiscuous behaviour and that the romanticisation of *ubusoka* is over. The modern practice of *ubusoka* is considered to be out of cultural context, because it amounts to transparent promiscuity with all its reverberations. This is so because characters with low morals such as Zitha, Zondi and MaMemela have a bleak future that is blemished by the careless sexual relationships of their youth. In contrast, the novel seems to be campaigning for *ubushimane*: unpopularity with girlfriends, which was disparaged in the ancient Zulu tradition, that celebrated *ubusoka*: popularity with girlfriends. The reader arrives at this view, because well-behaved Senzo is represented in the novel as a typical *isishimane*: a man who is unsuccessful in courting women:

USenzo wayengayiboni enye intombi angakha nayo umuzi (Sibiya, 2002:8).

[Senzo did not see any girl with whom he could start a family.]

... mhlawumbe kwakwenziwa ukuthi uyaqala nokuqonywa unkabi. Enhliziyweni yakhe wayezitshela ukuthi akekho omunye umuntu wesifazane owedlula uNokuthula (Sibiya, 2002:8).

[It could be that it was the fellow's first lover. He was sure in his heart that there was no other female person who was better than Nokuthula.]

... wayengaziboni ethandana nomunye umuntu ngaphandle kukaNokuthula (Sibiya, 2002:9).

[He did not think that he could love another woman except Nokuthula.]

... wayengakholelwa futhi yindaba yokuhambe eqonywa njengalaba bafana abaye baqonywe bese bezizwa bengamasoka bedlala ngezingane zabantu (Sibiya, 2002:9).

[He despised the idea that he should have many girlfriends like the promiscuous young men who were proud that they were popular with girls though in fact they were making sport of them.]

Indaba yamantombazana wayengayingeni nhlobo (Sibiya, 2002:10).

[He loathed relationships with girls.]

As *isishimane*, Senzo epitomises a person who devotes his time and energy to his school work and books (p. 10). Because of that, he is thus disparaged by his peers who are *amasoka* – *wayisigcono sabanye abafana* (Sibiya, 2002:10). Yet, he turns out to be the best in his group in terms of choosing the best-behaving girl, becoming educated and being distinguished in his community as an example – parents wished he were their child or that he would marry their girls:

Inhle insizwa yakho MaGambu. Ithi ilungile, kanti kayisiyena nomuntu wezintombi. Uyathokoza ngengane ethanda isikole, thina oBongane basishiya phansi isikole. USenzo kungakuhle impela abheke ngakoSindi uma esethatha (Sibiya, 2002:17).

[Your young man is handsome, MaGambu. In spite of being humble, he is not popular with maidens. You are happy to have a child who loves education. He is unlike my Bongane who became a school dropout. How I wish that he would choose Sindi when he decides to marry.]

The novel affirms positive behaviour, conveying to post-apartheid youth that sexual abstinence and being faithful to one partner not only lead to the avoidance of many social problems, but save the youth from the prevalence of HIV and AIDS:

Angithi bathi kuhle ukuziphatha kahle kulezi zinsuku ngoba nalu nalolu bhuhane lwesifo luqoba luyavunguza. Konje kuthiwa yini ... i-Eysi? (Sibiya, 2002:19).

[It is good to behave well these days because there is this disease that kills people in great numbers. What do they call it? ... Aids?]

As a young man who respects himself and his partner, Senzo believes that the culmination of love, according to Zulu culture (p. 70), is marriage. This encourages young people to pay *ilobolo* (dowry) for their future wives, as a sign of their respect for them, so that they can live with them. But doing the opposite, is a symbol of disrespect and is against tradition:

Isiko lethu thina bantu lithi uma intombi usuyidinga kufanele uyilobole, hhayi le ndaba yokuhlala nomuntu ngokungekho emthethweni nasosikweni (Sibiya, 2002:70).

[Our custom is that when you need a young woman, you must marry her, not cohabit, or live with her unlawfully, or out of custom.]

The novel also presents another type of a morally undesirable young persons, namely ex-prisoners, like Bhibi Nzuza. People like him are hardened killers, thieves, dagga-smokers, women-abusers, rapists and assassins. MaMemela's desperate need to hide her dissolute past drives her to hire Bhibi Nzuza to assassinate Nokuthula.

5. Conclusion

The message to the youth in *Kungasa ngifile* is captured in Campbell's (1994:59) view that "respect is the cornerstone of traditional African social relationships, both in the family and in the wider community". As a result of this view, the novel appears to re-evaluate and then select part of the tradition that is useful and to blend this with new social forms in order to build the new nation. With this meaning, the presentation of youth in *Kungasa ngifile* promote the post-apartheid construct of liberated, but responsible youth. To achieve this, the novel reconstructs a modernist image: unifying, homogenising and naturalising within the dominant post-apartheid culture of redress and empowerment.

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Key concepts:

Kungasa ngifile

moral consciousness

representations: black African youth

Zulu youth novel, ideological concerns: theme, plot and character portrayal

Zulu tradition

Kernbegrippe:

jeugroman, Zoeloe, ideologiese belange: tema, storielyn en karakteruitbeelding

Kungasa ngifile

morele bewussyn

voorstellings: swart Afrika-jeug

Zoeloe tradisie