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Celimpilo Dladla

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A THEORETICAL ANALYSIS OF TRANSLATING DANTE'S *INFERNO* INTO ISIZULU: BALANCING CULTURAL ADAPTATION AND POETIC FIDELITY

CELIMPILO PIETY DLADLA
(University of the Witwatersrand, RSA)

Sommario
Questo articolo prende in esame l'intricato processo di traduzione dell'Inferno di Dante dalla versione inglese di Nichol (2014) all'isiZulu, una delle lingue sudafricane, basandosi su varie teorie della traduzione. Storicamente, la traduzione dell'Inferno, poema caratterizzato da complesse allegorie e da un ricco simbolismo, ha presentato notevoli sfide, in particolare nel mantenere i toni filosofici del poema rendendolo allo stesso tempo accessibile ai non italofoni. Questo articolo analizza le trasformazioni culturali e linguistiche necessarie per adattare l'Inferno ai parlanti isiZulu, concentrandosi sull'equilibrio tra traduzione semantica e traduzione comunicativa.

Keywords: Culture, poetry, translation process, translation theories, reflexivity

Introduction

The translation of Dante Alighieri's *Inferno* from its original Italian into various languages represents a significant milestone in the cross-cultural dissemination of this seminal literary work. *Inferno*, the first part of Dante's Divine Comedy, is an allegorical journey through hell, laden with symbolic, philosophical, and theological nuances. Its

translations, especially into English, have multiplied over time, highlighting the universal appeal and enduring relevance of Dante's vision. As Altieri (1998:28) notes, English boasts the most translations of *Inferno*, underlining the linguistic and cultural challenges and complexities that translators have faced as readers from different languages an opportunity to "travel by a different road" as indicated in lines 91 to 96 below with an isiZulu translation:

English	**IsiZulu**
"Now you must travel by a different road," He answered when he saw that I was weeping, "If you wish to escape from this wild wood. This beast, the reason that you cry out loud, Will not let people pass along this way, But hinders them, and even has their blood."	"Manje kumele uhambe ngenye indlela," Waphendula lapho ebona ukuthi ngikhihla isililo, "Uma ufisa ukuphunyuka kuleli hlathi elesabekayo. Lesi silo, imbangela yokuba ukhihle isililo, Angeke sivumele abantu ukuba badlule ngale ndlela, Kepha siyabanqanda, futhi sigxaza igazi labo."

Table 1: Translation of lines 91-96 of Inferno

This paper analyses this addition of an isiZulu translation to the number of languages that honour the work of Dante, from J.G. Nicholas (2014) English translation, published by Alma Books. The Alma Books' website states that Nicholas, the Liverpool born poet and translator, is a renowned translator of Italian classics such as Dante's *Divine Comedy*, Boccaccio's *Decameron*, and Leopardi's *Canti*; and was awarded the Florio and Monselice Prizes for his great work[1]. Given that he is an English native speaker, his translation resonated better with me as a second language speaker of English. In addition, his translation included the Italian source text which enabled me to verify the translation with the assistance of my colleagues who are native Italian speakers.

[1] See https://almabooks.com/alma-author/j-g-nichols/

The work analysed herein reflects on significant translational decisions, emphasising the *skopos* (intention of the text) of the original work while navigating the linguistic and cultural landscapes between the source and target texts. Key aspects of this paper include maintaining poetic forms, adapting cultural symbols, and the strategic use of domestication in lieu of foreignisation. This was deemed important in the production of a culturally significant text that speaks directly to the hearts and minds of its new audience.

Background: Translations of *Inferno*

The literary world has witnessed numerous translations of Dante's *Inferno*, originally penned in Italian. In instances where direct translation from Italian was unfeasible, intermediary translations have been employed such as in the isiZulu translation. Despite the inherent complexities and challenges faced by translators in conveying this allegorical journey — steeped in gloom, fear, and passion — into different languages, English stands out as the language with the most translations (Altieri, 1998:28).

The availability of many English translations enabled me, as a translator, to also embark on this journey of literary voyage through the translation from J.G. Nichols (2014). My inspiration in this translation project was fuelled by the warm reception of the work by South African students narrated in a book by Fanucchi and Virga (2021). These scholars assert the following:

> [we] noticed that the *Commedia* affected South African students in a very personal and meaningful way and that our students responded to it passionately. They tended to see themselves reflected in Dante's epic journey through the after-world, and found themselves grappling with the challenges that the text poses to their political and ethical beliefs. It became very clear that Dante struck a note among our students, despite his text's cultural, temporal and linguistic distance from them. Many of them found themselves conversing with the text in the sense that they

> transposed its language and imagery into the realm of their own experience, a process that involved both resisting and accepting Dante's vision. (Fanucchi & Virga, 2021:14)

The observed positive reception of Dante's vision among students engaged in a bilingual study of the *Divine Comedy* in Italian and English provides a compelling indicator of the narrative's enduring power. This narrative posits that linguistic mediation plays a crucial role in shaping the subjective interpretation of the epic by readers, thereby suggesting that the personal and emotional impact of the work may be substantially enhanced when readers engage with it in their native languages. According to Nelson Mandela (1995), language is key in communicating with others and comprehending them; one cannot convey their dreams and desires, understand their past, cherish their poetry, or enjoy their music if they do not completely understand the language they speak. Mandela is often quoted when expressing the importance of speaking to people in their home languages as that transports the message straight to their hearts (Ginsburgh & Weber, 2011). Translating *Inferno* to isiZulu facilitated the transportation of Dante's vision to a new community of readers.

Translation theories

In this comparative analysis of translated texts, the focus was on the challenges encountered during translation. This demanded dependence on translation theories and exploring different translation strategies to achieve the intended meaning of the original poem. My primary goal in this translation was to create a text that conveyed the message of the source text rather than the cultural context. In this paper, I reflect on the translation process taking into account the reflexive methods in translation, semantic translation and communicative translation.

- **Reflexive methods in translation**

Kadiu (2019) critically analysed the reflection process of the translation activity, drawing from Venuti (2018) who discussed the invisibility of the translator. Kadiu (2019) argues that reflection in translation is a way to showcase the journey taken by the translated work, emphasising the

status of the new text as a separate document and viewing it as an ethical act that exposes the cultural distinctions between the source text and the target text. Many translators of Dante's *Inferno* include annotations explaining translation decisions and sometimes apologising for not fully capturing the intended message due to the poet's artistry (Altieri, 1998). They make themselves visible as translators, informing the readers that the work they are reading is not the original document. They present issues that may have affected the cultural elements of the target culture and describe how they used various strategies, informed by translation theories and experiences, to create an adequate translation. Likewise, this paper analysed the translation through semantic and communicative translation theory by Newmark (1977).

- **Semantic translation vs communicative translation**

Building on theories of equivalence in translation, Peter Newmark (1977) discussed semantic translation and communicative translation, suggesting that translation studies should consider the impact of the text based on the methods used during translation. This involves deciding whether to prioritise loyalty to the source text or the target text.

> Communicative translation aims to have a similar effect on readers as the original text. Semantic translation aims to convey the exact contextual meaning of the original text as closely as possible within the constraints of the second language (Budiman *et al*., 2023:39).

Therefore, when translating using semantic translation, one should remain faithful to the source text and employ strategies that convey cultural elements and linguistic appropriateness, while placing the target text reader in a similar position to the reader of the source text, with the difference being the languages used. However, this strategy may result in the translated text sounding awkward or unfamiliar to the new reader due to foreign concepts. To address this issue, substitutes and explanations may be used in the translation.

On the other hand, when the translator utilises communicative translation strategies, their loyalty is to the reader of the target text.

They aim for the reader of the target text to understand the message from another language in a way that is relevant to their culture and language, eliminating any awkwardness or unfamiliarity that may come from the original language's culture. The primary focus of this approach is to satisfy the recipient, making sure that they grasp the intended message from the original author, but in their own cultural context. When a phenomenon does not exist in the target culture, the translator can replace that with a phenomenon that has the same attributes as the text even if it may be different. Thus, in the translation of *Inferno*, this approach of communicating the message to the target readers in their culture was adopted for culturally challenging aspects of the text. Budiman *et al.* (2023) contrast features of the communicative and semantic translation approaches.

Parameter	*Semantic translation*	*Communicative translation*
Transmitter/addressee focus	Focus on the thought processes of the transmitter as an individual; should only help TT reader with connotations if they are a crucial part of message	Subjective, TT reader focused, oriented towards a specific language and culture
Culture	Remains within the SL culture	Transfers foreign elements into the TL culture
Time and origin	Not fixed in any time or local space; translation needs to be done anew with every generation	Ephemeral and rooted in its own contemporary context
Relation to ST	Always 'inferior' to ST; 'loss' of meaning	May be 'better' than the ST, but overriding 'loyalty' to TL norms
Use of form of SL	If ST language norms deviate, then this must be replicated in TT; 'loyalty' to ST author	Respect for the form of the SL, but overriding 'loyalty' to TL norms
Form of TL	More complex, awkward, detailed, concentrated, tendency to overtranslate	Smoother, simpler, clearer, more direct, more conventional; tendency to undertranslate
Appropriateness	For serious literature autobiography, 'personal effusion' any important political (or other) statement	For the vast majority of texts, e.g., non-literary writing, technical and informative texts, publicity, standardized types, popular fiction
Criterion for evaluation	Accuracy of reproduction of the significance of ST	Accuracy of communication of ST message in TT

Figure 1: Newmark's semantic and communication translation (Budiman, 2023:40-41).

The translation of *Inferno* required careful consideration of factors influenced by translation, and decisions had to be made regarding the most suitable translation approach to use. According to Budiman *et al* (2023), translators have the flexibility to utilise multiple approaches based on the purpose of the target text. This reflective article examines

the translated text by evaluating each of the parameters identified in *Figure 1*.

Research methodology

This was a qualitative analysis of the translation, based on an interpretivist approach employed to studying the isiZulu translation of a culturally embedded poem that is situated in context. I present and compare different versions of the translation. I also explain the translation strategies that were informed by Newmark's translation theories, which were employed during the translation process leading to the final translation of Canto 1 of *Inferno* from Nichols' (2014) translation edition of the book into isiZulu.

Reflecting on the translation of *Inferno* into isiZulu

As previously stated, the main purpose of the translated text is to introduce readers to Dante's presentation of hell through his poetic encounter. The evaluation of this translation is carried out using parameters presented by Budiman *et al* (2023) in *Figure 1* to wit the use of form, addressee and culture.

a. Use of form of the source language: Translation with the intention of maintaining rhymes

Rhyme is a crucial element in poetry, therefore, this section examines the use of rhymes in the original text and how this influenced the translation process leading to the recreation of rhymes in the translated versions (Translation A and Translation B).

(i) Translation A

Halfway along our journey to life's end I found myself astray in a dark wood, Since the right way was nowhere to be found.	Eminyakeni yami yobunsizwa umoya usahlangene nenyama Ngazithola ngidukele ehlathini elimnyama Indlela eyiyonayona yayifiphaliswe yibo lobo

How hard a thing it is to express the horror Of that wild wood, so difficult, so dense! Even to think of it renews my terror.	bumnyama. Ngiswele amagama okuchaza okwangithuthumelisa Kulelo hlathi elesabekayo, kunzima, kuhlasimulisa! Nokulicabanga nje kuyangiqhaqhazelisa.

(ii) Translation B

Halfway along our journey to life's end I found myself astray in a dark wood, Since the right way was nowhere to be found. How hard a thing it is to express the horror Of that wild wood, so difficult, so dense! Even to think of it renews my terror.	Maphakathi nobude bempilo ngibheke esiphethweni Ngazithola ngidukele ehlathini elimnyama, Indlela eyiyonayona ibifiphele Ngiswele amagama okuchaza lobu bunzima Behlathi elisabekayo, elinobunzima, eliminyene! Nokulicabanga nje kuhlasimulisa umzimba kabusha.

The words "*nenyama*" (with the flesh), "*elimnyama*" (that is dark), and "*bumnyama"* (darkness) rhyme. The translation incorporated the use of an isiZulu idiom used to refer to being alive, which is "*umphefumulo/ umoya usahlanganene nenyama*" (while the spirit is still intact with the flesh) leading to a full translation of line 1 in (i) as "In the years of manhood while my flesh was still intact with my flesh," instead of "*Maphakathi nobude bempilo ngibheke esiphethweni*" (in the middle of the long life heading towards the end) found in line 1 of (ii). The use of an idiomatic expression in lieu of the more direct translation was to evoke an idiomatic effect that would rhyme with the next two lines as per the Italian text structure. The sentence structure of isiZulu captured this effect succinctly as the noun comes before the adjective, leading to "*ehlathini elimnyama*" (in the dark forest) which naturally created

another rhyme in line 2 of (i) although not for (ii). In line 3, in (i) I opted to continue with the theme of darkness to help maintain the rhyme as "The right way was hidden by that darkness," instead of "The right way was hidden" in (ii). I added "*ubumnyama*" (darkness) to create a rhyme yet maintaining meaning.

Newmark in Budiman *et al* (2023), when referring to the form of the source language, says that the translator should respect the norms of the source language while maintaining those of the target language. Alwanza (2014) provides opposing views in this respect, stating that some scholars emphasise the retention of form and content of the source text and produce a translation that will be loyal to the source text even if the produced text will be foreign to readers; on the other hand, other if translators adopt Venuti's (2018) domestication, the translated texts lean more towards the target reader at the expense of the source text. The latter leads to a production of a text that is aligned with cultural norms of the target language and satisfies the function of the translated text and is less foreign to target readers.

b. Addressee: Foreignisation vs Domestication

Newmark gives translators the option of either maintaining the translated text's fidelity to the interpretation of the source text reader and translating it literally with the addition of annotations to clarify the connotations of the text. Alternatively, they can choose to eliminate the foreign elements of the text and adapt it to the cultural context of the target text reader, allowing them to understand the information without reference to the original text's environment. I analyse the translation of the text using both foreignisation and domestication strategies adopted by translators.

(i) Foreignisation

He answered: "Not a man, though I was once. Both of my parents came from Lombardy, And both of them were native Mantuan's.	Waphendula: "Angisiyo indoda, nakuba ngake ngaba yiyo. Abazali bami babengabaseLombardy, Bobabili babezalelwe eMantua.

I came to birth sub Julio, rather late, And lived in Rome under the good Augustus When false, deceptive gods still held their state."	Mina ngazalwa kubusa uJulio, selishonile ilanga, Ngahlala eRome ngaphansi kuka-Augustus olungileyo Lapho kusabusa onkulunkulu abalahlekisayo."

(ii) Domestication

He answered: "Not a man, though I was once. Both of my parents came from Lombardy, And both of them were native Mantuan's. I came to birth sub Julio, rather late, And lived in Rome under the good Augustus When false, deceptive gods still held their state."	Waphendula: "Umuntu – qha nakanye, nakuba ngake ngaba ngumuntu. Abazali bami babengabakwaZulu, BengamaZulu ngokuzalwa. Ngazalwa kusabusa uCetshwayo kaMpande, sebengincamile. Ngahlala oLundi ngaphansi kwesandla sayo belu Inyathi kaNdaba Ngenkathi kusabusa namadlozi angabakhohlisi."

In (i), the names Lombardy, Mantuan's, sub Julio, Rome, Augustus, gods may be unfamiliar to the target readers because of their contextual meaning aimed by the poet and the foreign setting of the text. In (ii), these words are translated with functional concepts chosen from South African history, and gods is substituted with *amadlozi* (ancestors) as it is a significant aspect of the target language culture. When making this comparison, I pair each foreign word from (i) with a corresponding word from (ii).

Source text	Foreignisation	Domestication
Lombardy	eLombardy (in Lombardy)	babengabakwaZulu (from the Zulu nation)
Mantuan	eMantuan (in Mantuan)	KwaZulu (in Zululand)
Julio	uJulio (Julio)	Zulu kaMalandela (Zulu son of Malandela)
Augustus	u-Augustus (Augustus)	Inkosi uCetshwayo kaMpande (King Cetshwayo son of Mpande)
Gods	Onkulunkulu (gods)	Amadlozi (Ancestors)

Table 2: Foreignisation and domestication in the translation of Dante's Canto 1 to isiZulu

Virgil claims he was born during the time of Julius Caesar (sub-Julio) as Caesar, which according to Wigodsky (1975) does not necessarily refer to Dante's birth date but to a period when Virgil, Dante's favourite poet, was born. Wigodky suggests that the interpretation of sub-Julio would be better understood if worded differently and paraphrases it as follows:

> I was born sub Julio – you know that it was Pompeio et Crasso consulibus, but I say sub Julio, even though he was late to take the place beside and above the other two for which Heaven intended him, and it is by virtue of this intention that I call that entire time sub Julio (Wigodky, 1975:181-2).

It is important to state that this paper does not delve the period referred to in the text as sub-Julio but acknowledges the historical importance of this period in the poet's life which should also resonate in the

translation. Sub Julio existed long before the recorded times of the Zulu nation, therefore, finding a suitable replacement for Julius Caesar was a challenge. I eventually decided to replace him with Cetshwayo kaMpande, who was the fourteenth Zulu king according to Mazisi Kunene (2017).

The original text also mentions Augustus, who was the first noble emperor of Rome. In the translation, I substituted Rome with uLundi, where king Cetshwayo ruled and later all the official states of the province were conducted historically. This choice was made to highlight the history of the country making the text more relatable to readers; just like the substitution of "gods" with "*amadlozi*" (ancestors). Historically, the Zulu nation paid homage to their ancestors rather than multiple gods, as seen in other parts of the world. This modification aimed to accurately reflect the Zulu cultural beliefs and practices.

The final translated text was adjusted following Venuti's domestication strategy, as mentioned earlier. By making certain decisions in the translation process, I aimed to immerse the readers in a setting that they could easily relate to without needing further explanation of the context. This approach aligns with a concept by Newmark discussed by Budeman *et al* (2023) of semantic translation, which allows for flexibility in adapting the text to suit the contemporary audience while retaining its cultural and historical roots.

The translation of this historical text was guided by the goal of ensuring that readers could connect with the content on a personal and cultural level. By localising the poet to the South African context and referencing familiar figures and places, I strived to make the text more accessible and engaging for the target audience.

c. Culture: Symbolism

In the text, Dante mentions three beasts that he encountered: the leopard, the she-wolf, and the lion. Translating the names of these animals presented challenges due to the different characteristics described by Dante, which are not typical in an African context. For animals that are not native to South Africa, I translated them by replacing them with locally available animals. When naming these beasts, I included their characteristics to evoke the descriptions provided in the original text, as follows:

(i) leopard – ingwe enguNonkanuko (BT: a leopard called Lust)
(ii) lion – ingonyama enguZigqajile (BT: a lion called Pride)
(iii) she-wolf – uMonase oyimpungushe (BT: a jackal named Greed)

The three beasts have been studied by many scholars but for this paper, I used the explanation from Chona and Adlawan (2018).

> The three beasts symbolized sins and temptations; the lion is an image of ferocity and violence but it symbolizes pride, the leopard symbolizes lust and the she-wolf symbolizes avarice or cupidity (Chona & Adlawan, 2018: 1016).

In the African context, a lion is known to be brave, courageous, and strong. It is seen as the top of the food chain and is often associated with pride due to its hierarchal position in the savannah. In African folktales, the focus is on the lion's bravery and strength rather than its pride as depicted by Dante. Therefore, the characteristics from the source text were used as the name for the lion in order to preserve the characteristics depicted by the poet. The same approach was taken in translating the leopard, which is also viewed as mighty (though to a lesser extent than the lion) and known for its spots, rather than lust.

Translating the she-wolf posed a challenge as this animal is not native to Africa. Since the poem is set in an African context, I needed to choose animals that are found in Africa to avoid creating a strange text with animals that the target readership is less familiar with. Therefore, the she-wolf was translated to a jackal as it is associated with greed as is the intention of the context. Another option could have been to follow the established example of Bible translations for 'wolf' to a 'hyena' as will be shown later in the next section of this paper but this was not followed becuase of the skopos of the text. This cultural substitution was necessary to make the text more accessible and relatable to the target audience. Additionally, I incorporated the characteristic of greediness from the source text, as hyenas are often depicted as cheeky and cunning in African culture.

It is important to preserve the characteristics of the animals as they represent the seven sins in Dante's work. By maintaining these

characteristics, the intended message of the source text is preserved and readers can better understand the symbolism behind these animals. Simply translating the names of the animals without considering their characteristics would have hindered the reader's understanding and led to misinterpretation based on their own cultural knowledge.

Discussion

IsiZulu poetry encapsulates rhythm, and rhyming is one of the strategies for capturing a rhythmic effect in literature. Sibisi and Tappe (2020) state that poetry captures and engages readers with all aspects of African life as perceived by the poet. In their study on the use of contemporary poetry in isiZulu as a tool to enhance access to academic content, they added that "rhythm and movement were seen as alluring to students and helpful for capturing and holding their attention" (Sibisi & Tappe, 2020:30). Similarly, in translation, even when the English source text does not rhyme, capturing the African rhythm found in poetry can engage the reader from the first line. The absence of rhythm in the source language form does not hinder the translator from incorporating rhythm commonly found in literature written in the target language, without deviating from the information conveyed by the foreign text.

Translators must employ the most adequate strategies in translation, placing the target addressee in mind. These strategies include choosing between domesticating and foreignising the translated text. Venuti (2018) characterises foreignisation as a translation approach that purposefully maintains the distinct linguistic and cultural elements of the original text, thereby immersing the reader in a foreign context. Conversely, domestication involves a translation method that conforms the original text to the target language's cultural norms, making it more accessible and familiar for the reader. Put simply, when domesticating, the translator decides substitute parts of the source text with parts found in the natural environment of the target reader, and when foreignising the text, translates with the intention of retaining source text concepts in their original form but in a different language, teaching the target reader about the world from which the source text originates by including foreign concepts.

The origination of the text from Italy which is miles away from South Africa, and the historical differences that exist between the two countries demanded the use of accommodative translation strategies to facilitate communication across these nations. Domesticating through changing foreign names of people, places, animals, towns and cultural practices was necessary to build a connection with the reader and arouse further interest in learning more about the poet's encounters in hell.

Another important feature in this translation was the use of symbolism based on animals where Dante refers to the three beasts he met. As already stated, this symbolism was in reference to the seven deadly sins. In Canto 1, he meets three animals or beasts — the leopard, lion and a she-wolf — which are understood differently in the African context; in the case of the she-wolf, it is non-existent. Translators must employ various strategies to mitigate cultural gaps that exist in literary translation.

> This strategy involves replacing a culture-specific item or expression with a target-language item which does not have the same propositional meaning but is likely to have a similar impact on the target reader (Baker, 2011:29).

For instance, in the case of the she-wolf, it was replaced by a jackal in the translation while the English text has the animal 'wolf'. Despite 'wolves' and 'jackals' referring to different animals, certain characteristics that they share warrant the substitution of one with the other within the cultural context. Thus, the translator's duty is to find a meeting point that does not alienate the target reader while ensuring that the intended meaning is conveyed across cultures. There are no wolves in South Africa, and to counter this and to remove the foreignness of the text to the target audience, bible translators considered the *skopos* of the biblical metaphorical use of 'wolf' as a predator (Jesse, 2000). This metaphorical use of hyena in African folklore also includes cunning predatory traits (Crandall, 2002). However, in this translation, I shifted away from the 'hyena' translation because of the intention of the source text which was to portray the wolf as greedy rather than its predatory traits. To this end, I replaced it with a 'jackal' which in African folktales is often associated with greed (Stewart, 2004). As much as the word 'wolf' is translated differently in different texts, the

skopos of both texts was to convey the characteristics rather than the animal species. As Verhovtsova (2023) defines cultural translation, it involves conveying elements of the source text to the target language within the constraints of the target language. This entails employing strategies that make the translation accessible to the target reader while still faithfully representing the original author's intent.

Thus, translators must navigate the delicate balance between maintaining the integrity of the source text and making it resonate within the cultural context of the target audience. The choice between domestication and foreignisation depends on various factors, including the purpose of the translation, the nature of the source text, and the cultural distance between the source and target languages. By employing these strategies thoughtfully, translators not only bridge linguistic divides but also foster a deeper understanding and appreciation of diverse literary traditions.

Conclusion

The translation of Dante's *Inferno* into isiZulu presents a unique and challenging endeavour that simultaneously bridges and highlights cultural, temporal, and linguistic differences. This reflective paper delves into the intricate process and decisions involved in this task, drawing from well-established translation theories and methods, such as those forwarded by Newmark (1977), Venuti (1995), and Baker (2011). A multitude of approaches of communicative translation and domestication were employed judiciously to ensure that the translated text not only remains faithful to Dante's original vision but also resonates with the cultural and linguistic contexts of South African readers.

Choices to employ rhythm and rhyme within isiZulu poetry, the substitution of culturally significant names and places, and the adaptation of symbolic elements such as the three beasts demonstrate the translator's effort to both capture and convey the essence of Dante's epic in a manner that is accessible and relatable to the target audience. This maintains the delicate balance between preserving the source text's integrity and making it comprehensible and meaningful within the context of the target culture.

The historical and cultural adaptations seen in the translation point to a broader understanding that translation is not simply a linguistic exercise but a cultural and ethical act that strives to make complex texts accessible without losing their core message. It emphasises the importance of context, both cultural and historical, in the translation process and the significant role of the translator as a mediator between worlds. Ultimately, the translation of *Inferno* into isiZulu not only enriches the literary landscape of South Africa but also provides a unique opportunity for readers to engage with Dante's timeless themes through the lens of their cultural heritage. The combined use of reflexive methods, semantic and communicative translation strategies, and culturally sensitive adaptations demonstrates that translation is a dynamic and evolving practice aimed at fostering cross-cultural understanding and appreciation.

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