

THE IMAGE OF WOMEN IN SELECTED TSONGA NOVELS

by

HLAMALANI RUTH MATHYE

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SUPERVISOR: PROF D I MATHUMBA

JOINT SUPERVISOR: MRS N MASUKU

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DECLARATION

Student number: 413-072-3

I declare that *THE IMAGE OF WOMEN IN SELECTED TSONGA NOVELS* is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

.....

SIGNATURE

(MISS H R MATHYE)

.....

DATE

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to:

All the great grandchildren of Khahlamba

My father: Moses

My sister: Masaswivona

My children: Madali and Nkateko

SUMMARY

This dissertation is a critical examination of selected Tsonga novels by male and female writers. Positive and negative images of women by these authors are analysed, compared and evaluated from a feminist perspective.

Emphasis is laid on the manner in which Tsonga writers portray female characters in a changing society and the extent to which the images of women in this literature represent the present day woman. Adherence to ideological, cultural and traditional values as well as the differences in portrayal of women by male and female writers is also investigated.

Through a comparison of novels written by male and female writers it is established that because of patriarchy these writers differ markedly in their portrayal of female characters. In all the novels analysed, the sociol-cultural context influences the way in which these writers portray female characters. Male writers promote traditional values which female writers strive to discard by portraying female characters who predominantly undermine stereotypical cultural sex-roles.

KEY TERMS DESCRIBING THE TOPIC OF THIS DISSERTATION

Images of women

Tsonga culture

Patriarchy

Nuclear family

Feminist theory

Feminism

Black feminism

Womanism

Sex and gender

Sex-roles

Stereotype

Androgyny

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 AIM AND MOTIVATION OF THE STUDY	1
1.2 SCOPE OF THE STUDY	2
1.2.1 The establishment of a nuclear family among the Tsonga people	3
1.2.2 Tsonga culture as far as it affects the woman	5
1.3 SELECTED NOVELS	9
1.4 APPROACHES AND METHODS OF RESEARCH	10
1.4.1 Feminist literary criticism	11
1.4.2 Comparative approach	14
1.5 DEFINITIONS OF RELATED TERMS	15
1.5.1 Feminism	15
1.5.2 Sex and gender	16
1.5.3 Sex-roles	18
1.5.4 Stereotype	19
1.5.5 Androgyny	19
1.5.6 Culture	20
1.6 LITERATURE REVIEW	21
1.7 SUMMARY	23

CHAPTER 2

A FEMINIST OVERVIEW OF FEMALE SUBORDINATION	25
2.1 INTRODUCTION	25
2.2 FEMINISM AND PATRIARCHY	25
2.3 FEMINIST THEORY	28
2.3.1 Liberal feminism	29
2.3.2 Radical feminism	30
2.3.3 Socialist feminism	31

2.3.4	Black feminism	32
2.3.5	Literary feminism	34
2.3.5.1	Feminism in fiction	35
2.3.5.2	Elements of Literary Feminism	36
2.3.5.3	Aspects of feminism in novels	37
2.4	FEMINISM IN SOUTH AFRICA	39
2.4.1	Pre-colonial period	39
2.4.2	Colonial period	40
2.5	SUMMARY	41

CHAPTER 3

DEPICTION OF WOMEN CHARACTERS IN THE SELECTED MALE-AUTHORED

NOVELS 43

3.1	INTRODUCTION	43
3.2	CHARACTERIZATION	43
3.2.1	Types of characters	45
3.2.2	Methods of characterization	47
3.3	DISCUSSION OF THE NOVEL SASAVONA BY D.C. MARIVATE	48
3.3.1	(a) Summary of the story	48
	(b) Characters selected for discussion	48
3.3.2	Analysis of the depiction of Sasavona	49
3.3.3	Analysis of the depiction of Midlayi	51
3.3.4	Evaluation of presentation of female characters in <i>Sasavona</i>	52
3.4	DISCUSSION OF THE NOVEL <i>MASUNGI M'FANA KA MAXELE</i> BY H.W.E. NTSANWISI	52
3.4.1	(a) Summary of the story	52
	(b) Characters selected for discussion	53
3.4.2	Analysis of the depiction of N'wa-Ridonga	53
3.4.3	Analysis of the depiction of Khanyisa	55
3.4.4	Analysis of the depiction of Nobayeni	56
3.4.5	Evaluation of presentation of female characters in <i>Masungi</i>	58

3.5	DISCUSSION OF THE NOVEL <i>MIBYA YA NYEKANYEKA</i> BY B.K.M. MTOMBENI	58
3.5.1	(a) Summary of the story	58
	(b) Characters selected for discussion	59
3.5.2	Analysis of the depiction of N'wa-Basana	59
3.5.3	Analysis of the depiction of Cheyeza	64
3.5.4	Analysis of the depiction of N'wa-Mdanisi	65
3.5.5	Evaluation of presentation of female characters in <i>Mibya ya nyekanyeka</i>	69
3.6	DISCUSSION OF THE NOVEL <i>MADYISAMBITSI</i> BY T.H. KHOSA	69
3.6.1	(a) Summary of the story	69
	(b) Characters selected for discussion	70
3.6.2	Analysis of the depiction of N'wa-Mpon'wa	70
3.6.3	Analysis of the depiction of Javurisa	72
3.6.4	Evaluation of presentation of female characters in <i>Madyisambitsi</i>	73
3.7	DISCUSSION OF THE NOVEL <i>MAKUMU YA VUTOMI BYEBYOBYE</i> BY E. McMIYEN	74
3.7.1	(a) Summary of the story	74
	(b) Characters selected for discussion	74
3.7.2	Analysis of the depiction of N'wa-Thevu	75
3.7.3	Analysis of the depiction of Olivia	77
3.7.4	Evaluation of presentation of female characters in <i>Makumu ya vutomi byebyo</i>	79
3.8	DISCUSSION OF THE NOVEL <i>NDZI TA N'WI KUMA</i> BY W.R. CHAUKE	79
3.8.1	(a) Summary of the story	79
	(b) Characters selected for discussion	80
3.8.2	Analysis of the depiction of N'wa-Manganyi	81
3.8.3	Analysis of the depiction of Mthavini	85
3.8.4	Evaluation of presentation of female characters in <i>Ndzi ta n'wi kuma</i>	87

3.9	DISCUSSION OF THE NOVEL <i>BYA VELEKERIWA</i> BY N.J. CHABALALA	87
3.9.1	(a) Summary of the story	87
	(b) Characters selected for discussion	88
3.9.2	Analysis of the depiction of N'wa-Nsimba	88
3.9.3	Analysis of the depiction of N'wa-Ngula	92
3.9.4	Evaluation of presentation of female characters in <i>Bya velekeriwa</i>	96
3.10	SUMMARY	97

CHAPTER 4

	DEPICTION OF WOMEN CHARACTERS IN THE SELECTED FEMALE-AUTHORED NOVELS	98
4.1	INTRODUCTION	98
4.2	DISCUSSION OF THE NOVEL <i>NTSAKISI</i> BY J.F.C. MKHOMBO	98
4.2.1	(a) Summary of the story	98
	(b) Characters selected for discussion	99
4.2.2	Analysis of the depiction of Tahani-N'wanjiyani	100
4.2.3	Analysis of the depiction of Mdlayi-N'waripewu	103
4.2.4	Analysis of the depiction of Ntsakisi	105
4.2.5	Evaluation of presentation of female characters in <i>Ntsakisi</i>	106
4.3	DISCUSSION OF THE NOVEL <i>XIKOTIKOTI WA MATSHOTSHO</i> BY M.A. MAHUHUSHI	107
4.3.1	(a) Summary of the story	107
	(b) Characters selected for discussion	108
4.3.2	Analysis of the depiction of N'wapeni	108
4.3.3	Analysis of the depiction of N'wa-Jon	113
4.3.4	Evaluation of presentation of female characters in <i>Xikotikoti wa Matshotsho</i>	114
4.4	DISCUSSION OF THE NOVEL <i>NDZI TSANDZEKILE</i> BY G.A. RITSHURI	114

4.4.1	(a) Summary of the story	114
	(b) Characters selected for discussion	115
4.4.2	Analysis of the depiction of N'wa-Hlengani	115
4.4.3	Analysis of the depiction of Masingita	118
4.4.4	Evaluation of presentation of female characters in <i>Ndzi</i> <i>tsandzekile</i>	122
4.5	DISCUSSION OF THE NOVEL <i>XIMAMBANA</i> BY M.M MABUZA	122
4.5.1	(a) Summary of the story	122
	(b) Characters selected for discussion	123
4.5.2	Analysis of the depiction of Rosi	123
4.5.3	Analysis of the depiction of Ximambana	126
4.5.4	Evaluation of presentation of female characters in <i>Ximambana</i>	127
4.6	SUMMARY	127

CHAPTER 5

COMPARISON BETWEEN MALE AND FEMALE AUTHORS WITH REGARD TO THE PORTRAYAL OF FEMALE CHARACTERS

5.1	INTRODUCTION	130
5.2	CHARACTERIZATION	130
5.2.1	Brief comments on characterization	130
5.2.2	Social traits	131
5.2.3	Psychological traits	135
5.3	DEPARTURE FROM STEREOTYPES	136
5.4	SOCIAL CAUSES FOR UNPLEASANT CHARACTERS	139
5.5	SUMMARY	141

CHAPTER 6

	CONCLUSION	142
6.1	INTRODUCTION	142
6.2	RESEARCH FINDINGS	142
6.3	RECOMMENDATIONS	144

BIBLIOGRAPHY 146

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 AIM AND MOTIVATION OF THE STUDY

This study focuses on the role and image of women in Tsonga society as depicted by male and female writers in selected Tsonga novels. The study will be based on an analysis of these selected Tsonga novels. The aims will be, firstly, to investigate the extent to which portraits of Tsonga women in literary works represent the nature and role of women in the Tsonga community. Secondly, the study aims to establish whether the substantially changing role and status of women in society in general affects the manner in which Tsonga writers portray women characters in their works. Thirdly, it aims to establish whether there is any difference in the portrayal of women characters in the novels authored by male writers and those authored by female writers.

The study has been prompted by the way most Tsonga writers traditionally create female characters who are abused, oppressed and discriminated against because of their gender. This point will be thoroughly dealt with in the following chapters and examples will be cited from the selected novels. In view of the changes in society, men and women in most developed countries share equal rights in various institutions such as the family, schools, government and in society at large. As a consequence of the political and social changes that have taken place all over the world, a good Tsonga writer should, in some of his/her works, portray female characters who share equal rights with their male counterparts. This envisaged dispensation of female characters in literature engenders transformation through which men and women will view each other as human beings instead of being influenced solely by their masculinity or femininity. In order to understand the role and nature of women in Tsonga society it is deemed imperative by the researcher to outline the relationship between men and women in Tsonga society. This discussion will be incorporated under the scope of the study in the ensuing paragraph.

1.2 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

In discussing the different images of women in the selected Tsonga novels a chronological order is followed in the selection and classification of the novels with the purpose of covering every decade in the history of Tsonga publications. It starts with the decade 1930-1939, the first Tsonga novel being published in 1938 by a male writer, and ends with the decade 1990-1999 when this research was undertaken.

All the novels selected were published during the apartheid regime in South Africa when Blacks suffered racial discrimination. During this period both Tsonga men and women were victims of white oppression. This state of affairs resulted in the fact that Tsonga men faced oppression from one side only, that is, the government of the day whereas the women's oppression was two-pronged: from the white rulers on the one hand and from the Tsonga men through the institution of culture on the other. This dual oppression of women was because of sex. This sexual discrimination influenced their creative works to some extent. For instance, as the first step, the Tsonga woman in her writing struggles to liberate herself from the more immediate effects of a patriarchal society of male dominance, while the Tsonga man uses culture to exercise his power over the woman.

The study has been divided into six chapters, organised as follows:

Chapter one is a general introduction to the images of women in Tsonga society. It provides the aim and justification of the research, research methodologies, an inventory of selected works, definition of concepts and a literature review. A brief discussion of Tsonga culture as far as it affects the woman is also provided.

Chapter two gives a feminist overview of the explanations of female subordination with the emphasis on literary feminism. A brief discussion of feminist theories such as liberal, radical, socialist and black feminism is provided to explain feminist assumptions underlying the fight against women's oppression. The pre-colonial and colonial periods can be marked as the periods of most severe oppression of women in South Africa.

Chapter three analyzes the portrayal of women characters by male writers. Various stereotypes held about women are examined and evaluated. Both positive and negative images of women are evaluated. This will enable the identification of the feminist outlook which is significant in this study.

Chapter four is a continuation of the analysis of the portrayal of women characters, focussing on female writers. Both positive and negative images by female writers will be examined and evaluated.

Chapter five provides a comparison between male and female writers with regard to the portrayal of women. Differences and similarities will be indicated .

Chapter six provides a general conclusion. It contains remarks, observations, findings and recommendations drawn from the entire study.

In the next paragraph, I shall give an indication of the selected Tsonga novels as well as the basis on which these were selected. However, before proceeding to outline these works, I shall, as indicated in par. 1.1 above, give a brief overview of Tsonga culture as far as it affects the woman. This will be discussed in two sub-paragraphs, namely, the establishment of a nuclear family among the Tsonga people, followed by a general elaboration of Tsonga culture as far as it affects the woman.

1.2.1 The establishment of a nuclear family among the Tsonga people

Customarily, a Tsonga family is established by a man's family advancing **lobola** to the parents of a woman he chooses as wife. When a young woman is asked for in matrimony the matter is jointly deliberated upon by parents, uncles and other blood relatives on both sides. This joint deliberation of the matter signifies the collective nature of the Tsonga community (Junod 1962:278). This collectivist conception of a community stabilizes the foundation and organization of a conjugal group.

The practice of **lobola** is culturally bound. In the past our forefathers used iron hoes for **lobola**. Later on cattle were used and nowadays money is used. **Lobola** legalizes the union of two people. It ties different families from both sides together and links these families with the new family, forming an extended relationship. Both extended families share mutual interest in the development and welfare of the new family. Junod's (1962:279) argument that the sole purpose of **lobola** is to strengthen the patriarchal family, i.e. the right and superiority of the father, could not be corroborated in the fieldwork conducted for this study. What was clearly revealed was that special attention is paid to the harmonious integration of the network of relationships which arise as a result of the union of two individuals who decide to establish a family (Mathumba 1988:136). A woman married with **lobola** is not the sole property of her husband. She becomes a member of her husband's nuclear family as well as of his extended family. She is bound to serve the interests of his entire family. Children born to her belong to their father, they live with him, owe him respect and bear his clan name (Junod 1962:279). Consequently, when her husband dies, in order to look after her, this woman is taken over by the deceased's younger brother through the custom of the levirate. He is entitled to have sex with her in order to raise a family on behalf of his late brother. In this way the levirate custom is significant because it provides for widows and orphans. It also strengthens the relationships between the nuclear family and the extended families.

Seligman (1932:175) remarks as follows with regard to **lobola** and the levirate custom:

Though no marriage would be valid without the exchange of bride-wealth, and a widow's position is one of dependence on her deceased's husband's heir, it is not true to say that wives are bought as slaves are bought, nor that they are inherited as property is inherited.

In spite of the positive tenor of the quotation above with regard to the levirate custom, in today's world this custom is not entirely advantageous because some of its obligations prejudice women who may become victims of the situation. More about

this will be said in the next section dealing with Tsonga culture.

1.2.2 Tsonga culture as far as it affects the woman

Women in Tsonga society are governed by certain fixed rules, duties and obligations which they must follow strictly. Among the Tsonga authority within the family lies with the father and a married woman must respect and obey her husband. His supremacy is extended to public affairs, especially in the tribal court. According to Tsonga custom a woman's word is of no value. She is excluded from all decision-making in the community. The man is the full guardian of his wife and children and is held liable for the misdemeanours and debts of his wife. An unmarried woman's uncle acts on her behalf as her guardian. Unlike the man, the woman's status is reduced to an inferior position in the community. Her voice is not recognized. She depends on her husband's fate for survival. In relation to this, Schapera (1940:92) says:

The wife is always legally dependent upon her husband. She cannot as a rule resort to the tribal courts except through him as her representative, and if she does wrong or falls into debt he is liable for any payment that must be made. She cannot bind herself to any contracts without his approval, she must live wherever he chooses to build his home and she must obey all his commands.

From the viewpoints expressed above it is evident that the Tsonga community is a patriarchal one. With the rule of the father the woman is subject to various cultural obligations imposed upon her through male domination. Against the background of the patriarchal nature of Tsonga society every woman in the Tsonga community is supposed to find a man who will take care of her. Divorcees and unmarried women are regarded as outcasts and they are the minority in the community. A young woman entering matrimony is strongly warned to dissociate herself from these groups as it is believed that they are capable of breaking up her marriage. A divorcee is considered a typical example of feminine (not masculine) frailty, i.e. she may as readily leave her new husband as she did his predecessor (Schapera 1940:271).

In a polygynous marriage, the rank and status of wives is determined by the order in which they were married. The woman married first (nsati lonkulu) has the highest rank and is certainly the most respected. Her children are also accorded high status by the other wives together with their children. Because of their birthright children of the senior wife can inherit all their father's property including some of his junior wives. It is for this reason that the son will only refer to his blood mother as 'mother'S the rest of his father's junior wives being referred to as 'N'wa-Jack' (daughter of Jack); 'N'wa-John' (daughter of John) as the case may be. This obviates embarrassment when the son ultimately gets married to one of them as 'inheritance', for obviously one cannot marry one's own 'mother' (Mathumba 1979:19-20). As already mentioned in paragraph 1.2.1 this type of marriage is similar to the levirate custom which is not entirely advantageous to women, especially in today's world. For example a widow who refuses to cohabit with her husband's younger brother may be returned to her family and thus falls back under the control of her father. Sometimes she is separated from her children for the rest of her life. The woman's family may be forced to return **lobola** to her deceased husband's family, which is often very difficult. In this way this practice violates women's rights and treats them as children.

From the fieldwork conducted for this study it was established that the custom of the levirate is becoming unpopular. Most widows feel independent after the death of their husbands, and those who wish to marry again prefer to choose their own spouse. The institution of polygyny is also becoming unpopular. Most women feel oppressed and discriminated against in a polygynous marriage. The effect is an increased number of single mothers. This is unacceptable in Tsonga society because of its negative connotations. Any child born of an unmarried woman bears the mother's surname and lives with the mother's family (Junod 1962:279).

The most important role of a woman in Tsonga society is to bear her husband as many children as she can. According to the patrilineal nature of the Tsonga

community, a woman with a large number of male children is honoured most as her sons will perpetuate the clan name. Should the woman be barren, a younger sister or any other close relative will have to take her place as the second wife. Consequently, when a woman dies before bearing any children, her parents are obliged to give her husband a substitute wife, normally the wife's younger sister, who will bear children for him. Against this background it is clear that in the Tsonga community no marriage or family is complete without children.

Strict measures are exercised against the woman who deviates from the rules and cultural obligations of the society. The adultery of a married woman is a serious offence to her husband and it may serve as grounds for divorce. Widows and divorced women living in their parents' home are regarded as unmarried and they are under the control of their father. If any of these women is seduced, the father is entitled to claim damages. A widow living in the home of her late husband is treated like a married woman. She is allowed to cohabit with her husband's younger brother or any close relative to raise (hlayisa) the seed of the deceased. If the woman is caught with any man other than the one specially approved for the purpose, she is accused of adultery (Schapera 1946:206).

Among the Tsongas the woman's sex life and certain individual functions which are thought to have a bad influence on nature are prohibited by several feminine taboos. During her menstruation period and immediately after childbirth the woman is not allowed to have sexual intercourse. If she has aborted she must wait until her next menstruation period is over. There is a strong belief that disregarding these sexual norms can cause her husband serious illness, even death. It is also taboo for a woman to approach the kraal during her menstruation period as it is believed that the cattle might be attacked by a bad cough and grow thin. Similarly she is not allowed to walk among the pumpkin plants (marhanga) or pluck their fruit as they may be badly affected and also cause her serious infections (Junod 1962:184).

Some feminine taboos concern food, especially meat. A woman is prohibited from

eating certain meat and certain parts of the animal's body as it is believed that the woman's future child may resemble that animal. It is also believed that some portions of the animal's meat may make delivery very difficult. A Tsonga woman must abstain from eating eggs, chicken, hooves and the tongue of cattle, to mention but a few. It is believed that a woman who eats eggs and chicken is in danger of bearing a bald child. This woman might also struggle during labour like a hen which runs in all directions when it is about to lay an egg. A woman eating hooves and the tongue of cattle will walk and talk too much. Such a woman is a threat to society because she is capable of seducing other women's husbands (Junod 1962:184).

Young girls at the stage of puberty are restricted by similar taboos to those which affect the childbearing woman. Apart from these restrictions, young girls are exhorted to be very polite and respectful to elderly people. At a later stage when young girls are ready for marriage, they are introduced to womanhood through initiation. When married, a young woman first lives in the settlement of her husband's parents and must comply with a wide range of rules of behaviour set by her new family. There is also a wide variety of duties which she must fulfill. If the woman is lazy she will not cope with the amount of work in her new family.

Regarding the widow, it is taboo for her to be seen anywhere before her mourning period is over. It is believed that a widow who disregards this norm causes droughts, thunderstorms and poor harvests in the community. It is also taboo for a widow to exchange things or shake hands with other people as this may bring them misfortune. A widow is also forbidden from having sexual intercourse with any man before she is purified as it may cause him serious illness or even death. Preferably, a good widow must adopt a shy and cool behaviour and always remain indoors. Old women and young girls before the stage of puberty are exonerated from all feminine taboos. Culturally, a Tsonga woman must be procreative, submissive, obedient and hardworking.

Against the background of the Tsonga culture as discussed in the preceding

paragraphs, it is clear that a Tsonga woman is looked upon as the source of most if not all bad things. This is in fact a negative and repressive outlook. Living in a communal society, Tsonga women have different role expectations according to their status and relationships with the community. As a result women are classified into different groups such as teenage girls, virgins, married women, elderly women, widows and divorcees. It is the role and status of these women and their relationships with the community that will be assessed in this study. To achieve this, a few Tsonga novels by male and female authors have been selected for analysis.

1.3 SELECTED NOVELS

For the purpose of this study a few Tsonga novels by different male and female writers have been selected for analysis. These novels were selected chronologically according to decades.

The following novels by male writers were selected and classified according to the following decades:

1930 – 1939 Sasavona. (1938)	–	Marivate, D.C.
1950 – 1959 Masungi M’fana ka Mashele. (1954)	–	Ntsanwisi, H.W.E.
1960 – 1969 Mibya ya Nyekanyeka. (1967)	–	Mtombeni, B.K.M.
1970 – 1979 Madyisambitsi. (1978)	–	Khosa, T.H.
Makumu ya vutomi byebyo. (1979)	–	Miyen, E.
1980 – 1989 Ndzi ta n’wi kuma. (1983)	–	Chauke, W.R.
1990 – 1999 Bya velekeriwa. (1991)	–	Chabalala, N.J.

The following novels by female writers were selected and classified according to the following decades:

1960 – 1969 Ntsakisi. (1962)	–	Mkhombo, J.F.C.
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Xikotikoti wa Matshotsho. (1966)	–	Mahuhushi, M.A.
1980 – 1989 Ndzi tsandzekile. (1984)	–	Ritshuri, G.A.
Ximambana. (1989)	–	Mabuza, M.M.

Some anomaly as well as gaps occur in the chronological order of selection because of conditions found in the publication of some novels within certain decades. During the decade 1940 – 1949 Baloyi S.J., the only writer of this period, in his novelette **Murhandziwani** gives only a detailed account of Murhandziwani's life – a male character in the novelette. For this reason, this novelette could not be selected for analysis. From the decade 1970 –1979 two novels, viz. **Madyisambitsi** and **Makumu ya vutomi byebyo** were selected for analysis to show a distinction between a rural and an urban setting. With regard to novels by female writers, only four novels published within the stipulated decades are analysed because of the very limited number of novels produced by female writers. These were the only novels by female writers that had been published at the time this research was undertaken.

1.4 APPROACHES AND METHODS OF RESEARCH

Two approaches are used in this study, viz. feminist literary criticism and a comparative approach.

1.4.1 Feminist literary criticism

Apparently, no clear demarcation exists between feminist literary criticism and feminist criticism. Generally, in its non-literary context, feminist criticism is an approach which advocates the rights of women in all social spheres such as patriarchal, political, economic, educational, physical and psychological domains. Feminist literary criticism on the other hand examines how these ideologies and practices shape literary texts. Both feminist criticism and feminist literary criticism

are based on the assumption that gender is a socially constructed and historically changing reality. In both approaches gender serves as the fundamental category for analysis. While feminist criticism strives for the liberation of women and equality of the sexes in all social spheres, feminist literary criticism aims at the establishment and expression of authenticity in the voice of the female writer and in women characters as representatives of human beings in literature. Feminist literary criticism enhances cultural politics of race, sex and other differences in feminist critics. Both approaches are basically critical of the male established set-up.

The following paragraphs will sketch out views and definitions of feminist literary criticism expressed by different scholars, as this is the principal method of research used in this study.

According to Greene and Kahn (1985:1), feminist literary criticism is

One branch of interdisciplinary enquiry which takes gender as a fundamental organizing category of experience. This enquiry holds two related premises about gender: one is that the inequality of the sexes is neither a biological given nor a divine mandate, but a cultural construct, and therefore a proper subject of study for any humanistic discipline. The second is that a male perspective, assumed to be 'universal', has dominated fields of knowledge, shaping their paradigms and methods.

The above definition implies that gender is culturally bound and therefore differs from one nation to another. It also implies that people's experience of life is influenced by the gender identity of maleness and femaleness. This self-created condition of gender identity also directs human life.

On the other hand, Kolodny in Brown and Olson (1978:37) defines feminist literary criticism as

Literary criticism which uses feminism as its criterion. When applied in the study of literature, feminist literary criticism covers various contexts and a variety of activities, including any

criticism written by a woman, no matter what the subject; any criticism written by a woman about a man's book from a "feminist" perspective; and any criticism written by a woman about a woman's book or about female authors in general.

This definition implies that feminist literary criticism assists with the analysis of female characters by exposing ways in which sexist stereotyped formulations of women's roles in society are arranged in literary texts. It also enables us to examine the portrayal and attitudes of female characters by different authors.

Similar to Kolodny's definition, Bullock, Stallybrass and Trombly (1988:314) say that feminist literary criticism is

... concerned with both women as writers and women as readers (of male and female texts). It is an activity which raises the question of aesthetics and politics, and the relationship of women to language. It has also established the importance for women of having their own space in which to speak and express themselves freely - and to expose the sexual ideology in the work of male and female authors. It has situated the text (rather than the author) at the heart of critical practice. It has explored the construction of sexuality through the text and questioned the very existence of a fixed (male or female) human subject.

The above extended definition implies that feminist literary criticism addresses the social forms that sexual discrimination takes. It creates a platform for women critics to utilize feminist theories in textual analysis and includes critical interpretations of the cultural ideology.

In line with the above definition Humm (1994:7-8) mentions four essential issues which feminist literary criticism addresses:

Firstly, the issue of masculine literary history is addressed by re-examining male texts, noting their patriarchal assumptions and showing the way women in these texts are often represented according to prevailing social, cultural and ideological norms.

Secondly, feminist critics have charted a new literary history which provides authenticity to texts of neglected women and women's oral culture. Thirdly, feminist criticism confronts the problem of the 'feminist reader' by offering readers new methods and critical practices. Lastly, feminist criticism aims to make us act as feminist readers by creating writing and reading collectives.

Humm's views on feminist literary criticism focus on women's oppression as a theme in literature and assume a woman reader as consumer of male produced works. They address the invisibility of women writers by recognizing the abandoned texts of neglected women. They also enable a feminist critic to provide new ideas about the interaction of author, character and reader.

To sum up these different views on feminist literary criticism, Greene and Kahn (1985:2) have this to say

Feminist scholarship has two concerns: it revises concepts previously thought universal but now seen as originating in particular cultures and serving particular purposes; and it restores a female perspective by extending knowledge about women's experience and contribution to culture.

The word "particular" in the above quotation indicates that feminist literary criticism is not always the same in different countries or even within one country and that it has different aims. For the purpose of this study feminist literary criticism will examine selected texts on the basis of patriarchal assumptions to show how women are represented according to prevailing social, cultural and ideological norms in Tsonga society. Criticism will focus on women's oppression as represented in selected texts, rejecting traditional standards in which women's roles are misrepresented. This approach will glorify women's solidarity formed in companionships such as friendships between women and mother-daughter bonds as a basis for transformation.

1.4.2 Comparative approach

Comparative approach is a literary technique which uses comparison as its main instrument of research.

Prawer (1973:169) describes this approach as

An effective method through which one can trace the movement and transformation of ideas, while also widening our narrow experiences to which our existence in space and time condemns us by opening up, for our emotional and intellectual enrichment, a vast storehouse of imaginative experience.

Nichols and Vowles (1968:199) sum up this method of approach by saying,

... relevant comparison may be – must be – an instrument of analysis and a criterion of evaluation.

These descriptions imply that comparison broadens insight and transforms ideas through analysis and evaluation of similar elements. This approach will be used to analyse and to evaluate the aesthetics and politics of gender as established in selected texts by feminist literary criticism. It will also compare cultural representations of female characters by male and female novelists.

1.5 DEFINITIONS OF RELATED TERMS

Before I start my analysis, there are some basic terms and concepts that should be clearly understood because they will be frequently used in my study, and as such they form essential tools for my analysis. These are feminism, sex and gender, sex-roles, stereotype, androgyny and culture.

1.5.1 Feminism

Feminism is a broad term and has no single accepted definition. It is a dynamic theory which advocates the rights of women and equality of the sexes from a feminist

perspective. Because of the dynamic nature of feminism, different theoretical perspectives give rise to various definitions of feminism. Humm (1989:94) says the following in this regard:

The definition of feminism incorporates both a doctrine of equal rights for women (the organised movement to attain women's rights) and an ideology of social transformation aiming to create a world for women beyond simple social equality. Under this broad umbrella various feminisms offer differing analyses of the causes, or agents of female oppression.

The word "umbrella" used in the quotation above shows clearly that feminism is a broad term with various definitions. Generally its aim is to liberate women because in all its approaches there is a belief that women suffer injustices because of their sex. Feminist critics such as Hawxhurst and Marrow cited by Tuttle (1986:107) say the following with regard to different definitions of feminism:

Feminism has only working definitions since it is a dynamic, constantly changing ideology with many aspects including the personal, the political and the philosophical ... Feminism is a call to action. It can never be simply a belief system. Without action, feminism is merely empty rhetoric which cancels itself out.

This implies that feminism must insist on the specific character of gender relation and the oppression of women by men. With regard to feminism in literature, Kenyon (1988:9) views the following as significant:

Feminism offers a revaluation of half the human race through the 'images of women' approach, the reappraisal of women's novels, and theories of gender difference in reading, writing and literature interpretation.

In this study feminist literary criticism will be used to examine the ways in which selected texts reinforce patriarchy in the Tsonga community.

1.5.2 Sex and gender

Sex and gender are terms used to describe the physiological differences on the basis of which human beings are classified as males or females. Both terms entwine the biological with the socially constructed.

Tuttle (1986:123) defines sex and gender as

Terms for socially imposed divisions between the sexes. Whereas sex refers to the biological, anatomical differences between male and female, gender refers to the emotional and psychological attributes which a given culture expects to coincide with physical maleness or femaleness.

Similarly, Kramarae (1985:411) says,

The terms sex and gender usefully suggest the complex interaction of biology and culture and suggest that sexuality is intricately related to gender.

In both definitions, sex differences are natural whereas gender differences are culturally constructed. The term sex refers to two biological divisions of human beings commonly referred to as “the male sex” and “the female sex”.

Websters dictionary (1980:2296) defines sex as

The sphere of behaviour, dominated by the relations between male and female. By extension, the whole sphere of behaviour related even indirectly to sexual functions and embracing all affectionate and pleasure-seeking conduct.

This definition refers to the biological differences between individuals that make them man or woman. For the purpose of this study, the social development of the female sex in Tsonga society is investigated in relation to the male sex.

Unlike sex, which is biologically grounded, gender is a term used to identify socially defined character traits between males and females. Gender is thus culturally based.

Ruth (1980:16) describes gender as

A social, not a physiological, concept. Femininity and masculinity, the terms that denote one's gender, refer to a complex set of characteristics and behaviors prescribed for a particular sex by society and learned through the socialization experience.

This means that males and females in every society behave themselves differently according to the values, norms and customs of that society.

Bullock et al. (1988:348), on the other hand, define gender as

An integral part of the process of social classification and organization. It is both a set of ideas (a way of thinking about relations, of influencing behaviour, a set of symbols) and a principle of social organization (allocation to roles, division of labour). Gender is an idiom for talking about the relationship between nature and culture. Gender has to be understood within a social context.

This suggests that the idea of male dominance and female subordination has to be viewed from a cultural basis and not from biological grounds. For the purpose of this study gender refers to the culturally constructed social differences between males and females in the Tsonga society. This study therefore examines the use of gender as an ideological mechanism in the subordination of women in Tsonga society.

1.5.3 Sex-roles

Sex-roles are behaviours and attributes expected of individuals on the basis of their sex, i.e. of being male or female. Tuttle (1986:293) says the following about the concept of sex-roles:

Sex-roles were developed by sociologists as a way of describing the appropriate social functions filled by men and women. Behind the term was the assumption that there were certain traits and qualities which were naturally masculine or feminine, and which explained why women were best suited to the 'role' of wife and mother and supportive companion, whereas men were suited to a much wider range of roles as an individual in the world.

Similarly, Ruth (1980:17) says

... sex-roles are made up of a set of expected behaviors with accompanying gender traits.

What Tuttle and Ruth say about sex-roles is that in almost every society men and women perform separate and specific roles on the basis of their sex. But unlike men, women unquestionably fulfil traditional role requirements of femininity even if it means risking their own lives in cases of poor health. For instance, a Tsonga woman is expected to get married, bear as many children as possible, take care of her husband and run the household.

This study is concerned with an analysis from a feminist view of the roles of Tsonga women, and their nature, effects and implications.

1.5.4 Stereotype

Stereotypes refer to preconceived ideas about individuals, groups or objects. Ruth (1980:17) defines stereotype as follows:

Stereotype is a concept related to role, yet distinct, ... a composite image of traits and expectations pertaining to some group ... an image that is persistent in the social mind though it is somehow off-centre or inaccurate... an over generalization of characteristics that may or may not have been observed in fact. Often containing a kernel of truth that is partial and thus misleading, the stereotype need not be self-consistent, and it has a remarkable resistance to change by new information.

Bullock et al. (1988:813), on the other hand, define stereotype as:

An over-simplified mental image of ... some category of person, institution, or event which is shared, in essential features, by large numbers of people. The categories may be broad ... or narrow ... and a category may be the subject of two or more quite different stereotypes. Stereotypes are commonly ... accompanied by prejudice.

In both definitions above, stereotype means a mental image about a person's behavioural expectations within a social context. In this study, stereotype refers to images, symbols and labels of Tsonga women with derogatory implications. This study attempts to analyse different stereotypes about Tsonga women as found in the selected novels.

1.5.5 Androgyny

The term androgyny originates from the Greek words “andro” meaning male and “gyn” meaning female. Androgyny is not a physical state of, but refers to, a psychic integration of masculine and feminine virtues. Bullock et al. (1988:33) describe androgyny as:

A concept developed in feminist movement representing a movement away from theories of rigid sex-role or gender stereotyping ... recognizes both male and female characteristics in human identity...(and) therefore implies that men should develop “feminine” qualities, women “masculine” qualities and thereby dissolve the difference, the sources of inequalities, between the sexes.

Pratt (1982: 57-58) views androgyny as:

The results of the negation of gender stereotypes, the absorption of positive qualities of “masculinity” and “femininity” into the total personality, and the development of a selfhood beyond gender dichotomies.

Both descriptions mean that androgyny enables men and women to assume challenging roles of the opposite sex to overcome gender stereotypes. In this study, androgyny is seen as advancing social conditions by challenging “masculine” qualities to surpass gender stereotypes in order to dissolve the inequalities between the sexes.

1.5.6 Culture

The term “culture” refers to the way of life of the community. Bullock et al. (1988:195) define culture as:

The ‘social heritage’ of a community: the total body material artifacts...of collective mental and spiritual ‘artifacts’ ... and of distinctive forms of behaviour ... created by a people ... in their ongoing activities within their particular life-conditions, and ... transmitted from generation to generation.

Bullock, et al. (1988:323) elaborate further on the definition of culture by distinguishing folk culture which they define as:

The social heritage ... of a group of people feeling themselves as members of a closely bound community, and sharing a deep-rooted attachment and allegiance to it. A folk culture is distinguished from more complex cultures in that it is predominantly non-literate, and so closely knit as to be transmitted from generation to generation by oral means and by ritual and behavioural habituation.

Although the second definition may appear to be a repetition of the first, it is more appropriate to my study because it emphasizes the sharing of common interests by the whole community. For the purpose of this study, culture will be understood as referring to customs, beliefs, rites, rituals, norms, values and modes of living in Tsonga society.

1.6 LITERATURE REVIEW

Many scholars of literature in African languages have already shown an interest in the study of the image of women in literature. Ngcangca (1987) in his M.A. dissertation **The Image of Women in Selected Sesotho Novels**, discusses the role categories of the Basotho woman. He divides the categories according to the woman's developmental stages. The first stage he discusses is the image of girls. He compares girls in the transitional stage between traditionalism and modernism. He observes that a traditional Mosotho girl offers very little resistance or objection to her parental choice of marriage partner while girls of the post-transitional stage reject parental choice. The second category he discusses is the image of the wife. He also distinguishes between traditional women and those inclined to modernism. He observes that the image portrayed is that a traditional Mosotho woman obeys her husband in all respects. The third and last category he discusses is the image of the mother. He notes that a Mosotho mother is portrayed as a person with inherent protective maternal instincts.

Mtuze (1990) in his doctoral thesis **A Feminist Critique of the Image of Women in the Prose works of Selected Xhosa Writers (1909 - 1980)**, analyses various stereotypes expressed by both male and female writers in Xhosa prose works. In his study, Mtuze recognizes the fact that stereotyping as a social phenomenon and a construct has its roots in the pre-literate era, i.e. stereotyping was not brought about by education or modern life. Another important feature which he acknowledges about stereotyping is that it is universal as it transcends all racial and national barriers, affecting women similarly in various countries and in different communities, differing only in intensity.

Mtuze divides his study according to decades. He notices that Xhosa women in the first twenty years of written prose fiction were portrayed as peripheral and subservient. The woman of that period was strongly stereotyped by male writers – the only writers of that period. The third and fourth decades were characterized by the woman who refuses to be shackled by oppressive social norms. The woman was seen as dynamic, pro-active and outright deviant at that time. In the fifties the woman was portrayed as being reactionary.

She opposed all forms of domination. Women of the sixties and seventies resisted parental control, and this frustrated thousands of them. They were fashionable and materialistic, so much that they neglected all other things. Women of this period performed masculine roles. The eighties were characterized by women taking a much stronger stand in politics than men.

Mtuzze makes the following observations:

- ❑ Xhosa writers do not highlight the plight of the Xhosa woman.
- ❑ The first female writers confirmed popular stereotypes perpetuated by male writers instead of refuting them as one would have expected.
- ❑ The position of women has undergone a tremendous change over the past few decades, although negative stereotypes continue to thwart their progress and to undermine their achievement in various subtle ways.

Mawela (1994) in her M.A. dissertation **The Depiction of Women Characters in Selected Venda Novels**, analyses the portrayal of Venda women. Like Ngcangca, she also makes a distinction between traditional women and women in modernism. She observes that a traditional Venda woman is submissive and obedient. She never tries to compete with male characters even when she is justified in doing so. This woman is more acceptable and agreeable and conforms to the rules laid down by culture. Unlike traditional women, modern women are very competitive and active. They compete with men in most spheres of life, even the economic sector.

Dlamini (1995) in her M.A. dissertation **Voicing their perceptions: A review of Swazi women folk songs**, discusses protesting songs by Swazi women based on issues of discontent among women. She employs a feminist approach to reveal the woman's feelings and her perception of the world around her. She observes that most Swazi women who are not happy in social institutions especially marriage, express their dissatisfaction through oral songs. However, the Swazi woman's trust in folk songs has proved a failure since it brings no change to her oppression.

Masuku (1997) in her M.A. dissertation **Images of Women in some Zulu Literary works: A Feminist Critique**, analyses various stereotypes by both male and female authors. Like Mtuze, she employs a feminist approach in her study. She observes that in some instances both male and female writers in Zulu literature use similar stereotypes of women, and others appear sexist in their portrayal of female characters. She recommends that feminism should bring a cordial relationship between man and woman and should thus be supported by all, especially women.

My study, **The Image of Women in Selected Tsonga novels**, provides an analysis of various stereotypes in selected Tsonga novels. Like Mtuze and Masuku, I also assume a feminist perspective in my study.

1.7 SUMMARY

The primary purpose of this study is exposed as the examination of the role and image of women in Tsonga society. The works selected for analysis represent both male and female writers. Two approaches, viz. feminist literary criticism and a comparative approach are outlined as techniques which will be employed throughout the study. The discussion of Tsonga culture so far as it affects the woman, provided in this chapter, will guide us to an understanding of the role and nature of women in Tsonga society. A detailed explanation of the terms feminism, sex and gender, sex-roles, stereotypes, androgyny and culture on which the study focuses is given. A review of similar studies by other scholars is also provided. In the next chapter, various types of feminism and female subordination will be discussed.

CHAPTER 2

A FEMINIST OVERVIEW OF FEMALE SUBORDINATION

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter a feminist perspective of the images of women in society in general will be provided. Both historical and theoretical debates will be incorporated in an attempt to show the inherent segregation and oppression which exists between the sexes, and how this finds expression in Tsonga society. The contents of this chapter will cover feminism and patriarchy as well as feministic theories such as radical feminism, liberal feminism, socialist feminism and black feminism. The chapter is based on literary feminism which examines feminism in fiction, elements of literary feminism and aspects of feminism in novels. It will also cover feminism in South Africa with the focus on pre-colonial and colonial periods concluding with a brief summary at the end of the chapter.

2.2 FEMINISM AND PATRIARCHY

The term feminism has been defined in paragraph 1.5.1 as a dynamic theory which advocates the rights of women and equality of the sexes from a feminist perspective. It is argued in that paragraph that feminism is a doctrine of equal rights for women and an ideology of social transformation which offers various analyses of the causes of women's oppression.

In the current study feminism will be used to examine how patriarchy affects the woman's social, physical and psychological development. The term patriarchy was explained in paragraph 1.2.1 as the rule of the father and as men's authority over women. This power, which is vested in men by society, deprives women of certain fundamental human rights.

According to Bullock et al. (1988:632) the term patriarchy describes authority and control exercised by men over women. Patriarchy, when used by feminists, refers to what is

perceived to be a fundamental and universal state of male dominance which is both a state of affairs (i.e. men control social institutions) and an ideology (embedded in languages). This implies that patriarchy as a doctrine is expressed differently in various languages. For example in Kate Millet's study of patriarchy the questions of gender, the nature of the family and the process of socialization are highlighted in understanding the nature of male supremacy. For her, the political relationship between the sexes was central to patriarchy, and male power is expressed and contained in the sexual act itself (cf. Bullock et al. 1988:632). Similar to this description of patriarchy, Tuttle (1986:242) says that patriarchy means "the rule of the father".

The above directly refers to patriarchy as a universal state of male dominance which advocates male supremacy.

Freud, as cited by Nye (1988:118) provides an indirect perspective on the universal nature of patriarchy. He believes that the most likely explanation for its universality lies in the fact that a woman's anatomy is traditionally vulnerable to and responsible for biological qualities such as menstruation and childbirth. He describes women as hysterical because they have a womb, and their willingness and receptivity are related to their open genitals.

Freud's belief of the universal nature of patriarchy is highly questionable because it focuses only on the woman's anatomy as the cause of her inferior position in society while ignoring the moral and psychological state of being which makes every person different from others. It is therefore rejected in this study.

Lacan, also cited by Nye (1988:139-140), offers a different perspective on the universal nature of patriarchy. He believes that patriarchy is based on tradition and that language determines its social structures and authorizes its ranks. He also believes that the castration complex in girls or in boys is not based on any anatomical fact but derived from meaning-bearing symbolic construction. In the symbolic construction of boys' or girls' castration, the phallus is the master signifier and the symbol of desire. The master signifier refers to the controlling image derived from the construction itself. According to the World Book

Dictionary (2001:1561) the phallus is described as “an image or model of the penis, symbolizing the generative power of nature”. The correlate of the penis in language is the name of the father who is regarded as the generator of life.

The controlling image of girls’ or boys’ castration above is that the girl has no phallus and she is thus transitorily the owner of the father’s name. She has a name as she has a penis only through a man (cf. Nye 1988:139-140). On the other hand the boy’s identity is fixed in a language that incorporates the rules of kinship and determines his paternal name. Without a phallus the woman is at a disadvantage. Her subordination to the man lies in the fact that she depends on him to find the signifier of her desire.

From what has been stated above one can say that patriarchy focuses on the nature of the family as the primary source for developing the personality traits of a woman and her socialization effects. It prevents her from questioning authority by developing in her an internalized set of values which defer her independence while acknowledging male supremacy. In this way the family becomes the chief institution which is both a mirror of and a connection to the larger society. Against this background, the Tsonga woman depends on her husband and her husband’s family.

Patriarchy in the Tsonga community covers the levirate custom (cf. paragraph 1.2.1). A woman married with **lobola** is subject to this custom. In view of the consequences of **lobola** Junod (1962:280-281) failed to understand the purpose of the levirate custom and states the following as the negative consequences of **lobola**:

The woman is undoubtedly reduced to an inferior position by the fact that she has been bought by lobola. As regards her children, whatever may be her love for them, she does not in fact possess them. They belong to the father. If divorce takes place and the lobola is not returned to the husband, he keeps them and the mother will be separated from them for ever. In the same way a widow to be inherited is in the hands of her deceased husband’s family. If she bears children thereafter, they belong to the husband’s family.

Against the background information on the levirate custom as explained in paragraph 1.2.1, what Junod thought to be the disadvantages of **lobola**, is in fact a cultural practice of black people in general and the Tsonga people in particular. This practice serves to reinforce the communal outlook of the Tsonga people who, as a small scale society, focus on relationships and oneness of a large group. **Lobola** and the levirate custom are only a means of realising this spirit; not 'buying' or 'inheriting' in the Western sense. Under the above system, women and children belong to the husband and father. For this reason the woman's oppression by her husband and her husband's family cannot be disputed.

2.3 FEMINIST THEORY

Like feminism, this theory is very broad and has various movements such as liberal, radical, socialist and black feminism. Feminist theory is a philosophical assumption in the analysis of the concept of gender and the meaning of sexual difference. Feminist theory claims that to acknowledge the gender bias of traditional theory is to transform radically the structure of our knowledge of reality. Feminist theorists differ both in the extent to which they accept the idea of a unique, gender-determined knowledge and in their recommendations for the reconstruction of scientific and non-scientific discourses (Tierney 1989:487).

The fundamental goal of feminist theory is to explore the origin of the oppression of women and to expose sexist stereotypes. Feminist theory critically evaluates the claim that gender is biologically determined and reveals women's individual and shared experiences by encouraging friendship between women. This friendship enables women to recognize their interest and status as human beings. Feminist theory also acts against traditional theories which restrict women from participating in economic, political and quite a number of other domains of social life and point to these as major causes of women's oppression.

For the purpose of this study feminist theories mentioned in paragraph 2.1 will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

2.3.1 Liberal feminism

Liberal feminism develops from "enlightenment thought" fighting against unequal opportunity. Proponents of this theory believe that individuals have certain inherent rights such as life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. They argue that women have the same basic rights as men. They propose equal opportunity for women in social institutions such as education, government and the economy.

Liberal feminism marks a reformist position, working within existing political structures to secure equal rights and equality of opportunity for women (Eagleton 1991:228).

In her argument for equality between the sexes Grimke, cited by Donovan (1992:16) says

... man and woman were created equal, and endowed by their beneficent Creator with the same intellectual powers and the same moral responsibilities, and that consequently whatever is morally right for a man to do, is morally right for a woman, it follows as a necessary corollary, that if it is the duty of a man to preach ... it is the duty also of a woman.

Political philosophers such as John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor cited by Nye (1988:13) stress fundamental individualism and emphasize sexual similarities for equal opportunity. They argue for a society in which the interests of every man would be considered and, at the same time, in which the individual rights of each man would be protected.

Liberal feminists endorse this theory because it vindicates the rights of women in all social positions. The liberal feminists' desperate quest for equal opportunity could be summed up in the words of Evans (1995:33), who says,

"Recognize our full humanity, and we will trouble you no more."

2.3.2 Radical feminism

Radical feminism views the inequality between men and women as the primary form of exploitation, pre-dating class or racial antagonism. For radical feminism, change is impossible within the present social order. What is needed is a new social order based on woman-centred values and methods of organization (Eagleton 1991:228).

Radical feminists argue that men and women are fundamentally different. Women have certain "material traits" such as caring for others, flexibility, submissiveness and cooperativeness which differentiate them from men. They claim that all these traits including others are essentially humane and must be the moral basis for a new society. This is what Eagleton (1991:229) refers to as woman-centredness – a radical feminist concept which claims that feminism should concentrate on female experience and interpretations and resist male definitions. This belief can lead to a position of separatism.

Radical feminists regard patriarchy or male domination as the root cause of women's oppression. They argue that marriage and family are institutions of socialization where women's subordination is transferred to the next generation, through ideological indoctrination in attitudes towards role, temperament and status. They advocate the destruction of patriarchal ideologies and the abandonment of hierarchical patriarchal institutions and relationships.

2.3.3 Socialist feminism

This is the theory of unequal power. Socialist feminism proposes gender relations as the primary contradiction of social organizations. It concentrates on the family as the basic institution for ideological socialization with the role of the mother therein.

Socialist feminists challenge pre-assigned domestic tasks as being non-creative and alienating for women. They argue that women's domestic labour, their poorly paid and insecure position as wage-labourers, must be taken into account because this contributes much to their oppression. They regard society as organized to prevent feminine equality by creating masculinity and male dominance in the sex and gender system and as having developed men as participants in the capitalist work world (Donovan 1992:84).

Socialist feminists consider the pre-existence and intertwinement of patriarchy with capitalism. They believe that equality for women cannot be achieved within a capitalist system. Like radical feminists, they criticize liberal feminists for emphasizing the individual's right, arguing that it is practically impossible to take advantage of opportunities where one lacks the potentials to perform the specific task.

Donovan (1992:82) emphasizes the impossibilities of equality in a capitalist system by saying

Socialist feminists demand to uncover the truth that capitalist patriarchal society cannot deliver on "liberal" promises of equality or even equal rights for women without destabilizing itself.

On the contrary, revolutionary contemporary socialist feminists believe that women's culture, women's experience and practice can provide the basis for opposition to destructive patriarchal ideologies (Donovan 1992:89).

2.3.4 Black feminism

Black feminism can be defined as an ideology that involves freedom from oppression based on political, economic, social and cultural manifestations of racial, cultural, sexual and class biases. It is more inclusive than other forms of feminist ideologies and originates from racial divisions and conflicts that represent

some of the worst and most chronic forms of human suffering (Steady in Terborg-Penn and Rushing 1987:4).

Black feminism explores the peculiarity of black women's experience, criticizes the racism it finds in the work of white feminists and deconstructs our understanding of racial differences (Eagleton 1991:226).

This ideology was formulated in the United States and developed mainly in literary criticism marked by a tremendous growth in the number of literary products in the fiction by black women. African and Afro-American women writers share similar aesthetic attitudes which are distinct from those of white feminists because of race and on account of the fact that black women have experienced in the past and in the present-day subtle control exercised over them by the foreign Western culture. These para-literary factors partly account for the conflict between white and black women over strategies and priorities in sexual politics. This is the argument of the Nigerian critic Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi (1985:64) who maintains that more often than not, where a white woman writer may be a feminist, a black woman writer is likely to be a "womanist" i.e. a black feminist or feminist of colour. The above definition expresses the belief that the black woman strives for sexual, racial, cultural, national, economic and political empowerment.

In affirming Walker's (1983:xi) definition of the term womanist, Ogunyemi (1985:72) points out that womanism has a mandalic core: its aim is the dynamism of the wholeness and self-healing that one sees in the positive integrative ending of womanist novels. The same view is held by Steady in Terborg-Penn and Rushing (1987:4), who maintains that the interaction of all oppressions has produced a new brand of feminism through which women are viewed as "human" rather than sexual beings.

Black women writers distinguish between feminism and womanism. The ultimate difference between the feminist and the womanist is what each sees of patriarchy

and what each thinks can be changed. The womanist mission is to develop the positive aspects of the life of Blacks. The politics of the womanist is unique in its racial-sexual ramifications; making it more complex than white sexual politics, for it addresses more directly the ultimate question relating to power: how the world's wealth and concomitant power among the races and between the sexes are shared (Ogunyemi 1985:68-69).

Both Ogunyemi and Walker's philosophy of womanism celebrates Black roots, the ideals of the life of Blacks and the mystical meanings of womanhood amongst the Blacks. Their joy lies in the fact that black womanism is as equally concerned with black sexual oppression as it is with other world power structures that subjugate Blacks.

In black society, womanism is favoured because it incorporates the racial, cultural and national philosophy of black people. Black feminism develops within the context of black-defined sexual-political struggles, examining the sexual tensions and conflicts in terms of black culture and its shaping within and against the dominant white culture. It seeks ways for black men and women to negotiate politically sexual-political tension and abuse in a way that reinforces their collaboration against racism and the capitalist formulation that embodies and sustains that racism (Joseph and Lewis 1981:281).

Black feminists articulate their concern as the preservation of authentic women's traditions, history and the culture of their grandmothers in order to retain their racial and ethnic roots.

However, when writing about black women or contemporary black womanist criticism, white feminist theory is an essential precondition for the growth of this area of criticism because black womanism as a distinct body of the theory and practice is in the process of development. Black womanists have to develop a black literary tradition before they can establish black critical techniques (Humm 1986:105). As

this study is based on textual analysis, feminist literary criticism – which is already well established – will be used in the analysis of the selected novels. However, in the evaluation of the characters depicted in the novels analyzed, black feminism will be the theory that is mainly applied, but owing to the fact that the common denominator of the different types of feminism is the concern about the unacceptable status of women in society and how women can be empowered, the other forms of feminism will also be taken into account and highlighted in the comments where this is deemed appropriate.

2.3.5 LITERARY FEMINISM

Literary feminism refers to feminist criticism used in textual analysis to expose sexist assumptions (cf. par. 1.4.1). Great emphasis is placed on textual analysis, with the focus on sexual ideology. As Cuddon (1991:338) puts it,

Feminist criticism is an attempt to describe and interpret (and reinterpret) women's experience as depicted in various kinds of literature – especially the novel; and to a lesser extent, poetry and drama.

As this study is based on literary criticism, feminist literary criticism will be used to examine images of women in the selected novels. To achieve this a brief overview of feminism in fiction, elements of literary feminism and aspects of feminism in fiction will be provided in the following paragraphs to examine sexist assumptions held by selected novelists (cf. par. 2.1).

2.3.5.1 Feminism in fiction

In its general, non-literary applications, feminism has a number of different meanings and connotations. What is common to all feminists however, is that they advocate or

support greater freedom or equal rights for women in politics, education, employment or personal life. In so doing, they question or reject in various ways traditional definitions of the nature or roles of women, but they differ considerably in several basic ways. For instance, while they all agree that women are oppressed and that a number of their character traits are the result of cultural conditioning, they do not agree on which traits, if any, consistently distinguish women from men, which of such distinctions are worth preserving, what changes in society are the most desirable, or what methods should be used to achieve their goals (Brown and Olson 1978:82).

Contrary to its general, non-literary applications, literary feminism provides documentation that the traditional definitions of women are inadequate and that women suffer injustices because of their sex. Literary feminism does not deal with feminists themselves or provide a strategy for the reform of society: it silently extricates the feminist views found in fiction (op. cit. p 282).

In her attempt to describe feminism in fiction, Cixous as cited by Moi (1985:108), claims that feminine texts are texts that work on the difference, strive in the direction of difference, struggle to undermine the dominant phallogocentric logic, split open the closure of the binary opposition and revel in the pleasures of open-ended textuality.

Pratt, in Brown and Olson (1978:280), maintains that feminism in fiction suggests a distinction between feminist fiction "narrowly defined as words in which the author's explicit intention is to expose some aspects of sexism" as stated in the preceding paragraph and novels which are "unintentionally ... feminist and of concern because of their place in the literature of women". The latter constitute "a fiction which includes a brilliant exploration of woman's existential situation within a carefully orchestrated treatment of other and broader human conflicts and relationships — a genre defined as encyclopaedic feminism."

Literary feminist critics argue that there is no difference between texts authored by women and those authored by men. They evaluate fiction according to its political rather than its artistic standards. The best fictions are those that reflect liberationist concerns. Literary feminist critics believe that the implicit privileges of a voice or speech in writing, occur when a text expresses the authentic presence of the human subject.

2.3.5.2 Elements of Literary Feminism

Krouse in Brown and Olson (1978:287) holds the view that feminism in fiction does not have an absolute relationship to the author's sex. Similar elements may appear in the work of both women and men. She identifies five distinct elements of literary feminism: characterization, point of view, departure from stereotype, examination of social causes for unpleasant characters and attention to the details of lives of women.

Cixous, as cited by Moi (1985:108), warns against the danger of confusing the "sex" of the author with the "sex" of the writing he or she produces. She argues that it is not the empirical sex of the author that matters but the kind of writing at stake.

Kaplan, as cited by Rogers (1991:7), refuses to speculate about the inherent difference between the "consciousness of men and women". She describes "feminine consciousness" as a literary device: a method of characterization of females in fiction, which focuses on how the authors develop uniquely feminine consciousness for their own characters.

Ama Ata Aidoo as cited by Ogunyemi (1985:64-65) dismisses the assumption that all material dealing with women is necessarily feminist. He argues as follows:

I am not a feminist because I write about women. Are men writers male chauvinist pigs just because they write about men? Or is a writer an African nationalist just by writing about

Africans? ... Obviously not ... no writer, female or male, is a feminist just by writing about women. Unless a particular writer commits his or her energies, actively, to exposing the sexist tragedy of women's history; protesting the ongoing degradation of women; celebrating their physical and intellectual capabilities, and above all, unfolding a revolutionary vision of the role [of women], he or she cannot be pronounced a feminist.

From what is said above it is clear that women writers are feminists when they use literature as a place where they can voice their political ideas; ask different questions about female socialization; present their autobiographies in “feminine modes”; subvert literary boundaries to represent women in positive ways and crucially attack social and economic discrimination against women (Humm 1991:26).

2.3.5.3 Aspects of feminism in novels

Ogunyemi (1985:4-65) affirms that for a novel to be identified as feminist, it must deal not just with women and women's issues but should also posit some aspects of a feminist ideology in which a reader can expect to find a combination of literary themes such as a critical perception of and reaction to patriarchy, sensitivity to the inequalities of sexism; a change leading to female victory in a feminist world, or a failure to eliminate sexism and finally a style characterized by acrimony of feminist discourse.

Novels with characteristics of feminism have either a female protagonist or several female characters who are significant to the theme or central action. If the male character is the protagonist, the women either do not emerge clearly as individual characters in their own right, or if they do, the serious kind of attention given to the existential anguish of the main character is not accorded them.

In some instances, feminism can be observed even in a female character who appears to be fully developed by examining the author's point of view and emphasis

in revealing the extent to which the character's life and fate are treated seriously. Besides the inclusion of female characters whose life and fate are treated seriously, feminism in characterization may be distinguished by the author's avoidance of stereotypes and inanimate characters.

Krouse in Brown and Olson (1978:284) mentions two methods of departing from stereotypes. The first is complexity and specificity which saves a character from being a stereotype. Another highly effective way of avoiding a stereotype is multiplicity. The danger of multiplicity is assigning a stereotypical characteristic of one sex to another. This appears to be a forced way out which may lead to more androgynous literature.

On rare occasions unpleasant female characters can be used to make a feminist point. This is characterized by the portrayal of significant female characters who are not subordinate to a male point of view. Deviation from stereotypes, and a sensitivity to the question of whether women are inherently vicious or rather victims of society resembles feminism in novels. Feminism is also evident in the attention given to the details of the lives of women, especially attention to the areas ignored or sentimentalized, such as the unusual influences of mothers on sons instead of the usual development of relationship between mothers and daughters (Brown and Olson 1978:285 – 286).

2.4 FEMINISM IN SOUTH AFRICA

2.4.1 Pre-colonial period

For many decades, black women in South Africa were oppressed, and there are

certain elements within indigenous cultures which still oppress them. The oppression of women is dynamic and undergoes qualitative changes over time.

In the pre-colonial period, Tsonga women were oppressed because of sex and gender differences. For young women, marriage was the beginning of hard labour which signified female subordination to and exploitation by men.

On marriage, a bride price called "cuma" or "xuma" in Tsonga was paid by the husband to the bride's father in the form of cattle, presupposing that a young woman would remain obedient to her husband and her husband's relatives (cf. paragraph 1.2.1). In this way the woman was reduced to an inferior position in the family. This type of marriage oppressed women because disobedience on the part of the wife was sufficient reason for the husband's family to demand their cattle back. The woman was thus obliged to be submissive to her husband.

The **lobola** custom caused great misery to some young Tsonga girls because in some instances a girl would be given to an old man for whom she had no liking just because her father had accepted **lobola** from that man some time before. This was one of the worst situations which young Tsonga girls could find themselves in.

A married woman was supposed to work for her husband and she in return received very little from him. The husband was given a productive piece of land by the chief or head of the clan to utilise. This piece of land was mainly cultivated by the woman to produce subsistence crops. At the same time she was expected to reproduce, i.e. to bear as many children as she could, children who would, in turn, marry and also bear children to keep the name of her husband's clan alive. Meillassoux, as cited by Walker (1990:38), places emphasis on the relative importance of the word "reproduction" — in the sense of creation and control of people — over production. This is similar to the biblical sense of human creation: "Have many children, so that your descendants will live all over the earth and bring it under their control" (Genesis 1:28).

While production and reproduction were placed on women's shoulders, stock farming and especially cattle was the domain of men because these creatures were used for marriage. This sexual division of labour is based on gender stereotypes and helped to place women under male domination. However, Tsonga women in pre-colonial times were free to control female initiation. This freedom, together with their ability to reproduce, gave them status and social integrity. Unfortunately, women who could not bear children were stigmatized.

2.4.2 Colonial period

The colonial period created a different kind of female subordination. This was imposed by the migrant labour system which forced men in South Africa to migrate to town for wage labour as cash needs expanded more and more. Women remained at home with the burden of domestic and unpaid agricultural labour. Their workload increased, and as a result they had to work much harder and much longer. In addition to their "invisible" tasks, they had to watch their husband's herds.

Bozzoli, as cited by Walker (1990:179), regards this position of women as problematic and concludes that it was not the men's absence that put the burden of domestic and agricultural labour on women, but that these societies were themselves capable of subordinating women's labour.

Starvation and unpaid labour forced women to migrate to urban areas in search of employment in the modern sector of the economy. The migrant labour system expressed rigid sexual and racial divisions of labour. Black women were excluded from jobs in the formal and industrial sectors. This compelled them to look for domestic services and jobs in the informal sectors such as laundry works, shebeens, and hawking where they were not registered as workers. Those who managed to find employment in the formal and industrial sectors earned very low wages compared to their male counterparts. The black woman was sexually assaulted and abused by the white colonizer. She was forced to undermine herself and served as

the white woman's maid and wet nurse for her children. This affected women negatively and relegated their status even lower (Beale, in Donovan 1992:157).

However, the colonial period brought significant changes for black women by opening up possibilities of individual mobility and independence for women in the economic sector.

2.5 SUMMARY

In this chapter different schools of thought and historical perspectives were explored in an attempt to outline the course of female subordination. It was argued that patriarchy is a widespread popular term used for describing women's subordination to men. For the purpose of this study more emphasis is placed on black women in South Africa who are discriminated against mainly because of race and gender, with special attention to Tsonga women.

From this discussion it is established that black feminism views human life from a totally inclusive perspective. A black female is therefore likely to be a womanist because womanism includes both her racial and sexual predicaments unlike feminism which is confronted only by a white woman's sexual politics.

The liberal, radical and socialist feminists, all fought independently for equal rights for women in social institutions such as government, education, the economy and personal life. The pre-colonial and colonial periods were identified as the periods in which black women suffered the worst discrimination on the grounds of their race and sex.

In view of the above discussion it has been established that feminism in fiction is evident through emphasizing, avoiding stereotyping and exploring fully the injustices suffered by women either because of the sexist nature of society, or because of their relationships with individual men or both. This forms the basis of this study and will be dealt with in the chapters that follow.

CHAPTER 3

DEPICTION OF WOMEN CHARACTERS IN THE SELECTED MALE-AUTHORED NOVELS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter purports to expose the image of women in the selected male-authored novels, namely, Sasavona, Masungi m'fana ka Maxele,¹ Mibya ya nyekanyeka, Madyisambitsi, Makumu ya vutomi byebyo, Ndzi ta n'wi kuma and Bya velekeriwa. A summary of each novel will be given at the beginning of the appropriate paragraphs before embarking on discussion and analysis.

Since the study examines the portrayal of characters it is imperative to provide the reader with background information on types of characters and methods of characterization.

3.2 CHARACTERIZATION

The concept 'characterization' refers to the art of creating fictional characters in words which give them human identity.

Cohen (1977:177) defines characterization as

The means whereby an author establishes the illusion that the persons created by his words are indeed people or like people, with traits and personalities which a reader can recognize and analyse.

This assertion is supported by Shaw (1972:71) who says

¹ In the first edition "Maxele" was spelt "Mashele" in line with the orthography at that time (see bibliography). However, subsequent editions use the revised orthography where "sh" is superceded by "x", and it is this form that will be used in this dissertation.

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

From the above definitions it is clear that characters in fiction are not real people, but imaginary persons with human traits and personalities.

Thus Abrams (1993:23) continues in the same vein by saying,

Characters are the persons presented in a dramatic or narrative work, who are interpreted by the reader as being endowed with moral, dispositional, and emotional qualities that are expressed in what they say – the dialogue and by what they do – the action.

This implies that the characters' dialogue amongst themselves, their emotional and moral behaviour and their actions in the story resemble those of real people in everyday life.

Roberts (1982:54) elaborates further on this idea as follows:

A character in literature is an extended verbal representation of a human being, specifically the inner self that determines thought, speech and behaviour. Through dialogue, action and commentary literature captures some of the interactions of character and circumstance. Literature makes these interactions interesting by portraying characters who are worth caring about, rooting for, and even loving, although there are also characters at whom you may laugh, or whom you may dislike or even hate.

Roberts' expression creates the impression that the author's socio-cultural background, his environment and his personal experience of life significantly influence his creation of characters.

Gaidzanwa (1985:8) projects a similar explanation when she says

Literature is an important part of the author's experience because it mirrors and interprets the experience from the points of view of those who write about it.

Finally, Wellek and Warren (1949:89) emphasize the idea that literature is a reflection of life through the author's experience when they state that:

Literature imitates life, and life is, in large measure, a social reality, even though the natural world and the inner or subjective world of the individual have also been objects of literary "imitation".

From these definitions, characterization can be summed up as the creation in literature of imaginary persons who represent living people in life. This is the view that will be used in this study and that will embrace the actions and words of fictional women created by the authors in their novels.

The discussion of characterization above indicates that characters in literature behave differently as individuals. For this reason characters in literary works are classified as various types according to their roles in a story and personality traits. In the following paragraph different types of characters will be sketched out.

3.2.1 Types of characters

The following types of characters will be discussed briefly in the following paragraphs viz. protagonist, antagonist, tritagonist and foil.

The protagonist is the major character or hero of the story. He/she is the most prominent figure whose actions direct the theme. In some literary works there can be more than one protagonist in a single story. Ntsakisi, Masingita and Ximambana are examples of protagonists in the selected novels.

The antagonist or the villain is the character who opposes the hero. His/her villainous actions are directed at disrupting the protagonist's actions or motives. The

antagonist may be a person, the society or anything that opposes the protagonist. The antagonist in Ndzi Tsandzekile is N'wa-Hlengani who opposes her daughter, Masingita. N'wa-Hlengani tried in vain to disrupt Masingita's aim to become an enlightened woman. Like the protagonist the antagonist is also a major character.

Major characters may further be divided into flat and round characters. Flat characters centre on a single idea. These are simple characters who do not perform any surprising actions. They are easily recognized by readers because of their simplicity.

Round characters on the other hand are characters who show growth and complexity in their actions. Round characters focus on different ideas and are capable of performing surprising actions. Their motivations are more realistic and believable. Masingita in Ndzi Tsandzekile is an example of a round character. Tahani-N'wanjiyani in Ntsakisi is another good example of a round character. She is always generous and she humbles herself to Mdlayi-N'waripewu, her daughter-in-law, who disrespects her and accuses her of witchcraft.

Forster (1927:81) says the following with regard to round characters:

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.

What Forster is highlighting here is that complex characters are more human. Their complexity enables the reader to seek the hidden reality. Both flat and round characters play a significant role in literary work.

Forster (1927:78) highlights the significance of round and flat characters in a single story when he says:

A novel that is at all complex often requires flat people as well as round, and the outcome of their collisions parallels life more

accurately.

From the above expression it can be concluded that the interaction of round and flat characters in a single story is essential because it gives a more balanced and realistic picture of life.

The tritagonist is a third character who causes conflict between the protagonist and the antagonist. Mdlayi-N'waripewu is an example of the tritagonist. She stands between Tahani-N'wanjiyani and her daughter, Ntsakisi. However, Mdlayi-N'waripewu's villainous actions are fruitless because Tahani-N'wanjiyani is a developing character and she can easily overcome difficult situations.

A foil is a minor character whose actions either contrast or complement the actions of the major character. Midlayi in Sasavona is an example of a foil. Midlayi's Christian morality and her tidiness are in direct contrast to Sasavona's immorality, carelessness and untidiness. Midlayi's ideal behaviour serves as a commentary on Sasavona's bad behaviour.

The various types of characters discussed above will be used for analysis in this study. Characters will be selected on the basis of their role in the plot. The discussion of various characters above leads us to methods of characterization which indicate how various characters are portrayed in a literary work.

3.2.2 Methods of characterization

Several methods and techniques are used by the author to portray various characters. For the purpose of this study the expository and dramatic techniques of presentation will be briefly outlined.

The expository method is a descriptive technique of presentation. Here the character communicates directly with the reader through the narrator's voice. When describing the character the narrator may use explicit statements about this character. For

example, the narrator may comment on the character's physical or psychological description, his environment and his reaction to others.

The dramatic technique is an implicit method of presentation. In the dramatic method the writer does not tell the readers about the characters. The characters' behaviour and their personality traits are perceived through dialogue and their interaction with other characters in the story.

In discussing and analysing the depiction of female characters in the selected novels, the characteristics discussed above will be used to select the characters for discussion, as well as to evaluate them.

3.3 DISCUSSION OF THE NOVEL SASAVONA BY D.C. MARIVATE

3.3.1 (a) Summary of the story

Sasavona was the first novelette to be published in Tsonga. The author describes the life of a woman of the same name, Sasavona. Sasavona lives a carefree life, and fails to care for her family in an acceptable manner. She is very lazy, drinks heavily and is a kleptomaniac. Contrary to this, Sasavona's friend, Midlayi, cares for her family and brings up her children in a proper manner although she is poor. Midlayi's children attend school. Later in life, Midlayi accepts Christianity and begins to prosper. Sasavona, too, ends up accepting Christianity on her deathbed. The author conveys the message that one can benefit from becoming a Christian.

(b) Characters selected for discussion

The characters to be examined in this novel are Sasavona, who is the protagonist, and Midlayi, who is the foil.

3.3.2 Analysis of the depiction of Sasavona

Sasavona is described as an extremely irresponsible woman who fails to care for her family satisfactorily. She spends most of her time roaming about the village searching for beer. By so doing, Sasavona deprives her children the intimacy inherent in the mother-child relationship. Because of her bad influence almost all her children are irresponsible in life. For instance, Mhlava, her eldest daughter, elopes with a stranger who later murders her. Mbtsimuni, like her mother, becomes a heavy drinker. She marries several men. Matshoho, the eldest son, also becomes a heavy drinker. He is killed in a fight with a robber. Xigono, the younger son, becomes a hobo.

Traditionally, the role of a mother in a Tsonga family is to introduce all her children to clean and acceptable social habits. A Tsonga woman must therefore practise good behaviour at all times for the sake of her children. Sasavona fails to recognize this norm as a mother. She fails to provide her children with a happy and stable family life essential for their ultimate success. All the mishaps and shocking experiences suffered by her children are the consequences of her failure to bring them up in an appropriate manner.

Marivate (1938:28) mentions the following proverb to condemn Sasavona's conduct:

Ku tlula ka mhala ku letela n'wana wa le ndzeni.

(Lit. The jumping/leaping of the impala teaches the young she bears inside, i.e. a child copies his parents' ways of living.)

In Tsonga society, when a child misbehaves, especially a girl, she is accused of having taken after the mother. Junod (1978:38) provides another version of the proverb above which is more directed at the wrongs of a mother:

Ku tlula ka mhala tekela nyini.

(Lit. The jumping/leaping of the young impala is like that of its mother, meaning that the child particularly copies the mother's way of life)

This is, indeed, true of Sasavona from the way she has been depicted. All the wrongs of her children resemble her own bad conduct. For this reason, Sasavona is to be blamed for her failure to bring up her children properly. The author condemns Sasavona's bad conduct by saying:

Sasavona u tsandzekile ku undla vana. George a hi n'wi veki nandzu hikuva a a nga tali ku tshama laha kaya. Sasavona hi yena a a sala na vana, va dyondza mikhuva ya yena hinkwayo, ku nga ri hi ku swi rhandza, kambe ku ri swilo swo kula va ri karhi va swi vona. Sasavona a a nga chavi ku yiva. A a va rhuma ku hlongorisa tihuku ta vanhu, va khoma. Loko va ku "huku leyi a hi ya hina", a vo tshinyiwa, va byeriwa ku khoma. A va tala ku ya hluvela ekule, va celela mintsenga, va vuya va byeleteriwa leswaku va nga vuli. Futhi nyama ya kona a yi dyiwa vusiku (1938:28).

(Sasavona failed to raise her children in an acceptable manner. George is not to be blamed because he was not always found at home. Sasavona is the one who stayed with them, and they learned all her bad manners, not because they liked them, but because they grew up witnessing her bad conduct. Sasavona was not scared of stealing. She sent her children to catch other people's chickens. When they tried to explain to her that these were not their chickens, she scolded them and forced them to catch those chickens. They usually deplored the stolen chicken far from their home and buried its feathers in the ground. They were told not to reveal this to anybody. For that reason, they ate the chicken during the night.)

From what the author says above, it stands to reason that Sasavona's children had no alternative but to follow in their mother's footsteps. They were dishonest because she taught them to steal and to lie. Her poor morals led them to become badly behaved and deceitful in life. This is suicide. Women like Sasavona are socially condemned because they ruin the nation.

3.3.3 Analysis of the depiction of Midlayi

Midlayi is described as a responsible woman who commits herself to the welfare of her children. She buys her children food and school uniform with the little money which her husband sends her. She teaches her children good morals and they behave in a socially approved manner. She always keeps her house clean and welcomes her in-laws. Above all, Midlayi produces subsistence crops for the survival of her family. All these actions show her commitment to the welfare of her family.

The author mentions some of Midlayi's commitments to her family in the following manner:

Vana va basile, na swona va dya va xurha. Exikolweni mathicara ve ri a hi xichavo xa vona. Laha kaya na kona va dya xo nyikiwa. Nsati loyi u tiva n'wingi, mana wa nuna, a nga swi koti ku dya a n'wi tsona, ni vana va makwavo wa nuna, makwavo lo wa xisati, u va tiva ngopfu (1936:8).

(Her children are clean, they eat satisfactorily. Teachers compliment them on their morals. The children accept only what they are given at home. This woman respects her mother-in-law, she shares with her everything that she eats, together with her sister-in-law's children. She likes them very much.)

Women like Midlayi, who care for their family, are socially admired. Hall (1990:82) says the following about such women:

Women's interests are essential to society, and can be expressed fully only through commitments.

3.3.4 Evaluation of presentation of female characters in *Sasavona*

Sasavona is the major female character in this novel. She is a sloven who cares little about anything. Sasavona's counterpart, Midlayi, adheres to cultural values but she is very poor. Midlayi later prospers in life after accepting Christianity. The author

credits Christian morals with Midlayi's prosperity. Sasavona too, ends up accepting Christianity on her deathbed. This overtly suggests that Sasavona's life could have been better if she had accepted Christianity at an earlier stage. It also insinuates at the importance of Christian morals over cultural values.

3.4 DISCUSSION OF THE NOVEL *MASUNGI M'FANA KA MAXELE* BY H.W.E. NTSANWISI

3.4.1 (a) Summary of the story

Masungi is the life-history of a boy bearing the same name. He is brought up in a traditional Tsonga setting. At the age of sixteen, his father sends him to school. Later on he goes to Warmbaths to seek employment. There, he is impressed by Western ways of living. On his return, he is forced to marry Khanyisa, a woman chosen for him by his mother, N'wa-Ridonga. This marriage frustrates him because Khanyisa's traditional ways are contrary to his modern lifestyle. Masungi decides to desert her and goes to Cape Town where he marries a Xhosa girl by the name of Nobayeni. The story depicts a clash between traditional ways of life and the incorporation of Western ways brought by education among the Tsongas.

(b)

Characters selected for discussion

The characters to be examined in this novel are N'wa-Ridonga, the antagonist to Masungi (who is the main character), Khanyisa, the victim of the clash between traditional cultural values and Western lifestyles, and Nobayeni, a woman steeped in Western tradition through education.

3.4.2 Analysis of the depiction of N'wa-Ridonga

N'wa-Ridonga is an elderly woman, described as a strict traditionalist who is not

interested in the modern ways of life. Her adherence to traditionalism influences her in choosing for her son a wife he would not have married. However, the choice of spouse by parents is a common practice in Tsonga custom, because it is believed that a woman is married to serve the whole family (cf. paragraph 1.2.1). As such, she must be chosen with great care.

The author says the following with regard to the choice of spouse by parents:

Milawu ya hina Vatsonga yi vula leswaku n'wana u fanele ku yingisa swileriso ni switsundzuxo swa vatswari, ngopfu emhakeni ya vukati, loko a nga endli sweswo, a hi munhu, i sirha ra vahanyi (1954:67).

(Our traditional laws insist that a child should adhere to the commands and advice of his parents, particularly on matters concerning marriage. If he fails to do that, he is not regarded as a human being.)

In Tsonga custom a young man is supposed to marry a girl from a very good family which does not practise witchcraft. A young woman who is capable of performing major domestic duties such as cooking, drawing water, fetching wood and grinding mealies is preferred to a lazy girl.

In his book "Tolo a nga ha vuyi" in which he discusses Tsonga customs and beliefs, Rikhotso (1985:23) supports this argument:

Jaha ri fanele ku pfumela ku teka emutini lowu rhandziwaka hi vatswari va rona. A ri fanelanga ku tshova nawu wa vatswari.

(A young man must agree to marry into a family preferred by his parents. He is not supposed to break the law of his parents.)

Parents who have a say in the pre-arrangements of their son's marriage, insist among other requirements on the working capacity of a girl. Khanyisa is hardworking and industrious. This is the main reason why N'wa-Ridonga chooses her for her son.

The author expresses Khanyisa's working capability thus:

Nhwana loyi a ri ni mavoko, a a tlhokola, a sweka a nga vileli. Hi yona mhaka leyi nga yiva mbilu ya N'wa-Ridonga hikuva a a lava ku wisa musi ni tshuri. A a lava leswaku Khanyisa a hloma a endla xigayo ni hlonga ra yena (1954:67).

(This young woman was a hard worker, she stamped soaked maize and cooked without complaining. This is what impressed N'wa-Ridonga, because she wanted to be relieved from the pestle and mortar. She wanted Khanyisa to come to her new home to become her slave by using her as her mill.)

The extract above indicates that N'wa-Ridonga chose Khanyisa for her own benefit and not in the interest of her son. N'wa-Ridonga controlled Masungi in his marriage in order to secure Khanyisa. She even helped Khanyisa to do some traditional chores but these failed to impress Masungi.

This type of actions portray N'wa-Ridonga as a domineering mother who fails to understand the problems which traditionalism brings to modernism and how they affect her son. As a result, Masungi is not happy in this marriage and he deserts Khanyisa.

3.4.3 Analysis of the depiction of Khanyisa

Khanyisa is described as a beautiful young woman. The author describes Khanyisa's physical appearance as follows:

Khanyisa a ri nhwana wo saseka wa Mutsonga. Xiyimo xa yena ni nghohe ya yena a swi hlomula timbilu ta majaha (1954:67).

(Khanyisa was a beautiful young Tsonga woman. Her stature and her facial appearance overwhelmed the hearts of young men.)

Khanyisa's light complexion enhances her beauty. During the early sixties when

Blacks started to copy Western styles and applied cream to their skin, a light complexion was preferred to a very dark one.

Junod (1962:182-183) noticed this tendency and states the following as a standard of beauty amongst the Tsongas:

The ideal is a tall stature, strong limbs and well developed breasts ... A light complexion is preferred to a very dark one, because white or yellow races are regarded as superior, and a Native laying claim to European or Asiatic blood is proud of it.

The description of Khanyisa's physical appearance above, together with the standard of beauty as mentioned by Junod, provides the reader with a picture of a tall girl, strong in build and light in complexion. Khanyisa's description reveals that she possesses all the features of feminine beauty. Her beauty portrays her as an attractive young woman whose power of attraction forces Masungi to marry her. However, Junod's argument that a light complexion enhances the woman's beauty is refuted by the slogan "Black is beautiful" which was popularized by the Black Consciousness Movement. Joseph and Lewis (1981:160) say the following regarding the slogan:

To be Black meant not simply a particular shade, but to have pride in one's ancestry, one's race, one's history. It meant developing a world view of humanity based on equality and marked by an absence of personal greed or the desire to exploit others.

The above quotation is in line with Walker's (1983) definition of a black feminist as a person who is committed to the survival and wholeness of an entire people, male and female (cf. paragraph 2.3.4).

Contrary to Khanyisa's beauty is her failure to please Masungi as her husband. Khanyisa is unable to wash and iron Masungi's clothes properly and spoils her husband's expensive trousers. Her baby is not well looked after. This makes

Masungi very angry. Masungi is interested in education and likes Western customs. She, on the other hand, clings to traditionalism and cooks traditional dishes like “tihove” (a dish made of fresh maize mixed with groundnut sauce), “tshopi” (porridge of pumpkin and maize flour), “xankhomi” (fresh maize porridge of coarse semolina) and “mukhusu” (dehydrated vegetables for winter use, made by boiling and drying) – all of which Masungi dislikes. Khanyisa shows no interest in Western education. Masungi sends her to adult school but Khanyisa is not interested and drops out. Khanyisa’s failure to subscribe to her husband’s social values portrays her negatively. It shows that someone brought up within the demands and stipulations of a particular culture is not easily susceptible to change. Khanyisa finds herself caught up in such an unenviable situation.

3.4.4 Analysis of the depiction of Nobayeni

Nobayeni is described as an autonomous housewife. She studied domestic skills at Healdtown in the Cape while she was still a young girl. Nobayeni’s father, Ndlazilwana, is a minister of the Presbyterian church at Langa. He leads his family in Christian morals. As an independent housewife, Nobayeni manages her own time and she performs all her household chores admirably. Her ability to do all her household chores in an acceptable manner pleases her husband. Etaugh in Paludi and Steuernagel (1990:45) says:

Historically, domestic skills were greatly valued in young women, and the housewife role was emphasized as a major one for women.

This is what leads Masungi to fall in love with Nobayeni. She is portrayed as a woman who shows great hospitality. Nobayeni’s acquired domestic skills enhance her hospitality. The author of the book *Masungi* describes Nobayeni’s hospitality as follows:

Nkata Masungi na yena a a ri munhu wa malwandla. U hlayisa

muti wa Masungi hi ndlela leyi nga tsakisa nuna wa yena, yi n'wi rivarisa ni swilondza swa madzolonga ya mana wa yena ni nsati wa kwe lo'wo rhanga. Kutani, Masungi a sungula ku orhela masana ya ndyangu lowu akiweke erirhandzweni, ...

(Masungi's wife was also a person of hospitality. She kept Masungi's family in a manner which pleased her husband. It made him forget the problems of his mother's disputes and his first wife. Masungi started to enjoy the warmth of a family built on love ...)

Nobayeni's ability to be hospitable is highlighted when she hosts her husband's friends from the Transvaal (currently Limpopo Province), Maluleke and Chauke, who come to attend a Sunday School Convention of the Presbyterian church. The author emphasizes Nobayeni's hospitable nature by saying,

Kutani nkata Masungi a tsaka ngopfu ku twa leswaku Maluleke hi yena a nga dyondzisa nuna wa yena xikolo, kutani a tika rhata, a gingirika, a korhoka a va swekela swakudya le'swinene. Va dya va tiluma ni tintiho hi ku nandzika ka swona. Loko va heta ku dya Maluleke a sungula ku dzunisa nkata Masungi, a ku: "Se Maxele u tekile wansati. Se u katekile, a wu nga hlweli ku ndlandlamuka u fana ni ximuwu" (1954:92).

(Masungi's wife was very pleased to learn that Maluleke taught her husband. She took pains to prepare them good food. They eat and lick their fingers because the food was delicious. After eating, Maluleke praised Masungi's wife saying: "Maxele, now you got married to a good wife. You are now fortunate, you will soon swell up and be like a baobab tree".)

In Tsonga society, a woman who respects her husband's relatives is highly appreciated (cf. paragraph 1.2.1). Nobayeni's hospitality towards Maluleke and Chauke proves her love and respect for her husband's relatives and associates.

3.4.5 Evaluation of presentation of female characters in *Masungi*

Female characters in this novel present a contrast between cultural and modern values. Khanyisa is depicted strictly according to traditional roles although they do not please her husband. Masungi's second wife, Nobayeni, is described as a good

housewife because of her ability to perform modern domestic duties. The distinction between Masungi's wives indicates the author's acknowledgement of modern values.

3.5 DISCUSSION OF THE NOVEL *MIBYA YA NYEKANYEKA* BY B.K.M. MTOMBENI

3.5.1 (a) Summary of the story

The story concerns a minister of religion, Tlhomandloti, and his family. His wife is N'wa-Basana. They have two sons, Madambi and Nyiko. Tlhomandloti regards himself as a very important person and he wants his children to be exemplary to the whole community.

Madambi, the eldest son, is very intelligent but very careless. His carelessness makes his father dislike him. Moreover, Madambi intends to marry a Xhosa girl, Soluka, whom his father disapproves of because she is from a different ethnic group.

The younger son, Nyiko, is regarded as the flower of the family by his father. He is very neat and very respectful. Unlike his brother, Nyiko is not intelligent. He depends greatly upon his father who is sympathetic towards him and protects him most of the time. His father likes him more because like him, he becomes a minister and also marries a Tsonga girl, Munene.

Later on Nyiko is seduced into adultery by a beautiful widow called N'wa-Mdanisi, who also falls pregnant. This causes his father great despair. Nyiko is to resign from the ministry because of his scandalous behaviour. He is unable to bear the scandal and commits suicide. His father who is now old, also dies from depression. The story depicts the problems which affect overprotected children in life.

(b) Characters selected for discussion

The characters to be examined in this novel are N'wa-Basana, Cheyeza and N'wa-Mdanisi. They are the only female characters depicted in the story. N'wa-Basana and Cheyeza are flat characters, while N'wa-Mdanisi is depicted as the antagonist whose adulterous behaviour disrupted the life of Nyiko and his father, Tlhomandloti.

3.5.2 Analysis of the depiction of N'wa-Basana

N'wa-Basana is depicted as an ideal wife because she accepts her role as a subordinate to her husband. She is not held in high esteem like her husband, Tlhomandloti, who is a highly respected minister of religion. Neither does she interact actively with the community in which they live nor is she heard talking to her children as their mother in the presence of her husband. She believes that everything she does and says sounds right if it pleases her husband. This strong belief develops in her nature a humble manner of speaking which portrays her as being more submissive and always willing to subject herself to her husband.

When Tlhomandloti tries to find out what makes their elder son, Madambi, to be dull and careless, N'wa-Basana does not hasten to give an answer. This indicates her thoughtfulness and the delicacy of her speech. The author expresses N'wa-Basana's thoughtfulness in the following expression:

N'wa-Basana a nga hatlangi a hlamula, u miyerile nkarhinyana
(Mtombeni, 1967:9).

(N'wa-Basana did not hasten to answer, she remained quiet
for some time).

The expression above proves that N'wa-Basana is very careful with her speech. She hates to annoy other people with what she says. She thinks before she says anything. This is the reason she does not rush into saying something. Her delicacy of speech resembles that of Lucilla Stanley who is described by White in Pratt

(1982:14) as follows:

Lucilla Stanley is rather perfectly elegant than perfectly beautiful. I have seen women as striking, but I never saw one so interesting ... Her conversation, like her countenance, is compounded of liveliness, sensibility, and delicacy. She does not say things to be quoted, but the effect of her conversation is, that it leaves an impression of pleasure on the mind, and a love of goodness on the heart. She enlivens without dazzling and entertains without overpowering. Contented to please, she has no ambition to shine. There is nothing like effort in her expression, or vanity in her manner. She has rather a playful gaiety than a pointed wit.

Liberal feminist critics noticed the fact that in many instances, where the husband's word is final, male dominance becomes so effective that even older boys are given higher status than that of their mothers. Similarly, N'wa-Basana's younger son, Nyiko, takes her place in the family. Mtombeni (1967:14) describes Nyiko's position as follows:

Nyiko yena a a ri xiluva xa ndyangu. Swo tala a swi nga endliwi handle ka rikotsa ra muti. Jaha a ri te vunene, malwandla ni rirhandzu ro tshama ri bombile, ku rhandza mati minkarhi hinkwayo ya dyambu ra Xikwembu.

(Nyiko was the flower of the family. Most decisions were not taken without consulting the last born in the family. This young man was full of kindness, hospitality and the desire to always look smart. He also enjoyed washing himself throughout the day.)

N'wa-Basana is always tactful in her speech. Tactfulness is significant in women because it is essential in the solving of crises. When her husband complains about their elder son, Madambi, concerning his carelessness, she gives a protective, well-formulated comment which covers them all. She remarks as follows:

"... 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?" (1967:9).

("...when they refer to the fact that the straps of the baby-sling have snapped or when they say that they are loose, are they not implying that an intelligent person who is also kind gives birth to dull mischievous or unkind and careless children?")

A reply such as this one indicates that as a mother N'wa-Basana cares about her children. She is very neat and tidy. This is an image of an ideal woman. Her neatness pleases her husband who is also a tidy person. Mtombeni (1967:8) grants them a special authorial respect in admiration of their neatness and tidiness. He describes them as follows:

Misisi ya vona ha vambirhi a yi tshama yi fefiwile, na ku tshama yi komile hi ku yi tsemeta swo xonga. Swo ambala a va rhandza swa ntima tani hi 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.

(Their hair was always combed, and cut nicely short. They liked black clothes like many other ministers and their wives. These clothes were always clean, dusted neatly every morning with great care. They were indeed a charming family.)

Although N'wa-Basana is neat and tidy, she is not exposed to other women in the congregation either by holding women's prayer meetings with them or by advising them where necessary. This matter is revealed when Cheyeza, a member of Tlhomandloti's congregation, comes to him to seek help about her delinquent son Celela. N'wa-Basana only greets her and leaves her with her husband to prepare coffee for them. She finds it unnecessary to listen to what Celela's mother says or to help in solving her problems as they are both women. She does this in order to please her husband because she knows that all church matters together with the congregation are his domain. Miller (1986:7) spells out women's attributes as follows:

It follows that women as subordinates are described in terms of, and encouraged to develop, personal psychological characteristics that are pleasing to the male counterpart. These characteristics form a certain familiar cluster: submissiveness, passivity, docility, dependency, lack of initiative, inability to act, to decide, to think, and the like. In general this cluster includes qualities more characteristic of children than adults – immaturity, weakness, and helplessness. If women adopt these characteristics they are considered well-adjusted.

N'wa-Basana reveals most of these qualities: submissiveness, dependency, lack of initiative and an inability to act. As a woman N'wa-Basana is supposed to show sympathy to Cheyeza but she leaves the matter to her husband. This shows a lack of initiative and an inability to act. Although it pleases her husband, Tlhomandloti, it has negative implications about N'wa-Basana as a woman.

From the male's point of view, Tlhomandloti's domination in this field contributes to the assumption that women as subordinates are unable to perform activities which are most highly valued in any particular culture. For instance, in Tsonga society, men undertake leadership roles in families and society (cf. paragraph 1.2.2). Viewed from this perspective, N'wa-Basana's docile and passive role appears to be justified because it validates Tsonga culture. However, radical feminists disapprove of such meekness and detachment.

After the death of Tlhomandloti, N'wa-Basana assumes her role as a loving mother by giving Madambi her consent to marry Soluka despite her late husband's opposition to this. This initiative, however, does not portray her as being insubordinate to her husband. Her subjection to him is marked by the advice which she gives to Madambi in the following quotation:

Swi lulamile n'wananga, mina ndzi dyuharile, ku ta fika laha ndzi nga ha swi kotiki ku ku swekela ni ku ku hlantswela. Na swona 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 vuya u veka swiluva loko u heta ku

n'wi vikela n'wananga (1967:85).

(It is accepted my child, I am old, there will be a time when I will no longer be in a position to cook for you and do your washing. Moreover, I would appreciate seeing my daughter-in-law, the newly-wed wife of my first born son while I am still alive. Take these flowers and water to pour on your father's grave, and then put the flowers on the grave when you have informed him, my child.)

The word “n'wananga” (my child) used repeatedly in this extract, proves that N'wa-Basana cares about the welfare of her son. It underlines her strong sense of motherhood and enhances the portrait of the mother. In traditional Tsonga society, a woman is not allowed to make her own decisions even if her husband is dead. To black feminist critics N'wa-Basana is seen as a responsible mother in allowing her son to marry Soluka. This shows that women care about the needs of other people especially their family but this is severely hamstrung by the dictates of culture.

3.5.3 Analysis of the depiction of Cheyeza

Cheyeza is described as a good mother. She is a source of both comfort and discipline to her only son Celela. At the age of twenty Celela joins a team of gangsters which influences him to become a robber. Cheyeza's agitation about her son's criminal acts, force her to seek ways and means to reprove him. Her concern about her son's welfare shows that she is a loving mother who is worried about her child's immoral behaviour.

When Celela is shot during a housebreaking, he runs home to his mother for shelter and security. Cheyeza enfolds him in her arms crying in great distress. She remains his comforter until he dies. When the police come to look for him at her house, Cheyeza tries to protect him from them by saying,

N'wananga a hi mudlayi, n'wina maphorisa, u lo yengiwa, a kuceteriwa hi vafana vo biha timbilu a hi xigevenga. Xihlangi

lexi xi tiva yini? U yenge hi lavakulwanyana. Yena wo va na makume mambirhi ya malembe. A nga si tiva nchumu n'wi rivaleleni (Mtombeni 1967:30).

(My child is not a murderer, you police, he was deceived and incited by boys with evil hearts. He is not a robber. What does this infant know? He was deceived by the older ones. He is only twenty years old. He is still innocent, please forgive him.)

This overprotection, comfort and care which Cheyeza gives to her son Celela, when he is injured enhances the image of motherhood as invariably supreme and transcendent.

Ntshinga (1998:76) acknowledges the importance of a woman, a mother, by the explanation which she gives to the following Xhosa proverb:

“Ilanga liya kunina” (Lit. The sun is going to its mother, i.e. at sunset)

She further says,

Going home is associated with going to the mother. A home is not a home without a mother. A mother is a valued person in society, in that she provides a home, warmth and security to children. Even nature seeks that warmth which only a mother can provide.

From the explanation above it is clear that the protection of children by their mothers is an archetypal feminine role inherent in women. Cheyeza's pleading words “kuceteriwa” (incite to wrong doings) and “yengiwa” (deceived) more aptly describe her protectiveness and serve as strong tools to rescue her son from the police. However, her plea is inappropriate because housebreaking is a serious criminal offence which demands solitary confinement. This type of behaviour is typical of caring mothers who wish to protect their children in hopeless situations.

3.5.4 Analysis of the depiction of N'wa-Mdanisi

N'wa-Mdanisi is depicted as a glamorous widow who delights in looking attractive. Mtombeni uses her posture and her sweet voice to represent her as a shrewd woman. He describes her as follows:

A ri mupfumeri wo tiya, wa ribungu ni ku xonga ka mayimele,
mavulavulele ni ku tshama xi ti bomberile n'wana wa vanhu –
hikuva ingi nuna wakwe a n'wi siyile ni mali yo tlhariha. A nga
karhati munhu hi swa vusiwana bya yena. O tixanisekela tani
hi van'wana vanhu (1967:61).

(She was a strong believer, light in complexion and beautiful in appearance, with a good manner of speaking and always in pretty clothes – because it seems that her husband had left her enough money. She bothered nobody about her poverty. She suffered like any other people.)

Her shrewdness is highlighted by her special clothing on the evening she has dinner with Nyiko. The pretty clothes specially chosen for that evening, transform her into an enchantress and allow her to trap Nyiko into adultery.

Mtombeni (1967:61) describes her appearance that evening with the following clothing imagery:

N'wana wa vanhu na yena a nga bombangi o kendla hivomu ku
pelela hase ka malwandle.

(The woman was dressed to kill.)

The image created by this manner of dressing corroborates Kolodny, in Brown and Olson (1978:45), who points out that clothing is the means through which the gesture is effected, serving if you will, as a kind of “objective correlative” for what is finally an internal (emotional or intellectual) activity.

N'wa-Mdanisi is further depicted as a seductress by intentionally inviting Nyiko into her house to pray for her sick child, while playing tricks on him. Later on she

entangles him in adultery by her female wiles and solicitation. Her deviance from feminine eunuchry portrays a stereotypic image degrading women who engage in sex outside marriage as whores. This negative stereotypic image labels widows and unmarried women as treacherous.

In the Tsonga community women like N'wa-Mdanisi are viewed negatively. As a widow who lives in her late husband's house she is expected to respect herself and be dignified. She is allowed to cohabit with someone specifically chosen to raise the seed of the deceased. If the woman is caught with any man other than the one specifically approved for the purpose, she is accused of adultery (cf. paragraph 1.2.2). In the case of N'wa-Mdanisi the matter is more serious because Nyiko is a minister of religion and it is his responsibility to lead people along Christian principles.

Even from the author's point of view, N'wa-Mdanisi is to be blamed. She intentionally invites Nyiko into her house in order to seduce him. N'wa-Mdanisi prepares herself for the moment, starting with her dress, then dinner and the house itself. The author puts less blame on Nyiko because his actions are caused by temptation.

Mtombeni further uses N'wa-Mdanisi's beauty and her cheerfulness as powerful instruments which entice Nyiko, while her false Christianity deceives him. When Nyiko realizes that it is becoming too late, he asks for the sick child to pray for. N'wa-Mdanisi, who is deeply interested in him, calmly responds to the request as follows:

Leswi hi nga khongela loko hi sungula ku dya a hi ngo to yimanyana. Hi ta swi vona ka ndzhaku, ku nga ri ku landzelerisa swikhongelo ingi ho hela timbilu hi leswi swi endlweke hi Xikwembu (1967:62).

(Seeing that we prayed when we started eating, can't we wait a little bit? We will consider that later, not to line up a string of prayers as if we are impatient with what God has made.)

This cunning appeal by N'wa-Mdanisi marks the shrewdness of women. It is

significant to most women because it exposes their natural maturation. It also reveals the author's point of view by enabling N'wa-Mdanisi to overcome Nyiko. However, women like N'wa-Mdanisi who exert pressure on men for the fulfilment of their erotic desire are regarded as unnatural.

According to the Concise Oxford dictionary (1964:1175) the concept unnatural refers to something contrary to the course of nature i.e. extremely cruel or wicked. In this study, "unnatural" refers to the violation of sex-roles according to cultural values whereas "natural" refers to acceptable cultural sex-roles.

Ferguson (1973:2), who noticed the suppression of women's egos by men, says the following about women like N'wa-Mdanisi:

A beautiful woman is despised as a bitch if she uses her "weapons" of tongue and sex to diminish a man's sense of worth.

Nyiko fails to control himself as a minister of religion and falls prey to her deliberate seduction. His confession at the end blames the effects of the passionate woman:

Ndzi dlayile hi ku hlangana ka tindzimi ta valala ni ku nambutela ka vona eka leswi a ndzi swi rhandza ni ku nambutela ka vona eka leswi a ndzi ri ka swona, hikuva ntiyiso ni ku hava ntamu wo ala leswi nga ndzi ngenisa ekhombyeni a swi langutiwi, ndzi vitana swikwembu leswi nga fiki leswaku swi ta va timbhoni eka Wena Tatana; ndzi hanyile emavokweni ya Wena, rirhandzu ra ntirho wa mina, xichavo ehenhla ka vatswari va mina. Ndza ku kombela Tatana leswaku u ndzi hlayisela vana va mina hikuva vona a va kona ethyakeni leri ndzi nga ka rona na swona ri nga tshuki ri va khumba (1967:69).

(I was misled by the meeting of evil tongues and their sucking of what I liked and their sucking of that in which I was, because the truth and lack of power to refuse that which led me to distress is unbearable. I call upon the immortal ancestral spirits to give testimony unto You Father; I lived in Your hands, the love of my work, and respect for my parents. I beg You, Father,

to take care of my children because they are not involved in this immorality in which I am and it must never affect them.)

Nyiko's confession shows that he acknowledges his sin and pleads for forgiveness from God as it is beyond his control. Nyiko blames N'wa-Mdanisi for seducing him. To be fair, both Nyiko and N'wa-Mdanisi should bear the consequences. However, only Nyiko is blamed as he is a minister of religion and married. Adultery is considered a great sin to ministers of religion. N'wa-Mdanisi's widowhood protects her. In Tsonga culture, as a widow who stays in her husband's house, N'wa-Mdanisi is supposed to cohabit with a man specifically chosen for the purpose (cf. par. 1.2.1). This means that N'wa-Mdanisi is also accused of adultery. However, more blame is placed on Nyiko as he is a religious man and also the protagonist.

3.5.5 Evaluation of presentation of female characters in *Mibya ya nyekanyeka*

Female characters in this novel present varying images. N'wa-Basana is portrayed as a submissive wife. Cheyeza is a nurturing, caring and loving mother. N'wa-Mdanisi is portrayed as an adulterous woman who seduces Nyiko into adultery. The author's emphasis shows adherence to cultural sex-roles. He blames N'wa-Mdanisi for adultery by intentionally inviting Nyiko into her house and thereafter seducing him.

3.6 DISCUSSION OF THE NOVEL *MADYISAMBITSI* BY T.H. KHOSA

3.6.1 (a) Summary of the story

This story is about Khazamula Xisunghele and his family. His wife is N'wa-Mpon'wa. The story centres on their son, Makonyete. His parents bring him up in a good manner and he marries Javurisa.

At first, Makonyete appears to be a very responsible young man who takes care of his family. His first employment is at a dam construction site nearby. After some time Makonyete is promoted. His bad friends influence him to drink heavily. He beats

his wife and stays away from home. They also influence him to involve himself in extramarital relationships. His favourite girlfriends are Beti and Khubani. One day Beti finds Makonyete with Khubani. Beti quarrels with Khubani and beats her terribly. Makonyete tries to pacify them but Beti overpowers him. Makonyete gets angry, throws a stone at Beti and kills her.

Makonyete is arrested for murder and he is sentenced to fifteen years imprisonment. He is unable to endure the hardship and commits suicide. His mother says that Javurisa has bewitched him. His father is overwhelmed by grief and dies of heart failure. The story centres on crime and murder caused by unfaithfulness in love affairs.

(b) Characters selected for discussion

The characters to be examined in this novel are N'wa-Mpon'wa and Javurisa. Javurisa is portrayed as the tritagonist in the story while N'wa-Mpon'wa is the antagonist. N'wa-Mpon'wa causes conflict between her son Makonyete and his wife Javurisa. N'wa-Mpon'wa is also in conflict with her husband Khazamula and with everybody in the family who shows love for Javurisa.

3.5.2 Analysis of the depiction of N'wa-Mpon'wa

N'wa-Mpon'wa is an elderly woman. She is described as being very aggressive. She attacks and quarrels with everybody in the family, including her husband. Her aggression reveals her as an unnatural woman, one who dominates men. The author expresses her aggressiveness by saying:

N'wa-Mpon'wa a o va ngwenya-nkelenge. Xisunghela na yena ko hlaya a ri karhi a koka-kokiwa hi mabaji ni maburuku a pfa a sukumetiwa a ya ku gagaga, ni xitulu, a pfa a haxiwa xikandza hi byalwa kumbe ntsuvi wa dini (1978:9).

(N'wa-Mpon'wa is a very fierce woman who respects nobody.)

Xisunghele has been pulled several times by his jacket and trousers, sometimes he was pushed away to fall over the chair onto his back, at times beer is poured over his face, or water in which mealie meal was soaked for sour porridge).

The expression “ngwenya-nkelenge” is a contraction of the proverb “ngwenya-nkelenge xivutla ni mindzheko” which means a fierce person who respects nobody. N’wa-Mpon’wa is therefore an aggressive and disrespectful woman. The author repeats this proverb to emphasize N’wa-Mpon’wa’s aggression where he says:

Khazamula ni ku kula ka yena loko N’wa-Mpon’wa o le xo karhi o xikan’we nyakwe! Kumbe a pfumelela. Phela hambi sweswi a nga kula kasi na sweswi a nga hlomisa a a tama a ha fumbiwa xikandza hi masindza loko a ala rito ra N’wa-Mpon’wa. Phela loko hi vula leswaku N’wa-Mpon’wa a a ri ngwenya-nkelenge a ho n’wi sandza kumbe ku n’wi rhukana. Ntiyiso wa chucha (1978:11).

(Though Khazamula is a man, he stands up quickly when N’wa-Mpon’wa commands him or alternatively gives his consent. Even now that he is an old man and has a daughter-in-law, he is still beaten with bracelets on the face when he disapproves of N’wa-Mpon’wa’s word. When we say that N’wa-Mpon’wa is a fierce woman who respects nobody, it is not to insult or curse her – it is the absolute truth!)

From what the author says above, it is clear that N’wa-Mpon’wa does not respect her husband. In Tsonga society domination by a woman is unnatural. The man is the head of the family. He controls his wife and children. In this regard Rikhotso (1985:19) says,

Wanuna i nhloko ya muti. Ku hava lexi faneleke ku endliwa ehandle ka yena. A nga tali ku kanetiwa eka leswi a swi vulaka.

(A man is the head of the family. Nothing is done without his consent. He is seldom opposed in what he says.)

This is not the case with Xisunghele. N’wa-Mpon’wa controls him and prevents him from assuming his dominating role as husband and father. A woman like N’wa-

Mpon'wa is regarded as unnatural by deviating from the subordinate role to the dominant one. She fails to fulfil her “natural” role as wife and mother. This is unacceptable in Tsonga society.

N'wa-Mpon'wa's powerful role portrays her as a destructive woman. She is not a loving mother. She tries several times to end Javurisa's marriage to her son, Makonyete, by telling him that Javurisa is barren. Later on, she attempts to murder Javurisa by adding poison to her porridge but Javurisa does not eat the porridge. This makes N'wa-Mpon'wa very angry. She expresses her aggression by saying,

“Kasi dyona Javurisa dya kona a ndzi lo dyi hupa. Loko a dyi lo nokola kan'we vuswa lebyiya ingi dyi nga hundzangi misava” (1978:31).

(“I just missed that Javurisa. Had she pinched that porridge once she could be dead by now”.)

The effects of a dominating woman are always disastrous. Nothing pleases her unless things are done her way. Women such as N'wa-Mpon'wa are socially disapproved of among the Tsongas.

3.6.3 Analysis of the depiction of Javurisa

Javurisa is a young woman. She is described as a good wife because she respects her husband and her husband's relatives. She even shows respect to her mother-in-law, N'wa-Mpon'wa, despite N'wa-Mpon'wa's outrageous behaviour towards her. A woman who shows respect to the relatives of her husband is appreciated in Tsonga culture (cf. paragraph 1.2.1). When N'wa-Mpon'wa attacks Javurisa for rescuing N'wa-Mukhari, Javurisa does not fight back. She shows her respect for N'wa-Mpon'wa by saying,

“Kasi mina a ndzo lamula ndzi vona mi tlimbile kokwani ... Mina a ndzi nga ri wo lwa” (Khosha 1978:12).

("But I only intervened because you were strangling granny... I was actually not fighting.")

Javurisa is portrayed as a submissive wife. When Makonyete disagrees with her on matters concerning their family, Javurisa just sobs and ends the argument. In a patriarchal Tsonga society, a woman who submits herself to her husband is ideal, because the man is the head of the family and his word is final.

Javurisa's submissiveness is further indicated when she asks for permission from her father-in-law, Xisunghela, to look for a job after her husband had deserted her. Xisunghela refuses to grant her permission. When Javurisa wants to know why Xisunghela refuses to grant her permission he responds as follows:

"Wansati laha ka hina a nga humi ntirho ni swintsanana. Pahla swikwembu Makonyete u ta vuya. Swa ku tirha e-e! Ndza ala mina Xisunghela" (Khosa 1978:54).

("A woman in this family does not go to work at all. Perform rites of the ancestor cult and Makonyete will come back. Looking for a job, no! I, Xisunghela, refuse".)

Javurisa's request for permission from her father-in-law in the absence of her husband proves that she acknowledges her inferiority to her husband and her father-in-law. On the other hand, Xisunghela's refusal to grant her permission marks his role as a father and the head of the Xisunghela family. According to a radical feminist outlook, Javurisa is portrayed negatively as a stereotypical wife who subjects herself to her husband and her husband's relatives while denying herself her freedom.

3.6.4 Evaluation of presentation of female characters in *Madyisambitsi*

Characters in *Madyisambitsi* portray conflicting ideologies. N'wa-Mpon'wa undermines traditional patriarchal roles. She is jealous, aggressive, violent and insubordinate. Javurisa on the other hand subjects herself to traditional patriarchal roles. She is submissive, tolerant and subjects herself to familial abuse.

3.7 DISCUSSION OF THE NOVEL *MAKUMU YA VUTOMI BYEBYO* BY E. Mc MIYEN

3.7.1 (a) Summary of the story

The story is about a young couple, Japi and Olivia. Japi runs his late father's business. Olivia is a teacher. She has had several boyfriends before marriage and involves herself in extramarital relationships. Her beloved boyfriend is Shame Abby, a young Coloured man.

Olivia and Abby plot to murder Japi. They seek help from Risinga, a famous traditional healer from Giyani, unaware that he is Japi's relative. Risinga gives them a dangerous poison made from crocodile's brain and liver. Japi pays Risinga a visit. Risinga is shocked when he realizes that Olivia is Japi's wife. Risinga alerts Japi to his wife's intention to murder him. He gives Japi a remedy to weaken the poison.

One evening Olivia pours the poison into Japi's tea. She sits next to him to make sure that he drinks the whole cup. Immediately after the last sip, Japi groans in agony, and falls down unconscious. Japi's uncle Russia, rushes him to hospital. Within a few days Japi recovers fully. The story depicts fights, murder and extramarital relationships as a result of low moral standards.

(b) Characters selected for discussion

The characters to be examined in this novel are N'wa-Thevu and Olivia. N'wa-Thevu is Japi's mother and she is poised against Japi's wife. Olivia is depicted as the tritagonist who causes conflict between Japi and her mother-in-law, N'wa-Thevu. Olivia attempts to murder her husband, Japi, and is disrespectful to N'wa-Thevu, her

mother-in-law. More will be said about these characters in the ensuing paragraphs.

3.7.2 Analysis of the depiction of N'wa-Thevu

N'wa-Thevu is an elderly woman. She is Japi's mother. In most instances, old women in Tsonga fiction are mirrored as representatives of their culture. N'wa-Thevu is no exception. Although she lives a Christian life, she respects her culture. Generally, marriage outside the Tsonga ethnic group is discouraged among the Tsongas in order to avoid a clash of cultures. In line with this type of thinking, N'wa-Thevu advises her son to marry a Tsonga girl because she has a very low opinion of township girls, especially those from different ethnic groups. However, Japi deviates from the norm of the family and marries a Sotho girl.

As a loving mother, N'wa-Thevu wants her son to live a good life. She believes that marrying a good woman brings happiness in life. According to her own judgement and personal experience, Olivia is not a good woman. Through personal contact with her, N'wa-Thevu discovers that Olivia is an immoral young woman. N'wa-Thevu tries many ways to convince Japi not to be blinded by her beauty. When N'wa-Thevu realizes that Japi is beyond control, she warns him strongly against the danger of the step he is about to take by saying,

“Wena n’wananga, u katekile, wa hanyeriwa, vatsundzuxi u na vona: rhiya ndleve u yingisa: N’wana loyi u lavaka ku n’wi teka i nyoka. Vumbhurhi byona ha byi vona. Hakunene i mbhurhi. Ku rhomba ni ku dzika ha swi vona e! U rhombile, kambe n’wananga, ku rhomba lokuya i ku rhombela ka thumba. Siku thumba leri ri vupfaka ni ku komba ndzhombho, u ta funungula khahele leri u nga lerisiwanga hi munhu” (Miyen 1979:55).

(You are fortunate my son, you have people to advise you: just pay attention: That girl you are about to marry is a snake. I can see that she is beautiful. I agree that she is cool and calm, but she is hiding her true colours. One day she will reveal her true self and you will regret it.)

Two images are evoked by the expression “n’wana loyi u lavaka ku n’wi teka i nyoka”

(the girl you want to marry is a snake). In the first place it signifies untrustworthiness and slyness. Secondly, in traditional Tsonga culture it symbolizes a witch and is encapsulated in proverbs such as the two hereunder:

Ku teka wansati i ku hoxa nyoka exikhwameni

(To marry a woman is to put a snake into your pocket, i.e. getting married to a woman is to invite trouble and woes.)

N'wana wa nyoka i xinyokana

(The offspring of a snake is a small snake, i.e. a witch begets a witch)

The author validates this prediction by making it possible for Olivia to exemplify these two facets of a woman being a “snake”, as will be clear from an analysis of Olivia's depiction in the next section.

After six months of marriage, Olivia shows no sign of pregnancy. This worries N'wa-Thevu. She wants to caress her grandchildren before she dies. She expresses her concern by asking Swahava, Japi's aunt, to investigate the problem. N'wa-Thevu is shocked to hear that Olivia is the source of the problem. Olivia once underwent an illegal abortion while still young. Another problem which worries N'wa-Thevu is the daily decrease of income in their business.

N'wa-Thevu's concern about the progress of her son marks the pain of motherhood. The Tsonga proverb, noted in Junod (1978:170), says in this regard:

N'wana u luma endzeni ni le handle.

(Lit. The child hurts inside and outside, i.e. a pregnant woman

feels the pain of bearing her child, and when the child has been born, the hurt continues.)

This proverb is used in Tsonga to indicate the great concern which mothers have for their children. N'wa-Thevu wants to see her child progressing in all spheres of life. Above all, N'wa-Thevu desires to see her grandchildren before she dies. Traditionally, old women in Tsonga society acquire status by having grandchildren. As an old woman, N'wa-Thevu also desires to have her own grandchildren, but she is dogged by misery as these are not forthcoming as will be highlighted in the ensuing discussion.

3.7.3 Analysis of the depiction of Olivia

Olivia is a beautiful but unfaithful young woman. She is described as a woman of loose morals. Her mother teaches her to enter into relationships with more than one man, and to “search their pockets”. This unacceptable behaviour influences her and makes her aggressive towards her husband and her in-laws. This is totally unacceptable in Tsonga society because a woman is married to serve the needs of her husband and her husband's relatives (cf. paragraph 1.2.1).

Olivia shows no respect for her husband and her husband's relatives. She wastes Japi's money on her boyfriend Abby. This clandestine and unfaithful relationship shows that she is untrustworthy and sly, and warrants the label of “snake”. She shows no interest in fulfilling her natural role as a woman and rejects Swahava's feminine advice to fall pregnant. Instead she scolds Japi and his relatives over the matter, saying,

“Mi lava ku ndzi dyisa ndzi ri karhi ndzi swi vona hi! I khale mi va endla, mina a ndzi yena yoloye. Wena swi ku vavaka wo ya. Loko u karhele hi mina wo ndzi tlherisela ekaya. Tatana wa hanya, manana wa hanya, ndzi ni papila ra vudyondzisi. Ndzi karhatiwa hi yini? Vavanuna va tele. Kasi Makwapa ndzin'wina mi lo yini? Mhaka leyi yona ndzi ta yi byela na mhani. Kumbe mi lava ku ndzi dlaya mi ta kuma furha ra bindzu? Nkata mina

leyi yona mhaka a hi yi tshike (Miyen 1979:71)

(Surely you want to poison me in broad daylight! You have long been doing this to others. I am not like them. You may go if it bothers you. If you feel tired of me please take me back home. Both my parents are still alive and I have a teacher's certificate. What bothers me? I can also get myself another man to marry. What is wrong with you Shangaans? I promise to report this matter to my mother. Or do you want to kill me and make "muti" for your business? My husband, let us forget about this problem.)

What Olivia says above proves clearly that she does not want to become a mother. She married Japi only for his wealth. This is what her mother taught her, "to suck men's pockets like a tick". Women like Olivia are immoral and socially unacceptable.

As an unfaithful woman, Olivia plots with Abby to murder her husband. She puts poison into Japi's tea. This shows that she is a "snake" as N'wa-Thevu predicted. Among the Tsongas to poison someone is equated with witchcraft. When Japi lies unconscious, Olivia rejoices, hoping that he is dead. This shows that Olivia welcomes Japi's death more than his life. She expresses her joy which reveals her unfaithfulness to Japi by saying,

"Ndzi rhandza ku ku tivisa leswaku mudlayi wa wena hi mina, murhi wo ku dlaya hi wona ndzi wu kumile eGiyani nkarhi lowu wena a u endzerile Makwapa ya ka n'wina eXipilongo. Ndzi ku byela ntiyiso hinkwawo leswaku u ta etlela hi ku rhula, hikuva loko wo fa hi mbitsi u nga ta vuya u ta ndzi tsona vurhongo. Ndzi navela ku ku tivisa leswaku mana wa wena na lexi Russia, ndzi ta va hlongola hikuva mabindzu lawa ya ta vuriwa mina. Kumbe u na n'wana loyi a nga ta va yena mudyandzhaka handle ka Olivia na Abby murhandziwa wa yena? (Miyen 1979:97).

(I inform you that I am your murderer, I got the medicine which I used from Giyani while you were visiting your relatives at Spelonken. I tell you the honest truth so that you may rest in peace, because if you die in distress you will trouble me. I also inform you that I am going to chase away your mother and that Russia so that all your businesses will belong to me. Or do you have any child to inherit your wealth other than Olivia and her

lover Abby?)

The effects of an unfaithful woman are always disastrous. Olivia is selfish and loves money. She glorifies Japi's death instead of mourning it. Fortunately Japi recovers in hospital. Olivia becomes remorseful about her evil deeds and attempts to end her life. She runs into the bush and tries to commit suicide by hanging herself from a tree. To her disappointment she falls down and breaks her leg. Women like her are socially unacceptable.

3.7.4 Evaluation of female characters' presentation in *Makumu ya vutomi byebyo*

Characters in this novel portray conflicting ideologies. N'wa-Thevu is a traditional woman and adheres to her cultural values. Olivia is a bad woman. She violates sexual norms by having many sexual partners. She is violent, aggressive and plots to murder her husband. Olivia is unable to bear her husband any children. This worries her mother-in-law. In Tsonga society a woman who bears children is respected more than the one who cannot (cf. paragraph 1.2.2).

3.8 DISCUSSION OF THE NOVEL *NDZI TA N'WI KUMA* BY W.R. CHAUKE

3.8.1 (a) Summary of the story

This is a detective story in which sergeant Mbambu investigates a crime at Machipisana store, which occurred five months before. His wife is N'wa-Manganyi. They have no children. N'wa-Manganyi is an enlightened woman. She is a friend to Mthavini, an unmarried woman. Sergeant Mbambu is given two weeks by lieutenant Mathebula to complete this investigation. Lieut Mathebula promises Sergt Mbambu that if he succeeds in this investigation, where he himself has failed, he will be promoted and take charge of Tlharihani Police Station. Lieut Mathebula is confident that Sergt Mbambu will succeed in this assignment because once before he had managed to arrest a dangerous criminal called Zorro.

In his investigations Sergt Mbambu is shocked to discover that one of his colleagues, Sergt Mantengu, is involved in the crime at Machipisana store. He is the one who burnt down the shop and stole the safe. He also discovers that the gun which Mzamani, Mantengu's younger brother, used to kill advocate N'wamba was hidden in Mantengu's house.

When Sergt Mantengu realizes that Sergt Mbambu is after him, he burns down his house, unaware that he is giving away more information about the crime. The door is not broken down and in both instances the arson occurs at the same time of the day.

With the help of Sergt Chuma, Sergt Mbambu manages to overcome Sergt Mantengu. Sergt Mbambu disguises himself as Mzamani on the telephone, seeking more information and evidence from Sergt Mantengu, who unwittingly reveals the secrets in his answers to Sergt Mbambu's questions. When the conversation is over, Sergt Mbambu goes to Mantengu's house and finds Mzamani there. After a confrontation, Mzamani shows him the gun which he used in killing advocate N'wamba. Sergt Mbambu overpowers Mzamani and shoots him dead. Later Sergt Mantengu arrives. Sergt Mbambu marches Sergt Mantengu to the police station at gunpoint. The story illustrates crime, robbery and murder amongst the police.

(b) Characters selected for discussion

The characters to be examined in this novel are N'wa-Manganyi and Mthavini. They are the only significant female characters in the story. N'wa-Manganyi is a foil. Her ideas in the story contrast those of her husband, Sergeant Mbambu, who is depicted as the protagonist. N'wa-Manganyi's friend, Mthavini, is a minor character. She is also depicted as a foil because her arguments are counter to those of the protagonist. She is fighting for women's rights.

3.8.2 Analysis of the depiction of N'wa-Manganyi

N'wa-Manganyi is married to Sergt Mbambu. Unlike other fictional women already analyzed, N'wa-Manganyi is described as a liberated woman who is concerned about women's issues. This description is significant because most of her questions and arguments about women are positive and optimistic.

Every time they are at leisure, N'wa-Manganyi argues for women's empowerment with her husband Sergt Mbambu, a public servant responsible for maintaining public order. In one of their conversations she focusses on the world's wars which the male people fail to overcome by undermining family problems. In her argument, N'wa-Manganyi emphasizes that family problems are at the root of all instability in the world. If the male folk do not direct their power to solve family problems, the injustices which women suffer because of their sex will remain hidden for a very long time. She deplores the disadvantages of women saying,

Hi minkarhi yo tala timitsu ta timholovo ti sukela emitini; ti dzimiwe kwalaho. Tani hi milambu leyi sukelaka eka ku handzukanyana ka misava yi ya helela elwandle, swiphiqo swa hina swi sungula emutini wun'we, swi kulela swi ko swi mita miti hinkwayo. Loko hi nga se dyondza ku fambelana na vaakelani va hina, misava leyi yi ta hi mita hikwerhu, hi un'we-un'we. N'wina mi yime ekule kasi nhonga ya le kule a yi dlayi nyoka. A mi na mhaka na mindyangu (Chauke 1983:77).

(On many occasions the roots of clashes originate within families; they are rooted there. Like rivers which originate from little cracks in the ground and end up in the sea, our clashes start from one family and develop in other families. If we have not yet learnt to make peace with our neighbours, this earth will swallow us all, one by one. You men dissociate yourself from your neighbours, but you cannot find help from far. You do not care about your families.)

In her dialogue with her husband on peace and security, she argues against men's efforts as the main source of power to restore peace and stability and comments as follows:

"Ma karhi ma swi ntshunxa sweswi?" Ku vutisa wansati hi ku

n'wayitela. "Loko swi ri tano, mi endla yini ku timela tinyimpi leti bvunyeke misava leyi xana? Xana a mi le ku hlanganyeteni ka ndzilo hi vutlhari bya mataxihaha ke?" (1983:75).

("Are you busy solving the problems now?" The woman asked with a smile." If it is like that, what actions do you take to stop the wars all over the world? Are you not provoking violence with your little knowledge?")

The above comment questions male power. In her conversation N'wa-Manganyi shows great concern about male domination. Some of her arguments, as in the extract below, attempt to show complex relationships and problems which exist between men and women in society. N'wa-Manganyi says,

Swiphiqo leswi tateke misava namuntlha, ku sukela emitini ya hina ku ya fika eka timholovo leti ti hlaseleke misava leyi ya hina, swa hi tsandza ku swi ololoxa. Hi tsandzisiwa hi leswi hi ringetaka ku khandziya murhi hi rhavi. Loko nsimu ya mina yi hlaseriwile hi nhova ndzi fanele ku yi hlakulela. Loko ndzo teka xikomu ndzi yi hala kunene, yi ta tlhela yi pfuka endzhaku ka masiku ma nga ri mangani. Leswi swi va tano hikuva timitsu ti va ta ha sele endzeni ka misava. Swi tano ni le ka swiphiqo swa hina namuntlha. Hi ringeta ku timela tinyimpi ni timholovo leti taleke miti ya hina hi ku languta mihandzu leyi tswariwaka; a hi na mhaka na timitsu (1983:76).

(The problems all over the world today, from our families to the disputes occurring in this world of ours, are difficult to resolve. We are incapable of resolving them because we try to climb the tree by its branch. When my field is attacked by weeds, I must hoe out the weeds. If I only take the hoe and scrape the weeds over, they will grow again after a few days. This happens because the roots are alive in the soil. It is like that even in our problems today. We try to stop the wars and violence which predominate in our families by looking at the fruits thereof; we don't care about the roots.)

N'wa-Manganyi further convinces her husband that a mutual relationship between husband and wife within the family could lead to world peace. This face to face debate with her husband provides an androgynous mouthpiece to the emancipation of women. It also suggests the deconstruction of fixed concepts of masculinity and

femininity. N'wa-Manganyi also tries to show her husband the importance of women and children in society by saying,

“Mi lahlekeriwile hi masungulo layo tiya ya vutomi ... A mi na mhaka na miti, vana ni mindyangu – kambe mi honisa vukona bya mindyangu. Loko mi nga se twisisa mindyangu, xana misava leyi yi vumbiweke hi mindyangu mi nga yi fambisa hi ndlela yihi ke?” (1983:76)

(“You lost the strong foundations of life ... You don't care about your families, children and women. You want to pay attention to the world which is built up of many families – but you ignore the presence of families. If you have not yet understood your families, how can you rule the world which is built up of several families?”)

Unlike most women in fiction who dislike each other, N'wa-Manganyi recognizes and at the same time encourages meaningful friendships between women. She also enjoys the company of other women. N'wa-Manganyi strengthens her point by continuing as follows:

“Xinakulobye exikarhi ka n'wina vavanuna a xi tiyangi ... Mi ta vona leswi Mthavini a nga ta tsakisa xiswona loko a ndzi vona, kambe n'wina mi to qhavulana kunene, mi vhe mi nghena emilandzwini. Vavanuna!” (1983:77).

(Friendship between you men is not strong .. Just look how exultant will Mthavini be when she sees me, but you will only shake hands, and get into business. Men!”)

What N'wa-Manganyi says above emphasizes women's close acquaintance with one another as friends. Orbach and Eichenbaum (1983:169) say the following with regard to friendships between women:

Women's friendships and their dependency on one another do not detract from the intimacy in a sexual relationship. On the contrary, it seems that interdependent friendships aid the success and longevity of sexual relationships. They do so by diffusing some of the intensity of a marriage or committed sexual relationship, by providing alternative objects for

transference and by spreading the burden of need: because women friends are able to give each other emotional nurturing and contact, women can feel 'fed' by their friends and not look only to their men for fulfilment.

From the quotation above it is clear that in a socialist feminist view, friendship among women is highly esteemed as it can fulfill other women's needs, a view also shared by black feminists. In concluding her argument, N'wa-Manganyi emphasizes the essentials of the cooperative nature of human existence and says,

"Lexikulu evuton'wini bya hina hinkwerhu i vunghana na ku twanana no twisisana. Leswi swi ta ntsena loko vanhu va kota ku hlangana, va hlengeletana, va nyikana miehleketo na mianakanyo leyintshwa. Loko vanhu vo ka va hlangana, va twisisana, xana nkwetlembetano wu nga ta hi kwihi ke? Loko hi tshama eswihundleni swa hina, un'wana na un'wana a ri na xihlahla xa yena xa munyama wa xitumbe-tumbe na vutlhari bya hava, a hi nge ehleketi ku fana, hi nge voni ku fana, se xana hi nga hanyisanisa ku yini ke?" (1983:77)

("What is important in all our lives is friendship, to be on good terms with others and to understand each other. This can only be attained when people meet, come together, share their thoughts and new ideas. If people can meet, understand each other, where will the conflict come from? If we have secrets, each and everyone of us with his own dark hiding bush and false knowledge, we will not think the same, we will not reason the same. Now, how can we care for each other?")

Hall (1990:111) also acknowledges the essence of cooperation between the members of a society for the development and existence of that particular society. She argues that cooperation has distinct advantages. It is not characterized by competitive negotiations between those who are unequal, but approximates the ideal of negotiations between equals. In contrast to competitive negotiations, cooperative relations are not centred on self-interest and individual achievement. Rather, they are reciprocal exchanges between equals with the clearly defined intentions of contributing to each other through meeting community and societal needs.

Although a woman is endowed with good characteristics, pride and jealousy in women remain the cunning stereotypes in the fiction of the day. N'wa-Manganyi's pleading comments to her husband, accusing him of being unfaithful to her, strike her pride and jealousy which almost corrodes her strong personality. This is her comment:

Ndzi rivaleleni leswi ndzi mi toteke manyala tolo, a ndzi nga kholwi leswaku a mi vulavula ntiyiso. Xifaniso xa n'wina na wanhwana wa le banki xa ha ndzi hlamarise ngopfu, ndzi twa ndzi ri ehenhla loko ndzi ri nsati wa nhenha ya Tlharihani. Mahungu ya nyuziphepha ya ndzi surile mihloti, ndzi va ndzi swi vona leswaku ndzi mi hoxele ngopfu matolo. A ko va mbilu ya xisati (1983:72).

(Forgive me for the immorality that I attached to you yesterday, I did not believe that you were telling the truth. Your photo with that lady from the bank surprised me very much; I feel proud to be the wife of Tlharihani's hero. News from the newspaper wiped my tears away and I discovered that I did you much wrong yesterday. It was just a woman's weakness.)

The quotation above shows that N'wa-Manganyi is not self-centred. She is able to recognize her weakness and she is in a position to fight it. In Black feminist perspective, women like her, who *gently* move away from stereotypes of femininity, are highly appreciated.

3.8.3 Analysis of the depiction of Mthavini

Mthavini is an unmarried woman. She is depicted as an aggressive woman who lacks womanly compliance. She rejects the subjection and suppression of women by men. Her aggression is marked by her rebellious response towards sergeant Mbambu and his investigations:

"Ndzavisiso!" ku huwelela wansati hi rito leri ri ninginiseke ni misava hinkwayo. "Wa ndzi hlolela makwerhu. Swa mindzavisiso a ndzi dzahisani na swona. Mi lava ku pfuniwa hi hina hambu leswi n'wina mi tsandzekaka ku hi pfuna.

Ndzavisiso! 'Sorry', mina ndzi nge mi pfuni hi nchumu!" (1983:33).

("Investigations!" the woman shouted with a loud voice which shook the whole earth. "This is an ill omen my brother. I don't care about investigations. You want to be assisted by us but you are of no help to us. Investigations! Sorry, I will not help you with anything!")

Her behaviour towards Mbambu as a sergeant is mostly characterized by emotions. This type of behaviour is typical of women who seek liberation from men's domination. When Mbambu tries to call her to order, she shouts out:

"A ndzi miyetiwi hi wanuna mina," ku vila wansati. "Mi nga ringeti ku ndzi chavisa, ndza yi tiva mfanelo ya mina. Ndzi nga miyerisa ku yini xana? Xana mi endle yini hi ku gevengiwa ka malume wa mina xana?" (1983:34).

("I cannot be told to keep quiet by a man", said the woman angrily. "You must not attempt to frighten me, I know my rights. How can I be quiet? What did you do about the murder of my uncle?").

Even after Mbambu had introduced himself and explained the purpose of his investigations to her, Mthavini refuses to give him relevant information arguing that the law is taking sides:

"A ndzi nge hlamuli na xin'we," ku jakatseka wansati. "Loko mi nga si hetisisa mhaka ya ku gevengiwa ka malume wa mina mi nga languteli ku pfuniwa hi mina. 'I'm sorry' makwerhu!" (1983:34).

("I will not answer even a single question", said the woman continuously. "If you have not completed the case of my uncle's murder do not expect to be assisted by me. I am sorry my brother!")

Her refusal to give proper answers to Mbambu's questions proves that as an individual she insists on her rights to make her way in the world. It makes Mbambu reconsider the murder of her uncle which was not properly investigated by the police.

However, such women as Mthavini who deviate from the social order of male dominance by insisting on their rights are considered “abnormal” in patriarchal Tsonga society.

3.8.4 Evaluation of presentation of female characters in *Ndzi ta n’wi kuma*

Female characters in Chauke’s novel are liberated women. Their objective is to strive for equal opportunities for men and women in society. They emphasize the development of social stability and advocate a mutual respect between men and women which will bring about social change.

3.9 DISCUSSION OF THE NOVEL *BYA VELEKERIWA* BY N.J. CHABALALA

3.9.1 (a) Summary of the story

The story is about Mnyamani’s chieftainship. The major female characters in this novel are N’wa-Nsimba and N’wa-Ngula. N’wa-Nsimba is the chief’s senior wife. She gives birth to a boy, an heir, late in life. His name is Fumani. The chief’s second wife, N’wa-Ngula is jealous about the birth of Fumani. She begrudges Fumani’s chieftainship.

When Fumani is four years old, the chief hosts a big feast to strengthen him as the future chief. This worries N’wa-Ngula. She writes a letter to her son, Makaringi, who is working in Johannesburg, calling him back home. On his arrival she informs him about the feast which chief Mnyamani is hosting for his own son Fumani, and the motive behind this.

Makaringi and his mother plot with a witchdoctor, Makenya, to end chief Mnyamani’s life by bewitching him. After some time, the chief becomes ill and dies. Makaringi repossesses all the chief’s treasures and drives Fumani and his mother out of the village. Thereafter Makaringi instals himself on the throne, although the majority of

the people are dissatisfied with his reign.

N'wa-Nsimba struggles to educate her son Fumani while living at the barracks. After Fumani has passed his matric, he discovers that the chieftdom belongs to him. With the help of the minister and the government authorities of Rixile, Fumani returns to his father's village and officially takes over his rightful throne. The story shows that chieftainship in Tsonga is hereditary.

(b) Characters selected for discussion

The characters to be examined in this novel are N'wa-Nsimba and N'wa-Ngula. They are both major characters. N'wa-Ngula is the antagonist. She causes conflict in Fumani and his mother, N'wa-Nsimba, over the chieftainship.

3.9.2 Analysis of the depiction of N'wa-Nsimba

N'wa-Nsimba is portrayed as an ideal wife who enhances her status as the chief's senior wife by bearing him an heir to the throne although late in life. In Tsonga custom, bearing the chief a son is the greatest achievement. Ngcangca (1987:86) emphasizes this by maintaining that "a woman's status is enhanced by bearing children but giving birth to a son, an heir, gives her, her husband and her in-laws greater satisfaction and fulfilment".

The birth of Fumani brings great joy to chief Mnyamani. His joy is expressed in the following extract:

Mina Mnyamani ndzi ri n'weti wu humile, wu hlongola munyama lowu a wu ri karhi wu vandzamela tiko ra ka Mnyamani. Xikwembu xi ndzi endlele mahlori, xi sivile xihuhuri xa ha ri endzhaku ka ntshava. Tani hilaha mi tivaka hakona leswaku yindlu leyikulu yi xambile hi xirhundzu yi tlhela yi xevedza hi tihukuto khomela vayeni, namuntlha fundzu ri chuchekile, yindlu leyi yi kume wa matlhari, yena mudyandzhaka wa ka

Mnyamani, yona hosi ya mundzuku. Loko mi ndzi vona ndzi vulavula ndzi yimile, ndzi xixima yena, hikuva eka yena ndzi yimela swo tala leswi nga tsandza mina (Chabalala, 1991:2).

(I, Mnyamani, say that the moon has risen, it chased away the darkness which was approaching Mnyamani's village. God has performed miracles to me, He prevented the impending violence... As you know the chief's senior wife gave birth first to girls, today the knot is untied, this woman gave birth to a boy, an heir to Mnyamani's throne, the future chief. When you see me speak while standing, I pay respect to him, because from him I expect much which I failed to achieve.)

As a submissive wife, N'wa-Nsimba prefers to suffer for the welfare of her husband instead of protecting her own life which is in danger. She confines herself to her husband during his time of illness although Makaringi raises difficulties by refusing to allow her to enter the chief's hut. Her willingness and dedication in nursing her husband forces her to reject Makaringi's silly orders, arguing with him, saying,

"Hambi leswi va nge yini ka vamanana, nuna wa mina a ngo fa ndzi tsandzeka no n'wi hlambisa hi mhaka ya munhu? Leswi ndzi ngo sunguriwa ku cinisiwa rhuvu-rhuvu a ha copeta, loko a ta famba ra makumu ndzi ta nghena kwihi mina? Loko a ndzi ri na makwerhu wa xinuna, a ndzi ta jinga ndzi kuma ko rilela kona. Na xona Xikwembu xi ndzi endle nsele, xo ndzi sungurisa hi vavasati. Loko a ndzi lo sungula hi n'wana wa xinuna, a swi antswa. Loko swi ri swa vukosi, a ndzi na mhaka na swona, hikuva ndza swi tiva ku swi nga dlayisa Fumani wa mina, ku kota tata wakwe a ngo cela ri oma. Hambi o teka hinkwaswo kambe a ndzi pfumelela ku ndzi etlela ndzi twa swikhovha ndzi ri karhi ndzi hlupheka na nuna wa mina" (1991:14).

("It is strange indeed, how can I leave my husband to die unwashed in fear of someone else? If the conflict intensifies now while he is still alive, what will happen after his death? If I had a brother, perhaps I would cry on his shoulder. God has been spiteful to me, He made me give birth to girls first. If my first born was a boy, it would be better. I do not intend to involve myself with chieftainship matters, as this can endanger Fumani's life, like his father who is now suffering the consequences. He can take everything from me but allow me the opportunity to spend sleepless nights with my husband.")

After the death of chief Mnyamani, N'wa-Nsimba finds herself in the serious situation of being accused of witchcraft. This causes her and her son great despair because they are driven out of the village. The only place to hide and to find protection against Makaringi's troops is the jungle. In their struggle for survival she protects Fumani by carrying him on her back in dangerous places. By so doing she plays the nurturing and protective role of a loving mother.

On the other hand she shows a supportive role by encouraging her daughter Khumbani to return to her husband even though her mother-in-law, N'wa-Mhondzo, cannot give them a hiding place in her home.

Here follows her advisory words to her daughter Khumbani:

Khumbani n'wananga, sweswo u nga swi endli. Tshika mina na Fumani hi dluvadluveka. Loko xo tshuka Xikwembu xi hi pfuna hi kuma ko tumbela eka Mbilanyana le ka Gidjana, hi ta rhuma vanhu va ta ku byela. Loko mina ndzi lowile, a va dlaye mina na Fumani. Mina nuna wa mina i nge a hanya. U dlayise hi mina ndzi nga tswala Fumani. Xilo xikulu lexi ndzi dlayisaka i vukosi, kasi mina a ndzi nga ri na mhaka na swona. N'wananga, n'wananga, ndza ku byela u nga dlayi vukati hi mhaka ya mina (1991:38).

(Khumbani my child, you dare not do that. Leave me and Fumani to wander about. If God can help us to find a hiding place at Mbilanyana there at Gidjana, we will send people to come and inform you. If I have committed sorcery, let them kill me and Fumani. My husband could have been alive now. The greatest thing which puts me in trouble is chieftainship, yet I have no interest in it. My child, my child, do not divorce your husband because of my problems.)

While wandering, they come across a man called Shikepisani who declares his love to her. Although Shikepisani is hideous, N'wa-Ngula is forced by the circumstances to form a relationship with him. Falling in love with a hideous man like Shikepisani adds to her expression of humility and compliance. Chabalala (1991:47) describes

Shikepisani's hideousness as follows:

Shikepisani a a bihe lero munhu loko o dya vuswa a n'wi langutile a byi huma. A a tthele a tikomba wonge u na mona, lero hambi wo ya u n'wi pikile loko a ku onhele xin'wana, u nga fika u ntluntlama loko a ku vutisa ku u lava yini. U nga hlamula u ku, ndzo tela ku mi xeweta.

(Shikepisani was so hideous that a person eating porridge while looking at him would vomit. He also appeared to be surly, to the extent that even when you were prepared to fight him for some wrongdoings, you would squat before him when he asked you what you want. You would answer him by saying, I came to greet you.)

It is a belief among the Tsongas that no man is hideous. Even if his looks can qualify to have him labelled "hideous", that will not deter him from getting a wife. This is the gist of the following proverb:

Ndzi fulile akhumba gi renzeleka hi makuti (Tshwa)²

(Lit. I have shot a wild pig with my arrow while it ran around the huts, i.e. an expression of a hideous man who succeeded in the end to get the favour of an unwilling girl).

As head of the family a man must be physically strong in order to protect his wife and children. N'wa-Nsimba and her son Fumani seek protection against Makaringi and his troops. Shikepisani's physical build shows that he is a strong man although he is hideous. The proverb above is cited to indicate that N'wa-Nsimba falls in love with Shikepisani to protect herself against her enemies.

3.9.3 Analysis of the depiction of N'wa-Ngula

² The Tshwa people comprise one of the major subdivisions of the Tsongas, the other two being the Rongas and the Tsongas (the term for the last group also being used as an umbrella reference for all the groups).

N'wa-Ngula is depicted as an elderly woman who is troubled by jealousy. Her insane jealousy causes her to elope to chief Mnyamani with her son, Makaringi, and to become Mnyamani's junior wife.

Jealousy among women in a polygamous marriage is a common stereotype, especially jealousy against the senior wife and her elder son, who is entitled to be his father's successor. In Tsonga society this jealousy is mostly expressed in folk-songs. Johnston (1971:276) gives an example of a beer-song in which the words express the jealousy of the co-wives:

Xi Fikile N'wakwele
Call: Xi fikile n'wakwele
Response: Dumalizwe n'wakwele dumalizwe!
Call: Xi nga fika n'wakwele/
Xi ta tlela na le handle/
Xi ta rindzela ye nuno/

The Complainer has Arrived
Call: The complainer has arrived
Response: Dumalizwe the complainer!
Call: The complainer has really come/
She will sleep outside/
She waits for her husband/

The birth of Fumani, Mnyamani's first son, to N'wa-Nsimba, Mnyamani's senior wife, revives N'wa-Ngula's jealousy of N'wa-Nsimba.

N'wa-Nsimba's son, Fumani, is Mnyamani's first son although he is not his first born child. N'wa-Ngula's son, Makaringi, is not Mnyamani's biological son. As a result N'wa-Ngula is jealous of N'wa-Nsimba and her son, Fumani. Her jealousy is expressed in the following comment:

... Mnyamani u endle nkhuvu wukulu wo tlangela goya leri nga kuma hi N'wa-Nsimba. A ku tlhaviwe ntlhanu wa tihomu, mina na nqina rinene a nga zanga a ta ndzi susa mihlolo. Kambe sweswo a swi nga ri na mhaka. Leswi swi ndzi dyisaka mbitsi i xikongomelo xo endla nkhuvo wa n'wana loyi. U vurile

leswaku hi ye mudyandzhaka wa ka Mnyamani, kambe n'wana wa xinuna lonkulu la ka Mnyamani hi wena (1991:7).

(... Mnyamani organised a big feast to show gratitude to his illegitimate child born to N'wa-Nsimba. Five head of cattle were slaughtered. He did not even bother to give me a single piece of meat. But that does not matter. What worries me is the purpose of throwing a feast for this child. He said that he – Fumani – is the heir to Mnyamani, yet you are Mnyamani's eldest son.)

To elucidate N'wa-Ngula's jealousy, the chief's successor according to Tsonga custom will be briefly examined. Rikhotso (1985:81) explains the matter thus:

Hosi leyi nga lova, nhonga ya yona ya vukosi yi fanele yi tameriwa hi n'wana wa yona wa mativula wa nsati lonkulu. Hileswaku ku fanele ku fuma wa yindlu leyikulu. Loko nsati wa hosi a tivurile hi n'wana wa nhwanyana, kambe wa vumbirhi ko va mufana, loyi wa nhwanyana vukosi a hi bya yena i bya ndzisana ya yena ya mufana.

(The chief's successor is usually the first born child of his senior wife. When the first child of the senior wife is a girl, she is not allowed to take over the chieftainship. It is the boy who reigns over his father's country even when he is born second or last.)

Shilubana and Ntsanwisi (1958:41) support this argument:

Hi nawu wa ka Nkuna (Xitsonga) mudyandzhaka, hosi ya muti, kumbe hosi ya tiko, yi velekiwa hi nsati lo'nkulu wa hosi ... loyi a nga yena a nga n'wi humesa enhlangeni. Nakambe nawu wa Xitsonga a wu na xivandla xa wansati exitshan'weni xa vuhosi, ku fuma wa xinuna ntsena...

(According to Nkuna (Tsonga) customary law the heir, the village chief or chief of the country, is the son of the chief's first wife ... who transformed him from bachelorhood. Furthermore Tsonga customary law has no place for a female chief, only a man reigns...)

Mathumba (1993:48) also highlights this custom when discussing the problems

surrounding Soshangane's successor after his death in 1858:

Muzila's mother was Soshangane's first wife. According to Tsonga custom, Muzila was supposed to succeed his father as chief. Muzila's brother, Mawewe, was the son of Soshangane's junior wife. However the lobolo for Mawewe's mother had come from the tribe and according to Nguni custom Mawewe was the rightful heir to the throne.

Against this background, it is clear that Mnyamani's successor is Fumani, the first son of Mnyamani's senior wife, N'wa-Nsimba. N'wa-Ngula is Mnyamani's second wife, and on top of that her son, Makaringi, is Mnyamani's stepson. Under normal circumstances, Makaringi is not supposed to be chief Mnyamani's successor.

Realizing that Makaringi does not qualify to take over chief Mnyamani's chieftainship, N'wa-Ngula practises her witchcraft and bewitches chief Mnyamani to death. Witchcraft is an evil archetypal pattern practised by wicked persons, especially women, both in literature and in society to win the day. In Tsonga, witchcraft is known as "vuloyi". Junod (1978:504) explains witchcraft as "criminal magical practices by which wizards and witches bewitch innocent folk".

According to Daly, as cited by Pratt (1982:122) the role of witch was often ascribed to social deviants whose power was feared. All women are deviants from the male norm of humanity. However, those singled out as witches were frequently characterized by the fact that they had or were believed to have power arising from a particular kind of knowledge, as in the case of "wise women" who knew the curative powers of herbs and to whom people went for counsel and help. Defined as evil, they became the scapegoats of society, and in this process, the dominant ethos was reinforced.

N'wa-Ngula's witchcraft empowers her to violate the social order. The death of chief Mnyamani becomes for her an occasion of self-glorification. She gives orders to other women at the gathering in the chief's village instead of mourning like all the

chief's other wives. This unnatural behaviour is totally against the cultural tradition of the Tsongas and is used in literature to show that the effects of a dominating wife are destructive.

Chabalala (1991:21) describes her frivolous behaviour in the following extract:

Vavasati va hosi Mnyamani xikan'we na N'wa-Nsimba a va lo khozaa, kwale ndyangu, wonge i swigwamatshuku swo pfumala vaaluli. N'wa-Ngula yena a a ri enkuweni a ri karhi a endla vujijji. Vavasati-kuloni a va tluleteriwa milenge ku nga lunghi nchumu. Na leswo wa ha ku ferwa a swi nga kali swi n'wi ya, minceka a yi koka ni le hansi ku nga lunghi nchumu. Hambi leswi vanhu a va n'wi languta hi mahlo yo tshwuka, a ka yena a vo n'wi vanga. "He n'wina vabvana ndzin'wina, a mi swi tivi ku ri kwalaho ku tshama vatswatsi? Phela mi ta bohiwa loko mi nga ri na tindleve", N'wa-Ngula a vulavula swi tikomba leswaku u na matimba yo karhi.

(All Mnyamani's wives together with N'wa-Nsimba were sitting as though they were initiates with nobody appreciating their womanhood. N'wa-Ngula was at the fig tree boasting and being pompous. The fellow women were looked down upon. The fact that she had lost someone was meaningless to her, her traditional clothes were dangling around her legs, and nothing was coming right. Although people looked at her angrily, she did not bother herself about them and it appeared as though they were aggravating the situation. "Hey, you maidens, don't you know that the place where you are sitting is meant for elderly women? You will be prosecuted if you ignore the rules", N'wa-Ngula talked boastfully to demonstrate her powers.)

Focussing on female consciousness, Walker, cited by Ferguson (1973:125) claims that for a woman the psychic cost of departing from a socially acceptable role is unbearable. This is true of N'wa-Ngula's actions. She tricks Makenya by offering him bribes to accuse N'wa-Nsimba of being a witch who has caused the death of chief Mnyamani. His accusation of N'wa-Nsimba influences part of the community and turns them against her. It enables Makaringi's troops to drive her and Fumani out of the village, causing them great misery. N'wa-Ngula's dominating powers open doors for her son Makaringi to win the throne unlawfully. In this way, tricks and

hypocrisy become effective stereotypes imposed upon women in fiction.

According to Deutsch, in Brown and Olson (1978:324), women characters like N'wa-Ngula who dominate men in fiction are called masculine women because they lack the essential traits of femininity such as passivity and masochism. These women are described as

... active, intellectual, aggressive witches or bitches in whom warm intuitive knowledge has yielded to cold unproductive thinking.

This is true of N'wa-Ngula. Her selfish behaviour destroys her feminine feelings of affection and compassion which basically prevent a woman from unproductive thinking. She causes the death of chief Mnyamani and encourages the community to chase out Fumani and his mother, N'wa-Nsimba, accusing her of witchcraft.

3.9.4 Evaluation of presentation of female characters in *Bya velekeriwa*

Both female characters in this novel share equal status as being the chief's wife. They are both traditional women, but differ in social conduct. N'wa-Ngula is insubordinate, jealous, violent and aggressive. N'wa-Nsimba is submissive, nurturing and suffers familial abuse.

3.10 SUMMARY

The majority of male writers in the selected novels are bound by traditional cultural values. They portray the relationship of a mother-in-law in crisis with her daughter-in-law. For instance, N'wa-Mpon'wa in Madyisambitsi dominates Javurisa, her daughter-in-law. She also accuses her of witchcraft. Olivia in Makumu ya vutomi byebyo is aggressive. She is not on good terms with her mother-in-law and attempts

to murder her husband, Japi. N'wa-Ridonga in Masungi chooses Khanyisa for her son so that Khanyisa can relieve her of the household chores. Sasavona in Marivate's novel is portrayed against traditional cultural values. She is irresponsible and does not resemble a Tsonga woman of her period. Marivate is heavily influenced by Christianity in his writing. Mtombeni in Mibya ya Nyekanyeka portrays conflicting roles. He is bound by traditional cultural values. N'wa-Basana is a submissive wife. Cheyeza is a nurturing and caring mother and N'wa-Mdanisi is an adulterous widow. Chauke in Ndzi ta n'wi kuma portrays liberated women who insist on their rights. Chabalala in Bya velekeriwa portrays jealousy between women over the chieftainship. This is a traditional patriarchal behaviour amongst women in a patriarchal society.

This chapter has sketched the depiction of women characters in the selected male-authored novels. In the next chapter the focus will be on the depiction of women characters in selected female-authored novels.

CHAPTER 4

DEPICTION OF WOMEN CHARACTERS IN THE SELECTED FEMALE-AUTHORED NOVELS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines the image of women in the selected female-authored novels, namely, Ntsakisi, Xikotikoti wa Matshotsho, Ndzi tsandzekile and Ximambana. As in chapter 3, a summary of each novel will be given at the beginning of the appropriate paragraph before embarking on discussion and analysis.

4.2 DISCUSSION OF THE NOVEL *NTSAKISI* BY J.F.C. MKHOMBO

4.2.1 (a) Summary of the story

This is a love story about Ngqovi, the son of Tsuvuka, and Ntsakisi, the daughter of Tahani-N'wanjiyani. Ngqovi promises Ntsakisi that he will marry her. Tahani's daughter-in-law, Mdlayi-N'waripewu, has lost two children to a mysterious disease. Mdlayi-N'waripewu accuses Tahani-N'wanjiyani of witchcraft and claims that Tahani-N'wanjiyani has bewitched all her children. She also influences Ngqovi against marrying Ntsakisi. Ngqovi works as a foreman in a hotel in Johannesburg. However, his stay in Johannesburg is plagued with problems. First he becomes critically ill and later becomes impotent. Following on this, he is attacked by criminals who ironically cause him to land in jail.

As a foreman, Ngqovi is supposed to leave only when all the workers have left. One day he works overtime and leaves very late in the evening. Ngqovi's friend, Misaveni, accompanies him but unfortunately on their way home they come across a gang of criminals standing around a fire. The gang attacks them and Misaveni is badly injured. Ngqovi tries to fight back but he is also injured. During the fight the police

arrive. The criminals flee but the police manage to arrest one of them together with Ngqovi. Misaveni is taken to hospital.

As he gets used to Johannesburg, Ngqovi falls in love with a young teacher by the name of Nkhensani. Ngqovi's love for Nkhensani influences him to break his promise to Ntsakisi but his father forces him to fulfil his promise to her. Consequently Ngqovi marries Ntsakisi. He is unfaithful in their marriage and tries several ways to end Ntsakisi's love. He even brings his girlfriends to their new home during weekends. Later on, Ngqovi deserts Ntsakisi in favour of Nkhensani. He leaves his clothes by the river bank with a note stating that he has drowned himself.

One evening Ngqovi's mother curses Ntsakisi saying that she has caused her son's death. Ntsakisi is terribly shocked and flees into the bush nearby. There she meets a stranger who introduces herself as Nkhensani, a teacher from Johannesburg. She is looking for a way to Ngqovi's place. Ntsakisi tells her nothing about her relationship with Ngqovi. They spend the night together in the bush and the following day both catch a train to Nkhensani's house in Johannesburg.

One day Ngqovi comes to Nkhensani's house. He is shocked to find her with Ntsakisi. Ntsakisi, who is convinced that Ngqovi is dead, faints from shock. When she recovers, Ngqovi apologizes for all the wrongs he has done to her. They reconcile and start a happy family. Ngqovi finds a specialist who treats him successfully. Their marriage is blessed with two children.

(b) Characters selected for discussion

The characters to be examined in this story are Tahani-N'wanjiyani, Mdlayi-N'waripewu and Ntsakisi. Ntsakisi has been selected because she is the protagonist. All the actions of the story centre around her. Mdlayi-N'waripewu is the tritagonist who causes conflict between Ntsakisi and her mother, Tahani-N'wanjiyani. Tahani-N'wanjiyani is a round character who is capable of embracing change and

her reaction to situations is therefore unpredictable. Being Ntsakisi's mother, she is also a major character because she has to be her daughter's mentor.

4.2.2 Analysis of the depiction of Tahani-N'wanjiyani

Tahani-N'wanjiyani is depicted as an elderly woman. She is tall, beautiful and light in complexion. She is a hard worker and struggles to make ends meet after the death of her husband. Tahani is portrayed as a good loving mother. She loves all her grandchildren as seen in the way she nurses Mdlayi-N'waripewu, her daughter-in-law, during her times of confinement, although Mdlayi later accuses her of witchcraft. Tahani further reveals her favourable disposition towards her daughter, Ntsakisi. When Ntsakisi is engaged to Ngqovi, Tahani shows her love for her daughter by wishing her well. She encourages her daughter to do good by her husband and her husband's parents. She says to her:

Ntsakisi, u ndzi tsakisile vuton'wini bya wena! U ndzi yingisile minkarhini hinkwayo loko u ri laha kaya. Mahanyelo ya wena ya endlile ndzi rivala maxangu ni xivundza xa ku siyiwa hi nuna wa mina, tata wa wena. Mahanyelo ya wena a ya ri nsuku ni silivere. Ku miyela i nsuku. Famba ka Xivambu u ya hanyisa sweswo. Rhandza ni ku yingisa nuna wa wena henhla ka hinkwavo. Hlonipha ni ku fundzha vatswari va nuna. Eka hinkwaswo, a ku na lexi tlulaka ku titsongahata ni ku yingisa (Mkhombo 1962:54).

(Ntsakisi, your behaviour pleased me! You obeyed me throughout your childhood. Your good behaviour made me forget my loneliness after the death of your father. It was like gold and silver to me. Silence is golden. Go to Xivambu's family and behave yourself well. Obey your husband and his parents. Above all, there is nothing more important than being submissive and obedient).

What Tahani says above is in line with traditional Tsonga culture and is seen in a favourable light by black feminists. However, to liberal feminist critics a married woman is concerned about her husband and children only, not the network of the extended family. Tahani is further portrayed as a comforting mother. When Ngqovi,

Ntsakisi's husband, becomes impotent after a serious illness, Tahani comforts her daughter and encourages her not to divorce her husband saying,

Loko swi ri leswi n'wananga a nga tiendlanga, ku rhandza ka Xikwembu. Hi Xona Xi nyikaka, Xi tlhela Xi teka. A hi lwi na Xona. Loko u n'wi rhandzile antiyisweni u nga ka u nga n'wi tshikeli sweswo, ku ta va ku n'wi hlekula. Xikuma-kumani xi nga mi kuma, byarisanani xona. Tanihi laha a hlamuselaka ha kona, swi nga endleka a kuma n'anga ya matimba yi n'wi lunghisa a tlhela a va wanuna futhi (Mkhombo 1962:37).

(What happened to him my daughter, is the will of God. He (God) is the One who gives and takes. We are not against him. If you truly loved him (Ngqovi), you will not leave him for that, it will be to ridicule him. This is also your problem, help him solve it. As he says, he might get a doctor to cure him).

Tahani's words above show that she is a caring mother. She encourages her daughter to be tolerant of her husband at all times. She does not allow her daughter to divorce her husband even if it means risking her own life by being married to an impotent husband who lacks libido and consequently fails to procreate.

A situation such as this one is well-known and accommodated for in Tsonga society and other African societies. According to traditional Tsonga culture when the husband is impotent the young woman is encouraged to fall in love with another man for procreation. However, this must be done secretly. When the woman becomes pregnant, the children which she bears belong to her husband. Rikhotso (1985:36) in his book, *Tolo a nga ha vuyi*, says:

Loko wansati a nga ri na xihoxo, vakhegula va n'wi vitela exihundleni leswaku a chochovela kambe swi nga tikombi. Vana lava velekiwaka va tekiwa va ri va nuna wa yena.

(When the woman is not barren, the old women call her to a secret place and encourage her to seek herself a secret lover. Children born of this relationship are considered as her husband's children.)

Although Tahani is a Christian and trusts in the Lord completely, she is still rooted

to traditionalism. When N'wamxejani, Mdlayi's mother, asks Tahani who or what causes the death of her grandchildren, Tahani answers her as follows:

"A hi munhu, i Xikwembu xi nga n'wi vita. Hi Xona Xi nyikaka Xi tlhela Xi teka. Ntsena ho rila hi navela leswaku loko ngi hi nga va hanyisa vana lava a swi ta hi lulamela. A swi kanakaniwi, byi kona byona vuvabyi lebyi va hetaka, kambe a hi se byi lemuka." (Mkhombo 1962:15).

("This is nobody's fault, it is God's will. He is the one who gives and also takes. But we mourn because we hope that it would be to our benefit if these children live. Undoubtedly, they suffer from a certain hidden disease.")

From a black feminist perspective what Tahani-N'wanjiyani says above shows that she is serious about bringing peace and harmony and possesses the ability to see beyond difficult conditions and harsh circumstances. She accepts the deaths of her grandchildren without accusing anybody of witchcraft. This marks a shift from traditional belief in witchcraft to Christianity. Tahani's ability to see beyond hard and difficult living conditions reveals her as a strong woman with positive personal relationships and capacity to cope with general living conditions. Women like her possess transcendent values which transform their lives. Hall (1990:138) says the following with regard to transcendent values of women:

Transcendence allows us to be honest with ourselves. We understand what we are doing with our lives only when we detach from our emotional involvement with others. We love more fully when we loosen our possessiveness. We are less enslaved by others when we transcend annoying or petty conditions in our personal relationship.

Tahani's transcendent values differentiate her from other women of her time like N'wamxejani, Mdlayi's mother, who still believes that Mdlayi's children are bewitched. She is portrayed as an independent woman who cares much about her personal development. An independent woman can be defined as a woman whose ideals and commitments are detached from other people's demands and expectations and who responds to her own needs. Hall (1990:141) says further that freeing ourselves from other people's demands and dictates allow us to be more

“autonomous and empowered”. This makes it possible for us to free ourselves from other people’s “possessiveness and expectations”. In other words the greater our empowerment, the greater the contribution we can make to developing our society.

In radical feminist perspective independent women like Tahani-N’wanjiyani who move away from predetermined roles and formulate their beliefs about life for the development of society are highly valued because they represent a transformation of society by focussing on specific individual needs.

4.2.3 Analysis of the depiction of Mdlayi-N’waripewu

Mdlayi-N’waripewu is portrayed as a dominating woman, who shows no respect to her husband. She is very hostile towards her mother-in-law, Tahani-N’wanjiyani, and falsely accuses her of witchcraft. She claims that Tahani-N’wanjiyani is responsible for the death of her children. Her hostility towards her mother-in-law is exposed in the following excerpt:

Vana va mina va hela, ndzi ri va hela N’wanjiyani. Wena N’wantsan’wisi u nge ndzi swi tshika, swi tshikeriwa yini leswi rhumbu ra mina ri helaka. Ndzi nga vuli loko ndzi dlayeriwa vana! Ndzi nga vuli ndzi ku ndzi chava yini? Ndzi dlayi phela. Ndzi dlayi na mina N’wanjiyani, ndzi ri ndzi dlayi, ndzi ri ndzi dlayi-hi, ndzi landza vana va mina (Mkhombo 1962:16).

(N’wanjiyani, you are busy killing my children. How can I be quiet when my children are being killed? I am asking you daughter of Ntsan’wisi? How can I be quiet? Kill me! I say kill me N’wanjiyani so that I can be with my children.)

The expression above proves that Mdlayi-N’waripewu is a strong traditionalist who still clings slavishly to Tsonga culture in all its facets. According to Tsonga culture, a man does not simply die nor do the children. When a man dies it is believed that his wife has bewitched him and when the children die it is believed that there must be someone who is bewitching them. That is the reason why Mdlayi-N’waripewu blames Tahani-N’wanjiyani for the death of her children. Witchcraft is regarded as

a criminal act in African societies, therefore to accuse someone of witchcraft is a serious offence. Women like Mdlayi-N'waripewu who openly defy their mothers-in-law are disapproved of in the Tsonga community.

Mdlayi-N'waripewu is jealous of Ngqovi's marriage to Ntsakisi. She influences Ngqovi to divorce Ntsakisi by accusing Ntsakisi's mother of witchcraft. However, when she is on her deathbed, Mdlayi-N'waripewu confesses as follows to Ntsakisi and Tahani-N'wanjiyani:

Manani Tahani-N'wanjiyani, ndzi ri ndzi rivalele ndzi ku dyohela ngopfu-ngopfu. Loko u ndzi khomela xidyoho xa mina, ndlela yi ta pfuleka ndzi ya vutomini lebyi nga heriki...Ntsakisi muhariva hi mina ndzi nga endla leswaku Ngqovi a ku tshika hikuva a ndzi vonile hi laha a wu ta tsaka ha kona, a ndzi nga rhandzi leswaku mi tsaka. Hi mina ndzi nga endla leswaku n'wingi waku a ku pumba vuloyi, xilo lexi xi nga kala xi ku lan'wisa u lava na ku tidlaya. Ndzi rivaleli. (Mkhombo 1962:86-87).

(Tahani-N'wanjiyani, my mother, please forgive me. I wronged you very much. If you forgive me my sins, my way will be clear and I will go to everlasting life...Ntsakisi my sister-in-law, I am the one who influenced Ngqovi to desert you because I realized that you would be happy with him. I did not wish to see you happy. I also influenced your mother-in-law to accuse you falsely of witchcraft, the thing which forced you to lose your patience and make you think of killing yourself. Please forgive me.)

Although Mdlayi-N'waripewu's confession shows that she is afraid of the unknown it reconciles her to Tahani-N'wanjiyani and her daughter, Ntsakisi. This is reminiscent of Sasavona in paragraph 3.3.1 (a). It shows that it is essential for a sinner to ask for forgiveness before he/she dies. Shortly after this confession to Ntsakisi and Tahani-N'wanjiyani, Mdlayi-N'waripewu dies.

From a feminist perspective Mdlayi-N'waripewu's change of beliefs and attitudes is highly valued. Pratt (1982:137) says the following in this regard:

The rebirth journey and similar experiences bring to consciousness the lost values of the psyche... and by this means the human being becomes more complete....For when a woman submits to the laws or principles of her own being and gives up the personal orientation of the ego she gradually defines the limits of her own nature and the individuality crystalizes with her.

The rebirth journey implies the transformation of the character's personality from bad to good. In this case the rebirth journey refers to Mdlayi's repentance which she reveals by asking for forgiveness from Tahani-N'wanjiyani and Ntsakisi. Her awareness of the violation of social standards transforms her from her destructive rebellious behaviour to a submissive and humble woman whose fate lies in the hands of her opponents.

4.2.4 Analysis of the depiction of Ntsakisi

Ntsakisi is described as a submissive young woman. She confines herself to her mother's advice and is humble and dependent at all times. Her meekness makes her docile. She does not take strong exception when Ngqovi invites his girlfriends to their new home for weekends. When Ntsakisi realizes that Nkhensani is Ngqovi's girlfriend, she does not quarrel with her. This is not normal in real life. Ntsakisi's patience, tolerance and submissiveness towards Ngqovi's girlfriends are exaggerated in this case. Ntsakisi's submissiveness is emphasized when Ngqovi finds her in Nkhensani's house. Ntsakisi thanks Nkhensani for reuniting her with Ngqovi. Ntsakisi expresses her inferiority to Ngqovi when she says,

A ndzi na marito, ririmi ri tatile nomu! A ndzi koti ku kuma marito... A ndzi na swo tala loko ku nga ri ku nkhensa wena nakulorhi, loyi a nga ri ku na xitalo, loyi a nga ndzi tisa laha ku ri ndzi ta kala ndzi n'wi kuma loyi a file. Loko a ri Ngqovi, mbilu yanga wa yi tiva, ya ha ri tani hi tolo na tolweni, ya ha pupuma hi rirhandzu, ndzi pfumele leswaku ndzi ta va na wena ni makumu. (Mkhombo 1962:74).

(I've got nothing to say! I wish to thank you, my dear friend, because you brought me here, to find him who was dead.

Ngqovi, you know my heart, it is still full of love for you, allow me to be with you until the end of time.)

In traditional patriarchal society, the woman who willingly and happily submits herself to her husband is ideal. Ntsakisi's humiliating obedience is rewarded when Ngqovi finds a doctor who cures him.

4.2.5 Evaluation of presentation of female characters in *Ntsakisi*

The portrayal of women in this novel, reinforces patriarchal ideology. Ntsakisi and Tahani-N'wanjiyani are portrayed as good women because of their compliance with patriarchal cultural sex-roles. Tahani-N'wanjiyani is described as modest. She encourages her daughter, Ntsakisi, to be submissive, tolerant, obedient and dependent. These are ideal virtues in a woman in patriarchal Tsonga society. From a liberal feminist standpoint these feminine virtues are undermined because they prevent women from performing wider and more challenging roles. Feminist critics such as Miller argue against these virtues (cf. par. 3.5.2.)

Miller(1986:7) concludes her argument against patriarchal feminine virtues as follows:

...when subordinates show the potential for, or even more dangerously have developed other characteristics ... there is usually no room available within the dominant framework for acknowledgement of these characteristics. Such people will be defined as at least unusual, if not definitely abnormal. There will be no opportunities for the direct application of their abilities within the social arrangements.

Tahani-N'wanjiyani and her daughter, Ntsakisi, show none of the potential mentioned in the quotation above. As a result their innate defects please the dominant group.

Ntsakisi sacrifices herself to serve the needs of other people even when it means risking her own life. In the end, Ntsakisi is rewarded for her good conduct as a

woman who lives according to good traditional customs. She is reunited with Ngqovi, and Ngqovi is cured of his illness. Contrary to Ntsakisi, Mdlayi-N'waripewu rejects her traditional sex-roles and violates cultural norms. She is described as a bad woman by being jealous, violent, hostile and aggressive. After her repentance, Mdlayi-N'waripewu confesses to Tahani-N'wanjiyani and Ntsakisi. Shortly thereafter, she dies.

4.3 DISCUSSION OF THE NOVEL *XIKOTIKOTI WA MATSHOTSHO* BY M.A. MAHUHUSHI

4.3.1 (a) Summary of the story

The story is about Xikotikoti, the first son of Makhense Nkhavelani and N'wapeni. They live in Matshotsho. Xikotikoti is born into a poor family. His father is a carpenter and at the age of eighteen Xikotikoti goes to Johannesburg to look for work. Nhongayakule, known as Tshovane, introduces Xikotikoti to his manager, Mr McGallon. Mr McGallon employs Xikotikoti as a machine operator. He gives Xikotikoti a new name, Tolly, saying that his real name is too difficult to remember.

Tolly is an honest young man who likes his job and respects his manager. Within the first four months of employment, Tolly is promoted to a senior position. While in Johannesburg his friend, Nhongayakule, teaches him how to save money. After a few months Tolly writes a letter to his parents informing them that he is working in Johannesburg. Tolly's mother asks her friend, N'wa-Jon, to read the letter for them. Towards the end of the year, Tolly asks his parents to look for a girl for him to marry. With the help of the teacher's wife, N'wa -Jon, Tolly is introduced to Violet, a kind young girl, to marry. Tolly and Violet fall in love on Christmas day at N'wa- Jon's home. They marry soon thereafter and their marriage is blessed with five children: four girls and a boy.

(b) Characters selected for discussion

The characters to be examined in this story are N'wapeni and N'wa-Jon. They are both major characters. Their prime objective is to uplift the interests of other people. They show development and complexity in their actions, and are thus round characters.

4.3.2 Analysis of the depiction of N'wapeni

Throughout the story, N'wapeni is depicted as a loving wife and nurturing mother. She struggles to bring up her first child, Xikotikoti, against great odds such as a lack of food and her husband's unwillingness to seek employment in the economic sector. Xikotikoti grows up in this poor family. Unlike his father he goes to Johannesburg while still young and finds a job. There he learns to read and write. Every month Xikotikoti writes his parents a letter sending them money.

N'wapeni, Xikotikoti's mother, is an illiterate person. She establishes friendship with N'wa-Jon, a teacher's wife, who often reads her the letters from her son, Xikotikoti, now known as Tolly. N'wapeni's interaction with N'wa-Jon gradually influences her to re-socialize herself and to retreat from some of her traditional beliefs and values by taking on modern roles which she finds valuable in strengthening her identity. In this way N'wapeni's friendship with N'wa-Jon enhances her self-awareness, highlighting the importance of friendship among women.

Hall (1990:117) highlights the importance of friendship between women by saying,

Friendship ... is a bridge for women to use in distancing themselves from their involvement with family concerns. Meaningful connections outside the immediate family increase women's understanding and support in their quest for fuller living. The additional resource of friendship enhances women's self-respect, and leads towards their discovery of increased options for identity beyond the traditional roles of daughter, wife, and mother. Although it is essential for women to interact with their parents, sisters and brothers to be fully aware of themselves, friends are an invaluable source for clarifying identity and commitments.

N'wapeni's friendship with N'wa-Jon brings significant changes to her life-style. She learns modern domestic chores like ironing her husband's shirts and sewing her children's torn clothes. These new activities enhance her identity and please her husband who boastfully comments about it to other men:

Me ndzi ambala tihembe to ayiniwa hikuva nsati wa mina i mujagani, timhaka ti na nkata thicara Maceme, hi ye a n'wi dyondzisaka ku hlantswa, ku ayina na ku rhunga leswo handzuka. (Mahuhushi 1966:57).

(I wear ironed shirts because my wife adopted Western values and attends church, encouraged by the teacher's wife, Mrs Maceme. She is the one who teaches her to wash, iron and sew torn clothes).

To black feminist scholars such as Walker (1983) N'wapeni can be viewed as a very responsible woman who values and credits her own thoughts, feelings and actions. Responsibility implies a sense of obligation or duty to act in specific normatively defined ways – to behave so one meets with the approval of mainstream society. N'wapeni faces the challenges of life responsibly in order to attain her goals. The feminist movement values women such as N'wapeni because they have a mission in life and are able to expand their goals beyond normative ways. This is not acceptable in Tsonga society because a woman depends on her husband and she is not allowed to make any major decisions (cf. par. 1.2.2). N'wapeni begins a new life-style by attending church every Sunday with N'wa-Jon. She accepts Christianity with the aim of giving thanks to God for the success of her son. N'wapeni also motivates her husband to accept Christianity by saying,

Ndzi vula leswi hi nga ta fa hi nga si tinyiketa ekerekeni. Hi tshamile exikarhi ka vapfumeri hi le kusuhi na kereke. Thicara u karhele ku hi khongotela munhu wa Xikwembu, na swona Xikwembu Xi kombisile rirhandzu ra Xona hi n'wana wa hina Xi nga n'wi biyelela no n'wi phephisa eka hinkwaswo swa misava. Xi n'wi kombe kendla leswinene. (Mahuhushi 1996:51).

(It is now time we become Christians before we die. We live amongst Christians and we are near the church. The teacher is tired of encouraging us and above all, God showed his love to us by protecting our son from all evils. God influenced him to do the right thing.)

N'wapeni's decision to accept Christianity despite the fact that her husband is not a Christian signifies a shift from patriarchal values to societal values based on personal freedom and the expression of self-fulfilment. To liberal feminist scholars such as Evans (1995) N'wapeni's decision-making beyond her husband in this regard is appropriate because it allows her to interact with her husband as equals. In relation to the fulfilment of personal freedom, Hall (1990:7) notes the fact that a person's freedom rests in his/her ability to choose the values he/she designates as most sacred. She argues that:

As women discover their most meaningful values and create real identities, they convert from ascribed religions of traditional patriarchal values about gender to achieved religions of egalitarian values. They move from the extremes of traditional female and traditional male values to a synthesis. Gender definitions shift into more general selections of values, and identity becomes androgynous and more autonomous. Traditional gender value systems are transformed by this process, enabling women to move from subordinated roles and restricted social positions to broadened opportunities for mobility and fulfilment.

In traditional Tsonga society, women who reject traditional female roles and accept egalitarian values, as N'wapeni does, are stigmatized as deviants rather than viewed as innovators or pioneers carving out additional possibilities for themselves. N'wapeni is denigrated by society, especially women who fail to accept her real identity and value choices. Some of these women are churchgoers, such as Mrs Masochi who nearly pulls N'wapeni out of the church. N'wapeni is encouraged by her husband, Makhense, to strengthen her identity and to stick to her commitment to self-empowerment by saying the following:

Yena lowo ku vula sweswo, u pfumele ye munhu wo tano ke? A va swi tivi leswaku vanhu ekerekeni va fana na tinhlampfi eritavaleni ke? Hikuva ri phasa hinkwaswo. Siku rin'wana a hi tinhlampfi ntsena leswi nga na ritavala ku na tinhlampfi tinene, kambe ko tala ritavala ri phasa na machela na maganji na mintlambya ke? Swa fana na ye manana yaloye, a nga ha va a ri ganji eritavaleni, hikuva u lava ku luma a vavisa van'wana. Tiyisela hambu mina nuna wa wena ndzi nga si gongondzeriwa a swi na nchumu nghena, (Mahuhushi 1996:54).

(Do you call such a person a Christian? Don't they know that people in a church are like fish in a net? The net catches everything. Sometimes there are not only fish in a net. What happens if there are frogs and crabs in the net? It goes without saying, that woman is like a crab in a net because she wants to bite and hurt other people. Hold on, although I am not yet a Christian.)

These words show that Makhense acknowledges Christianity. It proves that he appreciates his wife's moral behaviour and encourages her to hold on.

N'wapeni is a caring mother; and as a result her son, Tolly, develops a strong bond with her. When Tolly is about to marry he informs his mother which is unusual in traditional Tsonga society. Among the Tsongas, when a young man is about to marry he informs his father. Tolly deviates from this social norm and initiates the matter with his mother, N'wapeni, forming a strong bond with her. This transcends gender sex-roles and is unacceptable in patriarchal Tsonga society.

Rikhotso(1985:22) says,

Loko jaha ri fikile eka xiyimo xo "pela mazivuko," ri fanele ku tivisa tata wa rona. Loko a chava ku byela tata wa yena u byela un'wana wanuna.

(When a young man has reached the stage of marriage, he has to tell his father about it. When he is scared to tell his father he informs any other man).

The above quotation highlights the notion that marriage affairs in Tsonga society are

initiated by people of the same sex. However, N'wapeni, with the help of N'wa-Jon, takes the initiative in finding a girl for Tolly to marry instead of referring the matter to her husband, Makhense. To the proponents of feminism N'wapeni's involvement in the initiation and organization of her son's marriage marks responsibility attained through self-awareness and identity empowerment transcending traditional cultural sex-roles. The mother-son relationship between N'wapeni and her son, Tolly, is indicated in their dialogue below:

"Mhani, swi sasile mi nga hava vurhongo, hi to xuxa hi bula. Livhi ya mina ya hela, loko ndzi languta ndzi kuma leswaku ku lo sala n'hwetl ntsena, leyo sungula yi herile. Leswi swirhodyana na swona swi nga kwala, a ndzi lava munhu wo ta mi kela mati ndzi nga si tlhelela eJoni. A hi tivi loko swi ta endleka. Mi swi vonisa ku yini ke?" N'wapeni: "Swona hi swona Nkhavelani, wa vulavula. A ndzi ta tsaka ngopfu, titangha ta mina ti na vingi na vatukulu. No sweka a ta ha sweki." Tolly: "A hi tivi, a ndzi mi tivisa." Tolly u hetele hi ku byela mana wakwe leswaku a swi tshikela emavokweni ya nkata tichara Maceme. (Mahuhushi 1966:87).

("Mother, seeing that you are still awake, we can spend the evening together and converse. My leave is about to end, I am only left with one month, the first month is over. Since there are enough cattle, I was thinking of finding a wife before I return to Johannesburg. I am not sure if it will be possible. What is your opinion on this matter?" N'wapeni: "What you say is true, my son. I would be very happy, my age-group already have daughters-in-law and grandchildren. They no longer cook." Tolly: "I don't know, I was only informing you." Tolly concluded by telling his mother to leave the matter to the teacher's wife, Mrs Maceme).

N'wapeni's dialogue with her son above reveals that she is a loving mother. To feminist scholars such as Walker (1983) N'wapeni's actions are acceptable. They prove that she is an independent woman who acts responsibly.

4.3.3 Analysis of the depiction of N'wa-Jon

N'wa-Jon is portrayed as an enlightened woman. She is a teacher by profession, but

works most successfully as a woman's companion. N'wa-Jon performs most of her activities to develop other women in her community. She befriends an illiterate woman, N'wapeni, and a young girl Violet. N'wa-Jon often reads N'wapeni's letters from her son, Tolly. She encourages N'wapeni to develop herself by teaching her household chores such as sewing and ironing. These new activities enhance N'wapeni's status and please her husband, who is proud of her. Furthermore, N'wa-Jon develops N'wapeni's spiritual being. She successfully encourages N'wapeni to accept Christianity by inviting her to church every Sunday.

N'wa -Jon commits herself to community participation and teaches Violet, her former pupil, modern ways of cooking, baking and sewing. She also introduces Violet to Tolly, a responsible and educated young man. Violet and Tolly fall in love on Christmas day at N'wa-Jon's home and marry thereafter. Although feminism does not agree with matchmaking for future couples, N'wa-Jon's responsibility in this respect is appreciated because it focuses on the development of the society. Hall (1990:22) argues that marriage does not define all the life-chances of women. Therefore, it is more important for women to come to terms with themselves than to search for the perfect or "right" spouse, or to consistently adapt to one's spouse. This implies that family living must be consciously and deliberately chosen and women should be given a chance to choose their own spouses. Among the Tsongas every woman is responsible for the development of her own daughter and she is expected to teach her all the domestic chores.

4.3.4 Evaluation of presentation of female characters in *Xikotikoti wa Matshotsho*.

Female characters in this novel are enlightened women. They are not portrayed within the framework of traditional sex-roles of wife, mother and daughter. They recognize the importance of friendship between women for the development of others in society. Their activities transcend the social barriers of gender roles and show the mobility of sex-roles to broaden opportunities and fulfilment. For instance, N'wa-Jon develops Violet and N'wapeni's personalities. She finds Violet a

responsible husband to marry. N'wapeni encourages her husband to accept Christianity. Although Nkhavelani, N'wapeni's husband, does not want to declare it, his behaviour proves that he appreciates Christian values. To feminist critics N'wapeni's interaction with her husband is praiseworthy. In a changing society men and women should influence one another for the development of their families and the society at large.

4.4 DISCUSSION OF THE NOVEL *NDZI TSANDZEKILE* BY G.A. RITSHURI

4.4.1 (a) Summary of the story

This story concerns a dispute between Rikhezwani and his wife, N'wa-Hlengani, over their daughter Masingita. Rikhezwani wants Masingita to attend school, but N'wa-Hlengani is totally against it. N'wa-Hlengani says that it is against Tsonga custom for girls to attend school. As head of the family Rikhezwani overrules his wife and sends Masingita to school.

After passing J.C. (Grade 10), Masingita trains as a nurse at Nkhensani hospital.

This is against her father's wishes who wants her to become a dressmaker.

Masingita marries John Shipalana, a young teacher from Dzumeri. Masingita is unfaithful in her marriage. She involves herself in an extramarital relationship with Zacharia Nkuna, a policeman at Bendstore. Masingita spends more of her time with her boyfriend, Zacharia, than with her husband, John, unaware that Zacharia is married and loves his family. Masingita gives birth to a baby girl, Xichavo. Her relationship with Zacharia ends her marriage. The story depicts female dominance influenced by education for black women.

(b) Characters

selected for discussion

The characters to be examined in this novel are N'wa-Hlengani and Masingita. Masingita is the protagonist. Her motives clash with those of her mother, N'wa-Hlengani, who is depicted as the antagonist.

4.4.2 Analysis of the depiction of N'wa-Hlengani

N'wa-Hlengani is an adult woman who is very traditional and too conservative in her behaviour. She clings strongly to the traditional belief that a Tsonga girl should not attend school and share seats with boys as she may become perverted and bear illegitimate children. Her conservative behaviour is shown when she insists that Masingita should follow the ways of her mother, grandmothers and great-grandmothers and undergo initiation, get married and bear children.

Initiation is a cultural practice among the Tsonga, through which old women introduce young girls to womanhood. N'wa-Hlengani is totally convinced that through initiation, Masingita will understand herself and her wifely duties. As such there is no way in which Masingita can deviate from this norm. Eliade (in Pratt 1982:152) emphasizes the importance of the initiation of girls by saying,

The purpose of feminine mysteries of initiation in African tribes is for the older women to introduce the younger to the “mystery of childbearing”, not merely for its fertility powers but also for a “discovery that she is a creator on the plane of life [that] constitutes a religious experience ...” It is not the phenomenon of giving birth that constitutes the mystery; it is the revelation of the feminine sacredness; that is, of the mystic unity between life, woman, nature and divinity.

From the quotation above it is clear that the purpose of initiation is to introduce a young woman into the mystery of childbearing. In Tsonga culture the initiation school also inculcates cultural laws essential for the survival of the community and also trains the young woman to behave herself in a respectful manner.

N'wa-Hlengani is further portrayed as a dominating woman. She is verbally aggressive and objects strongly to her husband's idea of sending Masingita to school. Throughout the story, N'wa-Hlengani rejects and disregards her husband's words. For instance, when Khazamula informs her that he had enough beer at

Xingwangwa, N'wa-Hlengani answers angrily by saying,

A ndzi na mhaka na byalwa hambi a ri Xingwangwa, lexi ndzi nga na mhaka na xona i n'wana wa mina loyi ndzi lavaka leswaku a kula a cineriwa a tlhela a tekiwa ivi ndzi tshama hansi ndzi dya xuma. Leswo n'wana wa nhwanyana a ya exikolweni a ndzi swi twisisi. (Ritshuri 1984:11).

(I've got nothing to do with beer nor Xingwangwa, I am only interested in my child who must grow up, be initiated and get married so that I can enjoy her **lobola**. It is against my beliefs for a girl to attend school.)

These words indicate that elderly women show less interest in social change and modern values and perpetuate traditional ideologies to preserve their cultural values. In traditional Tsonga society, such women who challenge their husbands are frowned upon. N'wa-Hlengani is viewed as a strong woman by feminist critics because she is able to air her own views even if they are against her husband's ideas. Liberal feminist critics support the idea of girls attending school.

Gaidzanwa (1985:11) has the following comments about such women:

As wives, women are expected to behave in a comforting, non-aggressive and nurturing way. They are there to make life manageable for husbands and children. Wives are also expected to be faithful, both physically and socially, to their husbands. When wives refuse to do so, they are disapproved of.

N'wa-Hlengani is further depicted as a greedy woman and a jealous mother. When Masingita starts to work, N'wa-Hlengani forces her to buy her a bed before she gets married, saying that when married, Masingita will be working for her in-laws. N'wa-Hlengani wants Masingita to refund all the money which her father spent on educating her. N'wa-Hlengani shows her possessiveness of Masingita by refusing to allow her to go to her new home after **lobola** has been paid up. She says,

Swi nga ka swi nga endleki leswaku Masingita a hloma kasi wa ha ku lovorwa namuntlha kunene... A hloma a nga ndzi tirhelangi? Phela a mi vulavuli loko mi ku tani, mo chinga...Tata wa Masingita a mi vulavuli loko mi vula sweswo, mo seletela (Ritshuri 1984:85).

(Masingita will not go to her new home before she works for me...What you say is unacceptable...You had better consider your words. My husband, what you say is inappropriate.)

Later on, N'wa-Hlengani expresses her possessiveness by naming Masingita's baby girl, Khombomuni, implying that she, N'wa-Hlengani, is unfortunate because after she has struggled to bring up her daughter, Masingita, other people will enjoy the benefits of her endeavours.

Feminist scholars such as Pratt (1982) believe that jealousy amongst women is an archetypal stigma which separates women from each other. N'wa-Hlengani is jealous of her daughter's profession. N'wa-Hlengani wants Masingita to work for her even after she is married. This is against Tsonga tradition which stipulates that a married woman belongs to her husband and to her husband's family and she is expected to serve her husband and her in-laws.

4.4.3 Analysis of the depiction of Masingita

While still a young girl, Masingita is portrayed as an animus-driven daughter. An animus is described by Jung (1958:13-15) as a woman who is basically influenced by her father. The father endows his daughter with conventional opinions which play a dominant role in female argumentation. These inarguable conventions exclude the personal reality of the actual woman she is. The animus gives a woman's consciousness the capacity for reflection, deliberation and self-knowledge. It fills her personality with an unshakable feeling of rightness and righteousness. If the woman is ridden by the animus, no logic on earth can shake her no matter how friendly and obliging she might be. This type of behaviour is unacceptable in Tsonga society. In this regard Rikhotso (1985:20) says:

...na yena nhwana u fanele ku komba xichavo hi ku nkhisama eka lavakulu.

(...the young woman too must show respect to the elderly by kneeling down.)

This indicates that a young woman, like her mother, is supposed to show respect and obedience at all times. Masingita disrespects her mother and turns to her father. Viewed from a feminist perspective, women's identification with the male is laudable because it opens doors for wider roles. Rogers (1991:119) says the following with regard to the daughter who turns to the father in fiction:

...the father-daughter relationship is the one most crucial to the heroine's development. Transferring affection to the masculine, the heroine begins to move away from identification that precludes both individuality and the possibility of relationship.

As an animus-ridden daughter, Masingita is depicted negatively by failing to identify herself with her mother who merely serves as her instructor giving her instructive examples of problems befalling women who fail to understand, or who form relationships with the masculine. Masingita rejects all the feminine social roles imposed on her by her mother. She creates her own new roles, forming for herself a new and positive life-style. She becomes the first girl from her village to attend school with the permission of her father. After passing J.C. (Grade 10), Masingita refuses to follow any of the careers chosen for her by her parents. She makes her own choice and becomes a nurse at Nkhensani hospital. From a black feminist point of view a woman with wider roles is admirable because she is in a better position to contribute positively to a changing society. Hall (1990:21) says the following with regard to women like Masingita who deviate from their social norms:

Women who decide to change or reorder their values, consequently moving away from their traditional roles, are customarily perceived as deviant. Because this labelling is a negative sanction, it pressures them to move back to traditional patterns. However, in spite of continued widespread social expectations that women be confined to domestic roles,

it is increasingly difficult for most women to conform to these restricted roles. As society changes, it is easier for them to deviate, and ultimately that deviance becomes a norm.

When Masingita passes her J.C. (Grade 10) both her parents become happy. Her deviant behaviour of attending school with boys turns into a success and ends as a norm. In Tsonga society, deviancy in adolescents is regarded as delinquent behaviour. Young girls like Masingita who deviate from the norms of society are subject to punishment. Taiwo (1984:3) emphasizes the importance of conformity by saying that “any girl who tries to upset societal values does so at her own risk.”

As a married woman, Masingita is portrayed negatively by being disrespectful to her husband. She is unfaithful to her husband and as a result she is not happy in her marriage. Masingita indulges in an extramarital relationship trying to break away from the constraints of marriage and family obligations by being adulterous. Adultery is regarded by some feminists as a stage in a female’s development in which a woman seeks autonomy and self-discovery after the traditional female fulfilment of marriage has been achieved. Abel, Hirsch and Langland (1984:12) argue that the image of a woman as an adulteress is one of an individual on a quest for self-discovery and autonomy, a quest which involves breaking away from marital authority. This type of behaviour is unacceptable to the Tsonga community.

Masingita’s adulterous life makes her to be intolerant of her husband and ultimately ruins her marriage. John talks to her several times about her irresponsible actions calling her to order, but Masingita does not listen. In the end, John expresses his shock and disappointment about her bad conduct:

Leswi u swi endlaka a swi pfuni nchumu hikuva a swi nga ku vuyerisi nchumu. Mina a ndzi na mhaka na swona. Hambi u na vanghana hambu a wu na vanghana a swi ndzi tirheli. Loko va ri vanghana vo biha swi poyila wena. (Ritshuri 1984:92).

(Your bad conduct will lead you nowhere. Whatever happens to you does not bother me. If you have bad friends that is your own problem.)

According to custom what John says above shows that Masingita is an immoral young woman. She is insubordinate and violates the traditional sex-role of wife by having many sex partners. Among the Tsongas a woman must respect her husband and she is not allowed to have several sex partners.

Masingita is not in good terms with her mother-in-law, and shows no respect to her. Unlike Tsonga traditional women, Masingita lacks obedience. She fails to obey her mother-in-law and her husband. Her defiant attitude towards her mother-in-law contributes much to her failure to please her husband who respects his mother. Masingita aggravates her disobedience to and disrespect of her mother-in-law by using surly statements in her dispute with her husband. For instance she says,

Mina a ndzi na vamanana vambirhi, mana wa mina i N'wa-Hlengani, wa swi tiva na wena. (Ritshuri 1984:89).

(I do not have two mothers. I've got only one mother, she is N'wa-Hlengani, you know that too.)

As a career woman Masingita is depicted negatively by being insubordinate, troublesome and unconventional in her behaviour. This is caused by her unfaithfulness to her husband. The author uses her profession as an explanation of her unfaithfulness and the failure of her marriage. Problem women like her often suffer drastic punishments at the hands of their husbands. John divorces Masingita as a punishment for her adulterous life. This negative portrayal of Masingita as a career woman may blacken the role of women in society. This may also discourage young women from combining career, marriage and motherhood. It may also encourage husbands and parents to shelter their wives and daughters from other spheres of life. For instance, Rikhezwani forbids Masingita from becoming a nurse while her mother does not want to allow her to attend school.

Gaidzanwa (1985:11) says the following about such women:

In literature, the bulk of problem women are those who fall down on their wifely duties and responsibilities. These duties include bearing children, subordinating themselves to husbands, remaining faithful to their husbands and deferring to their husband's mother, father or other relations. Unfaithful and insubordinate women are despised and socially frowned upon.

In traditional Tsonga society, a woman is socialized to accept restrictions. She has no time of her own and does not think to assess the quality of her status. Women like Masingita who dedicate themselves to their careers are portrayed negatively because of the expectations of Tsonga tradition.

4.4.4 Evaluation of presentation of female characters in *Ndzi tsandzekile*

Characters in Ritshuri's novel portray conflicting ideologies. N'wa-Hlengani is a traditional patriarchal woman who adheres to traditional cultural values. She is a strict traditionalist and shows no interest in modern values. Masingita is a modern girl. She is not interested in traditional gender roles and forms a relationship with her father. She deviates from the patriarchal sexual norm by having many sexual partners. Masingita becomes a career woman which is against patriarchal Tsonga tradition. The woman's prime role in Tsonga tradition is to bear children and not to pursue a career, hence the Tsonga proverb:

Wansati i ku veleka

(Lit. A woman is to give birth, i.e for a woman to be respected in a Tsonga family she should beget as many children as possible.)

Against this background it is the duty of the man to provide his family with food (singilela muti) even in times of famine. For this reason women like Masingita who dedicate themselves to their careers are portrayed negatively.

4.5 DISCUSSION OF THE NOVEL *XIMAMBANA* BY M.M MABUZA

4.5.1 (a) Summary of the story

The story is about a young woman, Ximambana. Her mother is Rosi and her father is Mulungu-wa-Chuma. Both her parents are proud of her. Ximambana falls pregnant before marriage, and lies to the matron at the nursing college, saying that her father is dead. She disappears to her aunt, Nyanisi, in Johannesburg to hide her pregnancy. Ximambana gives birth to a baby girl, Singita. Her father expels her from home because she has damaged his integrity by bearing an illegitimate child.

Shortly after the birth of Singita, Themba Halata, a young magistrate from Pretoria, is transferred to Nkowankowa. Rosi captures him for her daughter. She secretly calls Ximambana to come back home and introduces her to Themba. Themba falls in love with Ximambana and marries her. Ximambana tells her husband that Singita is her sister.

After six years of marriage, a dreadful incident occurs. Singita's foster mother, Nyanisi, is knocked down by a car and dies on the spot. Singita is taken to her grandmother, Rosi, at Nkowankowa. Ximambana is depressed by the incident and fails to resist the stress of denying her own child. Moreover, Themba jokingly proposes that Singita become his second wife because Ximambana's health is failing. This causes Ximambana more stress and great disruption in the family. At last, Ximambana reveals her lifelong secret to her husband that Singita is her own child and not her sister. Themba calmly forgives Ximambana and her parents and accepts Singita as his own daughter.

(b) Characters selected for discussion

The characters to be examined in this story are Rosi and Ximambana. They are both major characters. Ximambana is the protagonist and Rosi is the antagonist.

4.5.2 Analysis of the depiction of Rosi

Rosi is an elderly woman. She is depicted as very supportive to her daughter. She hides Ximambana's premarital pregnancy by abandoning her baby with Ximambana's aunt, Nyanisi, who is childless. Rosi admires Themba, the new young magistrate at Nkowa-Nkowa and proposes him for her daughter. Under normal circumstances it is men who propose love to women in Tsonga society. When a woman proposes love to a man she is doing so for another woman. Normally this task is carried by the girl's aunt. Rosi's action indicates tension caused by intimacy and possessiveness. This is taboo among the Tsongas. A girl's mother does not come into direct contact with her son-in-law before he performs the cultural rite (ku alula) which grants him permission to talk to his mother-in-law not to mention proposing love for her own daughter. However, Rosi establishes links with Themba for Ximambana in her absence. Rosi is also portrayed as a very cunning woman because she deceives Themba by hiding the fact that Ximambana has already had a child by another man. Instead, she glorifies Ximambana, saying,

Yena loko a lo baka khekhe, ri vuyisa n'wana evukatini. Kumbe o chachamisa huku, u to sala u phomaphoma rihlakahla. Tisaladi leti, i hosi ya tona. U la na pasa Jesi tata wa yena a n'wi rhumela ku ya dyondzela vusweki ni ku rhunga. Mi ri kasi i wansati lowo tsandzeka no boxela nuna xa Magezi? I nsati muni yena wo hlongorisa dyondzo? A va ri ndlela yo kongoma embilwini ya wanuna yi hundza hi le khwirini, a hi swona? (Mabuza 1989:27).

(She bakes delicious cakes. Her roasted chicken is delicious. She makes enjoyable salads. After J.C. (Grade 10) her father sent her to a dressmaking school. Don't think that she is unable to cook food for her husband early in the morning. It is not important for a woman to be highly educated. A woman must know how to cook delicious food in order to please her husband.)

In relation to her husband, Rosi is portrayed as a domineering woman who controls her husband. She reduces the amount of money which her husband suggests for Ximambana's **lobola**. This is socially unacceptable. In Tsonga **lobola** is decided on by the father as head of the family, and not by the mother. Rosi forbids her

husband from informing the people who come to pay **lobola** that Ximambana has had a child by another man. When Mulungu-wa-Chuma insists on this matter, Rosi scolds him, saying,

Yona ntsumi ya kona ku ta va muchuchisi-ka. Yi ta kala yi boxa lomu yi n'wi vonaka kona n'wana, yi ta va yi poxile. Na yena lowa majisitarata loko o tisa vumajisitarata bya nzukwa emutini wa mina o hundzela mahlweni, la ka mina a hi le khoto. (Mabuza 1989:35).

(Is their messenger coming to judge my family? If it is like that, he will have to show me the child, he will have committed a breach of etiquette. Concerning that magistrate, if he thinks of controlling my family, he can forget it.)

After six years of marriage, Ximambana can no longer bear the pain of denying her own child. She wants to reveal her life long secret to her husband, but Rosi perpetuates her mother-daughter companionship forbidding Ximambana from letting the secret out as it could lead to divorce. She forces Ximambana to stick to the comforts of her husband saying,

Kune Ximambana, madyondzela ya mina, kunenenene wo vindziwa hi tibotere leswi u vulavurisaka xiswona? Wo xinyata u raha xinkwa hi xirhendze u rahela vanhwanyana-kuloni dyambu ri lo hosi? Leswi u endlaka swona wo hlanhla meno u tamela hi mandla. U ta ndzi tsundzuka siku rin'wana u humile kwala ndlwini leyi. N'wananga, miti leyi u yi vonaka leyi, ndzi vula ni vukati bya vanhu lava mavito, va tekiwa va siye vana amakaya kambe a va teki mhalamhala va tianekela swihundla swa vona. (Mabuza 1989:54).

(Ximambana, my first born child, do you really mean that you have enough of wealth? Are you really kicking bread away for other girls to enjoy in broad daylight? What are you doing is merely to extract your teeth and holding them in your hands. You will remember me one day when you are out of this house. My dear daughter, all the families that you see, even famous women who get married to famous husbands, leave their illegitimate children with their parents, they do not reveal the secret.)

The expression above shows that Rosi is a traditional woman who views marriage as the ultimate goal of womanhood. She forces her daughter to secure her marriage by keeping the secret. This kind of behaviour labels Rosi as a liar and a cheat which is unacceptable to feminist critics and the society at large.

4.5.3 Analysis of the depiction of Ximambana

Ximambana is depicted as a good wife because she behaves well towards her husband. She devotes most of her time to serving her husband's needs and taking care of her children. She bears her husband three sons, two of whom are twins. She is also eager to keep the peace between herself and her parents. Miller (1986:62) maintains that

Women are taught that their main goal in life is to serve others – first men, and later children ... women are better geared than men to first recognize others' needs and then to believe strongly that others' needs can be served – that they can respond to others' needs without feeling this as a detraction from their sense of identity. The trouble comes only when women are forced to serve others' needs or when they are expected to do so because it is the "only thing women are good for."

The responsibility of pleasing other people affects Ximambana. She is trapped in a dilemma, trying to please her parents by hiding the fact that she has concealed her first child, Singita, from her husband. As time goes by, Ximambana can no longer bear the grief of denying her own child further. She reveals the secret to her husband thus:

Singita i n'wana wa mina, i xivati xa mina, hi tona tingana ta vuhlangi ni vuphukuphuku bya mina. A ku na lexi ndzi nga xi vulaka xo tipendha kumbe ku tivhikela emhakeni leyi. Nakona enkarhini wa sweswi swi nge ndzi hakeli nchumu ku tlhelela endzhaku laha vatswari va mina va nga ndzi ndzondzometa kona. Hi mina ntsena ndzi orhaka phungula. Ndza swi vona

leswaku ku hava lexi nga sulaka leswi mina hi vumina ndzi nga swi endla n'wina. Mina ndzi pfumerile rito ra vatswari malembe ndzi hanya na n'wina ndzi karhi ndzi fundzile nyungu ya vuxungu. (Mabuza 1989:57).

(Singita is my own daughter. There is nothing to say which can cleanse me from this immorality. Presently I cannot retreat from what my parents forced me to do. I am the only one to bear the consequences. There is nothing which can cleanse me from the wrong I did to you. I listened to my parents' bad advice for many years, but now I am the one who suffers.)

Ximambana's revelation of the secret to her husband indicates that the guilt is too much for her. It reconciles her to her husband who accepts Singita as his own child. Although Tsonga culture allows a man who marries a woman with children to take care of her children, Themba's reaction to this circumstance is not plausible because Ximambana has been unfaithful to him by denying her own child for more than ten years. To feminist scholars such as Hall (1990) Ximambana's revelation of her secret is admirable because it shows that Ximambana has developed a positive identity which enables her to experience every moment in life instead of predicting it. This action shows that while serving others' needs, women also need the opportunity to attend to their own interests and desires. Selden (1989:35) says "women themselves are in the position to assess the true existential possibilities of womanhood." However, Roland and Harris (1979:106) comment as follows about independence in relation to women:

Autonomy, independence and assertiveness, the qualities most valid in our society, are considered "unfeminine"...When a woman is called independent, it is usually in a pejorative tone.

In Tsonga patriarchal society, a woman is never independent. She must always be under the authority of her husband. Rosi forbids Ximambana to reveal the secret to her husband in order to be a "good" wife to him.

4.5.4 Evaluation of presentation of characters in *Ximambana*

Characters in this novel show a strong adherence to cultural values. They are portrayed in a patriarchal traditional relationship of mother and daughter forming a strong mother-daughter bond for the development of the daughter to a successful life, even if it means lying. Both mother and daughter regard marriage to the right man as a guarantee of happiness throughout and they prejudice men for their convenience.

4.6 SUMMARY

Both Mkhombo and Mabuza portray two major female characters, i.e. mother and daughter forming a strong mother-daughter bond. For instance, in **Ximambana** by Mabuza, Rosi forms a strong bond with her daughter Ximambana. Both adhere to traditional cultural sex-roles. Their objective is to ensure that the daughter gets married to the right man. Mkhombo in **Ntsakisi**, reveals similar objectives. Tahani-N'wanjiyani advises her daughter Ntsakisi to be submissive to Ngqovi at all times. Ritshuri, in **Ndzi tsandzekile**, portrays conflicting characters in a situation in which the daughter Masingita forms a strong relationship with her father. This is unusual and against traditional cultural values in Tsonga society. Mahuhushi, in **Xikotikoti wa Matshotsho**, portrays enlightened women who develop each other in society. They are not portrayed in relation to traditional patriarchal sex-roles of wife, mother and daughter. Their activities transcend traditional cultural sex-roles.

Both mother characters in **Ntsakisi** and **Ximambana** impose traditional characteristics on their daughters. This is unacceptable to liberal and radical feminist critics as it prevents the young woman from venturing into the future. Women need to acknowledge the influence of traditional values, but must simultaneously resolve to move on and live their lives more fully than in the past. Feminist critics such as Rogers (1991) support the idea of a father-daughter relationship. They believe that a woman who identifies herself with the masculine is capable of disposing patriarchal values in favour of more egalitarian social values.

This view is also appropriate to radical feminists because it indicates women's ability to acquire modern values. The same applies to the enlightened women portrayed in **Xikotikoti wa Matshotsho**.

CHAPTER 5

COMPARISON BETWEEN MALE AND FEMALE AUTHORS WITH REGARD TO THE PORTRAYAL OF FEMALE CHARACTERS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on a comparison of female characters depicted by male and female writers. Elements of literary feminism such as characterization, departure from stereotypes and examination of social causes for unpleasant characters will be compared to make a feminist point.

5.2 CHARACTERIZATION

5.2.1 Brief remarks on characterization

Seeing that the concept characterization has been explained in detail in paragraph 3.2, in this chapter I will focus on the term “trait”, or distinctive features, in characters.

Trait can be described as a personal characteristic which differentiates an individual from others. Chatman (1978:126) defines a trait as a “relatively stable or abiding personal quality.” Guilford as quoted in Chatman (1978:121) refers to a trait as “any distinguishable, relatively enduring way in which one individual differs from another.”

Both definitions above emphasize the idea that a trait is a stable and consistent personal quality which differentiates a particular character from all other characters.

Different personality traits can be distinguished in characters, viz social, physical and psychological. A character's social traits are those that concern the character's place in society, especially the character's relationship to groups and institutions recognized by society. Physical traits refer to the identification of a character's physical build, e.g. short, tall, fat or thin. Psychological traits consist of inner feelings, for instance they show whether a character is emotional or intellectual, aggressive or gentle, secure or insecure and active or passive. The analysis of female characters in the selected novels shows that they have similar aspects in their physical appearance. For example, Ntsanwisi in **Masungi m'fana ka Maxele** portrays Khanyisa as a very beautiful young woman whose beauty attracts Masungi. Mtombeni in **Mibya ya nyekanyeka** portrays N'wa-Mdanisi as a beautiful widow who seduces Nyiko with her beauty. Miyen in **Makumu ya vutomi byebyo** portrays Olivia as a beautiful young woman and she also attracts Japi with her beauty. In all instances where the character's physical appearance is portrayed, the emphasis is placed on the beauty of the woman, as indicated above. This is mainly found to be the case among male writers. Female writers seldom mention the beauty of the woman. An example of this is Tahani-N'wanjiyani in **Ntsakisi**. This seems to imply that men like beautiful women. The superfluous use of the beauty of the woman by male authors with similar motives makes the physical traits of women in the selected novels redundant. For this reason I will compare the character's social and psychological traits and how these differ between male and female authors.

5.2.2 Social traits

There is a vast difference between male and female authors with regard to the depiction of social traits of female characters. Male writers characterize the social traits of women by laying emphasis on the mother-in-law in crisis with her daughter-in-law. For example, N'wa-Mpon'wa in Khosa's novel **Madyisambitsi** shows aggressive behaviour towards her daughter-in-law, Javurisa. N'wa-Mpon'wa

influences her son Makonyete to divorce Javurisa, saying that she is barren. Olivia in Miyen's novel **Makumu ya vutomi byebyo** is not in good terms with her mother-in-law, N'wa-Thevu. Olivia refuses to take Swahava's advice to fall pregnant. She scolds Swahava and Japi's mother arguing that they want to bewitch her. Ntsanwisi in **Masungi m'fana ka Maxele** portrays N'wa-Ridonga as a cunning woman. N'wa-Ridonga wants Khanyisa for her son so that she can relieve her of all domestic chores. In a traditional Tsonga family a woman is married to serve the interests of the entire family. This is the source of most social problems in most Tsonga families. Khanyisa fails to please her husband Masungi, who likes the Western lifestyle and she listens to all the dictates of his mother who clings tightly to traditionalism. Khanyisa's failure to please her husband forces Masungi to desert her and to marry Nobayeni who, like Masungi, likes Western lifestyle. All the social problems which influenced Masungi to divorce his wife advocate social change from traditionalism to modernism.

By contrast, women's writings reflect the social traits of women by putting more emphasis on the mother-daughter bond. In Tsonga custom, a young girl identifies herself with her mother, therefore, a good mother should develop a sufficiently flexible identity to merge with her daughter and to remain nurturing. For instance, Ritshuri in **Ndzi tsandzekile** portrays N'wa-Hlengani in conflict with her husband, Rikhezwani, for taking Masingita to school. In a traditional Tsonga society a woman is not supposed to be educated. N'wa-Hlengani is illiterate and wants Masingita to be like her, since to be properly female in patriarchal Tsonga society, involves doing the sorts of things which the mother does and being the sort of woman she is. N'wa-Hlengani emphasizes that Masingita should undergo initiation, get married and bear children, just like her. This means that Masingita must identify herself with her mother in order to learn the appropriate sex-roles. Although Rikhezwani's idea of taking Masingita to school is inappropriate in traditional Tsonga society it effectively transforms social status and advocates social change. In Mkhombo's novel, **Ntsakisi**, Tahani-N'wanjiyani forms a strong bond with her daughter, Ntsakisi, and encourages her to be submissive to her husband and her in-laws. Mabuza in

Ximambana, also emphasizes a strong bond between Rosi and her daughter, Ximambana. Rosi proposes Themba Halata, a young magistrate, for Ximambana in her absence. Later in their marriage, Rosi forces her daughter to deny her illegitimate child in order to secure her marriage to Themba.

All the selected novels by male authors portray male characters as protagonists. This seems to be a general trend. Since Tsonga is a patriarchal society with the father being head of the family, male writers seem to assume the position of the father in their writings and classify other characters, such as women and children, as subordinates. For example, in **Masungi m'fana ka Maxele** Ntsanwisi depicts the life-history of a male character called Masungi. Mtombeni in **Mibya ya nyekanyeka** depicts Tlhomandloti as the major character. He is a minister of religion and dominates his family as well as his congregation. In **Madyisambitsi** Khosa depicts Makonyete as the protagonist. Makonyete dominates his wife Javurisa and he has several girlfriends. In **Makumu ya vutomi byebyo** Miyen portrays Japi as the protagonist. Japi survives Olivia and Abby's plan to murder him. In the end, Japi's gangster murders Abby. In **Bya velekeriwa** Chabalala depicts Makaringi as the protagonist. Makaringi robs Fumani of his chieftainship. In **Ndzi ta n'wi kuma** Chauke portrays Sergt Mbambu as the protagonist. Sergt Mbambu arrests his colleague Sergt Mantengu for arson.

Unlike male authors, female authors have a tendency of portraying female characters as protagonists. As subordinates women want to prove to their male counterparts that they are also capable of performing other duties which were traditionally thought to be males' tasks. In Mkhombo's novel Ntsakisi is the protagonist. She overcomes all the problems which her husband causes her in their marriage. She succeeds in her marriage by bearing her husband two children. In Ritshuri's novel, Masingita is the protagonist. She is the first woman in her village to become a professional nurse. She disobeys her parents by choosing her own career. Mabuza depicts Ximambana as the protagonist. Ximambana wins

Themba's love with the help of her mother and Themba accepts Ximambana's illegitimate child in the end.

Young women in male-authored novels submit themselves to patriarchal social roles. For example, Khanyisa in **Masungi m'fana ka Maxele** restricts herself to traditional social roles and customs although they clash with her husband's acquired modern ways of living. Javurisa in **Madyisambitsi** willingly submits herself to her unfaithful husband and her in-laws although they ill-treat her. The portrayal of Olivia in **Makumu ya vutomi byebyo** is in direct contrast to that of Javurisa in **Madyisambitsi**. Olivia disobeys her husband and rebels against her in-laws whereas Javurisa subjects herself to her husband and her in-laws. The difference in social relations between Javurisa and Olivia seems to imply that girls in rural areas are obedient and lean more to traditionalism than township girls who are disobedient and reject traditional social roles and customs. This distinction is still discernible today though the dividing line is becoming increasingly blurred.

Female-authored novels in contrast to those written by men, portray young women who violate patriarchal social roles. For instance, N'wapeni in **Xikotikoti wa Matshotsho** plays a dominant role by encouraging her husband to accept Christianity. Masingita in **Ndzi tsandzekile** forms a relationship with her father and refuses to follow any of the careers chosen for her by her parents. Ximambana in Mabuza's novel gives birth to an illegitimate child and abandons her. In traditional Tsonga society when a young girl conceives before marriage and later marries another man her future husband is informed about the child born before this marriage. When the husband is willing to take care of her child he is allowed to do so. If he refuses, the child remains with her family. Thus, Ximambana's repudiation of Singita is not plausible and violates Tsonga social conduct. Elderly women in novels written by women adhere to traditional social roles. For example, N'wa-Hlengani in **Ndzi tsandzekile** discourages her husband, Rikhezwani, from sending Masingita to school. Tahani-N'wanjiyani in **Ntsakisi** comforts her daughter and

encourages her to stay with her impotent husband.

Whereas the dominant impression from male writing is that of the power of jealousy, dislike and mistrust to destroy women, women in novels written by females enjoy one another's company. For example, earlier novelists such as Mahuhushi and Mkhombo emphasize friendship between women as developing and improving the image of the women. In **Xikotikoti wa Matshotsho** N'wa-Manganyi is described as a generous woman who cares about the development of other women. Such generosity seems to occur between Nkhensani and Ntsakisi in Mkhombo's novel. After Nkhensani has discovered that Ntsakisi is also in love with Nqgovi she is not jealous about it. Nkhensani expresses her kindness to Ntsakisi by buying her a tea-set as a wedding present. Later novelists like Ritshuri and Mabuza emphasize a mother-daughter bond to assist their daughters. For example, Rosi in **Ximambana** proposes Themba for her daughter, Ximambana, while N'wa-Hlengani in **Ndzi tsandzekile** discourages Masingita's relationship with her father and puts the blame on him for causing her failure.

5.2.3 Psychological traits

With regard to psychological traits in female characters, both male and female authors share the view that women are passive. This attitude undermines women and affects the depiction of female characters by both male and female authors. In the selected novels male authors represent women's passivity by creating female characters who submit themselves utterly to their husbands and their in-laws. For example, Khanyisa in **Masungi m'fana ka Maxele** fails to adapt herself to her husband's modern way of living and clings instead to traditional social roles and customs as dictated to her by her mother-in-law, N'wa-Ridonga. Javurisa in **Madyisambitsi** resists her husband's aggressive behaviour by being too submissive to him and to her father-in-law, Xisunghele, who refuses to grant her permission to look for employment after her husband, Makonyete, has deserted her.

Female authors on the other hand represent this view by portraying female characters who find satisfaction in marriage and the limited development of the woman in the domestic sphere. For example, Ntsakisi tolerates her husband's unfaithfulness, whereas Masingita faces a bleak future although she emerges as a fully developed personality. Her liberation from the family ends her marriage and her dedication to a career fails to bring her fulfilment.

5.3 DEPARTURE FROM STEREOTYPES

Tsonga culture is patriarchal (cf. par. 1.2.2) and as a result the standard of excellence in its literature is judged according to patriarchal values and norms. Departure from stereotypes means deviation from cultural values and this is condemned in traditional Tsonga society. In literary feminism characterization may be distinguished by the author's avoidance of stereotypes. Radical feminist critics acknowledge female characters who turn away from a culture hostile to their development.

From the examination of the selected novelists in this study, it is observed that feminism in fiction does not have an absolute relationship to the author's sex. Similar elements may appear in works of both genders (cf. par.2.3.5.2). For example, both male and female authors successfully make use of multiplicity in characterization to avoid patriarchal stereotyped images of women. Chauke, in **Ndzi ta n'wi kuma**, portrays N'wa-Manganyi as an optimistic woman who openly challenges her husband's negative ideas about women in favour of expansive dimensions for women in society (cf. par. 3.8 2). Similarly, Ritshuri in **Ndzi tsandzekile** depicts Masingita as an animus driven daughter who rejects all traditional feminine roles imposed on her (cf. par.4.4.3). Masingita is criticized for her intellectual abilities instead of being integrated into the society. This type of criticism reinforces the status quo.

Other methods such as complicity and specificity are used to save a female

character from becoming a stereotype (cf. par. 2.3.5.3). When successfully used, these methods can transform social and cultural structures. They may lead to a more androgynous literature in which male and female developments are fully represented.

Female characters such as Masingita, Ximambana and Ntsakisi show growth and development in their actions. A novel which represents the character's development from childhood to maturity is called a *Bildungsroman* (Langland in Paludi and Steuernagel 1960 :86). This is a German term for a novel whose theme is the growth and development of its hero. Abrams (1993: 132) says

The subject of these novels is the development of the protagonist's mind and character, in the passage from childhood through varied experiences – and often through a spiritual crisis - into maturity and the recognition of his or her identity and role in the world.

The analysis of the selected novels reveals that only female writers show the development of the female protagonists from childhood to maturity. For instance, Ritshuri in **Ndzi tsandzekile** portrays Masingita at different developmental stages from childhood to maturity. In early childhood Masingita is criticized for attending school with boys. Later on she becomes a nurse at Nkhensani hospital. As a young lady she marries Zacharia Nkuna. While married she becomes involved in extramarital relationships which finally lead to her divorce. To liberal feminist critics adultery reveals a woman's desire for independence and self-discovery (cf. par.4.4.3). Therefore Masingita's involvement in extramarital relationships which finally cause her divorce may be seen as a refusal to submit to society's social dictates.

As Tsonga society is a patriarchal society only male development in the social milieu is marked as a norm. For this reason women's development in black society is viewed as a radical feminist point which advocates for social changes. This is the

reason why women like Masingita who so determinedly endeavour to explore their social milieu are finally criticized instead of being integrated into the society.

Similarly, Mabuza in **Ximambana** portrays Ximambana from her early childhood until she reaches maturity. Like Masingita, Ximambana also attends school with boys. Ximambana falls pregnant while training as a nurse and gives birth to an illegitimate child. Later Ximambana marries Themba Halata. At first Ximambana denies her own child in order to secure her marriage, but later in life she reveals the secret. Ximambana's revelation of her secret signifies her psychological development and responsibility.

In **Ntsakisi** Mkhombo portrays Mdlayi-N'waripewu at two different stages. First she is shown as an aggressive woman who rejects traditional sex-roles by being jealous, violent and hostile. Later in life Mdlayi-N'waripewu repents and confesses her sins to Ntsakisi and Tahani-N'wanjiyani. Mdlayi's second developmental stage – that of repentance – is significant for the rebuilding of her identity and removes her stereotyped image of hostility.

Female characters in novels by female writers form strong bonds and assist one another in order to develop the image of the woman. They achieve great complexity when they are seen in relation to one another as friends, colleagues and companions. These relationships transform the developmental pattern for women from wives, mothers and daughters. For example, female characters by Mahuhushi in **Xikotikoti wa Matshotsho** form remarkable teams of friends and companions which save them from becoming stereotypes. For instance, N'wa-Jon is a professional teacher, a colleague to her husband and a lady's companion. She is a friend to N'wapeni and Violet. N'wapeni plays a dominant role in her marriage by encouraging her husband to accept Christianity and to appreciate modern values.

While male writers promote patriarchal social values and attitudes, women's novels describe a world alien to patriarchy. For example, Ritshuri in **Ndzi tsandzekile**

describes Masingita as an animus driven daughter. Masingita attends school with boys and becomes the first professional nurse in her village. Masingita's social roles deviate from society's traditional sex-roles. Whereas female characters in female-authored novels are directly involved in the actions of the story as indicated above, in male-authored novels – in those few instances where female characters depart from stereotypes – emphasis is placed upon the verbal expression of the experience instead of on real actions. This seems to imply that women depend on men and cannot act on their own. For example, N'wa-Manganyi in Chauke's novel **Ndzi ta n'wi kuma**, only makes verbal pronouncements on women's liberation and mutual respect between men and women in society instead of taking action towards the attainment of her goal.

5.4 SOCIAL CAUSES FOR UNPLEASANT CHARACTERS

Some patriarchal norms and values in Tsonga society reduce the status of the woman to that of an inferior person and prevent her from questioning male authority (cf par. 1.2.2). Because of this predicament, some Tsonga male authors create an image of women which needs to be examined against the traditional background of her social and cultural roles. Contrary to this, female authors create female characters who react against the cultural conditions of their historical period.

As mentioned previously male writers have a tendency to assume the position of "father" in their writings in order to oppress female characters. Humm (1986:13) says

A male reading as a feminist, is not a feminist critic because he carries with him the possibility to escape into the masculine and into patriarchy.

This may also refer to the male writer as a feminist. It implies that male writers have masculine qualities and can always escape into masculinity and into patriarchy when it suits them. In the current study the above quotation refers to the acts of

feminism which can be detected in male writings. On rare occasions the examination of strikingly unpleasant situations in female characters created by male authors can be used to make a feminist point. For example, Masungi's decision to divorce Khanyisa for her failure to adapt herself to his modern values is not plausible. In the Tsonga nuclear family a woman is married to serve the interests of the entire family (cf. par. 1.2.1). Khanyisa is therefore bound to obey the dictates of her mother-in-law who is rooted in traditionalism and neglects her husband's modern ways of living. Her failure to adapt herself to her husband's lifestyle is due to traditional Tsonga social values which force young married women to show respect to their in-laws, thus avoiding the real business of life. From a black feminist outlook the necessity to forgive Khanyisa for her traditional attitudes which end her marriage is essential because these originate from her socio-cultural development.

Another concealed act of feminism appears in **Madyisambitsi**. Towards the end of this novel, Khosa portrays Javurisa as a drunkard who becomes involved in extramarital relationships. This unpleasant characterization of Javurisa stems from the unfair treatment of married women by their husbands and in-laws. When Makonyete has deserted Javurisa, her father-in-law, Xisunghele, refuses to grant her permission to look for employment. Her mother-in-law, N'wa-Mpon'wa, also withholds food from her children. Under these circumstances, one must put the blame on society's patriarchal norms and values as they are the cause of Javurisa's unpleasant behaviour.

5.5 SUMMARY

The comparison between the work of male and female authors above reveals a difference in the portrayal of female characters. Tsonga male authors portray female

characters who adhere to traditional gender sex-roles, e.g. wife, mother and housewife whereas female authors transcend gender sex-roles and portray female characters with androgynous life-skills such as professional teaching and nursing. Female characters in female-authored novels advocate for social changes whereas female characters in male-authored novels stick to traditionalism. Female authors are directly involved in the lives of their female characters whereas male authors stand aloof and detached from their actions.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This study presented an analysis of the image of women in selected Tsonga novels by male and female authors. The novels start from the decade 1930 –1939 and culminate in the decade 1990 –1999. A comparison was made between male and female authors in their portrayal of female characters. The aim was to establish gender differences in the depiction of female characters by the novelists and to establish whether the changing role and status of women in society in general influences the manner in which Tsonga writers portray women in their literary works. To achieve this, feminist literary criticism and a comparative approach were used to examine literary variations between male and female authors.

As this is the final chapter I shall give my research findings as well as recommendations based on the analysis outlined above.

The research findings in this study appear by and large in the preceding chapter which compares the portrayal of female characters by male and female authors in the selected novels. In order to avoid unnecessary repetition I shall recap the salient points without going into detail except in those few instances where this may be deemed essential.

6.2 RESEARCH FINDINGS

The analysis of female characters in the selected novels by male and female authors revealed the following:

- P Tsonga society is a patriarchal society with the father as head of the family. Consequently the selected novelists depict female characters against the backdrop of patriarchal values which oppress women with their cultural, traditional, social and ideological norms.
- P Male authors reflect a bias in favour of patriarchy by depicting female characters who cling to traditionalism whereas female writers undermine patriarchy by portraying female characters who resist traditional values (cf. par. 5.2.2).
- P Novels by female writers advocate freedom from social biases based on sexual differences and strive for equal opportunities for the sexes in Tsonga society. For example, female writers like Ritshuri and Mabuza portray girls who attend school with boys. Among the Tsonga, it was unacceptable for girls to attend school, worse still in the company of boys. Tsonga female writers therefore advocate or support transformation of some Tsonga beliefs and cultural norms in line with changing times.
- P Male authors portray male characters as protagonists. Contrary to this female writers depict female characters as protagonists.
- P In male writings female characters clash with each other but female characters in female writings are portrayed as friends and form strong bonds to develop the image of the woman.
- P Regarding the psychological development of the woman, both male and female writers portray female characters as passive.
- P Female writers depict the development of the female protagonists from childhood to adulthood. For example, Mkhombo in **Ntsakisi** portrays Ntsakisi from childhood to adulthood. Ritshuri in **Ndzi tsandzekile** also portrays Masingita from childhood until she reaches adulthood. Male writers in contrast portray their female characters

at a single stage of development. For example, Ntsanwisi in **Masungi mfana ka Maxele** portrays Khanyisa as a young woman and N'wa- Ridonga as a grown-up woman. The same applies to Khosa in **Madyisambitsi** where Javurisa is portrayed as a young woman and N'wa-Mpon'wa as an adult woman.

- P Some aspects of feminism such as multiplicity, complicity and specificity appear in novels by both male and female writers although in the former these aspects are concealed to suppress female characters whereas female writers disclose them to resist sexist assumptions which exist in male dominated society.

6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

- P Black women are faced with great challenges and tremendous opportunities. To black feminists, women require transformation of the indigenous cultures to help them cope with these drastic changes. Within this context transformation of the indigenous cultures does not imply a complete rejection of traditionalism but refers rather to adaptation and evolutionary change of certain customs and beliefs to render the transformation relevant to the changing life patterns mushrooming the world over, a view also shared by the liberal and socialist groups.
- P Equal opportunity without discrimination between men and women is essential for the development of humanity in a changing society, thus black writers should adopt an androgynous mode of writing in order to be more influential among the black community, encouraging them to share power equitably in all social spheres.
- P Because only a small number of novels have been written by women in Tsonga literature, more Tsonga women should join the field of writing in order to bring out and publicize their views. The cultural transformation referred to in the above paragraph can only take place if it is highlighted in several ways, one of which is the writing of books.

P Finally, I hope that the analysis of the positive and negative images of women presented in this dissertation will spur women on to be reputable authors and researchers, and will also encourage male authors to diversify their writings so as to reflect the current scenario in which women are a force to be reckoned with in the workplace, education, politics, law, the health sector, safety and security and many other spheres of life.

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