

A CRITICAL ASSESSMENT OF B.K.M. MTOMBENI'S CREATIVE WORKS

by

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my parents,
family and the Magoveni clan.

DECLARATION

I declare that *A critical assessment of B.K.M. Mtombeni's creative works* is my own work and that all sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references



K.J. NKUZANA

29 NOVEMBER 1996

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SUMMARY

This critical assessment is a study of B.K.M. Mtombeni's literary achievements in the Tsonga literature. The literary trend which persists throughout his novels *Mibya ya nyekanyeka* and *Ndzi tshikeni*, his volumes of short stories *Ndzhaka ya vusiwana* and *Mavala ya yingwe* and his plays *Malangavi ya mbilu*, *Vuhlangi bya vuhlangi* and *Mihizo ya kayivela*, was identified. Mtombeni has been a successful writer, who through his thematic patterns, plot, characterization, language and style, was able to bring out his ideas and thoughts to his readers effectively.

Each chapter of this study dealt with special literary issues which contributed to the accomplishment of the research. The first chapter is a general introduction setting out the aim of the research: a biographical sketch; definitions of key terms of the topic and the literary approaches; the motivation behind the selection of the topic; the method of research; and the scope and composition of subsequent chapters.

The thematic patterns of Mtombeni's works and his attitude to life are handled in chapter two, whilst the focus of the third chapter is on conflict, which is a major element of plot. Reference is also made to the other elements of plot such as climax and denouement.

Chapter four addresses characterization with the aim of determining the lifelikeness, plausibility and credibility of characters in Mtombeni's works.

Chapter five analyses Mtombeni's language and style, the focus being on diction, whilst syntactic patterns, preambles or introductory paragraphs, imagery, proverbs and idioms, tone and dialogue form chapter six.

Mtombeni's use of patterned language in his plays is treated in the seventh chapter, whilst the last chapter is the general conclusion of the study, with recommendations for future research.

KEY TERMS:

Critical assessment; literary works; thematic patterns; plot; characterization; language and style.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Aim of study

"A critical assessment of B.K.M. Mtombeni's creative works" is a study which examines Mtombeni's literary achievements and imaginative scope. It aims at identifying the literary trend which persists throughout his novels, short stories and plays. The goal is an appreciation of his works and the extent of his contribution to Tsonga literature in particular and African literature in general.

Mtombeni's philosophy of life will be examined through thorough assessment of his creative works, working chronologically through his publications.

It is necessary to examine Mtombeni's works to discover his contribution as a writer, and the unique quality of his creative works. He was bold enough to coin concepts which he felt could explicitly express what he wanted to transmit to his readers. Mtombeni's philosophy of life and his knowledge of human behaviour are manifest in his works in the embodied disguises of particular characters, action and setting.

Mtombeni's specific quality of imagination in the totality of his works prevails throughout all his novels, short stories and plays, as a view of the world which is unique to him. The aim of the study is, essentially, to trace the development of his vision throughout the chronological span of his career.

1.2 The reason for choosing Mtombeni

Mtombeni's regular contribution in *Nhluvuko*, the then monthly magazine of the Department of Information, entitled *Hi tisola yini?* (Why do we look down upon ourselves?), had a great influence to me as a young literary critic. His main

theme -an invitation to people to become self-reliant, self-assertive and self-confident motivated me to read all his books more seriously, for they seemed to boost the morale of the people. *Mibya ya nyekanyeka*, *Malangavi ya mbilu*, *Ndzi tshikeni*, *Mavala ya yingwe*, *Ndzhaka ya vusiwana*, to mention but just a few, are all books which enticed me and, as a result, I wished to share what I found in them with everyone who is interested in literature.

Sparks (1990:1) says that "fiction justifies itself by the truth it tells", and it is because of the truth and honesty that I discovered in Mtombeni's fiction that I felt obliged to choose him for this research. Mtombeni's philosophy of life has also been a strong attraction.

Another important reason for undertaking a study of this nature is the current need for literary critical assessment studies in Tsonga. Nkuzana (1988:1) has the following to say in this regard:

... the few known scholars who contributed greatly towards the scientific study of Tsonga, such as H.W.E. Ntsan'wisi in his *Tsonga idioms - A descriptive study* (1965), C.T.D. Marivate in his *The ideophone in Tsonga* (1982), C.P.N. Nkondo in her *The compound noun in Tsonga : synchronic study of its derivation, usage and structure* (1973) and G.S. Mayevu in his *The predicative relative construction in Tsonga: a descriptive study of its form and function* (1978), were more inclined towards linguistics than literature.

Therefore, it is my feeling that a study of this kind, will be a valuable contribution to future literary researchers.

1.3 Biographical sketch

Bennet Keats Mpilele Mtombeni, the first born son of Nyavana, son of Mugimeti, was born on the 14th December, 1926 at Burgersdorp in the Tzaneen district.

He started school in 1936 at the Shilubana Primary School, where he passed Standard 6. Thereafter, he proceeded to Johannesburg to seek employment. He struggled and worked at several places. Owing to the fact that he knew that without education, nothing could succeed, he incessantly engaged himself in private studies. Fortunately, his efforts were rewarded. He managed to complete the Junior Certificate Examinations through correspondence. After a short period of time, he passed his Matriculation Examinations, which opened the way for his B.A. degree studies. At the time of his death, he had already passed sixteen courses towards the completion of his degree with the University of South Africa, but owing to a disjunction between his subject combinations and prescribed curriculum of the degree, he failed to satisfy the requirements for a B.A. degree.

In 1950 at the age of twenty-four, Mpilele Mtombeni joined the South African Railways and Harbours as a policeman. In 1960 he took up employment at the University of South Africa. He worked here for a period of two years as a messenger. From 1963 to 1971 he was in the employ of the South African Milk Board. Because of his involvement in community development and his enthusiasm to improve the quality of life and the status of the Tsonga people in the urban areas, the Gazankulu Government appointed him as the first Urban Representative for the Tsonga/ Shangaan people. In the beginning, he did not have offices and he operated from his house in Atteridgeville. Later he worked from the Gazankulu offices next to the Saulsville cemetery.

In 1972 he started writing articles for *Nhluvuko*, a monthly journal of the Department of Information. He became a regular and popular contributor until his death in 1976. He wrote with the main objective of conscientizing the Tsonga/Shangaan people in the urban areas to stand up and be counted amongst the other racial groups. He became known as the *Nhlalala ya madoroba* (A honey-guide - bird), because of his qualities of leadership.

Mtombeni married Josephine Thokozile Nkosi and they were blessed with three

children: Floyd Mandla (son), Leslie Marhule (son) and Louretta Thandiwe (daughter).

Mtombeni was a staunch member of the Bureau for Tsonga Language and Culture. He was the Chairman of the Book Committee and an active Executive Member. We believe that his association with this organization was a strong factor in his love of writing.

On the 3rd May, 1976 at the age of 50 years, Mtombeni died at Tembisa Hospital after a short illness. He died fourteen days after the death of his first born son, Floyd, who drowned in the Crocodile River. They were buried on the same day, after a funeral service at the Atteridgeville Community Hall. This tragedy affected many urban dwellers and the whole Gazankulu community. The Gazankulu Government was represented by the late Chief Minister: Prof. Ntswan'wisi. This occasion accorded him the chance to pay homage to Mtombeni's creative works.

1.4 *Mtombeni and Tsonga literature*

Before we embark on an intensive analysis of Mtombeni's writings, it is important to comment briefly on the position of Tsonga literature prior to his appearance on the literary scene. Bill and Masunga (1983:17) vividly indicates that

... the first fifty-five years of writing in Tsonga was dominated by White, European, and predominantly Swiss writers and translators. From 1938 onwards however, the Tsonga literary scene witnessed the emergence of large numbers of Tsonga writers. Their growing self-awareness, developing skill in the handling of literary genres, and their search for self-identity through literature, can only be a sign of hope for the future.

It is not our objective to give a historical review of the development of the Tsonga literary scene, but the quotation cited above implies that it is only from

1938 that Tsonga writers began writing books of literary value. They then became aware of different kinds of literature or genres.

Rev. D.C. Marivate is the first Tsonga author who penned *Sasavona*, the prize-winning novel in the *International Institute of African Languages and Cultures Competition*. Bill (1983:17) further reveals that Marivate's *Sasavona* was followed by three novelettes after a period of fifteen years: *Murhandziwani* (1942) by S.J. Baloyi, *Mambuxu* (1953) by E.P. Ndhambi and *Masungi M'fana ka Maxele* (1954) by Prof H.W.E. Ntsan'wisi. We again note from Bill (ibid) that:

During the decade 1960-70 six novels were published, and from 1970-83, fourteen. These modern novels were of varying length and excellence, but the most successful novelist has undoubtedly been Bennet K.M. Mtombeni, whose two novels *Mibya ya nyekanyeka* (1967) and *Ndzi tshikeni* (1973) set new standards in language usage, plot development and character delineation. His untimely death in 1976 cut short a very promising literary career.

Mtombeni's appearance as a writer coincided with, and was partly responsible for, a period of re-awakening in Tsonga literature. In the quotation above, Bill asserts that new standards in language usage, plot development and character delineation were set. A new spirit and a real revival were perceived in the Tsonga literary scene.

Miller (1958:viii) remarks that "a work of literature is rooted in its age, in the life of its author, and in his conscious theories about art and morality".

Mtombeni, as a Tsonga writer, has been praised by many literature lovers. Maluleke (1987:1) in her Honours Article entitled "B.K.M. Mtombeni as a short story writer", hails Mtombeni as

... one of the best writers of Tsonga literature. He did not concentrate on one genre only but wrote novels, plays and

short stories. Mtombeni can be regarded as a man who contributed a lot in Tsonga literature, moreover Tsonga is a language that still lacks writers in the different branches of literature.

Ntsan'wisi (1976:326), the former Chief Minister of former Gazankulu praised Mtombeni as the great writer of Tsonga literature:

Nhenha ya tinhenha laha madorobeni yi hi siyile. Nhlalala leyi a yi hlengeleta rixaka ra hina haleno madorobeni yi timekile. Xihontlovila xa ririmi ra Vatsonga xi fambile. Mutsari wa Mavala ya yingwe u hundzile. Mutsari wa Mihizo ya kayivela u fambile. Mutsari wa Vuhlangi bya vuhlangi u lovile. Mutsari wa Ndzi tshikeni u chupukile. Mutsari wa Ndzhaka ya vusiwana u nyamalarile. Mutsari wa Mibya ya nyekanyeka u porokile. Mutsari wa Malangavi ya mbilu u timekile. Ririmi ra Vatsonga ri lahlekeriwile. Rixaka ra Vatsonga ri lahlekeriwile. Muhandzi wa tindzalama ta ririmi ra hina eku enteni ka rona ni le ku anameni ka rona u fambile.

The hero of heroes in the urban areas has left us. The honey-guide (bird) that united our nation in the urban areas has been extinguished. The giant of the Vatsonga language is gone. The author of *Mavala ya yingwe* has passed away. The author of *Mihizo ya kayivela* is gone. The author of *vuhlangi bya vuhlangi* has perished. The author of *Ndzi tshikeni* has disappeared. The author of *Ndzhaka ya vusiwana* has flown away. The author of *Malangavi ya mbilu* has been extinguished. The Vatsonga language has lost a great man. The Vatsonga nation has lost a great man. The man who unearthed the gem of our language in its entirety is gone.)

The tone of Ntsan'wisi's oration was that of a man who believed that a nation was devastated by the death of this gifted author of irrefutable reputation. He expresses deep appreciation for a man he revered as a diamond of the Tsonga language. Ntsan'wisi deliberately repeats the term *mutinari* (author) to emphasize Mtombeni's contributions.

Ntsan'wisi (ibid) further reveals that Mtombeni's death was not in vain but left a legacy of literature. He calls upon the nation to mourn his death:

A hi rileni Mpilele wa Mtombeni hi ri karhi hi tsundzuka leswaku wa hanya hikuva u hi siyele ndzhaka leyi hi nga ta sala hi n'wi vona ha yona hi matsalwa lawa a ya siyeko. A nga yanga na vutihari bya yena emasirheni, u hi siyerile byona ... tindzalama ta ririmi ra hina, leswaku hi sala na swona swi va ndzhaka ya hina.

(Let us mourn the death of Mpilele, son of Mtombeni with the understanding that he is still alive because he has left a legacy which will always make us see him through his works which he wrote. He did not take along his wisdom to the grave, he has left a legacy to us ... the diamond of our language, to remain as our heritage.)

In the light of the extract from Ntsan'wisi's speech, it is clear that in this study, we are dealing with a man who is highly respected in literary circles.

The editor of *Nhluvuko*, Vol. 17, No. 12 of 1976:331) also added his voice of appraisal to Mtombeni as an author among authors. He says:

... Mpilele a a ri mutsari wa vatsari. Ndzi nga engeta ndzi vula leswaku a a ri egondzweni ra vatsari va vatsari. Exikarhi ka malembe mo ringana khume voko ra yena ri tsarile ku ringana nhungu wa tibuku.

(... Mpilele was a writer amongst writers. I should again mention that he was en route to the path of writers of note. Within a period of ten years, his hand produced eight books.)

This is a commendable achievement by a single writer amongst the Tsonga writers in this country. Chronologically, his works appeared in this order: the first publication is a play *Malangavi ya mbilu* (Flames of the heart) (1966). It is a play about love affairs. The main theme of the play is the moral decadence of society in modern times. Marhule, the protagonist, falls in love with a young woman, Makhanana. Before they stay together, two children are born. Thereafter, Marhule is attracted by a student nurse, Ruti, with whom he falls in love. He deserts Makhanana and the two children. His relationship with Ruti is short-lived, because the nurse falls in love with another man after she had

discovered that Marhule is "married" with two children. Marhule is devastated. When he attempts to return to his deserted lover, he finds her about to marry Khazamula. Marhule is the loser, having forfeited the affections of both women. He is left frustrated and confused.

The second publication is a novel *Mibya ya nyekanyeka* (The straps of the baby-sling are loose) (1967). This novel won a literary prize in the competition sponsored by the Department of Education in celebration of the fifth anniversary of the Republic of South Africa. The first paragraph of the preface of this novel is provocative:

Va khale a va vula leswaku ku tlula ka mhala ku letela n'wana endzeni. Kambe swa manguva lawa a swa ha tivi hi munhu. Munhu u byala kwembe ku mila rhanga; a tshovela laha a nga rimangiki kona. (Mibya ya nyekanyeka:5)

(People of the olden days used to say "like father like son". But today we no longer know what the position is. One plants a pumpkin seed but what germinates is a calabash plant, one harvests where one did not cultivate.)

The use of the proverb *ku tlula ka mhala ku letela n'wana endzeni* (the jumping of the impala teaches the unborn child) i.e. like father like son, arouses the curiosity of the reader. In the same paragraph we find the author saying: *munhu u byala kwembe ku mila rhanga* (a person plants a pumpkin seed but what germinates is a calabash plant), which also creates a sense of anticipation. This style of presentation qualifies him to be regarded as a craftsman, artist and a great author.

During the period of 1973, three books appeared: *Ndzi tshikeni* (novel) (Leave me alone), *Ndzhaka ya vusiwana* (Heirloom of squalor) (short stories) and *Vuhlangi bya vuhlangi* (Childish adolescence) (play).

Ndzi tshikeni, as Mtombeni's second and last novel depicts the frustrations of

Xihluku Xilandzo, the protagonist who is compelled by unavoidable circumstances to become a murderer. The thugs who kill his child and wife, and the attitude of the police towards his plight drive him to be a murderer. *Ndzhaka ya vusiwana* is a collection of fourteen Tsonga short stories. These short stories won him the first prize in the Tsonga Section of the 1971 Republic festival competition for African authors of short stories, organised by the then Department of Education. The short stories are grouped under three titles. The first five stories are grouped under the title *Tihandlakambirhi*, whilst the sixth to the tenth story are named *Vamabvani*, and the last four are grouped under *Mihloti ya ngati*. *Vuhlangi bya vuhlangi*, a play, is about Ned Nkolele who aspired to be educated from the time he was a small boy until he qualified as an advocate. Ned succeeded although initially he had to struggle under the wrath of three boys who used to beat him and rob him of his lunch boxes.

Mavala ya yingwe (The spots of the leopard) (1974) is a collection of three short stories: *Nghunghunyana ni xikhovha, ndzi xavelela yini?* and *N'hwahimbirhi*. *Mihizo ya kayivela* (The garments are too short) (1974) is Mtombeni's third and last play. This play was published by Sasavona Publishers. In the foreword to *Vuhlangi bya vuhlangi* Mtombeni acknowledges the assistance that he received from Prof C.T.D. Marivate with regard to the requirements of a play. We notice a number of improvements in that play in respect of the linguistic features and dialogue. In *Mihizo ya kayivela*, it appeared as though he had forgotten about the tips that he learned from the professor. We observe characters who make long uninterrupted speeches; longwinded dialogue which hinders effective interaction among the various characters; and lack of distinguishing characteristics in terms of the manner in which they speak.

The reader cannot recognise a character through dialogue, because they all speak the same; they use the same level of intelligence and thinking. In *Mihizo ya kayivela*, we read about the clash between Christianity and traditional religion, i.e the belief that death is caused by witchcraft and that healing is

possible if one takes medicines prepared by witchdoctors, who will always tell who the sorcerer is. This is the conflict which dominates the whole play.

Matshopetana ya tindzumulo (The children's clay mud cakes) was published in 1977, one year after his death. It is a collection of children's short stories.

D.R. Maluleke in Nkuzana (1989:72-74), in his eulogy, gives a precise literary chronology of the appearance of Mtombeni's works. This eulogy is quoted at length because of its relevance to this study:

Eleji eka B.K.M. Mtombeni

*Leswo u etlele, ndzi mbhoni,
Leswo hikwalaho ka yini u late rimbambu,
Swi tiva hi Tatana ...*

*U te **Ndzi tshikeni**; u chukuvanya bya hlampfi exinjoveni,
U chukuvanyisa hi **Malangavi ya mbilu**,
Mbilu ya wena a yi pfurha,
Yi oxa hi malangavi,
Yi rhukurha ku vona **Mibya ya nyekanyeka**,
Mbilu yaku yi khahla tiko ro dadavala.*

*Tiko ri dadavala bya phunjavunja,
Mihizo ya kayivela yi kayivele wonge i mali ya xisiwana,
Vusweti bya rixaka byi ku dzudze **Vuhlangi bya vuhlangi**,
Vusweti byi ku dlokodla mbilu,
U ka u mila ntshiva u teka vunghwazi.*

*U mila **Mavala ya yingwe**,
Mavala ya yingwe ya ku tikirheta enhlohlorhini ya Everest,
Moya wo kwetsima wu ku tihoma xidlodlo,
Wu ku rhuma ku ya hlikihla Vutsonga,
Khamba ri ku sivile ri ku khina,
U nga si heta ku haxa evhangeli ya wena.*

*A wu vanga na makwanga,
U haxile **Ndzhaka ya vusiwana**,
U phamele rixaka;
A wu sweka hi byongo,
U phama hi penisele,
U phamela ebukwini;
Voko raku i nkombe wa nsuku,*

Byongo byaku i nambu wa Nile.

...

*Ririmi raku ematsalweni ri olova wonge i nhluvi;
Ririmi raku a ri gogonyi,
Marito yaku ya gamba; ya hlakahla byongo;
Ya kucetela; ya titimeta torha ra vutivi;
Ya tshunxa mapindzi; mafundzu ya nyekanyeka.*

*Tintlharhi ti aneka vutlharhi byaku erivaleni,
Ntokoto waku wu andlariwa tani hi sangu,
Ntokoto waku wa mameka; a wu pundzulanga,
Vutlharhi byaku byi phapha byongo bya vahlayi vaku*

*U nombhela eka novhele,
u nyanganya bya vulombe,
Nghimeto u hava eka swihungwana,
U tlanga xinave-nave,
A wu kongomi, wo khovolela,
Timhaka wo thya, u thya swange i ncuva,
Marito yaku ya hakuta ntlhaveko,
Mbilu yi sa' yi pfempfa hi ku navela.*

*Leswo phata u swi nyenyile,
U vona ya ri **Matshopetana ya tindzumulo**
Xa wena i ku boxa tshumba,
U komba mhaka hi rintihlo; u honokela mhaka
U nga copeti,
U monya leswi phewaka;
Ntivo-vuhleketi waku wu hi hlantswe mahlo,
Nkunghwa wu sukile,
Hi ta jikula hi chela eka ndzheko wa **Ndzhaka ya vusiwana**,
Wu ta ka wu khapa hi vutivi ...*

Elegy to B.K.M. Mtombeni

That you are asleep (dead), I am a witness,
Why you died,
It is known only by the Father ...

You said *Ndzi tshikeni* (Leave me alone) and made convulsive movements like a fish when hooked,
You struggled because of *Malangavi ya mbilu*, (Flames of the heart)
Your heart was burning,
Roasted by the flames,
Burning with a desire to see *Mibya ya nyekanyeka*,
(The straps of the baby sling are loose)
Your heart scolds the country which is stupid.

The country which is stupid like a girl of weak morals, *Mihizo ya kayivela*
 (The garments are short) is short like money of the poor,
 Poverty of the nation shook off *Vuhlangi bya vuhlangi*, (Childish
 adolescence)

Poverty pierced your heart,
 Until you were angered and you plucked your courage.

You sprouted *Mavala ya yingwe* (Spots of the leopard)
 The spots of the leopard put you at the peak of Mount Everest,
 The holy spirit crowned you,
 It mandated you to awaken the Tsonga people.
 The thief prevented and halted you,
 Before you could complete your mission.

You were not selfish,
 You spread *Ndzhaka ya vusiwana* (Heirloom of squalor)
 You fed the nation;
 You cooked by the brain,
 And dished out by the pencil,
 You dished on the books;
 Your hand became a golden spoon,
 Your brain the river Nile.

...

Your language in writing is as simple as a boneless steak,
 Your language is not irritating,
 Your works are precise and expressive; they evoke the brain;
 They influence; they quench the thirst for knowledge;
 They loosen the cords; the knots become loose.

The clever critics expose your wisdom in the open,
 Your experience is spread out as on the mat,
 Your experience is easily sucked; is smooth and easy to swallow,
 Your wisdom evokes the brain of the reader.

You are like a cherry fruit when it comes to a novel,
 You are as sweet as honey,
 You do not have finality when it comes to short stories,
 You play an enticing game,
 You are not explicit, as if you are playing chess,
 Your words evoke emotions,
 The heart remains with a desire,

You never liked poetry,
 You thought it is *matshopetana ya tindzumulo*, (Children's mud cakes),
 Yours is to be specific,
 To be direct in your expression; to hold the bull by the horns without
 winking,

You scorn all that is wayward;
 Your philosophy opened our eyes,
 The mist is gone,
 We shall hoe and pour into the drinking calabash of
Ndzhaka ya vusiwana (Heirloom of squalor),
 Until it overflows with knowledge ...)

In Maluleke's elegy, B.K.M. Mtombeni's works are perceived as a panorama in which we follow ways of life. When you have a strong desire to achieve something in life, you vow that you will strive and struggle until you get what you want, hence *Ndzi tshikeni* (Leave me alone). Xihluku Xilandzo was, indeed, infuriated by the killers of his family members: wife and child; he wanted to revenge their death. In *Malangavi ya mbilu* (Flames of the heart), Mtombeni's heart burns of fervent desire to see himself writing more and more books, hence the appearance of *Mibya ya nyekanyeka* (The straps of the baby sling are loose).

Each publication has a title with a special meaning, e.g. *Mihizo ya kayivela* (The garments are short) refers to money of a poor man whose misery is eradicated by *Vuhlangi bya vuhlangi* (Childish adolescence).

Mtombeni's style of writing is briefly outlined in the ninth stanza of this elegy. Reference is made to the simplicity of this language usage, its explicit, clarity and brevity.

The sweetness of the *nombhela* (cherry fruit) fruit is likened to his novels. It is implied that they are as sweet as *vulombe* (honey). Maluleke further indicates that it is delightful to read Mtombeni's short stories because they have no *nghimeto* (finality), they are sarcastic and evoke the emotions of the reader. Maluleke also refers to the fact that Mtombeni did not write poetry, because to him that was *Matshopetana ya tindzumulo* (The children's mud clay cakes). Mtombeni's philosophy of life is also quoted as being of significance.

1.5 Definition of key terms and literary approaches

1.5.1 Definition of terms

Definition of key terms will enable us to determine our standpoint as we assess the standard or value of Mtombeni's creative works.

The term *critical* implies judgements with regard to analysis of fiction. Burton (1976:19) is of the opinion that the critic "in its final judgement ... takes into account both his objective analysis and his subjective responses". Burton thus takes cognisance of the fact that judgements may differ because of the subjectivity of the individuals doing research. He further indicates that:

Criticism is an art, not a science. The sympathetic reading of a text, followed by detailed, analytical scrutiny will achieve as high a degree of objectivity as is possible in the critical art.

Interpretations that are made in science should be based on scientific objectivity. However, the conclusions which are reached in art should be respected on the basis of the justification that the critic will provide. In this respect Burton (*ibid*) says:

The writer is entitled to expect careful, unprejudiced and sympathetic reading; but the good critic has a mind of his own, and his final opinion is as much as self-judgement (and a self-revelation) as is a judgement of the writer.

The term *assessment* involves an estimation of the value or the quality of a thing (in this instance, literature). In assessing a work of art, one is actually engaged in evaluation. This fact is supported by Ellis (1974:74) when he says:

More recent work on value theory has tended to stress that value words are to do with persuasion, appraisal, and commendation rather than with description.

Therefore, critical assessment will be our basis for the judgement of the value and standard of Mtombeni's creative works. The term *creative works* refers to all the books that he has written in the Tsonga literature.

1.5.2 Literary approaches

In the study of literature we often refer to approaches, which are used when a literary work of art is analyzed. These include the textual approach, biographical approach, psychological approach, the reader-oriented approach, feminist approach, generic approach, contextual approach, etc.

When a critical analysis of a work of art is done, it might be necessary to combine two or more of these approaches in order to conduct an exhaustive assessment.

Hawthorn (1986:73) defines *textual approach* as those critical discussions of novels which restrict themselves to information gained from the actual texts of novels discussed. In this approach, the actual words of the novels which are being assessed are studied very closely. Hawthorn further indicates that:

Textual critics thus pay little or no attention to biographical information about authors (including other writings by him or her).

Under this approach we get formalists who pay attention to the form of a literary work of art. This group includes a group of critics known as Russian formalists, who wrote mainly in the 1920's, and the Anglo-American New Critics, who dominated the 1940's and 1950's.

The term *generic approach* implies that we cannot begin to read or understand a novel, for example, until we are clear as to what sort of novel it is - which for most critics means obtaining clarity about the author's intentions (Hawthorn, 1986:75).

As far as the *contextual approach* is concerned, the critics depend on the contextual usage of words for the understanding of the value of the work of art. Under this approach, we find sociological and Marxist critics placing great stress on the need to understand the context of the author's own society and his or her position within it, both as an individual and as an author (Hawthorn, 1986:76).

The term *biographical approach* is self-explanatory because here emphasis is placed on the historical background of the author. Hawthorn (1986:77) indicates that:

The more books by the same novelist that we read, the more we become conscious of common or similar elements in them, and the more we begin to build up a picture of the man or woman behind the printed text, constructing an idea of his or her values, interests, and attitudes.

It is through the biographical approach that we gain interest in an author and wish to read more about him and his creative works. Those who first read *Malangavi ya mbilu*, the first creative work written by Mtombeni, were compelled to read the other books because their aim was to discover whether there were changes in style in his later publications or not. The greatest disadvantage of this approach is the tendency by critics to concentrate more on the author's life history than his works.

There is considerable debate as to the applicability of these approaches to the study of African literatures. Serudu (1993:18) argues that "the so-called universal approaches may fail to do justice to the true African mode of literary expression. These universal approaches might cause one to disregard or deny specific cultural features which might appear in his creative writing. Emmanuel Ngara (1982:3) refers to Chinua Achebe who compares the attitude of the colonialist critic to that of the famous missionary Albert Schweitzer who declared that all men were brothers but the African was his younger brother.

He further says:

The colonialist critic is equally patronizing and arrogant, for he sees the African writer as a somewhat unfinished European who with patient guidance will grow up one day and write like every other European.

Ngara (1982:14) quotes Achebe in his essays "*Where angels fear to tread*" when he says:

Here the Nigerian writer singles out three kinds of critics disliked by Africans: first, hostile critics; second, those critics who are amazed that an African can write, and write in English too; third, those who say that African writers should be judged by the same standards as European writers, and then arrive at the logical conclusion that African writing is inferior to European writing.

However, Westerners themselves do not share these views. They do not believe that they are incapable of dealing with African literature. For that matter, some have actually proposed critical procedure for African literature.

The majority of African critics, according to Ngara (1982:5), feel that for African literary criticism to be truly African, it must be written in African languages. If this is not done, African literary criticism of African writing will become dull, drab, flippant, mainly because there will be no opportunity for original thinking. This is so because the tendency is to repeat European clichés like *romantics*, *classic*, *realism*, etc. Ngara (ibid) quotes Wali as saying:

African writing and criticism should be in African languages and criticism should go in for the hard school of African linguistic studies if they are to produce worthwhile criticism.

However, in order to arrive at African standards or criticism we should accept whatever is good and useful in European criticism. Ngara (1982:6) concludes by pointing out that *in order to liberate ourselves from foreign domination we should adopt our own viewpoints*. In this study the textual, contextual,

biographical and generic approaches will therefore be combined or used interchangeably in the critical assessment of B.K.M. Mtombeni's creative works. Although no particular approach will be mentioned as such, the analysis will be based on these approaches.

1.6 Method of research

This study is based primarily on the novels, short stories and plays written by B.K.M. Mtombeni. Each text will be scrutinized using the textual, contextual, biographical and the generic approaches. The aim is to assess each work of art in order to discover its merits. Various sources will also be used to substantiate our arguments.

Interviews will be used to gather information which is not accessible from the written materials, as very little has been written on Mtombeni's works.

Although this study does not purport to be a comparative study of Mtombeni's works, to some degree we will be bound to engage in such exercises to illustrate his point of view. In this regard Serudu (1993:13) says:

Although the field of comparison is focused on one author and his novels, the study will be mindful of the comparative approach to literature with its well-articulated aim of arriving at a wider scope, broad knowledge and global insight.

It is from the comparative analysis of information that we can come to a conclusion about the matter. Serudu's use of words such as "wider scope", "broad knowledge" and "global insight", indicates the scope of knowledge to be gained from comparison.

1.7 Scope and composition of chapters

The chapters have as their goal the exploration and assessment of the imaginative world of Bennet Keats Mpilele Mtombeni, and the revelation of the presiding unity hidden at the centre, but present everywhere within his novels, short stories and plays and particularly revealed there in the embodied disguises of particular characters, actions and setting. Miller (1958:x) is of the opinion that:

The imaginative universe of a great writer is an infinite domain, and an infinite number of critical paths might traverse it profitably. The view from certain roads, however, is more complete and less distorted.

We have chosen what seems to us a salient approach to Mtombeni, the theme of the search for a true and viable identity. We have chosen to explore in detail two novels, two collection of short stories and three plays spanning Mtombeni's literary career. Each of these creative works represent an important temporal development and all of them together include much of his most important contribution to Tsonga literature. This study is obviously not exhaustive or comprehensive, but rather a preliminary essay into Mtombeni's creative works and his contribution to Tsonga literary studies.

Chapter One is a general introduction to the study of Mtombeni's creative works. This chapter has provided his biographical sketch; the definition of key terms and the literary approaches; and the reason for choosing him for such literary study. A brief look at the method of research is also provided.

Chapter Two will deal with the thematic patterns of Mtombeni's works and his philosophy of life with regard to each work. This will enable identification of the subjects which form the greater part of his contribution.

Chapter Three will focus on plot with the main emphasis on conflict in his works. Obviously, in handling conflict, denouement, which is the unravelling of complications, will also feature prominently.

Chapter Four will address characterization in Mtombeni's works with the aim of examining the plausibility of his characters.

Chapter Five. Here, Mtombeni's prose language and style, with special reference to diction, will be evaluated.

Chapter Six will be a continuation of the treatment of language and style in Mtombeni's prose narratives. Special attention will be directed to his syntactic patterns, preambles, imagery, proverbs and idioms, tone and dialogue.

Chapter Seven. Patterned language in Mtombeni's plays will be assessed.

Chapter Eight will be the general conclusion.

1.8 Summary

In this chapter we have shown that the main objective of undertaking this study is to reveal the literary achievements and the greatness of Mtombeni's imagination in his writings. The reasons for choosing him for such essential literary analysis were given.

This project is also meant to be a contribution to the scarce literary studies in Tsonga.

It is through Mtombeni's biographical sketch that we discovered that he is, indeed, a literary giant who is revered by lovers of literature. Through his death, the nation has lost a novelist, playwright and philosopher.

CHAPTER TWO

THEMATIC PATTERNS

2.1 Definition of the concept theme

It has become evident that most literary experts and criticism studies are unanimous that *theme* is the essential central idea underlying the literary work of art. Brooks, Purser and Warren (1975:15) define theme as

... the governing idea implicit in the original situation of conflict that becomes, in the end, the focal idea - what we take to be the 'meaning' of the whole (story).

Heese and Lawton (1979:97) concur:

... theme is the central idea, the basic issue with which the novelist/playwright is concerned, and which he comments through the medium of his story and his plot.

Pretorius and Swart (1982:4) refer to "theme" as "the interpretation of life as conveyed by the story as a whole". Fowler (1986:249) refers to "theme" as a line or thread running through a work, linking features which are otherwise unrelated.

It is only through reading the whole story that we can determine what the underlying or hidden meaning of the story is. Mampuru (1986:160) argues that "theme" is not the "topic of the story, neither is it the incidental, philosophical thoughts expressed in the story. It is the strongest binding or cohesive factor in any literary work. It is the central element which determines the unity of the story". Peck and Coyle (1984:141) define the "theme" of a work as "the large idea or concept it is dealing with".

All these definitions refer to the central idea, the large idea, the central element,

the basic issue, the line or thread running through a work and the strongest building factor in any literary work.

It should be remembered that when an author writes a literary work of art, he does so because of a strong desire to share his ideas and feelings about life and its meaning with his readers. He writes a novel, play, etc. because he has a vision of life (Brooks, Purser and Warren, 1975:16). This is what we may call philosophy of life, which is the doctrine or creed on which a man acts, not that which he professes, but which characterizes his literary product.

A philosophy of life can also be referred to as the way the author thinks life should, but not an assumption that life should be a "moral tag to hang on the wall, such as 'Honesty is the best policy' or 'Honour thy father and thy mother'" (Brooks, Purser and Warren (1975:16). Here it is implied that "theme" should not be a moral teaching, because, as Brooks, Purser and Warren (ibid) point out, "the reader ... instinctively objects when a writer seems to be using fiction as a disguise for preaching at him."

Hudson (1925:171) asserts the following:

Directly or indirectly, and whether the writer himself is conscious of it or not, every novel must necessarily present a certain view of life and of some of the problems of life; that is, it must so exhibit incidents, characters, passions, motives, as to reveal more or less distinctly the way in which the author looks out upon the world and his general attitude towards it. ... we will ... call this the novelist's criticism, or interpretation, or philosophy of life.

Another very important aspect about theme, according to Brooks, Purser and Warren is that:

... the writer's theme shall not be trivial or ridiculous ... that the world offered by a piece of fiction be coherent, that it be fundamentally logical in its own way ... that it be true to the life it professes to express.

Hawthorn (1986:61) affirms that:

We can ... distinguish between concepts of theme which see it as a central idea and those which view it more as a recurrent argument, claim, doctrine, or issue. This distinction hinges upon the extent to which a novel is seen not just to contain a particular element, but also to put forward a case for a point of view or established position.

This argument explicitly re-affirms that what we call theme may be viewed as a central idea. Secondly it can be viewed as a recurrent argument, claim, doctrine or issue. This view is also held by Pretorius and Swart (1982), who refer to it as the interpretation of life: which is conveyed by the story as a whole.

The concept interpretation of life implies the perception and/or conception of life in a particular work of art. It obviously suggests that every author has his/her own way of looking at life or his/her point of view or world view, which Serudu (1985:100) describes as

... the attitude of an author or the stand he takes on various facets of life, that is to say those fundamental views or opinions people genuinely hold and act upon.

Interpretation of life further implies that the standard, view or attitude of life can be interpreted differently by various authors.

Although the author has the right to look at life through his own eyes and experience, he should, at the same time, not be tempted to prescribe to the reader, because by so doing, he will deprive him of his own reflection of life. It should be remembered, however, that his readers are intelligent human beings who are able to see what is happening around them. Mampuru (1986:160) endorses this fact by saying:

The author must also not underestimate his reader's intelligence by making unnecessary explanations or by

oversimplifying his subject matter.

It is of vital importance for a literary critic to assess the themes of a writer like Mtombeni because according to Gordimer (1973:11) themes determine the plots, characters and literary style of the writers. She explains that

... themes are statements or questions arising from the nature of the society in which the writer finds himself immersed, and the quality of the life around him. In this sense the writer is the voice of the people beyond any glib political connotations of the phrase.

The writer is considered a very important person in society for he has a duty to represent his people by presenting to them a point of view which will enable them to know or to be aware of what is happening around them. He should act as their conscientizer, their eyes, their voice.

The importance of theme is also indicated by Mtuze (1986:44), who quotes Knickerbocker, Reninger, Bretton and Liggett as follows:

Every good story is shaped by a controlling theme or idea. This controlling theme selects and arranges everything that goes into the story - the characters, the action, the resolution of the conflict, and anything else used by the writer to dramatise their total meaning.

Indeed, Mtombeni's short stories, for instance, are characterized by this "central element which determines the unity of the story" (Mampuru, 1986:160).

2.2 Mtombeni's techniques of expressing theme

There are various techniques which a reader can employ to establish the theme in a work of art. Mtombeni employs three distinct techniques to formulate themes in his works of art. These are the following:

- * The use of the title
- * The popular sayings (which might be proverbs or truisms) and
- * Dialogue between characters

2.2.1 The title technique

Here we find that the title of a work such as *Mibya ya nyekanyeka* (The straps of a baby-sling are loose) is actually the central controlling idea of the novel. All events in the novel occur only to reinforce this main theme. This is also true in the case of the play *Mihizo ya kayivela* (The garments are too short). In this instance, the author's main objective is to demonstrate that there is discordance between Christianity and traditional worship. This general claim dominates the entire narrative. We could also quote titles such as *Vuhlangi bya vuhlangi* (Childish adolescence), *Ndzi tshikeni* (Leave me alone), *Malangavi ya mbilu* (Flames of the heart) and titles of short stories like *Mandlakulova* (The losing hands), *Xidyondzi xa xiphukuphuku* (An educated fool), *Vubombi byo lomba* (transient pride), *Matanato* (The one who brings them along) in *Ndzhaka ya vusiwana*; *Ndzi xavelela yini?* (What am I begging for) and *N'hwarhi-mbirhi* (Two partridges) in *Mavala ya yingwe*. These titles point to the themes he writes about. This pattern of expressing theme is of great interest to the reader, whose curiosity is aroused as to how the theme in the book will be developed and how the writer will disentangle the problems of the story. This means that right from the outset, the reader is pre-informed of what he should expect in the work. Mafela (1993:28) disparages this approach, claiming that:

This technique does not arouse the interest of readers to read through the book. Even if readers can force themselves to read through the book, they will only be interested in finding out the techniques used by the author to narrate the story. This technique of expressing theme does not give readers a chance to find themes on their own. They are forced to take what the author perceives as being true.

However, we feel that the reader yearns to know all that has been stated in the title. For instance, in *Mibya ya nyekanyeka*, the tendency of the child to deviate from the ways and habits of his parents is clearly symbolised on the cover of the first impression of 1966. Nkondo (1976:71) explains that:

Even if the mother tries to tighten the strings, as long as the child is not prepared to be carried on the back, he will loosen the strings by struggling to free himself.

In *Mibya ya nyekanyeka*, Mtombeni explicates the title by showing how children deviate from the expectations of their parents. In this case, Tihomandloti's two sons, Madambi and Nyiko, do not become what their father wishes them to be: exemplary children amongst all children at Chiawelo. Madambi is quite intelligent, but he is untidy and careless. He also refuses to marry a Tsonga woman who would be acceptable to his father.

Nyiko, the second and the last born of the family, is a dandy like his parents, but not particularly gifted intellectually. The parents adore him:

Nyiko yena a a ri xiluva xa ndyangu swo tala a swi nga endliwi handle ka rikotse ra muti (Mibya ya nyekanyeka:14).

(Nyiko was the flower of the family, many things were not done without the last-born of the family).

True to the dictates of the title, after being a good man, a clergyman, Nyiko is tempted by a widow, N'wa-Mdanisi. Now the straps of the baby-sling are beginning to loosen. N'wa-Mdanisi ultimately falls pregnant, and Nyiko is castigated. This shatters him completely because he had otherwise devoted his whole life to church affairs:

Nyiko swi n'wi vavisile ngopfu ku lahlekeriwa hi vufundhisi bya yena lebyi a a tinyiketetele ku byi nyika vutomi bya yena

hinkwabyo (Mibya ya nyekanyeka:68).

(Nyiko was deeply hurt by the loss of his career to which he had decided to devote his whole life.)

Nyiko is left with no other option but to commit suicide. This incident also affects his father who concludes that he has nothing else to live for without his favourite flower (*xiluva*). Truly, the straps of the baby-sling became loose. It is through the expression of the theme by the title, that every one who starts reading *Mibya ya nyekanyeka*, will definitely read up to the last word at the end of the book.

In *Mihizo ya kayivela*, the reader's attention is drawn by this title. He immediately wishes to know more about the garments which are short or inadequate. After reading the whole play, we are left with the theme that traditional worship, which is symbolized by *mihizo* (traditional attire) falls short of Christianity. Mtombeni successfully demonstrates in *Mihizo ya kayivela* that, whatever happens Christianity will always triumph over ancestral religion or worship. It is his intention to show that God is the Almighty, that there is nothing which can surpass the Power of God. This central message is embodied in the participation of two characters: N'wa-Bembe Makaringe and Mbolovisa Makolo at a funeral service of Etiyana Mathebula, where they deliver funeral orations. They speak their minds. Their speeches reveal a wide dichotomy between the two institutions. From the outset, N'wa-Bembe, the minister of religion, refers to a place in heaven which is ready to accommodate all who believe in God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. N'wa-Bembe argues that Etiyana's time of death had arrived, to enable him to get to the Father, where he will inherit eternal life. He asserts that the grave is symbolic of the beginning of new life. Mbolovisa, the witchdoctor, tells the crowd gathered around the grave that they are all witnesses to acts of evil and sorcery, hatred and eaters of human flesh. Mbolovisa is opposed to Christianity because it preaches the forgiveness of sins and wizards. According to him, people consult diviners and forget about God. The shortcoming which we find

in ancestral beliefs is referred to as the *ku kayivela ka mihizo*, i.e the shortness of the garment. Magwaza, a philosopher and an educated man, refers to death as

... masungulo ni mahetelelo ya vutomi; loyi a kotaka ku hlamusela rifu, u kota ku tihantlha xihundla xa ntumbuluko. Naswona u ta va a vonile rinungu ro hetelela ra vutomi ensinyeni wa ntumbuluko wa yena (Mihizo ya kayivela:11).

(... the beginning and the end of life; one who is able to explain life, is capable of analysing the secret of nature. And he will have seen the last core of life, at the base of his nature.)

But in this dialogue, Goya, a refined teacher, asserts that:

Vutomi bya hina Machangana i bya khale, a byi ambexiwile hi nkhanu ra munyama, hi gandzela emunyameni hi swa munyama. Vukriste byi hi ambexile nguvu ya ku vonakala; kambe nguvu leyi ya kayivela - i mihizo yo koma. Nkayivelo lowu wu tumbuluxa dzolonga ra vuncikinciki ni vudlitidliti; ku kanakana ni mihoniso (Mihizo ya kayivela: 11-12).

(The life of we, the old Machangana, was clothed with a black robe, we worshipped the evil in the dark. Christianity was clothed with a white robe, but this robe is short - it is a short garment. This shortness creates conflict of incompleteness and confusion, doubt and absent-mindedness.)

Goya goes on to affirm that:

Kunene Vukriste ni swikwembu swi nge twanani; Vakriste ni va malombo va nga twananisa ku yini? (Mihizo ya kayivela:13).

(Indeed, Christianity and gods will not come to terms; how will Christians and the people of evil spirits agree?)

This is a question which does not require any answer, because it is self-explanatory. All the bad that befalls a person has a cause, so says Mbolovisa. He believes that there is a cause for the following :

Ku ba hi movha, ku tlhaviwa hi mukwana, nyoka yi ku luma ntsena-ntsena? A swi twali sweswo, u to va u yi vekeriwile, xo humelela ntsena a xi kona, ndzi nga ku hlambanyela ... (Mihizo ya kayivela:17-18).

(To be hit by a car, to be stabbed by a knife, the snake to bite you without a cause? That is not understandable, it would have been put for you, there is nothing that can happen without a cause, I wager you.)

The belief that people are turned into *swigono* (supernatural beings) and are used to perform evil deeds to persecute human beings is rife among the non Christians.

Hlupheka, a young beautiful lady, to whom Mantengo proposes love explains that:

Swi nge saseki ku hlanganisiwa ka hina hikuva wena u wa kereke ni vukhongereri kasi mina ndzi munhu ntsena wa xikamba, valanga exikarhi ka majakana (Mihizo ya kayivelo:24).

(It will not be a good thing for us to be united, because you belong to the church and prayer, whereas I am just an ordinary person, please look amongst the Christian believers.)

It is in this type of dialogue that we clearly observe Mtombeni's reference to two different religions.

N'wa-Bembe confirms that:

Vanyamisoro a va na wo matimba yo herisa vutomi, kambe ku nwa ni ku nwisiwa mhondzo swa dlaya

(Mihizo ya kayivela:30).

(The diviners have no power to end life, but to drink poison kills).

N'wa-Bembe further asserts that:

*Mi kayivela ku ponisiwa, ni ku kutsuriwa loku taka, loko misava yi fika makumu ka vutomi bya vona. Mi kayivela hungu ra rito ra Xikwembu hi Bibebe, mi le handle ka vukhongerani ni nsovo wa Xikwembu. Mi hundziwa hi nsovo wa vutomi lebyi nga heriki, leswi ma titsona, ma tikayiverisa hi vomu.
(Mihizo ya kayivela).*

(You are short of being saved, the redemption which will come when the earth comes to an end of their lives. You are short of the message of the word of God by the Bible, you are outside the religion and the mercy of eternal life, this is what you are depriving yourselves of, you are deliberately depriving yourselves.)

It is only at the end of the play that the power of the word of God and prayer is demonstrated. Mbolovisa, a strong believer in ancestral spirits, accepts the Lord, Jesus Christ, as his saviour only a few minutes before he dies. N'wa-Bembe baptizes him on his death-bed. This is an indication that Christianity will always triumph over witchcraft. Mbolovisa who fought Christianity and the word of God, at this hour actually demands that the minister must pray for him:

... Mufundhisi ndzi khumbi, ndzi khongelele, hatlisa ! Xi byele laha ku vavaka kona ni vito ra mina, huwelela swinene, matilo ya le kule, huwelela! Vulavulela mufundhisi, ndzi veke emavokweni ya wena, xi byele swinene Xikwembu xa kona, hlamusela swinene, tikirheta xikhongelo xa wena hi vunene ni malwandla (Mihizo ya kayivela:65).

(Pastor, touch me, pray for me, please hurry! Tell him where the pain is and my name, please shout, the heavens are far, shout! Speak, pastor, carry me on your arms, tell God everything, explain in detail, put emphasis in your prayer).

Mbolovisa is in great pain and suffering. He earnestly desires recovery. He is desperate and miserable, therefore, he accepts God unquestionably. This brings happiness to N'wa-Bembe who knows that God is the answer to all problems. This episode has the moral message that Christianity always triumphs over ancestral religion.

Xidyondzi xa xiphukuphuku (An educated foolish man) is another title of a short story in *Ndzhaka ya vusiwana*, in which Mtombeni's theme is expressed right from the start. This short story deals with Ntshabeleni, Rikhahlamba Nkuna's grandson, who is not thankful to his grandfather for the sacrifices made to finance his university education. On his graduation day, Ntshabeleni feels that his grandfather is of inferior status, as a result, he cannot identify himself with him. He runs away from him, so that his friends do not know that Rikhahlamba is his grandfather. Ntshabeleni's instability and restlessness lead him to his death. He is killed in a car accident whilst trying to hide away from his grandfather. Rikhahlamba is left with the corpse of his dead grandson filled with shame for his behaviour.

A man who struggled to educate his grandson is repaid by this act of shame. It is, indeed true that *fuwa hloiswa u tsema ndleve* (keep a wild dog and cut its ear, i.e. be careful in all that you do). If Rikhahlamba had guessed that his grandson would behave as he did, he could have refrained from helping him. Rikhahlamba's paying of the exorbitant university fees, was like *ku bohelela xuma enengeni wa mpfuvu u yi tshika yi bvun'wala na xona endzhoopeni* (tying wealth to a hippo's leg and leave it to plunge into a muddy pool with it, i.e. to give something of worth to one who does not value it.)

The title clearly indicates that the central idea here will be an educated man who is a fool. Indeed at the end of the story, it is clear that Ntshabeleni is educated, but the fact that he does not want to be associated with his grandfather, indicates his foolishness.

The title of the novel *Ndzi tshikeni* is another good example of the title technique which Mtombeni uses to express his themes. In this narrative, *Xihluku Xilandzo*, the protagonist, is adamant that he will track down the culprits who have murdered his son and wife. He insists that he must be left alone. This fact is expressed by the title of the book. Indeed, no one is able to stop him. He is arrested and locked up in gaol, but even this cannot deter him from pursuing the murderer of his dear ones.

When he is found guilty of murder, he pronounces the following:

Ndzi tshikeni ndzi ya vonana ni n'wana wa mina
 Madlayisana, ndzi ya tswontswa nkatanga Gavaza
 Makhawukana; ***ndzi tshikeni*** ndzi famba; ***ndzi tshikeni*** manana
 (*Ndzi tshikeni*:42).

(Leave me alone to go and meet my child, Madlayisana,
 to go and kiss my dear Gavaza Makhawukana; leave me
 to go alone; mother leave me.)

The words typed in bold in the above extract express the fundamental controlling idea that Mtombeni presents to the readers in this narrative. The readers are bound to follow the story to actually find why the title of the novel is *Ndzi tshikeni*.

In the play *Vuhlangi bya vuhlangi*, the title expresses the fact that when children are still young their behaviour might not be compatible with the accepted norms and values of adults. As a result it could be said that they conduct themselves in this fashion because of their immaturity. It is only when they reach adulthood that they start taking stock of their lives. In most cases, they curse the past because there is nothing cogent that they can refer to. In this play, Gilbert, James and Selwyn realize that they have lost wonderful opportunities of schooling because the boy they bullied when they were still young, Ned Nkolele, is now a well-known advocate who defends them in their last case of theft and murder.

2.2.2 The popular sayings or proverbs

A significant linguistic resource is popular sayings or proverbs. Mtombeni expresses many of his themes on the basis of these popular sayings or truisms. One of the most essential themes which we find in Mtombeni's works and which underlies this philosophy of life is *Masasani u fela nhoveni, mabihani a fela kaya* (The good man dies in the bush, the evil one dies at home) i.e. the good man is not shown any gratitude (for his kindness), he dies in grief, whereas the troublesome one dies amongst his people. We should not confuse philosophy of life as theme, but some themes do suggest the author's way of looking at life or his point of view or world view, which Serudu (1985:100) describes as

... the attitude of an author or the stand he takes on various facets of life, that is to say those fundamental views or opinions people genuinely hold and act upon.

In Mtombeni's short story *Mandlakulova* in *Ndzhaka ya vusiwana*, Mgaveteri, who is not educated himself, is kind enough to send his brother, Msesenyana to school. He does this in good faith. Msesenyana qualifies as a teacher. He teaches at a local school together with his brother's newly wed wife, Mandlakulova. He gets acquainted to her and falls in love with her. They both speak English which Mgaveteri does not understand. They elope and leave Mgaveteri alone. Msesenyana's actions do not in any way show that he is thankful for all the education which his brother has given him. He rewards him by taking away his wife. Mgaveteri is kind, but his brother, Msesenyana is unkind.

In his plot structure Mtombeni creates a situation which develops into confusion. Mgaveteri's home becomes a place of unhappiness and frustration. Msesenyana's life is cursed because of the misery that he causes to his brother. He buys a new car, which kills him in a terrible collision. Mandlakulova, who misjudged the prospects of her future, is shattered and her

thoughts turn to her former husband. When she arrives, Mgaveteri rejects her. In the Tsonga tradition, we have a wise saying: *fuwa hlolewa u tsema ndleve* (If you own a wild dog, cut off its ear) i.e a person who has lived in the village of another man will insult the one who helped him, once caught in the snare, will bark at you, as they say, if you do not cut off its ear. This analogy fits Mgaveteri's situation. He did not know that by sending his brother to qualify as a teacher, he was digging his own grave. This story abounds with characters which remind us of ourselves. Mtombeni has succeeded in creating and portraying characters who are true to life and credible.

There is nothing more evil than human greed and jealousy

In *Ndzi xavelela yini?* a short story from *Mavala ya yingwe*, Mtombeni presents us with another situation. Tihomana, a woman who has only daughters as her children in a polygamous family, feels that she cannot afford to lose her share of the inheritance when her husband dies. She decides to kill all the sons of the co-wives so that there will be no heirs. She devices a plan which will exonerate her as the murderer. She carries a calabash full of poisoned milk to the grazing lands and succeeds in killing the first born boy who drinks the milk. The remaining two boys escape and reach home to report the incident. She is finally found guilty of murder and attempted murder. Her motivation to kill the boys is stated as follows:

... a ndzi nuhi na vurhongo ... loko ndzi ehleketa tihomu ta vana va mina ... ti nga ta dyiwa hi rivana ra tindlu tin'wana swi ri ndzi tihinga va sala va dya ndzi nga ha ri kona ...
(*Ndzi xavelela yini?*:26).

(... I do not fall asleep at all ... when I think of the cattle of my children which will be shared by the children of my co-wives, it is as if I could commit suicide so that they can remain enjoying (the wealth) when I will be dead ...)

The plot structure of this story leaves much to be desired. We are surprised

to find that Ngomana, Tihomana's husband, does not take strong measures against his wife for her evil deeds. Although it is normal for her to be jealous, no one could condone her for killing Matsemane, the first born from the senior wife. When she is brought before the tribal court, we do not see any member of the crowd showing any sign of fury. They all take it lightly. Ngomana cushions this matter by saying that the Chief and the courts will decide on the appropriate sentence. The normal, or expected reaction would be for people to be angry and become riotous. The title of this story *Ndzi Xavelela yini?* (Why do I have to beg?) is misleading: there is actually nothing to beg for when Tihomana has no sons to receive their share when their father dies. This story demonstrates that there is nothing more evil than greed and jealousy.

When Mugwaleni, Mandlati and Cata (the great indunas of Chief Nghunghunyana) in the story *Nghunghunyana ni xikhovha* in *Mavala ya yingwe* (1974), are massacred at the Chief's kraal, it is because of the greed and jealousy in the hearts of the witchdoctors: N'wankoti, Masiya and Mabodlonga. They envy the position of the indunas and think that by removing them, they will remain in their positions and influence the Chief in all matters pertaining to the country. Their wishful thinking was short-lived, because they suffer at the hands of Xitihelani, who after advising the chief is given orders to kill them with the assistance of the Chief's impis. This story emphasizes that power corrupts; the withdoctors do not gain anything by deceiving and misleading the Chief.

Dishonesty in love affairs does not pay

In *Ndzi tshikeni*, N'wamakasana, Xipelupelu's wife fails to remain loyal and honest to her husband. She detests the activities of her husband and his gang to the extent that she decides to report them to the Police. One evening, when they leave Xipelupelu's home for their nocturnal criminal errands, N'wamakasana pretends to be asleep by putting out the lamp. But after a short while, she lights it again and goes out of the house, to the Police Station. Xipelupelu and friends, who are hiding not very far from the house, follow her

and eventually see her coming back with the Police, who ransack the whole house and snatch valuable clues including photos. When they see this, Nhompfu-ya-mbyana, one of the members of the gang, asks:

*U ri u ni nsati u vula xilo lexi xi nga hundzuka
ntshukunyana wo celela hina?
(Ndzi tshikeni:20).*

(Do you say you have a wife when referring to such a mole which will bury us alive?)

This is, indeed, an act of betrayal to someone you love. True, Xipelupelu is portrayed as a criminal, but in life many women are married to thugs and criminals, but they do not report them to the Police. They do not inform the Police because these men earn their living through these evil criminal acts. This type of behaviour is prevalent in urban areas like Chiawelo, where Xipelupelu and his gang live.

In *Mati ya ndlala*, a short story from *Ndzhaka ya vusiwana*, Euphine marries Joab Mathebule although she knows quite well that she is being dishonest, for her real husband is away studying overseas. She is aware that he will be returning to live with her in Rustenburg.

When that time arrives, she loads everything from their Natalspruit home into a truck and proceeds to her home town - Rustenburg. This is a deliberate reminder to readers, not to trust a person you do not know well. Therefore, the story serves as a lesson to would-be husbands to be more careful about marriage, especially when such marriages are not arranged with the consent of one's parents.

Marhule in *Malangavi ya mbitu* is portrayed as a man who betrays Makhanana, his would-be-wife with two children. He becomes ambitious and falls in love with a student nurse at the hospital. To his dismay, when he visits her on

another occasion, he finds her with another man, who promises her heaven. He is shocked to see how things can change at such speed. When he returns to his former lover (Makhanana), he finds her engaged to another man. The whole affair becomes complicated, hence Mtombeni in the preface of this play says:

*Vavanuna ni vavasati va namuntlha
Va xisana mindzuku hinkwayo ...*

(Men and women today
Cheat one another everyday ...)

The proverb *nhlampfi i ya mangheno* (the real fish is the first one) means that one has to be satisfied with the first wife whom one marries. If you take another one, thinking that she will be a better wife, you are definitely mistaken. This is what happened to Marhule, the main character in this play. It seems as if Mtombeni wants to caution young men and women to be careful about love affairs and to remain honest, faithful and committed to one lover.

In *Mihizo ya kayivela*, it is not clear why Hlupheka jilts Mantengo to love Magwaza. We are not convinced that a person can be attracted to someone through mere philosophizing. What actually happens is that Hlupheka is not honest when she tells Mantengo that she loves him.

Never be over-ambitious about children

Tlhomandloti, the main character in *Mibya ya nyekanyeka*, who is described as a perfectionist by Nkondo (1976:72), believes that his sons should occupy prime positions in all aspects of life. Unfortunately, this does not materialise. Madambi, the first born, is an untidy person and insists on marrying a Xhosa girl (much against the will of his father), whilst Nyiko is excommunicated from the church because of his adultery with N'wa-Mdanisi, a widow, who is also a member of his church. Nkondo (ibid) says:

Now the straps of the baby-sling are beginning to loosen. N'wa-Mdanisi ultimately falls pregnant, and Nyiko is castigated. This shatters him completely because he had otherwise devoted his whole life to his work.

Nyiko commits suicide and his father follows suit, because his hopes of being a father to children of high standing in the community were dashed. Nkondo (ibid) further indicates that:

He (Tihomandloti) has nothing to brag about ...
the straps of the baby-sling are loose, and
the skirt and beads of making oneself appear
beautiful are thrown on the garbage heap.

In this respect, it has become true that *a wu tswali mbilu u tswala miri* (you do not beget the heart, you beget the body), i.e it is not possible as a parent to control and direct the behaviour of your children because they are individuals. Mtombeni, who lived in the urban areas for the better part of his life, gained a great deal of experience about the behaviour of urban children. Consequently, he believed parents should always try to guide their children properly.

Mtombeni explores this theme of the looseness of the straps of the baby-sling in four of his works: *Mibya ya nyekanyeka*, *Ndzi tshikeni*, *Malangavi ya mbilu* and *Vuhlangi bya vuhlangi*. In *Mibya ya nyekanyeka*, this controlling idea dominates the whole novel. The title of the novel and the picture displayed on the cover of the first impression of 1966, portray a child who is disobedient and who is refusing the control of his mother. This deviation from the accepted normative pattern of behaviour by Tihomandloti's children is demonstrated in the depiction of Madambi and Nyiko as unique characters who behave in accordance with their own intuition and view of life. Mtombeni labels this pattern of behaviour *looseness of the straps of the baby-sling*. This symbolizes the failure of the parents to influence children's lifestyles. In *Ndzi tshikeni*, *Xihluku Xilandzo* laments the death of his first born son by saying:

Tinsulavoya ti ndzi dlele, ti lo ndzi bela endhawini,

*Va ndzi tsemile rhumbu, marhangela ya ndyangu;
Mubya wu ntshunxekile wu tlatlalata (Ndzi tshikeni:8)*

(The thugs have injured me where it hurts most, they got me right, they have killed the first born of the family; The strap is loose and threw the child to the ground.)

The child who stayed safely on the back of his mother in a sling, has now fallen down because the straps have been loosened by the criminals. Mtombeni leads us to believe that once the straps are loose, the child will eventually lose his life. In *Mibya ya nyekanyeka*, when Nyiko fails to follow the example of his father, his life ends up in the grave. In *Ndzi tshikeni*, when the thugs shoot and kill Xihluku's son, Madlayisana, this happens because the straps became loose and dropped the child. Xihluku is outraged and he is determined to avenge the death of his son.

Xihluku refuses to take instructions from his mother, and this is symbolized in the straps which no longer hold the child.

In *Malangavi ya mbilu*, Mtombeni does not specifically make reference to the looseness of the straps of the baby-sling (*ku nyekanyeka ka mibya ya ntehe*), but the fact that Khazamula marries Makhanana, a woman who already has two children by another man, much against the will of his parents, is a clear indication that he is defying them. Accordingly, the theme of the looseness of the straps of the baby-sling is implied. The same is true with regard to Gilbert, James and Selwyn, the three young criminals in *Vuhlangi bya vuhlangi*, who are eventually arrested for murder and theft. It becomes very clear that their behaviour differs from that of their parents.

Youth is characterized by some degree of emotional immaturity

We have noted with interest that Mtombeni's works trace the development of a human being from youth to maturity and/or death. In this regard, Cox and Cox (1971:1) say:

Youth is not an age, it is a condition.
 The condition often occurs, however, between
 childhood and adolescence ... youth does not
 necessarily mean young people, but people of all ages
 have the qualities of youth.

We all develop towards maturity. We do not remain young for ever in terms of our chronological age, but our behaviour can represent that of young people if we are not mature. Moving from immaturity, has its own problems. In the first place, the transition is slow and, secondly, uneven and occasionally painful. Cox and Cox (1974:1) assert that "some people never make the transition" because "maturity involves judgement and control. We ... must learn to control our emotions or we remain children".

When we read Mtombeni's works we realize that this underlying factor is one of the philosophies of life. He explores the struggles of youth to demonstrate to us that life has no easy paths. Men and women need unshakeable personalities and strong wills.

In *Vuhlangi bya vuhlangi*, Mtombeni reveals the emotional struggle in the life of Ned Nkolele, the main character, who is portrayed as a young boy who grows up under severe ill-treatment by Gilbert, James and Selwyn, the three boys who leave school to become thugs and criminals. They also live with the fear of being arrested for their evil doings. Their emotional suffering starts when they played truant and escalates as they develop into criminals. Mtombeni depicts Ned Nkolele as a person who does not have peace. The presence of the three boys is a thorn in his flesh. This state of affairs torments him. Ned grows to be a mature, qualified citizen who becomes an advocate, while Gilbert, James and Selwyn become jail-birds. They languish in prison for murder and robbery. Undoubtedly, in jail, their emotions are disturbed. The way they speak is a clear testimony of their state of mind. Although they differ in what they plan to do after their release, they all agree that:

Hi fanele ku tirha hi vutlhari, hi xiyaxiya swinene hi nga si

*endla nchumu leswaku hi ta tiva lexi hi xi endlaka
(Vuhlangi bya vuhlangi:13).*

(We must act intelligently and cautiously, taking care of what we should do beforehand to be sure of what we have to do.)

Gilbert, James and Selwyn reach maturity only after an extensive struggle. Selwyn, the leader of the gang, affirms that:

*Namuntlha dyambu ra vutlhari ri humile, na hina hi kota ku
orhela masana ya rona - ndza tshemba ri ta hi dzumula
nhlonge ya vuhlangi bya vuhlangi na hina hi va vavanuna.
(Vuhlangi bya vuhlangi:27).*

(Today the sun of wisdom has arisen, we are also able to bask in its rays - I believe it will remove the old skin of youth of our adolescence to become men.)

It is this condition of awareness which emphasizes the conclusion that youth is marred by some degree of emotional instability which only improves after a bitter experience.

Mgaveteri, in the short story *Mandlakulova* in *Ndzhaka ya vusiwana*, displays immature behaviour by falling in love with his brother's wife. This action is unacceptable and causes him a lot of stress. He does not find peace and happiness. He ends up dead in a car accident. The same condition torments Mandlakulova. She returns to her former husband but she is no longer welcome. Her delayed maturity caused serious repercussions. It is this harrowing emotional crisis which eventually brings her to the beginning of meaningful self-awareness. It is only now that she begins life properly, but it is too late to mend her ways, hence the rejection by Mgaveteri.

In *Xidyondzi xa Xiphukuphuku* in *Ndzhaka ya vusiwana*, it is ironic that an educated man like Ntshabeleni suffers from an inferiority complex just because of the social status of his grandfather. Ntshabeleni's emotional insecurity, cost him his life. He needs to appreciate the value of having grandparents

irrespective of their educational status. His flight from this reality kills him. Mtombeni succeeds in driving home the fact that *youth is characterized by some degree of emotional immaturity.*

Marhule in *Malangavi ya mbilu*, comes to regret his miscalculated behaviour when he was still a young man. He thought he had the capacity to frustrate women and do as he wished with them. To him it was such a minor thing to bid farewell to a lover and pay her off, leaving her to bring up his children. When he discovers that his new found girlfriend, Ruti, the beautiful nurse, is now deeply in love with another man, he starts becoming mature. Ironically, when he returns to Makhanana, she is engaged to Khazamula. Marhule finds consolation from Sevengwani, a widow who says:

Wa ha ri jaha u ta kula, u ta n'wi rivala (Malangavi ya mbilu:53).

(You are still a young man, you will grow, you will forget about her.)

Every person is unique and has his own individuality and/or personality

Mtombeni's philosophy of life is that every person is a special human being with unique qualities in nature and as a result has his own way of doing things. Magwaza in *Mihizo ya kayivela*, is a highly intelligent person who is quite sensitive to situations around him. For instance, the death of Etiyana Mathebula, in the beginning of this play, touches him deeply. In his soliloquy on the death he prays that he be given longevity, wisdom, piety and the energy to help his fellow human beings. He prays for peace, love and cooperation.

Magwaza distinguishes himself as a positive member of the community and always encourages his colleagues to have confidence in what they do. He says:

... varikwerhu hi nga heli timbilu, hambu mumu wu hisa a

hi tshiki ku hlakulela, hikuva ntshembo wa ku na ka mpfula wu kona (Mihizo ya kayivela:99).

(... my brothers let us not lose courage, even though the sun is hot, we do not abandon hoeing, because we hope it will rain one day.)

This is a positive attitude from a responsible person who thinks constructively.

Magwaza's intelligent questions to Mbolovisa, the witchdoctor, provoke the latter to provide answers to the problems with regard to the intricacies of life. Magwaza is a philosopher, who understands why things happen the way they do. He says:

Hi leswaku munhu u titirhela swa yena evutomini bya yena, kasi Xikwembu Xi ta tirha swa Xona hi munhu ni hi vutomi bya yena (Mihizo ya kayivela:3).

(The fact of the matter is that man does his own things in his life, whereas God does His things with a man and his life.)

Magwaza is also portrayed as a character that has an individual approach to proposing love to a woman. When he meets Hlupheka, the most beautiful girl in Chiawelo, he applies his ingenuity to divert Hlupheka's love from Mantengo to him. Mantengo has worked very hard to convince this woman to love him. No one could doubt this fact after reading his concluding remarks when he meets Hlupheka:

Famba hi ku rhula embilwini ya wena, mina ndzi twa miloti ya tinsimu to nandziha. Ndzi vona tintsumi ta matilo ti ambele swo basa, ti hlanhletela swiluva ehenhla ka hina, tin'wana ti nyunyetela mafurha yo nuhela, ku komba ntsako lowu nga timbilwini ta tona na hina hikwalaho ka rirhandzu (Mihizo ya kayivela:28).

(Go with peace in your heart, as for me, I hear sounds of sweet songs. I see angels of heaven wearing white clothes spreading pieces of flowers on us, others sprinkling sweet

smelling perfumes to show the joy which is in our hearts because of our love.)

The way in which he bids his lover farewell, indicates how deep their love is. He speaks of peace (in your heart), sounds of sweet songs, angels of heaven wearing white clothes, pieces of flowers, sweet smelling perfumes and joy in our hearts, which are all clear symbols of love. These words create strong images of a man who is deeply emotional.

Magwaza, however, outperforms Mantengo in this game of proposing love. Magwaza chooses the middle of the night to visit Hlupheka. He awakens her through the window and speaks from that position. He dramatizes the whole situation in order to win her. He knew she will find it difficult to escape. He goes to her at this hour of the night knowing fully well that other people are asleep and therefore are not in a position to see him. He draws her attention by making reference to God and pleads for her patience and time. Magwaza pretends that the woman he loves is not with him, but far away from where they are. Therefore, he requests that Hlupheka should go to inform her of his deep love. This proposal causes her considerable conflict. She says:

Kutani ndzi tshamile ehenhla ka mitwa, hi tlhelo ku mpfempfa makala ya ndzilo, tlhelo rin'wana ndzi langutaniile ni riwa ndzi hava xisirhelelo kumbe khokholo (Mihizo ya kayivela:37).

(Then I find myself seated on top of thorns, and on one side the glowing embers are smouldering again on the other side, I am faced with a deep precipice without any protection or fortress)

She finds herself in an awkward situation, where it is very difficult to take a quick decision in favour of any of the two young men. At last, she admits that:

Marito ya xinuna vuxungu bya nyoka etindleveni ta xisati, Xihuhuri xo kongoma embilwini ya wa xisati; mahiri, vunwa ni vumbabva swi tete xitiati xa xinuna (Mihizo ya kayivela:66).

(The words of a man are like the venom of a snake in the ears of a woman, the whirlwind that goes directly to the heart of a woman; tactics, deceits and chicanery are too much in man.)

This admission implies that although she finds herself on the horns of a dilemma, the only option which she could perhaps follow is to accept the love of Magwaza. She rejects Mantengo by writing him a letter, rather than talking to him face to face. The following assertion by Hlupheka seals Mantengo's fate:

*Namuntlha ndza funengeta, ndzi lema hi mumpfu nkova
lowu a wu khuluka mati ya rirhandzu ra wena
(Mihizo ya kayivela:68).*

(Today I cover and seal with wax the valley through which your love flowed.)

She now speaks of *rirhandzu ra wena* (your love) as if he is the only person who was in love, and she never was. This is heart-breaking to Mantengo. The man who came to destabilize their affair is Magwaza - the philosopher.

In *Malangavi ya mbilu* this uniqueness of personality is shown by another philosopher, Tom Magoza, who has more or less the same character traits as those of Magwaza in *Mihizo ya kayivela*. This indicates that Mtombeni takes delight in focusing his themes on characters with special qualities. Magoza is also a philosopher and an educated man who speaks intelligently and with authority on any topic that provokes the mind. He addresses issues that are problematic to the community. Magoza draws his audiences to matters pertaining to philosophy and psychology. He is presented to us as a man of exceptional intelligence. Khazamula confirms this assertion as follows:

*Tom Magoza va pfimbe nhloko,
Mi nga peta dyambu mi yingisela vona;
kambe xihlovo xa kona a xi phyi!
(Malangavi ya mbilu:23).*

(Tom Magoza has a swollen heard, i.e very intelligent) You

can stay the whole day listening to him, but his fountain never dries up.)

A fountain that never dries up symbolizes a person who is well informed and who will speak inexhaustibly on any topic.

In *Vuhlangi bya vuhlangi*, the theme of the book centres around another character with special and outstanding personality qualities. This character is Ned Nkolele, who loves schooling from the time he was a small boy, until he qualifies as an advocate. Although Gilbert, James and Selwyn, the three boys who have left school, ill-treat him by beating and robbing him of his lunch boxes, he does not leave school. He perseveres, until he reaches University where he completes his legal studies.

After qualifying as an advocate, Ned feels duty-bound to defend the very same boys who traumatized him during his early school going age, when they were faced with charges of robbery and murder. As a young intelligent lawyer, he argues convincingly for their acquittal. Outside the court, Ned affirms his responsibilities:

Ntirho wa mina i ku yimelela vanhu hinkwavo - hambu loyi a nga tshama a ndzi tlhava hi mukwana ndza boheka ku n'wi yimelela hi xiviri xa mina hinkwaxo - swi nga ri tano ndzi fanele ku tshika ntirho lowu ndzi ya lava wun'wana (Vuhlangi bya vuhlangi:27).

(My work entails defending all people - even those who once stabbed me with a knife, I am compelled to represent them devotedly, if not, I should leave this job and look for another one.)

2.2.3 The use of dialogue to express theme

Mtombeni uses a third technique to embody theme, namely the dialogue of the characters. Mafela (1993:28) says "it does happen that the theme of a story is explicitly stated somewhere in the story by one of the characters". Mtombeni

uses this technique in most of his works. In *Malangavi ya mbilu*, Marhule, the protagonist, tells Makhanana of his intentions that:

*Ndzi nge swi koti ku tshama na munhu
Enyongeni, kasi wun'wana u le mbilwini
(Malangavi ya mbilu:25).*

(I cannot afford to stay with a person beside me, whereas there is another one in my heart.)

Throughout *Malangavi ya mbilu*, Marhule struggles to find the right person who will satisfy his heart. He leaves Makhanana to go and meet frustration in the company of Ruti. When Ruti discovers that Marhule is not honest and faithful, she chooses another man. In choosing Ruti, Marhule thinks he has found true love. Ironically, Ruti rejects him, because she is also looking for someone trustworthy and loving.

In *Ndzi tshikeni*, Xihluku Xilandzo constantly reminds us that he does not want anyone to stand in the way of his vengeance. Xihluku Xilandzo can think of nothing but getting hold of the killers of his son and wife. The words *ndzi tshikeni*, *ndzi tshikeni* (leave me alone, leave me alone) are uttered every time he opens his mouth. He has become so vengeful that he fears nothing. Wherever he gets the opportunity he engages in fierce fighting in order to take revenge. When all else fails, he ends up in gaol where his arch-enemy Xipelupelu is serving a prison sentence for killing his son and wife. To him that is not enough.

This kind of determination is obsessive and unusual. Owing to what the thugs did to his life, he forfeits all chances of a normal life for himself and vows: the killers of Madlayisana, and Gavaza Makhawukana will have to face the gun.

In *Mihizo ya kayivela*, we also become aware of the theme of the play because of what the characters say. The funeral oration of N'wa-Bembe Makaringe, the minister of religion, and Mbolovisa Makolo, the witchdoctor, clearly indicate the

divergence between Christianity and ancestral worship. Their speeches alert us to the difference between those who belong to the Western religion and those who believe in the traditional worship. It is only at the end of the book that Mtombeni leads the readers to believe that Christianity is better. Mtombeni presents his theme in this manner in order to please the two groups which belong to these institutions, although by creating a situation for Mbolovisa to invite the minister to pray for him a few minutes before his death, he is actually articulating his support for the Christian group.

In the narrative *Mibya ya nyekanyeka*, dialogue is also used to express theme. N'wa-Basana, Tlhomandloti's wife says:

... kasi loko va ku mubya wu tsemekile kumbe va ku wa nyekanyeka a va vuli swona leswaku munhu wa vutlhari a vuya a lulama u tswala vana vo dadavaJa, va mihupana, miharihari, kumbe va va na lunya, xindzhuvu ni futu xe? (Mibya ya nyekanyeka:9).

(...as a matter of fact, when they say the strap of the baby-sling is loose don't they imply that an intelligent and kind person begets foolish, naughty, unmanageable and obstinate children?)

This speech highlights the theme of the book. This character confirms the fact that children will always deviate from the normative behavioural patterns which are expected by their parents. *Mibya ya nyekanyeka* demonstrates this theme successfully.

The same pattern is found in works such as *Mavala ya yingwe* and *Vuhlangi bya vuhlangi*.

2.3 Summary

We should remember that theme is always determined by considering conflict and its resolution. The way the protagonist solves his/her problems - whether

the solution is in his/her favour or not that solution has a message to the reader. Therefore, to determine theme we should determine the conflict and its resolution which the protagonist encounters. Consequently, the next chapter of this study will concentrate on one aspect of plot, which is conflict.

The other important fact is that theme is not a moral. It is simply a statement about life in general. The last thing a writer should do is to start preaching. Nothing offends readers more than to realize that they are being lectured to or told what to do.

However, Mtombeni's works of art reveal various themes which he defended. This study cannot in any way claim to have exhausted all his themes. The reader is fascinated by the manner in which he handles these themes and, as a result, reads on in order to find out how he will eventually resolve the conflict in the novel, play etc.

All great writers have a theme, an idea of life profoundly felt and founded on some personal and compelling experience. This experience is of course, the writer's intuition, his theme is the explanation of the intuition, which is conceptual and the product most often of a reflection over long periods of time (Kelleher, 1964:6).

It is noticeable that amongst all his themes, Mtombeni did not write about politics, and the suffering which was brought about by the oppressive laws of the country during the Apartheid Era. At the time of the writing of his creative works, Apartheid was at its peak, but Mtombeni chose to remain silent about this inhuman ill-treatment of the Blacks by the White Minority Government of this country which was in power. Forced removals, drought, disease, Group Areas Act, Pass Laws, the Immorality Act and the Land Act were a few of the scourges of those years, but Mtombeni evaded them. Instead, he deliberately chose to write about love affairs, crime, greediness, gossips, education, etc. Perhaps his allegiance to the Government of the day as an Urban

Representative of the Vatsonga/Machangana people in the Urban Areas and a staunch member of the Presbyterian Church, might have influenced him to shun such themes. Perhaps he strongly feared that he might lose his job and languish in jail for writing about such things. The other reason might have been that he did not want to risk losing his school readership, because the majority of the reading population were school-going children who had to buy these books as prescribed by the Department of Education. Whatever the reasons, we have been deprived of the opportunity of getting his sincere contribution in this regard.

The themes which Mtombeni writes about, reveal that he views life as a nexus of problems resulting from the vicissitudes of life. In his works, we discover that humanity has a tendency to be ungrateful, dishonest, cunning, greedy, jealous, deceitful, unfaithful and over-ambitious in nature.

Mtombeni's works also reveal the theme of *looseness of the straps of the baby-sling*. This is the theme which depicts the fact that children have the inclination to disobey their parents. Other central themes are the emotional stress which characterizes children, and the clash between Christianity and ancestral religion.

Mtombeni uses three techniques in expressing his themes. The titles that he gave to his works assisted him in the formulation of his themes. The titles *Malangavi ya mbilu*, *Mibya ya nyekanyeka*, *Ndzi tshikeni*, *Vuhlangi bya vuhlangi* and *Mihizo ya kayivela*, all have more to do with the theme of the book than just being titles of books. Mtombeni also uses popular sayings or proverbs to express his theme. The proverb like *Masasani u fela enhaveni mabihani ekaya* (The good man dies in the bush, while the evil one dies at home) i.e the good man is not shown any gratitude (for his kindness), dies in grief, is one example of such popular sayings. Mtombeni also makes use of dialogue to reveal his themes. It is only a writer with special skills who can be in a position to use such techniques to express his themes.

CHAPTER THREE

PLOT

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter we will focus mainly on conflict, because most literary scholars on plot identify conflict as the most basic element of plot. Wymer (1978:20), for instance, claim that "the most universal element of plot is conflict, the opposition between characters or forces, the working out of which makes up the story". Mafela (1993:67) agrees, arguing that "the principal cause of plot resides in the conflict. This means that the cause stems from the conflict. Without conflict there is no plot."

Before we embark on a discussion of conflict, we should first indicate what plot is. We will quote a few remarks by literary experts on this aspect of literature. Serudu (1993:51) asserts that:

Most literary scholars and critics agree that plot is the sequential flow of events in time and its means and causes, effects and ends in a literary work. This means that one event is the cause of the one that follows it in a sort of relay and so on ...

To our mind, Serudu's assertion about plot is a resume of what literary critics say with regard to plot. Cohen (1973:68), in similar vein defines plot as "the arrangement of a sequence of events". This implies that we are dealing here with a story or narrative which depicts a unified or purposeful sequence of events or which meaningfully relates events and details disconnected in time.

Heese and Lawton (1983:102) define plot as a "narrative of events, the emphasis falling on causality".

Rodway (1982:183) elaborates:

According to E.M. Forster, the grammar of story is 'And then' ... while that of plot is 'And therefore .. 'Story, we may say, is sequential, plot is consequential. 'The queen died, and then the king died', Forster says, is the story. 'The queen died, and then the king died of grief' is plot.

In all the statements the underlying factor of plot is causality. There is always a cause of any event to take place. Obviously this cause creates conflict to the characters in the book. In this regard Potter (1967:24) also asserts that "plot is based on a series of events that are all partly the result of some continuing cause."

Plot cannot be studied or analyzed in isolation. It must include the analysis of setting, point of view and characterization. Owing to the fact that plot is the arrangement of a sequence of events, action in a narrative will always be organized to follow chronologically (Cohen, 1973:68).

The plot structure of a narrative can be analyzed in terms of exposition, rising action, climax and denouement. Exposition refers to the beginning part of the narrative where the background material is provided for. It is in this section where the author establishes the setting, and creates the basic atmosphere of the story. The story begins to unfold at this stage of the narrative.

As far as the rising action is concerned, Cohen (1973:69) says

(It) .. encompasses that part of the story from the first event of the plot to the climax. Here the author will indicate the development of his basic situation, suggest any important conflicts, and develop his characters.

In this part of the narrative the author develops his characters by involving them in problems which will later have to be resolved in the denouement. But before

we come to the resolution or denouement, the author has to develop his story to a climax, which is the highest and most important point to which the chain of events in the rising action has been moving. Cohen (1973:69) defines this as the point where issues and conflicts in the plot are fully and clearly resolved, or which establishes the final action which leads the author to explain or unravel what has happened up to the climax.

Before assessing conflict in Mtombeni's works, a definition is necessary.

Roberts (1983:375) defines conflict as:

The opposition between two characters, between large groups of people, or between protagonists and larger forces such as natural objects, ideas, modes of behaviour, public opinion, and the like.

Roberts (1983:52) further indicates that conflict is the essence of plot because in conflict

... human energy is brought out to the highest degree. In its elemental form, a conflict is the opposition of two people. They may fight, argue, enlist help, and otherwise oppose each other.

Cohen (1973:181) on the other hand, states that conflict is:

The collision of opposing forces in prose fiction, drama and poetry. Conflicts can take many forms: between people; between man and his environment; between ideologies, or internal conflicts which can come from any of the forces above, from feelings within a person, or from cause unknown.

From the above definitions by Roberts and Cohen, one fact becomes evident and that is conflict has to do with two opposing forces. These forces might be two people, groups or ideologies. Another important fact is that Roberts refers to protagonists which also implies that there are antagonists. It is obvious that when assessing conflict, we are bound to make reference to characterization,

which is defined by Shaw (1972:71) as:

The creation of images of imaginary persons in drama, narrative poetry, the novel, and the short story.

Besides characterization, Roberts (1983:52) also mentions human energy, which is brought out to the highest degree in conflict, which implies that conflict rises up to a crisis level or climax. Climax is part of plot structure of a literary work of art. From this stage, in a well-structured plot, the intensity of the conflict diminishes, leading to the denouement, or resolution. The denouement marks the outcome of the conflict, i.e the solution of the problem. This implies that the whole state of affairs returns to a state of stability or equilibrium. If there was an ideological fight between two people, peace is restored. Roberts (1983:52) reiterates that:

Conflict is the major element of plot because opposing forces arouse curiosity, cause doubt, and create tension.

Where there is conflict in a work of art, the protagonist is always found to be exerting great energy to win and there is at all times uncertainty about ultimate success, for unless there is doubt about the outcome there is no tension, and without tension there is no interest. What we have said so far, in this paragraph, is that in conflict, there will always be doubt, tension and interest. With regard to tension, Knott (1977:35) says:

The most elaborate plot in the world is useless without the tension and excitement that conflict imparts to it.

It is also interesting to note what Beardsley, Daniel and Leggett (1975: xxxiii) say about conflict:

The substance of fiction is, broadly speaking, a conflict - sometimes an overt conflict between two people ... sometimes an inner, psychological one ... sometimes a confrontation of life's inexorable forces of time and change.

It is clear that conflict can be of different kinds. It might be an inner psychological conflict within one character or external conflict between two people with opposing views, arguments etc. or it might be a resistance to change with time. In summary, the following are the different kinds of conflict that we find in a literary work of art.

3.2 Kinds of conflict

Heese and Lawton (1983:88) recognise the following as kinds of conflict:

Conflict within an individual, between individuals, between man, circumstance, fate and environment. Because drama is based on conflict, it involves its characters in choices, choices which must be made, for life demands change and action.

From the above statement we can list the following kinds of conflict in literature:

- * man against nature or against his environment;
- * man against man, as in most love stories;
- * man against himself, what can be termed psychological conflict, i.e. frustrations as a result of clash in beliefs and principles; and
- * man against fate or destiny.

Brooks and Warren (1971:172) are of the opinion that man's contest with external forces is the simplest kind of struggle and finally the least interesting. The greatest and most typical human conflict is one in which human beings are in conflict. Another well-known conflict is where a protagonist is in conflict with himself. Simply stated, we find two main kinds of conflict, viz. external conflict and internal conflict. External conflict is where the characters struggle against the environment or each other. Internal conflict is where the character is involved with himself, i.e. struggling against his moral, psychological or spiritual beliefs, e.g. a character may struggle against an aspect of himself due at times to vice or virtue carried to excess.

3.3 The techniques of delineating conflict in Mtombeni's works

Mtombeni uses characters to reveal conflict. The characters in his works are found engaged in dialogue or soliloquy through which their intentions, problems and struggles are exposed to the reader. This technique is called the dramatic technique, whilst Hudson (1925: 25) calls it the indirect method. Nkuzana (1981:7) defines the dramatic technique as

... the manner whereby the author of prose fiction, like the dramatist, allows his characters to talk, to act or to react to various situations in the novel. He does not describe their actions and manners. The author gives the characters chance to reveal their nature through speech.

The implication we get from the above quotation is that the character becomes a participant in revealing his own tribulations. In this regard, Mafela (1993:159) says:

The dramatic technique is a technique through which a character reveals his own traits to the reader.

Sometimes we find that a character will soliloquize, and by so doing reveal to us his/her problems. This is called soliloquy and falls under the dramatic technique. In almost all Mtombeni's works, soliloquy has successfully been employed to delineate conflict. This technique is so effective that it becomes very easy for the reader to know the circumstances: good or bad, which surround the life of a character.

The second technique through which Mtombeni presents conflict in his works is the narrative technique, which is explained by Nkuzana (1981:7) as follows:

... the author or one character in the book reveals or tells the readers more about the other characters, although this narrator may not be aware of the implications of what he is reporting. The author tends to give the reader more information, thus allowing him no scope to make his own

judgement of the characters.

Altenbernd and Lewis (1966:156) call this technique the expository technique.

They say:

The expository method of characterization tells us about the figure: he is described or discussed either by the author or another character.

This means that the personality traits of a character are directly shown by the narrator's descriptions and explanation or by the other characters in the book.

The third technique which Mtombeni employs in revealing conflict in his works is setting whereby the credibility of a character and his actions are assessed. The actions of a character gain credibility if the setting is real (Brooks, and Warren (1971:573).

Cohen (1973:195) defines setting as "the time and place (or locale) in a literary work. It is intimately connected with mood and atmosphere".

With regard to atmosphere, Cohen (1973:175) says:

The mood or moods of a literary work created by the description of settings by the actions and words of characters, by the tone of an author or the voice through which he speaks. One function of atmosphere can be the creation of suspense - tenseness and expectations within a reader or observer.

Mtombeni creates conflicts in his works by means of this technique. He mainly employs the night as the appropriate time for incidents to take place. He also chooses appropriate settings for peculiar or eventful incidents to occur: Police Stations, hospitals, railway stations, restaurants and township houses.

In discussing Mtombeni's use of conflict, we shall also assess his success or

failure in creating that conflict. Conflict in Mtombeni's works will be examined as it is first manifested in his novels, plays and short stories.

3.4 Conflict in Mtombeni's novels

Mtombeni wrote only two novels during his literary career: *Mibya ya nyekanyeka* (1967) and *Ndzi tshikeni* (1973). In both novels only the conflict experienced by the protagonists will be assessed, although reference to that of the antagonists will be made.

In *Mibya ya nyekanyeka*, the protagonist is Tihomandloti, who is depicted as a man of about fifty-six years old, suffering internal psychological conflict brought about by his social status in the community. As a minister of religion, who is respected by his parishioners and ordinary members of the community he sees himself as an important person whose children should also be highly esteemed. Therefore, he has great expectations of Madambi and Nyiko, his two sons, however, these two sons fail to meet the expectations of their father.

Madambi, who is always on top of his class, is a filthy young man, who does not care about his personal cleanliness. Madambi further frustrates his father by insisting on marrying Soluka, a Xhosa girl. It is through the dramatic technique that Mtombeni reveals Tihomandloti's objection to the proposed marriage.

Ndza ku alela Madambi, ndza ala ku amukela n'wingi wa Muxhosa vatukulu va mina va va vatukulu va Maxhosa hi le tlhelo - ndza ala. Lava nhwana wa Mutsonga, va tele ngopfu; teka un'we wa vona, a nga ri nhwana wa Muxhosa. E-e, ndza ala (Mibya ya nyekanyeka:57).

(I refuse you Madambi - I refuse to accept a Xhosa daughter-in-law so that my grandchildren be grandchildren to Xhosas at the same time - I refuse. Look for a Tsonga lady, there are many; pick one of them, not a Xhosa lady. No,no, I refuse.)

Tihomandloti strongly refuses to approve Madambi's marriage to a Xhosa

woman. He repeatedly says: *ndza ku alela* (I refuse you). In the Tsonga tradition, marriage can only be blessed if parents give consent. Madambi is able to marry Soluka, only when his father dies.

Using the dramatic technique, Madambi insists that:

Swa ndzi tikela tatana ku ntshunxa fundzu leri ndzi ri boheke na Soluka. Fundzu leri bohiweke hi ku hlambanya emahlweni ka Xikwembu - hikuva xi kona hinkwako - hi n'wina tatana mi nga hi dyondzisa ku hlambanya ntsena hi ntiyiso, lowu faneleke ku yima tani hi tintshava ni milambu ya ntumbuluko hikuva ntiyiso i wa ntumbuluko, hi tlhelo ntumbuluko i ntiyiso (Mibya ya nyekanyeka:57).

(It is difficult to me, father, to untie the knot that I have tied with Soluka. The knot that has been tied by swearing before God - because He is omnipresent - it is you, father, who taught us to swear only in truth, the truth that should stand like the mountains and rivers of nature because the truth belongs to nature, at the same time nature is truth.)

Obviously, this type of conflict is of external nature. It is brought about by external forces outside Tlhomandloti himself.

Nyiko, who should be the star of the family, is the opposite of his brother. He is obedient and exceptionally neat; but he is not intelligent. He forgets easily and is therefore, a trial to his father. This state of affairs creates external conflict in his father. These factors in his sons create a state of instability, worry and frustration. They also impede his ideal of being a highly respected person on the forefront of his community.

Madambi's insistence on marrying Soluka infuriates Tlhomandloti. He feels undermined by his own son. This action brings him to a crisis situation. But, before this crisis is resolved, as fate would have it, Nyiko adds pressure to the situation. He is tempted by N'wa-Mdanisi, a beautiful widow and a parishioner of his church. He is excommunicated from the church because of his immorality. He is overwhelmed by the publicity of the case and commits

suicide. From what Tlhomandloti says (*Mibya ya nyekanyeka*:17), we can realize the influence he has on his son:

*Wa swi tiva leswaku muti wa hina wu hundzukile rivoni
exikarhi ka vusiku leri voniwaka hi vanhu va ha ta hi le
kule. Hi hina timboni ta munyama wa vanhu va ka hina; hi
hina hi faneleke ku va rhangela emahlweni eka hinkwaswo
leswo lulama ni leswi akaka mikhuva leyinene, vumunhu
ni nhluvuko wa vanhu varikwerhu.*

(You know that our household has become a light in the night which is seen by people from afar. We are the lights of the darkness of our people and we should lead them and be in front in all the right things and all that contribute in building good customs, humanity, and the development of our people.)

This incident created an internal conflict which is only resolved by death. Nyiko dies a coward.

Tlhomandloti begins to mould his sons right from their early youth stage in accordance with his way of looking at life. We see rising action, i.e exposition as they grow to attend school: Madambi proceeds to the University for academic training, whilst Nyiko goes to a Theological Institution to train for the ministry.

Conflict is embodied in this novel as these two sons show signs of revolt against their father's wishes. Their actions develop into a crisis when it becomes obvious that Madambi and Nyiko are now adults who are independent and free to make their own choices in life. In this regard, Roberts (1983:53) says:

Here we have a true plot because our story contains a major conflict together with related conflicts. The (1) initial difference in plans and hopes is resolved by (2) a parting of characters, leading to choices that are (3) not totally happy.

Tlhomandloti is totally not happy when his two sons deviate from his wishes. He does not believe that his own children can behave as they do, because his expectation is that they should be exemplary to all other children in the community.

Nevertheless, the conflict portrayed by Mtombeni in *Mibya ya nyekanyeka* has a great lesson for the reader. Mtombeni demonstrates that the reward of sin is death. Nyiko, the son of a minister of religion, and a minister himself, is tempted to commit adultery with N'wa-Mdanisi, a parishioner in his own church. It is a happy relationship which turns sour and eventually is fatal when N'wa-Mdanisi falls pregnant. The end of this incident is abrupt and painful. Nyiko dies and his father also dies of grief. The whole community is shocked. The incident serves as a lesson to all the members of Nyiko's church and to the whole community.

Mtombeni has, to a large extent, succeeded in portraying Tlhomandloti who wishes the best for his family, especially his sons. It is unfortunate that his sons' social behaviour deviates from his normative expectations. This situation places him in conflict with his own sons and this results in his untimely death.

In *Ndzi tshikeni*, Mtombeni successfully employs the narrative technique, the dramatic technique and setting, to reveal conflict. The conflict which we find in this novel is mainly external conflict, whereby the character struggles with his environment and his enemies. In this instance, we find Xihluku Xilandzo, the protagonist being frustrated by the actions of the antagonists: Xipelupelu, Nhompfu-ya-mbyana and Xirhetirheti, who perpetually pester him. From the beginning of the novel, Xihluku is portrayed as a man without any peace of mind. He is made to suffer because of the cruel actions of the three men mentioned above. Gardener (1984:187) says:

Certain forces, within and outside the character, must press him toward a certain course of action, while other forces both within and outside, must exert strong pressure

against that course of action.

Xihluku Xilandzo is pressurized right from the outset by the actions of the three thugs to take a strong resolution to revenge the death of his son and wife. To show how serious his vow is, Xihluku says:

... lava nga dlaya yena ndzi ta va na vona exitikini ku kondza va etlerisa tihloko ta vona, kumbe ya mina, eritshurini tanihi n'wananga (Ndzi tshikeni:8).

(... those who killed him I will seriously follow them, until they die or kill me like they have killed my child.)

Xipelupelu and his friends choose the night and Xihluku's house to cause conflict. Their main objective is to steal the latter's money . This is the cause of the whole conflict. Xipelupelu says:

A hi lava mali leyi hi nga vona eka switivisa-mahungu leswaku Xihluku a a ha ku yi kuma eka mulungu loyi ngi a a n'wi tirhela kutani a nga lova a n'wi siyela magidi manharhu ya tirhanda, kutani munhu un'wana ni un'wana loyi a hlongorisaka mali u fanela a kanya mbilu, a ri ni xitiya-nhlana; mhaka leyi hi yi sunguleke a hi matlangwana (Ndzi tshikeni:23).

(We wanted money which we read about in the newspapers that Xihluku had just received from his master who passed away, who left him three thousand rand, and then every person who is in need of money should have courage; the matter which we have started is not a child's play.)

The mood of the story is created by the environment in which the events occur. The force through which Xihluku's house door is opened and the simultaneous drawing of the gun by Xipelupelu, create an atmosphere of insecurity, agitation and fear.

Xihluku's main worry becomes his son. He runs to him to pick him up, not realising that by so doing he was exposing him to danger. The result is his

son's death. Fear is then instilled in all the three incumbents of the house by Xipelupelu, the leader of the gang, who says:

Loko mi rhandza ku hanya hi nyikeni mali hi ku hatlisa xibalesa lexi xi nga si khohlola rifu (Ndzi tshikeni:3).

(If you are interested in living, give us money immediately before this gun coughs death).

This episode is actually the beginning of the rising action in *Ndzi tshikeni*. It is the initial stage of Xihluku's struggle with the killers of his beloved son, Madlayisana. His frustration is worsened by the actions of Mafambaborile, a Police Officer, at the Police Station, who handles this matter lightly. The indifferent behaviour of this policeman, infuriates him. Xikundu, the Sergeant-in-charge, tries to persuade Xihluku to be patient, but the latter says:

Ndzi tshikeni Secheni; ndzi tshikeni ndzi ya tihlotela vadlayi va n'wananga ndzi ri swanga, ndzi tshikeni ndzi ya vona masalela ya Madlayisana (Ndzi tshikeni:8).

(Leave me alone, Sergeant, leave me alone to go and hunt the killers of my child by myself alone, leave me alone to go and meet the remains of Madlayisana.)

Brooks and Warren (1971:580) emphasize that the writer establishes the moment of illumination by ascending series of moments of complication, or moments of tension. He further indicates that such moments of complication increase in intensity as the plot moves toward the moment of decision, the climax. Such direct scaling upward is observed in this novel. First, it is the killing of Madlayisana, second, Xihluku's appearance at the Police Station, and later the retaliation of Xihluku by killing Xirhetirheti in a gruesome and merciless manner, which leaves the people of Chiawelo in utter amazement and shock. They cannot believe their eyes when they see Xihluku repeatedly chopping Xirhetirheti with an axe in broad daylight. This is a clear testimony of how furious and enraged Xihluku is. Mtombeni succeeds in revealing the agony and pain in Xihluku through the dramatic technique.

Wherever Xihluku was, the only topical matter was the fact that he had killed Xirhetirheti. This fact torments him psychologically and creates internal conflict in him. Through the narrative technique, Mtombeni (*Ndzi tshikeni:11*) says:

Mahungu a ya etleli ndleleni. Loko Xihluku a fika ekaya u kumile mana wa yena a n'wi yimerile hi mahlo-ngati. Eka Xihluku hi byakwe swivulavulo a swo fana ni ku mbvonga ka swimongolwana: vanhu a vo fana ni swilavi emahlweni ka yena. Lomu a a ya kona ni lomu a huma kona a a nga ku twi - o vona ntsena ku fa ka n'wana wa yena, ku loveriwa ka yena ni nsati wa yena; ku chava; vutitimeri, xivundza ni xinyama xa nifu esirheni (Ndzi tshikeni:11).

(News spread very fast. When Xihluku arrived home, he found his mother anxiously waiting for him. To Xihluku himself these rumours were just like the humming of the small stingless bees; people were just like small particles in his eyes. Where he was going and where he came from, he did not know - the only thing he saw was the death of his son and that of his loss of his wife; the fears; the coldness; loneliness and the darkness of death in the grave.)

Xihluku is overtaken by fear and anguish. He delves into the past and realizes that it is the love of his son which plunges him into this situation. He vows not to stop hunting for the other two killers of his son. This state of affairs creates great interest in the reader who is curious to know how the whole saga will be resolved. Mtombeni unfolds his plot in an ingenious manner. Xipelupelu and Nhompfu-ya-mbyana strike where it hurts most. They attack and wound Xihluku's wife. She is left alone unconscious whilst the neighbours rush to assist her. When the neighbours arrive, the attackers used the back door to escape. Gavaza Makhawukana gains consciousness at the hospital only for a short moment to talk to her husband about the manner in which she should be buried. Here we see once more the dramatic technique used to reveal the anxiety, pain and suffering in both characters. Xihluku Xilandzo's agony is further exacerbated by the information that he receives as he leaves the hospital that his wife has now passed away. Xihluku Xilandzo subsequently meets Xipelupelu and Nhompfu-ya-mbyana at the restaurant. It is in this

encounter that Nhompfu-ya-mbyana is fatally shot whilst Xipelupelu escapes with a wounded leg. Xipelupelu is later arrested and sent to the hospital under police guard.

At this juncture, Xihluku Xilandzo has succeeded in killing two of his enemies. He still has to face the antagonist, Xipelupelu, to complete his mission, but in the meantime the police want him for the murder of the other two thugs Xirhetirheti and Nhompfu-ya-mbyana. Apprehension by the police would ironically be a blessing in disguise for it would afford him the opportunity to meet his arch-enemy.

Xihluku Xilandzo is eventually arrested and sent to Blue Sky Prison in Boksburg, where Xipelupelu is also serving his sentence for killing Gavaza Makhawukana and Madlayisana. Here, we further see Xihluku Xilandzo experiencing external conflict in his struggle against the environment. Xipelupelu, whom he earnestly wishes to meet, is locked in another cell where it is impossible for him to get hold of him. This arrangement frustrates him. Mtombeni creates a wonderful opportunity for Xihluku Xilandzo to have direct confrontation with Xipelupelu.

They meet in a parade for all prisoners. A struggle ensues between Xipelupelu and Xihluku. Xihluku stabs Xipelupelu several times on the back. Xipelupelu collapses and dies. This incident brings the whole novel to its denouement. The knot is untied. The theme of the story is achieved. The title of the book is *Ndzi tshikeni* (Leave me alone). Xihluku is indeed left alone to accomplish his solemn vow. His name, Xihluku Xilandzo, translates as *Burning desire to pursue*. He succeeds in following the killers of his son and wife and eventually kills the last culprit.

The antagonists, Xirhetirheti and Nhompfu-ya-mbyana, are also portrayed as characters experiencing conflict. They experience external conflict. They fear arrest by the Police. They do not wish to be recognized by the members of the

community. They are also aware that if by chance, they meet Xihluku, it will be a fatal encounter. All these facts drive them to hide at Doornkop Cemetery.

Last but not least we would like to quote Heese and Lawton (1983:88) when they say:

The way in which each character resolves his problems
exposes the complexities of his soul.

This is true of what happens to Xihluku Xilandzo in this novel. He had sworn that whatever the problems could be, his sole aim is to catch the killers of his dear ones.

3.5 Conflict in Mtombeni's plays

Conflict will be assessed in all Mtombeni's plays i.e. *Malangavi ya mbilu*, *Vuhlangi bya Vuhlangi* and *Mihizo ya kayivela*. We shall mainly concentrate, as we have done in novels, on the conflict experienced by the main characters i.e. the protagonists and the antagonists.

The essence of play is conflict. Without conflict, we have no play. The plot structure of a play (or novel) is based on conflict which is always centred on the protagonist and concerned with something he wishes to gain; the attainment of which is uncertain. Man's contest with external forces is the simplest kind of struggle and again the least interesting. The greatest and most typical human conflict is one in which human beings are in conflict. Another great conflict is where a protagonist is in conflict with himself. In plays the dramatic technique is used entirely to present conflict which the characters experience.

In *Malangavi ya mbilu*, Marhule, an ambitious young man, finds himself in a web of conflict because of his carelessness in handling his love affairs. Whilst he is in love with Makhanana, a modest traditional woman, he is at the same time attracted by a modern young lady: a student nurse at the nearby hospital.

He becomes a man about town, who boasts of two women at the same time. But when Ruti discovers that Marhule is a married man with two children, she shares this problem with her new-found boyfriend, who encourages her to reject Marhule. This action confounds Marhule, who has by then rejected Makhanana. He is left in limbo with nowhere to find solace. Makhanana, his former lover, has now turned to Khazamula. Ruti, who caused him to abandon Makhanana, is also in a new world she shares with her new boyfriend. This causes Marhule great pain and suffering. He experiences external conflict, caused by his own miscalculations. He did not realize that his actions would boomerang, he thought he could have it all. Makhanana says:

*Phela va Marhule va ncincimuka na Vembe.
A va lavi ku hundziwa hi xanchumu.
Va lava ku wisa timbirhi, tinharhu hi lembe ...
(Malangavi ya mbilu:26).*

(In fact Marhule is moving alongside the Vembe River.
He does not want to miss anything
He wants to have two or three (women) a year.)

Realizing that he is no longer loved by Ruti, Marhule soliloquizes as follows:

*Wena Tatana, muphameri wa vunene na nsovo,
Muvumbi wa swilo hinkwaswo-nkwaswo;
Xana ndzi dyohe ku tlula na Sathana-ke?
Miringo na ku khunguvanyisiwa i swa yini-ke?
Tatana wa misava na matilo hinkwawo,
Mubohi wa mafundzu ya harhi ya misava,
Mukhongoteri wa va makhombo na swirilo,
Wena mufambisi wa magandlati na tinguva,
Mu-engherisi wa ntergo etimbilwini ta vanhu,
Loko ndzi dyohele misava na vumunhu
Hi wena la' tivaka leswi ndzi ringaneke,
Loko u nga si ndzi ahlula Tatana, ndzi rivalele;
Handle ka sweswo moya wa mina
Wu ta eka Wena, Tatana wa matimba hinkwawo
(Malangavi ya mbilu:42).*

(Father, the provider of virtue and mercy,
The creator of everything

Have I sinned more than Satan?
 Why the temptations and disappointments?
 Father of all heaven and earth,
 The comforter of all misfortunes and sorrows,
 The controller/propeller of waves and tides,
 The cause of purity of the hearts of the people,
 If I have sinned against the earth and humanity
 You are the one who knows what is good,
 Before you pass judgement
 Father, please forgive me;
 If not, my spirit should come to you, the Almighty.)

Marhule prays thus when he realises that what he has done was wrong and totally unfair to his lovers. He walks for a long distance not knowing where he was going. But when he passes a woman carrying a crying baby Marhule realises that he is not the only sufferer on earth - even innocent children have something which troubles them. As he moves on he passes a certain village where an old greyheaded man is giving strong warnings to people who wronged him. As Marhule listens to this old man, he discovers that there is no peace on earth. He says:

*Mphilumpfilu lowu, wu vindlusa mbilu ya mina,
 Switlhavi swi tova-tova xiviri xa mbilu ya mina
 Tindzololo ta mina ti tuvika ndzilo wa vukari,
 Miri wa me' ngi wa malombo,
 Nhlomulo wu ndzi swonyaswonya marhambu,
 Milomu ya tshavatana, yi na swivulavulo ..
 Nambu wa xiviri wa fomafomeka embilwini;
 Moya wa mina i mphilumpfilu wa makhukhula ebobomeni;
 Swi ri ndzi bungula ndzi tsutsuma,
 Kambe swo fa swa mbilu na moya wa rirhandzu;
 Swo fela hi 'ndzandzi hi yo misava, mina
 (Malangavi ya mbilu:44).*

(This confusion stirs my heart,
 Pains torment the personality of my heart,
 My eye-balls glow of the fury of fire,
 My whole body seems possessed by the ancestral spirits.
 Sorrow hems my bones,
 My lips twitch because of a lot to be said
 The real river is sizzling in my heart;
 My spirit is the confusion of debris on the valley;

It causes me to run wildly,
 But dead things are for the heart and the spirit of love;
 To lose your love - that is how the earth is.)

Mtombeni uses soliloquy to intensify the conflict situation which entangles Marhule. He shares this traumatic experience with Sevengwani, a widow, sequentially from the moment he disappoints Makhanana, right to a point where the same treatment is meted out to him by Ruti. In his own words, he relates that:

*Ntsumbu wa ha hefemula - miri wu file,
 Ndzi fe ndza ha ri xihlangi.
 Vutomi bya mina byi wungukile
 Byi hangalake na nhova.
 Ntsumbu wo mbekuka wu ri woxe
 Wu hundzuke makhukhumba ya nambu;
 Mavivi ya nhova ya nhlakulo.
 Mahlo a ya voni,
 Ndzi vona ntsena hi mbilu;
 Yi vona ntsena leswi hundzeke,
 Leswi wunguleke nhombe ya vutomi bya mina;
 Swi ndzi phapha gugu na mathatha.
 Ndzi pfuleke mahlo na tindleve,
 Ku ndzi tharihisa na ku ndzi kurisa;
 Ndzi khalabyile, ndzi hundzile.
 Vumunhu bya mina bya pfurha,
 Bya fufunha byi hundzuka nkuma (Malangavi ya mbilu:52).*

(The corpse is still breathing - but the body is dead,
 I died whilst still a baby,
 My life has been winnowed
 It has been scattered all over the bush.
 The corpse floats alone
 It has turned to be the debris of the river;
 The sweepings of the hoed weed of the field.
 Eyes no longer see, I only see through the heart;
 It only sees what is past,
 All that winnowed the young age of my life;
 It trimmed my courage and enthusiasm.
 My eyes and ears are now opened,
 To become clever and to make me grow;
 I have grown old, I am gone.
 My personality is burning,

It is smouldering to become ash.)

Marhule impresses Sevenswani that he is now finished and has come to the end of his active life. The last sentence *Vumunhu bya mina bya pfurha, bya fufunha byi hundzuka nkuma*. (My personality is burning, it is smouldering to become ash), is a clear declaration that there is nothing left in him. It is only ash which remains. The term "ash" is symbolic of his burnt-out state.

However, Sevenswani does not seem to be worried about what has happened to Marhule because she feels that what occurred served him right, for *muhloti wa tinyarhi ti vuya hi yena* (The buffaloes come back for the hunter who went after them) i.e if you trouble people, do not wonder if they trouble you later on.

In *Vuhlangi bya vuhlangi*, the conflict centres on Ned Nkolele, the protagonist and the three boys James, Gilbert and Selwyn, the antagonists. Ned Nkolele, who is a diligent boy and eager to learn, experiences conflict caused by the three boys who do not want to attend school. They persecute him through various means: they beat him on his way to school and back; they rob him of his lunch boxes and hurl insults at him. Although he likes attending school, he suffers external conflict as a result of these boys who are after him. In this play complication is divided into three sections, viz. rising action, climax and anti-climax. For instance, the bullying of Ned by the three lazy boys, their first conviction and Ned's perseverance to learn is rising action. The murder committed by the lazy boys, their indictment, the request by their parents to Ned to represent them in their case is the anticlimax. We do not in any way expect him to defend them when they ill-treated him when he was attending school.

As far as the denouement in this play is concerned, we are exposed to two problems. First, the problem of Ned being persecuted by James, Gilbert and Selwyn, which is resolved as soon as the three boys are apprehended for the

first time. The second problem is the indictment of James, Gilbert and Selwyn. This problem is resolved by their acquittal through the legal assistance provided by Ned.

Mtombeni has also succeeded in creating a suitable environment for the characters in this play to operate. In the urban areas, we find many boys playing truant and robbing other boys of their pocket money at the school's tuckshop. This is true to life and is quite prevalent in the townships. Although we pity what happens to Ned, we are not shocked that it occurs. It is a normal occurrence in the urban areas.

In *Mihizo ya kayivela*, the conflict is mainly between Christianity and traditional or ancestral worship. This clash is revealed through two characters, N'wa-Bembe Makaringe, the minister of religion and Mbolovisa Makolo, the well-known bone-diviner and witchdoctor. They both represent divergent views on religion. They motivate their standpoints by arguing at length when opportunities arise.

This conflict is termed psychological conflict. It is caused by a basic clash in beliefs and principles. N'wa-Bembe believes that there is life after death. It is further argued that those who will inherit this life, which is eternal or everlasting life, are those who believe in the existence of God and the Almighty Being.

N'wa-Bembe has a large following in this play, including: Matengo Mathebula, Mthothomba Mathebula (Matengo's father), Gavaza Mathebula (Matengo's mother), Etiyana Mathebula (the late brother of Matengo), Mihloti Mathebula (Matengo's sister), Xirilele Byakanya (Matengo's best friend), Goya Makhuvela (a refined school teacher), N'wa-Mathonsi (the minister's wife.) and Magwaza Vuthela (the educationist and philosopher). All these characters represent those who have come to accept the word of God and Christianity.

Mbolovisa, the diviner, is in conflict with Christianity for he believes that there

is no life after death. He also propagates the fact that death is caused by evil spirits and by being hated. There can be no death without someone causing it. He also believes that there are people who thrive on human flesh. He cannot understand why people should talk of life after death when he certainly knows that death is the end of life. Characters who follow Mbolovisa's religion are Sasa Makhombo (Mbolovisa's assistant), Hlephuka Hlekani (a woman clown), Hlupheka Nkuna (a beautiful girl), Joyiyana Nkuna (Hlupheka's mother), Mkansi Nkuna (Hlupheka's father) and Nkiyasi and Khombomuni (Hlupheka's sisters).

When Matengo proposes love to Hlupheka, she advises him to choose a beautiful woman from the Christian group, which is a clear indication that she belongs to Mbolovisa's camp.

The conflict between Western Culture and African tradition is further highlighted by Goya, a distinguished teacher, who refers to darkness as symbolic of traditional worship and light as representative of Christian life and civilization (*Mihizo ya kayivela:11*).

Mtombeni contrives his plot to reveal at the end the belief which is better accepted. Christianity is portrayed as preferable to the African tradition.

3.6 Conflict in Mtombeni's short stories

Mtombeni has written three volumes of short stories: *Ndzhaka ya vusiwana* with a total of fourteen short stories, *Mavala ya yingwe* which has three stories and *Matshopetana ya tindzumulo*, a collection of children's stories. We do not intend to evaluate conflict in all these short stories. For our purpose, it will be sufficient to select two short stories from each volume, except *Matshopetana ya tindzumulo*, which does not fall within our scope, to illustrate how Mtombeni delineated conflict in them. The first two will be taken from *Ndzhaka ya vusiwana*.

Kumar (1968:67-68) has the following to say about plot in a short story:

... the modern short story is plotless, static fragmentary, amorphous - frequently a mere character sketch or vignette, or a mere reporting of a transient moment, or the capturing of a mood or nuance - everything, in fact, except a story.

We do not agree entirely with this assertion, because there are many short stories by Mtombeni which have plot, although a few are found without plot. These short stories have a structure, which is a basic design or skeletal framework, and that this structure is essentially the same as that of the older type of short story.

The main change that we find is the stricter limitation of subject and a method of indirection. In support of this argument Bader in Kumar (1968:70) says:

The modern writer's desire for realism causes him to focus upon a limited moment of time or a limited area of action in order that it may be more fully explored and understood.

The other reason which causes writers to disregard plot is that they consider plot to be artificial, especially if the subject is limited. In this regard Bader in Kumar (1968:70) says:

More important than this limitation of subject ... is the marked emphasis upon direction, which seemingly stems as much from the pervasive modern desire for subtlety as from the realistic ideal.

In the same breath, Bader in Kumar (1968:71) quotes L.A.G. Strong as saying:

The modern short story writer is content if, allowing the reader to glance at his characters as through a window, he shows them making a gesture which is typical: that is to say, a gesture which enables the reader's imagination to fill in all that is left unsaid. Instead of giving us a finished action to admire, or picking the bubble of some problem,

he may give us only the key-piece of a mosaic, around which, is sufficiently perceptive, we can see in shadowy outline the completed pattern.

In *Vubombi bya swo lomba*, the protagonist is Mageza, who is depicted as a well-built strong man with a hairy chest and a long nose. He is also described as a neat and well-dressed man who is loved by many people in the community. Mageza is married to Estere and they have three daughters. They lead a reasonably pleasant life and they drive a luxurious car which contributes greatly to their social status in the community. But this is just a smoke screen:

... kasi ntengo lowu, a wu ri vumbhoni-xihandle bya xidzedze lexi a xi simula swipingwana swa rihlampfu ra ndyangu wa ka Mageza (Vubombi bya swo lomba:110).

(... in fact this serenity, was just an external testimony of a whirlwind which could uproot the pegs of a fence of the yard of Mageza's family.)

Mageza becomes involved with Nelly Shigwatsu, a nurse at the nearby hospital. Nelly is so beautiful that Mageza cannot resist her. This affair causes serious differences between Mageza and his wife, Estere, who asks him:

Kambe tatana Mageza, nhwana loyi vanhu va taka va ta ndzi byela hi yena, a mi swi koti ku hambana na yena xana? (Vubombi bya swo lomba:111).

(But, father Mageza, are you not able to part with the woman that people come to tell me about?)

Mtombeni uses the dramatic technique to reveal Estere's external conflict. Mageza tries to avoid Estere's question by dismissing the allegations as untrue rumours from dogs which are barking at the moon. Estere's question is part of the rising action of the story and if Mageza was prepared to appease his wife and reconcile, he should have stopped going out with Nelly at that moment. He denies the affair but the argument continues until Mageza becomes disgusted and wants to assault Estere.

Estere is unhappy, and wants to confront Nelly. Estere resolves to see Nelly at the hospital. When she arrives there, she pretends to be one of the patients.

When she introduces herself to Nelly, the whole area becomes quiet, in anticipation of a fierce argument. Mtombeni describes this scenario as follows:

Hi nkamanyana wolowo nkarhi wu yima, mbilu ya Nelly yi yima; mimpfumawulo hinkwayo yi yima, miehleketo ya vona vambirhi ka vona yi yima - misava ni ntumbuluko hinkwawo swi yima (Vubombi bya swo lombani:112).

(At that time, time stopped, Nelly's heart stopped, all sounds stopped, thoughts of both of them stopped - the earth and the whole creation stopped.)

The verb *yima* (stop) is of special significance to Mtombeni's narration. It signifies that everything could not function because of the presence of Estere in the consultation room. This is a clear indication that Nelly is shocked by Estere's presence. Consequently, everything came to a stop, because of shock. Although she tries to hide her ineptitude, Estere insists that she had come to talk to Nelly about a serious matter. She says:

Nhwana wa rikwerhu, a ndzi tanga ku ta ta gula meno, ndzi tele ku ta ta vulavula na wena hi mhaka leyi yi ndzi vavisaka swinene (ibid).

(My home girl, I am not here to extract teeth, I am here to talk to you about a matter which worries me very much.)

To show that Nelly does not care about Mageza, she says:

Manana Mageza, ndzi rhandza leswaku u ndzi yingisa swinene, u hlavutela marito ya mina hi ku xiyaxiya. Mina ndzi nga Nelly a ndzi na mhaka ni swa muti wa wena; Mageza wa kona loyi u vulavulaka hi yena a ndzi n'wi tivi leswaku i mani, kumbe i ncini laha misaveni. Loko swi ri swa tindlela leti ndzi tifambaka a ndzi nga byeli hi wena leswaku ndzi famba-famba kwihhi na mani - u ndzi yingisile swinene? A ndzi na manana wa vumbirhi laha xibedlele

(ibid).

(Mrs Mageza, I want you to listen attentively, and please mark my words very carefully. I, Nelly, I do not care about your home affairs; the Mageza that you are speaking about I do not even know who he is, or who he is on earth. As far as my ways are concerned, I will not be told by you where I should go and with whom I should associate - please are you listening carefully? I do not have a second mother here at the hospital.)

Mtombeni employs the dramatic technique to reveal Estere's misery. She indicates that she is distraught about what is happening between Nelly and her husband. She leaves the hospital disappointed and dejected. Her conflict is unresolved for Mageza continues to see Nelly. Mageza reassures Nelly:

... ntanga wa swiluva swa mbilu ya mina hi wena. U karhata hi yini? (Vubombi bya swo lombā:113).

(... the flower garden of my heart is you. Why do you worry?)

Nelly's worry is that Estere is spoiling her name by exposing her affairs before the patients at the hospital. This behaviour degrades her. Consequently, she persuades Mageza to beat Estere in order to stop her from coming to harass Nelly. Mageza reassures Nelly that there is no person on earth who would influence him to reject her. Indeed, Estere's conflict is worsened by Mageza who quizzes her for having gone to the hospital. Estere gives her reasons:

Kambe a ndzi nga endli hi vomu, a ndzi endliwa hi ku mi rhandza ni ku chava leswaku siku rin'wana mi nga ndzi siya empfhukeni ndzi sala ni tingana. Kambe sweswi ndza swi vona leswaku ndzi hoxile, mi ndzi rivalela tatana (Vubombi bya swo lombā:113).

(But I did not do that in purpose, it was love which drove me to do that because I feared that one day you might leave me in the lurch with all the shame. But now I realize that I wronged you, please forgive me, father.)

Through the dramatic technique, Mtombeni continues to build up the story to an extent where Estere is assaulted, which is a clear indication that Mageza feels that Nelly is better than his real wife. Estere cries bitterly as she is repeatedly beaten.

As denouement, at the end of the story, we see Mageza in a wheel-chair as a result of a car accident. Mtombeni's resolution is designed in such a way that Mageza should not die, but live to be disillusioned in Nelly's love. Nelly is heard to say:

Nuna wa wena loyi a wu ndzi sapatela hi yena masiku hinkwawo ndzi ku nyiketa yena namuntlha - hikuva mina a ndza ha ri na ntirho hi xigono xo famba xi ndzundza hi le hanshi tanihi swikokovi (Vubombi bya swo lombamba:115).

(Your husband whom you always scolded me for, I am handing him over to you today, because I no longer have anything to do with a cripple that crawls on the ground like reptiles.)

Mageza realises how pointlessly he has made his wife suffer. He says:

Ndzi khongela leswaku misava hinkwayo yi layiwa hi khombo ro bomba hi swo lombamba (Vubombi bya swo lombamba:115).

(I pray that the whole world should be advised about the danger of making yourself nice in appearance by wearing borrowed clothes.)

Mtombeni successfully demonstrates that *dishonesty in love affairs does not pay* and that men should never trust girl-friends because they do not have true love for them.

In *Xidyondzi xa xiphukuphuku*, Mtombeni depicts internal conflict in Ntshabeleni, an educated young man who tries to deny his grandfather on his graduation day at the university. Although educated, Ntshabeleni suffers

psychologically, because he does not want to associate himself with an uneducated old man. This fact torments him inwardly and he is driven to extreme lengths to hide from his grandfather. Rikhahlamba Nkuna, the man in question, is not aware of the agony in his grandson. He earnestly wants to congratulate him on his achievement after spending dearly from his meagre savings to pay for Ntshabeleni's studies.

Ntshabeleni Nkuna grows up as an orphan and arguably, he should have learnt to value foster parents, especially a man of Rikhahlamba's calibre, who besides raising him, battles to pay his university fees. All these were just futile exercises, because at the end, Ntshabeleni endorses the fact that *masasani u fele enhoveni* (the good man dies in the bush, the evil one dies in his village.) i.e the good man is not shown any gratitude (for his kindness), he dies in grief. In this case, Rikhahlamba Nkuna does not literally die in grief, but the actions of his grandson, shatter him. He has made great sacrifices which Ntshabeleni is too blind to see. Through the narrative technique, Mtombeni portrays how Rikhahlamba struggles to make ends meet. He says:

Muti hinkwawo wa le Xitandani a wu vitana nkulukumba Rikhahlamba hi vito ra N'wamasaka, hikuva ku sukela hi Ravuntlhanu ioko a vuya entirhweni, a a famba-famba muti hinkwawo a xava mabodlela, marhambu ni masaka, a tlhela a ya swi xavisela valungu edorobeni. (Xidyondzi xa xiphukuphuku:81).

(The whole village of Xitandani used to call Mr Rikhahlamba by the name of N'wamasaka (the one who deals with bags), because right from Friday after working hours, he used to move around the whole village buying bottles, bones and bags which he resold to the Whites in town.)

This clearly shows that it was not easy for Rikhahlamba to finance his grandson's education. On the contrary, Ntshabeleni should have been very proud to receive such love and parental care.

In this instance, Mtombeni presents to the readers an old man with special love for his grandson. Unfortunately, the grandson suffers psychologically. The author uses the narrative technique to describe in detail the mean demeanour of *Xidyondzi xa Xiphukuphuku*.

Ntshabeleni grows up knowing very well that he is not as clever as people think he is, but only a hard-worker. Surprisingly, he fails to recognize how precious his grandfather is.

Ironically, we are told that Ntshabeleni is studying law, which could have made him aware of the importance of kinship. We are also informed that Ntshabeleni is acquainted with Mapula Maake, a North Sotho girl who competes with him in all subjects. They study together at all times. This relationship possibly influences his attitude towards his grandfather who is a Shangaan.

When the results of the examination are released, Rikahlamba buys his grandson a beautiful suit to wear on graduation day, the last item to be bought for him.

The resolution of the conflict is a fatal one; Ntshabeleni is knocked down by a car, thus bringing to an end the internal conflict which tormented him psychologically.

In *Mavala ya yingwe* we will discuss conflict in *Ndzi xavelela yini?* and *N'hwarhi-mbirhi*. In *Ndzi xavelela yini?* Tihomana, the wife to Ngomana, is depicted as a frustrated woman because she has no sons to inherit the wealth of her husband when he dies. She imagines herself without any cattle, knowing that the kraal is full of many cattle that would be shared by the sons of her co-wives. This state of affairs creates in her, a heart full of hatred and cruelty, and inspires a burning desire to kill in order to receive something. This internal conflict is known only to her. It becomes known to the others on the day the boys return crying because of the poisoned milk which they were given

by their senior mother (*mamuhulu*).

When Tlhomana actually executes her desire to kill, her conflict becomes external, because it is now between her and the children of her-co-wives. She wants to see them dead regardless of the repercussions.

It is through the dramatic technique that we learn of Tlhomana's internal conflict. She says:

U swi tiva swinene leswaku hi mina nghamu leyikulu eka Ngomana exikarhi ka vasati va yena lavan'wana vambirhi, kutani xo khunguvanyisa moya wa mina hi leswaku mina hi mpfhuka ndzi fika laha mutini wa ka Ngomana a ndzi swi kumi swihlangi swa vafana, ehenhla ka vanhwana lavanharhu ndzi va kumeke. (Ndzi xavelela yini?:17).

(You know it very well that I am Ngomana's senior wife amongst the other two wives, therefore, what worries my spirit is that since I came to Ngomana's family, I do not give birth to boys as children amongst the three girls that I have.)

Tlhomana's intentions are expressed quite clearly through this dramatic technique.

Although the motive for the poisoning of the three sons of her co-wives is understood subsequent actions are not as convincing. Would a person who has killed an innocent child, and seriously harmed another, still be found talking amongst an angry crowd? This lacks credibility. Similarly Ngomana lacks the responses of a normal person to the murder of one of his children. He takes things lightly, saying that the Chief and the courts should be allowed to take their course.

Mtombeni's setting of the grazing lands and Mdlasiri's homestead with dogs barking, is a typical rural environment.

In *N'hwathi-mbirhi*, which is the last short story in *Mavala ya yingwe*, Bra-Pampa who is the leader of the terrorizing gang, lives a double life. During the day he is a responsible police sergeant Mahomo and at night, he assumes the role of a gang-leader, Bra Pampa, who works very hard so that his group should steal, plunder, kill and rob members of the community. Because of his involvement in the activities of the gang, it is not possible for the police to arrest them. Bra-Pampa, who is sergeant Mahomo, is always aware of the whereabouts of the gang, as a result, he knows where to direct his work-force as they move around raiding. Nevertheless, Mahomo is always in conflict. His anxiety and worry is that he is not sure when things will turn sour for him. He experiences internal conflict. It is not possible for him to share this secret with anyone.

The title of the short story is *N'hwathi-mbirhi* (two partridges) which in full is expressed as *n'hwathi-mbirhi yin'we yi tshwa nkanga* (you cannot roast two partridges at the same time, the one's breast will get burned and the other's inside will rot), i.e you cannot do two jobs at the same time; neither of them will be done properly. Sergeant Mahomo suffers a great deal, because he has to struggle to save his people who are causing havoc in the community and at the same time he has to remain loyal, faithful and honest to his Department, especially Colonel Mathebula Terblanche, who is his immediate supervisor. The title is symbolic of the incidents in this short story. At the end of it all, we see sergeant Mahomo succumbing to the long arm of the law.

Mtombeni uses a prison as an appropriate environment to create the climax of the story. From that point it has to take a falling inclination to the end. We are bound to ask ourselves if the author's resolution is convincing and plausible. The warning seems to be that the law has a long arm. Whatever you do, ultimately you will be apprehended. It is humiliating for sergeant Mahomo to instruct Colonel Terblanche to lock him up because he is the man they were looking for.

Bra-Pampa knows that he cannot escape, because the police have already arrested Oupa Tanganyika, who will divulge the rest of the members of the Devil's Angels.

Dramatic technique facilitates the development of plot in Mtombeni's short stories. He frequently makes use of this technique to bring out conflict.

Bra-Pampa is aware that the police are using Soselina, Oupa Tanganyika's girlfriend, because he is one of them. But he worries about the arrest of Dan Dilolo, who is at the hospital under police guard and Oupa Tanganyika, who is still at large. His anxiety escalates when he learns that Oupa has been arrested on the Cape Town train and escorted back to John Vorster Square to Colonel Terblanche. This is how sergeant Mahomo hands himself over to Colonel Terblanche. His actions demonstrate to us that he is a coward. He says:

Kolonele wa mina, mina a ndzi nhenha, ndzi ni vutoya byo tlurisa mpimo, loko hi hlongorisa swigevenga ndzo rhurhumela, a ndzi nga ti ya laha ndzi swi tivaka leswaku ku ni khombo ro dlawa kambe loko ho ya hi tele un'wana u ta sala kona (N'hwari-mbirhi:46).

(My Colonel, I am not a hero; I am full of cowardice, when chasing criminals, I tremble, I cannot go where I fully know that there is danger of being killed but if we get there being many, one will remain there.)

Bra-Pampa does not want to meet the wrath of the police. He wants to cooperate with them in the hope that his sentence will be reduced.

3.7 Summary

This chapter has revealed that plot is basically the arrangement of a sequence of events in a work of art, the emphasis falling on causality. It has been shown that there is always a cause of any event to take place. It is this cause which

creates conflict for the character in a story.

We have also observed that the essential element of plot is conflict, which is regarded as the collision of opposing forces in a prose fiction, drama and poetry. Conflict is of various forms. Mention was made that there is conflict between people, between man and his environment, between ideologies or internal conflicts, which can come from any of the forms that we have just mentioned, from feelings within a person, or from causes which are not known.

This chapter also reveals that Mtombeni has employed the following techniques to portray conflict in his works: the dramatic technique, the narrative technique, soliloquy and setting. It is through these four techniques that external and internal conflicts in his works were depicted. It is interesting to note that environments such as police stations, hospitals and restaurants feature prominently as milieus in which his characters experience a lot of conflict. As far as the denouement is concerned, the prison is commonly used as a place where resolutions can be reached. For instance, Xihluku Xilandzo in *Ndzi tshikeni*, is able to get the culprit who killed his wife and son in prison. We also found that in *Vuhlangi bya vuhlangi*, the three boys Gilbert, James and Selwyn, who used to terrorise Ned Nkolele when he was still attending school, end up in prison.

The next chapter will deal with characterization, offering a critical analysis of the techniques which Mtombeni uses in portraying his characters. This will be done with the objective of discovering the success which he has achieved in creating lifelike and credible characters.

CHAPTER FOUR

CHARACTERIZATION

4.1 Introduction

In every work of art that we read, we always encounter one or more characters. In this regard Dietrich and Sundell (1974:75) say:

We quite naturally are concerned with what people do and what happens to people, and what their actions and experiences mean.

This assertion is supported by Walcutt (1969:5) when he says:

Every critic talks about it [characterization] because it must be the axle upon which all fiction turns; clearly we read fiction because we expect to learn something about them, which is another way of saying that character is the central substance of fiction.

What Walcutt says confirms how important characters are in literature. It is the activities of the characters that hold the attention of the reader. Shaw (1972:71) is also of the opinion that:

Every reader is interested in people or should be, because people are the most important single factor in individual lives. In fiction, a reader primarily interested in the individuals concerned, has natural tendency to identify with the 'hero' and hate the 'villain' or to feel 'for' or 'with' one individual or group and 'against' another.

Shaw (1972:71) defines characterization as:

The creation of images of imaginary persons in drama, narrative poetry, the novel, and the short story is called characterization.

This definition is echoed by that of Cohen (1973:37), who defines characterization as:

The creation of images of imaginary persons in drama, narrative poetry, the novel, and the short story is called characterization.

Irmscher (1975:17) offers the following insight:

The art of creating fictional characters in words which give them human identity, whereby the characters created seem to become people with traits and personalities which a reader can recognize, respond to, and analyze.

One important fact emerges from these definitions: characters in a work of fiction are not real living people, but are creations to populate the fictional world. This implies that they have been created to act like people with traits and personalities which the reader can recognize and assess. In this respect Scholes, Comley, Klaus and Silverman (1991:129) point out that:

No character in a book is a real person ... Characters in fiction are like real people. They are also unlike them. In realistic fiction, which includes most novels and short stories, writers have tried to emphasize the lifelikeness of their characters.

Although characters in a book are not real persons, as readers we are entitled to expect that the characters in a novel or play will be true to life, i.e the actions, statements, and thoughts of a particular character must all resemble what a human being is likely to do, say, and think under a given circumstance (Roberts, 1983:53).

This expectation is supported by Kenny (1988:23) who says

... most of us expect the people - or characters - in fiction to be similar to the people in life. To call a fictional

character 'artificial' is usually to imply disapproval. Whatever degree of artifice we are willing to allow in plot, we expect characters to be 'natural' or 'lifelike'.

As we study characters in fiction, we should be aware that literature presents a highly selective view of reality. Consequently, our main objective should be to discover if the character - whether intended by the author to be a complete, lifelike person, a romantic hero or an absurdist abstraction - does and says what we believe human beings might do and say under the exact conditions presented by the author.

To endorse that characters in fiction are not real people whom we meet and accost in our everyday lives, Mafela (1993:136) offers the following opinion:

To say that characters are imaginary persons is to show that characters are not real people. A character is therefore an artificial construction by the author, who may be endowed with certain human attributes, such as thinking, speaking, laughing, etc. This means that real persons are modified to suit the demands of plot.

Hawthorn (1986:47) contributes to this debate when he says:

... even if we stop at names we may realize that characters in novels are not quite like real people.

It is clear that characters in fiction are not real people, but imaginary persons with human traits and personalities which are like those of the living people we can meet in real life. Abrams (1981:20) maintains that:

Characters ... are interpreted by the reader as being endowed with moral and dispositional qualities that are expressed in what they say - the dialogue and by what they do - the action.

It is from the manner of the character's speech and his action that we are able to decide whether his behaviour is plausible and believable. When the actions

of the characters are motivated, then we believe that such a character is lifelike. We do not necessarily expect a character to remain essentially stable or unchanged in his outlook and dispositions from the beginning to the end of a work, but we are aware that he may undergo a radical change, either through a gradual development or as a result of an extreme crisis. For instance, in *Ndzi tshikeni, Xihluku Xilandzo*, whose son and wife are murdered by the thugs who terrorize him in Chiawelo, is forced to change his lifestyle for the worse. The actions of these thugs compel him to make a vow to pursue the killers of his dear ones. Another dramatic change we observe is in *Mibya ya nyekanyeka*, where Nyiko, who from youth is a well-behaved young man and who becomes minister of religion, changes his life when he is tempted by a beautiful widow and commits adultery. This change shocks his father who had high hopes that all his children would be exemplary. This action by Nyiko thus humiliates Tlhomandloti, his father. Roberts (1983:55) asserts that:

In many works you will perceive a change or a development of a character, and therefore an outcome that might have seemed inevitable will change. You may decide for yourself whether human character is capable of radical change, growth or development ...

Kenny (1988:230) argues that the qualities of lifelikeness of fictional characters should not be overemphasized. He says that we should stop

... seeing fictional characters as people or representations of people and see them rather as functions. In this view, the only legitimate question we may ask of such a character, is what is it doing here, what does it contribute to the text of which it is a part?

This statement actually suggests that we must acknowledge the role of a character as a representation and as a function. Scholes, et al (1991:129) add that:

It may be useful for us to think of a character as a function of two impulses: the impulse to individualize and the

impulse to typify. Great and memorable characters are the result of a powerful combination of these two images.

Characters have important functions in fiction. This importance is shown by Mafela (1993:137) when he says:

Characters are very important in a work of literature, since they are the prime movers of the action, and determine the plot structure, which in turn influences the direction of the bringing out of theme. In most cases, a narrative is read for the revelation of a character. The function of characters in a literary work is to carry out the actions which reveal what is happening in the story.

This statement emphasizes how important characters are in novels, plays and short stories. No action can take place in any form without them. The writer is able to design his plot structure, which leads to his intended theme, because of the various characters that he employs in his story. Mafela further indicates that a narrative is read mostly with the aim of discovering what characters do therein.

On the other hand, Serudu (1993:203) indicates the importance of characters as follows:

Among the many devices a novelist uses to achieve total communication are his characters. Characters in a novel can be regarded as agents through whose nature, actions and interactions the novelist signals the meaning, or theme "message" of his work. The selection and delineation of characters, their grouping, possible separation and regrouping, are all part and parcel of the comprehensive code of the novel.

Although Serudu mentions only the novel in the above quotation, his remarks can also embrace plays and short stories. The term "agents" bears more or less the same as "prime movers" which Mafela employs earlier. Serudu emphasizes that without characters, there will be no meaning, message or theme in the work of the writer. In his own words, characters are "part and

parcel of the comprehensive code of the novel". Therefore, characters are a crucial aspect of any creative work.

In this chapter we will focus on the main characters and, to a lesser extent, minor characters in the two novels by Mtombeni: *Mibya ya nyekanyeka* and *Ndzi tshikeni* and on one short story *Nghunghunyana ni xikhowha* from *Mavala ya yingwe*, to show how he delineates his characters. To a certain extent reference will also be made to the other characters in his other publications to substantiate our assertions.

We will focus our attention on the main characters, because they are most important in the development and the unravelling of the conflict in any narrative. In this regard, Gemme in Beaucamp (1969:15) says:

The major characters are vital to the development and resolution of the action; the function of the minor characters is to complement the major characters. Minor characters are two-dimensional stock characters, given to stereotypes, and become caricatures by an overemphasis upon one trait. They can serve to strengthen the possibility of the main characters, to move the actions, to provide comic relief, thematic contrast, local colour, fluidity in reflecting a battery of views and opinion of society, authorial commentary, or merely to take up space.

4.2 The various types of characters

Because characters act and behave differently as individuals who have dissimilar personality traits, they can be classified as being of various types. This variety is indicated by many literary critics. Gemme in Beaucamp (1969:15) says:

Major characters are the principal figures of the work: they can be considered in terms of the protagonist and antagonist in regard to conflict, in terms of the dynamic and static on the structural level, and in terms of flat and round on the personal level ... There may be more than

one major character in any of these categories.

Dietrich and Sundell (1974:75) call dynamic characters developing characters. Gemme uses three sets of concepts to refer to his characters. The first set is termed protagonists and antagonists. These are the main characters of the story. Gemme in Beauchamp (1969:15) further indicates that:

The classification of the protagonist as the hero and the antagonist as the villain tends to oversimplify any novel. As modern literature has shown, the protagonist may not always be admirable; nevertheless, he must command involvement on the part of the reader or better, empathy.

The second concept is the distinction between dynamic and static. These two terms refer directly to the actions of the characters. Gemme in Beauchamp (1969:16) explains these concepts as follows:

If a major character changes as the result of his experiences within the work of fiction, then he is said to be a dynamic or kinetic character; if he remains the same throughout the course of the narrative, then he is termed a static character.

The third criterion is the distinction between round and flat characters. These terms were popularized by Forster (1974:46-54). He calls flat characters "humours", "types" and sometimes "caricatures". In his opinion flat characters

... are constructed round a single idea or quality when there is more than one factor in them, we get the beginning of the curve towards the round.

Forster (1974:47) further indicates that flat characters are "easily recognized whenever they come in - recognized by the reader's emotional eye". They are easily recognized because, they remain unchanged under any circumstance: they are not moved and the term "static" fits them well. Forster (1974:50) admits that flat characters are not in themselves as significant a literary

achievement as round ones, and also that they are best when they are comic. They can end up being shallow and boring. Rimmon-Kenan (1983:40) has the following to say about flat characters:

... such characters do not develop in the course of action. As a consequence of the restriction of qualities and the absence of development, flat characters are easily recognized and easily remembered by the reader.

Kenny (1988:27) refers to flat characters, as simple characters and indicates that:

The simple, or flat character, generally possesses just one dominant trait, or at most very few traits in clear and simple relationship to one another; he or she often seems less the representation of a human personality than the embodiment of a single attitude or obsession.

This is in contrast to round characters. In this regard Forster (1974:51) says:

It is only round people who are fit to perform tragically for any length of time and can move us to any feelings except humour and appropriateness.

Forster (p. 54) concludes his argument about round characters as follows:

The test of a round character is whether it is capable of surprising in a convincing way. If it never surprises, it is flat. If it does not convince, it is flat pretending to be round.

It goes without saying that round characters should behave in a credible manner and their actions should be plausible. With regard to round characters, Rimmon-Kenan (1983:40) says:

Round characters are defined by constructive implication, namely those that are flat. Not being flat involves having more than one quality and developing in the course of the

action.

Forster's classification of characters on the basis of round and flat characters is criticized by Rimmon-Kenan (ibid) who says:

Forster's distinction is of pioneering importance, but it also suffers from a few weaknesses: (1) The term 'flat' suggests something two-dimensional, devoid of depth and 'life', while in fact many flat characters, like those of Dickens are not only felt as very much 'alive' but also create the impression of depth. (2) The dichotomy is highly reductive, obliterating the degrees and nuances found in actual works of narrative fiction. (3) Forster seems to confuse two criteria which do not always overlap. According to him, a flat character is both simple and undeveloping, whereas a round character is both complex and developing.

Kenny (1988:28) calls a round character a complex character. According to him, a complex character "is more lifelike than simple character because in life people are not simply embodiments of single attitude". Therefore, it is not surprising that many of the most admired characters are complex characters.

Examples of types of characters found in Mtombeni's creative works will be given as we discuss the various techniques of characterization in the next sub-heading. The reason for doing this is to avoid unnecessary repetition. Therefore, as we assess the different methods of character portrayal, the fact that a character is a protagonist, antagonist, dynamic, static, round, flat, simple or complex, will be mentioned.

4.3 Techniques of characterization

It is important to identify how an author presents his emotions or ideas and creates his characters. Cohen (1973:9) asserts that:

The word *how* refers to the writer's techniques, the numerous methods and devices he may use to shape his

material. Awareness and analysis of technique may result in rich exploration of form and content.

To elaborate what the word technique means, Cohen (1973:9) quotes Schorer (1948:67) as saying:

... technique is the only means (an author) has of discovering, exploring, developing his subject of conveying its meaning and, finally, of evaluating it.

Irmscher (1975:26) is of the opinion that;

... writing about [characters] depends to a great extent on being able to seek out meaningful clues and determine what technique the writer has used to reveal his characters.

From the statements made by Cohen and Irmscher, it is apparent that the term technique refers to the way an author reveals the personality of a character by means of describing the character's actions, behaviour and the manner of speech. Another term which can interchangeably be used with technique of character portrayal is method, which is a term used by Kenny (1988:34) when he says:

The author must also choose methods of characterization, the methods by which the characters will be presented to the reader. There are a number of methods available to the author, each with its advantages.

These techniques will be discussed under the following main headings: the narrative, dramatic and naming of characters technique.

4.3.1 The narrative technique

The narrative technique which is also called the discursive method by Kenny (1988:34), is when the author chooses simply to tell us about the characters.

In this regard, Nkuzana (1981:6) says:

Here the author or one character in the book reveals or tells the readers more about the other characters, although this narrator may not be aware of the implications of what he is reporting. The author tends to give the reader more information, thus allowing him no scope to make his own judgement of the characters.

In *Mibya ya nyekanyeka* Mtombeni employs the narrative technique of character portrayal to reveal the serenity of the daily life of Rev. Tihomandloti, the protagonist of this narrative. He is presented to us as a disciplined man of the church who spends most of his afternoons with his wife, N'wa-Basana, sitting on the veranda of their house watching the passers-by:

A ku ri nkarhi wa ndzhenga Mufundhisi a titshamerile kusuhi ka nyangwa yo nghena endlwini hi le handle; a tshamile na nghamu ya yena N'wa-Basana (Mibya ya nyekanyeka:7).

(It was in the afternoon. The Reverend was seated next to the door of the house on the veranda together with his wife, N'wa-Basana.)

Mtombeni (1967:8) describes Tihomandloti and N'wa-Basana's environment as follows:

Ku tsekatseka ka byanyi a wonge byo khananyana hi ku twa ku nandziha ka tinsimu leti taka ni swimoyana. ... Ndzhawu hinkwayo a yi languteka yi ri na ku rhula ni ku tenga ka le handle ni ka le ndzeni ka ntumbuluko.

(The shaking of the grass was as if it was dancing with joy because of the sweet melodies which were coming together with the breeze ...

The whole place appeared peaceful and pure inside and outside nature.)

The serenity of Tihomandloti's environment is characterized by the quietude which prevailed in and outside nature and enhanced by natural factors such as the cool breeze, the shaking grass and the sweet melodies which accompany

the blowing of the light wind.

This is of course, the perception of a man who has a positive outlook on life and who believes nature and the whole creation is a haven of all beauty, peace and security. Life is a source of joy to man, especially a Christian like Rev. Tlhomandloti.

The narrative technique presents us with the elderly physique of this religious person. He is described as a man of fifty-six years, yet he still looks strong and healthy without wrinkles and grey hair. It is only a man who cares about his health and appearance who will deceptively resemble men who are far younger than himself. He is revealed to us as a conscientious man who is serious about his public image.

Nkulukumba Tlhomandloti a a ri na ntlhanu wa makume na ntlhanu wa malembe na lembe rin'we. Kambe a ha tiyile swinene ni nhloko ya yena yi nga si basa hi timpfi. Xiyimo xa yena a ri na rhambu ro leha, ri tihela ri bumbula hikuva a ri na miri lowu a wu fanelana ni ku leha ka yena. Mahlo ya yena a ya komba vukarhi lebyi yaka eku timekeni hikokwalaho ka ku hlaya ka masiku ya yena (Mibya ya nyekanyeka:8).

(Mr Tlhomandloti was fifty-six years old. But he was still very strong and he was not yet grey-headed. His physique was that of a man with long and thick bones because his body balanced very well with his height. His eyes showed the fury which was gradually fading because of the number of days of his life.)

Tlhomandloti's physical stature commands respect from every person who meets him. His quiet disposition is also a source of his self-confidence and his self-importance. Tlhomandloti is always aware of the fact that he is a minister of religion and that people hold him in high esteem. This state of affairs boosts his morale. He appears to be a very important person who always believes that his fellow-men should also recognize his status. All these attributes did not come without effort. He feels duty-bound, as a minister of religion, to pay

attention to his grooming, and to wear black clothes to maintain his well-deserved dignity:

Misisi ya vona ha vambirhi a yi tshama yi fefiwile, na ku tshama yi komile hi ku tsemeta swo xonga. Swo ambala a va rhandza swa ntima tanihi vafundhisi na vasati va vona lavo tala. Swambalo leswi a swi tshama swi basile, swi phumunhiwa ritshuri mixo wun'wana ni wun'wana hi malwandla ni nsaso lowo khatisa swinene.

A wu ri ndyangu wo tirhandza hakunene (ibid).

(Both of them always had their hair smartly combed and neat and well cut. They loved black clothes just like ministers of religion and their wives. Their clothes were always clean; everyday in the morning they were immaculately and properly dusted. It was a family of people who loved themselves.)

These character traits of Tihomandloti and his wife, N'wa-Basana, are portrayed through the use of the narrative technique. The author succeeds in bringing out the personality traits of this man; he describes Tihomandloti's physical appearance: his combed hair, the look and the size of his eyes, the fading fury which dominates his personal reactions in his daily life, the colour of his clothes, which perfectly fit his religious career and his personal dignity, the quiet character of his family and the tranquillity of his environment - a manse, built in the church yard. The saying, *cleanliness is next to Godliness* aptly describes him and his family.

Although Rev. Tihomandloti behaves in a Christian-like manner, at times, he reacts like any other person in the street. When a man is stabbed by thugs next to the manse, he instinctively runs to the scene to see what is taking place. His reaction is prompted by the sudden screaming of a man who is struggling for his life. Mtombeni describes Tihomandloti's quick response as follows:

Hi loko va tlula kunene va ba magoza va ya yima engoleni

ya muti va hlalela leswi endlekeke exikarhi ka gondzo (Mibya ya nyekanyeka:11).

(They then jumped and strode to stand at the gate of the homestead to witness all that happened in the middle of the road.)

When N'wa-Ndleleni, a messenger from the Baloyi's family, where Celela is fighting for his life after being shot by the Police, arrives at Rev. Tihomandloti's house to inform him of what has taken place, the latter does not waste any time. He quickly makes his way to the Baloyi's family. Mtombeni describes Rev. Tihomandloti's promptness and his sense of urgency in responding to the call as follows:

Hi loko mufundhisi a teka khancu a ri ambala a vitana Nyiko leswaku a n'wi nyiketa Bibelet, buku ya tinsimu ni xihuku xa yena, a tikirheta hi ku vula leswaku Nyiko a hatlisa hikuva a lava ku hatla a ya vona khombo ra ka Baloyi (Mibya ya nyekanyeka:25).

(The Reverend then took his gown and put it on calling Nyiko to give him his Bible, hymnary and his hat and then indicated that Nyiko should hurry, because he wanted to go and see the incident that befell the Baloyis urgently.)

Mtombeni describes Tihomandloti wearing a hat, because hats are worn by gentlemen - people who like to look smart and elegant. The author makes use of the verbs *hatlisa* (hurry) and *kahlula* (make haste) to show how urgently the attention of the minister is needed. Tihomandloti is a responsible man, who knows that his parishioners should be assisted without any waste of time. Normally, the minister wears his gown when conducting the church service on Sundays, but at this moment Mtombeni depicts him with the gown. Possibly the urgency of the incident has confused him:

Loko mufundhisi a twa sweswo u humile hi ku hatlisa, thugamama yi n'wi sele hi le ndzhaku va kongomile kwale ka Baloyi. Laha ndleleni a nga kona loyi a nga angula un'wana. (Mibya ya nyekanyeka:26).

(When the Reverend heard about that, he quickly went out, the young lady following him leading to Baloyi's family. On the way no one spoke to the other person.)

It is only a man who is businesslike, truthful and straightforward, who can respond to a critical situation in such a manner. Tlhomandloti knows that his presence at the Baloyis is of great importance. He has to play his vital role of comforting the afflicted, the weak and those experiencing physical and spiritual pain immediately. The author thus reveals him to us as a man of quick action. Roberts (1983:54) supports this kind of character portrayal when he says:

... characterization in literature is an author's representation of a human being, specifically of those inner qualities that determine how an individual reacts to various conditions or attempts to shape his or her environment. Choices and actions indicate character.

Indeed, Rev. Tlhomandloti chooses to act promptly by saying a prayer to communicate with the Almighty:

Mufundhisi u hatlisile ku vona leswaku moya wa Celela wa huma; hi loko a kombelela moya wa Celela tintswalo ta matilo ni nsovo wa moya lowo kwetsima hi xikhongelo (Mibya ya nyekanyeka:28).

(The minister quickly realized that Celela was about to gasp the last breath, then he prayed for God's mercy and the holy spirit to bless his soul.)

Tlhomandloti is depicted as a serious family man who loves and cares about his wife and children. Letters that he receives from his sons touch his ego and evoke his paternal love:

A nga swi twanga leswaku mihloti a yi ni karhi yi xiririka emarhameni ya yena. A yi ri mihloti ya rirhandzu ni nsovo, ya ku tsaka ni ku tidzuna hi jaha ra yena. Xiviri xa Madambi a xi gongondza embilwini ya tata wa yena; yi xi vukarha, xi yi khumba hi rintoho ro rhurhumela hi xichavo ni ku titsongahata emahlweni ka tata wa yena (Mibya ya

nyekanyeka:38).

(He was not aware that his tears were flowing on his cheeks. Those were tears of love and pity, tears of joy and pride for his son. The personality of Madambi was knocking on his father's heart; embracing it, touching it with a shivering finger because of respect and humbling himself before his father.)

The tears that we are told about here, are not just the ordinary tears of a weeping person, they are special tears of joy, love and pride. The letter which he receives from Madambi, his first born son, evoked his most tender emotion and reminds him of his paternity.

Towards the end of this narrative, Tihomandloti is presented to us as a worried and a frustrated person. His strong-willed personality diminishes and he is portrayed as a man who fails to face problems. At this juncture, Mtombeni presents to us a changed character, a dynamic, complex, round character which is overwhelmed by the problems and frustrations of his children. Madambi persistently refuses to heed the advice of his father not to marry a Xhosa girl. Another serious problem which is giving him sleepless nights, is Nyiko's excommunication from the church because of his involvement in adultery. Tihomandloti is shown here as a coward who dies of grief. In a very short space of time, he is revealed as a wretched old man:

Nkulukumba Tihomandloti a languteka a dyuhele ngopfu. Nhloko ya yena a yi basuluke ku tlula mpimo; nhlonge ya yena a yi khwanyanile ngopfu, yi komba vutivi bya vutomi lebyi a byi nga tsariwanga etibukwini. Ku gwanya ni ku khwanyana ka nhlonge ya yena a ku ni buku ya vutivi bya malembe laya hundzeke ni ku xaniseka hi nsingilo ni maxangu ya vumunhu laya nga henki. (Mibya ya nyekanyeka:72).

(Rev. Tihomandloti appeared very old. His head was quite grey: his skin was wrinkled showing the experience which was not written in books. The toughness and the wrinkles of his skin were a book of knowledge acquired through the past years and the suffering endured through struggling

and the never-ending human problems.)

Tihomandloti's metamorphosis is amazing. It is because of his deep love for his son, Nyiko, that he resolves to die in order to follow him in Heaven:

U tshamile kwalaho nkarhi wo leha a ri karhi a vona ku hundzuka ka ntumbuluko; hi nkama wolowo a twa leswaku na yena wa hundzuka, wa famba

U te loko a ehleketa ku fa ka yena, u ehlekete ku ya hlangana na Nyiko wa yena - hi loko a n'wayitela, a n'wayitela, a n'wayitela (Mibya ya nyekanyeka:73).

(He sat there for a long time whilst seeing the change that was taking place in nature; during that time he felt that he was also changing, he was going.

When he thought of his death, he conjured going to meet his son, Nyiko - he then died smiling.)

In *Ndzi tshikeni*, Mtombeni uses the narrative technique to introduce the characters to the reader by simply describing their ages, physical appearance and manner of doing things. *Xihluku Xilandzo*, the protagonist, a dynamic and complex character in this narrative, is described as

... wanuna wa miri wo ringanela ni ntima lowo rhomba. (Ndzi tshikeni:1).

(... a man of medium built and of lightish dark complexion.)

We are presented with Xihluku as a caring father and a committed family man through the expository technique which Mtombeni employs to portray this character. It is only a serious man who loves his family, who after work, goes straight home to be with his dear ones. Xihluku is depicted as a man who spends the evenings with his wife and son:

... ndyangu wu xuxile swinene va ri karhi va tiorhela ndzilo ni ku tidyela mabulo ya swa vutomi lebyi a va byi languterile, naswona va byi languta bya ha va leherile

hikuva a va ri vantshwa swinene (Ndzi tshikeni:2).

(... the family sat leisurely while warming themselves next to the fire as they converse about life which they faced and which they regarded as still long for they were still very young.)

In this extract we observe that Xihluku is delineated as a forward-looking person with a vision for the future. He is optimistic about his future. His youth brings him great hope for the life that lies ahead. He is hopeful that Madlayisana, his son, will also grow to become a responsible father. The bond that exists between them is embodied in the following narration:

Loko Gavaza Makhawukana a ri karhi a lulamisa kofi, Madlayisana a titlangela ni tata wa yena va tidyela mabulo hi ku rhandzana lokukulu ni ntwele-vusiwana wa nkava eka mutswari ni n'wana (Ndzi tshikeni:1).

(When Gavaza Makhawukana was busy making coffee, Madlayisana was playing with his father, conversing while showing each other deep love and the relationship which is tied up by the umbilical cord of the parent.)

Through the narrative technique Mtombeni presents an impatient Xihluku to us. Mtombeni describes the state in which Xihluku was in the following manner:

Hi loko Xihluku a suka a yima; a languta phorisa leriyana a timiyelerile; a hetelela hi ku hlakahla nhloko, a ntlokola (Ndzi tshikeni:8).

(Then Xihluku stood up; stared at that policeman quietly; and ended up by shaking his head and made a lateral click sound to express disgust.)

Xihluku's impatience and disgust are a result of the indifferent treatment that he receives from Mafambaborile, a constable who is responsible for taking the statement with regard to the shooting of his son. Mafambaborile does not seem to realize that this case worries Xihluku very much and that there is no room for jokes and time-wasting.

Mtombeni uses the narrative technique to present the pain of a man who has lost a son, after the burial of Madlayisana at the cemetery:

Kambe Xihluku yena u sarile a yimile kusuhi ni sirha ra n'wana wa yena. Endzhaku ka nkarhinyana u nkhinsamile hi matsolo; mihloti yi ri karhi yi xiririka emarhameni; milomu yi tshavatana; miri wu rhurhumela; a khondla mavoko; swandla swi fumbarha swivuri a swi vekela exifuvuni xa yena (Ndzi tshikeni:10).

(But Xihluku remained standing next to the grave of his son. After a little while he knelt down; tears flowing on his cheeks, his mouth twitching, his body shivering; he folded his arms, the palms of the hands came together to make fists which he placed on his chest.)

It is not easy for a man to shed tears unless he is tormented by an unbearable situation. The fact that Xihluku is shown here kneeling next to his son's grave, is a clear indication that he is distraught and needs to say a prayer to God for mercy, help and support. In this narrative, we are not shown whether he is affiliated to any church, but the way he prays testifies that he is a committed Christian.

Xihluku is depicted as a man who is full of anger, vengeance, and vindictiveness. This does not suddenly become part of his lifestyle. The circumstances surrounding the death of his beloved ones, prompt him to become a pugnacious man. At this juncture, he braves himself to show the world publicly that he is not a coward, but a resolute person, who is ready to face the consequences of his actions. His mental state is focused only on violent retribution. This is the reason why he is presented here as a man with cheeks full of tears, his body trembling and his mouth twitching. We see a man who is full of fury and hatred. Roberts (1983:55) says:

... some authors arrange their characterization as an embodiment of either change or development.

Xihluku, who at first is presented as a loving and caring father, is now a

changed person who is ready to annihilate whoever might have been involved in the killing of his son and wife. He is now a man of strong determination who is no longer prepared to listen even to his own mother:

Marito yo hetelela ya Mantantana ya lo mbekuka ni moya; Xihluku a nga ya hlayisanga; xiviri xa yena a xi ri esirheni ra n'wana wa yena, laha ingi a tilulamiserile ku ya etlela kona hi siku ra makumu ka fundzu leri a a ri bohile embilwini ya yena ehenhla ka n'wana wa yena (Ndzi tshikeni:12).

(Mantantana's advice was ignored; Xihluku did not take heed of it; his mind was focused on the grave of his son, where he was destined to be when he died - and he imagined this day to be quite near because of the vow that he had made with regard to the death of his son.)

The rage that characterizes Xihluku as he attacks his arch-enemy, Xirhetirheti, one of the antagonists in this narrative, is revealed in the following description:

Hi ku copeta ka tihlo Xihluku a tlula, a tlula, a ba magoza mambirhi manharhu, a fika a wutla xihloka lexiyana emavokweni ya wansati; handle ka ku angulana ni nsati luyana, wansati u to sala na tona hi ku hlamala ni ku tshuka; o sala a lo tiyimela ingi a a lo khoma hi gome - hinkwaswo swi humeterile hi ku hatlisa ka ku khaluta ka tuva, leswaku munhu un'wana ni un'wana a nga ti vona ni ku tiva ku endla nchumu ehenhla ka leswi swi nga humelela hi nkarhinyana wuntsanana wo kohla ni ku pima (Ndzi tshikeni:13).

(In a wink of an eye Xihluku jumped and advanced two or three steps forward and snatched that axe from the hands of the woman without saying a word to her, she remained perplexed and was frightened; she was aggrieved - all happened very quickly like the passing of a dove, that no one could have succeeded in knowing what to do about what occurred in a very short space of time.)

Xihluku is shown as a man of quick action, who is determined to kill before anyone can prevent him from doing so. To him actions speak louder than words. Xihluku's anger is clearly revealed by the description of his attack on

Xirhetirheti. We actually see how cruel Xihluku has become. Mtombeni also uses figures of speech to depict Xihluku's character. The similes such as *ingi a lo khoma hi gome* (as if he was aggrieved) and *ku hatlisa ka ku khaluta ka tuva* (the passing quickly like the movement of the dove), help to give us a vivid picture of the actions of Xihluku. His skills and dexterity in using an axe, make us think that he might have undergone some special training in handling and using such a dangerous weapon:

Loko wanuna luyana a ku kelu, u vonile ntsena vukari bya xihloka byi vangama empfukeni, byi ri karhi byi xeka moya tanihi rikhozana, loko ri bvunga kondlo, byi n'wi kongomile; a a swi vona swinene leswaku siku ra yena ra ku fa ni fikile - kambe xo fa xi fa xi hlarile; na yena u ringetile ku tlula, ni ku yimisa mavoko yo ringeta ku tisirhela. (Ndzi tshikenj:13).

(When that man looked back, he saw only the sharpness of the edge of an axe shining in the air, cutting the air like the quickness of the falcon when snatching a mouse, coming in his direction; he clearly realized that his day of dying had arrived - but one dies after making a few struggles and kicks as well as raising hands trying to defend oneself).

Mtombeni describes the hiding-place of the remaining criminals, Xipelupelu and Nhompfu-ya-mbyana:

... Xipelupelu na Nhompfu-ya-mbyana a va tshamile exikarhi ka masirha, ensin'wini ya masirha. Laha hi laha a va tumbela kona hi ku tshemba leswaku a a nga vi kona munhu loyi a a ta ehleketa ku va lavela emasirheni. Leswi a va tshamisisile swona a swi tikomba leswaku a va ri eku kaneleni ka nandzu wa vona etimbilwini ta vona (Ndzi tshikenj:15).

(Xipelupelu and Nhompfu-ya-mbyana were seated amongst graves in the cemetery. They used to hide here with the hope that there would be no one to think of looking for them in the graveyard. The manner in which they were seated, proved that they were in deep thought and they were seriously pondering their problems.)

People with good intentions cannot be found hiding amongst the graves. It is fitting that evil-minded people, like Xipelupelu and Nhompfu-ya-mbyana are depicted in such a gruesome setting.

The way the thugs leave the graveyard is described by Mtombeni as follows:

... Endzhakunyana va humile ensin'wini ya masirha. Dyambu a ra ha ku pela. Ku huma ka vona va kongomile amakaya ya vona ku ya lava swakudya. Swihuku swa vona a va swi kokoterile leswaku swi siva swikandza leswaku vanhu va nga va tivi (Ndzi tshikeni:16).

(Thereafter they left the graveyard. It was immediately after sunset. From there they went to their respective homes for food. Their hats were worn in such a way that they covered their faces to avoid recognition.)

Xipelupelu and Nhompfu-ya-mbyana always strive to conceal their identity by covering their faces. They know that Xihluku wants to kill them for the murders that they have committed.

Xihluku's inner feelings are revealed through the expository technique. Mtombeni presents Xihluku as a man with premonition. This is shown on the day his wife was fatally attacked by the thugs:

Hi siku leni Gavaza Makhawukana a nga gevengiwa hi rona timbilu ta vona ha vambirhi a ti nga tshamisekanga; hambu leswi a va nga swi tivi ti endliwa hi yini. Ku famba ka yena a a ri karhi a kanakana kambe a nga lavi ku khomiwa hi maphorisa a nga si heta ntirho wa yena lowu a nga wu tshembisa esirheni ra n'wana wa yena ... (Ndzi tshikeni:27).

(On the day Gavaza Makhawukana was murdered both their hearts were not settled, although they did not know why it was so. As he was walking, he was doubtful, but he did not want to be arrested by the police before he completed his mission which he vowed on the grave of his child.)

Here, we notice his feelings of doubt and anxiety which exacerbate his pain and anger. This experience adds fury when he is already devastated. Xihluku looks forward to avenging the death of his family members. Good, humble and peaceful citizens can also be provoked by acts of criminal violence to an extent that they behave as Xihluku does in this narrative. Xihluku's actions, obviously driven by emotions, are plausible as well as believable.

Mtombeni deliberately portrays Xihluku as a man with a will of iron. He is cruelly brave and combative:

Xikhongelo xa Xilandzo embilwini ya yena a xi ri xa ku ya hlangana ni nala wa yena Xipelupelu ekhotsweni laha ku navela ka yena a ku ta hetiseka hi tihelo ra switshembiso swa yena eka n'wana ni nghamu ya yena a swi ta kuma ku tshembeka (Ndzi tshikeni:37).

(Xilandzo's wish in his heart was to go and meet his enemy. Xipelupelu in jail, where his desire would be accomplished in respect of his vows to his child and spouse.)

The plot structure of a work of fiction depends on the skilful use of character. Mtombeni uses his protagonist, Xihluku, the round character, to unravel the conflict portrayed in *Ndzi tshikeni* (Leave me alone). The title reveals that no one will succeed in preventing Xihluku from taking revenge on all the killers of his son and wife. A conscientious person like Xihluku, who single-mindedly pursues his enemy, is shown as succeeding when Xipelupelu is eventually killed in broad daylight. Xihluku, a man of prowess and exceptional intelligence, is depicted killing his enemy by stabbing him with a sharpened handle of an old spoon. Roberts (1983:55) comments that:

You may decide for yourself whether human character is capable of radical change, or whether change is really to be described as growth or development.

The reader is not surprised to see Xihluku Xilandzo as he is in this novel, for the cause is clear. His actions are fully motivated. Had it not been for the thugs who gunned down his son and fatally wound his wife, we might have

seen a different character at the end of the narrative. We cannot but conclude with Roberts that human characters are capable of changing radically if forced by circumstance. Xihluku Xilandzo's behaviour after the thugs have terrorized him, is a clear indication of how a character can change when conditions dictate.

In the short story *Nghunghunyana ni xikhovha* in *Mavala ya yingwe*, Mtombeni uses the narrative technique in revealing most of the actions of his characters. From the outset, Chief Ngunghunyana is shown to the reader as a coward and as a strong believer in witchcraft:

A nga ni munhu wa vutoya, kambe xikhovha enyangweni ya yindlu ya yena hi ku xa ka dyambu a xi nga ri na wa vurhena hikuva a swi tiviwa swinene leswaku valoyi va haha hi swikovha, miswona ni vamangadyana; a a swi vona leswaku ku tsandzeka ka xona ku haha lahaya nyangweni ya yindlu yakwe noyi a a yimekile loyi a tele ku ta n'wi lowa - ku ta n'wi dlaya a fa (Nghunghunyana ni xikovha:5).

(He was not a coward, but an owl found at the door of his palace early at dawn could not be tolerated, even if you were a hero, because it was well known that sorcerers flew by means of owls and bats; he realized that its failure to fly from the door of his palace, was an indication that the sorcerer who had come to bewitch him and kill him was stranded.)

In just one paragraph, Mtombeni has succeeded in revealing the human attributes of Chief Ngunghunyana. Here we are clearly shown that an owl is feared by all people irrespective of their social status. Chief Ngunghunyana is respected by all his subjects, but it is not surprising that he also fears the power of owls and bats, which are used by sorcerers in accomplishing their sinister missions.

Mtombeni reveals Chief Ngunghunyana as a man of quick action because when he realizes that peace at his palace is threatened, he summons his

indunas to assist by calling all men of war. As a man who commands a lot of respect, these men respond in such a hurry that they do not waste time by dressing in a leisurely fashion. They arrive in great numbers. This is a clear testimony of the support that Chief Nghunghunyana enjoys from his subjects.

*Van'wana va humile tindlwini ta vona hi swigiya ni michizo,
van'wana matlhari ni swithangu, van'wana vo huma hi
mandla ku yisa ntsena miri wa vona laha a yi lava hi hosi;
kambe hinkwavo a vo tsutsuma va ri karhi va boha mihizo,
miceka kumbe tinjhovo va kongomile kwale lawini ra hosi*

...

*Loko va fika kona hi vunyingi bya vona hosi yi va kombile
xikhovha lexi a xi yimekile nyangweni ya lawu ra yena
(Nghunghunyana ni xikhovha:5).*

(Some came out of their houses armed with knob clubs and sticks, others with spears and shields; while others came out unarmed just to register their presence to the chief; but all of them were running whilst tightening their girdles and strips of skins while leading to the chief's kraal.

They arrived there in great numbers, the chief showed them an owl which was placed at the door of his palace.)

4.3.2 The dramatic technique

Nkuzana: (1981:7) says:

By dramatic technique is meant the manner whereby the author of prose fiction, like the dramatist, allows his characters to talk, to act or to react to various situations in the novel. He does not describe their actions and manners. The author gives the characters chance to reveal their nature through speech.

This indicates the importance of dialogue in the dramatic technique. It is through dialogue that characters are made not only to participate actively in the whole narrative, but also to reveal their inner personalities. It is from their way of speaking and how they think that we are able to deduce who they are and

what their general and specific attitudes toward life are. Walcut (1969:14) quotes Aristotle as saying that a character "must be made to think and reason in ways that will appear in /his/ speech and action".

In similar vein, Conrad (1990:42) points out that "what a person in your story says and does is what reveals character - just as in real life. Dialogue is your important weapon. This view is supported by Kenny (1988:35):

In the dramatic method, the author allows the characters to reveal themselves to us through their words and actions. This, of course, is how a character is revealed to us in drama; that is why we call this method dramatic. But it is also how people reveal themselves to us in life.

Kenny (ibid) further indicates that the dramatic method involves showing rather than telling.

From the statements made by Nkuzana (1981), Walcutt (1969), Conrad (1990) and Kenny (1988), it is abundantly clear that through the dramatic technique the author is able to involve the character in revealing his own personality traits to the reader. Mafela (1993:15) notes that "a character becomes a participant in revealing his traits". A character's traits thus emerge through the character's actions and his speech (dialogue) (Walcutt, 1969:14).

At this juncture, we also need to indicate the advantage of the dramatic technique. Kenny (1988:36) says "the dramatic technique is more lifelike and invites the reader's active participation in the story", but also indicates a disadvantage of this technique, namely that "it is less economical than the discursive because to show takes longer than to tell".

Another fact which Kenny entertains as a disadvantage of the dramatic method is that

... although this method encourages the reader's active participation, it also increases the possibility of the reader's misjudging the character.

We will discuss the dramatic technique of characterization under the following subheadings: the actions of the characters and dialogue.

4.3.2.1 The actions of the characters

The various actions of a character help us to form a full picture of that character. In *Mibya ya nyekanyeka*, the actions of the main character, Rev. Tihomandloti give the reader insight into his personality traits and way of thinking. Tihomandloti is depicted as a man of quick actions. When he is called upon to come and pray for the dying Celela, he does not waste any time. He promptly takes his Bible and his hymnary as well as his gown to Baloyi's house to be by the side of this dying young man. He immediately enquires as he arrives at the Baloyi's house if an ambulance has been called to come and take Celela to the hospital:

*Mi wu vitanile movha wa xibedlhele manana Baloyi?
(Mibya ya nyekanyaka:27).*

(Did you call for the ambulance, Mrs Baloyi?)

He also does not waste any time finding out if Celela is in actual fact, still alive. This shows that he wants to establish all related facts before it is too late. When Rev. Tihomandloti realizes that Celela is about to die, he urgently says a prayer.

Tihomandloti's quick actions are also obvious when he is emotionally affected by exciting occurrences. For instance, when he receives good tidings from his sons he weeps. Tihomandloti's wife says:

Swi lo yini ka tata wa Nyiko mi ngo nifa, ku lo humelela yini

evaneni va hina? (Mibya ya nyekanyeka:38).

(Nyiko's father, why are you crying, what might have happened to our children?)

Tihomandloti's answer is quick and simple:

*Ku humelele leswo tala leswi swi tsakisaka mbitu ya mina
(Mibya ya nyekanyeka:39).*

(A lot that pleases my heart has occurred.)

Another striking feature of Tihomandloti's actions is noticed when his first born son, Madambi wanted to marry a Xhosa girl. He immediately acts without pondering:

N'wananga, u nga yingiseli swa ngati ni swa nyama eminkarhini yo tala wa hohola. Ehleketa swa muti lowu u nga velekiwa eka wona lowu ku kuriseke, wu ku komba hinkwaswo leswi ntamu wa wona a wu swi kota ku ku endlela swona. Tikhome n'wananga, tisindzisi ku ndzi yingisela, ku twa rito leri humaka emiehleketweni leyi nga ni tihlo leri vonaka swa khale, swa namuntlha ni swa mundlwana wa haseni. Boha moya wa wena leswaku u va xivoniso xo xonga exikarhi ka Vatsonga va namuntlha: (Mibya ya nyekanyeka:56).

(My child, do not listen to the dictates of the blood and the flesh, in most cases these mislead. Think of your family in which you were born, which raised you and showed you all it could do for you in its power. Control yourself, my child, force yourself to listen to me, to hear the advice which comes from my mind with foresight, the eye which has seen the old, today and things of yesterday and the day before yesterday. Hold yourself to become an example amongst the Vatsonga of today.)

Tihomandloti is trying to advise his son never to hurry whenever he wants to embark on any serious matter. He is trying to warn him to be steady in all matters that affect his future. Tihomandloti is well aware of the fact that emotions could ruin one's life. Although Tihomandloti's actions are meant to

protect Madambi, Madambi resists his father:

Swa ndzi tikela tatana ku ntshunxa fundzu leri ndzi ri boheke ria Soluka. Fundzu leri bohiweke hi ku hlambanya emahlweni ka Xikwembu - hikuva xi kona hinkwako - hi n'wina tatana mi nga hi dyondzisa ku hlambanya ntsena hi ntiyiso, ntiyiso lowu faneleke ku yima tanihi tintshava ni milambu ya ntumbuluko hikuva ntiyiso i wa ntumbuluko, hi tihelo ntumbuluko i ntiyiso. (Mibya ya nyekanyeka:57).

(It is difficult, father, to untie the knot that I made with Soluka. The knot that was tied by swearing before God - because he is everywhere - it is you, father, who taught us to swear truthfully, the truth which we should maintain like the mountains and the rivers of nature, because the truth belongs to nature, and at the same time nature is the truth.)

When Madambi insists that he will marry Soluka, Tihomandloti puts his foot down:

Ndza ku alela Madambi, ndza ala ku amukela n'wingi wa Muxhosa vatukulu va mina va va vatukulu va Maxhosa hi le tihelo (Mibya ya nyekanyeka:57).

(I refuse you, Madambi, I refuse to accept the Xhosa daughter-in-law so that my grandchildren should be the grandchildren to the Xhosas at the same time.)

Tihomandloti does not mince his words, because he wants Madambi to know about his antagonism before embarking on a disastrous marriage.

When his son, Nyiko is excommunicated from the church, he is depicted as the first person to suggest that Nyiko be forgiven because of his youth:

Nyiko wa ha ri xihlangi, vutomi bya yena byi langutele leswaku bya ha lehile; loko ho n'wi rivalela Vukriste byi hava khombo (Mibya ya nyekanyeka:66).

(Nyiko is still a child; he is still expected to live long; if we

forgive him Christianity will not be jeopardized.)

Tihomandloti reacts in this manner fully aware of the implications of Nyiko's adultery with N'wa-Mdanisi. No one could condone what Nyiko has done: Christians expect a minister to lead an unblemished life; to be exemplary at all times. If he were just an ordinary person the matter could have been tried differently. Rev. Tihomandloti believes that each case has its own merits and should be tried accordingly. His submission that Nyiko be forgiven is based on his (Tihomandloti's) contributions as a minister of the church:

N'wina mi ta ndzi tsundzuka hi mintirho ya mina eka vakokwa va n'wina, leswaku ndzi hanye hi ku mi tisela leswi a mi swi rhandza; ndzi tsemakanya miganga minyingi exikarhi ka makhombo, ndzi nga chavi nchumu hikuva a ndzi tirhela Vatsonga va ka hina - n'wina (Mibya ya nyekanyeka:64).

(You will remember my contributions to your grandparents, that I lived to bring what you liked; I travelled extensively crossing many valleys and hills amidst danger, I did not fear anything, because I was working for my Vatsonga people - you.)

Rev. Tihomandloti acts in this manner because he wants to persuade the court of the church to be sympathetic to his son. At this juncture Rev. Tihomandloti is portrayed as a loving parent, who will risk all for his children. He is sincere in his submissions, because he is intensely involved in the outcome of the matter. Indeed, when Nyiko commits suicide out of grief, he also suffers a sudden heart attack.

In *Ndzi tshikeni*, Xihluku Xilandzo is portrayed as a daring husband and father through his actions. He snatches his son with the speed of lightning in the hope of removing him from the danger of being wounded by the invaders in the house. Gavaza Makhawukana, Xihluku's wife, also acts in a frantic manner to help fight the thugs. She grabs the lamp to hit one of the thugs on the head. The confusion which ensues dramatizes the tension. The fear which prevails

is conveyed by the way in which Xilandzo calls his son repeatedly:

Madlayisana, Madlayisana, Madlayisana wa mina ndzi hlamule n'wananga, hahlula mahlo u ndzi languta... (Ndzi tshikeni:4).

(Madlayisana, Madlayisana, Madlayisana, please answer me, my son, raise your eyes to look at me ...)

Xihluku's agitation is clear. He hurries to the Police Station to report the incident. In his preamble to Chapter 2 of *Ndzi tshikeni*, the author comments:

Mphilumpfilu wa swikandza hi nkhavaxelo wa mihloti, Mbisukano wa timbilu swa mfindluko wa swihlovo: Ntsuvo ni ku tilan'wa swi tsutsumisa swa muhloti. Fada ni langavi ra mpitsuko swi tshwutela nsovo (Ndzi tshikeni:5).

(The complexity of the faces full of tears. The frowning of the hearts like the turbulent fountains. The sullen silence and disappointments move as quickly as the hunter. Jealousy and the flame of helplessness spit kindness.)

Xihluku Xilandzo is depicted as a vengeful man; an angry man, who is traumatized by what has happened to him. His face speaks volumes about his feelings after this shocking incident. He frowns and curses life. Xihluku feels that he is unfairly treated. He is left helpless and dejected because of the actions of the thugs. He rants to his wife, mother and his neighbours. He wanders about alone at night. Life has become sour and bitter because he has elected to live a nocturnal life in the hope of catching the killers of his son.

Xihluku, as a serious-minded citizen, expects government officials, including the Police, to respect their positions and to assist members of society as quickly as they possibly can. Unfortunately, Xihluku does not get this type of treatment at the Police Station. Mafambaborile, the Police constable, does not act in a business-like manner. This infuriates Xihluku and as a result, intensifies his determination to take revenge:

Ndzi tshikeni Secheni; ndzi tshikeni ndzi ya tihlotela vadlayi va n'wananga ndzi ri swanga, ndzi tshikeni ndzi ya vona masalela ya Madlayisana (Ndzi tshikeni:8).

(Leave me alone Sergeant; leave me alone to go and hunt for the killers of my child alone, leave me to go and meet the remains of Madlayisana.)

Xihluku reacts in this way because he is already convinced that the only solution to his problem will be to take revenge. He is fully prepared to fulfil the promise that he made at the graveyard. Mafamborile's negligence and indifference prompt him to adopt the position he has taken.

Xihluku does not care about what other people say about his actions because of the pain inflicted by the cruel actions of Xirhetirheti, Nhompfu-ya-mbyana and Xipelupelu. When Xihluku snatches an axe to kill Xirhetirheti, he is clearly a man who has reached the stage where he no longer cares about anything. It is apparent that he is acting at the mercy of his impulses. He repeatedly hacks at Xirhetirheti in broad daylight. The streets of Chiawelo are full of people, but no one had the courage to intervene or to call the Police for help.

Leswi vanhu va Joni va nga lamuriki tinyimpi, vanhu a va lo yima va hlalela; van'wana va swinya mahlo, van'wana va lerisa miri, nhlonge yi khwanyana; kasi van'wana a vo hewula va huwelela wonge Xihluku o giya, kumbe o va munhu wa rihuhe exikarhi ka van'wana vanhu va rihuhe. Vuhari, vutoya ni xindhuvu swi kokelana hi vahlaleli va nyimpi ya kona (Ndzi tshikeni:14).

(Due to the fact that the people of Johannesburg do not intervene in fights, they were just standing witnessing; others pretended as if nothing was taking place, whilst others commanded their bodies and their skins shrank; whereas others again were shouting as if Xihluku was rejoicing or he was a mad person amongst other people. Brutality, cowardice and cruelty were the order of the day during this war.)

Xihluku's actions seem to be those of a man driven beyond normal constraints.

Xihluku's determination to take revenge is also evident in the manner he attacks Nhompfu-ya-mbyana and Xipelupelu at the Orlando Station Restaurant:

Mhaka ya kona ya ha hlayiwa ni namuntlha leswi yi nga humelerisa swona (Ndzi tshikeni:33).

(This event is still the talk of everyone today with regard to how it happened.)

Xihluku Xilandzo was not ready to retreat like a coward; he regards himself as a victor when he succeeds in killing another one of the criminals. The only remaining hurdle is their leader, Xipelupelu.

On the other hand, Xihluku Xilandzo can be labelled a hypocrite, because he prays to God to help him to remove the killers of his son and wife from earth:

*Wena Xikwembu xa matimba ...
Chululela vutlhari exivirini xa mina,
Vukarhi bya ndzilo emiehleketweni ya mina,
Lumeka rivoni evusikwini bya namuntlha.*

...
*Loko a suka a yima miehleketo ya yena a yi
ambexiwile papa ra ntima tani hi vusiku
lebyi a a ri xikarhi ka byona ...
(Ndzi tshikeni:36).*

(The Almighty God ...
Give me intelligence,
The fury of fire in my mind,
Light the lamp tonight.

...
When he stood up his mind was covered by
a black cloud like the night in which he was ...)

The fact that he spends several days sharpening the handle of a spoon until it can be used as a weapon, proves that his intention is murderous. We are thus prepared for the bloody circumstance of the story.

Although he is determined to kill, he is not keen to be arrested before he has

killed all the thugs, but when Xipelupelu is arrested, this fear turns into a strong motivation to follow his enemy into jail. Everything happens as he has planned. Xihluku Xilandzo's determination never wavers from the day his son is gunned down. He follows the killers until he finds them all. He is a man of his word who is never swayed from his resolutions.

In the short story *Nghunghunyana ni xikhovha* in *Mavala yayingwe*, the actions of Chief Nghunghunyana portray him as a man who likes to wake up early in the morning and go to the hillside to enjoy the cool morning breeze before the rising of the sun.

*... kasi yena a wu ri ntolovelo wa yena ku pfuka
muti hinkwawo wu nga si pfuka a ya tshama
exintshabyanini lexi muti wa yena a wu seketele hi xona -
ku vona lava ngenaka ni lava humaka mutini wa yena
(Nghunghunyana ni xikhovha:5).*

(... But it was his habit to wake up early in the morning before every one at the palace did so and to go to the hillside next to his home - to see those who were coming in and going out from his home.)

It is through this habit that he finds the owl placed at the door of his palace.

The witchdoctors try to convince everyone that the chief indunas of his majesty, Chief Nghunghunyana, are responsible for the placing of the owl at the door of the palace; they unashamedly point out Mugwaleni, Mandlati and Cata. It is through these actions that we realize that those who are cunning are eventually discovered.

4.3.2.2 Dialogue

Serudu (1993: 189) asserts that:

Dialogue is not a very important element of prose.

Essentially it belongs to the dramatic art. However, good prose writers use it very efficiently and effectively to enhance the process of communication with their readers.

Serudu goes on to indicate that:

Through dialogue the writer is able to advance his story and to reveal certain traits of the people who unfold the story.

Serudu further quotes Hallie and Whit Burnett (1975: 57) who state that dialogue shows mood, and changes in mood; it can reveal emotions more by what is not said than what is. The characters' dialogue should resemble the way ordinary people speak to be considered as true to life or lifelike. In this regard, Serudu (1993: 190) says;

Since the author draws his material from the society in which he lives, his dialogue also reveals certain similarities to our daily conversations.

As far as the importance of dialogue is concerned, Mafela (1993: 167) quotes Cassil (1975:159) as saying:

Dialogue has always seemed to me one of the indispensable devices for shading and particularizing a character. In real life we like to see a person's face and his actual voice before we judge what he is up to. Fictional dialogue can be made to render very sensitively the mental and emotional ingredients in characters whose general outlines have already been accounted for.

It is clear that the way characters speak in fiction helps us to particularize them. The character traits of a fictional person become known to us as we read the dialogue allotted to such a character.

In *Mibya ya nyekanyeka* Rev. Tihomandloti's ideals about life and his children, are shown in his dialogue:

*N'wananga u fanele ku chivirika, u tikarhata,
u dyondza hi matimba ya wena hinkwawo, hikuva
ku va rivoningo ra vanhu, ku va muleteri ni muhleiteri
wa varikwenu swi lava ku kululeriwa nyuku. U vona
vanhu masiku hinkwawo va fika laha kaya va ta kombela
ku layeriwa vana, ku tsundzuxiwa hi swa milombyana ya
swihlangi, mbholovo ya mindyangu, va le makhotsweni ni
leswi va faneleke ku fambisisa swona milandzu ya vona
etihubenyi ta valungu (Mibya ya nyekanyeka:18).*

(My child, you must work hard and take pains to learn by all means, because to be the light of the people, to be the guide and to lead your people like a hen does to her chickens, one must sweat. Everyday you see people coming here at home to ask for advice in respect of their children, infantile debility, family quarrels, court cases and the procedures to be followed.)

It is obvious from his speech that Rev. Tihomandloti believes that he is a very special and important person in society and that his children should be too. Rev. Tihomandloti sees himself as a lamp which should give light to the whole community. He believes that his children should also be leaders:

*... u fanele ku va emahlweni ka vona hi tindlela hinkwato,
swa wena ni leswi u swi endlaka swi va leswi hlawulekeke
(Mibya ya nyekanyeka:19).*

(You should be in front of them by all means, everything you do should be special, more excellent than all in whatever you do.)

Rev. Tihomandloti is a staunch member of the church and above all, he is a committed minister of religion, but there is one character trait which dominates all other traits, namely his ethnicism. As a Christian, we would have expected him to have treated other people equally, irrespective of race, colour or creed. From the way he speaks with Madambi, it is clear that he hates other Black races such as the Xhosas. He resents the fact that his grandchildren may be Xhosas:

Ndza ku alela Madambi, ndza ala ku amukela n'wingi wa Muxhosa vatukulu va mina va va vatukulu va Maxhosa hi le tihelo - ndza ala. Lava nhwana wa Mutsonga, wa tele ngopfu; teka un'we wa vona. A nga ri nhwana va Muxhosa. E-e, ndza ala (Mibya ya nyekanyeka:57).

(I refuse you, Madambi, I refuse to accept a Xhosa daughter -in-law so that my grandchildren should be the grandchildren to the Xhosas at the same time - I refuse. Look for a Mutsonga young lady, they are too many, get one of them, not a Xhosa young lady. No-no, I refuse.)

Rev. Tihomandloti was obsessed with the purity of his race to the extent that we could label him a racist. When Madambi realizes the sincerity of his father, he honestly thanks him for being truthful with him:

Ndza mi tlangela tatana, ku mi tlangela ka mina ku kongome ku lehisa ka n'wina mbilu, ku ndzi byela ntiyiso wa mbilu ya n'wina handle ko ringeta ku ndzi tsakisa hi vumbabva. Xikwembu xi va na n'wina (Mibya ya nyekanyeka:58).

(I thank you, father, I thank you for having been patient with me, to tell me the truth of your heart without any attempt at pleasing me deceitfully. May God be with you.)

Madambi speaks in this manner after realizing that his father is being honest when he reveals his true feelings about his son marrying a Xhosa girl. He congratulates him on his firm stand.

Rev. Tihomandloti is depicted as a resolute man who sticks to his words. When Nyiko, his second son, is found guilty of committing adultery with N'wa-Mdanisi, a widow, Rev. Tihomandloti defends his son, claiming that Nyiko should be given a second chance because he is still young:

... Nyiko wa ha ri xihlangi, vutomi bya yena hi byi langutele leswaku bya ha lehile, loko ho n'wi rivalela Vukriste byi hava khombo (Mibya ya nyekanyeka:66).

(... Nyiko is still young, he is expected to still live long, therefore, if we forgive him Christianity will not be jeopardized).

Rev. Tlhomandloti is trying to save his son from humiliation, shame and embarrassment. It is always from the way the character speaks that we are able to conclude what his character traits are.

We shall now discuss Mtombeni's use of dialogue as applied to delicate characters in *Ndzi tshikeni*. Xihluku Xilandzo's determination to kill all his opponents is depicted in the way he repeats the words: *Ndzi tshikeni* (leave me alone) when speaking with his mother, Mantantana:

*... Ndzi tshikeni mhani, ndzi tshikeni.
Vutomi bya mina byi wunguriwile tanihi vukanyi.
Vukanyi lebyi wunguriweke byi hatla byi phyama
hambi byo funengetiwa, handle ko byi lemetela hi
mumpfu. Kutani vutomi bya mina bya phyama hikuva
mumpfu wo byi lemelela a wu kona. Ndzi tshikeni
ndzi landza n'wana wa mina (Mibya ya nyekanyeka:12).*

(Please mother, leave me alone, please leave me. My life has been skimmed like it is done to 'marula' drink. The 'marula' drink which is skimmed loses flavour very soon even when covered, unless when sealed by wax. Therefore, my life has lost respect, because of the absence of the wax. Please leave me alone, leave me to follow my son.)

The dialogue makes Xihluku's distress clear. The thugs kill his son, therefore he feels it is his duty to avenge his son's death. In this regard, Brooks and Warren (1971:17) remark that "one of the most important modes for character revelation is of course the way in which characters talk". Brooks and Warren (ibid) also warn that "if used incessantly it might kill the story by making it too talky".

Xihluku Xilandzo's mother tries to persuade him to change his vows.

Unfortunately, she does not succeed, for Xihluku Xilandzo is prepared to die for his dead son. He no longer fears death:

*Sirha ra mina ri ceriwile ndza ha hanya;
ndzi ri vone hi mahlo (Ndzi tshikeni:12).*

(My grave has been dug whilst I live;
I saw it.)

A feeling of hopelessness is conveyed. Owing to the fact that his son, Madlayisana, has been shot dead by thugs and his wife, Gavaza Makhawukana, strangled by the same men, he feels it is futile for him to live. He chooses to go to jail rather than to remain free whilst his beloved wife and son are dead.

Xihluku Xilandzo's preparedness to take revenge is conveyed in his discussion with the police officer:

*Ndzi tshikeni Secheni; ndzi tshikeni ndzi ya
tihlotela vadlayi va n'wananga ndzi ri swanga,
ndzi tshikeni ndzi ya vona masalela ya Madlyayisana
(Ndzi tshikeni:8).*

(Leave me alone, Sergeant; leave me alone to
hunt for the murderers of my child, leave me
alone to go and see the remains of Madlayisana.)

His speech convinces us that no one and nothing will stop him for revenge. He is determined to do exactly what he says.

Although our main focus is on the main character, Xihluku Xilandzo, as far as character delineation is concerned, we could briefly show how Mtombeni uses the dramatic method to portray some of the characters in this novel. Through this method, we are able to comprehend Gavaza Makhawukana's love for her husband. When talking to him in a happy jolly mood, she says:

Mati yo hisa ndzi ya tseleke khale dyambu ri nga se pela ni ku pela. Kambe mi to sungula hi ku khulanyana kofi mi kufumeta marhumbu. Loko mi wisilenyana hi kona mi nga ti ya tiba miri (Ndzi tshiken:1).

(It is now a few minutes ago before sunset that water was put on the stove. It will be better if you first drink coffee and when you have relaxed a little bit, you will bathe your body.)

From this statement it is evident that Gavaza has lived with her husband for some time and knows his needs and likes.

Gavaza Makhuwukana also loves her son, Madlayisana. When her son is struck by a bullet from Xipelupelu's firearm, she is distraught:

Yo O! n'wananga yo O! u nga etleli Madlayisana ndzi langutise n'wananga; na mina ndza ku rhandza, ndza swi navela ku va na wena ku fika emakumu ka vutomi bya mina (Ndzi tshiken:4).

(Oh ... oh, my son, please do not die, Madlayisana look at me, my son; I also love you, I wish to be with you for ever in my life.)

This is a clear indication that the death of her son leaves her helpless and dumbfounded.

Xipelupelu, as the main antagonist, is also portrayed to us through the use of dialogue. He is clearly presented as a thug and a murderer:

Mina ndzi vona leswaku loko hi nga swi kota, a hi fanele ku ringeta ku susa nghamu ya yena erivaleni ra misava; hi xona xilo lexi ndzi vonaka leswaku xi ta tshama xi ri karhi xi vangama emiehleketweni ya yena emasikwini ya vutomi bya yena hinkwabyo, a tlhela a vonisisa swinene leswaku ku susa moya wa munhu laha misaveni a swi hi chavisi hambu hi nga kongomanga ku teka nchumu (Ndzi tshiken:16).

(I think if it were possible, we should try to

remove his wife from the face of the earth, this is what I think will always remind him and make him aware of the fact that we are not afraid of killing a person, even if we do not aim to rob him anything.)

As a ringleader, Xipelupelu wants everyone to dance to his tune by carrying out his instructions. Those who refuse, like Somisa, his wife, are punished. Somisa is thoroughly beaten for refusing to go and spy on Xihluku Xilandzo. Mtombeni uses the dramatic method to show that Somisa does not want to assist Xipelupelu and his friends in spying on Xihluku:

*Hambi ndzi ri nsati wa laha kaya a swi vuli swona
leswaku ndzi fanele ku nghena timhaka ta vavanuna,
hi ku vula ka n'wina, timhaka ta vusiku ni munyama
ta tingana ni leswi hina vavasati hi chavaka ku swi vula
(Ndzi tshikeni:18).*

(Even if I am a housewife it does not imply that I should interfere with men's affairs. According to you night affairs and darkness are shameful deeds and what have you.)

Soliloquy is another aspect of dialogue which Mtombeni employs to delineate characters. Mtombeni has written these soliloquys in a poetic style. For instance, Xihluku reveals his disgust about what the thugs did to him by killing his son in the following soliloquys:

*Tinsulavoya ti ndzi dlele, ti lo ndzi bela endhawini,
Va ndzi tsemile rhumbu, marhangela ya ndyangu;
Mubya wu ntshunxekile wu tlatlalata
Madyondzela ya vuxambiri evutomini.
Maxangu ya hina: yo boxiwa nkava hi risunguni;
Ku tsuvuleriwa swimila swa khava ra ntanga;
Ku phatuleriwa miphovo munhu a ya cukumeta;
Lero tlimbiwa mikolo ndza ha mita swo nandziha!
Ndzi ta vuyisela xidyoho hi ndzihiso wa lunya
(Ndzi tshikeni:8).*

(Thugs have caused me great loss. They have really fixed me. They have murdered my first born. The strap of the

baby-sling has loosened to let my child drop down. Alas! what a misery: to be stabbed in the navel by an awl. Plants are uprooted in the garden; the unripe maize is broken off and thrown away. Delicious food is too much for the pot. It will be a matter of merciless retribution.)

Mtombeni makes use of a number of images to describe Xihluku's loss: the pain that one gets from being stabbed by an awl in the navel; a lively green plant which is mercilessly uprooted from the fertile soil is also used as an analogy to show Xihluku's devastation. The last sentence of the above soliloquy: *Ndzi ta vuyisela xidyoho hi ndzihiso wa lunya* (It will be a matter of merciless retribution) implies that Xihluku will avenge the death of his son with all the cruelty it deserves. This soliloquy establishes Xihluku's emotions and intentions.

Somisa's miserable life with her husband, Xipelupelu, is depicted in the following soliloquy:

*Tatana wa ntsetselelo, ndzi lo onha yini mina:
 Xo pfumala ku rivaleriwa evutomini bya mina?
 Mahlomulo yo tshama ndzi tamele mbilu hi mandla,
 Ku tshama ndzi rindzele ku boha milala,
 Ku ongola kumbe ku rila hi khotso mina?
 A swi ndzi tshiki ha yini ku khwayeka?
 Ku tswontsweka ndzi sala marhambu
 Ndzi ta swi tshikisa ku yini? A ndzo titshika ke?
 Loko a fa u fela mina, ku n'wi tshika ku titshika;
 Ku pfumelela mbilu yi fehla ku tisunga -
 Ndzi tshikenil mangava yanga, ndzi tshikenil
 (Ndzi tshikenil:3).*

(Father of all mercy, what wrong action have I committed? The sin that cannot be forgiven in my life? I am made to suffer time and again. I live expecting to mourn, to nurse the wounded or to worry about someone in jail. Why don't I stop to grow lean? To become lean and gaunt leaving only bones. How shall I leave it? Am I not neglecting myself? When he dies, it will be my responsibility and when I leave him I shall be doing myself down. To continue worrying is just like committing suicide - Leave me alone! That is my trouble, leave me alone!)

The activities of Somisa's husband, i.e murder and robbery, cause her great conflict. She expects to mourn his death at any time. Her rhetorical questions emphasize her helplessness. She is in a dilemma, because whatever choice she makes, she will be placing herself in jeopardy.

When assessing the actions and behavioural patterns of all characters in this narrative, it is noticeable that Mtombeni is more successful and effective in depicting characters when using the dramatic technique than the narrative method.

4.3.3 Naming of characters technique

The naming of characters is the method whereby the author deliberately gives a certain character a particular name in the narrative with the purpose of shaping that character to behave in accordance with his name. The readers learn to know the character traits of that particular fictional character because of the meaning of the name given to him. This technique leads the reader to expect a particular behaviour from the character. Mafela (1993:176) refers to this technique as follows:

This is another technique which narrative writers use to reveal the traits of characters through the names they bestow on them, by describing a character directly through expository technique, revealing a character indirectly by showing action.

In *Mibya ya nyekanyeka*, Mtombeni has deliberately named his characters to depict their personality traits and their way of life. Characters such as Rev. Tihomandloti, N'wa-Basana, who is Rev. Tihomandloti's wife, Madambi and Nyiko, Rev. Tihomandloti's sons, N'wa-Mdanisi and Celela, have been named with the aim of portraying their role and function in this narrative.

4.3.3.1 Rev. Tihomandloti

Rev. Tihomandloti is the main character in *Mibya ya nyekanyeka*. With regard to his name, Masunga (1993:2) indicates that:

His name is a compound (noun), consisting of the verb stem *tihoma* (to stick), and a noun *ndloti* (cheetah). The name is probably derived from the Xitsonga expression *ku andlala ndloti*, which means to give red royal treatment. The skin of a cheetah is spread for the royalty to sit on as a sign of honour. In the case of the pastor's name, the *ndloti* is not spread but stuck, i.e. it is misplaced.

From the explanation given by Masunga, we can deduce that the author gave the protagonist, Rev. Tihomandloti, this name to depict his self-importance, self-esteem and his social position as a clergyman, community advisor, family counsellor and religious leader of his people. This deduction is reinforced by Tihomandloti's utterance:

Wa swi tiva leswaku muti wa hina wu hundzukile rivoni exikarhi ka vusiku leri voniwaka hi vanhu va ha ta hi le kule. Hi hina timboni ta munyama wa vanhu va ka hina; hi hina hi faneleke ku va rhangela emahlweni eka hinkwaswo leswo lulama ni leswi akaka mikhuva leyinene, vumunhu ni nhluvuko wa vanhu varikwerhu. Munhu loyi a nga ni xirive u ta leterisa ku yini vanhu va ka vona xe? (Mibya ya nyekanyeka:17-18).

(You know that our home has turned to be a lamp in the night which is seen from far by people. We are the lamps of the darkness of our people; we have the duty to lead them in everything good and those constructive good ways, humanity and the development of our people. How will a person who is forgetful guide his people?)

Masunga (1993:2) further indicates that:

Pastor Tihomandloti regards the position of his family as being of such high esteem that he does not leave room for

failure or see the dark side of life. He desires for perfection, as exemplified by his desire for his sons to be perfect.

The character's name in this case, reinforces the idea of his community. His behaviour is that of a person who is in the forefront in all aspects of life. This is shown in the way he advises his son, Madambi, in respect of his academic progress at school:

Ndzi ri u nga fani na van'wana. Madyondzele ya wena ya komba leswaku u le mahlweni ka hinkwavo, kutani u fanele ku endla leswi hlawulekeke, u tula hinkwavo eka hinkwaswo - fungha marito ya mina. (Mibya ya nyekanyeka:19).

(I say you should not be like other people. Your progress in learning shows that you are in front in everything, therefore you should perform exceptionally well, and surpass everyone in everything - mark my words.)

Rev. Tihomandloti advises his son in this matter because he feels he should occupy the first position in all that he does. Therefore, Rev. Tihomandloti's name and behaviour combine to portray him as a character who acts as a very important person in society.

4.3.3.2 N'wa-Basana

N'wa-Basana is a name derived from *N'wana Basana*. The noun *n'wana* has been shortened to leave only the prefix *n'wa-*. The idea is that she is the daughter of Basana. Basana, the pure or clean one, denotes a woman who is always clean, neat and tidy. N'wa-Basana is depicted here as a woman who likes to be smartly dressed and to look attractive:

Swambalo leswi a swi tshama swi basile, swi phumunhiwa ritshuri mixo wun'wana ni wun'wana hi malwandla ni nsovo lowo khatisa swinene (Mibya ya nyekanyeka:8).

(These clothes were always kept clean, by being brushed every morning carefully and in a pleasing manner.)

N'wa-Basana is not only portrayed as a clean person outside, but her behaviour is that of a quiet peace-loving wife who listens attentively before giving an answer or her opinion. She also hates unnecessary acts of annoying other people:

N'wa-Basana a nga hatlangi a hlamula, u miyerile nkarhinyana (Mibya ya nyekanyeka:9).

(N'wa-Basana did not hasten to answer, she remained silent for some time.)

This is a clear indication that, for her, thought precedes action. Her quiet disposition suits her role as the wife of the minister of religion and the leader of the women of prayer. Her quietude is appropriate in a woman who fosters the love of God amongst her community. Discipline, respect and humility are attributes associated with N'wa-Basana. She qualifies to be called the "angel" of *Mibya ya nyekanyeka*, because at no stage does she disappoint anyone. She remains pure, serene and non-committal. Her husband had given instructions to Madambi never to marry Soluka, a Xhosa girl. N'wa-Basana knows this, but after his death, because of her quiet nature, she does not prevent Madambi from finalising his marriage to Soluka. In accordance with the Tsonga tradition, instructions left by a dead person should always be honoured. This is not the case, because N'wa-Basana hates worrying anyone. She does not want to interfere with Madambi's love affairs and cause him a lot of misery. The only thing which she asks him to do is to visit the graveyard and place some flowers on his father's grave:

Swi lulamile n'wananga, mina ndzi dyuharile; ku ta fika laha ndzi nga ha swi kotiki ku ku swekela ni ku ku hlantswela. Naswona a ndzi ta tsaka ku vona n'wingi wa mina, nhlomi ya mativula ya mina ndza ha hanya. Teka swiluva ni mati yo chela esirheni ra tata wa wena u veka swiluva ehenhla ka sirha ra yena loko u heta ku n'wi vikela n'wananga (Mibya ya nyekanyeka:85).

(It is alright, my child, I am old; there will be time that I will not be in a position to cook and to do your washing. Above all, I would be very pleased to see my daughter-in-law, the newly-wed wife of my first born whilst I am still alive. Take these flowers and water to pour on the grave of your father, and then place the flowers on the grave, and when you are through with informing him.)

N'wa-Basana is also shown as a loving wife who does everything in her power to please her husband. She is often depicted as sharing tea with him whilst on the veranda of their house. They speak of constructive matter:

... kasi loko va ku mubya wu tsemekile kumbe va ku wa nyekanyeka a va vuli swona leswaku munhu wa vutlhari a vuya a lulama u tswala vana vo dadavala, va mihupana miharihari, kumbe va va na lunya, xindzhuvu ni futa xe? (Mibya ya nyekanyeka:9).

(... but when they refer to the fact that the straps of the baby-sling are cut or when they say that they are loose, are they not implying that an intelligent person who is also kind gets dull, mischievous or unkind and careless children?)

4.3.3.3 Madambi

The name Madambi is the plural of *dambi* meaning misfortune. It is given to a child who is miraculously born or whose birth is preceded by bad luck and misfortune. Those who are named *Madambi* are sometimes associated with problems and frustrations that they cause to their parents. In this regard, Mawela (1994:41) says:

In the name giving technique of characterization the author gives a character a name which has a bearing on the person's behaviour. This usually occurs in African literature, for a name in the African tradition always has a meaning, be it a name of a person, of an object or a place ... a woman can also give her child a derogatory name in response to the bad treatment she receives from her in-laws.

In this instance, Madambi is depicted as a young man who is exceptionally intelligent. He always does very well at school and later goes to university. His academic record is clear testimony that he enjoys his studies, but a glaring flaw is his carelessness, untidiness and slovenliness. Therefore, the name *Madambi* has a great bearing on his behaviour:

Swa wena swa xikolo swi ndzi tsakisa ngopfu. U ndzi vavisa mbilu ntsena hi futa ni vufendza wonge a wu n'wana wa muti wa vukhonger, wa dyondzo, vufundzo ni malwandla. Ku dyondza ni vutlhari swi seketeriwa hi mikhuva leyinene, leyi hlantswekeke hi xiviri hi mini (Mibya ya nyekanyeka:19)

(Your school work is delightful. You only pain my heart because of your carelessness and untidiness as if you are not from a religious family, with education, respect and hospitality. Being educated and intelligent should be supported by good manners, which are polished and acceptable.)

Madambi is portrayed as a young man who does not care about his appearance. His father rails against him:

Ndzi ku byela masiku hinkwawo leswo u byewula malepfu u tsemeta ni misisi kambe do! Ndzo vulavula ni tamba leri ngo tshama ri lo pyi hi thyaka (ibid).

(Daily I tell you that you should shave your beard, cut your hair, but all in vain! It seems as if I am talking to a rock which is always full of dirt.)

Madambi also acts as a thorn in his father's side in his insistence on marrying a Xhosa girl. Tlhomandloti ultimately feels that is unfortunate to have been given such a child by God.

As readers, literary critics and admirers of Madambi's intelligence, we tend to believe that the author deliberately presents him in a negative light to contrast him with Nyiko, who occupies a soft spot in his father's heart. The actions of Madambi also promote the theme of the looseness of the straps of the baby-

sling.

4.3.3.4 Nyiko

Nyiko (Gift) is the name given to the second and the last born son of Rev. Tihomandloti. He is portrayed as a gift to Rev. Tihomandloti's family, and a gift of God to his people. Nyiko is not a highly gifted person intellectually. He is presented as someone who struggles with his education. Rev. Tihomandloti says:

Nyiko yena u tshama a hlantswekile, hinkwaswo swa yena swi endliwa hi malwandla ni mafundza, kambe a ndzi swi tivi leswaku n'wananga u lo nghena hi yini emiehleketweni ya yena, a ku ngheni nchumu enhlokweni ya yena hi swa tidyondzo. (Mibya ya nyekanyeka:9).

(Nyiko is always clean, he does all his things skilfully and respectfully, but I do not know what has gone wrong in his brains, there is nothing which he understands with regard to education.)

Nyiko himself realizes his own shortcomings:

... ndzi ta huma ndzi ya vulavula ni vanhu hi rito ra Xikwembu - lava ri tivaka ni lava nga ri tiviki. Leswi loko ndzi swi ehleketa swa ndzi chavisa hikuva ndza swi tiva leswaku a ndzi tharihanga na swona ndzi na tingana to ka ti nga heli. (Mibya ya nyekanyeka:45).

(... I will go out to spread the Word of God - to those who know it and those who do not. Thinking of it frightens me, because I know that I am not intelligent and I am very shy.)

Nyiko attends at a theological seminary to be a minister of religion. This fact pleases his father, who is also a minister of religion. Masunga (1993:4) says "he decided, to his father's delight, to become a pastor". Rev. Tihomandloti is delighted because he knows that between his two sons, one has taken after

him. Nyiko, who is aware of his limitations, appeals for help and support from his father. Rev. Tihomandloti is seen giving his son moral and religious support because he is such a wonderful gift from God.

Nyiko is depicted as a weak person who cannot stand on his own. He depends on his father for everything. Although Nyiko lacks intelligence, Mtombeni defends him as follows:

Buku yo saseka hi le handle kasi swa le ndzeni swa phyama, yi fana ni munhu loyi a dyondzekeke a nga ri na xichavo, a nga koti ku tikhoma eka leswi swi nga ni nkokela wa nyama. Yi fana ni munhu wo tihariha a ri ni lunya; mufundhisi wo pfumala rirhandzu, mutswari wo hava nsovo ehenhla ka vana va yena ni ku va navelela leswinene. (Mibya ya nyekanyeka:47)

(A book which is beautiful outside whereas the contents are of no value is like an educated person without respect, who is not able to control himself when attracted by sins of the flesh. It is like an intelligent person with bad manners; a parent without kindness towards his children and to wish them all the best.)

Nyiko cannot cope without his father's assistance, hence he succumbs to temptations. He fails to succeed as a minister of religion, because as a "flower of the family", he cannot stand alone without the support of his father, who also fails to rescue him when he is entangled in a controversy involving adultery with N'wa-Mdanisi, a beautiful widow and one of his parishioners.

Nyiko marries Munene (the good one or in simple terms: Beauty). Munene, appropriately, is a name derived from the adjectival stem *-nene* (good, right).

Munene is a kind woman who is always ready to forgive and to assist whenever requested. When Nyiko, her husband returns in a miserable state from N'wa-Mdanisi, the widow who lands him in problems, she quickly prays for him. Consequently, this matter is domestically settled and Munene, because of her positive attitude and trustfulness, forgives her husband. Unfortunately,

Nyiko fails to resist temptation and returns to N'wa-Mdanisi, who later becomes pregnant.

Munene, because of her good disposition, does not worry about what has befallen her husband. True to her name, she does not treat Nyiko harshly or criticise him, and - ironically - thus allows him to continue to his doom.

4.3.3.5 N'wa-Mdanisi

N'wa-Mdanisi is one of the minor characters in *Mibya ya nyekanyeka*. She only appears in this narrative as a bait to Nyiko, who commits adultery with her. Her name *N'wa-Mdanisi* (the humiliator) appropriately portends the humiliation which Nyiko suffers after being excommunicated from the church. Nyiko fails to withstand the impact of the humiliation caused by N'wa-Mdanisi and commits suicide as a result.

N'wa-Mdanisi is a name derived from the verb *danisa* (humiliate). N'wa-Mdanisi is portrayed here as the cause of the conflict which leads both Nyiko and Rev. Tihomandloti to their death.

Nyiko, a respectable clergyman, is N'wa-Mdanisi's victim so that, in the end, the theme of the novel is accomplished that "the straps of the baby-sling are loose", i.e. children often deviate from the normative behavioural patterns of their parents. N'wa-Mdanisi is entirely blamed for Nyiko's fall.

4.3.3.6 Celela

Celela, the name of a character in *Mibya ya nyekanyeka*, is derived from the verb *cela* (dig). It is an applicative which indicates that one should dig and bury something inside the grave or ground. Celela is Cheyeza Baloyi's son, who grows to be a deviant. This behaviour lands him in the hands of the police who shoot and wound him. Although he does not die instantly, he later succumbs

to his wounds. His name portends his fate - to be killed and later be buried:

Ku herile malembe mambirhi Celela a file, ku ririwile - a celeriwile (Mibya ya nyekanyeka:34).

(Two years had elapsed since Celela died, was mourned and buried.)

The verb *celeriwile* is the past tense of *celela*, the character in question.

Celela's lifespan is predetermined. Celela is bound to be caught stealing and to end up being gunned down by the police. This happens because Celela is a deviant, who always ignores the advice of his parents:

Manana, tekani mali leyi mi yi veka. Hi xona xihondzo xa mina laha misaveni - xihondzo xa rirhandzu ra n'wina ehenhla ka mina, xitsundzuxo xo hetelela xa n'wana wa n'wina loyi a nga tsandzeka ka dzana-dzana ku mi yingisa a ha hanya; mina wa n'wina, loyi a hambukeke etindleleni to lulama, to aka ni ku akisana, to letela ni ku hletela. Ndzi humile evuhlengini bya n'wina bya tintswalo, bya ntsetselelo ni ntswelo-vusiwana (Mibya ya nyekanyeka:23).

(My mother, take this money and keep it. This is the peak of your love to me, the last advice to your child who failed a hundred times to listen when he was still alive, who deviated from the normative pattern of behaviour, who neglected your constructive ways and guidance. I left your kind means of supporting me, your mercy and piety.)

Celela speaks thus, knowing that he has reached the end of the road. He gives his mother the stolen money as compensation to her for whatever acts of kindness, support and guidance he received from her. Although Celela is on the verge of death, he still remembers vividly all the good advice he received from his mother:

A swi ndzi faneli ku va n'wana wa n'wina. Hambu mi nga ndzi vukarha, mi ndzi korisa mi ndzi nantswa hi mintswontswo kambe vutomi bya mina byi ta huma hi le xikarhi ka tintiho ta n'wina - naswona a swi nga twakali

loko swi endleka (*Mibya ya nyekanyeka:23*).

(I am not fit to be called your son. Even if you can embrace me and kiss me affectionately, my life will escape between your fingers - and you will not notice when that happens.)

Celela is destined to die, his destiny is embodied in his name.

In *Ndzi tshikeni*, all the female characters have been given names which have nothing to do with their personality traits or behaviour.

As far as the male characters are concerned, all of them have been named with the aim of representing their ideals, behaviour, feelings and their manner of doing things in the narrative. First on the list is the main character, the protagonist, *Xihluku Xilandzo*, whose first name and surname have to do with his actions in this novel. His first name *Xihluku* denotes a person who is full of bitterness, grief and vindictiveness. In this novel, *Xihluku* is, indeed, bitter about the death of his son and wife. He feels he must avenge the death of these two people. He is full of vengeance to an obsessive degree. The burning desire in him is the *xihluku* which is the driving force behind his behaviour: He feels compelled by his conscience to pursue the killers until he has caught all of them. The zeal to pursue them is encapsulated in his surname, which is *Xilandzo*. *Xilandzo* is a surname derived from the verb *landza* (follow). It is an appropriate surname for a man who is committed to a quest of pursuit.

Xihluku Xilandzo follows all the killers of his family until he ends up in jail with the main objective of killing the leader of the gang. His strength of will and his commitment to his bitter cause are overwhelming.

Xihluku Xilandzo's son is *Madlayisana* (one who causes others to be killed or be in trouble). The death of *Madlayisana* initiates the whole conflict. If *Madlayisana* had not been gunned down by the thugs, *Xihluku Xilandzo* would

not have embarked on his quest for vengeance, a quest which lands him in jail. Madlayisana is the indirect cause of Xihluku Xilandzo's life sentence for killing Xirhetirheti, Nhompfu-ya-mbyana and Xipelupelu, the murderers of his son and wife.

Amongst the policemen who serve Xihluku Xilandzo at the Police Station is *Mafambaborile* (the one who walks around rotten). *Mafambaborile* is a compound name derived from the verb *famba* (walk) and the adjective *-bola* (rot). It denotes a person who walks around whilst rotten, i.e. with bad manners and disregard for people. This name is an apt description of the manner in which he behaves on the day Xihluku Xilandzo visits the Police Station to report the shooting of his son. He is clearly a person who has a corrupt way of executing his official duties.

The character's name is thus a direct embodiment of his behaviour and role in the novel.

A trio of characters: *Xirhetirheti*, *Nhompfu-ya-mbyana* and *Xipelupelu*, are the antagonists in this narrative, whose names have to a certain extent a bearing on their character traits. *Xirhetirheti*'s name implies that he will not be apprehended easily and will escape from the police quite easily. *Xirhetirheti* is derived from the ideophone *rheti*, slippery. *Nhompfu-ya-mbyana*'s name infers to his facial appearance which resembles that of a dog. He is far from being attractive or handsome. His nose looks like that of a dog, hence the name *Nhompfu-ya-mbyana*. The name *Xipelupelu* (Windmill) suggests this character's behaviour. He moves around in circles trying to run away from the police. He does not succeed because he is ultimately arrested.

In *Malangavi ya mbilu*, we find Marhule, the protagonist, whose name derives from the adjectival stem *-rhula* (be quiet, at peace, be of a quiet, calm disposition) (Cuenod, 1979:176). Marhule's name suits his nature. Although he is not faithful in his dealings with his girlfriends, he is always quiet and calm.

He is a man of peace. He does not believe in fighting anyone. For instance, when he discovers that Ruti is now in love with another young man, because of being a man of peace, he does not think of fighting him. Because he is a quiet man, he does not argue with Ruti or question her about her jilting of him. His conscience worries him and he wanders alone until he is found by Sevengwani, who advises him about life in general and how he should solve his conflict in particular.

In *Nghunghunyana ni xikhovha*, Mtombeni uses the name *Xitlhangoma*, which has a special meaning in the traditional life of the Tsonga people. The son of a chief, who is always the first person to be circumcised in an initiation school, is named *Xitlhangoma*, i.e. the one who inaugurates the circumcision lodge. In *Nghunghunyana ni xikhovha*, *Xitlhangoma* is the first man who has the courage to approach the chief about the chicanery of the witchdoctors.

4.4 Summary

Different scholars on the study of literature agree that characterization is the creation of fictional people in a work of art, with the purpose of revealing them as people who behave in a lifelike manner and whose actions are also credible.

Three techniques of character portrayal were discussed. These are the narrative technique, the dramatic technique and the name-giving technique. The narrative technique is used mostly to describe the physical appearance of the characters. For instance, Rev. Tlhomandloti in *Mibya ya nyekanyeka* and *Xihluku Xilandzo* in *Ndzi tshikeni*, are presented to the readers by means of the narrative technique.

Many hair-raising incidences in *Ndzi tshikeni*, such as the encounter of *Xirhetirheti*, *Nhompfu-ya-mbyana* and *Xipelupelu* with *Xihluku Xilandzo* are presented by the narrative technique.

The dramatic technique is Mtombeni's most frequently used technique to delineate his characters. In *Ndzi tshikeni*, this technique dominates. The dialogue which we find in this novel portrays characters such as Xihluku Xilandzo, the protagonist and the trio: *Xirhetirheti*, *Nhompfu-ya-mbyana* and *Xipelupelu*, who are antagonists in this prose narrative. The actions of all the characters become apparent to us because of the manner in which they reveal themselves to the readers through their way of speaking. The themes of the prose narratives are expressed in the dialogue of the characters. This is not only realized in *Ndzi tshikeni*, but also in *Mibya ya nyekanyeka*, where the narrative and the dramatic techniques are equally employed. Conflict in *Ndzi tshikeni*, *Mibya ya nyekanyeka* and *Malangavi ya mbilu*, is vividly expressed through the dramatic technique.

Mtombeni also uses the name-giving technique to reveal the character traits of his fictional people. In *Mibya ya nyekanyeka*, names such as Tihomandloti, N'wa-Basana, Madambi, Nyiko, Celela and N'wa-Mdanisi imply behaviour personality and role. The same is true for characters in *Ndzi tshikeni*. In this novel, we have characters such as Xihluku Xilandzo, Madlayisana, Xirhetirheti, Nhompfu-ya-mbyana and Xipelupelu. This name-giving technique pre-empts the expectation of the readers, because even before they read about the characters their names already set up expectations as to behaviour and role.

Undoubtedly, Mtombeni has succeeded in portraying his characters through the use of the narrative and dramatic methods and name-giving technique.

CHAPTER FIVE

LANGUAGE AND STYLE: DICTION

5.1. Introduction

The assessment of language and style in Mtombeni 's creative works will be handled in three chapters, because there are many stylistic features which must be treated. In this respect, Ngara (1982:11) asserts that

... in order to arrive at a satisfactory understanding of literature, the reader must have an understanding of language, its function and its mode of operation. The reader must therefore have recourse to linguistics for a full understanding of the phenomenon of language.

Therefore, this chapter will concentrate on diction, wherein the following will be the point of our discussion: derivatives, i.e nouns which are formed from other word categories and which begin with nasal *n* and the prefix *vu-*, antonyms, synonyms, ideophones, diminutives, locatives, compound words and repetitions. In chapter six the other stylistic devices like the sentence, paragraphs, imagery, proverbs and idioms, tone and dialogue will be assessed. We would like to emphasize that these two chapters deal with language and style, which are inseparable entities which overlap with one another (Ramahuta, 1993:143).

For illustrative purposes, examples will be extracted from Mtombeni's three prose narratives: *Mibya ya nyekanyeka*, *Ndzi tshikeni* and *Mavala ya yingwe*.

Mtombeni's plays, i.e *Malangavi ya mbilu*, *Vuhlangi bya vuhlangi* and *Mihizo ya kayivela*, will be the main focus of chapter seven, which deals with his use of patterned language.

A definition of language is a useful starting point to an analysis of the language and style of B.K.M. Mtombeni in his creative works. Henry Sweet (1992:566)

defines language as "the expression of ideas by means of speech sounds combined into words. Words combined into sentences, this combination answering to that of ideas into thoughts".

Words are basic units in a language, and it is from them that sentences are formed, and it is from sentences that ideas are expressed. People interact through the medium of language. Fowler (1986:18) for instance, is of the opinion that language is a

... central part of social process and is a highly efficient medium in the coding of social categorizations. The obvious role of language is the expression of the discriminations which a culture needs to make, but its role goes further than that. Language does not just provide words for already existing concepts; it crystallizes and stabilizes ideas.

An idea encoded has clear identity because it has material substance: it can be spoken and written. Words help us remember ideas, better still, help us store them as systems of ideas. They allow us to express distinctions and relationships. Mafela (1993:184) adds the following insight:

All events in a narrative are described in language; characters and settings are also described in language. Language is therefore a medium of communication which can also expand the significance of the communication. This language, a solely human activity is what separates men from other living beings.

The term "medium" implies that language is a means through which the author is able to transmit his message to the reader. Mafela also indicates that language is a solely human activity which differentiates man from animals. Ramahuta (1993:147) reinforces Mafela's view:

Language is the medium through which the author is able to communicate his thoughts to the reader. This is

achieved by making appropriate word choices to express his ideas.

Ramahuta's definition emphasizes the importance of individual words in communication. Words have their literal and figurative usages. All these aspects of the language have to be taken into consideration when the literary achievements of the author are assessed.

An issue related to language is that of style. Mafela (Ibid) defines style as

... the use and arrangement of language, the selection of words, and pacing and patterning with which one puts them together. Style involves the author's characteristic manner of expression, in that it shapes all the elements of fiction in a narrative.

Mafela's definition is based on a firm belief in the individuality of an author because each author has his own way of pacing and patterning words to produce an intended idea. Ngara (1982:21) supports this claim by revealing that "in real life no two individuals speak a language in exactly the same way". Keith Kraus in Beaucamp (1969:83) defines style as

... word selection and order, but it also includes tone, mood, use of detail, presentation of character, punctuation - in short, style is the sum of the techniques an author uses to make his narrative emotionally believable.

Kraus (op. cit.:84) further reveals that "in general then, it can be said that when we understand a writer, we can often sense what he will be saying about his subject". This implies that as we read the author's works, we are able to catch the tone and the mood of his writing and understand the message that he is conveying.

Brooks and Warren (1971:329) define style as "the manner in which something

is said or done - [the author 's] special way of expressing an idea. Brooks and Warren also imply that an individual author in any narrative has his own way of expressing his ideas. Cohen (1973:49) supports this view:

Style pertains to an author's choice of words and their arrangement in patterns of syntax, imagery and rhythm. These arrangements of words constitute the author 's situations, or characters he chooses to create and communicate.

Serudu (1993:118) concludes that:

Style can never be given a watertight definition, since it involves not only the choice of words and their appropriate use in sentences and paragraphs but also the entire pattern that a literary work assumes: it registers not only in the theme (message) but also in its impact. Style reflects the world of the work and may be an index to author's worldview.

Conrad (1990:93) on the other hand, asserts that "the necessary elements of style are lucidity, elegance and individuality". This implies quite clearly that style is an individual matter and that each author will always have his or her own style.

From the definitions of language and style given above, it is obvious that it is difficult to separate the two concepts. This is because language is the medium, while style refers to the manner, i.e how the author expresses his thoughts, ideas and emotions.

5.2 Diction

Brooks and Warren (1971:335) are of the opinion that:

Good diction is the choice of the right words. Accurate effective expression obviously requires the right words - the words which will represent not nearly, not appropriately, but precisely and exactly what we want to say.

Cohen (1973:183), in a similar vein, defines diction as "the choice and arrangement of words in phrases and images or larger units such as poetic lines and sentences", and points out that "the vocabulary current during the author's life will naturally influence his choice of words". It is through the words which the author employs in his works that we are able to define his style. Fowler (1986:61) asserts that "diction, the choice of words is a fundamental element of meaning". Above all, Conrad (1990:95) emphasizes that "truth and sincerity is what style is all about". If the author remains objective, truthful and faithful in his expression and in his choice of words, the truth and the sincerity of the style will be maintained.

5.2.1 Derivatives

Mtombeni's works abound with words which are derived from various word categories. It is these derivatives which characterize him as a writer who uses language in a manner unique to him. Each piece of writing always reveals a style which marks him out as an individual writer of Xitsonga literature. Mtombeni is able to express his ideas and emotions clearly by employing these derived words.

Firstly, we have words which have been formed through the use of the prefix *vu-*. These words are always abstract concepts. Words formed in this way are found in great numbers in his works. Verb stems are used as the origin of

such abstract nouns.

In *Mibya ya nyekanyeka*, when Rev. Tihomandloti says a prayer for Celela, who is about to die after being shot by the police, we find the following abstract nouns:

*Chululela laha misaveni vutshunguri ni vuongori bya matilo
lebyi teleke tinhunguvana ta vukutsuri bya wena, ni matilo
ya wena langa henhla-henhla (Mibya ya nyekanyeka:28).*

(Bequeath unto the world the healing and nursing from heaven which is full of small calabashes of medicines of your redemption and your Glory in the Highest.)

The abstract nouns *vutshunguri* (healing), *vuongori* (nursing) and *vukutsuri* (redemption), are all derived from verb stems: *-tshungula* (heal), *-ongola* (nurse) and *-kutsula* (redeem) respectively. The prefix *vu-* is affixed, while the last syllable in all cases is replaced by the syllable *-ri*.

In the same prayer, we find two other abstract nouns: *vuhomboloki* (crookedness) and *vutsetseleri* (sympathy). The noun *vuhomboloki* is derived from the intransitive verb *-homboloka* (be crooked). Again, the prefix *vu-* is used, whilst the ending vowel *-a* became *-i* in the derivative. The same derivation produces the abstract noun *vutsetseleri*.

The preamble to Chapter three of *Mibya ya nyekanyeka*, is a display of nouns derived from verb stems:

*Byento bya munhu i mpimo wa vutivi,
Vutlhari i mphamelo wa nkava ni rhumbu;
Ntiyo wa vukorhoki i gondzo ra vutivi
Mindyangu vunkhinsinkhinsi swi navisa swa matshimbu.*

(The depth of a person is the measure of the knowledge, Wisdom is a share that one gets through the umbilical cord; The devotion to serving others is a way of being knowledgeable.)

For families to be always busy is like the spreading of the shoots of sweet potato plants.)

The nouns *vutivi* (knowledge), *vutlhari*, (wisdom), *vukorhoki* (servitude) and *vunkhinsinkhinsi* (business), are all derivatives. *Vutivi*, *vutlhari* and *vukorhoki* are formed from the verb stems: *-tiva* (know), *-tlhariha* (be wise) and *-korhoka* (serve). They all have more or less the same structure, i.e the prefix *vu-*, the verb stem and the ending vowel *-i*. This structure is the same as in *vukhinsinkhinsi* except that this abstract noun is a derivative formed from: *-khinsikhinsi*, which is an ideophone.

The abstract nouns embellish this preamble which is in the form of a stanza of a poem. The first line of this stanza rhymes with the third one through the application of the noun *vutivi* which is repeated, while the second and the fourth lines also rhyme, because of the use of the final syllable *-mbu* of *rhumbu* and *matshimbu*. This poetic diction arouses curiosity in the reader.

When Madambi, a character in *Mibya ya nyekanyeka*, writes to his father, Rev. Tlhomandloti, he concludes as follows:

Tatana ndzi nga mi dyeli nkarhi hi papila ro leha ra vufana na vuhlangi (Mibya ya nyekanyeka:38).

(Father, I should not waste your time by a boyish and puerile long letter.)

The words *vufana* and *vuhlangi* are both abstract nouns derived from nouns *mufana* (boy) and *xihlangi* (child). In this instance the prefixes *mu-* and *xi-* of both nouns respectively change to *vu-*, whilst the last vowels are left unchanged. The words emphasize the insignificance of the letter to Madambi's father. Another important factor is the intimacy which is created by the use of these two nouns.

In the following extract from *Mibya ya nyekanyeka*:

*U twile a khomiwile hi xivundza,
a navela ku n'wi byela hi nomu wa rirhandzu
ra vutswari (Mibya ya nyekanyeka:38).*

(He felt lonely and wished to tell him verbally with paternal love.)

The noun *vutswari* is used to show the bond between the father and the child because the word *vutswari*, is a derivative from the verb stem *-tswala* (give birth).

When Rev. Tlhomandloti replies to the letter, Mtombeni employs the noun *vukhwatsi* (unhurriedly; quiet), which is formed from the adverb *khwatsi* (quietly, slowly) in the following manner:

*Ha vambirhi ka vona va vulavula hi rito rin'we ra vukhwatsi
hi mintirho ya wena (Mibya ya nyekanyeka:39).*

(Both of them speak in one voice unhurriedly about your work.)

The word *vukhwatsi* in this context signifies the close and tender relationship that exists between the two people who are talking about Madambi and his commendable work.

In his reply to the letter that his father writes to him, Madambi says:

*Ndza tshemba un'wana ni un'wana wa hina u vonile
vutsanana bya miri wa yena ni vutsongo bya vutivi bya
yena (Mibya ya nyekanyeka:42).*

(I believe each and everyone of us has seen the smallness of his body and scantiness of his knowledge.)

Here we are struck by the words *vutsanana* (smallness) and *vutsongo* (scantiness) of his body and knowledge, respectively. Both these words are derived from adjectival stems.

Thus far we have focused on Mtombeni's use of abstract nouns characterized by the prefix *vu-*, derived from various word categories. We have noted abstract nouns formed from verb stems, ideophones, adverbs and adjectives.

Mtombeni applies *vulerisi* (command) and *vuleteri* (guidance) in the letter that Nyiko is writing to his father (*Mibya ya nyekanyeka:43*). These words are derived from verbal stems: *-lerisa* (give command) and *-letela* (guide). The following is a further example:

Kambe xiviri xa mina xi ndzi byela leswaku vukereke byi dlayile mongo wa vukhongeri (Mibya ya nyekanyeka:46).

(But my real self tells me that churchliness has killed the core of religion).

In this extract *vukereke* is an abstract noun formed from a common noun *kereke*, which denotes ordinary regular church attendance, whereas *vukhongeri* refers to religion in general.

Mtombeni's use of abstract nouns with the *vu-* prefix is also seen in his novel *Ndzi tshikeni*. The preface of this novel introduces us to the abstract nouns: *vuxongi* (beauty) as in *vuxongi bya mbilu* (beauty of the heart); *vutimekelo byo siva mpfundze ni nkuma* (extinction that leaves behind dead furnace and ash). The last stanza of this preface refers to *vumbhoni bya vumpfempfo* (the witness of the smouldering of fire) which is indicative of the fact that after the fire has been extinguished, it will remain smouldering until it ignites again.

Mtombeni in *Mibya ya nyekanyeka* introduces us to a new abstract noun. This is *vrhurheri* (giving accommodation, receiving of guests). Basically its

formation is regular: the prefix *vu-* is affixed to the verb stem *-rhurhela*, and the last syllable *-la* changes to *-ri* to result in the abstract noun *vurhurheri*. The noun used in this context indicates the affection, warmth, acceptance and hospitality which prevail in Xihluku Xilandzo's family as he arrives home from work.

Our attention is further drawn to another abstract noun *vuxambiri* (doing work for the first time) which is derived from the verb stem *-xambila* (do work for the first time). It is used contextually as follows:

*Mubya wu ntshunxekile wu tlatlalata
Madyondzela ya vuxambiri evutomini
(Ndzi tshikeni: 8).*

(The strap of the baby-sling has loosened and let
the first born in my life to fall down.)

The phrase *madyondzela ya vuxambiri* refers to the first born child of Xihluku Xilandzo, Madlayisana, who is gunned down. Mtombeni refers to this child as *vuxambiri* because he is the very first child born in his marriage to Gavaza Makhawukana.

In the second and the third paragraphs of *Ndzi tshikeni* on page ten, Mtombeni employs the term *vunyenyeri* (whimpering), derived from the verb *-nyenyela* (whimper) to show how touched the community is when Madlayisana meets his gruesome death. This untimely death is followed by *vumpfikumpfiku* (bitter sobbing) of the people who loved Xihluku Xilandzo's son. This noun vividly describes the community's distress and mourning.

After the burial of Madlayisana, Xihluku Xilandzo remains behind kneeling next to the grave praying. He says:

*Hi kombe ndlela ya nsovo ni ku vonakala ka Wena
Hi khongotele moya wa vuhloti ni vunantswelo
Bya nhlomulo ni mihloti ya hina*

(*Ndzi tshikeni*:10 - 11).

(Show us the way of mercy and your light
Exhort the spirit of hunting and licking
of our sorrow and tears.)

Mtombeni uses these two abstract nouns: *vuhloti* (hunting) and *vunantswelo* (licking) to indicate how worried Xihluku Xilandzo is with regard to the death of his son.

The blood of Madlayisana, according to Mtombeni:

*... ku hundzukile vugandzeri bya misava, mhamba ya yena
emisaveni ya vanhu ni ya nsati wa yena - mihloti ya
ntumbuluko wa vanhu va misava hinkwayo; vutsekatseko ni ku
tshama hi ku titsetsa laha misaveni
(Ndzi tshikeni:11).*

(... has become the worship of the earth, his offering
on earth for the people and for his wife - the tears
of the origin of people of the whole world; the instability
and self-pity.)

This feeling of great loss is indicated by the blood that drops from Madlayisana's gun-wounds and fall on the ground as if it meant to act as sacrifice in traditional worship. The term *vutsekatseko* signifies the fear that has overwhelmed everyone because of this incident.

The abstract nouns *vutivi* (knowledge) and *vutshunguri* (healing) used in *Mibya ya nyekanyeka* page 28 appear again in *Ndzi tshikeni* on page 30. In this instance Mtombeni wants to show that

*... [rifu] ri hlurle vutivi ni vutshunguri bya ximunhu -
masingita ya rifu ya na hina kwala hi nga kona.*

(... [death] has defeated the human knowledge and
healing - the miracle of death is always with us wherever
we are.)

Another instance is the following:

*Vumina ndzi nga byi hlurisa ku yini leswaku ndzi
endla makungu ya mina n'wini, kambe vumina lebyi
nga n'wana wa n'wina byi yimela tlhelo xana?
(Ndzi tshikeni:31).*

(How can I move away from the idea of the me-ego
to execute my own plans, that the me-ego which is
your own child stands aside?)

The abstract noun *vumina* is a derivative from the absolute pronoun *mina* to convince his mother that he is an individual and as such he is entitled to do what his mind dictates to him. His mother argues that he is her child and, as a result, she has the responsibility not to allow him to do whatever he wants.

The last abstract noun with the *vu-* prefix which Mtombeni employs in *Ndzi tshikeni* is *vukungeto* (starting again after a failure), derived from the verb *-kungeta* (start again). It is used here to show Xihluku Xilandzo's re-dedication to pursuing the killers of his son and wife. It is used contextually as follows:

*Ndzi voningele miehleketo,
Ndzi andlalele vukungeto.
Ntsena hikwalaho ka Yesu Kriste
(Ndzi tshikeni:36).*

(Brighten my mind,
Give me power to start again.
But in the name of Jesus Christ.)

In *Mavala ya yingwe* (p.14), Mtombeni refers to the country in which the Vatsonga people live as *Vutsonga*. *Vutsonga* in this instance is an abstract noun which denotes the place where the Vatsonga people are found in great numbers. Mtombeni employs *vukhiri* (isolation) (*Ndzi xavelela yini?: 22*) to show how Tihomana's interests differed from the rest of the members of Malaza Ngomana's family.

When Tihomana thinks about the loss that she will suffer if her co-wives's children were to inherit the wealth of her husband alone, she answers

*... hi vutikirheti byo komba vuxinyati bya xitswatsi
(Ndzi xavelela yini?:23).*

(... with the firmness to show fearlessness of a mature person.)

She declaims:

*Ndzi ri vuwalawala lahaya mutini bya ndzi siringa
loko ku pfumaleka ni un'we mufana loyi a nga wa mina
(Ndzi xavelela yini?:25).*

(I say the appearance of the many (boys) at that home annoys me when there is no single boy who is mine.)

The term *vuwalawala* (the ideophone of many people) aptly describes the situation facing Tihomana. None of the boys in that home are her sons, and they would in the long run qualify for a share of their father's wealth, when he eventually dies.

The term *vucholachola* (rustling as of creatures when breaking through the bush) is used by Mtombeni (*Ndzi xavelela yini?:29*) to show the disorderly movement of the running people. This is a term derived from the ideophone *cholachola* (make noise of tramping footsteps, as in the bush).

Second on the list of Mtombeni's derivatives, we have nouns with the nasal *n-*. His works show a prevalence of nouns with the nasal *n-*. These nouns are also abstract nouns. The frequent application of such nouns by Mtombeni categorizes him as an author quite different from the other Tsonga writers who write ordinarily without using derivatives such as the following: *ntiyo wa vukorhoki* in *Mibya ya nyekanyeka* (p.34). The noun *ntiyo* (strength) is a derivative from the verb stem *-tiya* (to be strong).

In a letter written by Madambi to his father, Rev. Tihomandloti, the derivative *ntwisiso* appears as follows:

*Ku yi tiva hi ntwisiso lowu hetisekeke ...
hambi leswi ntwisiso wo hetiseka wu kalaka eka hina
(Mibya ya nyekanyeka:35).*

(To know it with complete understanding ...
although complete understanding is scarce amongst us.)

The noun *ntwisiso* (understanding) appears twice in the sentence quoted above. It is a derivative from the verb *-twisisa* (understand). Mtombeni often employs such nouns to give his narrative the impact which is intended to intensify the meaning. A more usual usage is the infinitive *ku twisisa*, which carries the same meaning, but not the same weight. Mtombeni's adoption of this style reinforces his individuality.

Mtombeni (*Mibya ya nyekanyeka:71*) employs the noun *ntsetselelo* from the verb *-tsetselela* (be compassionate) to show Nyiko's character: he was compassionate, loving and caring to his parishioners and members of the community. Mtombeni (*Mibya ya nyekanyeka:83*) uses the abstract nouns: *nkhumuko* (act of flowing) and *ntshamiseko* (stability) to express the idea of the flowing of knowledge and wisdom and the stability of Soluka's family.

In *Ndzi tshikeni*, we also find various abstract nouns with the nasal *n-*. In the introductory paragraph of Chapter One of *Ndzi tshikeni*, Mtombeni writes as follows:

*Ntsako ni ntengo swi papama, exidziveni xa vutomi,
swikhiyana ni nhlekelelo swi andlalela hinkwako-kwako,
xirhami ni nkufumelo swi va tinungu ta timba rin'we, ku
tinyikela hi vulula swi khudlunya vunene bya vurhurheli.
(Ndzi tshikeni:1).*

(Happiness and serenity float over the deep pool of life; organized and ordinary laughing is heard all over; the cold and the warmth have become nodes of the same

stalk of sweet-cane, to devote oneself in a simpler manner disturbs the virtue of giving accommodation to someone.)

The words in bold are abstract nouns. *Ntsako* (happiness) is formed from the verb *-tsaka* (be happy), whilst *ntengo* (serenity), *nhlekelelo* (laughing) and *nkufumelo* (warmth) are derived from *-tenga* (be serene), *-hlekelela* (laugh) and the adjective *-kufumela* (warm), respectively.

This paragraph aptly describes the happiness, joy, comfort, serenity and warmth which prevail in Xihluku Xilandzo's family.

In this first Chapter of the novel, Mtombeni refers to *nsirhelelo* (act of protection) from the cold weather as well as from enemies, so that there can be *nhlayiseko wa ndyangu* (safety of the family) (*Ndzi tshikeni:1*).

The abstract nouns which attract our attention here are *nsirhelelo*, derived from the verb *-sirhelela* (protect), and *nhlayiseko* (safety) derived from the verb *-hlayiseka* (keep safe).

To show that the murderers of Madlayisana are men who intend to destabilize the peace and contentment of Xihluku Xilandzo's family, Mtombeni uses the following expressions:

... vavanuna lava ... a va ri vahahluli va swihlungwa
swa swiviri swa ntshamiseko wa ndyangu
(*Ndzi tshikeni:3*).

(... these men were the demolishers of the roof
tops of the real stability of families.)

The term *ntshamiseko*, formed from the verb *-tshamiseka*, is used to indicate how peaceful Xihluku Xilandzo's family was, before the thugs arrived to terrorize them.

In *Ndzi tshikeni* (p.3) Somisa, Xipelupelu's wife soliloquizes as follows:

Tatana wa ntsetselelo, ndzi lo onha yini mina?

(Father of all mercy, what wrong have I done?)

The term *ntsetselelo* (mercifulness) is a further example of Mtombeni's inclination to use abstract nouns with the nasal *n-*.

Ntwakalo (sound) of *swigingi* (footsteps) is another abstract noun used by Mtombeni (*Ndzi tshikeni:4*) to indicate the noise which accompanied the arrival of the three thugs at Xihluku Xilandzo's house.

In the introductory paragraph to Chapter Two, Mtombeni writes as follows:

*Mpfilumpfilu wa swikandza hi nkhavaxelo wa mihloti,
Mbisukano wa timbilu swa mpfindluko wa swihlovo;
Ntsuvo ni ku tilan'wa swi tsutsumisa swa muhloti,
Fada ni langavi ra mpitsuko swi tshwutela nsovo
(Ndzi tshikeni:5).*

(The frowning of faces because of the flowing of tears,
The breaking of the heart because of the stirring up
of the fountain,
The anger and hopelessness move swiftly like the hunter,
Hatred and the flame of being irritated spit pity.)

This extract contains a number of abstract nouns with the nasal *m-* and *n-*. The nouns with the nasal *m-* are *mpfilumpfilu* (confusion), *mbisukano* (breaking of the heart), *mpfindluko* (act of stirring) and *mpitsuko* (anger). The nouns with the nasal *n-* are *nkhavaxelo* (flowing of tears) from the verb *-khavaxela* (flow) and *ntsuvo* (act of getting angry) from the verb *-tsuva* (get angry).

It is an interesting phenomenon that Mtombeni does not use a single abstract noun with the nasal *n-* in his volume of short stories *Mavala ya yingwe*. This is in contrast to the style of his other prose narratives. Instead, in this volume of short stories, he employs many adoptives from other languages.

5.2.2 Adoptives

In his collection of short stories Mtombeni employs many words of foreign origin. He uses many Zulu, Afrikaans and English words to express his ideas. These words are called *adoptives* because of being transferred from a foreign language to a pre-existing native language (Hudson, 1925:65). When such transference takes place the meaning of lexical items and concepts borrowed from a foreign language is usually kept (Msimang, 1987:84). Mtombeni uses adoptives from the three above-mentioned languages because of social contact with the speakers of these languages. It is common for language elements from one language to be incorporated into another when different language groups live in close proximity.

Mtombeni worked and stayed in Pretoria from 1955 until 1976 when he died at Tembisa Hospital. In this cosmopolitan area he interacted with Zulu, English and Afrikaans-speaking people. Therefore, it is not strange that many words from these languages appeared frequently in his creative writings.

In *Mavala ya yingwe*, we find words of Zulu origin used. For instance:

*Van'wana va humile tindlwini ta vona hi swigiya ni michizo,
van'wana matihari ni switihangu, van'wana vo huma hi mandla
ku yisa ntsena miri wa vona laha a yi lava hi hosi.
(Nghunghunyana ni xikhovha:5).*

(Some came out of their houses with knob clubs and sticks, some with spears and shields, others with no weapons but they only came to register their presence to the chief where he wanted them.)

The lexical items *swigiya* and *michizo* (knob clubs and sticks) are of Zulu origin, because in Zulu *isagila* (knob club) and *umchizo* (stick) are words which refer to instruments used in warfare. The Tsonga people, by their nature, tend to be peace-loving people, and these words have been adopted from the Zulu, which

Furthermore, we find that Mtombeni uses the word *mabuthu* (warriors), which is apparently another adoptive, from the Zulu *amabutho* (warriors). In this instance, the Zulu spelling of this word is only modified at the end where the vowel *o* is replaced by *u*.

Hosi ya mabuthu, tintshava, milambu, mintlhambi ni magungu ya Vutsonga ku vuriwa leswaku hosi ya swikwembu swa Machangana yi nyikile swisiwana vukosi lebyi khale ka khaleni a byi ri bya vangoma va tiko (Nghunghunyana ni xikhovha:14).

(The Chief of the warriors, mountains, rivers, herds of cattle and the forests of Vutsonga, it is alleged that the Chief of the Gods of the Machangana has given the poor chieftainship which in the olden days belonged to the witchdoctors of the land.)

The word *mabutho* (warriors) is used here to denote the power that the chief has over everything: *warriors, mountains, rivers and forests*. The word *xidakwa* (a drunkard) is also another adoptive from the Zulu *isidakwa*. In many instances where the Tsonga speaker uses *x*, the Zulu speaker will employ *s*. However, the semantic significance of the word remains the same.

Another Zulu word which Mtombeni adopted in his *Mavala ya yingwe* is *xigwili* (rich person) from *isigwili*:

... Tihomana Ngomana, nkata Malaza Ngomana, xigwili xa Thulamahaxi (Ndzi xavelela yini?:17).

(... Tihomana Ngomana, Malaza Ngomana's wife, the rich person of Thulamahaxi.)

Mtombeni uses *xigwili xa Thulamahaxi* (the rich person of Thulamahaxi) to indicate that Ngomana is not just an ordinary person, but a prominent rich man of Thulamahaxi. It implies further that the popularity of Ngomana was known to many at Thulamahaxi.

In the last short story of *Mavala ya yingwe: N'hwari-mbirhi*, Mtombeni uses adopted words from Afrikaans:

*Titimelani hinkwenu mi yimisela mavoko ehenhla,
hi lava mali hinkwayo laha sakeni rero ...
(N'hwari-mbirhi:35).*

(Be quiet all of you and raise your hands up,
we want all the money in that bag ...)

The word *sakeni* (in the bag) is an adoptive from the Afrikaans *sak*, which means *bag*. It is used here as a locative because of the suffix *-eni*, which is affixed to *saka* (bag). Mtombeni specifically chooses *sakeni*, although a Tsonga equivalent *nkwama* (bag) is available.

The Tsonga speaking people in Pretoria, the administrative capital of South Africa, had to deal with many government officials who spoke Afrikaans as their mother-tongue. This situation influenced many Tsonga-speaking people, Mtombeni included, to adopt their vocabulary. The word *vhilwa* (wheel), for example, is used in the following context:

*... wa vuntlhanu a khomile vhilwa ra movha
(N'hwari-mbirhi:35).*

(... the fifth one was holding the wheel of the vehicle.)

The word *vhilwa* (wheel) is an adoptive from the Afrikaans *wiel*. In this instance, it has been Tsonga'ized whilst retaining the same meaning. On the same page of *N'hwari-mbirhi*, Mtombeni employs *xisakana xa banka* (the small bag of the bank) to draw our attention that there is money in that small bag. The words *xisakana* and *banka* are adopted from *sak* and *bank* which are both of Afrikaans origin. *Xisakana* is a diminutive which has been formed by the affixation of the prefix *xi-* and the suffix *-ana*, whereas *banka* has been Tsonga'ized by affixing the terminative vowel *-a*. Another use of the Afrikaans

affixation of the prefix *xi-* and the suffix *-ana*, whereas *banka* has been Tsonga'ized by affixing the terminative vowel *-a*. Another use of the Afrikaans adoptive is observed in the following:

... a va tshunga-tshunga ehansi hi ku twa
tikulu ku fehla
(N'hwari-mbirhi:38).

(... they were twisting on the ground because of the pain inflicted by the bullets.)

The word *tikulu* (bullets) is adopted from the Afrikaans *koëël*, which means bullets. The pronunciation as well as the meaning of the word remain the same.

It is not necessary to list all the Afrikaans adoptives found in *Mavala ya yingwe*, therefore, it will be sufficient to quote the last one as *konopela* (fasten) which is adopted from *knoop* as used in the following sentence:

... a tsondzela xisuti ... a ntswinya: a vuya a konopela
(N'hwari-mbirhi:37).

(... he wrapped his waist ... and tightened it and then fastened.)

This word is used to complete the process taking place. This is a special style of narration which Mtombeni displays in this short story.

Several adoptives in *Mavala ya yingwe* are from English. The concept of a "store" did not exist in Tsonga, hence the following usage:

... Tlhomana u vonile Rimbilana na Khombomuni
va ta va longolokile va huma exitolo
(Ndzi xavelela yini?:19).

(... Tlhomana sees Rimbilana and Khombomuni coming following each other from the store.)

The use of *pasi* and *xipencele* (pass and special permit) also surfaces as follows:

*... u nga ndzi vutisi pasi na xipencele; phela hi mina
wa yindlu leyikulu laha mutini wa ka Ngomana
(Ndzi xavelela yini?:19).*

(... please do not ask me my pass and my special permit;
I belong to the senior house in Ngomana's family.)

We further discover that the words *mecisi* (matches) and *thelefoni* (telephone) in *Mavala ya yingwe*, are adoptives from English. Mtombeni uses them as follows:

*... ku thweba ka langavi ra ndzilo wa mecisi swi
hatlana ni ku ba ka thelefoni leyi a yi ri henhla ka
tafula (Nhwathi-mbirhi:37).*

(... the striking of the flame of the matches coincided
with the ringing of the telephone which was placed on the
table.)

The two words have been Tsonga'ized, but their meaning has been retained.

Mtombeni did not only employ adoptives from foreign languages in *Mavala ya yingwe*, but in *Ndzi tshikeni*, we also find words borrowed from Afrikaans and English. In the following sentence:

*Ni leswi swo tsokombela ku fana ni malekere?
(Ndzi tshikeni:2).*

(And the tasty things like sweets?)

We find the word *malekere* (sweets) which has been taken over from the Afrikaans *lekkers*. The plural in the Tsonga version is denoted by the prefix *ma-*.

The word *mafasitere* (windows) as used in the following sentence:

Tindlu hinkwato, magondzo ni mahandze, timbanti ni mafisitere a swi lo tititi, hi vurhongo ...
(Ndzi tshikeni:2).

(All houses, roads and cross-roads, doors and windows, were all quiet because of sleep ...)

denotes that the Tsonga language did not have an appropriate term for *window* until it adopted one from the Afrikaans *venster*. This is because buildings in the Tsonga tradition, did not have windows except openings which were barricaded by small thin sticks to let air in. As a result, there was no word for such an item.

The terms *switulu* and *matafula* are plurals of *xitulu* and *tafula* respectively. Their Afrikaans version is *stoel* and *tafel*. Mtombeni uses them in the following instance:

Hi nkama wolowo va n'wi tsutsumela va ri karhi va tlhengula switulu ni matafula ...
(Ndzi tshikeni:33).

(By that time they ran to him whilst turning chairs and tables aside ...)

These are items which did not exist in the culture of the Tsonga people. The traditional type of chair was a three-legged stool made of wood. The Tsonga people did not know *tables* and *chairs* as we have them today, hence the adoption from Afrikaans.

The other thing which we should remember is that the cultural eating utensils of the Tsongas did not include such items as metal spoons. For this reason, the word *lepula* (spoon) adopted from the Afrikaans *lepel*, is an adoptive into Tsonga. The adoptive in question is used in the following manner:

*Hi ka siku rin'wana loko va ri karhi va rima ensin'wini
ya Mulungu un'wana, u rhorile lepula ra khale ... a ri teka
(Ndzi tshikeni:38).*

(One day when they were busy cultivating at a certain White man's field, he picked up an old spoon ... and took it.)

In the narrative, this is the spoon which Xihluku Xilandzo sharpened into a deadly weapon, which he used to kill his arch-enemy Xipelupelu, who killed his son and wife.

Mtombeni also uses English adoptives in *Ndzi tshikeni*. The word *sechasecha* (search) is used in its compound form by reduplication to indicate the process of being searched as in the following sentence:

*Hakunene N'wamakasana, tlhelo Somisa, u fambile ni
maphorisa va kondza va ya fika endlwini ya vona laha
maphorisa va nga sechasecha hi ku xiyaxiya lokukulu va
kondza va heta yindlu hinkwayo ... (Ndzi tshikeni:21).*

(Truly, N'wamakasana, who at the same time is known as Somisa, walked with the police until they reached her house where they searched the whole house with extreme care ...)

Mtombeni uses the compound form of the verb *sechasecha* to denote the thoroughness of the search. The adopted Tsonga word for *police* is *maphorisa*, singular *phorisa* (policeman). The plural is shown by the prefix *ma-*.

The adoptive *jaji* is directly borrowed from the English *judge*, in the following quotation:

*Jaji yi vutisile loko Xilandzo a tivona a ri ni nandzu ...
(Ndzi tshikeni:40).*

(The judge asked whether Xilandzo pleaded guilty or not ...)

Mtombeni uses the concord *yi-*, which is used for nouns of class 9 which denotes non-living objects, as if he does not believe that *jaji* (judge) was a person, in which case the concord should be *u-*. This anomaly confirms that *jaji* is a foreign term to Tsonga, although the appropriate term for a mediator in a traditional court is *muavanyisi*, which could literally be translated as the *divider*. Mtombeni avoids this ambiguity by adopting the English *judge* as Tsongaized.

Through reduplication, Mtombeni adopts *mavholovholo* from the English *revolver*. The early Tsonga people did not have guns in their culture. Consequently, they could not speak of *revolvers*. When they ultimately heard the sound that came from the revolver, they immediately called it *xibamu*. This term is used to refer to any gun irrespective of the size. Mtombeni prefers to adopt *mavholovholo* from English. The plural is indicated by the prefix *ma-*.

In *Mibya ya nyekanyeka*, we also find many adoptives used. In all Mtombeni's works, more or less similar adoptives prevail. For instance, the adoptive *mavholovholo* in *Mavala ya yingwe* is found employed as *tivholovholo* in *Mibya ya nyekanyeka*. Although Mtombeni uses *ma-* and *ti-* as prefixes, the meaning of both words is not affected. This inconsistency is, perhaps, as a result of uncertainty about which form is widely accepted, especially because it is an adopted word.

Mtombeni uses the adoptive *switici* and *switimela* (stations and trains), derived from the English stations and *steam engines*, to refer to items which were foreign to the Tsonga culture:

... *switici swa Mlamlankuzi, Orlando, Phefeni, Dube na Nancefield switimela a swi konya hi ku tikiwa hi vunyingi bya vanhu, kasi van'wana a va gayagayiwile hi xona (Mibya ya nyekanyeka:77).*

(... Mlamlankuzi, Orlando, Phefeni, Dube and Nancefield Stations, trains were groaning because of the weight of many people, whereas some were grounded by them.)

This refers to suburban trains ferrying workers from the various townships in Soweto. *Switimela* (trains) and *switici* (stations) are items that are used in modern technology, brought to us through Western civilization. The terms, too, are adopted from English. The other English adoptives which we find in *Mibya ya nyekanyeka* are *timali* (money), *maphorisa* (police), *hodela* (hotel) and *ekhixini* (at the kitchen). The latter is used as follows:

*Endzhaku ka sweswo va tihundzela va ya ekhixini ku ya
lava swakudya ...
(Mibya ya nyekanyeka:14).*

(After that they proceeded to the kitchen to look for food
...)

The idea of a *kitchen* as used by Mtombeni refers specifically to the modern kitchen in a modern dwelling, whereas traditionally, we speak of a *xitanga* (cooking hut) which is built unattached to the main house. The term *xitanga* is inappropriate to refer to a modern kitchen. Therefore, Mtombeni's adoption is justified.

When Tihomandloti sends his sons to the universities, he had to use money to pay for their tuition, hence his use of the term *timali* in the following instance:

*Vo tala hi titsakisa hi leswi swi nga heriki hi tshika ku
hlongonisa leswi swi hundzaka, tanihi leswi na hina hi
hundziwaka hi nkarhi ni ku helela hi timali to hakelela ...
(Mibya ya nyekanyeka:36).*

(Many of us take delight in things that have no end and
not go after things which are destined to pass, just as time
elapses and money that we use for payment gets finished
...)

Mtombeni uses *timali* (money) which is a means of exchange in economic markets in our everyday lives. In the olden days cattle were the main means of barter. The wealth of a person was determined by the number of stock that he had, but today it is the bank balance which is recognized.

Mtombeni also used a number of Afrikaans adoptives in *Mibya ya nyekanyeka*. In the following extract, he uses *doroba*, which is an Afrikaans adoptive from *dorp* (town):

Ku tshukatshuka ka nhongana ni ku tsekatseka ka voko ra mufundhisi loko a ri karhi a tsala a swi fana ni ku tsutsuma ka vanhu ehandle emagondzweni ya doroba ni mimovha ni swifuwo ni tinyanyana - hinkwaswo a swi nga ri na ku tshamiseka (Mibya ya nyekanyeka:49).

(The shaking of the fly and the shivering of the hand of the minister of religion when writing, were like the running of the people outside the roads of the town (dorp)).

The term *doroba* has been lengthened by the insertion of vowels after each consonant, and the *p* of the Afrikaans *dorp* has been changed to *b*.

In the case of the term *jazi* (overcoat) from the Afrikaans *jas*, we find that the *s* of *jas* has been changed to *z* in the Tsonga *jazi*:

Munhu loyi a nga ambalanga jazi ... hileswaku a ... pfumala endlwini ya yena (Mibya ya nyekanyeka: 50).

(A person who was not wearing an overcoat did not have one in his house.)

In this instance, Mtombeni wanted to indicate that it was quite necessary for one to be wearing an overcoat because it was very cold outside. The Afrikaans word is used because it is the only term which could express the idea intended by the author. During the First and the Second World Wars, the African soldiers were supplied with uniforms which included heavy overcoats. These were called *majoni* because they were understood to be from *Joni* (Johannesburg). Here, Mtombeni avoids using *majoni*, because this term refers specifically to large military style overcoats, whereas *jazi* is an ordinary overcoat.

These instances of adoption of words from foreign languages into another

language, which is also known as neologism, reveal that Mtombeni has great skill in integrating new words into the Tsonga syntax. Thoughts and ideas which could have been difficult to put across if Tsonga vocabulary had been used, are clearly conveyed.

5.2.3 The use of antonyms

A unique feature of Mtombeni's diction which is mostly prevalent in *Ndzi tshikeni*, is the use of antonyms. In *Mavala ya yingwe*, he only uses it once to express the serious situation which faces the police when they are called upon to a scene of robbery and shooting at the Orlando Bottle Store. He describes their seriousness as follows:

Loko va huma John Vorster Square mimovha ya vona a yi tihavile mikhosi yo komba leswaku a va nga yimi lomu a va fanele ku yima loko va tsemakanya switarata hikuva laha a va kongomile kona rifu ni vutomi a swi vukarhanile (N'hwari-mbirhi:38).

(When they left John Vorster Square the sirens of their vehicles were making warning sounds as an indication that they would not stop at all places when crossing streets because they were destined to a place where life and death was the order of the day.)

This extract shows that they are under pressure to rescue lives, hence the use of the antonyms *rifu* (death) and *vutomi* (life). If they hurry, lives may be saved, but any slight delay could cause death because the thugs are busy shooting wildly. Any action which involves life and death is a cause for concern and panic to any peace-loving person.

In *Ndzi tshikeni*, several antonyms are also used specifically to express situations which call for urgent consideration and attention:

... vatimi va ndzilo wa switiko swa vutomi a va hlanganisiwile hi kungu ro tlhantlha leswi a swi lukeriwele

ku hanyisana swin'we; a va hlanganisiwile hi vuhangalasi vahlanganisi va leswo bola ni leswa thyaka (Ndzi tshikeni: 73).

(... the extinguishers of the fire of the furnaces of life were together with the aim of destroying what was destined to live together; they were united by the destruction, the combiners of the rotten and the evil.)

The terms *-hlanganisiwile* (brought together) and *-tlhantlha* (dismantle) are antonyms. The same is true of *vuhangalasi* (dispersing) and *vahlanganisi* (combiners).

In the following excerpt from *Ndzi tshikeni*, Mtombeni in a soliloquy by Xihluku Xilandzo, uses yet another antonym:

*I swa yini leswaku wena u teka sirha ra mina?
Kasi mina ndzi vonile masikunyana ya vutomi
Laha misaveni - miri u wu ponisile, moya wu file.
(Ndzi tshikeni:9).*

(Why should you die for me?
Whereas I have seen more days of life
Here on earth - the body has been saved whilst the
spirit is dead.)

Xihluku is fortunate because his life was saved by his son who was shot whilst carried in the arms of his father; this irony lies behind the use of antonyms:

... miri wu ponisiwile, moya wu file.

(... the body is saved, whilst the spirit is dead.)

The verbs *-ponisiwile* (saved) and *-file* (dead) are antonyms which show that it is now futile for him to live after his son has been killed. The use of these antonyms conveys Xihluku's helplessness and frustration.

Earlier on, on the same page, Mtombeni refers to

Ku hleka ni ku monya a swi hlanganile ni ku nyenya ...

(To laugh and to scorn were mixed with despair ...)

Ku hleka (to laugh) and *ku monya* (to scorn) are antonyms which depict the revulsion of the people observing the scene. This situation creates in Xihluku a sense of dejection and disillusionment. It is this frustration which influences him to track down the killers of his son.

Mtombeni uses antonyms to create a dramatic scene which clearly gives a vivid picture of the frustrated Xihluku:

*U sukile a yima, a famba, a nga cingeli endzhaku
(Ndzi tshikeni:15).*

(He arose and stood up, he went away without looking back.)

The use of *yima* (stand up) and *famba* (walk) strongly expresses the idea of a person who has an unstable mind. Mtombeni paints Xihluku as a person who is in a state of limbo, whose mind will only be restored when he has caught the killers of his son.

The phrase

*... u to tshama u ri n'wana wa mina vusiku ni nhlekanhi
(Ndzi tshikeni:31).*

(... you will always remain my child night and day, i.e. everytime.)

emphasizes the unchangeability of the fact that Xihluku will for ever remain his mother's child. This fact is expressed in the antonyms *vusiku* (night) and *nhlekanhi* (day).

5.2.4 The use of synonyms

Mtombeni's diction is further enriched by his employment of synonyms in expressing his ideas and emotions. Mtombeni's craftsmanship is enhanced a step further by the use of these synonyms, which are deployed in close proximity in the same sentence or expression. One might think that such usage results in tautology or ambiguity, but here such words strengthen his denotation.

In *Mibya ya nyekanyeka*, Mtombeni says:

Swo va erivaleni leswaku timbilu ta vanhu vo tala na maxaka ya Solani ti sale mihloti ni mahlomulo, ku khunguvanyeka ni swiviti (Mibya ya nyekanyeka:12).

(It is evident that the hearts of many people and Solani's relatives remained in tears and sorrow, disappointments and grief.)

Mtombeni uses two sets of synonyms to express the emotional state of Solani, who has lost her son Celela. These synonyms are *mihloti* (tears) and *mahlomulo* (sorrow); *ku khunguvanyeka* (disappointments) and *swiviti* (grief). These four words reinforce the concept of desperate grief.

Another two sets of synonyms are found in the following paragraph:

Xidyoho xa yena a ri ri futa ni vufendza ... ku hlamba ka yena hi loku ko sindzisiwa naswona o timbalambadza (Mibya ya nyekanyeka: 13).

(His shortcoming was his carelessness and filthiness ... His washing was that of a forced person and he always washed shoddily.)

The terms *futa* (carelessness) and *vufendza* (filthiness) can easily be used interchangeably to denote the same idea, but here Mtombeni carefully selects them to express Madambi's disorderly appearance. When he washes (*hlamba*),

he does it hurriedly (*mbalambadza*). These two words have been employed to denote that Madambi does not wash himself meticulously so as to appear presentable. Madambi is in strong contrast to his younger brother Nyiko who, according to Mtombeni is

*... xiluva xa ndyangu. Swo tala a swi nga endliwi handle ka rikotsa ra muti. Jaha a ri te **vunene**, **malwandla** ni **rirhandzu** ro tshama a bombile, ku rhandza mati minkarhi hinkwayo ya dyambu ra Xikwembu (Mibya ya nyekanyeka:14).*

(... the flower of the family. Many things were never done without the knowledge of the last born of the family. The lad was full of goodness, hospitality and love of always being smart, to bathe at all times.)

All the words typed in bold above are synonyms.

Mtombeni also uses synonyms in the following paragraph:

N'wananga, u fanele ku chivirika u tikarhata, u dyondza hi matimba ya wena hinkwawo, hikuva ku va rivoningo ra vanhu, ku va muleteri ni muhleiteri wa varikwenu swi lava ku kululeriwa nyuku. U vona vanhu masiku hinkwawo va fika laha kaya va ta kombela ku layeriwa vana, ku tsundzuxiwa hi swa milombyana ya swihlangi ... (Mibya ya nyekanyeka:18).

(My child, you must work zealously, you should put effort into your work and learn with all your power, because to be the light of the people, to be their guide and mentor of your own people needs one to sweat for it. You see people coming here daily to ask for the admonishing of their children for advice in respect of infantile debility ...)

The terms *ku chivirika* (work zealously), *tikarhata* (to invest effort) and *ku dyondza hi matimba* (to learn with all power) are synonyms which express the same idea in this context, while *rivoningo ra vanhu* (light of the people), *muleteri* (guide) and *muhleiteri* (mentor), are also synonyms with the same shades of meaning. In the same paragraph, *ku layeriwa* (admonish) and *ku*

tsundzuxiwa (to be advised) are also synonyms.

In the same story, Rev. Tlhomandloti says to Madambi:

*Ndzi ku byela masiku hinkwawo leswo u byewula malepfu,
u tsemeta ni misisi kambe do!
(Mibya ya nyekanyeka:19).*

(I tell you everyday that you should shave your beard
and cut your hair but nothing succeeds.)

Byewula (shave) and *tsemeta* (cut hair) are synonymous, and both deal with the key issue of personal grooming.

In the following sentence we observe how humble and respectful Madambi is to his father:

*Hi ku titsongahata ni ku vulavulela ehansi
Madambi a hlamula tata wa yena
(Mibya ya nyekanyeka:20).*

(By humbling himself and speaking softly,
Madambi answered his father.)

The reflexive *titsongahata* (humbling oneself) and the words *vulavulela ehansi* (speaking softly) are synonyms in this context.

Mtombeni refers to

*... vana lavo lulama, va tindleve ni lavo rhula
(Mibya ya nyekanyeka:24).*

(... well-behaved children, who listen and who are peaceful).

when talking about orderly and disciplined children. Mtombeni uses synonyms such as *lulama* and *rhula* to emphasize his theme of the relationship between children and parents.

In the following extract, we find another set of synonyms. These are *ku rhula* and *ku tenga*:

*Tatana mufundhisi ndzi dyohele misava ni vanhu va yona,
ndzi dzolonganise ku rhula ni ku tenga ka timbilu ta vona
(Mibya ya nyekanyeka:27).*

(Father, reverend, I have wronged the earth and its people,
I have disturbed the peace and the serenity of their hearts.)

Celela, who has been seriously wounded by the police on the scene of robbery, is in great pain. He realizes he is about to die. Therefore, he feels it necessary to confess before Rev. Tihomandloti that he has caused a lot of discomfort to many people. The synonyms emphasize his disruption of the peace of the community. The following is a further instance of this style:

*Ndza tshemba un'wana ni un'wana wa hina u vonile vutsanana
bya miri wa yena ni vutsongo bya vutivi bya yena emahlweni
ka byandlalo byo hava makumu
(Mibya ya nyekanyeka:42).*

(I believe each and every one of us has seen the smallness
of his body and the scantiness of his knowledge in its
entirety.)

The words *vutsanana* and *vutsongo*, both express the same notion of being small, but Mtombeni's intention is clearly to emphasize the issue.

This style of using synonyms in close proximity in one sentence, creates emphasis, and is fairly unique to Mtombeni's style. It is rarely used by any other Tsonga writer.

In *Ndzi tshikeni*, synonyms are also found in great numbers. The synonyms *mona* and *lunya* are so close in meaning that distinguishing their shades of meaning is difficult:

... mona na lunya ra vanwi va ngati ya vanhu va ha

hanya naswona ni nhlekanhi
(*Ndzi tshikeni:10*).

(... the surliness and the ill-feeling of the bloodthirsty people who drink human blood whilst the victims are still alive and for that matter, during the day.)

In the above description, Mtombeni wants to reveal the cruelty of the killers of Xihluku Xilandzo's son. They are murderers who are indifferent to normal human values. Therefore, the use of *mona* and *lunya* supports this interpretation.

Another example of synonyms with meanings which are very close to one another is the following:

Loko ndzi vulavula wansati a nga tlomuteli eka ya mina
miehleketo, kambe loko wena u swi vona swi ku ringanile
ku welawela timhaka ni makungu ya vavanuna swi langutisise
swinene-nene ... (Ndzi tshikeni:18).

(When I speak, a woman must not barge in, but if you feel it is necessary to get into the affairs of men without due consideration, think of it quite carefully ...)

Tlomutela and *welawela* means more or less the same thing, i.e. to interrupt when others are speaking.

In *Mavala ya yingwe*, *swigiya* (knobkieries) and *michizo* (sticks) are used as synonyms. These words refer to the type of primitive warfare instruments used by traditional warriors in the olden days.

5.2.5 The use of ideophones

Another distinctive characteristic feature of Mtombeni's descriptive ability is his employment of ideophones. Through the use of these ideophones, he succeeds in giving powerful descriptive images. Ideophones do not only serve in economising syntactical items, but they also provide vivid images.

in *Mibya ya nyekanyeka*, Mtombeni introduces ideophones by the employment of *dla* (ideophone of being exposed in the open) to give the effect to the beauty and the size of Rev. Tihomandloti's house, which is built at a distance from the other houses:

*Yindlu ya ka Mufundhisi Tihomandloti a yi vandzakanile
ni kereke hi tlhelo ra vupeladyambu bya Chiawelo. Kambe
yona a yi lo dla, lahaya kulenyana ni tin'wana tindlu
to tshama kona
(Mibya ya nyekanyeka:7).*

(Rev. Tihomandloti's house was built next to the church in the western side of Chiawelo. It was well placed in the open, just a little far from the other residential houses.)

The ideophone *n'walala* in the following sentence:

*Ku sala ku lo n'walala!
(Mibya ya nyekanyeka:8).*

(It remained scattered all over.)

is used to denote a state of disorderliness after something had taken place. In this instance, Mtombeni uses it to show the amazement which follows when N'wa-Basana passes a group of lads when she was still a beautiful young lady.

Mtombeni uses the ideophone *tlatlala* to describe something which is clearly seen by everyone with ease. In this respect, he is describing Nyiko's handsomeness in the following sentence:

*A chele ni miri, ribungu ni vumbhuri a swi lo tlatlala
ehenhla ka yena
(Mibya ya nyekanyeka:14).*

(He was stoutish, light in complexion and handsomeness were clearly noticeable in him.)

Surprisingly, in *Ndzi tshikeni*, very few ideophones are used. This might be due to the fact that idiomatic expressions dominate the entire novel. Mtombeni uses the ideophone *tititi* (the ideophone of being cold) (*Ndzi tshikeni*:34) to describe the condition of Nhompfu-ya-mbyana, after he has been gunned down by Xihluku Xilandzo in fierce fighting at the Orlando Station Restaurant.

Another ideophone is *gogogo* (the ideophone of knocking at the door) (*Ndzi tshikeni*:35). It describes a loud knock from the police who have come to Xipelupelu's house to arrest him:

*"Gogogo",
"I mani a gongondzaku?" ku vutisa nkata Xipelupelu hi ku tshuka.
"Hi hina maphorisa, pfula wena wansati, ha swi tiva nuna wa wena
u kona kwalaho ndlwini ... "
(Ndzi tshikeni:35).*

("Knock knock",
"Who is knocking?" answered Xipelupelu's wife fearfully.
"We are the police, open woman, we know that your husband is
present inside the house ... ")

In *Mavala ya yingwe*, Mtombeni uses two ideophones one after another in the following manner:

*"I mani loyi a vulavulaka?" ku vutisa Kolonele hi ku
korhamanyana, kambe a twa thelefoni yi pfala hi loyi i
ngi a vulavula na yena; ku vuya ku ku whii, tititi;
ku nga ha twali nchumu handle ka mbilu ya Mathebula loyi
a nga sala a tshikelela thelefoni endleveni
(N'hwarhi-mbirhi:37).*

("Who is speaking?" asked Colonel leaning a bit forward, but he heard the telephone being put down by the one to whom he was speaking; then it became silent, quiet; there was nothing heard except the beating of Mathebula's heart, who was left pressing the telephone on the ear.)

The ideophone *whii* (silent) and *tititi* (quiet) vividly describe the silence which follows when the telephone is dropped on the other side of the speaker.

5.2.6 The use of diminutives

Mtombeni uses diminutives affectively in his narratives to express endearment, affection and appreciation, as well as disparagement.

These instances will be illustrated by extracts from *Mibya ya nyekanyeka*, *Ndzi tshikeni* and *Mavala ya yingwe*.

In *Mibya ya nyekanyeka*, Mtombeni uses several diminutives which help greatly in enriching his expression. The diminutives used in this novel are mainly characterized by the suffix *-nyana*, and lack the diminutive prefix *xi-*. Mtombeni uses them in this fashion to denote extension of time, distance or movement of a thing. This is the case because the words involved are not nouns but verbs, adverbs and adjectives. (In the formation of diminutives for noun classes the affixation of the prefix *xi-* and the suffix *-ana* is the first basic rule.)

For example:

Lahaya kulenyana, endyangu wa un'wana Muchangana wansati a ri karhi a tihokola a bebule n'wana (Mibya nyekanyeka:74).

(At a little far distance, at the home of a certain Muchangana, a woman was stamping mealies carrying a baby on her back.)

The diminutive *kulenyana* indicates that the distance referred to here is not very far. This becomes evident in the use of *-nyana*.

Another example is the following:

Endzhaku ka masikunyana nhwana yoloye u kumekile a ri karhi a kasa hi matsolo a nga ambalanga nchumu emirini (Mibya ya nyekanyeka:77).

(After some few days that young lady was found crawling

on her knees naked.)

In this section of the novel, Mtombeni is giving a catalogue of incidents taking place in various townships around Johannesburg. As he does so, he indicates the time of these sinister occurrences (after a few days).

When using *tlhokolanyana* (stamp a little), Mtombeni wants to express that the stamping of mealies is not done heavily, but moderately as follows:

... kambe loko a tlhokolanyana mibya a yi tlhela yi debya yi nyekanyeka leswaku mana wa n'wana a yima, a tlhela a yi boha swinene (Mibya ya nyekanyeka:74).

(... but when she stamped a little, the straps got loose to an extent that the baby's mother had to stop and tighten them again.)

The use of *tlhokolanyana* indicates that the lady who is stamping mealies cannot continue because of the looseness of the straps of the baby-sling. If she ignored this fact, it would mean that she did not care about the baby on her back.

The novel *Ndzi tshikeni* also contains diminutives which follow the same pattern as those in *Mibya ya nyekanyeka*. This is the case, because of the frequent use of the diminutive suffix *-nyana* and the absence of the prefix *xi-*, which is an important diminutive formative. These diminutives also denote the idea of a small extension of an action.

For example:

Loko mi wisilenyana hi kona mi nga ti ya tiba miri (Ndzi tshikeni:1).

(When you have rested a little it is then that you can go and bathe.)

The idea expressed here is that when Xihluku Xilandzo arrives home from work, he has to take a short rest before he takes a bath or shower. Mtombeni succeeds in putting this across by means of the diminutive *wisilenyana*.

Another example of a diminutive which is used to express a little movement is the following:

*Hi nga yimaninyana nkulukamba, yimani switsongo
(Ndzi tshikeni:8).*

(Just wait a little, sir, wait a little while.)

In this instance, *Xihluku Xilandzo* has gone to report the murder of his son. The policeman who was supposed to take his statement delays until Xihluku Xilandzo decides to leave the Charge Office. Just when he is about to leave, the Sergeant-in-charge pleads that he should not leave, hence the use of *yimaninyana* (wait a little).

This diminutive has an element of pleading for patience. Although Xihluku Xilandzo is furious and fed up, he waits to give a statement. Had Mtombeni used the word *yima* (wait) without the diminutive *-nyana*, it could have implied that the Sergeant-in-charge sided with the mean behaviour of the officer attending to *Xihluku Xilandzo*. The diminutive *yimaninyana* completely changes the tone of this sentence. It could be concluded that Xihluku Xilandzo agrees to wait, solely because of the attitude of the Senior Policeman, which differs from that of the constable.

In *Mavala ya yingwe*, Mtombeni uses the word *xigurumbana* in the following sentence:

*... nyangwa ya xigurumbana ya pfarwa ni vusiku tanihi bya
matolo ka kona. (Nghunghunyana ni xikhovha:6).*

(... the door of the small hut used as a kitchen is closed at night just like the previous night.)

Xigurumbana (small hut used as a kitchen) is in the form of a diminutive, but in actual fact it has no standard form. In other words, we do not have a noun such as *gurumba* from which *xigurumbana* has been formed. This is a rare phenomenon found in Tsonga linguistics. The following are further examples of diminutives from *Mavala ya yingwe*:

U tivona u ri mani wena u ngo yimisa xinon'wana ...?
(*Ndzi xavelela yini?:20*).

(Who do you think you are to speak in that manner ...?)

Mtombeni uses the word *xinon'wana* disparagingly. Tihomana, the senior wife to Ngomana, is showing disrespect to Rimbilana, whose mouth is referred to as *xinon'wana* (small mouth). This also indicates that everything she says is regarded as insignificant.

To show endearment, Mtombeni makes use of the diminutive *xifanyatana* as follows:

... a ndzi ku kumbexana mi nga ndzi lavela munhu a ta ta ndzi yimayima na mina ndzi ta mi kumela xifanyatana xo sala xi ndzi sula mihloti hikuva leswi swa vanhwanyana a hi swa hina swa famba swi ya evukatini (Ndzi xavelela yini?:22-23).

(... I thought perhaps you would look for a person to cure me so that I could give birth to a little boy who would remain consoling me because girls will leave us on getting married.)

The word *xifanyatana*, as used here, shows that a small boy is affectionately needed by Tihomana to remain with her when Ngomana, her husband, dies. Tihomana speaks in this manner because a boy will also qualify for a share of the estate of her husband when he dies. Therefore, a son has significant value for her. The diminutive *xifanyatana* (small boy) can also be spelt as *xifanyetana*, but the meaning of the word remains unchanged.

The diminutive *ximbitana* (small earthenware pot) is also used with some affection because *Tihomana* loves it very much. Every time she carried liquids like milk, she uses this *ximbitana*. She uses it on the day she took poisoned milk to the grazing lands to the children of her co-wives, she used it:

*Hi ku hlamala ni ku tshuka Ndhambi u tshikile ximbitana xi
wela hansí xi fayeka masi ma halaka
(Ndzi xavelela yini:28).*

(With great amazement and shock, Ndhambi dropped the small earthenware pot down which got broken and the milk spilt.)

Ndhambi drops the small pot because he suddenly discovers that the milk tasted odd and he fears that he has swallowed poison.

Diminutives distinguish Mtombeni's style.

5.2.7 The use of locatives

Mtombeni uses locatives with a particular structure. The structure which is common to him is that of a locative with the locative vowel *e-* as a prefix, and the locative suffix *-ini* or *-eni* affixed at the end of the word. Although, in very few instances, Mtombeni uses locatives without the locative prefix *e-* or *a-*, his tendency is to maintain the formal structure of the locative. Generally, speakers of Tsonga tend to elide the locative prefix *e-*. Whether the full form of the word is pronounced or the locative prefix *e-* is elided, the meaning of the word remains unaffected. Many locatives are used in *Mibya ya nyekanyeka*, *Ndzi tshikeni* and *Mavala ya yingwe*. The structure of the locative in all these narratives is basically the same and some are repeated in the three books.

In *Mibya ya nyekanyeka*, Mtombeni used locatives such as the following:

*... na swona a ku nga ri na un'we loyi a n'wi tlula
etidyondzweni ta vona ni hi swa vutlhari byo ehleketa*

(*Mibya ya nyekanyeka:13*).

(... and there was no one who surpassed him in their learning and thinking skills.)

This implies that Madambi was exceptionally intelligent as far as mastering his lessons is concerned.

In *Mibya ya nyakanyeka*, N'wa-Baloyi is depicted as crying bitterly for Celela who is destined to die, having been shot by the police while stealing. He is fatally wounded. The use of the words *xiririka emarhameni*, strongly suggest that N'wa-Baloyi is dramatically affected by this incident. The flowing tears are clear testimony of her emotional pain:

U n'wi xingile hi matimba ya yena, a n'wi ntswontswa, mihloti yi ri karhi yi xiririka emarhameni yi tshonela emombyeni wa Celela yi hundza yi wela ehansi (Mibya ya nyekanyeka:23).

(She carried him on her arms with all her power; she kissed him whilst her tears flowed on her cheeks and dropped on Celela's face and fell on the ground.)

The word *emombyeni* (on the face) is another example of the locative. Its form is exactly the same as that of *emarhameni* (on the cheeks).

In the following sentence, we notice another example of a locative:

N'wa-Ndleleni loko a fika eka Mufundhisi Tihomandloti o gogondza erivantini (Mibya ya nyekanyeka:24).

(When N'wa-Ndleleni arrived at Rev. Tihomandloti's place she knocked at the door.)

N'wa-Ndleleni's actions portray her well-mannered behaviour. Her knocking at the door implies that she is seeking permission to enter.

The following is a further example of the use of the locative:

... *loyi moya wa yena wu kwetsimaka u ta ya ematilweni*
(*Mibya ya nyekanyeka:80*).

(... the one whose soul is holy, shall enter into heaven.)

Heaven is expressed by the locative *ematilweni*. This word can also refer to the sky, and beyond that we find the place of happiness *ematilweni* (heaven) which has never been seen by any living person. The locative implies entry into a place of happiness, a place which is cherished by all Christians. The basic requirement of being allowed into heaven, is leading a good life on earth. Madambi grows up knowing that those who do not commit sin and stay away from intoxicating drinks, will gain admission to heaven.

It is through this style of using locatives in *Mibya ya nyekanyeka*, that Mtombeni conveys his point in a simple, straight-forward and clear manner.

Mtombeni also uses many locatives in *Ndzi tshikeni*, but it will suffice to quote only a few.

In the opening chapter of this novel, Madlayisana, Xihluku Xilandzo's son, converses with his father:

Hikwalaho ka yini mi ya entirhweni masiku hinkwawo
tatana? (Ndzi tshikeni:1).

(Why do you go to work everyday, dad?)

The locative in question is *entirhweni* (at work). This boy affectionately and inquisitively asks his father why his father goes to work every morning and returns only in the evening. When Xihluku Xilandzo arrives home from *entirhweni* (at work), Madlayisana is excited to see his father but their evening relaxation and supper are disrupted by murder and mayhem. Madlayisana is

fatally wounded and his blood drips on the ground like a human sacrifice:

Xikan'we-kan'we a vona ku tshona ka ngati ya Madlayisana ku hundzukile vugandzeri bya misava, mhamba ya yena emisaveni, ya vanhu, ni ya nsati wa yena - mihloti ya ntumbuluko wa vanhu va misava hinkwayo. (Ndzi tshikeni:11).

(At once, he saw the dripping of Madlayisana's blood becoming the sacrifice of the soil, his offering of people on earth and his wife - the tears of the nature of the people of the whole world.)

These occurrences of human sacrifice and offering take place *emisaveni* (on earth). This contextualizes the actions experienced by man as he leads his life on earth.

The following sentence is loaded with locatives, as we find four of them used consecutively:

*Munyama wu rhelela ku ya nghena **etimbilwini** ta vanhu, **exidziveni**, **exivindzini** ni le **mindzhutini** ya munyama wa nkamba (Ndzi tshikeni:15).*

(The darkness descended to the hearts of the people, in the deep pool, in the centre and the dark shadows of the camp.)

After Madlayisana is gunned down by the murderers, his father Xihluku becomes furious and ventures into the dark night. In his agony, he plumbs the depths of human emotions and enters to the dark night of the soul. The locatives in question are those typed in bold, i.e. *etimbilwini* (in the hearts), *exidziveni* (in the deep pool), *exivindzini* (in the centre) and *mindzhutini* (in the shadows).

Mtombeni uses more locatives in his collection of short stories, *Mavala ya yingwe*, than in the two narratives mentioned above. *Mibya ya nyekanyeka*

(1967) and *Ndzi tshikeni* (1973) appeared in the literary scene before *Mavala ya yingwe*, which was published in 1974. In the latter narrative, he uses more locatives, because through the previous years he had succeeded in acquiring more locative forms. The following are examples:

Loko a pfula rivanti a humela handle mahlo ya yena ya vonile xilo lexi eku sunguleni xi nga ka xi nga ngheni emiehleketweni (Nghunghunyana ni xikhovha:5).

(When he opened the door and went outside he saw a thing which at first did not register in his mind.)

Chief Nghunghunyana does not anticipate any thing placed to harm him, but when he sees the owl, he grows anxious and calls his men for assistance. Mtombeni uses the locative *emiehleketweni* (in the mind) to show that Nghunghunyana has been caught unawares. This word gives us the complete picture of a person at leisure early in the morning. His leisurely state changes immediately when he discovers that what is before him is an owl. In the Tsonga tradition, an owl is a bad omen.

The use of the locative *etimhakeni* reveals Mtombeni's skill in using concepts to express ideas. The word *etimhakeni* encompasses a wide range of affairs for instance:

Kutani u nga lerisa mani loyi wena u n'wi tivaka a swi kota ku komba ndlela etimhakeni ta vusiku (Nghunghunyana ni xikhovha:22).

(Then who can you advise whom you know can be in a position to show the way in respect of matters of the night, i.e. sorcery.)

The idiomatic expression, *etimhakeni ta vusiku* (matters of the night), becomes more effective in the locative construction. A writer who uses idiomatic expressions correctly is considered an expert in his language, because he does not only care about the message to be transmitted to his readers, but also the

style which he adopts to do so. In this respect, Serudu (1993:150) says:

Idioms are embellishments of a writer's language. They serve to heighten and to typify a particular writer's language usage. They lift the literary work above the plane of dull imitativeness.

When we look at what Mtombeni has done with this construction, we realize that he is not just an ordinary writer, but an expert author, who is capable of embellishing his language by using locatives and idioms to heighten and typify his usage.

In *N'hwarhi-mbirhi*, before Sergeant Mahomo hands himself over to Colonel Terblanche, he first advises his wife about his savings accounts and indicates that money matters are the remaining important affairs which he has to address before handing himself over to the police:

... *hi yona mhaka yo hetelela emakungwini lawa a ndzi ri karhi ndzi ku lerisa wona (N'hwarhi-mbirhi: 47).*

(... this is the last instance in my mind of which I wanted to advise you.)

Something which is *emakungwini* is a matter which has been well-planned and which has to be executed. Mtombeni uses it in the locative form because it is in this construction that his ideas are strongly expressed.

A further example is the locative *endyangu* (in the family) in the following sentence:

Loko a ya nghena endyangu mbilu ya yena a yi khapakhapa hi tinsimu ta ku tsaka (Ndzi xavelela yini?: 26).

(When he entered into the family his heart was very happy

with songs of joy.)

This construction lacks the locative suffix *-ini*. Mtombeni deliberately uses it without the suffix *-ini*, because it is linguistically possible to do so. In the case of *entsindza*, which is also without the locative suffix *-ini*, the latter cannot be affixed, because in Tsonga a word such as *entsindzeni* does not exist.

Locatives as used by Mtombeni, enrich his expression and contribute to the lucidity of his language.

5.2.8 The use of compound words

Mtombeni uses compound words to express his ideas and thoughts in a manner that is understandable to every one, because they are descriptive in nature. The nouns are enriched and so heighten the message that is intended by the author.

Amongst the compound words that he uses, we find a few which are his own coinage. These are *ntwelo-vusiwana* (the act of feeling pity), *vuhava-nchumu* (the state of having nothing), *switwo-miri* (feelings) and *vuveki-milandzu* (charge sheet). Besides these compound nouns, Mtombeni also uses many of those commonly known to all of us.

In *Mibya ya nyekanyeka*, the compound noun *ntwelo-vusiwana* drew a lot of interest from readers when it was used. He coined the word to denote the idea of feeling pity for someone. Its use provoked great interest in students of literature, and several scholarly essays included it. This compound noun is used as follows:

*Ndzi humile evuhlengini bya n'wina bya tintswalo,
bya ntsetselelo ni ntwelo-vusiwana (Mibya ya
nyekanyeka:23).*

(I am no longer under your merciful care, compassion and your feeling towards my distress.)

The compound *ntwelo-vusiwana* (the act of feeling pity) echoes the concepts *tintswalo* (kindness) and *ntsetselelo* (mercy), because they all have something to do with the feeling of one person towards another.

The compound noun *vuhava-nchumu* (the state of having nothing; emptiness) is used as follows:

Vuhava-nchumu bya vundzeni bya buku yo tano byi fana ni munhu loyi a hundzaka exikarhi ka vanhu lavo tala kambe a nga voni ni un'we. (Mibya ya nyekanyeka)

(The emptiness of the contents of a book of that nature is like a person who passes amongst many people but fails to see a single one.)

The word *vuhava-nchumu* as used here vividly expresses the emptiness or hollowness which is created by those who are not observant of their surroundings. To them life is meaningless and they fail to attach value to anything that they see. Such people will not be in the position to contribute positively towards the success of anything.

The third compound noun which is Mtombeni's own coinage, is *vuveki-milandzu* (charge sheet) found in *Ndzi tshikeni*:

Mupopeleri wa milandzu u vurile leswaku: Muchaviseki wanga, mubohiwa u dlayile munhu hi siku leri ri tsariweke kwalaho papilweni ra vuveki-milandzu, u n'wi dlayile hi tihanyi" (Ndzi tshikeni:40).

(The prosecutor said: "Your worship, the accused has killed a person on the day stated in the charge sheet, he killed him in a cruel manner".)

In our traditional courts we did not have charge sheets as such, because the case would just be stated verbally, whilst the counsellors and the audience

listened attentively. Therefore, the idea of a charge sheet as we find it here did not exist and Mtombeni had no other alternative but to improvise by coining a new term to suit the situation.

Another compound noun which was first coined by Mtombeni, is *switwo-miri* (feelings). Writers who make use of it today, have adopted it from him. It is derived from the verb *twa* (hear) and the noun *miri* (body).

In *Mavala ya yingwe*, we are exposed to compound nouns such as the following: *Mahlongati* (anxious state), *xitiyanhlana* (courageous person), *n'watlulakhele* (the one who jumps the pit), *mahungu-ndlela* (rumours), *nghamunkulu* (senior wife). We have just quoted a few compound nouns for illustrative purposes. For example:

"Malandza ya mina vonani noyi a nga yimeka enyangweni ya lawu ra mina", ku vula hosi Nghunghunyana hi mahlongati (Nghunghunyana ni xikhovha: 6).

("My followers, look at the witch who is stranded at the door of my palace," chief Nghunghunyana said with an anxious haste.)

Mahlongati described a person who is furious and anxious to an extent that his eyes become red like blood. In this case chief Nghunghunyana is angered by the witch who placed an owl with broken wings at the palace door. The use of *mahlongati* expresses his anger appropriately.

The compound noun *xitiyanhlana* (daring/courageous person) is used as follows:

... va hlengeletanile kwalaho hubyeni ya hosi un'wana ni un'wana a tivutisa kambirhi kanharhu hi leswi nga ta humelela - ku va ni lovi a veke ni xitiyanhlana xo ringa hosi hi xikhovha (Nghunghunyana ni xikhovha:8).

(... they gathered at the outside court of the chief whilst

everyone was asking himself several times of what could happen - if someone is found to have had the courage of tempting the chief by an owl.)

The word *xitiyanhlana* is used to express awe of the one who might have dared to leave the owl at the palace door. *Xitiyanhlana* is formed by placing the verb - *tiya* and the noun *nhlana* together with the prefix *xi-* of class 7 to denote expertness. *Xitiyanhlana* is also used in *Ndzi tshikeni* with a hyphen, whereas here the hyphen has been dropped, apparently without any reason. With or without the hyphen, *Xitiyanhlana* denotes a person with courage or a daring person.

Mtombeni's books are able to sustain the interest of their readers because they are written in a language that attracts their attention. The compound nouns that he uses contribute greatly to this effect. The message intended is easily understood because the right word is used to convey the intended idea.

5.2.9 The use of repetition

Shipalana (1970:38) asserts that:

Repetition, which reminds one of what Lestrade in the Critic (1935, Vol. IV:5) refers to as direct parallelism in praise poems is often used by Mtombeni. His repetition ranges from repeating a mere word at the beginning or at the end of a sentence.

Shipalana (ibid) further gives the reasons for Mtombeni's use of repetition. Amongst others he indicates that repetition provides emphasis and quotes the following example from *Mibya ya nyekanyeka*:

*U ringetile ku tlula swiboho swa yena swa vutswari ...
U ringetile ku tlula milawu ya kereke ku kutsula n'wana wa yena
(Mibya ya nyekanyeka:11).*

(He tried to ignore his parental obligations...

He tried to ignore the rules of the church to save his son.)

This repetition is intended to enhance the meaning of the action by Rev. Tihomandloti who knows that his son Nyiko has contravened one of the rules of the church, but he behaves as if that could be ignored to save his son. This is evident in the repetition of *U ringetile ku tlula ...* (He tried to ignore ...) His efforts to ignore the implications of his son's actions are in vain, because Nyiko ultimately commits suicide.

Shipalana (1970:38) indicates that Mtombeni's repetition in *Mibya ya nyekanyeka* ranges from repeating a mere word at the beginning or at the end of a sentence, for example:

- (1) *Hi hina timboni ta munyama wa vanhu va ka hina* (p. 17).
(We are the light of our people.)
- (2) *Mina ndzi rilela mufana wa mina* (p.72).
(I am crying for my boy.)

Mtombeni repeatedly uses the possessive pronoun *mina* to signify the relationship between Rev. Tihomandloti and his son, Nyiko, in the above sentence. Mtombeni uses the same possessive pronoun to signify the relationship between Madambi and Soluka. The following five extracts from *Mibya ya nyekanyeka* illustrate our argument:

FIRST ILLUSTRATION

Miri wa mina ni miehleketo ya mina swi fikile laha ndzi lavaka ku rhumela vatswari va mina va ta ta hi lunghisela swa vutomi bya hina swin'we (*Mibya ya nyekanyeka*: 52).

(My body and my mind have concluded that I should send my parents to make the necessary arrangements for things

of life which concern both of us.)

SECOND ILLUSTRATION

Madambi wa mina, u tsuvulela yini timitsu ta moya wa xiviri xa mina? Xana a wu nga tisoli siku rin'wana loko u kuma leswaku u vulavurile na mina hi nomu kasi mbilu yona a yi nga swi hlelanga swa marito ya nomu-ke? Mina ndzi ta rila mihloti ya xihluku hi xa mundlwana loko ndzi ta thumba leswo ndzi tinyiketile kasi a ndzi amukeriwanga eka Tihomandloti (Mibya ya nyekanyeka: 53).

(My Madambi, why do you uproot the roots of my spirit? Are you not going to regret it one day if you discover that you spoke to me with your mouth whilst your heart did not think properly about your utterances? I will cry tears of bitterness the day after tomorrow, when I discover that I submitted myself when I was actually not accepted at the Tihomandloti's.)

THIRD ILLUSTRATION

Soluka Maduna wa mina, loko mbilu ya wena yi ri ya mina tanihi leswi ya mina yi nga ya wena - ndzi nyike yona. Swa va ka hina i swa mina. Ndza tshemba leswaku na wena, u ta hlamusela varikwenu hi swa mbilu ya wena ehenhla ka mina (ibid).

(My Soluka Maduna, if your heart is mine, just like mine is yours - give it to me. All things belonging to my people are mine. I believe that you will also explain to your people about things of your heart concerning me.)

FOURTH ILLUSTRATION

Kasi n'wananga, a nga kona un'wana tata wa wena handle ka mina. Hi mina ndzi faneleke ku ku tlhavula mutwa wa le mbilwini. Hi mina ndzi faneleke ku ku ongola swa le moyeni - leswi swa ndzi boha, ndza sindziseka hikokwalaho ka vutswari bya mina ehenhla ka wena. (Mibya ya nyekanyeka:56).

(On the contrary, my child, there is no other person who is your father other than me. I am the one who should solve your problems. I am the one who should nurse your spiritual problems - this is essential to me, I am obliged because of my parenthood to you.)

FIFTH ILLUSTRATION

Soluka wa mina, u wa mina ku ya fika emakumu ka vutomi bya misava. U ta tshama u ri xingwavila xa mbilu ya mina, sagwata ra xiviri xa mina. Eka mina u ta va nghamu ya mina hi moya ni miehleketo - wena u wa mina ku sukela siku leri ndzi nga boha fundzu ra xitshembiso xa mina (Mibya ya nyekanyeka:58).

(My Soluka, you are mine until the end of the earth. You will always remain the ring of my heart, the gift of my real me. To me you will be my wife in soul and mind - you are mine from the day I vowed.)

In the illustrations above, there are instances where the possessive pronouns have not been used; instead we find the locative construction formed with the absolute pronoun *mina* repeated by the author. These instances are found in the third, fourth and the fifth illustration. In the third and the fourth illustration, we find *ka mina* (to me) whereas in the fifth illustration, the *-ka* is preceded by the locative vowel *e-* to form *eka mina* (to me). In speaking people are inclined to elide the locative formatives *e-* and *a-*. However, the meaning of the word remains unchanged.

Mtombeni's use of repetition is further observed when Madambi's father, Rev. Tihomandloti, persistently tells his son, that he is against Madambi's marriage to Soluka, a Xhosa girl:

Ndza ku alela Madambi, ndza ala ku amukela n'wingi wa Muxhosa vatukulu wa mina va va vatukulu va Maxhosa hi le tihelo - ndza ala. Lava nhwana wa Mutsonga, va tele ngopfu; teka un'we wa vona; a nga ri nhwana wa Muxhosa. E-e ndza ala (Mibya ya nyekanyeka: 56).

(I refuse you Madambi, I refuse to accept a Xhosa daughter-in-law that my grandchildren should be the grandchildren of the Xhosas at the same time - I refuse. Look for a Mutsonga girl, there are many; get one of them; not a Muxhosa girl. I refuse).

The repetition of *alela* and *ala* denote Rev. Tihomandloti's feelings against the idea of Madambi's marriage. This was not just pretence, because Rev. Tihomandloti does not change his mind until his death. Madambi responds to his father's refusal as follows:

Ndza mi tlangela tatana, ku mi tlangela ka mina ku kongome ku lehisa ka n'wina mbilu, ku ndzi byela ntiyiso wa mbilu ya n'wina handle ko ringeta ku ndzi tsakisa hi vumbabva (Mibya ya nyekanyeka:58).

(I thank you, father, I thank you because you have been patient to tell me the truth of your heart without trying to please me by hiding the truth.)

The word *tlangela* is repeated to indicate how appreciative Madambi is of his father's honesty about his feelings about marriage across ethnic boundaries. This is a clear indication that Rev. Tihomandloti belongs to the old order of traditional people who wanted to promote the purity of their tribes by homogeneous marriages.

Mtombeni (1967:61) uses the words *xin'wana ni xin'wana* (everything) to convince us as to the orderliness of Munene's house:

Xin'wana ni xin'wana a xi hatimisiwile, xin'wana ni xin'wana a xi vekiwile hi vukhwatsi laha a xi fanele ku va kona, xi tlhela xi fanela laha xi nga kona. (Mibya ya nuekanyeka:61).

(Everything was polished to a shine, everything was placed in a proper manner where it is supposed to be and fitted its position.)

In the novel *Ndzi tshikeni* (leave me alone), the words *ndzi tshikeni* are repeated twice deliberately by the author to emphasize the determination of Xihluku Xilandzo, to single-handedly carry out his promise of tracking down the killers of his son and wife. The following are notable instances:

FIRST INSTANCE

Ndzi tshikeni Secheni; ndzi tshikeni ndzi ya tihlotela vadlayi va n'wananga ndzi ri swanga, ndzi tshikeni ndzi ya vona masalela ya Madlayisana (Ndzi tshikeni:8).

(Leave me alone, Sergeant, leave me alone to hunt for the killers of my child by myself alone, leave me alone to go and see the remains of Madlayisana.)

When Xihluku goes to the Police Station to report the case of the thugs who killed his son, the Police do not attend to him immediately, so he persuades the Sergeant to let him go, for it was useless for him to remain at the Police Station. The words *ndzi tshikeni* have been repeated here to show his frustration:

SECOND INSTANCE

Ndzi tshikeni mhani, ndzi tshikeni. Vutomi bya mina byi wunguriwile tanihi vukanyi ... Ndzi tshikeni mhani, ndzi tshikeni ndzi fa, ndzi tshikeni ndzi landza n'wana wa mina (Ndzi tshikeni:12).

(Leave me alone, mom, leave me alone. My life has been winnowed like the marula drink... Leave me alone, mom, leave me alone to die. Leave me alone to follow my child.)

Xihluku's mother tries to persuade her son not to track down the killers of Madlayisana, for that could be dangerous. Xihluku repeats the words *ndzi tshikeni* to emphasize his strong determination to take revenge.

THIRD INSTANCE

Salani mhani, ndzi tshikeni, ndzi tikhuhlakhuhla hi mawa, hi kona ku kula ka wanuna, ndzi tshikeni hi ku ndzi rivalela mihoni ya mina emaritweni ya n'wina ya vuxiyaxiya bya vutihari (Ndzi tshikeni: 31).

(Goodbye mon, leave me alone, leave me to struggle as I hit myself against the big rocks, that is how a man grows, leave me alone by forgiving me for ignoring the advice and your intelligent observation.)

Xihluku Xilandzo's mother opposes the vengeful action which her son is committed to. Her advice falls on deaf ears, for Xihluku Xilandzo repeatedly says: *ndzi tshikeni mhani* (leave me alone, mom). He bids farewell to his mother, and leaves to follow the killers.

FOURTH INSTANCE

When Xihluku is about to be executed after killing Xipelupelu in jail, his mother sees him for the last time. When Xihluku sees her crying, he once again repeats his refrain:

Ndzi tshikeni ndzi ya vonana ni n'wana wa mina Madlayisana, ndzi ya tswontswa nkatanga Gavaza Makhawukana; ndzi tshikeni ndzi famba; ndzi tshikeni (Ndzi tshikeni:42).

(Leave me alone to go and see Madlayisana, to go and kiss my darling Gavaza Makhawukana; leave me to go alone; leave me.)

This is the last paragraph of the novel. The words *ndzi tshikeni* are repeated finally as Xihluku Xilandzo faces the ultimate loneliness of death.

In *Mavala ya yingwe*, Mtombeni is once more found to be repeating the absolute pronoun *mina* in similar circumstances as we saw in *Mibya ya nyekanyeka*. This repetition occurs as follows:

Malandza ya mina vonani noyi loyi a nga yimeka enyangweni ya lawu ra mina (*Nghunghunyana ni xikhovha:6*).

(My followers, see the witch who is caught at the door of my royal house.)

This is a repetition of the possessive pronoun to qualify the followers and the royal house. All these belong to the chief; he possesses them.

Mtombeni also used the possessive pronoun *mina* repeatedly in the following instance:

Swi antswa ndzi huma laha ndlwini ya wena hikuva wena u ni vukhirhi ni valala va mina, hi mina nghamu leyikulu lahaya ka muti wa ka Ngomana; ku fanele ku yingisiwa mina ku averiwa vana va mina ndzhaka ya muti lowuya (Ndzi xavelela yini?:18).

(It is better that I move out of your house because you associate with my enemies, I am the senior wife at Ngomana's house; people should listen to me, my children should get the share of the inheritance.)

Another clear instance of repetition in this novel, is that of the absolute pronoun *wena*. This pronoun is used as follows:

Wena, wena Rimbilana u ndzi endla kokwa wa wena - a ndzi chancheriwi marhonge mina (Ndzi xavelela yini?:20).

(You, you Rimbilana you behave as if I am your grandmother - I am not that person with whom you can play.)

The last paragraph of the short story *N'hwathi-mbirhi* has another interesting repetition. This time, it is a repetition of the verb *famba* (walk; go):

... a hundzuluka, a hlakahla nhloko a famba, a famba, a famba ... (N'hwathi-mbirhi:48).

(... he turned around, he shook his head and went, he went, he went)

In all his prose narratives, Mtombeni uses repetition to emphasize the message which he wants to carry over to his readers. Mtombeni believed in being clear and being understood, hence the use of repetition.

5.3 Summary

We have discovered that Mtombeni is able to bring out his ideas and thoughts to the readers through his diction. His medium is highly effective because of his careful selection of words which crystallize and stabilize his expression.

Mtombeni's narratives abound with abstract nouns such as *nkhavaxelo* (flowing of tears), *mpitsuko* (anger), *mbisukano* (breaking of the heart), *nkufumelo* (warmth), *nhlekelelo* (laughing), etc. which are derived from word categories like verbs to express the feelings of his characters. These derivatives are prevalent in all his narratives.

As far as *adoption of words* from foreign languages is concerned, it became evident that thoughts and ideas which have been difficult to put across if Tsonga vocabulary had been used, were clearly conveyed.

The use of *antonyms* and *synonyms* is another linguistic phenomenon which bears testimony to the fact that Mtombeni has skill in using words with contrasting meanings to put his message across.

The *ideophone* which is descriptive in nature, has also been employed to give a vivid description of the image intended, whilst the *diminutives* have been used to express endearment, affection, appreciation and disparagement. He did not only make use of the diminutive, but also employed the *locative* with a particular structure. The structure that he used is that of a locative with the locative vowel *e-* which is always prefixed to that locative and the locative suffix

-ini and *-eni* affixed at the end of the word.

Compound words such as *ntwelo-vusiwana* (the act of feeling pity), *vuveki-milandzu* (charge sheet) and *switwo-miri* (feelings) are some of Mtombeni's original coinages, i.e before he used them no Tsonga writer had attempted to use them. These compound words are able to describe incidents appropriately and they are also able to sustain the interest of the readers to continue with the narrative up to the end.

We also discovered that when *repetition* is used, the intended meaning is enhanced, due to emphasis which is brought out by its usage.

Our next discussion will still focus on *language and style*, but now with emphasis on syntactic patterns, paragraphs, imagery, proverbs and idioms, tone and dialogue. This will be done to shed more light on the manner in which he uses language to put his message across to readers.

CHAPTER SIX

LANGUAGE AND STYLE: OTHER STYLISTIC DEVICES

6.1 Introduction

Up to this point, the discussion of language and style concentrated on diction, which is the choice of the right words by the author to ensure that accurate and effective expression of thoughts and ideas is accomplished. In this chapter the other stylistic devices such as syntactic patterns, paragraphs, imagery, proverbs and idioms, tone and dialogue, will be analyzed. These stylistic devices are those linguistic structures which are larger than single words, because they are in the form of phrases and sentences. It is from the manner in which Mtombeni uses them that we will be in a position to judge the standard of his literary works.

6.2 Syntactic patterns

Fromkin and Rodman (1974:136) assert that:

Everyone who is a master of the language he speaks ... may form new ... phrases, provided they coincide with the genius of the language.

This quotation implies that every individual who speaks a language, is capable of forming phrases and sentences which will enable him to communicate effectively with the other people who understand his language. Fromkin and Rodman (1974:136) further argue that:

Knowing a language also means being able to put words together to form sentences which express our thoughts.

Therefore, an author who is competent in expressing himself well, will also be

a master of his language. He will be in a position to know how the syntactic patterns of his language should be. Syntactic patterns refer to sentences which are formed by ordering of words chosen skillfully in order to give the intended meaning to the reader. As far as the sentence is concerned, Serudu (1993:173) is of the opinion that:

A writer's most basic and most versatile tool is the sentence. Any interpretation of a literary work begins with sentences.

This obviously implies that an idea or message can only be carried across to the reader when expressed in meaningful sentences. The sentences which are used by the writer vary. We have simple and complex sentences.

The type of sentence is determined by the nature of the message to be transmitted to the readers by the author. To this effect, Serudu (1993:173) asserts that:

Through the use of sentences the writer can achieve a number of objectives. First, he can clarify the relationship between a number of ideas. Secondly he can channel the reader's attention and focus his interest on a key phrase by placing it conspicuously in his sentence. Thirdly, through the use of choice or well constructed sentences, he can create the mood of the work of art.

Simple sentences are often used in summing up key ideas, while complex ones are more appropriate when it comes to expressing detailed explanation or argument (Guth, 1975:331).

The effects of simple and complex sentences will be assessed in order to discover how they influence meaning in the works of Mtombeni.

Mtombeni uses simple and complex sentences in his creative works. Examples of such sentences will be quoted from his three prose narratives: *Mibya ya*

nyekanyeka, Ndzi tshikeni and *Mavala ya yingwe*. Sentences will be quoted to substantiate the argument.

6.2.1 Simple sentences

An example of Mtombeni's use of simple sentences is the following:

Ngati a yo senga kunene
(*Mibya ya nyekanyeka:11*).

(Blood was flowing profusely.)

This simple statement sums up Celela's condition after he had been gunned down by the police when he was found stealing. Celela bleeds to death: *Ngati a yo senga kunene* (Blood was flowing profusely). This sentence is short, simple and shocking. Because of its brevity, it gives the gist of what is happening in the scene.

Cheyeza a bungula xirito
(*Mibya ya nyekanyeka:30*).

(Cheyeza cried loudly.)

This sentence demonstrates how touched she was to see her son dying. She cries in despair and disappointment. As she cries, she indicates to the police that her son was never a killer. He was just influenced by boys with evil hearts, but he was never a criminal.

A further example of a simple sentence is the following:

Dyambu a ri pelele vo tala
(*Mibya ya nyekanyeka:33*).

(The sun had set for many.)

This sentence emphasizes how things have gone wrong for many people. The setting of the sun is symbolic. It signifies unhappiness, sorrow and death. The passing away of Celela is not the end of dying, but death still lies in wait for many people.

Another example of the use of simple sentence structure occurs when negotiations are underway with Madambi's father, for him to marry Soluka.

*U nga ndzi hlamuli Soluka
(Mibya ya nyekanyeka:59).*

(Please do not answer me, Soluka.)

Madambi speaks in this manner: short, simple and to the point, because he knows that the key figure in resolving this conflict is his father. Therefore, he expects the answer to come from the father, not from Soluka.

Another striking example of a simple sentence is:

*Mufundhisi yena u bihile ku tlula vahedeni
(Mibya ya nyekanyeka:64).*

(The minister of religion is worse than heathens.)

This indicates that ministers of religion can fail in terms of their behaviour and conduct. What they do can be worse than those people who are not clergymen. This sentence sums up the controversy which entangles Nyiko with N'wa-Mdanisi.

In *Ndzi tshikeni*, the narrator says:

*Mahungu a ya etleli ndleleni
(Ndzi tshikeni: 11).*

(News never sleeps on the way.)

to show that news spreads like wild fire, because if something has happened, it is known by many people in a very short space of time. The news of Madlayisana's murder soon reaches the ears of many people.

The short and pithy sentence:

Hi fikile (Ndzi tshikeni:25).
(We have arrived.)

sums up the sinister activities of Xipelupelu and Nhompfu-ya-mbyana, who have come to kill Xihluku Xilandzo's wife. The abrupt finality of *Hi fikile* (We have arrived), clearly conveys the sense that they are there for a special mission and will brook no debate. The confusion which follows leaves Gavaza Makhawukana unconscious and fatally wounded. Truly so, they had arrived.

When the police arrive at Xipelupelu's house, Somisa, his wife, wants to know whether she should open or not. She receives a straight-forward answer:

Va pfulele
(*Ndzi tshikeni:35*).

(Open for them.)

In *Mavala ya yingwe*, Chief Nghunghunyana due to his inquisitiveness and eagerness to know what is happening around him, asks a simple question in a simple sentence:

Va te va ta swi tirthisa ku yini?
(*Nghunghunyana ni xikhovha:13*).

(How did they intend doing it?)

This short straight-forward question emphasizes the chief's eagerness to get all the particulars about the magic owl placed at his palace door. His curiosity, embodied in this short pithy question, contribute to the unfolding and explication

of the plot.

Another question with similar effect, is the following:

Nandzu wu ri wa yini?
(*Nghunghunyana ni xikhovha:14*).

(What was the problem?)

Again, this question triggers further explication of the plot, as the witness testifies that the diviners have connived with the main objective of getting the chief's indunas into trouble. When the chief hears this revelation he is exhilarated and thanks Xitlangoma for his loyalty and faithfulness.

Fewer simple sentences are used in the short story: *Nghunghunyana ni xikhovha*.

In *Ndzi xavelela yini?*, another short story in *Mavala ya yingwe*, Tihomana, a senior wife of Ngomana, visits Cheyeza Nkuna to ask for help because she does not have a son to inherit the wealth of his father. When she arrives, Mdlasiri wants to know what the problem is:

I mhaka muni yo vavisa swonghasi?
(*Ndzi xavelela yini?:17*).

(What is the burning issue at stake?)

Tihomana relates in great detail her position as the mother of daughters who will not qualify to inherit from their father. Tihomana's problems are beyond Mdlasiri's comprehension because she does not understand the significance of not having sons. To show that Mdlasiri is convinced that there is no problem, she answers in a simple sentence:

Swo va sweswo, a ku na swin'wana
(*Ndzi xavelela yini?:18*).

(That is so, there is nothing more.)

Tihomana responds:

*Kasi na wena u yima ni valala va mina?
(Ndzi xavelela yini?):18).*

(Are you also siding with my enemies?)

Simple sentences are consistently used to pose questions in these stories:

*Makwanga ya kona ya tlula ya n'wina?
(Ndzi xavelela yini?):20).*

(Does the gluttony in question surpass yours?)

When Tihomana had succeeded in poisoning the boys, Rimbilana, one of Ngomana's wives, asks:

*Hi wena u dlayaka vana va hina? Hi wena u
nga va nwisu mhondzo? (Ndzi xavelela
yini?):32).*

(Are you the one who is killing our children? Are you the one who gave them poison to drink?)

A further instance of simple sentence structure is the violent injunction screamed by the crowd:

*A pyanyiwe hi tinchila'
(Ndzi xavelela yini?):34).*

(Let her be stoned')

Its stark simplicity conveys the crowd's outrage.

Mtombeni's simple sentences are often effective in summing up key ideas in

the text. Due to their brevity and pithiness, they convey the gist of the argument. Simple sentences also clearly express urgent messages to be carried across to the readers. Another important aspect of these simple sentences is that they are capable of posing clear questions which are easily comprehended by all readers. Last and not least, anxiety, eagerness and insinuation are easily revealed by the use of simple sentences.

6.2.2 Complex sentences

Complex sentences are made up of a number of simple sentences, which when incorporated as constituents of larger sentences are called clauses (Lyons, 1968:178). There is no prescription to the number of clauses or how long a complex sentence should be. Brooks and Warren (1971:323) are of the opinion that

... a sentence may be forty or fifty words long; and by tacking on further elements with and's and but's, we could construct sentences of indefinite length.

It should be remembered that a succession of simple sentences when writing tends to be monotonous, whilst complex ones also tend to bog the reader in a quagmire of words. A writer is free to choose to use a one-word sentence or even a long succession of simple sentences to create a special effect, or to use complex ones for the same reason.

Mtombeni uses complex sentences in his narrative prose to express various ideas to his readers. We will examine these sentences as used in *Mibya ya nyekanyeka*, *Ndzi tshikeni* and *Mavala ya yingwe*.

In *Mibya ya nyekanyeka*, Rev. Tlhomandloti expresses his amazement at the strange behaviour of his son, Nyiko, in the following manner:

Nyiko yena u tshama a hlantswekile, hinkwaswo swa yena

swi endliwa hi malwandla ni mafundza, kambe a ndzi tivi leswaku n'wananga u lo nghena hi yini emiehleketweni ya yena, a ku ngheni nchumu enhlokweni ya yena hi swa tidyondzo (Mibya ya nyekanyeka:9).

(As far as Nyiko is concerned, he is always clean, he does all things carefully and properly, but I do not know what has happened to my child mentally, for there is nothing he comprehends in his learning.)

It is through this complex sentence that we get to know that Rev. Tihomandloti is not completely satisfied with the behaviour of his son, who is always neat and tidy, but who is less gifted intellectually. Nyiko fails to understand even elementary learning problems. This state of affairs worries Rev. Tihomandloti, who wishes for his family to be exemplary to the rest of the community.

Structurally, this sentence has been lengthened by means of the conjunctions *kambe* and *leswaku* as well as the use of the *commas*.

In the following complex sentence:

Yena u fele ku hanyela ra makumu, kasi hina hi hanya hi rindzele ku fa (Mibya ya nyekanyeka:13).

(He has died to live eternally whereas we live waiting for death.)

Mtombeni has brought parallelism into play. The idea of everlasting life is expressed in the first part of the sentence, whilst the second part indicates that we live waiting to die. The two ideas are parallel, for it is better to die to inherit eternal life than to live in a state of uncertainty of when death will come. Uncertainty torments one to an extent that life becomes unbearable and dull.

When speaking to Madambi, who is quite intelligent, Rev. Tihomandloti says:

Madyondzele ya wena ya komba leswaku u le mahlweni ka hinkwavo, kutani u fanele ku endla leswi hlawulekeke,

u tlula hinkwavo eka hinkwaswo - fungha marito ya mina (Mibya ya nyekanyeka:19).

(Your progress in learning shows that you are ahead of everyone, therefore you should do exceptionally well and surpass all in everything - please mark my words.)

Another complex sentence in *Mibya ya nyekanyeka*, which indicates the bond that exists between child and parent is the following:

Mihloti ya Cheyeza a yi hundzukile mhamba ya rirhandzu leyi humaka etinhunguvanini ta ngati yin'we leyi a yi ri emisiheni ya vona ha vambirhi, ku bohana ka mutswari ni n'wana wa yena hi nkava wa mbeleko ni mafundzu ya mibya ya ntehe (Mibya ya nyekanyeka:24).

Cheyeza's tears had turned into the ritual of love that comes from a small calabash of the same blood which is in both their veins, the bond that exists between parent and child through the umbilical cord and the knots of the baby-sling.)

This complex sentence is linked by the use of the concord linked *leyi* and a *comma*. It is in this sentence that we are able to understand the kinship between child and parent which is brought about by birth.

In describing Nyiko's battle with adultery, Mtombeni uses many complex sentences to convey the complexity of the matter. For instance, on the day Nyiko leaves N'wa-Mdanisi's house:

U fambile n'wana wa vanhu a ri karhi a ganyuka, a tlulanyana a tsutsuma, a tlhela a famba ka khwatsi ku komba xichavo xa xiyimo xa vufundhisi - Nyiko wa vanhu u fambile nkarhi lowu a nga twa ingi i wa vutomi bya yena hinkwabyo - u fambile, a famba, a famba ku ya fika emakumu ka misava ni vutomi bya yena (Mibya ya nyekanyeka:63).

(The poor fellow walked whilst making long strides, jumping as he ran, and after a while, he walked leisurely

to show respect to his position of being a minister of religion - the poor Nyiko walked for a distance which made him feel as if he had walked for the rest of his life - he walked, walked, walked and walked to the end of the world and his life.)

It is through this complex sentence that we realize that Nyiko is overwhelmed by anxiety, fear and anguish. Deep down in his heart, he knows that what he has done is wrong. Consequently, he tries to hide the reality of the matter by analyzing the manner in which he walks but as he does that, it seems to him that he is walking for a very very long time without reaching his destination. Mtombeni succeeds in conveying this idea through the use of a complex sentence.

When Nyiko ultimately reaches his home, he finds his wife, Munene, waiting for him. He pleads for mercy and prayer:

Manana Munene, mana wa vana wa mina, nkatanga, ndzi khongelele, ndzi endlele xikhongelo; ringeta ku ndzi kutsula emalangavini ya ndzilo lowu ndzi ngheneke ka wona, ndza tshwa, ndza pfurha -ndzi wele endzeni ka khele ra tihele - ndza ha hanya laha misaveni (Mibya ya nyekanyeka:64).

(Madam Munene, the mother of my children, my darling, pray for me, organize a prayer for me; try to retrieve me from the flames of the fire that I find myself in, I am burning, I am in flames - I have fallen into the ditch of hell - whilst still alive on earth.)

Nyiko admits to his wife that he is in great trouble and that he has sinned. He further admits that he can only be saved by the power of prayer, which should come from his wife whom he calls his *madam Munene, the mother of his children and his darling*. This implies that although he committed adultery with N'wa-Mdanisi, his allegiance and love are still in Munene, his dear wife and the mother of his children.

The last example of a complex sentence which we wish to quote from *Mibya ya nyekanyeka* is as follows:

Ku n'wi hluvula ka vona nguvu ya vufundhisi a va n'wi tekela vutomi va siya ntsumbu; ntsumbu va wu siya wu ri ndzhukano emoyeni ni le mahlweni ka swimonyo (Mibya ya nyekanyeka:72),

(To strip him of his ministerial robe was tantamount to taking away his life leaving only the corpse; the corpse which was left being a curse in the air and before the people.)

The moral complexity of Nyiko's situation is mirrored in the complexity of the sentence structure.

In *Ndzi tshikeni*, we find that most of the sentences used by Mtombeni are complex sentences. In some instances, we find that the whole paragraph consists of one complex sentence:

Marito yo hetelela ya Mantantana ya lo mbekuka ni moya; Xihluku a nga ya hlayisanga; xiviti xa yena a xi ri esirheni ra n'wana wa yena, laha i ngi a tilulamiserile ku ya etlela kona hi siku ra makumu - naswona siku ra kona a a ri vonela ekusuhi hikwalaho ka fundzu leri a a ri bohile embilwini ya yena ehenhla ka n'wana wa yena (Mibya ya nyekanyeka:12).

(The last words of Mantantana floated on the air; Xihluku did not take heed of them; his whole attention was focused on the grave of his son, where he had prepared himself to lie when he died - and he saw this day as being very near, because of the promise that he had made with regard to his child.)

This long sentence constitutes a paragraph in which Xihluku Xilandzo expresses the fact that he will eventually die, because he refuses to stop tracking the killers of his son. Mtombeni employs *semi-colons, commas, dashes* and conjunctives *laha, naswona* and *leri* to form this complex sentence. He

employs them in such a way that in the long run, logic prevails in his expression although the paragraph consists of only one sentence. The following paragraph is constituted by two long sentences:

Hi ku copeta ka tihlo Xihluku a tlula, a tlula, a ba magoza mambirhi manharhu, a fika a wutla xihloka lexiyana emavokweni ya wansati; handle ka ku angulana ni nsati luyana, wansati u lo sala na tona hi ku hlamala ni ku tshuka; o sala a lo tiyimela ingi a a lo khoma hi gome - hinkwaswo swi humelerile hi ku hatlisa ka ku khaluta ka tuva, leswaku munhu un'wana ni un'wana a nga ti kota ni ku tiva ku endla nchumu ehenhla ka leswi swi nga humelela hi nkarhinyana wutsanana wo kohla ni ku pima. (Mibya ya nyekanyeka:13).

(In the wink of an eye, Xihluku jumped, he jumped and made two, three strides, he snatched that axe from the hands of a woman, without speaking to her, the woman remained flabbergasted and terrified; she remained standing as if she was gripped by sadness - everything happened as quickly as the passing of a dove, that no one could be able to know what to do with regard to what happened in a very short space of time.)

The breathless concatenation of clauses and phrases into long sentences conveys the intense, blurred, violent action. The seamlessness of impulse and execution are reflected in the syntax.

Several paragraphs in *Ndzi tshikeni* follow this pattern. The following is one of the examples:

U titshembisile embilwini ya yena leswaku loko o tsandzeka ku va hambukisela endleleni ya vululami ni nsovo u ta tihinga hi ku humesela munyama wa timbilu ta vona erivaleni - sweswo loko a swi anakanya, a swi n'wi bisa ripfalo ra ntsetselelo hi nuna wa yena; kambe ku humesa mimoya ya vanhu hi voko ra Xipelupelu a swi n'wi chavisa ku tlula nsovo ni vurhurheri bya mbukarho wa rirhandzu eka nuna wa yena (Mibya ya nyekanyeka:17).

(She vowed in her heart that if she failed to divert them to

the way of justice and mercy she would commit suicide by revealing the evils of their hearts - when she thought of that she felt pity for her husband; but the fact that Xipelupelu was killing a lot of people terrified her more than the love that prevailed between her and her husband.)

6.3 Preambles or introductory paragraphs

At the beginning of each chapter of *Ndzi tshikeni* and the first six short stories in *Ndzhaka ya vusiwana*, Mtombeni has written introductory paragraphs, which we may term preambles. The main objective of these preambles is to introduce the message or theme of the chapter or story. Mtombeni has written these paragraphs to give the readers the gist of what he wants to put across to them. The preambles serve as a summary of the chapter.

These paragraphs are written in stanza forms which resemble poetry, with poetic features like rhyme, alliteration, assonance and rhythm.

In *Ndzi tshikeni*, the first chapter has the following as its introductory paragraph:

*Ntsako ni ntengo swi papama exidziveni xa vutomi,
swikhiyana ni nhlekelelo swi andlalela hinkwako-kwako;
xirhami ni nkufumelo swi va tinungu ta timba rin'we, ku
tinyikela hi vulula swi khudlunya vunene bya vurhurheli
(Ndzi tshikeni:!).*

(Happiness and serenity float in the deep pool of life,
Merriment and laughing are found all over chilly and warm
weather are nodes of the same sweetcane, Simple
dedication pushes kindness of hospitality aside.)

This first chapter of *Ndzi tshikeni*, exposes us to the first tragedy that Xihluku Xilandzo experiences through the death of his son, Madlayisana. The first line of the preamble expresses the temporary nature of the happiness, merriment and joy that members of one family enjoy, for they can be destroyed by evil-minded people. The warmth that prevails in this family changes into a

situation which is unbearable because of pain inflicted without just cause.

In the second chapter of this novel, Mtombeni introduces his theme as follows:

*Mpfilumpfilu wa swikandza hi nkhavaxelo wa mihloti,
Mbisukano wa timbilu swa mpfindluko wa swihlovo;
Ntsuvo ni ku tilan'wa swi tsutsumisa swa muhloti,
Fada ni langavi ra mpitsuko swi tshwutela nsovo
(Ndzi tshikeni:5).*

(The frowning of faces with the flowing of tears,
Distress of the heart like turbid fountains;
Anger and depression run as fast as the hunter,
The flames of nausea spit kindness.)

This is an introduction to the chapter in which Xihluku Xilandzo gets infuriated because of the behaviour of one of the constables at the Charge Office.

In chapter three we find the following introductory stanza:

*I nhloti wun'we lowu xekaka rhama hi ku hisa
I tuva rin'we leri thantlhaka mpfhuka ri ri roxe,
Nhloti wun 'we wu vanga wun'wana wo wu ririsa;
Khombo a hi ra munhu wun' we a ri yexe
(Ndzi tshikeni:15),*

(It is one tear which inflicts pain on the cheek
It is one dove which flies alone in the air,
One tear causes another tear to cry together,
Misfortune is not for one person alone.)

In this chapter, Xipelupelu and Nhompfu-ya-mbyana are hiding away from Xihluku Xilandzo, who alone is tracking them like a single dove which is flying across the air. They are both aware that they are being sought, for Xirhetirheti was already killed. As a result, they are hiding in the graveyard, although they are also aware that misfortune might happen to them at any moment.

In chapter four, Xipelupelu and Nhompfu-ya-mbyana return to Xihluku

Xilandzo's house and find his wife alone. They attack her and leave her for dead. The introductory paragraph to this chapter reads:

*Mukhosi wa xisati wu handzula vusiku,
Mpfendzempfendze wu tsema nhlana wa ximunhu;
Sirha ri mite mintsumbu mimbirhi hi siku,
Mavito ya vadlayi ya nghena tindleve ta xinuna
Vuongori byi vika ku pya ka ncuva,
Xirilo xi ya chuluriwa evuxeni-xeni
Ndzihiso wu khohlola rifu ra ndzilo wo tlhava
Ncila wu puluta kan' we eritshurini
(Ndzi tshikeni:24).*

(The call for help by a woman is heard in the thick darkness of the night,
Commotion causes human shock;
The grave swallows two corpses on one day,
The names of the killers reach the ears of men
Reports of nurses reveal that the *ncuva* game is lost, i.e she is dead.
Sorrow is felt in the east,
The fine of the penalty causes the fire of death
Which pierce the tail that wags once in the dust.)

Gavaza Makhawukana calls for help from the neighbours in the thick of the night, but it is too late when they eventually arrive. To Xihluku Xilandzo it is obvious that the notorious thugs who killed his son, Madlayisana, have struck again. This action strengthens his determination to capture the killers of his son and wife.

The last preamble is found in the last chapter of the novel:

*Voko ri anyuka ri ya gaja,
Ri vula maxindyana a nga khani kambirhi;
Vatshoveri va siyela vafana swo khwaja,
Vutomi byi vula 'n'hwathi-mbirhi' hi nkarhi,
Valavi va va lavaka va kumana,
Va kumana va ri ku beni ka ribye,
Mahlori ya hlolola n'wini ma kumana,
Khombo ri phameriwa hi swibye.*

(The arm stretched until it seized,

It meant the yellow-footed squirrel cannot dance twice for joy,
 Harvesters always leave gleanings for boys,
 Life means many irons on the fire,
 Searchers do find each other,
 They find each other while hitting the stone, i.e in jail,
 Miracles happen to oneself,
 Misfortune is caused by utensils.)

The structure of this stanza makes it clear that Mtombeni was experimenting with poetic style. Rhyme has been attempted: the first line ends with the word *gaja* whilst the third line ends in *khwaja*; the last word of the second line *kambirhi* rhymes with that of the fourth line *nkarhi*. The same is true of the fifth line which rhymes with the seventh one, (*kumana* and *ma kumana*). The words *ribye* and *swibye* in the sixth and eighth lines respectively rhyme. The rhyme scheme thus is abandoned.

The last preamble in this novel seals off the narration. Its purpose is to show that everything has an end. Xipelupelu is able to elude Xihluku for a very long time, but *Maxindyana a nga khani kambirhi* (fortune comes but once). It is also true that *valavi va kumana* (the searchers do find each other) because in the long run, they both meet in jail. Xihluku Xilandzo devises a weapon from a spoon, to kill his foe. This is foreshadowed in the last sentence of the preamble: *khombo ri phameriwa hi swibye* (misfortune is caused by utensils).

In *Ndzhaka ya vusiwana*, the first six short stories are introduced to the readers by short poems with two to four stanzas, consisting of four lines each. These stanzas seem to summarize the stories. By reading these poems, the reader's attention is drawn to something which the author wishes to put across. After reading that poem, one is keen to proceed to the end of the story in anticipation of what is going to happen. So far, we do not have other Tsonga short story writers who have structured their narratives in this fashion.

The first poem which introduces us to the first short story reads as follows:

*Tshemba munhu mi langutanile,
Fularhela u hlometela sirha;
Ka swa rivaala hi hungukile,
Ngati yin'we yi hela eku fularhelaneni.*

*Fularhela makwenu - chavukela vugevenga,
Tshemba munhu, tshemba ku etlela ni ndlala;
Mhondzo emunhwini i mbilu ya makwanga,
Akisana ni swihlahla, munhu, ntsena mahundza-ndlela.*

*U gogela mani rivanti loko u etlela?
Vuswinya tihlo rin'we evurhongweni?
Xiya mitwa loko u tihela hi ndlela,
Tshemba ntsena vo etlela emasirheni
(Ndzhaka ya vusiwana:3).*

(Trust a person when you are face to face,
When you look the other side, you will see the grave;
In actual fact we are immoral,
People of the same blood are destroyed by turning one's back.

Ignore your brother - you will be safe from crime,
Trust a person, then you will sleep hungry;
To poison a person is a sign of a greedy heart,
Build relationship with the forests, for a person is a passerby

Why do you bar your door with a stick when you sleep?
Close one eye when sleeping?
Beware of thorns when returning on the way,
Trust only those who are asleep at the graveyard, i.e the dead.

This poem highlights the theme of the short story that *kindness is usually repaid by acts of unkindness*. Mgavateri trusts his younger brother to the extent that he deprives himself of learning in order to educate [Msesenyana], but when the latter completes his teacher's course, he falls in love with his brother's wife, Mandlakulova. This is a clear indication that one should never trust a person, even if he is your blood relative. This is a philosophy of life which Mtombeni propounds in his short stories.

The second short story in *Ndzhaka ya vusiwana* is *Matanato*. Its introductory poem reads as follows:

*Mangava yo tsemeka rhumbu
Ndza ha ri xihlangi, ndzi va hava xihlangi;
Madambi yo va hava xo tiyisa rimbambu.
Munghana wa ngati - xihlangi.*

*Nkateko: rirhandzu ra nkatanga,
Wo tikhegeta hi nkuwa wo va hava kuwa,
Exikarhi ka swiluva emisaveni ya xintanga
A kanya mbilu, a ndzi fundza, a ndzi fuwa.*

*Ndzi katekile ndzi nga dya rhanga
Ra mananga ya le kule-kule;
Tatana ra minkova ri dyiwa hi wo rhanga,
Murhu wo wu khula ndzi kurile.*

*Ndzi to swi yini swa rivala, mbuya?
Swa tatana ro ndzi dzanela enon'wini-xe?
Kambe ntsokombelo hi wona wu nga diaya
Mihloti ya mahlomulo swi tisa ku tsaka
(*Ndzhaka ya vusiwana*:14).*

(The misery of being without a child
Whilst still young, to be without a child;
The misfortune of being without something to strengthen the rib.
The blood friend - the child.

Luckily: the love of my spouse,
To lean against a fig tree without figs,
Amongst the flowers in the garden

He screws up courage, showed me courage, he kept me.

I am fortunate to have eaten a tuber
Of the far away arid land;
The fresh ripe fig of the valley is eaten by those in front
The gravy to sip while already a grown up.

What am I going to do about this, poor me?
For the fresh ripe fig to drop in my mouth?
But its sweetness has removed
Tears and sorrow to bring joy.)

Nhlalala who is barren, is blessed with a child in the form of Matanato, her husband's daughter by a mistress. It is not an easy adoption, but eventually it was a blessing in disguise.

The fifth short story in *Ndzhaka ya vusiwana* is *N'wamahungu*, which is introduced by the following poem:

*U nga ndzi byela yini xo ndzi kohla?
I mhaka muni yo tsandza mina?
Hikuva ndzi twa swa vusiku loko swi phohla,
Hungu ra xidzedze ni gama ra mina.*

*Xo mita hi huku xi tiva hi mina,
Swa le mpfungwe ndza hanguluxa;
Ntshukunyana wu boxeketa eka mina,
Fundzu ra le makorhweni ndza tshunxa.*

*Tindleve ta mina mahandze ya magondzo,
Nomu wa mina i boboma ra nambu;
Ndzi to miyetiwa hi ku titimetiwa hi swa mhondzo,
Esirheni laha ndzi nga ti lata rimbambu.
(Ndzhaka ya vusiwana:37).*

(What can you tell me which is unknown to me?
Which matter can be difficult to me?
Because I hear what happens during the night,
News of hurricane and eagle is mine.

Lies and truth are known by me,
Something at the rear of the hut,
I am able to take out
The golden mole reaches me,
The knot tied in the hidden place, I am able to untie.

My ears are like the cross-roads,
My mouth is just like the waterfall of a river;
I will only be silenced by poison;
At the grave where I will be buried.)

This poem is a recapitulation of the activities of a character called *N'wamahungu* who can not keep a secret, because she delights in transmitting

information, true or false, to boost her own image as a person well versed with what happens in her vicinity and the world at large. Unfortunately, one day she falls into a trap and is exposed to the community as an outright liar.

This style of writing has greatly contributed in Mtombeni being considered one of the greatest authors in Tsonga literature to date. He proved that whilst writing short stories, he could also write poems which were aimed at giving the gist of what he intended to transmit to his readers. It is from this type of style that we are able to conclude that Mtombeni had a rare gift of writing in all genres successfully.

6.4 Imagery

Sylvan Barnet (1979:186) is of the opinion that:

When we read "rose", we may more or less call to mind a picture of a rose, or perhaps we are reminded of the odour or texture of a rose.

This assertion aptly implies that whatever appeals to any of our senses (for example the sensation of heat and pressure as well as of sight, smell, taste, touch and sound) is an image, which might be literal or figurative. For instance, we can literally speak of a rose, which is a type of a colourful flower which grows on a thorny shrub or of my rose, which figuratively refers to the one I love. Images that we find in literature are created through the use of figurative language such as metaphors and similes. In this respect, Cohen (1973:187) says that imagery

... may be considered as a direct sense appeal, a figure of speech, or both, which lead the reader by a process of association to combine at least two elements inherent in the figure.

This notion is also expressed by Hess (1978:265) who defines imagery as

"mental pictures produced by descriptions and figurative language"

From the two definitions by Cohen and Hess, it is clear that imagery refers to the process of creating images or pictures in the mind through the help of mental associations. The mental pictures that are produced by description and figurative language, refer to the images that we perceive. An image is the mental impression or visualized likeness conjured by a word, phrase or sentence.

In his prose narratives: *Mibya ya nyekanyeka*, *Ndzi tshikeni* and *Mavala ya yingwe*, Mtombeni uses images to enrich his expression. Serudu (1993:134) says:

Besides making setting, character or action vivid and memorable, images serve frequently as a means; of conveying an atmosphere appropriate to the main elements of a story namely plot, character and theme.

From this quotation, it is quite evident that imagery is one of the most important means which the author uses to enhance his process of communication. In this regard, Raselekoane (1991:37) asserts that:

A writer uses words to create things (images) in the mind of the reader which the latter can see, smell, touch and taste. A writer uses ordinary words in a figurative way to enhance the quality of his language.

Therefore, we could conclude that imagery evoked in this manner enables the reader to recreate an object referred to more vividly and thus heightens the emotional effect of the narrative.

6.4.1 Literary imagery

A striking image in *Mibya ya nyekanyeka* is the following:

Kambe magondzo hinkwawo ya Soweto na Joni hinkwaro ya hundzukile makhwati lawa ya hanyaka (Mibya ya nyekanyeka:5)

(But all the streets of Soweto and Johannesburg have turned into living forests).

This evokes a surrealistic image of roads that are full of moving trees, which remind us of the many people going up and down the streets.

The following image also presents the city as a living entity:

Magondzo ya Joni ya hundzukile misiha, vanhu hi yona ngati leyi fambaka misiheni yoleyo. Mbilu hi mina na wena muhlayi wa mugaringeto lowu Joni hi yena munhu wa kona loyi hina hi nga swirho swa yena (Mibya ya nyekanyeka:6).

(The streets of Johannesburg have turned into arteries and the people are the blood which flows in those arteries. The heart is you and me who are reading this narrative. Johannesburg is the person in question and we are his body parts.)

Again, the author evokes in our minds a visual image by describing the big streets of Johannesburg as arteries carrying blood. No one can live without blood flowing from the heart: similarly the lifeblood of Johannesburg is its population. This is made vivid by the description of the author.

Another interesting image is the following:

Minkitsinkitsi leyi nga kona hinkwawo-kwako yi vanga hi swihuhuri etimilwini ta vanhu va manguva lawa. (Mibya ya nyekanyeka:9)

(The confusion which prevailed all over is caused by the

whirlwinds in the hearts of the modern people.)

In this visual image we perceive a strong whirlwind blowing in the hearts of the modern people which influences them to behave in strange ways.

The following excerpt from a letter written by Madambi to his father, Rev. Tlhomandloti, is another example of a visual image:

*Ndzi mi nkhensa ngopfu laha papileni hi ku tshemba
leswaku hi rona ndzi ta siya mikondzo leyi nga ta va xivuku
xa ku tlangela ka mina (Mibya ya nyekanyeka:37).*

(I thank you very much in this letter trusting that through it I will leave lasting footprints which will be the mirror of my gratitude.)

Our attention is drawn to familiar physical objects *mikondzo* (footprints) and *xivuku* (mirror). When a person walks on soft ground or wet soil, he leaves behind footprints, which will always remind him that he once moved through that place. This is also true of the message that Madambi will leave with his father in the letter. These footprints will be *xivuku* (mirror) which will be an indication of how grateful he is to his father.

In the first and the last stanzas of the preface to *Ndzi tshikeni*, Mtombeni uses vivid images which enrich his expression:

FIRST STANZA

*Ndzi tshikeni ndzi xaniseka enxanisekweni,
Ndzi famba ndzi tikhuhlakhuhla hi mawa emaweni,
Cingelani etlhelo, mi honisa swa mihoni,
Mi ndzi tshika ndzi chochovela swihlahla emintshungwini
(Ndzi tshikeni:ii)*

(Leave me alone to struggle as I suffer,
To walk whilst I hit myself against the walls of
precipices,
Look aside and completely ignore,

And leave me to go straight into the bush in the crowds.

THE LAST STANZA

*Tshikani malangavi lawa ya okelelaka
Swa le kusuhi ni le kule; tinhlahle ti tihava tindzololo
Ta vaorhi ni vahundza-ndlela; vumbhoni bya vumpfempfo;
Ku timoka ka makala; ku hela ka tihunyi, swi va nkuma.
(ibid).*

(Leave the flames that are carrying on and on
Near and far; the sparks piercing the pupils of the eyes
Of the people sitting around the fire and the passersby;
the evidence of smouldering of fire,
The extinction of ember; the burning of wood to a finish,
to become ash.)

In these stanzas, Mtombeni focuses our attention on various images: a person who should be left to hit himself against the walls of the precipices, a person who should be left to go straight into the bush, the flames with sparks which pierce the pupils of the eyes, the people who are sitting around the fire and those who pass by and the ember which will become ash after burning.

Here, we are exposed to visual, olfactory, auditory and kinaesthetic imagery. We see the flames, smell the smoke and feel the heat from the fire. A scene of people sitting around the fire is presented in both stanzas.

In the dedication entitled *Xitsundzuxo*, we find the following images:

- (1) *Vutlharhi i nkova lowu khulukaka ku ya fika elwandle
(Ndzi tshikeni:ii).*

(Wisdom is the valley that flows right up to the sea.)

- (2) *... tinhlolhorhi ta tintshava ta miehleketo (ibid).*

(... the peaks of the mountains of the intellect.)

In the first example the image that we find is that of a valley with wisdom that flows right into the sea. The depth of such wisdom is evoked in our mind. The

peaks of tall mountains are brought to our attention in the second example. Through the use of such images the intended meaning is enriched.

Nghunghunyana ni xikhovha in *Mavala ya yingwe* uses images associated with witchcraft and sorcery:

... a swi tiva leswaku valoyi va haha hi swikhovha, naswona ni vamangadyana; a a swi vona leswaku ku tsandzeka ka xona ku haha lahaya nyangweni ya yindlu yakwe noyi a a yimekile loyi a tele ku ta n'wi lowa - ku ta n'wi dlaya a fa (Nghunghunyana ni xikhovha:5),

(... he knew that witches flew by means of owls and bats; he realized that the failure for it to fly from the door of his house, implied that the witch that had come to bewitch him - to kill him had been caught.)

The images of owls and bats reinforce the theme of this short story: witchcraft, duplicity, and evil.

The following image appears in *Ndzi xavelela yini?* (p.33):

Loko vanhu hinkwavo va languta Khanyisa loyi a kombiwa hi Tihomana hi rintihlo, yena a vona xikan'we-kan'we leswaku makhukhumba ya ku pfindluseka ka vukari bya vanhu ya kongomile eka yena, hi loko a sungula ku tlhenthatlhentha hi xindzhakundzhaku.

(When all the people looked at Khanyisa who was being pointed by a finger by Tihomana, she instantly realized that the debris of the fury of the troubled people were directed towards her, she then started to retreat.)

The outrage of the community is compared to a river in flood just as it is not possible for thirsty people to drink turbid water, and as each one of us will avoid a flooded river with a lot of debris in order not to be washed away. Khanyisa flees the rage of people reacting to Tihomana's poisoning of their children. Mtombeni's language aptly describes the violence of their feelings through the images.

6.4.2 Imagery brought out by figurative language

Mental pictures, i.e imagery can also be achieved through the use of figurative language. In this respect, Serudu (1993:138) says:

Figurative language makes the difference between dull, lifeless prose and sparkling, imaginative prose, between prose that only partially communicates and prose that communicates exactly, efficiently and effectively. It entails the effective use of figures of speech.

Figures of speech are speech forms where there has been deviation in the use of words from their normal use to a figurative one. Metaphors, personifications and hyperboles are the most common figures of speech.

In *Mibya ya nyekanyeka*, Mtombeni makes frequent use of hyperbole, similes and symbols. A hyperbole is an expression which uses exaggeration for effect, e.g.:

- (1) *Ngati a yo senga kunene*
(*Mibya ya nyekanyeka:11*).

(Blood was just milking out.)

This means that blood which was coming out of the man who was stabbed was flowing like milk from the udder of a cow. It is an exaggeration of the bleeding of the wound, which gives a vivid picture of the extent of the injury sustained by that person.

- (2) *Ngati leyi a yi huma laha mbangeni yeyo a yi chavisa hikuva a yo khuluka kunene* (*Mibya ya nyekanyeka:21*).

(The blood that was coming out from that wound was terrifying because it was just flowing.)

The word *khuluka* (flow), which is an exaggeration, emphasizes the dramatic loss of blood.

- (3) *Ngati yo humisa swa xiseluselu*
(*Mibya ya nyekanyeka:25*).

(Blood was coming out like the spring in which water wells up visibly.)

In this case also, we find that blood is flowing like the swelling of a fountain. This is an exaggeration to express the idea of blood coming out in great quantity.

- (4) *Maphorisa a va balesela hi tivholovholo, va hi*
hlongorisa ku sala ku nuha ngati
(*Mibya ya nyekanyeka:27*).

(The police were shooting with revolvers, chasing us leaving behind the smell of blood.)

It is as though blood was flowing from behind as the police pursue Celela.

- (5) *Leswi ngati ya kona a yi tarisile swona ku*
ringana xitibyana a swo komba leswaku
misava hinkwayo yi le xirilweni hambu mina
na wena hi nga swi tivi leswaku ha rila
ntumbuluko wona a wu na mhaka na mina na
wena hikuva ho va mathonsi mambirhi
ematini ya lwandle ra ntumbuluko (*Mibya ya*
nyekanyeka:77).

(The fact that blood was as full as to fill a small pool, that was clear testimony that the whole world was mourning, although you and I might not have been aware that we are in sorrow, nature does not care about you and me because we are just two drops in the sea).

Quite interesting in respect of the hyperboles quoted here is the fact that they are all connected with profuse loss of blood. The effect is fearful.

In *Mibya ya nyekanyeka*, similes are used. A simile is a figure of speech in which a definite likeness is expressed. The objects compared may be alike only in one or more respects. In Tsonga, the simile employs the word *ongwe / wongwe / swangwe / tani hi / bya / fana ni*, e.g.:

*Loko a famba o koka milenge wongwe u lo
bela madeha (Mibya ya nyekanyeka:33).*

(When she walked, she pulled her legs as if
she has worn leg-bracelets.)

This indicates that her movements were very slow, just like a woman whose legs are full of bracelets.

Symbols are figures of speech in which a term or image or object stands for something else or suggests something else:

- (1) *Ntsena va ha yile kwale mintirhweni ya Valungu hi
wona masimu ya masiku lawa (Mibya ya
nyekanyeka:10).*

(The only thing is that they are still gone to
working places of the Whites, because those
are the fields these days.)

- (2) *Wa swi tiva leswaku muti wa hina wu hundzukile
rivoni exikarhi ka vusiku leri voniwaka hi vanhu va ha
ta hi le kule (Mibya ya nyekanyeka:17).*

(You know that our home has become a lamp
that shines in the night to be seen by people
whilst they come from afar.)

In these two sentences: *masimu* (fields) and *rivoni* (lamp) are symbols which stand for place of work and status or esteem respectively.

Mtombeni uses more figurative language in *Ndzi tshikeni* than in his other prose narratives. As a result, when we read this novel, we realize that he is, indeed, a master of the Tsonga language. He uses similes, personification, hyperbole

and, to a lesser extent, symbols. We will quote examples to illustrate his characteristic style.

Mtombeni shows the impact of his [*Xihluku*] son's murder on Somisa with a shocking simile:

*Nsati wa yena Somisa o pupumela kunene
bya huku yi tsewiwile nhloko hi xivitwana xa
xihluku xa le makumu ya ku tikhoma (Ndzi
tshikeni:5).*

(His wife, Somisa, was making convulsive movements like a fowl just beheaded with a small voice filled with sorrow that she would not control herself.)

Somisa's response is powerfully conveyed in the simile of the struggling of a beheaded fowl. It is expressed by means of the word *bya* (like).

Another simile, used immediately after the above instance is the following:

*Ku rhula loku ku nga landzela khombo ra ka
Xilandzo a ku hikahikiwa hi ku yimbelela ka
machela ni swin'wana swa vusiku - kambe ku
rhula ka kona a ku fana ni ntthamu kumbe
nseve lowu gwimbiweke wu tiya wu yimerile
ntseni ku tlhekeka kumbe ku thonya (Ndzi
tshikeni:5).*

(The peace that followed the mishap of Xilandzo's was interrupted by the croaking of frogs and other nocturnal creatures - but this peace was just like a snare or an arrow which has been pulled very strongly waiting only to shoot.)

The peace is clearly of a temporary nature and fraught with tension, because it is just like a trap or an arrow which is poised for action.

The last example of a simile in this novel is the following:

*Swandla swa mina swi ta kama nkolo wa
wena swa marhumbu;
Nomu wa wena wu ta ahlama,
U ta titimela; u nonoha swa rhambu (Ndzi tshikeni:23).*

(My hands will squeeze your throat like the
intestines;
Your mouth will be opened,
You will become cold; and be hard like a bone.)

This is part of a speech spoken by Xipelupelu, the leader of the gang which killed Xihluku Xilandzo's son, when they are about to attack Gavaza Makhawukana. The simile: *swandla swa mina swi ta kama nkolo wa wena swa marhumbu* emphasizes the murderous intentions of the thugs. The image of squeezing her throat like intestines, is a grotesquely violent omen. The following image confirms the fate awaiting her:

*Nomu wa wena wu ta ahlama,
U ta titimela; u nonoha swa rhambu (ibid).*

(Your mouth will be opened,
You will become cold; and be hard like a bone.)

We all know how cold a dead body is and we also know how a dead animal's mouth remains opened. Mtombeni uses figurative language to foreshadow Gavaza Makhawukana's gruesome death.

Mtombeni also uses exaggeration for effect. Mafambaborile, a police officer in *Ndzi tshikeni*, says:

*... a ndzi nga rhandzi ku mi anyula tinhlaya hi
swona Secheni (Ndzi tshikeni:6).*

(... I did not intend to pull apart your cheeks
about it Sergeant.)

It would obviously be painful and strange to have one's cheeks pulled apart, but the police officer, Mafambaborile, speaks like this to show that he did not intend to cause his sergeant to laugh unnecessarily.

The following excerpt is another example of a hyperbole:

(Nwamakasana) ... u endlile xifungho embilwini ya yena leswaku ringhole leri a a tibohelerile hi rona eka Xipelupelu a ri fikile laha ri nga kenyeka, ri lala ku ringana ni nsiha wunene laha a ri ta tsemeka hi nkama wun'wana ni wun'wana hikokwalaho ka ku nonoha ka nhloko ya Xipelupelu, ni ku tshama a ri karhi a tselekiwile exitikweni xa nhlomulo, ku titsetsa ni ku tshama evutoyeni ehenhla ka vona ha vambirhi (Ndzi tshikeni:17).

(N'wamakasana) ... vowed in her heart that the thread that had tied her to Xipelupelu had become cut, but not to a finish, it had become thin to equal just a vein to an extent that it could be cut off any time, because of the obstinacy of Xipelupelu, and to always stay put on fire of mental anguish, to pity herself and to remain in fear for both of them.

The image of a person placed on fire like a cooking pot ready to cook food is used to show the extent of the suffering which N'wamakasana endures because of the actions of her husband, Xipelupelu. This style of expression conveys the danger of living with a criminal. She is on the verge of losing patience, for she has been strained for a very long time, hence the thread which binds her to Xipelupelu is about to snap. All these facts are not clearly discernible from the ordinary everyday words that Mtombeni has used but figuratively, we are able to grasp what he wanted to say.

The last example of a hyperbole from *Ndzi tshikeni*, is the following:

Ku nghena ka vona va hoxile mahlo ku valanga vanhu hinkwavo lava a va ri kwalaho xihodelanini (Ndzi tshikeni:33).

(As they entered the restaurant they threw their eyes to inspect all people who were in there.)

Mtombeni uses this figure of speech to indicate that these thugs looked all over the restaurant to ensure that they were safe in that environment. (Unfortunately they do not realize that Xihluku Xilandzo is already waiting for them at a corner where it is not easy for any one to see him).

In *Ndzi tshikeni*, Mtombeni also employs personification to enrich his expression. When Xipelupelu wants Xihluku Xilandzo and his family to give him money, he says:

Loko mi rhandza ku hanya hi nyikeni mali hi ku hatlisa xibalesa lexi xi nga si khohlola rifu (Ndzi tshikeni:3).

(If you want to live give us money before this pistol coughs death.)

Mtombeni uses the verb *khohlola* to personify the pistol. In this way, readers are able to understand the danger of the situation.

In another personification, Mtombeni says:

Sirha ri ta mita mintsumbu mimbirhi hi siku (Ndzi tshikeni:23).

(The grave will swallow two corpses on one day.)

The grotesque image of a mouth engulfing people, as if the grave hungers for flesh, helps to convey the grim sense of purpose in this story.

In *Mavala ya yingwe*, Mtombeni employs personification, similes and hyperboles. The following is an example of personification:

*... yena dyambu a ri n'wi hiwelela ngopfu ku pela leswaku
tiharira yena ri ta nwa ngati ya vangoma (Nghunghunyana
ni xikhovha:16).*

(... to him the sun was getting too slow to set that his spear
could drink the blood of the diviners.)

It is needless to point out that a spear cannot drink blood, because it is not a living being. In this context, it is used to indicate that it will stab the diviners, who will, as a result, bleed to death. Mtombeni uses this figure of speech to ensure that everyone understands the seriousness of the action which will take place that evening. Those who caused the death of the chief's indunas, will be punished.

The last example of personification in *Mavala ya yingwe* is as follows:

*Kolonele a tlula kambirhi kanharhu a ya vambela na
Secheni Mahomo, va fika va pfurisa rivanti ra khun'we -
kambe xitokisi xo ahlama - Secheni Mahomo a nghena
(N'hwari-mbirhi:48).*

(The colonel jumped twice or thrice to be parallel with
Sergeant Mahomo, they arrived to open door No. 11 - but
the cell yawned - Sergeant Mahomo went in.)

Mtombeni uses *ahlama* (yawn) to show how wide open the door is for Sergeant Mahomo to enter.

Mtombeni also uses similes to enhance his expression. On the same page, we find five of these similes. In this context, he uses words like *tanihi*, *wonge* and *fana ni* to denote the likeness as in the following:

- (1) *U bile rivanti a nghena tanihi ku baleka ka ndlati
(N'hwari-mbirhi: 44).*

(He hit the door and entered like the roaring of thunder.

- (2) ... *tikulu ti landzelelana tanihi ku tshana ka makanyi (ibid).*

(... the bullets followed one another like the dropping of the marula fruit from the tree.)

- (3) ... *vutomi bya munhu a byi fana ni bya huku madyambu walawo kwalaho garaji. (ibid).*

(... the life of a person was like that of a fowl that evening at that garage.)

This image links the cheapness of the life of a fowl to the number of human deaths.

- (4) ... *vo hlayanyana va ri karhi va bohaboha timbanga ni ku hlamba tingati laha ku nga sala ku titimerile wonge hi le ntangeni wa vafi (N'hwari-mbirhi:44).*

(... quite a number were bandaging their wounds and washing blood, thereafter it remained as quiet as a graveyard.)

This figure of speech emphasizes the quiet and gloom after the shooting and criminals had run away or those who remained were arrested.

6.5 Proverbs and idioms

Serudu (1993:145) quotes Guma (1967:66) who defines a proverb as

... a pithy sentence with a general bearing on life. It serves to express "some homely truth" or moral lesson in such an appropriate manner as to make one feel that no better words could have been used to describe the particular situation.

This definition is more or less similar to Mathumba's (1989:9) who says that a proverb is

... a concise stylised metaphorical sentence, usually displaying peculiar formal features, expressing a common truth familiar to and accepted by the members of a particular language community.

The words some *homely truth* in Guma's definition and *common truth* in Mathumba's, reveal that proverbs have the function of expressing commonly held ideas, beliefs and especially truths that are common to a particular language community. On the other hand an idiom is defined by Ntsan'wisi (1971:2) as follows:

... a fixed structural form or a fixed phrasal pattern of words which go together, peculiar to the genius of a language as regards grammatical structure, accepted by usage; and the meaning of which cannot be logically or literally ascertained from its component parts.

In other words, idioms are found in fixed structural forms or fixed phrasal patterns of words which always go together, such as a verb with a particular noun, a pair of nouns, a particular pair of verbs, a particular figurative expression, to express a definite idea (Ntsan'wisi, 1971:2). Mtombeni employs many idioms to express ideas clearly. Before we provide examples of such fixed structural forms and fixed phrasal patterns, we would like to quote some examples of proverbs used in *Mibya ya nyekanyeka*. Mtombeni introduces some of his proverbs by using a particular formula which is an acknowledgement that these sayings belong to the wisdom of the old people. This is done by making use of the words *va khale a va vula leswaku*, followed by the proverb, e.g.:

Va khale a va vula leswaku ku tjula ka mhala ku letela n'wana endzeni (Mibya ya nyekanyeka:5).

(The old people used to say that the spring of the impala teaches the young she bears inside, i.e the parents' ways are an example to the child and his real teaching.)

In his preface to *Mibya ya nyekanyeka*, Mtombeni wants to indicate that the idea expressed by this proverb should be the rule, although nowadays there is no one who can predict what will become of our children because

Munhu u byala kwembe ku mila rhanga, a tshovela laha a nga rimangiki kona (ibid).

(A person sows a pumpkin seed and the vegetable marrow plant germinates and he harvests where he did not plough.

In this second proverb, Mtombeni does not make use of the formula *va khale a va vula leswaku* because this is a truism which obviously does not need any reference to the old people. The proverb means that our children have the tendency to deviate from the normative patterns of behaviour that society expects. In this novel we find characters like Celela, Nyiko and Madambi, who do not follow the wishes of their parents. Mtombeni used these proverbs in the preface of his novel to signal the theme of the book.

With regard to the rigid form of proverbs, Ntsan'wisi (1971:3) points out that

[proverbs] ... do not allow of any slight syntactic alteration or rearrangement of their component elements. In all contexts in which it appears the form of the proverb remains fixed and unchangeable.

Mtombeni breaks this rule by, for example, altering the fixed phrasal patterns of the following proverb:

N'wendzi a nga orhi mindzilo mimbirhi (Junod, 1970:33).

(A traveller does not warm himself with two fires at the same time, i.e do not try to visit two villages at the same time (one would be dissatisfied.)

Mtombeni's version is as follows:

Kasi ndzi ta ta orha switiko swinyingi (Mibya ya nyekanyeka:26).

(On the contrary I shall come to warm myself in many fireplaces.)

The idea is similar, but in the original proverb we find the word *mindzilo* (fires), whilst Mtombeni's version uses the word *switiko* (fireplaces). He also replaces the word *mimbirhi* (two) with *swinyingi* (many). It could be said that Mtombeni was not even aware that he had deviated from the original form of the proverb. Great writers sometimes do not stick to the rules, because to them, it is not the rules which must come first, but language usage and effect.

Max Black (1962:135) points out:

It is truistic that language grows erratically as a jungle and that the attempt to forecast its change or to control it has about as much chance of success as the attempt to cultivate the Sargasso sea.

In the other prose narratives not a single proverb is employed. The scarcity of proverbs in these other prose narratives could be attributed to the fact that many idioms are used instead.

Examples of idioms will be quoted from *Mibya ya nyekanyeka*, *Ndzi tshikeni* and *Mavala ya yingwe*. It is, however, useful to begin with Serudu's (1993:150) opinion on idioms:

Idioms are embellishments of a writer's language. They serve to heighten and to typify a particular writer's language usage. They lift the literary work above the place of dull imitativeness.

This implies that when an author employs idioms in his writings his works are bound to be interesting, illuminative and informative.

In *Mibya ya nyekanyeka*, the title of the novel is a Tsonga idiom (Shipalana, 1970:39). It means that the straps of a baby-sling are loose, i.e children do not always listen to their parents.

A related idiom is

... *mubya wu tsemekile* (*Mibya ya nyekanyeka*:9).

(... the straps of the baby-sling are cut.)

In its context it is used together with the former idiom in the following manner:

... *kasi loko va ku mubya wu tsemekile kumbe va ku wa nyekanyeka a va vuli swona leswaku munhu wa vutihari a vuya a lulama u tswala vana vo dadavala, va mihupana, miharihari, kumbe va va na lunya, xindzhuvu ni futa ke?* (*Mibya ya nyekanyeka*:9).

(... when they say that the strap of the baby-sling is cut or when they say that it is loose, are they not referring to the fact that an intelligent person and an honest one, begets dull, foolish, mischievous or incorrigible, obstinate and careless children?)

The two idioms in this sentence are *mubya wu tsemekile* (the strap of the baby-sling is cut) and (*mubya*) *wa nyekanyeka* (the strap of the baby-sling is loose). They both mean that children do not behave in accordance with the expectation of their parents. Mtombeni uses the two idioms in one sentence for emphasis. However, it should be remembered that their meaning has nothing to do with the literal components of their lexical items. In this respect, Ntsan'wisi (1971:3) says:

A person not familiar with the genius of the language or with its usage cannot gather the meanings of these expressions from their component elements, i.e from the different words which constitute them.

When Mtombeni says *mubya wu tsemekile*, in actual fact, he wants to indicate

that the child is wayward. Literally, it means that the strap of the baby-sling has been cut and the child could not remain on the back of its mother, and as a result, it falls.

Another idiom related to the theme of the book is

... a nga si mila meno
(*Mibya ya nyekanyeka:21*).

(... before his teeth germinated.)

A person whose teeth are not yet out, is obviously still a child of less than six months. Figuratively, it refers to a very young and immature person. This idiom is used to denote that when Celela was killed he was still a very young boy.

Mtombeni uses idioms to express different ideas in the novel or short story. For instance, when a problem is insurmountable, he uses the idiom:

... ndzi khe matluka
(*Mibya ya nyekanyeka:7*).

(I have plucked leaves, i.e I have failed.)

This is usually said by a person who has dismally failed to achieve something.

When N'wa-Mdanisi falls pregnant, Mtombeni (1967:64) uses an appropriate idiom to express this fact:

Endzhaku ka tin'hwetinyana timhaka a ti nga ha tivikani hikuva N'wa-Mdanisi a a tikile. Ni le kerekeni a nga ha ti
(*Mibya ya nyekanyeka:64*).

(After a few months matters were bad because N'wa-Mdanisi was heavy, i.e pregnant. And she was no longer attending church services.)

Finally we wish to quote all the heart-related idioms in this novel:

- (1) *Lehisani mbilu tatana, ndzi ta ringeta ku fana ni van 'wana (Mibya ya nyekanyeka:19).*

(Please lengthen your heart, dad, I will try to be like others, i.e have patience, dad.)

Mtombeni uses this idiom to show that Rev. Tihomandloti does not give his son, Madambi, the opportunity to do whatever he could do on his own to better himself. This is an assurance from his son that he will try to compensate.

- (2) *Loko mati va ya tisile u nwisile Celela wa yena hi ku hlomuka mbilu (Mibya ya nyekanyeka:23).*

(When water was brought, she assisted Celela to drink with the heart removed, i.e distressfully.)

Cheyeza, Celela's mother, is in great distress when she realizes that her son is fatally wounded. *Hi ku hlomoka mbilu* is an idiom which shows how perturbed she is.

- (3) In contrast to *ku lehisa mbilu* (to lengthen the heart) i.e to exercise patience, is the idiom *a nga heli mbilu* (not to be finished of heart) i.e to be impatient.)

This is said in respect of the hunter who does not lose patience as he goes about hunting wild animals.. This idiom is used by Madambi in a letter to his father explaining a student's attitude towards his studies.

The examples cited so far from *Mibya ya nyekanyeka*, are illustrative of the fact that Mtombeni uses idioms effectively to enrich his expressions.

In *Ndzi tshikeni*, Mtombeni uses more idioms than in his other prose narratives. This could explain why in this novel no proverbs appear.

Some of the idioms used in *Mibya ya nyekanyeka*, re-appear in *Ndzi tshikeni*. Consequently, we feel it would be a repetition to cite them again.

In addition to the idioms on *mbilu* (heart) which we commented on above, we find the following example:

*... ku kanya mbilu
(Ndzi tshikeni:ii).*

(... to press the heart i.e to gather courage.)

Another instance is used by Xihluku Xilandzo after being told about the attack on his life:

*...ndzi ta tsutsumela kwale xibedlele kumbe ndzi ta kuma
nhlamuselo yo wisa mbilu (Ndzi tshikeni:28).*

(... I will run to the hospital, perhaps I will get an explanation that will fall the heart, i.e cool me down.)

Mtombeni uses this idiom to show that Xihluku Xilandzo is anxious to hear more about this fatal incident.

Another idiom using *mbilu* (heart) is the following:

*Mbilu ya Xihluku yi tlula yi ta tshama enkolweni (Ndzi
tshikeni:13).*

(Xihluku's heart jumped to sit on his throat.)

At times, Mtombeni uses three idioms in one sentence:

*Mina a ndzi vona leswaku hi n'wi susa xikandzeni xa
misava hi sala hi bela hi moya, hi kota ku dya byi rhelela
(Ndzi tshikeni: 15).*

(I was of the opinion that we should remove him from the face of the earth to remain being hit by air, so that food could go down easily, i.e we should kill him to remain free and enjoy life without any hindrance.)

The idioms in question are *hi n'wi susa xikandzeni xa misava* (we remove him from the face of the earth, i.e kill him), *hi sala hi bela hi moya* (we remain being

hit by air), i.e remain free and *dya byi rhelela* (we eat so that it goes down i.e to have peace of mind.)

It is only a stylist like Mtombeni who can combine three idioms in one sentence and still remain intelligible.

Lastly, we wish to comment on idioms using *nhloko* (head), in *Ndzi tshikeni*.

The Sergeant-in-charge instructs Mafambaborile and Kleinbooï to go and investigate the gunning down of Xihluku Xilandzo's son:

Fambani sweswi, mi ndzi tshika ndzi sala ndzi horisa nhloko
(*Ndzi tshikeni:9*).

(Go now, and leave me to remain cooling my head, i.e to remain cool and level-headed.)

Mafambaborile has annoyed the sergeant to an extent that he does not want to see them anymore, and the idiom expresses his irritation.

When Xipelupelu's wife is not willing to cooperate with them in their criminal activities, he remarks:

... leswa vavasati timbyana, tinhloko ta swona ti tele mati
(*Ndzi tshikeni:19*).

(... women are dogs, their heads are full of water, i.e they are very weak in reasoning.)

Because Xihluku's mother does not afford him the opportunity to be his own and exercise his independence as an adult, he accuses her as follows:

... a ndzi fanelanga ku tiseketela hi n'wina ndzi kondza ndzi
basa nhloko (*Ndzi tshikeni:31*).

(... I am not supposed to lean on you until my head becomes grey, i.e until I become an old man.)

Xihluku's actions lead many people to think that

... nhloko a yi hlanganile (Ndzi tshikeni:40).

(...the head was mixed up, i.e he was insane.)

In *Mavala ya yingwe*, Mtombeni also employs idioms in a commendable way. In these short stories, idioms relating to the heart have been used appropriately to express his ideas. In addition to those used in *Mibya ya nyekanyeka* and *Ndzi tshikeni* is the following:

*mbilu ya yena a yi khapakhapa
(Ndzi xavelela yini?:26).*

(her heart was spilling over, i.e she was overjoyed.)

Tihomana is overjoyed to get hold of the poison to kill all the sons of her co-wives.

Mtombeni uses the following idiom to illustrate Rimbilana's exchange of words with Tihomana:

*Hiloko Rimbilana a khoma Khombomuni hi voko a n'wi koka
va famba va ri karhi va hoxana hi rhanga ro hisa ku kondza
marito ma nga ha twakali (Ndzi xavelela yini?:21).*

(Then Rimbilana held Khombomuni by the arm and pulled her and they walked whilst throwing a hot marrow vegetable at each other until one could no longer hear their voices.)

Figuratively, this shows that whilst Rimbilana is moving away, she is insulting Tihomana.

We have discovered that through the use of idioms, Mtombeni is able to explain various situations which would otherwise have been obscure. His communicative power is also revealed to us through the range and variety of idioms used.

6.6 Tone

So far we have assessed diction, sentence patterns, paragraphs, imagery, proverbs and idioms, as important elements of a writer's style. The treatment of style cannot be complete without the inclusion of tone, which is the manifestation of the writer's attitude towards his material and towards his audience (Brooks and Warren, 1971:332). West and Stallman (1958:95) define tone as "the attitude of the author towards what is presented". In their definition *what is presented* is synonymous with the term *material* in Brooks and Warren's definition. William Kenny (1988:77) says that "by tone ... we mean the expression of attitude". The attitudes referred to are obviously those of the author. Kenny (*ibid*) further indicates that:

In spoken language it is primarily the intonation of voice (just how one says "nice work") that reveals the tone and thereby suggests the attitude. In written language, including the language of fiction, tone is primarily a quality of style that reveals the attitudes of the narrator (and by inference, the author) toward subject and audience.

This implies that tone is dependent on style, i.e on what the writer does with language. The writer's attitude will determine the choice of words to express a certain idea. Cohen (1973:50) is of the opinion that the author's attitude is apparent in his choice of words or his arrangement of details. He also mentions that authors can employ numerous tones, because tone can be pessimistic, cynical, ironic, optimistic, objective, satiric, comic, or tragic; sometimes the author will mix tones in one work. In such instances, we should always try to determine whether the mixture has been logical or purposeful.

Heese and Lawton (1983:116) are of the opinion that the reader should be aware of the author's position in the novel and comment on it if it has any relevance. They further indicate that the position which the author adopts is the attitude that he has both towards the events and characters in his novel and towards his readers.

Sylvan Barnet (1979:176) says:

A speaker ... has attitudes towards himself, his subject, and his audience, and (consciously or unconsciously) he chooses his words, pitch, and modulation accordingly; all these add up to his tone.

The term *speaker* as used in Barnet's assertion above, is cognate with the author or the narrator. Attitudes can only be realized through word choice.

Barnet (ibid) further reveals that

... tone must be detected without the aid of the ear; the reader must understand by the selection and sequence of words the way (whether playfully, angrily, confidentially, ironically, or whatever) in which they are meant to be heard.

The discussion thus far indicates that tone may be as elusive as the expression of personality itself. We should not consider tone to be decorative or just an embellishment of expression. It is an integral - sometimes the central part of the meaning.

Examples of tone in Mtombeni's prose narrative will be quoted from *Mibya ya nyekanyeka*, *Ndzi tshikeni* and *Nghunghunyana ni xikhovha*, the first short story in *Mavala ya yingwe*.

The manner in which Mtombeni manipulates events in his plots in his various works reveals his tone.

In *Mibya ya nyekanyeka*, Mtombeni (1967:11) addresses parents as people who have great responsibility towards their children. He says:-

Lexi nga kona hi leswaku mutswari un'wana in un'wana u fanele ku kanya tinguvu a letela vana va yena hi matimba ya yena hinkwawo. Loko vatswari vo endlisa sweswo vana va hina a va ta tsakisa ngopfu.

Xa vumbirhi vatswari va fanele ku dyondzisa vana va vona ku fundza na ku rhandza dyondzo ni vutlhari. Leswi hi nga swi endlaka hina vatswari i ku tshama hi ri karhi hi va kombisa ku tlandluka ni ku enta ka vutlhari hi ku va thyeketela swa khale leswi vonisaka ntamu wa vutlhari na swona hina vatswari hi bohekile ku komba vana va hina tindlela leto saseka ta tintswalo, hi ku tlakusela ehenhla rivoni ro tiya ku titirhela hi ku va fanisela hi bindzu ra mihandzu leyi kumiweke hi lavo tiya eminkarhini ya khale ni ya namuntlha (Mibya ya nyekanyeka:II).

(In actual fact each and every parent has to strive very hard to mould his/her children in all his/her power. If all parents could do that, our children would be more pleasing.

Secondly, parents should teach their children to respect and to love education and wisdom. What we can do as parents is to inculcate the habit of showing them the importance and depth of wisdom that come through learning by continuously telling them all the olden aspects of life which depicted the power of wisdom and we parents were bound to show our children all the good pious ways by elevating the strong lamp to work on their own by reminding them about the advantage gained by those who worked very hard in the olden times and in our time.)

These two paragraphs show how idealistic he is towards parents. Mtombeni is quite optimistic that if parents work with dedication they will eventually produce well-behaved, educated and respectful children. He believes that this should be the duty of each and every parent. It is also implied that in instances where children behave badly, the blame is on the parents who have failed to teach them the accepted norms and values of life.

Mtombeni believes that parents must ensure that their children are properly taught in order to be responsible citizens of the country. The first paragraph spells out this fact unambiguously:

Lexi nga kona hi leswaku mutswari un'wana ni un'wana u fanele ku kanya tinguvu a letela vana va yena hi matimba ya yena hinkwawo (Mibya ya nyekanyeka:II).

(In actual fact each and every parent has to strive very hard

to mould his/her children with all his/her power.)

An idealistic tone prevails in these paragraphs. It is unfortunate that, at the end, this idealism is destroyed. Moral and behavioural standards are violated much against the will of parents.

In the second paragraph, we are able to detect the dislike of the author for children who hate learning and who are not respectful. The author also expresses the hope, courage and perseverance which should characterize their actions because moulding children is a continuous process, which takes time to reach fruition. He says:

Leswi hi nga swi endlaka hina vatswari i ku tshama hi ri karhi hi va kombisa ku tihandluka ni ku enta ka vutlhari hi ku va thyekefela swa khale leswi vonisaka ntamu ni vutlhari ... (ibid).

(What we can do as parents is to inculcate the habit of showing them the importance and the depth of wisdom ...)

The phrase *i ku tshama hi ri karhi hi va kombisa* is indicative of the lengthy and continuous process which the author is referring to.

The author has deliberately chosen words such as *kanya tinguvu* (squeeze clothes, i.e. strive very hard), *fundza na ku rhandza dyondzo* (to respect and to love education), *ku tihandluka ni ku enta ka vutlhari* (the elevation and the depth of wisdom), *tindlela leto saseka ta tintswalo* (the good pious ways) and *hi tlakusela ehenhla rivoni ro tiya ku titihela* (by elevating the strong lamp to work on our own), to indicate his concern for the social development of our children.

The author draws the attention of the readers to some of the awful incidents which happen to our children much against our will:

Miri wa mana wa yena a wu sungula ku rhurhumela hi vusindza ni xivitwana ni mbitsi yo pfumala ntamu wo boha vutomi bya Celela byi nga humi exivirini xa yena. U n'wi

xingile hi matimba ya yena, a n'wi ntswontswa, mihloti yi ri karhi yi xiririka emarhameni yi tshonela emombyeni wa Celela yi hundza yi ya wela ehansi, yin'wana yi tshama emisisini yi fana ni mberha loko dyambu ri nga si huma.

Mihloti ya Cheyeza a yi hundzukile mhamba ya rirhandzu leyi humaka etinhunguvanini ta ngati yin'we leyi a yi ri emisiheni ya vona ha vambirhi, ku bohana ka mutswari ni n'wana wa yena hi nkava wa mbeleko ni mafundzu ya mibya ya ntehe (Mibya ya nyekanyeka:23).

(The body of his mother was beginning to shiver due to pins-and-needles, sobbing and the distress caused by being without the power of preventing Celela from losing his life. She carried him on her laps with all her power. She kissed him, her tears flowing on her cheeks dropping on Celela's face and passing and dropping on the ground, while others remained on his hair like dew before sunrise.

Cheyeza's tears had turned to be a ritual sacrifice of love which comes from the *nhunguvana* (small calabash) or the same blood which was in the veins of both of them, the bond of parent and her child by the umbilical cord and the knots of the straps of the baby-sling.)

The author shows great sympathy for Celela's mother; whatever she does, she cannot prevent her son's soul from leaving his body. He feels the pain of a mother who must witness such a horrendous incident, when her loved one has been shot and is about to die.

Mtombeni is clearly a man of peace who detests violence. He views human nature with tender affection, i.e he wishes that love, happiness and joy should reign in the lives of all people.

The tears that flow down the cheeks of Celela's mother and drop on her son portray her strong maternal love:

Mihloti ya Cheyeza a yi hundzukile mhamba ya rirhandzu leyi humaka etinhunguvanini ta ngati yin'we leyi a yi ri emisiheni ya vona ha vambirhi, ku bohana hi nkava wa mbeleko ni mafundza ya mibya ya ntehe (ibid).

(Cheyeza's tears had turned to be a ritual sacrifice of love which comes from the gourd of the same blood which was in the veins of both of them, the bond of parent and her child by the umbilical cord and the knots of the straps of the baby-sling.)

The flowing of Cheyeza's tears also symbolizes the bitterness, anger and outrage caused by the fatal shooting of her son. The tears that we see on her cheeks compel us to have pity on her. Consequently, a tone of distress and hopelessness is created.

In the first chapter of *Ndzi tshikeni*, Mtombeni says:

Loko Gavaza Makhawukana a ri karhi a lulamisa kofi, Madlayisana a a titlangela ni tata wa yena va tidyela mabulo hi ku rhandzana lokukulu ni ntwelo-vusiwana wa nkava eka mutswari ni n'wana. (Ndzi tshikeni: 1).

(When Gavaza Makhawukana was busy making coffee, Madlayisana was playing with his father conversing together in an atmosphere of love and the piety that is bound by the paternal relationship of father and son.)

The mood that prevails here is that of a happy family united by love, understanding and contentment amongst its members. It is a tone of playfulness which characterizes people who share family ties. The relationship between parents and their child is one of mutual respect and co-existence. The attitude of the author expressed in this paragraph is conveyed in his diction. The reflexive verbs *titlangela* (play on your own) and *tidyela* (eat on your own), are indicative of an action done willingly without any form of coercion. Love and happiness always result from such actions. The use of the reciprocal verb *rhandzana* (love one another) and the abstract noun *ntwelo-vusiwana* (piety), reveal the mood which characterizes this family.

As Xihluku Xilandzo converses with his son, Madlayisana, the inquisitiveness of the latter is revealed through the type of questions that he asks his father:

Hikokwalaho ka yini mi ya entirhweni masiku hinkwawo, tatana? (Ndzi tshikeni:1).

(Why do you get to work everyday, father?)

Laha mi tirhaka kona ku ni swakudya swo tala? ... Ni leswi swo tsokombela ku fana ni malekere? (Ndzi tshikeni:2).

(Is there plenty of food at the place where you work? ... And sweet things like sweets?)

From his questioning we perceive the freedom that Madlayisana enjoys in the presence of his father. Madlayisana feels that he belongs to the family and that it is his right to ask questions. Madlayisana expresses a feeling of admiration for his father. Attitudes of trust, belonging and affection are revealed in this relationship. Mtombeni's diction is in keeping with the tone of confidence that we observe in Madlayisana.

The serenity which prevails is interrupted by the invasion of the thugs:

Nkarhi wa hina wu komile swinene, mi nga hi rivati, humesani mali hi famba - swi nga ri tano ... (Ndzi tshikeni:4).

(Our time is too short, you must not delay us, pop money out so that we go - if not ...)

The author chooses words which aptly express what the thugs want, i.e. money, which should be given immediately to avoid serious repercussions. A sense of callous urgency is implied by the sentence. Mtombeni uses the third person narrator to inform us of this urgency.

Mtombeni reveals great pessimism about Police Officers who in most cases, do not respect the feelings of members of the public. These Police Officers are presented as being mean, inconsiderate, carefree and irresponsible, and not

duty-conscious with regard to the service they should render to the public.

The following dialogue reveals a humorous approach to a serious encounter:

"Secheni, va ndzi dlayele n'wana wa mina. Va n'wi balesele hi xigitsi, kambe a va kongomise ku dlaya mina Secheni; swi lo hatlana na mina loko ndzi tlakula n'wana. Mi ta ya va boha Secheni?"

"Hi ta ya boha vamani, lava tshamaka kwihhi?" Ku vutisa Mafambaborile secheni a nga si hlamula.

"U nga n'wi ngheni enon'weni, n'wi tshikeni a hi hlamusela ka khwatsi," ku vula secheni.

"A hi ku kumbexana va n'wi nyikile mavito ni lomu va tshamaka kona".

"Hi mpfhuka u va phorisa u tshama u kuma mudlayi loyi a siyaka vito ra yena eka valala va yena? Vito ra wena ri lo ku borisa ni miehleketo (Ndzi tshikeni:5).

("Do not interrupt him, let him explain in detail", the sergeant said.

"We thought perhaps they had given him names and the places where they stayed."

"Since you became a policeman have you ever heard of a criminal leaving his name to his enemies? Has your name caused your mind to be rotten?")

The author is clearly pessimistic about the police. Xihluku Xilandzo is greatly offended by the actions of Mafambaborile, who is quite irresponsible in his utterances. Mafambaborile's carefree attitude is noticed in the way he interrupts when Xihluku Xilandzo gives his report of the shooting. The Sergeant-in-charge indicates that Mafambaborile lives up to his name, which is a derivative from the verb stem *-famba* (go) and *-borile* (rotten) i.e one who walks around rotten. Therefore, Mafambaborile is acting to the dictates of his name. The author's attitude is satirical.

Mtombeni's audience consists of people who fear the graveyard and the night. If criminals want to hide away from the police and the general public, they can do so successfully by hiding in the cemetery and only moving around at night when it is dark. Mtombeni expresses this idea as follows:

Xipelupelu na Nhompfu-ya-mbyana a va tshamile exikarhi ka masirha ensin'wini ya masirha. Laha hi laha a va tumbela kona hi ku tshemba leswaku a a nga vi kona munhu loyi a a ta ehleketa ku va lavela emasirheni. Leswi a va tshamisile swona a swi tikomba leswaku a va ri eku kaneleni ka nandzu wa vona etimbilwini ta vona (Ndzi tshikeni:15).

(Xipelupelu and Nhompfu-ya-mbyana were seated amongst the graves in the cemetery. This is where they usually hid themselves knowing that no person would ever think of looking for them at the cemetery. The way they sat there, was indicative of the fact that they were discussing their case in their hearts.)

Normal human beings fear death, consequently, they also fear the graveyard. Xipelupelu and Nhompfu-ya-mbyana behave in accordance with this general belief and go to hide there. They turn the graveyard into a real place of danger. They spend their time there planning the attack on Xihluku Xilandzo and his family. Mtombeni thus conveys their daring attitude and also indicates an attitude of condescension.

Criminals consider themselves important people, who are feared by the community, but ironically, they in turn fear the same people, to the extent that they hide themselves in places like graveyards.

Another ironic attitude that Mtombeni expresses is the fact that jail is a place of safety for many, because when you have committed a crime and you are, as a result, incarcerated, those people you have wronged will not easily be able to take revenge. In that sense, jail is a place of safety. In *Ndzi tshikeni*, Xihluku Xilandzo kills Xipelupelu in broad daylight and in front of the warders. Therefore, jail has now become a place of insecurity and danger.

When the judge sentences Xihluku Xilandzo, he says:

"Hi byeriwile leswaku u tlhavile mufi hi xikhomo xa lepula lexi a xi lotiwile xi kondza xi hundzuka risungunu ro kariha swinene; leswi swi komba leswaku a a swi pimapimile hi miehleketeto leyo tenga, leyo enta, leyo kungeta hi ku lavana loku nga endla leswaku ku dlawa ka mufi ku n'wi wela tani hi xihuhuri xa vukarhi byo pulukanya vutomi bya yena hi ku copeta ka tihlo.

"Lowu a hi ntirho wa munhu loyi a hlanganeke nhloko; i ntirho wa miehleketeto ya munhu loyi loko a hlundzukile a nga dlayaka tiko hinkwaro (Ndzi tshikeni:42).

(We have been informed that you stabbed the deceased with the handle of a spoon which was sharpened to an extent that it became a deadly weapon; this is an indication that you had a well-planned, calculated and deep intention which resulted in the killing of the deceased which occurred like a strong whirlwind to enable him to stop his life in the wink of an eye.

This is not the work of an insane person. It is the work of a furious man who can kill the whole country.)

The attitude of the author in this instance is that crime does not pay. Those who commit it, like Xihluku Xilandzo, have to be punished, hence the life sentence that he is given.

In *Nghunghunyana ni xikhovha*, which is the first short story in *Mavala ya yingwe*, Mtombeni applies the popular belief that an owl is considered an evil omen and that people who practise witchcraft, use it to reach their goals. Chief Nghunghunyana is frightened to death by the owl placed in front of his palace door. The people of chief Nghunghunyana also become terrified:

Ku tlhela ku va ni ntungu wa loyi a nga ti kumiwa swi n'wi fanele ku va yena loyi a a gadile xikhovha xexo - loko ku ehleketiwa mhango leyi a yi ta n'wi humelela hinkwavo swi va chavisile etimbilwini ta vona; timbilu ta vanhu va tiko hinkwaro ti sungurile ku twela munhu wa kona vusiwana hambu leswi a nga si tiveka (Nghunghunyana ni xikhovha:7).

(There was also fear for the one who would be found to have been responsible for flying on that owl to the Chief - when thinking of what would happen to him, because of this incident, they were all frightened in their hearts; the hearts of all countrymen started pitying those who were responsible, although by that time they were not known.)

The chief refuses to ignore this incident. Loyal, honest and faithful indunas of the chief are wrongly executed for something that they did not do, but in the end the true culprits are discovered. The witchdoctors are cruelly killed for having cheated the chief. The author's attitude is that no one is entitled to cheat or use evil plans to get others in trouble.

6.7 Dialogue

In our discussion of characterization in chapter four, paragraph 4.3.2, we indicated that dialogue is one of the techniques which Mtombeni uses in delineating his characters. In the process, we discovered that dialogue is a vital form of action related to plot, and it is also a basic source of characterization and of an author's style.

Therefore, the assessment of style necessitates the study of dialogue. Nevertheless, we do not wish to repeat what was said in chapter four. The themes of Mtombeni's works are revealed to the readers by making his characters converse like people whose actions are credible and lifelike.

6.8 Summary

Every writer uses language to communicate with his readers. He uses the language in his own particular way which characterizes him as an individual, different from any other author, even in the same genre. The manner in which he writes, which is unique and different, is called his style. It is through style that we are able to distinguish authors.

In assessing the language of the writer, diction, which is the choice and the arrangement of words, comes first. Words are used to form sentences, which are either simple or complex. The sentences in turn form paragraphs, which contain ideas which should logically flow to constitute a well-thought out message which the author intends conveying to his readers.

Words, sentences and paragraphs constitute the language of the author which is used in his special way. Authors also employ imagery, proverbs and idioms. These are embellishments of the language which enrich the expression of the writer. These elements of language are not only decorative, but essentially contribute to the clarification of the message which he intends putting across.

Through the use of words, imagery, proverbs and idioms, we are able to discern the writer's tone. It is in the tone of the writer that we are able to discover his attitude towards his readers and his material. Mtombeni's use of imagery, proverbs and idioms is unequalled in Tsonga literature.

CHAPTER SEVEN

PATTERNED LANGUAGE IN MTOMBENI'S PLAYS

7.1 Introduction

Patterned language is another stylistic feature which Mtombeni uses in transmitting his ideas to his audience. It is mostly employed in his first play *Malangavi ya mbilu*, which was first published in 1966. The text demonstrates a dramatic deviation from conventional Tsonga conversation, in that the dialogue has in most instances been written in verse or poetry. Allardyce Nicoll (1965:145) calls this type of language design patterned language. He argues that in the minds of those who speak of poetry and prose in drama, is that there is a difference between dramatic dialogue which reproduces more or less faithfully the speech of ordinary life and the dramatic dialogue which makes use of a definitely artificial form of language.

Dramatists often deliberately design their plays to have the form of a dialogue patterned in verse. T.S. Eliot (1949:6) says:

In fact, I should say that poetry should be the norm for dramatic expression; and that it is more possible for poetry to adapt itself to the uses of prose, than for prose to perform the function of poetry.

Hauptfleisch (1978:31) refers to drama as an attempt by the artist to express a concept through the selection and a structuring of a series of everyday images. Hauptfleisch (1978:32) concludes that "the amount of a section, condensation and adaptation in art is usually greater than in normal everyday conversation".

These arguments imply that the dramatist intentionally selects, condenses and adapts words, phrases and sentences to form a pattern which will explicitly

express his ideas. The terms *structuring and selection* allude to patterned language, through which a specific way of thinking and feeling is expressed.

Although quite a number of literary experts agree that plays should be written in verse, Marivate (1970:43) notes that:

Some critics argue that the speech of the characters in ...[the] play is not natural, it is not according to everyday speech of spoken Tsonga. Others object to the dialogue on the grounds that the characters recite more than they converse.

Understandably, these arguments have been raised against the dialogue in Mtombeni's plays because he has used patterned language.

In contrast to the critics mentioned by Marivate above, Clarke (1965:46) argues that "in Elizabethan times, the Middle Ages, and among the Greeks, verse was regarded by all as the most proper and suitable kind of language for drama".

From this argument we can conclude that Mtombeni's approach to dialogue *in Malangavi ya mbilu* is fully within an acceptable dramatic tradition. Clarke (1965:48) further says:

At the moment although it is likely enough to hold the interest of many thousands of people against the challenge of films and television, many people feel that something is lacking - that the present age cannot compare favourably with the Elizabethan or the Greeks.

In this respect, Styan (1993:27) asserts that:

We should expect a dramatic poet like Shakespeare to write his finest poetry in his most dramatic scenes. And this is just what we do find: what makes it most dramatic is what makes it most poetic. No one ever points to certain plays as being the most poetic, and to other plays as being the most dramatic. The same plays are the dramatic,

and this is not by a concurrence of the two activities, but by the full expansion of one and the same.

The above forms a powerful argument for drama to be written in verse. The poetic form is more suited for the expression of feelings. Michael Black (1977:40) also agrees that "Shakespearean drama is poetic; a great deal of the rest of Elizabethan drama is in verse".

This argument is also supported by Allardyce Nicoll (1965:145) who quotes Maughan as having stated that "the prose drama to which I have given so much life will soon be dead". This quotation seems to imply that verse drama will last for ever and that dramatists should write in verse form, or patterned language. Mtombeni can be seen, therefore, as part of the great tradition of drama written in patterned language.

Another striking feature of drama, according to Nicoll (1965:146) is the following:

Action is to drama what his body is to man; in its language resides the drama's soul. A playwright essentially is, or should be, an artist in words.

All actions that the drama purports to reveal, are conveyed through the playwright's skilful patterning of his words and sentences to express his intentions. It is also interesting to note what Styan (1993:45) says about dramatic verse. He asserts:

The dramatist who is not a poet is so much the less dramatist ... only the use of verse on the stage can elevate the drama to a position where its achievements may be taken as seriously as those of the novel.

This implies that a stage drama which employs patterned language will hold the attention of its audience. Styan's use of the adverb *only* emphasizes the fact that without verse, the standard of the drama in question may be very low. His

use of the verb *elevate* implies that the quality of the drama will be enhanced by the employment of verse. Styron (1993:46) further argues that:

If a playwright uses verse today it is because he wishes by traditional methods to make his play a more universal statement one of extended range. So he rejects representational for "presentational" dramatic form.

It is through the use of the presentational drama that the dramatist may use all the agencies of the stage to render his ideas transparent for our better understanding of them.

It is clear that the use of patterned language in drama is acceptable in literature, it is perhaps the best tool to be used in writing drama. Therefore, the employment of patterned language by Mtombeni in his *Malangavi ya mbilu* can be seen as a valid literary approach.

The main thrust in this chapter will be to examine how Mtombeni uses patterned language in *Malangavi ya mbilu* and to investigate its use in *Mihizo ya kayivele* and *Vuhlangi bya vuhlangi*.

7.2 The effects of patterned language in *Malangavi ya mbilu*

Mtombeni uses patterned language in *Malangavi ya mbilu* with the aim of transmitting his message to his audience. He aims at being explicit, clear and relevant with regard to the thoughts and ideas in this play. Its main theme is the moral decadence of society in modern times.

Malangavi ya mbilu is a play about a young man, Marhule, who falls in love with a traditional young woman, Makhana. As young modern adults, they stay together although they are not yet formally married. In the interim, two children are born. Marhule falls in love with another young woman, Ruti, who is training as a nurse. This involvement leads him to forget his common law

wife and their two children. The student nurse is attracted to another young man and they fall in love. Marhule discovers their affair and realizes that he has been rejected. He decides to return to Makhanana, his jilted partner. Unfortunately, by then it is too late, because Makhanana is now deeply in love with Khazamula, and they are planning to marry. This is a great loss to Marhule, who is now without anyone to love him. Marhule laments the loss of the two women, whilst his grandmother comforts him by encouraging him to start again and guard that this situation does not recur.

The dialogue of these characters is in the form of patterned language.

7.2.1 The use of patterned language to express emotional feelings

This play is about the frustrations experienced by lovers. We find characters such as Marhule, Makhanana, Ruti and Khazamula expressing the ways in which love affects their lives. In this respect Styan (1993:44) indicates that "poetry is there to express and define patterns of thought and feeling otherwise inexplicable and indefinable. This is the legitimate reason for its use".

Lovers tend to choose quiet and cool spots to pledge their love. The quiet and the cool breeze in the shade of a tree, promote intimacy in the hearts of the two lovers. This atmosphere is readily conveyed by patterned language. In scene I of *Malangavi ya mbilu* when Makhanana arrives at the tree where Marhule, her lover is waiting for her, she expresses her innermost feelings as follows:

*Nkatanga, ku losa ka marito ya mina,
Na ku rhurhumela ka xiviri xa mina
A swi ve vutomi eka n'wina;
Swi va ntiyiso na nsovo eka n'wina.
Ndzi vukarheni, mi ndzi ongola mbanga,
Ndzi ongoleni xilondza xo hava mbanga
Xitlhavi lexi laha ku nga hava.
Mbilu ya mina ya mi rilela,
Ya mi fundzha, yi dzunisa xiyimo xa n'wina.*

*Mi kona laha mi nga ri ki kona,
Endzeni ka mina - embilwini ya mina
(Malangavi ya mbilu:11).*

(My darling, I greet you,
Although I am trembling
Let it bear testimony to you;
And it be the truth and kindness to you.
Please embrace me, nurse my wound,
Nurse the sore without a wound
The stitch in my side where there is none.
My heart is crying for you,
It respects you, it praises your position.
You are present where you are absent,
Inside me - in my heart.)

The dialogue is clearly presented in verse form, using patterned language. In this fashion, Makhanana presents the depth of her love for Marhule. She reveals her love to Marhule in a manner which involves him utterly. Makhanana's sincerity is revealed by words that she uses. As she speaks, her words are inviting. She commands in a loving manner, that Marhule should respond by embracing her:

*Ndzi vukarheni, mi ndzi ongola ...
(Malangavi ya mbilu:11).
(Please embrace me and nurse my wound ...)*

Makhanana is depicted as suffering from the pains of love, and needing the care of Marhule's attention. His love would soothe the pains of love. She begs him to cure the wound of love which she cannot easily show:

*... xitlhavi lexi ku nga hava
(ibid).*

(... the pain which cannot be pinpointed, i.e the love in her.)

The common association of love with the heart is obvious:

*Mbilu ya mina ya mi rilela,
Ya mi fundzha, yi dzunisa xiyimo xa n'wina
Mi kona ...
Endzeni ka mina embilwini ya mina
(Malangavi ya mbilu:11).*

(My heart is crying for you
It respects you, it praises your position
You are present where you are absent.)

The natural beauty around them forms part of the love that Makhanana experiences in the presence of Marhule. As a result, she wishes that the world and the sky could witness the joy in her heart. Natural imagery is prominent in her speech:

*A ndzi tshamise endzhutini wa n'wina
Ndzi orhela masana ya dyambu ra n'wina
Ndzi va xikhaviso na xibombo xa n'wina ...
(Malangavi ya mbilu:).*

(Let me be in your shadow
And bask in the sunshine of your sun
To be your beauty and your pretty person ...)

Through patterned language Mtombeni succeeds in creating a dialogue which enables Makhanana to convey to her beloved, the message which comes from her heart. Her speech leaves the audience in no doubt that she loves Marhule with all her heart. Marhule responds by saying

*Tana haleno nkatanga, tana maseve,
Ndzi lava ku ku sula nyuku wa rendzo;
Ku ku xinga na ku ku khunharha,
Ndzi ku tswontswa hi vunkwabyo bya mina,
Tshinela hi khumbana, hi hakarhana.
Tinyanyana na swihlahla swi ta phokotela
Rirhandzu ra hina ...
Hi nga nyumi hikuva rirhandzu xihlungwa
Xa vutomi na mindyangu ya vanhu
(Malangavi ya mbilu:12).*

(Come to me darling, come my love,
 I would like to wipe off the sweat of the journey;
 To carry you on my lap and to lean on you,
 And kiss you wholeheartedly,
 Come nearer for us to touch and embrace each other.
 The birds and the forests will be the witnesses
 Of our love
 Let us not be shy because love is the crown
 Of the life and the families of people.

The above speech clearly illustrates the view of Allardyce
 Nicoll (1965:146):

The world of the drama, however, is, or should be, the world of emotions, and every one knows that our common speech has no power to express our passions intimately. In ordinary life passion tends to make us tongue-tied or incoherent, the trite phrases stunned with grief spluttering with anger', and the like, testify to a universal recognition of this fact.

Marhule's response also reveals the tendency for the natural world to be used as the lovers' setting and mirror. In this instance, Marhule refers to the *tinyenyana* (birds) and *swihlahla* (forests) which witness their love.

When Makhanana falls pregnant, she is presented to the Mdungazi family. At this stage, Marhule is thrilled by the prospect of fatherhood.

*Ndzi lava ku tihlayisela mbewu ya mina
 Mbewu ya ka Khava-ra-N'hwembe
 (Malangavi ya mbilu:15).*

(I want to look after my offspring by myself,
 The offspring of Khava-ra-N'hwembe.)

This makes it clear that Marhule wants to live with his wife and nurture his children. The name *Khava-ra-N'hwembe* is a praise name for the Mdungazi family. Marhule uses it in this context to show his satisfaction with Makhanana's

pregnancy. It indicates that Makhanana and the baby will become part of Khava-ra-N'hwembe family. The use of the clan name, emphasizes Marhule's commitment. Mtombeni achieves this effect through the use of patterned language.

In scene IX, Mtombeni presents us with another love scene, but this time between Khazamula and Makhanana. The focus is on Khazamula who is proposing love to Makhanana. He says:

*Xana makuwa ya matatana ya ku twa
Ku tsokombela loku twiwaka hi
Vanhu na tinyanyana ke?
(Malangavi ya mbilu:26).*

(Do ripe figs of the season perceive
The sweetness that is experienced by
People and birds?).

Makhanana is associated with ripe figs which are sweet and are a delight to people and birds. Khazamula imagines her as somebody who could bring him happiness and joy. In the scene discussed above, Mtombeni refers to birds which are witnesses of the love between Makhanana and Marhule, but in this case, the birds are participants in the enjoyment of the sweet taste of the first figs of the season. In this manner, Khazamula is trying to convince Makhanana that he loves her because of her sweet qualities. Makhanana does not respond positively as Marhule did when she invited him to embrace her. Instead she reveals that she is not the sweet fruit that he is referring to, because she is now a *xivuya* (a wife who returned to her parents or a divorcee):

*A wo ndzi vungunya ka Khazamula -
A wu swi tivi leswaku ndzi xivuya?
Xivuya xo vuya na ntihambi xi khukhula
(Malangavi ya mbilu:27).*

(Are you not joking Khazamula -
Are you not aware that I am a divorcee?)

A divorcee that brought back a lot of children.)

What is interesting here is the use of *xivuya* twice in close proximity. Its use emphasizes the marital status of Makhanana so that when she eventually accepts Khazamula's love, he cannot turn against her - he should love her knowing fully well that she is the mother of two children by another man.

In scene X, Makhanana is relieved of her doubts by Khazamula's assurances:

*Xo biha hi lexo endliwa hi munhu;
Swa Xikwembu hinkwaswo swi basile.
Rirhandzu ra mina ri ente swa malwandle,
Ri lehile ku tlula tintshava na mapapa;
Ri ku rilela tani hi xihlangi,
Tani hi thonsi ra mputa emananga
(Malangavi ya mbilu:28).*

(The ugly thing is the one made by man;
All that God created is alright.
My love is as deep as the seas,
It is taller than the mountains and the clouds;
It is crying for you like a baby,
Like a drop of rain in the wilderness.)

The images used here *malwandle* (seas), *tintshava* (mountains), *mapapa* (clouds), *thonsi* (drop of rain) and *mananga* (wilderness), show the intensity of Khazamula's love for Makhanana. Such images impress on her the seriousness of his intentions. As a result, Makhanana succumbs to the temptation:

*Moya wa mina wa huma eka mina,
Wu hefemulela eka wena;
Suka emahlweni ka mina u famba,
Loko u te hi moya wa vubih;
Ndzi fularhele u muka - u swuvela,
Ndzi nga si tinyiketa hi vuvukarho byo biha
(Malangavi ya mbilu:29).*

(My soul is moving out from me,

It is leading into yours;
 Please leave me and go,
 If you came with wrong intentions;
 Turn away from me and disappear,
 Before I submit wholeheartedly to deceitful love.)

Makhanana is being ironic. She does not actually mean that Khazamula should turn away from her. In actual fact, she is saying that he should keep his word and live up to it, because she has heard such protestations of love before. Therefore, she is insisting on his total commitment so that when she eventually agrees to his love, she can trust that it will last for good. To her, experience has been a strict teacher.

Mtombeni goes on to illustrate how effective patterned language can be in expressing emotional feelings of love, when Marhule meets Ruti, the student nurse, for the first time. Here we are shown love at first sight. It can be expressed quite strongly. Marhule says:

*Xiviri xa mina xi haha swa nyanyana,
 Xi hunga na mimoya ya misava;
 Mbilu ya mina yi tele tinsimu timbe
 Yo tlhutha hi ku tsokombela
 Ka rirhandzu ra mina eka wena.
 Eka swilo hinkwaswo i vumbhoni,
 Vumbhoni bya rirhandzu na nsovo,
 Ku tsetselela na vunene bya Tata wa hina
 (Malangavi ya mbilu:30).*

(My whole self is flying like a bird,
 It is blowing with the winds of the earth;
 My heart is full of foreign melodies
 It is frothing through the sweetness
 Of my love to you.
 To all things it is testimony,
 Testimony of love and kindness,
 To the mercy and goodness of our Father.)

Once more, reference is made to *nyanyana* (bird), *mimoya* (winds), *misava* (earth) and *tinsimu* (songs), to show the connection between love and the

natural world. Marhule finds himself overwhelmed by love in the presence of Ruti, a beautiful nurse from the local hospital. He thinks of the *ku tsetselela na vunene bya Tata wa hina* (The mercy and the goodness of our Father). The noun *Tata wa hina* (Our Father) is written in capital letter *T* to show that he is referring to the Almighty. Marhule perceives this sudden overwhelming love as a gift from God. Ruti listens attentively, and responds in similar vein:

*Mbilu ya mina yi le ku rhuleni namuntlha;
Swa ndzi kombisa leswaku ku tsaka,
Na ku rhandzana i xiviri xa vutomi,
Byento bya timbilu ta vanhu na vumunhu.
Malangavi ya rirhandzu ra mina ya nantswa
Mpfhuka wa matilo, ya lumeka tinyeleti
Ta vusiku ti pfurha ti voninga hinkwako,
Ku hava na laha ku nga tumbela sokoti.
Nhova yi tshwa emisaveni ni le matilweni,
Malangavi ya khumba timbilu ta vanhu,
Laha ndzilo wu nga sungula kona
Malangavi ya nghena ya timekela kona (ibid).*

(My heart is at peace today;
It is evident to me that happiness
And love are the components of life,
The depth of the hearts of people and humanity.
The flames of my love touches
The sky and illuminates the stars
Of the night to provide light all over,
There is no place where even an ant can hide.
The forests burn on earth and in the sky,
The flames touch the hearts of people,
Where fire actually started
The flames penetrated and extinguished in there.)

Ruti speaks for a long time with no interruption from Marhule, revealing the love that she has discovered. Life seems to her to be an ecstatic combination of joy and love. She refers to *malangavi* (flames), part of the title of the play. While the title refers to *malangavi ya mbilu* (flames of the heart), Ruti speaks of *malangavi ya rirhandzu* (flames of love). The noun *mbilu* (heart) can be seen as synonymous with *rirhandzu* (love). The natural images *matilo* (skies), *tinyeleti* (stars) and *ku tshwa ka nhova* (the burning of the forests)) evoke the

intensity of love in one way or another. The shining of the stars in the sky will always have something to do with the presence of love, but the burning of the forests seems in contrast, to imply the end of the passion between two lovers. In Marhule's response, he makes reference to Ruti's eyes, which resemble the clear water of the fountain; tall trees with cool shade and the effects of such shade in quenching his thirst for love:

*Wena u andzisa torha ra mina loko
U ringeta ku ri tima, u omisa hi ku tima,
U ndzi kandza timbanga ta moya
(Malangavi ya mbilu:30).*

(You increase my thirst when
You try to quench it - you make me dry as you quench,
You soothe the wounds of my soul.)

The patterned language conveys quite clearly the intensity of their encounter. The euphoria does not last, however, as the next section will indicate.

7.2.2 The use of patterned language to express frustrations and disappointments

In his preface (*Rito ro rhanga*) to *Malangavi ya mbilu*, Mtombeni says:

*Vavanuna na vavasati va namuntlha
Va xisana mindzuku hinkwayo,
Mahanyelo ya vanhu va namuntlha
Ku tumba-tumba masiku hinkwawo;
Va lumbetana hi mavunwa,
Ntiyiso wu va mavunwa,
Timbilu ti khunguvanyekisiwa;
Tinhloko ti nyakapfariwa,
Tani hi vanhu va matsalwa lawa,
Mavito la nga ta landzela lawa
(Malangavi ya mbilu:7),*

(Men and women of today
Daily cheat one another,
The behaviour of people today

They hold secret meetings every now and then,
 They falsely accuse one another,
 The truth turns into lies;
 Their hearts become depressed,
 Their heads ache and they become disgusted,
 Just like the characters in this play,
 The names which will follow this preface.)

This preface reveals that in this play we should expect to meet characters who will never experience peace. The love expressions referred to in 7.2.1 are of a temporary nature.

The slow decay begins when Marhule starts to show signs of revulsion, discontentment and dissatisfaction with Makhanana. He starts to come home late at night. Makhanana innocently asks:

*Xana masiku lawa mi ngo famba
 Vusiku, kasi mihloti ya mina yi tata nkamba,
 Hikuva mi nga vonaki ku vuya; swo yini?
 (Malangavi ya mbilu:24).*

(Why do you come back home late at night
 Whilst I continue crying for you,
 When I do not see you coming back?)

Makhanana hopes that her concern about the strange behaviour of her lover would remind him of the fact that she still loved him very much, but to her dismay, it infuriates him. The answer that she gets from Marhule is shattering:

*Mina hi bya mina a swi ndzi tsakisi
 Ku ngunga vusiku tanihi varisi,
 Handle ka leswaku mbilu ya mina
 Yi tinyikete ku ntshunxa fundzu ra hina*

(I, personally, am not happy
 To walk distances at night like herdboys
 Except that my heart
 Is ready to untie our knot, i.e dismantle our love.)

Makhanana cannot believe what her lover is telling her, but he spells it out even more clearly:

*Ndzi lava leswaku tiko ri tiva mintirho
Ya mina, naswona ndzi yi endla nanhlekanhi,
Ndzi nge swi koti ku tshama na munhu
Enyongeni, kasi wun'wana u le mbilwini
(Malangavi ya mbilu:25).*

(I want the whole world to know what I am doing,
And that what I do is done during broad daylight,
I cannot afford to stay with a person
By my side, whilst another one is in my heart.)

Marhule vows that he will never return to Makhanana:

*Loko a ri mina ndzi fambela makumu
(Malangavi ya mbilu:24).*

(As for me, I am going for ever.)

This throws Makhanana into confusion and despair. The fact that her children will grow without a father torments her. She is left helpless. Satirically, Makhanana indicates to Jamela that:

*Phela va Marhule va ncincimuka na Vembe
A va lavi ku hundziwa hi xanchumu.
Va lava ku wisa timbirhi, tinharhu hi lembe,
Va burisana na swa misava ku ko ku wa fumu
(Malangavi ya mbilu:26),*

(By the way, people like Marhule are going with the stream.

They do not want to miss anything.

They want to fall two, three per annum,

They converse at great length about mundane affairs until eternity.)

Makhanana is trying to ridicule Marhule's behaviour before Jamela, to evoke her sympathy. Before Jamela can react, they are disturbed by the arrival of

Khazamula who wants to talk to Makhanana. Makhanana is lamenting her loss, she knows that there is little of Marhule returning to her. Makhanana further reveals her frustrations and disappointment with Marhule when talking with Khazamula, who is proposing love to her:

*Hi leswaku n'wina vavanuna mo fana,
Mi lava leswi mi nga swi rhandziki;
Mi tinyiketa hi swa mavunwa.
N'wina mo lava ku nantswa mi tshika,
Ku luma mi tshwutela entshurini
Mi tsakisa hi ku tshova rhavi ra matabyana,
Kasi a mi nga ri tshiveli exitikweni,
Swa wena a swi twali; a ndzi swi pfumeli
(Malangavi va mbilu:28),*

(The fact of the matter is that you men are alike,
You like what you do not love;
You indulge in deceit.
What you need is to taste and leave,
You bite and spit on the dust.
You take delight in breaking a tender and supple branch,
Whereas you are not going to use it for fire;
Yours is not understandable, I do not agree.)

Makhanana is questioning the authenticity of Khazamula's love because she does not want to fall into the same trap again. She is now treading with extreme caution and a measure of cynicism. She says:

*... n'wina vavanuna mo fana
(Malangavi ya mbilu:28).*

(... you men are just alike.)

Allardyce Nicoll (1965:148) reiterates that:

If the dramatist should be an artist in words, if the drama itself should deal mainly with emotional material, and if its limitations demand that playwrights should have the most instruments available for their use, then certainly the employment of our common familiar speech, even when

carefully selected and manipulated, is not sufficient for dramatic dialogue. It is of course the realization of this that has led to the recent pleas for poetry.

Mtombeni skilfully employs words to express how his characters feel about their daily problems. From the way they converse, their innermost emotional reality becomes clear.

Makhanana's attitude towards men is clear from the dialogue:

*N'wina vavanuna mi ndzingo muni?
Mi hi khunguvanyisela yini minoo?
Ku tsokombela ka marito ya Sathani
Vavanuna mi tsokomberisa marito ya Sathani
(Malangavi ya mbilu:28).*

(Why are you men such a big temptation?
Why do you disappoint us?
Your Satanic sweet tongue
Men, your tongues are as sweet as the words of Satan.)

Makhanana speaks thus because of the harsh treatment that she received from her former lover, Marhule, who cheated her. She compares his behaviour with the deceitful actions of the Devil.

Boulton (1980:132) sums up the effect of patterned language in conveying the emotions of characters in drama. She says:

Most of us have witnessed, if we have not felt, the choking inarticulateness of great anger or great grief; and joy can reach such extremes that we weep from inability to say anything. It is in this kind of situation that only convention, but in another sense truer to our inner reality than the miserable words of our everyday speech, can convey anything of the emotion.

7.2.3 The use of patterned language to express dejection and loss

Mtombeni employs the dramatic device of soliloquy to express a mood of dejection, depression and loss in his characters in *Malangavi ya mbilu*. Soliloquy, so says Theodore W. Halten (1975:23) is :

... a solo speech, generally an introspective analysis of a pondering of a future course of action. Playwrights, aware of rich psychological life beneath the surface, also used the convention of the soliloquy to reveal workings of the mind.

Through this dramatic device, a person, though alone, speaks aloud to himself or to be heard by the audience. Soliloquy can lead to quite different effects (Beckerman, 1970:13).

Mtombeni uses soliloquy to express the mood of dejection in Marhule. Marhule eventually finds himself at a loss when Ruti rejects him. At this juncture, he laments bitterly and prays to God to forgive him for all the mistakes he has made. He says:

*Wena Tatana, muphameri wa vunene na nsovo,
Muvumbi wa swilo hinkwaswo-nkwaswo;
Miringo na ku khunguvanyisiwa i swa yini-ke?
Tatana wa misava na matilo hinkwawo
Mubohi wa mafundzu ya harhi ya misava,
Mukhongoteri wa va makhombo na swirilo,
Wena mufambisi wa magandlati na tinguva,
Mu-enghenisi wa ntengo etimbilwini ta vanhu,
Loko ndzi dyohela misava na vumunhu
Hi wena la' tivaka leswi ndzi ringaneke,
Loko u nga si ndzi ahlula Tatana, ndzi rivalele;
Handle ka sweswo moya wa mina
Wu ta eka Wena, Tatana wa matimba hinkwawo
(Malangavi ya mbilu :42),*

(Father, the Supplier of virtue and mercy,
The Creator of all things;
Why should there be temptations and disappointments?

Father of all heaven and earth
 The decider of everything on earth,
 The comforter of all who are in misfortunes and distress,
 You are the controller of waves and seasons,
 The cause of serenity in the people's hearts,
 If I have sinned against the earth and humanity
 You are the one who knows what is good for me,
 Therefore, before you judge me, Father, forgive me;
 If not, my soul
 Will come to you, Almighty Father, i.e he will die.)

Marhule lingers and wanders alone with his mental anguish. As he passes a certain homestead, an old bearded man emerges soliloquizing. This old man declaims that the gods of Magudu and Ngwenya, his forefathers, would deal with those who brought misfortune on his child. The old man praises himself for the prowess and the ability to perform miracles of immeasurable magnitude. In his soliloquy he says:

*Hi mina xidzidzi xo pyopya hi vulombe,
 Mina muleteri wa miswona na swikhovha
 Ndzi pfuka ndzi dya vuswa ndzi yevuriwile,
 Ndzi bubula valala va ri ku xuxeni;
 Ndzi tlhengula swisa swi hisa vaorhi.
 Hi mina muswuri wa tinghoda ta tinghala,
 Mina mutluti wa mpfilumpfilu wa malwandle
 Munambuteri wa vuhlungu bya tinyoka na swikungu
 N'wina, n'wina vanwi va ngati ya ntukulu wa mina,
 Gonyani miganga mi pela milambu,
 Tlhotlhoovelani swihlahla mi tsemakanya timbala;
 Kambe ndzi ta va na n'wina xikolo-kolo
 (Malangavi ya mbilu:43-44).*

(I am the honey badger that becomes drunk by eating honey,
 I am the instructor of small and big owls
 I wake up to eat porridge whilst skinned, i.e naked,
 I glean my enemies whilst warming themselves around the fire
 I pull burning wood from the fire to burn those seated around it.
 I am the weaver of ropes to catch lions,
 I, the cause of storms in the oceans,
 The sucker of the venom of snakes and scorpions
 You, you, who drank the blood of my grandson,

Ascend the ridges and cross the rivers,
 Wriggle your way through the thick bush and cross the
 plains
 But I will always be on your heels.)

When Marhule overhears what the old man was saying, he realizes that he is indeed, in a difficult situation, which requires immediate attention.

*Moya wa mina i mpfilumpfilu wa makhukhumba
 ebobomeni; Swi ri ndzi bungula ndzi tsutsuma. (Malangavi
 ya mbilu:44).*

(My soul is in a confusing state of debris at the waterfall I
 feel I have to run away.)

He cannot ignore the warnings that the old man is issuing. As Marhule listens to the threats he fears that these will be diverted to him, and cause his death. Marhule is convinced that the old man has supernatural powers. This is evident from his capability to train owls to perform miracles; his ability to remove people whilst warming themselves around the fire; his adroitness in miraculously pulling wood from the fire and burning those who were sitting around it; he is a person who can make strong ropes to tie vicious animals like lions; a man who can cause storms in the oceans and above all, a man who can suck the venom of snakes and scorpions and never die. All these facts make Marhule think of his wasted past.

The song which Sevengwani, a divorcee, sings as she approaches the spot where Marhule is seated pondering about his problems, reminds him that:

*Nkarhi wu fikile, nkarhi wu ta hundza (Malangavi ya
 mbilu:51).*

(The time has come, the time will pass.)

These words from the song give him hope that what is happening to him will one day be a thing of the past.

As Sevengwani and Marhule begin conversing, she becomes aware of his dejection. Marhule indicates that:

*Ndzi bolele hi mbewu ya ndlala. Misava na
vutomi swi fikile evugimeta-musi (Malangavi
ya mbilu:51).*

(My seeds of famine got rotten. The earth
and life have reached the horizon, i.e the
end.)

The divorcee asks for more details. He mourns that his body is still alive, but his ego is dead. He feels that he has reached the zenith of his life whilst still very young. Marhule feels that his body is floating like debris on the river. He feels that he is like a weed that has to be removed to make way for more productive plants such as mealies. This evokes in him a feeling of dejection, because he feels he is destined to die in order to open the way for better people to survive. This feeling of helplessness is achieved through the use of patterned language. Finally, Marhule concludes:

*Ndzi pfuleke mahlo ni tindleve,
Ku ndzi tiharihisa na ku ndzi kurisa
(Malangavi ya mbilu:52).*

(My eyes and ears are now opened,
For me to be wise and to grow.)

Despite such encouraging words, Marhule cannot forget the misery of his loss:

*Ku saseka ka swa misava ku herile,
Ku hete hi futa ra le xibedihele;
Futa ra mbhuri ya muongori.
Mbhuri ya ku vatlwa, yo hleka hi n'wehla,
Swirho swö hlehleriwa hi mandla,
Baseleni wo basa na mbilu,
Ngati ya yena yi cheriwe ndzhope;
Ndzhope lowu n'wi thyakiseke mbilu,
Swi va swi ndzi tluleta
(Malangavi ya mbilu:52).*

(The beauty of the earth has come to an end,
 It was ended by the carelessness of the hospital;
 The carelessness of the beautiful nurse.
 The crafted beauty, who showed a gap between the teeth
 when laughing,
 The limbs which were moulded by hands,
 The light complexioned with a clean heart.
 Her blood has been tinted by mud;
 The mud that also diled her heart,
 This became contagious to me.)

This dialogue is redolent with regret about lost opportunities; the love of Ruti, whom he labels as one of the most beautiful women that the world has ever produced. Sevengwani's answer is simple:

*U vula leswaku u ta tisunga u tihingela swo ha' nchumu?
 A wu yi voni misava yi ngo makanyeka Tintombhi ta
 tinxaka hinkwato? (MaJangavi ya mbilu 53).*

(Are you saying that you are going to commit suicide For something not quite substantial? Don't you see that the world is full of Women of all kinds?)

Marhule cannot deny that the world is full of women, but to him, Ruti represented the ultimate woman:

*Va haxiwile hakunene,
 Kambe hinkwavo lava lavaka
 Hi mina va le ka Ruti.
 Ruti u vula vanhvana hinkwavo
 Eka mina, vanhvana hinkwavo i Ruti.
 Ndza va vona hinkwavo - ndza n'wi vona,
 Ndza famba-famba, ndzi hlangana na yena
 Hinkwako, minkarhi hinkwayo ndza n'wi rhandza (Ibid).*

(They are found scattered all over,
 But all who are loved
 By me are found in Ruti,
 Ruti means all women
 To me, all women are Ruti.
 I do see all of them - I see her,
 I move around, I meet her
 All over, all the time I love her.)

Marhule refuses to forget about his lost affection. He thinks that Sevengwani is being unreasonable and callous. She does not appreciate that Ruti is indelibly engraved in his mind.

In his state of dejection, Marhule attempts to regain the love of Makhanana, because he realizes that he has lost Ruti. His attempt is in vain. Makhanana does not mince her words:

*U humile embilwini ya mina, ku nghene vambe,
Ku nghene jaha ra ka Magudu wa Ngwenya,
Jaha ra Jamela na Mugwaleni wa Nxanatsi,
Va vonakile, va amukeriwa hi vukhwatsi,
Ku sele ntsena muchongolo wo ndzi hlomisa
(Malangavi ya mbilu:62).*

(You are out of my heart, others have come in,
The young man of Magudu of Ngwenya has taken my heart
The young man, son of Jamela and Mugwaleni of Nxanatsi,
They have formally come and they were accepted,
The only thing left is the wedding ceremony to finalize
the marriage deal.)

Makhanana's recitation of the clan names of her in-laws is a clear indication that she cared about them and that she loved them. It is also clear that she belongs to them wholeheartedly. There is no place left for Marhule in her life.

7.2.4 The use of patterned language to reveal Tom Magoza's philosophy as he addresses his audience

Tom Magoza is a character in *Malangavi ya mbilu* who only features in the play when he addresses meetings of educated people like teachers, nurses and the elite of the community. Marivate (1970:42) says:

Unfortunately the writer introduced certain characters whose role seem to be out of context. There is a character named Tom Magoza (scenes V, VIII, XII and XIX), a woman and an old man (not given names) in scene XIV. These characters are not contributing in carrying on the

plot.

Marivate (1970:43) further quotes Herman Ould in *The art of the play*, that

Actions or speeches dragged into a play in order to make an effect not inherent in the development of theme destroy its unity.

Our argument here is not whether Tom Magoza contributes anything towards the development of the theme of the play, but that his philosophy is presented in patterned language. Tom Magoza speaks with authority and at length. He reveals his philosophical approach to nature of thought or the mind. He demonstrates what the mind is, its origin, function and limitations. His speech is arranged in verse to give it the poetic form that is characteristic of Mtombeni in *Malangavi ya mbilu*. In his attempt to explain the origin of thought, Tom Magoza asks the following questions:

*Ku ehleketa swi vula yini xana?
Kumbe swi vula leswaku ku na nchumu
Lowu endlekaka emiehleketweni ke? Kumbe
Ku ninginika, ku tshukatshuka na ku
pufuvapfuveka ka miehleketo loko munhu a
Ehleketwa xe?
(Malangavi ya mbilu:17).*

(What is thought?
Or it means there is something which occurs in thought?
Or to shake, to move and the mixture of thought when one
is thinking?)

Tom Magoza goes on to indicate that no one can see, touch and identify the form of thought. Tom Magoza says:

*Vutivi i miehleketo, a byi na ku
Sungula, xikarhi na le makumu.
A swi kona leswaku u sungula vutivi, u
Le xikarhi ka vutivi, u le makumu,
Kutani wa swi tiva (Malangavi ya mbilu:18).*

(Knowledge is thought, it has no
Beginning, middle or ending.
There is no such a thing as you begin knowledge, you
Are in the middle of knowledge or at the end.
And then you know.

Tom Magoza explains the reality of thought by giving the following analogy:

*Loko u vona xilo wa xi vona;
U nga ka u nga ri ndzi sungula ku xi
Vona, ndzi le xikarhi ka ku xi vona,
Ndzi le makumu, kutani ndza xi vona
(Malangavi ya mbilu:19).*

(When you see a thing you see it;
you cannot say I begin to see it,
I am in the middle of seeing it,
I am at the end of seeing it).

Tom Magoza concludes by showing what comes first in talking and thinking:

*Swi andzile leswaku munhu
Wa ehleketa, wa vulavula, kumbe
Hi ku u rhangile hi ku ehleketa a
Nga si vulavula ... Lexi nga
Kona hi leswaku ku vulavula i ku ehleketa,
Ku ehleketa i ku vulavula, hikuva u nga ka
U nga vulavuri leswi twakalaka u nga
Ehleketi
Hikuva loko u ehleketa u nga vulavuri
Hi ri u vulavula hi mbilu, leswi kombaka
leswaku loko u vulavulela miehleketo
Ya wena ehandle, swi vula leswaku
U vulavula hi nomu. Kambe kwalaho
Ka sweswi swimbirhi i miehleketo
(Malangavi ya mbilu:19).*

(It is often said a person
Thinks, speaks, or
We say he started by thinking before
he speaks ... The fact of the matter
Is that speaking is thinking,
Thought is speaking, because you cannot
Speak sense without

Thinking ...

Because when you think without talking
 We say you are speaking by heart, which shows
 That when you talk your thoughts out, you are
 speaking through your mouth.
 But in these two things we are referring to thought).

After a lengthy talk, no one gets the opportunity to ask questions, because it is late at night. The audience is also too tired of listening to the philosophy of thought.

It is only after two days that Priscilla, Ruti and Khazamula as well as some teachers and nurses at a certain house get the chance to ask questions.

Priscilla asks:

*Mina a ndzi kombela ku vutisa loko hi swi
 Kota ku hambanisa ku tsundzuka na ku
 Twisisa. Naswona loko ku ri leswaku ha
 Swi kota, ku nga va ku ri leswaku swona
 Swi hambanile hakunene ke?
 (Malangavi ya mbilu:22).*

(I would like to ask if we can
 differentiate between remembering and understanding.
 If that is possible, what are the differences?)

To prove that Tom Magoza knows what he is talking about, it is easy for him to provide an answer:

*Ku tsundzuka i ku kota ku vuyisa emiehleketweni,
 leswi u nga swi twa, hlaya
 Kumbe u nga swi vona.
 Kasi ku twisisa i ku kota ku vona leswi nga endzeni
 Ka leswi u nga swi byeriwa, vona kumbe
 U nga swi hlaya (Malangavi ya mbilu:23).*

To remember is to be able to recall
 In the mind what you have heard, read
 Or what you have seen.
 Whereas to understand it is to be in a position
 to see the extent of what you have been told, seen or you have read.)

Finally, Khazamula acknowledges that Tom Magoza is a well-informed person who knows his subject:

*Tom Magoza va pflimbe nhloko,
Mi nga peta dyambu mi yingisela
Vona; kambe xihlovo xa kona a xi phyi
(Malangavi ya mbilu:23).*

(Tom Magoza has a swollen head, i.e intelligent,
You can spend the whole day listening to him;
but the well does not get dry.)

In scene XIII, Tom Magoza is found speaking to the same audience, but on a different topic. At this instance, he presents the range of kinds of literature, and enumerates their functions, i.e to educate, to entertain, to inform and to advise.

7.2.5 The use of patterned language in delineating characters

In the discussion of characterization in chapter four, we pointed out that Mtombeni uses three kinds of techniques to delineate characters, namely, the narrative technique, the name-giving technique and dialogue. It is obvious that dialogue is the most essential element of drama. In drama, characters reveal their personality traits through dialogue. The dialogue in *Malangavi ya mbilu* is written in verse, and the characters thus tend to recite rather than talk like normal people. Mtombeni uses verse to achieve clarity and intensity of expression. Theodore W. Halten (1975:22) in this respect, says:

Discourse in drama should be clear, because the language must be immediately apprehended by the listener; in the theatre, one cannot turn back the page or pause to weigh and consider a line before hearing the next. The dialogue must be interesting despite the need for simplicity and economy. It should capture the spirit of life and character.

The personality traits of Marhule, Makhanana, Ruti and Khazamula became known to us because of the manner in which they converse amongst

themselves. From the manner Ruti relates her problems with Marhule to her new lover, one can easily discover how unfaithful Marhule is.

Makhanana's anxiety and despair about Marhule's betrayal becomes vivid to the audience by the manner of her speaking. The willingness of Khazamula to marry Makhanana irrespective of her two children, is clearly portrayed by Mtombeni using patterned language.

The relationships between the characters become clear to the audience or readers because of the manner in which the characters converse. In this regard, Theodore W. Halten (1975:22) concludes:

The dialogue thus shows the character's relationship to others, reflects the progression of the action, indicates what is happening inside the characters, reveals their suffering, growth or decline. It is a means of articulating the clash of wills and the conflicting motivations.

Through verbal interactions we follow the course of events as Marhule first fails in love with Makhanana and later leaves her for the beautiful nurse, who, after discovering that Marhule is a playboy, deserts him. Life is dynamic and relationships grow and change by the day. When Makhanana loses Marhule's love, she finds solace in Khazamula. These relationships are embodied in the dialogue of the characters. The burning issues in *Malangavi ya mbilu* are portrayed by the characters themselves who reveal their suffering, strengths, weaknesses, growth and decline through their speeches. The wisdom and realism of the divorcee, Sevengwani, become evident as we listen to her speaking. Her mature character is obvious as she speaks to the immature Marhule, who thinks that life should always be a bed of roses. Marhule's decline and fall are clearly noticeable as he insists that Ruti will remain his beautiful lover, even after he has personally witnessed and heard her speak ill of him with her new lover.

When Marhule leaves Makhanana, he indicates that he is going for ever. Surprisingly, we observe him in Scene XIX negotiating in earnest with Makhanana to return to the relationship. By then, it is too late, because her heart is given to Khazamula.

All the characters in this play use patterned language and it is through this medium that we come to know them better. It is through this poetic language that our imagination is enriched to comprehend the characters' love problems. The solutions of these problems also come about through their dialogue which is also patterned in verse. Nowhere in this play is prose used. The vicissitudes of life which Marhule and Makhanana, the protagonists in this play, experience, come to light because of this dramatic device, which is successfully instituted by the author.

7.2.6 The use of patterned language to enhance the effectiveness of imagery

Imagery has already been discussed at length in chapter six. Therefore, it is not necessary to repeat the full argument.

Mental pictures produced by descriptions and figurative language (Hess, 1976:265), are referred to as imagery.

Through Mtombeni's use of patterned language, the characters in *Malangavi ya mbilu* enrich their oral expression by employing provocative imagery, which contributes to the awareness of the weight, texture and the arrangement of words in verse form. As a result, their dialogue is not contemplative or static; it is harnessed to action and change. In the opening dialogue of this play, Marhule is presented to us speaking alone about life in general and about the love of two individuals in particular. His monologue foreshadows what we should expect to take place in the drama. He uses imagery to unfold the theme of the play. For the purpose of this discussion, we would like to quote Marhule's dialogue in full to demonstrate how efficiently and effectively the device is used:

*Nguva i ya ximun'wana,
 Mirhi yi sungula ku hlukanyana,
 Rihlaza matlhelo hinkwawo.
 Timpfula to rhangata sewula,
 Matluka ya nhlanhleka hi xixika ya bola,
 Ndzhongo na byanyi swa twala ku nuha;
 Risuna ra swimila na swiluva
 Ku nuha na ku nuhela ka nguva,
 Vafambi va pyetla ndzhope
 Vurheti-rheti hi ku rhetemuka;
 Mati ya yime laha na lahaya
 Mirhi yi fana na vukwerha hi misinya,
 Dyambu ri tlhavile etimbilwini ta vanhu
 Etimbilwini timbirhi ta va rirhandzu,
 Timbilu teto ti tele tani hi milambu
 Ya makhukhula na misinya.
 Swisindza na tindlu to tala ta vanhu.
 Ku tsokombela ka misava ka hina;
 Rirhandzu ri ri ku xonga na ku tsokombela,
 Swiluva na miloti ya tinyanyana
 Swi bombisa rirhandzu ra hina
 (Malangavi ya mbilu:11).*

(It is spring season,
 Trees gradually begin to sprout,
 Green grass is seen all over.
 The first rains of the season begin to fall,
 Leaves wither in winter and decay,
 The moisture and grass produce smell;
 The flavour of plants and flowers
 The smell and the aroma of the season,
 Travellers tread on the slippery mud
 They slip because of the slippery surface;
 Water is stagnant here and there
 Trees are like boys from an initiation lodge.
 The sun's rays is on the hearts of people
 The hearts of two people who are in love,
 Those hearts are full like the river in flood
 With debris and logs.
 The tussock of grass and many houses of people
 The sweetness of our lives;
 Love is enjoyable and sweet,
 Flowers and melodies of birds
 Embellish our love.)

Various descriptions in this speech produce mental pictures in the minds of the audience. The audience can easily follow the intentions of the character, because of the form of the dialogue, which, in this case, is verse.

The first four lines of the dialogue refer to the beginning of the spring season, a season characterized by the sprouting of new leaves of various kinds of trees in nature, the germination of new grass which is gradually covering the earth to form a beautiful natural green carpet. These four lines evoke in our minds the commencement of new life by young people, which, in this instance, symbolizes the love affair between Makhanana and Marhule. The suppleness of the newly formed leaves, evokes in our minds the delicate new relationship of the two lovers - their joy as well as their happiness.

Of course as trees grow and seasons change, the leaves which were soft and pliable, change colour; some wither and die, whilst others drop on the ground to decay. The beauty of the flowers and the grass fades away as time elapses and when rain falls on them, a nasty smell is produced. The place becomes unpleasant because of the corruption and decay. This mirrors how life begins with joy, and as it progresses and people grow old, it loses its fresh intensity. In the beginning of the play Makhanana and Marhule enjoy love and contentment but later, their union is disrupted and destroyed.

The energy of the sun's rays which fall on the hearts of these two lovers, strengthens the bond of their relationship. Reference is also made to hearts which are full of love, hope and prosperity, like a river in flood carrying debris:

*Timbilu teto ti tele tani hi milambu
Ya makhukhula ni misinya
(Malangavi ya mbilu:11).*

(Those hearts are full like the river in flood
With debris and logs.)

The intense pleasure of these early days is expressed by Marhule as follows:

*Ku tsokombela ka misava ka hina;
Rirhandzu ri ri ku xonga na ku tsokombela
(ibid).*

(The sweetness of our lives;
Love is enjoyable and sweet.)

These words evoke in us the enjoyment that life brings to both lovers. The noun *misava* (earth, world) is used in this context to refer to life in general.

Marhule is sitting alone in the cool shade of a tree where he could see the beautiful flowers and hear the sweet melodies of the birds. *Swiluva* (flowers) and *miloti ya tinyanyana* (sweet melodies of birds) symbolize love:

*Swiluva na miloti ya tinyanyana
Swi bombisa rirhandzu ra hina
(Malangavi ya mbilu:11).*

(Flowers and melodies of birds
Embellish our love.)

But misunderstandings between Makhanana and Marhule develop and disaster befalls them:

*Vafambi va pyetla ndzhope
Vurheti-rheti hi ku rhetemaka (ibid).*

(Travellers tread on the slippery mud
They slip because of the slippery surface.)

The descriptions of *ndzhope* (mud) and *vurheti-rheti* (the ideophone of slippery) create in our minds a picture of the disruption caused by quarrels and misunderstandings. The relationship which was going well, is now under threat. Makhanana and Marhule go their separate ways. The imagery succeeds in

enhancing and enriching the dialogue.

The examples that we have quoted so far have demonstrated the use of imagery in the dialogue of Marhule. For the sake of being exhaustive, we would like to examine dialogue by Makhanana to show the extent to which Mtombeni employs imagery in his patterned language. Weeping, Makhanana says:

*I khombo muni leri ndzi ri vonaka ke?
 Ndzi ta swi nyika mani - ndzi ku swi yini-ke?
 Tlhari leri ndzi tlhaviwaka ha rona
 I tlhari ro tlhava tindlopfu na tihongonyi.
 Xidziva lexi ndzi nwelaka eka xona
 Vukhanelo bya tingwenya na timpfuvu.
 Mbilu ya mina yi tshwa tani hi nhova,
 Miri wa mina wu khoma hi vusindza;
 Wa rhurhumela wonge ku lo ba gwitsi.
 Mihloti yi ndzi xeka tinhlanga emarhameni,
 Yi hisisa swa nsimbhi yo n'okisiwa.
 Xana swikwembu swo' swi ri yini-ke?
 Vusiwana bya mina byi ta ndzi landzelela
 Byi helela kwihhi? - swo dlaya mina.
 Hambi swi ri tano n'wi basiseleni tindlela,
 Swikundzu a swi etleli ehansi.
 A nga tshuki a khudlunyeka;
 A va na vurivata bya timhirhi na valoyi,
 Tindzololo ta yena ti nga tshuki ti tlunyiwa
 (Malangavi ya mbilu:25).*

(What kind of bad luck is this?
 To whom shall I transfer it - and how?
 The spear which is used to stab me
 Is the spear which is used for killing elephants
 and wildebeests.
 The pool in which I drown
 Is a place for crocodiles and hippopotamuses.
 My heart is burning like the forests,
 My body is tingling;
 It is trembling as if snow fell.
 Tears are cutting cicatrization marks on my cheeks,
 It is as hot as the iron which is being melted.
 What do the gods say in this regard?
 How far will my misery
 Follow me? - this is only meant to fix me.
 Nevertheless, bless his ways,

Let all tree-stumps lie flat.
 He must never be stumbled;
 He should have the charm of the puffadder and the
 sorcerer which causes one to be forgotten,
 His pupils should not be blinded.)

This speech is full of images which evoke mental pictures in our minds. Makhanana is presented as a person who is experiencing the anguish of rejected love. She is left helpless when Marhule deserts her for Ruti. As she bursts into tears, she refers to the *spear* with which she is being stabbed. The violence of this image makes us realize that she is completely shattered. A further image is that of swimming in deep pools, in which crocodiles and hippopotamuses live. This implies that she is being subjected to dangerous situations where only the strong and vicious animals can survive.

Makhanana's heart burns as if it is a whole forest which has caught fire. This symbolizes the devastation facing her. She is burning to an extent that her whole body is tingling with pins and needles. Alternately, she describes herself as shaking in the freezing cold of snowy weather. Mtombeni deliberately employs these images to ensure that we apprehend Makhanana's torment.

A further distressing image is that of tears cutting cicatrization marks on Makhanana's cheeks. Her grief is thus depicted as laceratingly painful.

As Makhanana ponders the loneliness which will follow Marhule's departure, she imagines her misery that will persist as long as life continues:

*Xana swikwembu swo' swi ri yini-ke?
 Vusiwana bya mina byi ta ndzi landzelela
 Byi helela kwihl?*
 (Malangavi ya mbilu:11),

(What do the gods say in this regard?
 How far will my misery follow me?)

These questions reveal her considerable state of hopelessness. Her future appears bleak, especially when she imagines the fatherless state of her two children.

In the last five lines of her speech, she pleads with the powers that his safety be guaranteed - that all must be well with him. It is remarkable that in her grief she has no thought of revenge, but only wishes him well. One would expect her to wish him bad luck or that the sky should fall on him, because Marhule has treated her cruelly. All these revelations are conveyed through Mtombeni's patterned language.

7.3 The extent of Mtombeni's use of patterned language in his plays

B.K.M. Mtombeni scripted three plays: *Malangavi ya mbilu* (1966), *Vuhlangi bya vuhlangi* (1973) and *Mihizo ya kayivela* (1974). Patterned language is only used in his first play. It would appear that when he wrote *Malangavi ya mbilu*, he was still cautious of all the requirements of drama, and he therefore used patterned language to transmit his ideas and thoughts to his audience. Our discussion in 7.2 demonstrated that Mtombeni is a master of patterned language. When he wrote his second and third plays: *Vuhlangi bya vuhlangi* and *Mihizo ya kayivela* respectively, he deviated from this device. This sudden change could have been caused by critics who indicated that the dialogue in *Malangavi ya mbilu* was lengthy and artificial in that the actors recited instead of conversing.

As a result, dialogue in his later plays is in the form of ordinary conversation. This style of writing tends to make it difficult for the audience to identify the personality traits of the characters on the basis of their speech. Theodore W. Halten (1975:22) is of the opinion that dialogue written in prose does not fully reveal the character's emotions and motivations as the actor interprets them before the audience.

In *Vuhlangi bya vuhlangi*, which is his second play, Mtombeni was so cautious about his dialogue that he avoided patterned language completely. The dialogue in this play is concise and pithy, and is composed of short sentences. The characters converse in a life-like manner. The only characters who make long speeches in this play are Ned Nkolele, who becomes an advocate, and the legal officers, who deliver long legal speeches in court. The other characters's dialogue is appropriate. For example, in Act I, Scene III when three boys bully Ned, we notice that they all speak like normal people quarrelling:

- SELWYN: *Hi ta ku dlaya mpfana; u nga toloveli ku va ni nkolonyana kasi a wu na katla.*
- Ned: *(A ri karhi a hefemuteka ni ku mpfikula) N'wina mi na wona makatla leswi mi ngo ndzi hlengela tani hi tinyoxi?*
- Gilbert: *U ri u nga hi vula maphuphula hi miyela hi swona? A wu nga vuli wun' we wa hina, a wu hi hlekula hinkwerhu ku hundza ka wena ni mpundzu.*
- Ned: *N'wina, xihesi xa tibuku a mi vula mani? A ndzi ri na n'wina a mo ndzi hlekula ndzi tihundzela hi ndlela?*
- JAMES: *Hina a ho vungunyana na wena, a hi nga ku rhuketeli tani hi leswi wena a wu swi endlisa swona*
(Vuhlangi bya vuhlangi: 4-5).
- (SELWYN: *We are going to kill you, boy; you must not get used to being cheeky, whereas you don't have a shoulder, i.e you cannot fight.*
- NED: *(-Breathing heavily and sobbing) Would you say you have shoulders because you only attack in a group like the bees?*
- GILBERT: *Do you think when you call us fools we can just keep quiet? You were not referring to only one, but all of us as you passed here in the morning.*
- NED: *As you said book-worm, to whom were you referring ? You were also belittling me as I was passing.*
- JAMES: *We were just joking with you, we were not cursing you as you were doing.)*

This type of conversation is in strong contrast to the speeches exchanged by Makhanana and Marhule in *Malangavi ya mbilu*.

In *Mihizo ya kayivela* which appeared in the literary scene in 1974, Mtombeni completely neglects both patterned language and short, pithy and active lively dialogue. Here we are exposed to characters who speak for a long time without

any response from their fellows. When the other characters eventually say something, it is also their turn to talk at length. The listeners are bound to listen patiently until the character has completed his oration. Perhaps when performed on stage with the accompaniment of music and stage lighting, the attention of the audience could be attracted. Otherwise, listeners might find themselves utterly bored. For example, in Act I, Scene II, we find N'wa-Bembe (the local minister of religion) and Mbolovisa (the popular witchdoctor) competing before the mourners at the Doornkop Cemetery as to who is best in convincing people to believe in their preaching. We are presented with long speeches which fill two pages of A4 paper. Their orations are followed by another long speech by Magwaza, a philosopher and educationist. No patterned language is used in this play. Perhaps *Mihizo ya kayivela* would have been better if written as a novel, which uses everyday conventional language rather than forced into a dramatic format.

7.4 Summary

Literary critics like Clarke, Nicoll, Styan, T.S. Eliot, Hauptfleisch, Boulton, Halten and Beckerman, are all in agreement that, for drama to succeed in its communicative value, it should be written in verse form, which, in this chapter, is referred to as patterned language.

Through patterned language in *Malangavi ya mbilu*, Mtombeni is able to express the strong emotions of love between Marhule and Makhanana, between Makhanana and Khazamula and between Marhule and Ruti. Mtombeni was able to achieve this through the use of patterned language which enabled him to employ various natural images which evoked mental pictures. Images such as flames, the heart, the sky, the stars, the burning of forests, the seas, birds, winds etc. are all used to enhance the understanding of the intensity of the love that *Malangavi ya mbilu* focuses on.

The frustrations and disappointments experienced by Marhule and Makhanana

are also clearly expressed through the use of patterned language. The instability of Marhule and Ruti's love affair and the disappointment that Marhule suffers, are all incidents which are vividly expressed through the use of patterned language.

Mtombeni uses verse to depict Marhule as a man without anyone to love him. Soliloquy is also employed to show Marhule's dejection. This soliloquy is also written in verse. This device is effective in bringing out the state in which Marhule finally finds himself.

Another interesting fact is that characters like Tom Magoza, who are portrayed as educated members of the community, are afforded the opportunity to address the elite. As a result, they deliver illuminating speeches written in patterned language.

Several characters are portrayed in this play and their various personality traits are portrayed in patterned language which clearly characterizes them.

Although some literary critics believe that Mtombeni's characters in *Malangavi ya mbilu* recite more than they converse, the fact of the matter is that the most important requirement for a play to succeed on stage is that it should be written in patterned language.

Mtombeni's later plays, *Vuhlangi bya Vuhlangi* and *Mihizo ya kayivela* suffer from the absence of this remarkable use of patterned language.

CHAPTER EIGHT

GENERAL CONCLUSION

The literary career of B.K.M. Mtombeni stretches from the year 1966, when he first appeared on the literary scene with his play *Malangavi ya mbilu*, to 1977 when his *Matshopetana ya tindzumulo* was published, a year after his death. During this period of ten years, he contributed significantly to Tsonga literature, because he authored eight books: two novels, two volumes of short stories, one volume of children's stories and three plays. This research has revealed that, as a writer, he has opened his own chapter in Tsonga literary annals.

As an Urban Representative in the employ of the former Gazankulu Government, his work schedule was such that he did not have much time to concentrate on his creative writing. He was often compelled to make frequent visits to Giyani, the Administrative seat of his government, in order to update the cabinet about urban affairs. This business left him with very little time to attend to the development of his writing skills. Nevertheless, he succeeded in writing books of a notable standard, as this study has shown.

As a highly talented person, he did not only concentrate on one genre, but showed his creativity by writing novels, short stories and plays. Although he did not publish any volume of collected poetry, C.T.D. Marivate and G.S. Mayevu, the editors of *Swihlengi swa Vatsonga*, included many of his individual poems. We did not comment on them in this thesis, as poetry did not form part of the scope of our investigation.

Mtombeni's writings resuscitated the Tsonga reader and motivated him to love his own literature which up to that point was dormant and uninteresting. The patterned language which he introduced in his *Malangavi ya mbilu* attracted many readers who found this play a catalogue of recitations, which they could listen to when performed by actors. All the characters' dialogue was distinctly emotional and characteristic of the level of their education. No one could fail to differentiate between the way in which

Tom Magoza and Makhanana in *Malangavi ya mbilu* spoke. The fact that Tom Magoza was a philosopher and that Makhanana was just an ordinary traditional young woman, was quite clear to all readers. This became evident through Mtombeni's style.

The other very important contribution which Mtombeni made to the Tsonga literature, is his unique vocabulary, which characterizes him as one of the greatest writers of his time. Ideas which were difficult to express because of lack of appropriate and adequate terminology were conveyed because of his creativity and exactness in coinage and borrowing of foreign concepts. His coinage of abstract nouns and compound nouns characterizes him as a linguist of repute. Concepts such as *swito-miri* (feelings), *ntwelo-vusiwana* (piety) and *vuveki-milandzu* (charge-sheet), are Mtombeni's own original coinages. Mtombeni did not fear to express his thoughts in abstract terms and even exploited mental associations to evoke images to clarify messages which could otherwise be obscure to his readers.

It is also true that the number of books that he wrote has contributed much to the resource base of literature in Tsonga. In addition to mere quantity, the quality of his works of art is redoubtable.

Mtombeni is a writer who is revered by old and young readers of Tsonga literature. His death was a great loss to all lovers of his writing. When he died, the Nation lost a novelist, a playwright, a poet and above all a great thinker and a distinguished philosopher. His main motto was that you should never trust anyone. This is apparent in most of his short stories in *Ndzhaka ya vusiwana* and *Mavaia ya yingwe*.

Mtombeni's works reveal a number of interesting themes. Readers are drawn into his books because of the themes which he writes about. Recurring themes in his works include love, death, cheating, dishonesty, distrustfulness and crime. It is noteworthy that he never attempted any theme on politics and the suffering of disadvantaged communities brought about by the repressive laws of the Apartheid regime of the White minority. This could be attributed to the fact that he was a Government official who dared not risk criticizing his employers. Nevertheless, writers have a responsibility

towards their readers; they should concern themselves with themes which reflect contemporary social injustices and should also continually remind their readers of the need for reformation or transformation. Literature's prime function should be to conscientize the readers of their plight and to seek mechanisms to address all injustices. This course should be followed by all writers who are concerned about the welfare of their readers. This view is contrary to that held by writers like Mtombeni, who seem to feel that they should support the societies whose air they breathe and whose bread they eat.

Mtombeni's attitude towards his themes makes it clear that he has a fairly cynical view of life. Man does not always conform, but deviates from the normative patterns because of his individuality. Human beings tend to be ungrateful, dishonest, cunning, greedy, jealous, deceitful, unfaithful and over-ambitious in nature. Children will also always deviate from the behavioural patterns of their parents, hence the theme of the looseness of the straps of the baby-sling. When children are young, they are often emotional, stressed and frustrated. It also came to the fore that each person is unique and has his own personality, which should be taken account of for us to understand him.

Mtombeni's creative works are in accordance with known plot structure and as a result, do qualify to be considered as modern literature. Mtombeni used the dramatic and the narrative technique, the soliloquy and setting to portray conflict in his works. External and internal conflicts are depicted.

Mtombeni uses environments such as Police Stations, hospitals, restaurants, railway stations and prisons as settings for his narratives. The prison often features prominently as contributory factor to his denouement.

Mtombeni's characters are revealed to the reader through three techniques of character portrayal. These are the narrative, the dramatic and the name-giving techniques. The physical nature of the characters, i.e their physique and appearance, is shown to the reader through the narrative technique.

Although the narrative technique is successfully used to delineate characters, the dramatic technique is frequently employed. Mtombeni's *Ndzi tshikeni* though a novel, predominantly made use of this technique to portray characters. The characters themselves show their human attributes to the readers by the way they interact with one another, i.e in their dialogue and actions. The name-giving technique was employed in *Mibya ya nyekanyeka* and *Ndzi tshikeni*.

It is on the basis of our examination of these techniques that we concluded that Mtombeni is an expert whose language and style is also of a high standard. It is in his style of writing that he distinguishes himself as a unique author. His diction is such that he is capable of expressing himself easily through the use of the right word at the right time. It is not only the choice of words which is laudable, but their arrangement which suits his expression of ideas and thoughts. We also discovered that his syntax reveals a sound combination of simple and complex sentences which contribute to the logical structuring of the message to be carried over to the readers. His paragraphs are arranged in such a way that his ideas flow coherently.

Imagery, proverbs and idioms dominate Mtombeni's writing. The tone of his creative works is discernible in his style and use of idioms. Mtombeni is rightfully called a great Tsonga writer because of his vocabulary which is always correctly selected to express his intentions properly.

His use of patterned language in *Malangavi ya mbilu* makes it clear that this form is highly appropriate for plays. We should, however, point out that patterned language as found in *Malangavi ya mbilu*, is meant to be used when acting on stage. As actors speak, their speech can be justified when it deviates from the natural everyday spoken Tsonga. The fact that actors recite more than they converse, is also true, but this is fitting for a stage drama.

It has been explicitly revealed by literary critics like Clarke, Styan and Nicoll that even during the Elizabethan times, the Middle Ages and amongst the old Greeks, verse was regarded as the most fitting language for drama. Therefore, a dramatic text can be

enhanced by poetic style and patterned language. What makes patterned language the most suitable expression for drama, is the fact that in drama there is always action and that every actor should be an artist in words.

This study is the first of its kind in Tsonga literature. We hope that it will serve as a base for future research into the writings of Mtombeni.

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