

“BURYING OLD BONES IN NEW GRAVES!” LINGUISTIC CREATIVITY WITH A FOCUS ON WOMEN’S ELIGIBILITY FOR MARRIAGE IN ZULU MEMETIC APHORISMS

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ABSTRACT

In oral cultures, proverbs are a window to the very fabric of society. This article looks at how the current generation is using traditional proverbs in modern ways, by employing Zulu memetic aphorisms. These memetic aphorisms function in the same manner as memes; except that the former has no images underneath the writing. Memetic aphorisms are written in Zulu; however, they involve a lot of codeswitching and use of numbers instead of words. These memetic aphorisms are factual, ironical, funny, and use word play. They are generally acceptable comments and meaningful assertions about life in general. Memetic aphorisms have become an easy and quick way to communicate opinions of the speaker regarding the behaviour, dress code, physical appearance, social status and religious affiliation. This article will look at how the content of these memetic aphorisms is organised to criticise and shun the bad behaviour of women in an effort to prepare them for marriage. It will also look at the correlation between the languages of memes, as it relates to traditional proverbs in Zulu. The article proposes a simple typology for analysing and identifying common features between the aphorisms and traditional proverbs in Zulu social discourse. These memetic aphorisms gain their relevance and meaning in the context within which they are used.

Keywords: communication; humour; irony; relevance theory; social media



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INTRODUCTION

This article analyses memetic aphorisms as a new field in the study of Zulu, but most importantly seeks to bring about better understanding of the cultural evolution, and how rhetorical devices are understood in modern times. This is a breakthrough research foregrounding memetic aphorisms as literature is readily available on social media. Therefore, the main aim of this article is to contribute to the study of memetic aphorisms in Zulu, through empirical scrutiny—to determine how the use of rhetorical devices perpetuates gender stereotyping in a subtle and humorous manner. The boom in social media communication has seen the advent of memetic aphorisms as a unique social phenomenon amongst educated and internet-savvy Zulu-speaking communities. This article looks at the correlation between the languages of memes, as it relates to traditional proverbs in Zulu. It further looks at how these memes are gendered in the same way traditional proverbs are. These memetic aphorisms are shared by different people in online and/or offline affinity spaces, where they are held together through shared activities, interests and goals (Gee 2004).

Memetic aphorisms have become catchy and humorous sentences that people share on social media in order to cause others to laugh. These statements stand out because of the uniqueness of the language used, as well as the choice of words to illustrate the point being made. Words chosen for memetic aphorisms are metaphorical in their application, and thus give a clear picture of the intended meaning. This article concerns itself with how humour is utilised in memetic aphorisms, to be more appealing to the public. Many feminists are ambivalent towards the use of these memetic aphorisms because they feel that as humorous as the language used in them may be—they tend to be expressed in a manner that exacerbates the subordination and oppression of women, which is prevalent in patriarchal societies. They feel that humour is used strategically to conceal the fact that even in modern societies some people still strongly believe in gender hierarchies that favour men as the dominant sex. Their physical power is often equated to their intellectual capacity. Therefore, these aphorisms highlight gendered power relations in Zulu societies.

I refer to memes as aphoristic because they have no pictures, and also because I am interested in the interpretation of the textual feature; and how it is perceived by the intended audience. I also use the term memetic aphorisms to refer to the witty, humorous statements used by social media fanatics to warn women about their behaviour and the clothes they wear. This conduct (set dress code and behaviour) determines whether a woman gets married or not. These memetic aphorisms therefore, are used to ridicule women who think that they could still be married, even if they "misbehave." They also serve to sensitise the social media community of the prescribed "code of ethics" applicable to women of marriageable age. These memetic aphorisms communicate gender ideologies that may be sensitive to communicate using explicit language. Some of the collected memetic aphorisms communicate messages concerning sexuality and having multiple partners, which is behaviour

frown upon only if women engage in it. Therefore, the sense that is conveyed by these aphorisms in this regard, is that it is acceptable for men to be promiscuous; which is the "gospel truth" in patriarchal societies. Memetic aphorisms are therefore, used as tools to communicate cultural and societal values; which include, but are not limited to power dynamics between men and women and gender-related issues. Through these memetic aphorisms, the disseminator manages to express his/her sociocultural beliefs.

Africans have, from time immemorial, expected every member of their community to conform to a communal lifestyle. The use of memetic aphorisms is a rhetorical device used to strategically remind members of the group about behaviour expected from them within the group. These statements could be interpreted as perpetuating gender bias in their portrayal of women as insignificant "others", as well as reinforcing the roles expected of them in male-dominated environments. Humour is used to maximise the effectiveness of the statement and to give it a pleasant reception to the intended audience (on social media). The intention is not to make people laugh, but to have them reflect on societal norms, traditions, values, and beliefs of that society. The substratum of the relationship between men and women is gender inequality. This relationship is maintained when women are submissive to men and respect societal prescriptions regarding what constitutes acceptable behaviour for them. It should be borne in mind, in this regard, that the reward for submission and accepting that one is a lesser being when compared to their male counterparts, is marriage. Women who are assertive, independent and do not conform to societal norms and values are not eligible for marriage in patriarchal societies. According to the prescripts of such societies, women do not have the right to question the order of things in society—all that is required of them is to comply. Knobel and Lankshear (2005, 1) defines memes as "contagious patterns of cultural information that are passed from mind to mind and which directly shape and propagate key actions and mindsets of a social group." People use humour and metaphor as rhetorical devices in memetic aphorisms. This article intends to respond to the following questions:

- (a) To what extent have aphorisms replaced traditional proverbs in contemporary society?
- (b) What seems to be the difference in people's perception of male and female behaviour in traditional society?
- (c) How do people use a contemporary platform to convey conservative message on women's behaviour dictated to them?

The objectives that this study aims to meet are:

- To investigate how memetic aphorisms are employed
- To discuss the extent to which they encourage aesthetic engagement
- To demonstrate how they constitute a guide to action
- To determine the effect of memetic aphorisms to the intended audience

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXTUALISATION

When we talk of folklore we are not referring to the age-old tradition that was popular in the olden days—we are however, referring to the living and developing tradition. In Zulu oral discourse proverbs, idioms, riddles, and folktales were, and are still passed from one generation to the next through word of mouth. They become part of daily conversations to give clarity to utterances. Most people perceive folklore as children's genre, which is meant to entertain and teach children how to be responsible adults. The teaching aspect of folklore is relevant; the lesson is always clear and emphasises that there are serious repercussions to bad behaviour. Folklore teaches Zulu beliefs and philosophy to the current generation. Thus, folklores become a window into the soul of the society where they are prevalent. They give an indication of how society interprets what happens around them. I therefore, give prominence to the fact that the use of memetic aphorisms discussed in this article is a clear sign that the new generation has embraced the age-old tradition of using proverbs in daily conversation. In their broader literary forms, different folklore genres show their artistic form that could be explored by researchers to construct the worldview of societies in which they are prevalent. This assertion is evident in memetic aphorisms. The main aim of exploring this genre in contemporary social media settings is so that memetic aphorisms can be viewed as an intellectual discourse. Users of memetic aphorisms use modern styles of writing, which render them modern literary art with traditional features. The focus of this article is not on the artistic merit of aphorisms, but on the ethical issues and traditional identities.

The literate society has been very receptive of memetic aphorisms, and has accepted them as an indigenous body of knowledge in a modern space. This affirms traditional moral values, cultural identities, and collective wisdom. This also demonstrates cultural evolution and the move from a traditional space to a more modern one, but still emphasising the maintenance of cultural identities. This article therefore, focuses on gender issues and how women continue to be portrayed in patriarchal terms. It focuses on the contextual investigation of this genre in the broader oral literature spectrum. Memetic aphorisms are used as a medium for transmitting cultural knowledge in a modern way. This tendency has seen Zulu oral literature transforming from being an old-fashioned art into modern art trending on social media. The use of social media contributes to the perpetuity of indigenous beliefs and egalitarian values; and has evoked a new dimension of scholarly discourse in Zulu oral literature.

People use memetic aphorisms to sound thoughtful and to emphasise affiliations and beliefs. These aphorisms include anything that is factual, funny, and ironical; and make use of wordplay, and warn against bad behaviour. In oral cultures, proverbs are a window to the very fabric of society. Therefore memetic aphorisms function in the same manner as memes, except that the former have no images underneath the writing. Memetic aphorisms are short and straight to the point. Like proverbs, they

constitute true and meaningful assertions about life in general. What makes African Zulu proverbs particularly interesting is the fact that they are based on observations on how humans relate to each other and how they behave. Proverbs demonstrate practical wisdom that people have acquired over the years through observing how others live their lives. Like proverbs, memetic aphorisms are admonishing, and are useful because they serve as warnings against bad behaviour. It should be noted however, that most warnings about bad sexual behaviour are usually directed at women. In patriarchal societies, women are expected to behave in an acceptable manner (as prescribed by society) than men, in order for them to be eligible for marriage.

Parallels are drawn between "traditional" Zulu proverbs and memetic aphorisms to illuminate generational differences between the older generation and the youth. The usual memes are the ones written in English, which are captioned images, which give an illusion of "normalcy" by supposedly relating to the lives of ordinary people. They are presented in a humorous manner—and constitute people's opinions about contemporary situations and their interpretation of what is happening around them. The term "meme" originally refers to an idea, behaviour, or style that spreads from person to person within a culture (Dawkins 1976). Linguistic creativity can take familiar knowledge, sometimes old-forgotten references, and re-invent them in novel in surprising ways. It often relies on the intelligent adaptation of well-known text to a new context (Davison 2012); changing the language used in proverbs and making them modern.

DATA COLLECTION STRATEGY

Memetic aphorisms discussed in this article were collected randomly on social media—because once the information is made available on social media it is available for public consumption. These memetic aphorisms have become popular ways for account owners to communicate in a short and concise way. People use these "to increase the clarity as well as semantic effect of what they want to say" (Hussein 2005, 61).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The important aspect in analysing memetic aphorisms is looking at how the intended audience receives and interprets the utterance. This study adopted the ostensive-inferential communication techniques in order to analyse memetic aphorisms and focus on a) the informative intention and b) the communicative intention. Allott (2015, 12) mentions that,

The presence of the communicative intention is a criterion for whether the speaker intends to communicate in the deliberate, purposive sense that we are discussing. Moreover, the success of this intention is sufficient for successful communication. That is because if this intention succeeds, then by definition the hearer has recognized the informative intention: i.e. he realizes what it is that the speaker intended him to come to think.

The importance of these memetic aphorisms is in the message they relay to the intended audience. Memetic aphorisms are perceived as non-harmful, non-shaming and humorous statements which are intended for people to laugh; however, their underlying meaning makes it clear that they are intended to warn and ridicule women regarding the choices they make, concerning the life they lead. Alrasheedi and Dragan (2014) emphasises the fact that irony has an echoic use. This echoic use is reflected by the assumption that every utterance is an interpretation of the thought that the speaker wishes to communicate. Yet, this thought can be represented as an interpretation of another speaker's thought. She further mentions that:

Thus, an utterance which is intended as an interpretation to a certain thought is not simply always relevant by virtue of the notion that this utterance informs mainly that someone said or thought something, rather than reporting someone's thoughts which the speaker may indicate his/her own attitude towards them. (Alrasheedi and Dragan 2014, 73)

The echoic nature of irony simply means that echoic utterance expresses the speaker's attitude towards a thought. In this echoic interpretation, the speaker dissociates himself/herself from the thought which is being echoed. "The attitude expressed by an ironical utterance is invariably of the rejecting or disapproving kind" (Sperber and Wilson 1989).

For the echoic irony to be effective the context within which an utterance takes place needs to be considered. The context helps with the intended interpretation. Alrasheedi and Dragan (2014, 73) mentions that:

In any communication instance, the context in which the message is sent is important ... context is counted as a set of assumptions involved in the interpretation of the message and the relation of that message to the situation in which it was built.

HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY IN AFRICAN GENDER IDEOLOGY

Everything women are taught magnify power dynamics and gender issues in patriarchal societies. Both proverbs and aphorisms are a constant reminder to women that they are of a lesser status than men. Women who refuse to conform to these societal prescriptions are not perceived as good candidates for marriage. Surprisingly, even in modern societies women are still subjected to the belief that they need men in their lives to be whole. Being married earns women respect in society because they

have male voices speaking on their behalf. Marriage is believed to ground women and most importantly, curb women's indecorous behaviour. Some of these memetic aphorisms are demeaning to women—however, it is believed that they are put in place for their benefit. Women are treated like children who are often reprimanded for unacceptable behaviour and then get told what to do to "fix" their lives.

Hussein (2005, 59) asserts that gender ideology is "a systematic set of cultural beliefs through which a society constructs and wields its gender relations and practices." Like traditional proverbs, aphorisms "play an important role in reinforcing the cultural ideal of masculinity such as competitiveness, dominance, forcefulness, endurance, confrontation, self-reliance and willingness to take risk" (Hussein 2005, 67). Like Hussein (2005, 67), I argue that memetic aphorisms, like traditional proverbs, perpetuate gender legacies and ideology; they associate maleness with respect, firmness or strength, while associating femaleness with meekness, indignity, inconsistency, and powerlessness. People who come up with aphorisms "exploit new aesthetic opportunities by weaving traditional verbal art form" (Salami 2005, 24). These predefined gender roles give women their identity in traditional societies—those of being a daughter, wife, and mother. Memetic aphorisms discussed in this article reinforce the subjugation of women and reaffirm societal beliefs in women's subordination.

This gives an impression that women are only validated by marriage. From a young age, African women are groomed to become better wives and mothers. Zungu (2016, 221) asserts that

men are socialised into thinking that women need to start preparing themselves for marriage from a young age. Female behavior needs to be socially acceptable, as every person encountered by an unmarried female is a potential husband and potential in-law.

MEMETIC APHORISMS AND AFFINITY SPACES

The replication of these memetic aphorisms clearly shows that these beliefs are shared by a vast number of people in modern society. The argument put forward by Knobel is that a meme only becomes a meme once it has been shared by members of a group with shared values, beliefs and practices (Knobel 2006). In line with Knobel's argument, this article recognises three characteristics of successful memes that are still relevant to this day, that Dawkins (1976) refers to as fidelity, fecundity, and longevity. These three characteristics are what make memes memorable. Dawkins argues that at the centre of fidelity is the concept of susceptibility, which refers to the timing and location of a meme, when taking into account people's interest in it. This also looks at the relevance of a meme to the current situation, and how well it relates to what has been transmitted before. On the second aspect, that is fecundity, Dawkins talks about the rate at which the idea carried by the meme is spread. In other words,

how robust is the replicated transmission of that idea. He further mentions that the longer the meme survives, the more people share it and pass it on to new minds. They develop an interest in the meme, which guarantees an ongoing transmission in affinity spaces. These affinity spaces become ideal conduits for these memes—and interactions and activities among people who are linked by shared activities, interests, and goals (Gee 2005).

Zulu memetic aphorisms are relevant to the reader because they are short and to the point. They act as vehicles for conveying moral lessons and educating society on plausible behaviour. They are intended to praise, condemn and sometimes ridicule people who are doing something wrong in the same way Zulu traditional proverbs do. Through memetic aphorisms the value and worth of "traditional" proverbs is recognised by the modern-time generation. Traditional proverbs are passed on from one generation to the next, through the oral tradition, whereas memetic aphorisms are transmitted through writing. Memetic aphorisms are also easy to memorise in the same manner that proverbs are—they are well designed, and appropriately communicated, and can be powerful summaries that create a memorable impression (Morell 2006). A memetic aphorism is "a single allusion condenses much that needs to be read, or perhaps unravelled into the threads that connect it to the larger problems it signifies" (Morrow 2003, 288). A memetic aphorism can be used "to summarise a vision, capture a mood, or set the tone for change" (Conger 1991). Most importantly, memetic aphorisms can summarise shared cultural knowledge (Morrell 2004). Morrell's assertion resonates with the discussion on Zulu memetic aphorisms and the author's assertion that aphorisms are modern-day proverbs. Most Zulu proverbs referring to women tend to be directed at their eligibility and preparation for marriage. Proverbs are viewed mainly by the youth as outdated and old-fashioned, which makes it rather surprising to see how popular modern-time proverbs (in the form of memetic aphorisms) have become.

Androcracy is perpetuated in social media through modern-day proverbs in the form of memetic aphorisms. In the same manner that traditional proverbs portray women in stereotypical, gendered terms, memetic aphorisms have also proven to be gendered phenomena. They are perceived as apodictic statements directed at woman with an intention to shun what society "perceives" to be unacceptable behaviour according to androcratic standards. The use of humour and irony in these memetic aphorisms is a patriarchal pretence to make them sound like jokes while they are not. This article draws parallels between Zulu proverbs and mimetic aphorisms, and show how women's choices are limited even in modern times. The article will argue that most aphorisms shunning bad and promiscuous behaviour in relationships are directed at women. Memetic aphorisms allows men to have multiple partners. Therefore, memetic aphorisms are a modern way of conveying messages previously contained in traditional proverbs. This article will draw similarities between memetic aphorisms and proverbs.

ANALOGY OF MEMETIC APHORISMS AND PROVERBS

I have already pointed out that memetic aphorisms are used instead of traditional proverbs. For instance the traditional proverb, *Ingane engakhali ifela embelekweni* ("a child that doesn't cry will die on its mother's back") is now replaced with *Intombi engazisheleli ifela kubo* ("a maiden who doesn't ask men out will die at her parent's house"). Both the proverb and memetic aphorism imply that for a person to accomplish something in life they need to do something for themselves. They are relevant for people in the respective eras. In these modern times, single women may want to approach men and initiate a relationship, and modern society does not judge them for such behaviour.

Memetic aphorisms are used to warn, remind and ridicule certain behaviours in a humorous but straightforward way. Below is the analogy of few of the traditional Zulu proverbs and memetic aphorisms:

- *indlela othanda ngayo ukukhuluma ungathi wazalelwa emhlanganweni* ("The way you are so talkative it's like you were born in a meeting"). The use of imagery keeps the aphorism interesting and relevant to current times.
- *Ungaqhoshi ngokupakisha indaba ayikho ezinqeni isenkomeni* ("Don't boast about your curves, the important thing is the state of your vagina"). The way this memetic aphorism is written amuses the audience but shames the person it is directed at.
- *Ungathi inkomo ayisekho kanti uza no-okapi, ihlatshwa ngomkhonto inkomo* ("Don't say there is no cow and you have an okapi, you have to use a spear to stab a cow"). *Inkomo* ("cow") here refers to the female sexual organ and *okapi*—small stabbing knife—refers to the penis and the fact that the man may not be as well-endowed as he would like to be. *Dear ex yami ... la ake ama khona amanzi sekwakhiwa iMall*
- ("dear my ex-boyfriend or girlfriend ... Where there used to be water they have built a shopping Mall") versus *La ake ama khona amanzi aphinda ame* ("where there was water there can be water again"); which is a proverb referring to the status of a relationship and the possibility of rekindling things.
- *Ubuhle bendoda zinkomo zayo* ("a man's good looks are measured by his cattle") is a traditional proverb but these days it has been replaced by *ukuhlupheka kwendoda ukubona ngekhandha lentombi yalo* ("a man's lack is evident in the kind of hairstyle his girlfriend has") instead. Both the proverb and the memetic aphorism refer to the financial status of a man as a provider in the home.

TYPOLOGY OF ZULU MEMETIC APHORISMS

Shunning Bad Behaviour

These memetic aphorisms put an emphasis on women to respect themselves by conforming to society’s prescriptions. Men are exempted from any kind of warning because their promiscuous behaviour is condoned and accepted in traditional societies. There is an accepted notion of traditional men not striving for perfection or excellence in their relationships. The onus is then on the woman to persevere whenever things get tough within the relationship or marriage—as evidenced in the aphorism, *ayikho indoda ezokujabulisa 100%. U-100% zowugcina kujuice. Bekezela* (“No man will make you 100 % happy. 100% is only found in juice. Persevere”).

Another aphorism goes, *ukube amadoda niwaphatha kahle njengecard lakwaSASSA ngabe kade nawuthola umendo* (“If only you can treat men as good as you take care of your SASSA cards you would be married by now”). Every unemployed woman with a child gets assistance from the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) to support the child financially. A woman has to prove to her man that she is a potential wife by treating him well. She should not complain, express her opinion or ask her man for clarity on the things she does not understand. An opinionated woman is not considered marriage material because she displays bad traits, which demonstrate that she will not be submissive to her husband. Society expects her to turn a blind eye to any misbehaviour on the part of her man, who may or may not be a potential husband. Another aphorism which is directed at an opinionated woman goes, *ukube umlomo uwuvala njengama-data bundles ngabe sewalotsholwa* (“If only you shut your mouth like you switch off data bundles, you would be engaged by now”). Women are not expected to show interest in sex. That is a privilege reserved for men. If she initiates sex she is perceived as a loose woman. Women are usually perceived as people who use the cold weather as an excuse to have sexual intercourse. *Ngale mvulana nje uzobezwa “cela ungilande”* (Just because it is drizzling you will hear them say “fetch me for a sleepover”). This memetic aphorism is meant to curb the questionable behaviour of women. But the same behaviour is acceptable in men.

Appropriate Dress Code

These memetic aphorisms encourage women to wear fashionable clothes that are also suitable for their body types. The type of clothes that women wear may or may not appeal to suitable husbands—however, when the clothes are “appropriate” a woman stands a better chance of being married. Body shaming is still prevalent in traditional societies. *Lamantombazane akhule nge-waterproof ayayithanda ifully penty* (“These girls who grew up wearing waterproof panties over their nappy towels

like full (granny) panties"). This aphorism suggests that girls who grew up wearing waterproofs have no dress sense; they don't know what looking sexy entails. It is considered primitive to wear granny panties. Curvaceous and chubby people who used to be regarded as an epitome of African beauty are now perceived as ugly. People are now forever on diets to conform to the set standards. Another aphorism that shames the body of a "big" woman goes, *uma isdudla sigqoke ALL WHITE ngathi ufive litre wamasi* ("When a fat person wears ALL WHITE clothes he/she looks like a 5lt container of sour milk/maas"). Nowadays, women's beauty is measured against Western standards, which means they have to be thin and light-skinned, and these memetic aphorisms confirm this assertion.

Promiscuity or Suspected Cheating on the Part of a Woman

Moving from one partner to another, or having multiple partners for women is frowned upon in traditional societies, as the aphorism *useqoma ngisho ibhlukwe lenekiwe*. ("She is dating even trousers hanging on a dryer") suggests. For some women, saying "no" to a man's advances is unheard of, such that they just say "yes" even to men who didn't ask them out. The aphorism *Ian yesfebe ibonakala ngepassword*. ("You can spot a promiscuous woman's phone because it has a password") is used for suspected promiscuity. This implies that if a woman has nothing to hide she will have no reason to use a password on her phone—her man must have access to her phone, anytime he wants to go through her calls log, text messages, and social media accounts—but the same is not applicable to a man.

Sexual Addiction/Misconduct

Firstly, women are not allowed to visit their men; this is taboo. Secondly, they are not allowed to show interest or initiate sex, as suggested by the aphorism *Nkosi ngisize ngingatholakali kuyo yonke imizi njengecharger yeNokia kulobu busika Amen!!!* ("Lord help me not to be in every household like a Nokia phone charger this winter"). The Nokia brand is regarded as a phone brand that most people afford—hence each and every household has a charger for this phone. The aphorism suggests that a woman who moves from one man to the next is seen as easy and cheap.

Another aphorism that shun the alleged loose woman goes, *bufikile ubusika kunalabo sisi abazohlala besechargini njengama-blackberry, akumavezandlebe after* ("winter has arrived, along with a host of women who are always on a charger like blackberry phones, and a lot of bastard children afterwards"). BlackBerry phone needs to be charged more often than other phones, so ladies who need to have men in their beds are compared to Blackberry phones.

ANDROCRACY

This emphasises the notion that women must behave in an acceptable manner and that men must provide for their families:

Ukuba umuntu wesifazane wayelungile ngabe noNkulunkulu wayenowakhe (“if women were good people God would have had his own wife”). This memetic aphorism reveals the perception some men have about women. They see them as wicked creatures who bring chaos in their lives through whatever they do. In traditional societies a man has certain privileges when it comes to having extramarital affairs. Society condones this type of behaviour by accepting that men are wired to have extra-marital affairs, and that “marriageable” women do not question them; which is supposedly a sign of respect and submission—as suggested by this aphorism: *indoda ayibuzwa ukuthi ilalephi kuthiwa baba uhambe kanjani* (“you don’t ask a man where he spent the night, you ask him how it went”). This memetic aphorism suggests that women should be submissive and never assert themselves in marriage.

WOMEN ARE EXPECTED TO ACCEPT MEN’S DECEPTION

Amanga endoda afana nse ne-cancer, awalapheki (“man’s lies are exactly like cancer, they are incurable”) is an aphorism that implores women to accept their husbands’ ways of deception. Juggling multiple relationships means that men have to lie most of the times to cover their tracks. As a result of these multiple relationships, a man finds himself telling more lies than he has done before, in order to be able to continue with their philandering ways. This suggests that multiple relations cause men to become compulsive liars to cover their tracks. The women in these men’s lives should accept this as a statement of fact, and learn to live with it without question.

WARNING WOMEN AGAINST GREED/GOLD DIGGING

In contemporary times, most women have well-paying jobs and can maintain their lifestyles—however, there are still some who rely on men for financial support. For some women, a man has to do everything for them; and even give them money to get especially luxurious items such as weaves, manicures, and pedicures. On another extreme, there are women who expect men to pay for their apartments and cars as well. This element of greed on the part of some women is evidenced by this aphorism: *ukuba izimfene zinemali ngabe sekukhona amantombazane asehlala ehlathini* (“if baboons had money some girls would be living in the forest now”). Women these days are perceived as greedy and money-driven such that they would date men purely for money; regardless of their looks and/or marital status. The

difference between this kind of an arrangement and a man providing for his family is that in this kind of an arrangement, love is seldom involved. Traditionally, a man has to provide for his family—however, in contemporary times a woman who expects her man to provide for her is labelled as gold-digger, even where love is involved.

The aphorism *ukhlupheka kwendoda ukbona ngekhandla lentombi yayo* (“a man’s struggle can be seen through his woman’s hairstyle”) explains a man’s ability or lack thereof to provide for his woman. It is expected that a man give his girlfriend and/or wife money to do her hair—amongst other things—these days weaves are very expensive, and not every man can have that kind of money to spend on luxuries. So a woman’s hairstyle demonstrates his wealth and financial worth.

MISCELLANEOUS

In traditional societies marriage is important and an unmarried woman is called names— however, some men these days live with women without paying *ilobolo*. In this regard, society condones the behaviour of such men but shuns women for the same behaviour. These men enjoy all the privileges of being married without paying a cent. For them getting married is a legal and cultural inconvenience that has lost meaning. They can have “wives” without bankrupting themselves. This sentiment is carried in the aphorism *mina ngizolobola uma kune sale* (“I will only pay lobola for you if there is a sale”). The payment of *ilobolo* used to be the first thing a man works on when he started working and dating—this was done so that he marries a wife and someone to look after him and the extended family. This was before the present era, which has seen couples “moving in together”, and living as husband and wife, without permission from the family—a prevailing lifestyle in modern society. Traditional societies have always regarded marriage between an older woman and a younger man as taboo, although this arrangement is now prevalent, it has not yet been fully embraced by society.

CONCLUSION

In traditional societies, there are always double standards when it comes to the behaviour displayed by men and women. What is condemned in women is applauded in men. Most of these isiZulu memetic aphorisms revive the context within which traditional proverbs were used in olden times. They are used to ridicule women who display bad conduct; according to the standards set by their communities. These aphorisms serve to remind men of their roles as providers; and urge women to refrain from being gold-diggers. Most of these memetic aphorisms ridicule women for their artificial beauty, and portray them as fake, if they pay more attention to their physical appearance. Women are reminded that they need to prepare themselves for marriage

and behave in a manner that befits someone who marriageable. The emphasis is on women not to be assertive, but submissive at all time: *ukube umlomo uwuvala njengama-data ngabe kade walotsholwa* (“if you keep your mouth shut like you do your data bundles you would be engaged by now”) (Facebook aphorism) and *ihlonipha nala ingeyukwendela khona* (“a woman must respect everybody because she doesn’t know the family she will marry into”) (traditional Zulu proverb).

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