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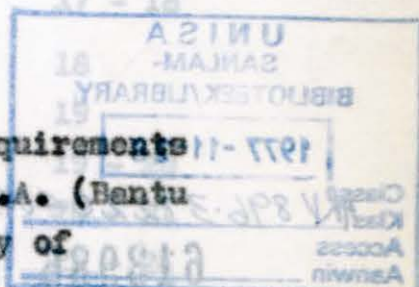
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### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would, firstly, like to express my gratitude to Professor D. Ziervogel, my supervisor, for the valuable advice he gave me in the planning of this article.

I would also like to thank Mr. J. Lenake, of the same department, for agreeing to spend a few valuable moments of his time, to peruse this article in its draft form.

P. R. S, M.

## INTRODUCTION

.00 K.E. Ntsane is a well known Southern Sotho poet and novelist. His poetry books Mmusa-pele I (Morija, 1961) and Mmusa-pele II (Morija) are well known for the satirical poetry they contain. He also wrote the following well known novels: Nna Sajeane Kokobela C.I.D., Masoabi and Bao Batho, his latest creation.

Besides his Mohwebi wa Venisi, a masterly translation of Shakespeare's "The Merchant of Venice", Ntsane also wrote Bana ba Rona, essays on developmental psychology and Makumane, a collection of pure formal essays which will be discussed hereunder.

.01 Other Sotho writers who have made plausible attempts at essay writing, a field that is not very popular, are the following:

- Mofokeng, S.M. : Leetong and Pelong ya ka.  
Motsemai, E. : Mehla ya Madimo (Documentary essays)  
Mocoancoeng, J.G. : Megogo ya Phirimana  
Molisoa, J.J. : Sediba sa Megogo  
Mengoela, Z.D. : Hara Dibatana le Dinyamatsane,  
also documentary essays.

.02 Before attempting to take a closer look at a sample of Ntsane's essays, as found in his book MAKUMANE (Left-overs), I would like to refer briefly to what writers of standing think an essay should be.

### DEFINITION

.03 Though few, if any, critical works have been written on essay writing, an attempt has been made to say what an essay is, and to outline the requirements for a good essay. Elize Botha defines an essay as " 'n diskoers oor 'n onderwerp waar die bedoeling nie altyd is om die onderwerp uit te put nie."<sup>1</sup> It is "an analysis of some subject of thought ..... a picture of the writer's mind as affected for the moment by the subject".<sup>2</sup>

1. Grove, A.P., Botha, Elize: Handleiding by die Studie van die Letterkunde, Nasou Bpk. p.107 (1968) p. 716
2. Lamb, Charles: Essays of Alia (Introduction by N.L. Hallward & S.C. Hill) Thomas Nelson & Sons (p.iv)

All essayists are today agreed that an essay is "a composition of moderate length, usually in prose, which though deals in an easy, cursory way with a subject, and, in strictness with that subject only as it affects the writer."<sup>3</sup>

.04 The following qualities will be the background against which I wish to analyse Ntsane's essays:

.1 Treatment: Is the picture he is painting clear or hazy?

Is the subject pictured or reasoned?

Is he suggesting or trying to prove?

We must here bear in mind that the essay must be a development of a single idea rather than an aimless wandering of the mind from one idea to another, and that every detail must bear on the suggested title.

.2 Tone: The reader must be regarded as a fellow-discusser. The tone must be convincing rather than forcing opinions upon the reader. The writer must take the reader into his confidence and go step by step with him, giving reasons for his standpoint within the experiences of the reader. As van Wyk Louw<sup>4</sup> puts it, a good essay is a discussion "dié met niemand wat praat, nie, om vir ons oor homself te vertel nie, maar oor iets in ons almal se wêreld." He must never be didactic or hortatory or rhetorical.

.3 Expression: How is the writer's choice of words - terse and appropriate, or 'slovenly' and inappropriate? Is his demonstrating material ingeniously chosen?

.4 Style: Here I wish to discuss such linguistic techniques as imagery, figures of speech, effective punctuation, and adaptation of style to the subject.

.5 Humour: This may be coupled with expression and style, but here I wish to see how the writer combats dullness by employing wittiness and fun if he does, and also punning.

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3. Encyclopaedia Britannica, (Essay) Vol. 8 (1968) p. 716

4. Louw, N.P., van Wyk: Swarte - en Ligtepunte, Nasionale Boekhandel, (1958) p.140

I now wish to discuss Ntsane's essays (most, though not all) against the above mentioned criteria.

1.0

D I P S I E T S I

In this essay Ntsane discusses difficulties or sufferings that are to be found everywhere, even amidst pleasures. He maintains that all suffering is equal and that if it was possible to exchange sufferings or troubles, we would long for our own as soon as the exchange has been transacted. His wish is, however, that only scientists and inventors should suffer for the good of all mankind, because suffering is an incentive to sound thinking and further invention.

1.1.0 Treatment

Here Ntsane paints a clear picture of the different forms of suffering that crop up in life, even where only joy is anticipated:

"Ha o tadimile banyadi, o boha bottle le ho tshwanelwa,  
O utlwa dipina tsa batho ba tlotlisang kopano ena  
e kang ya mangeloi, o ka ba wa lebala hore ana ho  
ka nna ha senyeha neng kapa neng ....."

(Looking at a bridal couple, the beauty and angelic matching, and the lovely songs that are sung to honour the marriage contract, one often forgets that trouble can spring up at any moment .....) )

1.1.2 This picture, taken from our daily life, flows in beautifully into the pattern and seems to give newer clearer meaning to what we know too well. Our understanding of sorrows that have always been foreign to us becomes clear in front of us, as we see people looking for one another, burning with the desire to get back their own:



"... batho ha ba phethesela ba batlana le bao ba tjhentjhaneng le bona mme ka bohale bo tshabehang; motho a batla lefu la hae la mala a kgutlisa la hloho....."

(... when people move in great numbers, to and fro, looking for those with whom they have exchanged, and, with great determination, each wanting back his stomachache and returning the headache.....)

1.1.3 In this casual, but practical manner, the writer develops a clear picture of the different sufferings, as he sees them, and infects the reader with his own feelings and ideas. His different kinds of suffering he consolidates beautifully into a necessary incentive to progress and endurance capacity:

"Batho ba hotseng ka thata hara ditsietsi tsa mefuta-futa hase hangata ba sithabetewang ke ditsietsi."

(People who grew up under great difficulties are not usually overwhelmed by difficulties.)

The matter is relevant to the suggested title ("Difficulties") throughout.

#### 1.2.0 Tone

Ntsane's tone is friendly and casual. He does not try to impose himself upon the reader. When he says "ha ke kgolwe here a ka pheta a rialo ..." (I do not believe that he can say so again), he uses the word "kgolwe" (neg. of believe) to accommodate his reader's opinion as well. Throughout, his opinion remains his own, and he tries to convince the reader by discussing along with him, rather than stating his opinion as fact:

"Mna, kameo ke bonang kateng, ke fumana mothe  
ya hlanyetswang ke ditsietsi a le lehlohonolo..."

(I, the way I see it, I regard the person who  
is always in suffering as lucky ...)

1.2.2. The manner in which he states his conviction is,  
by its considerateness of the possibility of views to the  
contrary, quite earnest. He takes the reader into his  
confidence. This is brought out by the repeated use of  
"ke dumela" followed by his opinion in the indicative  
mood preceded (unusually) by "hore"

1.4.0 "Ke dumela hore ditsietsi di ruta bohlahe,..."

(I believe that difficulties teach one to be wise)

1.4.1 "Ke dumela hore ya kileng a kopana le e nngwe  
ya ditsietsi teena ....."

(I believe that whoever has once met one of  
these difficulties .....) )

### 1.3.0 Expression

1.3.1. Ntsane uses well chosen words which give force to  
his expression. For instance he says "Thabo e re fapanya  
dihloho, re lebala hore re ntshing tsa selome kamehla, re  
ka tsubella neng kapa neng ....."

(Happiness makes us mad, we forget that we are forever on  
the "brow" of a cliff. We can plummet at any moment)

For madness he could easily have said "Thabo e a re  
hlantsha," but he uses a more forceful expression "fapanya  
dihloho" (mixing the heads up). To give a more forceful  
picture of impending death, he makes a comparison with  
being on the edge of a cliff down which we can plummet  
("tsubella") any time. He could simply have said, "re ka  
shwa ka motsotso ofe kapa ofe", but this would lack the  
desired sting.

1.3.2 To give impact to his standpoint, he picks on our

well understood everyday experiences and impulses: it is true that in our sufferings we have often envied those whose troubles we imagined were less or fewer than our own, just to change our minds the day we find ourselves in a similar plight.

1.4.3 Job's sufferings before gaining God's favour, and the fact that those who have gone through difficulties without flinching are better able to wear the storms of life, give added impact to the views he is putting across, that difficulties are an incentive to progress and should, therefore, be endured and succumbed.

#### 1.4.0 Style

1.4.1 In the opening paragraph Ntsane focuses our attention on the still "peaceful" water which, in spite of its stillness and "purity", is teeming with countless tiny stones, leaves of grass and living organisms. This is the frame work within which he discusses the difficulties or troubles of this world.

He refers to those who are affluent and happy as also "floating" ("tee boelang kahare") in troubles and death, unawares, like the tiny particles and organisms that float in the still clear water. The newly-weds feel very happy and blessed, but unknowingly, they are engulfed, like the particles in water, in the potential difficulties - the tribulations of this world:

"...lefatsheng lena la mahlomola, fatshe la  
ditshehlo le neutlwa"

(In this world of tribulations, a world of thorns  
and prickles)

1.4.2 The different forms of difficulties which Ntsane discusses, are centered round the pattern of the water that engulfs all that is in it, even as fate engulfs all inescapably. This approach is particularly well suited to the subject.

Coupled with this is good imagery and figures of speech. Coombes<sup>5)</sup> associates image with figures of speech, and maintains that "a successful image helps to make us feel the writer's grasp of the object or situation he is dealing with, gives his grasp of it with precision, vividness, force, economy....."

1.4.3 Of the happy newly-weds, he says later on ...  
"ba tla be ba nkelane marumo"  
(they will be armed with spears against each other).  
What a forceful image for one time lovers who are now tired of each other !

1.4.4 Of the misfortune-prone person, Ntsane says:  
"motho ya hlanyetswang ke ditsietsi o lehlohonolo ....."  
(the person about whom misfortunes are mad is lucky/fortunate .....) .

Though the expression is explained as "being mad about" a person, the Sotho "hlanyetsa" is more forceful than its English equivalent, being taken from the lunatic's habit of never by-passing a place where he once received good treatment.

After saying of the man who overcomes difficulties, "O lwanne senna" (he fought like a man), Ntsane, however, spoils by explaining in a long paragraph (p. 7 - 8), what he means by "ho lwana le ditsietsi" (to fight difficulties). This, to me, has the effect of explaining a joke.

1.4.5 Ntsane's tone and expression are reinforced by good and effective punctuation. The impact behind effective punctuation is seen from the very second sentence:

1.4.5  
"Ekaba ke ofe motho eo leha e le wa nama le  
madi a ka reng yena ditsietsi di mo pota  
kathoko, kapa o na le matla ao ka ona a ka di  
thibang?"

---

5. Coombes, H. : Literature and Criticism, Penguin Books, (1970) p.43

1.5.2 (Which person who, though of flesh and blood, can say difficulties by-pass him, or that he has the power to keep them away?)

This is a question in form only, but the conventional question mark has the force of emphasizing the impossibility of what its contents. It gives more force to the suggestion than would have been the case if it was in the indicative.

In the next sentence the hyphen is used in the way the colon is normally used: to link a statement with its explanatory portion:

"... ho oona ho nteeng ho na le tse ngata tse lwebang kahare - mahlokwana, majwana, dikokowanyana."

(... wherein many things go up and down - small pieces of grass, small stones, small insects.)

The punctuation mark further used to strengthen a suggestion:

"Eseng bohale ke ho ithuta merero ya ya hloedileng tsohle ..... ?"

(Is wisdom (perhaps) not learning the plans of the Creator of all things ..... ?)

2.0  
The comes the use of the exclamation mark to emphasise what the writer feels is an undebatable fact:

"Ana ho monate jwang ho lwana le ditsietsi le ho di hlola !"

(O, how wonderful it is to fight difficulties and to overcome them !)

This use of punctuation helps add certain shades of meaning to words, as has already been seen, and it helps express the writer's emotions.

### 1.5.0 Humour

1.5.1 This is closely related to expression and imagery. For instance, though the expression is clearly understood, the image created is somewhat amusing where the bride and the groom "ba nkelane marumo" as already explained in 1.4.3.

1.5.2 The demonstrating story of people exchanging their troubles is also amusing, especially when they "long" for their old troubles:

"Ho esc fete letsatsi moferefere o mohole wa oba teng ..... motho ha a batla lefu la hae la mala a kgatlisa la hlohe ....."

(Before the end of the day serious trouble started ..... when a person wanted his stomach-ache back, returning the headache .....) )

1.5.3 A somewhat modern Xhosa proverb is quoted in a typically Sotho fashion, to break any dullness that may possibly be forming:

"Mqhotesa a na le polele puong ya ona e reng Otixo o hamba ko rei."

This could have been given in a translated Sotho form, but it would not have any tickling effect. It is more so because of the broken Xhosa form. My only objection here is that Ntsane did not write the expression in inverted commas, nor in italics. More such humour would keep the essays lively.

2.0

## THAPELO

Here the writer sees a man being flogged and hears him pray hard, begging for mercy, but in vain. He sees the community get to church on a particular day, to pray for rain - a month passes with no sign of rain. He then demands an explanation from his learned, religious uncle. He is told that God's ways of doing things cannot be understood by the human mind, and that no amount of prayer can alter God's ways to suit our own desires.

### 2.1.0 Treatment

2.1.1 Ntsane paints before us a picture of a bewildered boy who sees a man flogged whilst begging for mercy. This picture flows into its next phase where the community prays for rain that never came. The picture is completed where the boy sits face to face with his wise uncle.

2.1.2 There is no attempt on the part of the writer to prove the need or otherwise of prayer, or its effectiveness or otherwise. He only suggests, by posing and developing the problem, that a deeper look into the importance of prayer be taken. He does not wander from idea to idea; in all three stages of the problem one idea, viz. prayer, occupies the topmost position. From the beginning where the young boy thinks to himself:

"Ana thapelo keng? Ya rapelwang empa a sa utlwe, yena o nahana jwang?"

(Actually what is prayer? The one who is being prayed taking no heed, how does he think?),  
right up to the end:

"Ke buile, Motjhana, jwale ako ye thuisa taba tsena (thapelo)"

(I have spoken, my nephew, now go and ponder over this matter (prayer), the writer doesn't drift off the subject. Every detail has a bearing on the title - prayer.

## 2.2.0 Tone

2.2.1 The writer's tone varies from enquiring and comment inviting, at the beginning, through narrative and matter-of-fact, in the middle, to earnest and convincing in the end. Throughout he takes the reader along with him as a fellow-ponderer over the problem. Though the opening question needs no answer, the writer uses it to invite his reader to think along with him. He later clearly takes the reader into his confidence by actually inviting his comments:

"Ka ipetsa he hore na ho tllile jwang hore ere mothe leha a rapela, a howa ka ntwe le hlabang pelo hakaalo, ebe e mong o etsa eka ha a utlwe..... Ana thapelo ke eng?"

2.3.2 (I asked myself, then, why is it that, even when one prays, shouting in a heart-rending tone, the other should just ignore his plea ..... Actually what is prayer?)

2.2.2 In the middle the tone is merely that of a story teller, speaking in the narrative tense throughout, except where he quotes his "uncle" directly. He, however, still does not speak down on his reader.

2.2.3 At the end, the writer again turns to his reader as a fellow-discusser. Though he does not force his opinion upon him, he convincingly intimates to the reader his final conviction:

"... empa kamorao sedinyana la hlaha.  
Ke re lesedinyana hoba ere ka ha ke le motho  
wa nama le nadi ke sitwa ho fihlela lesedi le  
lehole leo ke mpang ke dumela hore le bonwa  
feela ka moya le ka thapelo."

(... but in the end I saw some light. I say  
some light because, as a person of flesh and  
blood I cannot reach the great light which I can  
only believe can be seen only through the spirit  
and by prayer.)

Though he talks about what he experienced, he keeps within the reader's scope of experience.

### 2.3.0 Expression

2.3.1 The writer expresses his deep emotions tersely by repeatedly asking his reader soul-searching questions:

2.4.1 "Ana thapelo keng? Ya rapelwang empa a sa utlwe,  
thapelo yena o nahana jwang? O reng ka nantswe ana a  
kopang mohau, ka dikgapha tse keleketlang marameng  
a motho ya tsietsing?"

(Actually, what is prayer? The one who is being  
prayed, taking no heed, how does he think? What  
do you feel about these words crying for mercy,  
with tears streaming down the cheeks of a man  
in trouble?)

2.3.2 The same disgust is felt in the following figures of speech:

(a) Simile: "A tshwara morapedi a mo hoba-hoba  
sa ngwana thibaneng ditsebe a shapuya



2.4.1 ke ntatae ... athe enwa e ne e le monna  
a shapuwa ke monna e mong."

(he grabbed the praying man and beat him  
like a naughty child being thrashed by his father...  
but here it was a man being thrashed by another  
man.)

The last words are highly expressive of disgust.

(b) Hyperbole: "mothe a tabolaka e mong, a mo  
etsa ditema, morabaraba."

(the man tore the other (man) up into  
furrows, mill lines.)

The word "tabolaka" (intensive form of -tabola (tear)  
expresses the writer's extreme disapproval, which is further  
strengthened by "ditema" (furrows) and "morabaraba"  
(mill lines) - referring to the marks left by the kirrie  
on the victim's body.

The drought stricken place is described tersely,  
and the personification expresses all that can be said  
about the veld:

"... diphoofolo (di ne) di eshwa ke letsapa  
lefatshe le omeletse le apere bothokwa."

(the animals were dying of hunger and thirst,  
the veld was dry and clad in brown.)

## 2.4.0 Style

2.4.1 Ntsane starts the essay with the question "Hantle  
thapelo keng?" (Actually what is prayer?). This immediately  
focuses our attention on the subject "thapelo" (prayer).  
The following incident of a man being thrashed in spite of  
his prayer gives significance to the question "Hantle thapelo  
keng?"

2.4.2 To justify the discussion on prayer, and the little  
"research" which he later undertook, Ntsane describes the  
drought that had struck the land, how livestock died and  
how the community prayed for rain. After such suffering  
anybody knows that the prayers should have been earnest  
and from the depth of the heart. Still there was no rain.  
At this stage the reader also feels that there must be  
something wrong with the prayers.

2.4.3 To avoid talking down on his reader, or lecturing him, Ntsane creates an "uncle" character who must explain the questionability of prayer to him as well as his reader. He asks this character the questions his reader is likely to want to know. But he is aware that this character does not only talk to him alone, but also to his reader; so he endows him (his uncle) with the quality of wanting to discuss, rather than giving a unilateral view of the subject hence:

"Ke itse o botsa potso e boima haholo. Leha he le jwalo ke tla o belella seo nna ke se hopolang, mme teng o utlwisisa hore seo ke maikutlo a ka feela."

(I said you ask a very difficult question. However, I will tell you what I think, but bear in mind that it will only be what I think.)

He goes on to say:

"Ke a tshaba nna hore ke hle ke bua tjee ka ha eka ke a tseba, ke mpa ke lekanya feela."  
(I fear talking as if I know, I am only speculating.....)

2.4.4 Ntsane gives his "uncle's" mannerisms vividly and with great economy:

"Ha a itsalo, a boela a hotetsa peipi ya hae a tsuba, a nka le buka ya hae a bala."  
(Having said so, he again lit his pipe and smoked, and took up his book to read.)

"itsalo" is the perfect form of the somewhat archaic "rialo", instead of "tjhe jwalo" or "rejwalo" (say so). This has the effect of enhancing the "stiffness" in the uncle's conventional behaviour.

2.4.5 He also employs some unusual constructions in a subtle manner:

"... ka lemoha hore o ntse a nnyemotse hasesane, ka la moleka ... hore a bone seo a mpoletseng

3.0 sona se nkene kapa tjhe."

3.0.1 (I realised that he was looking askance at me so as to see whether or no, what he has told me has penetrated.)

A normal construction would be "... hore a bone hore na seo a mpoletseng sona se nkene kapa tjhe."

The omission of "hore na" places emphasis on "seo a mpoletseng sona" (what he has told me), i.e. its effect. The usage of "se nkene" (it has got into me, i.e. penetrated) further emphasises the idea of understanding and accepting - he could otherwise have used the normal "utlwisisa" for "understand."

2.4.6 The other form Ntsane uses is one usually found in spoken language, especially by men considering a serious matter:

3.1 "Ka hla ka otsa tje ka ha eka ke utlwile,  
3.1.1 ha ke a utlwa"

(I behaved as if I have heard, I have not heard) I consider that this construction gives more gravity to the "problem" under discussion.

A simple way would have been:

"Ke a utlwa, empa ha ke utlwisisa"  
(I hear, but I do not understand).

2.4.7 In this essay the punctuation marks, though used properly, are used in the normal manner, with no particular stylistic significance.

### 2.5.0 Humor

2.5.1 The nature of the subject does not allow much, if any, room for fun or wittiness. Perhaps the incongruity between the analogy of a man shouting for mercy and a prayer.

2.5.2 Otherwise <sup>he</sup>combats dullness with his comment-inviting tone, discussed in paragraph 2.2.1, and the soul-searching questions discussed in paragraph 2.3.1. The rich images created as discussed in paragraph 2.3.2 a & b, also keep the reader's attention awake.

3.0 He regards M O S A D I one who can either accept or reject the idea if he pleases, i.e. he does not impose

3.0.1 This is a satire on men and women by Ntsane. He refers to the biblical version on the origin of man, and shows how the first man was misled by a woman. He also links that with the present state of affairs wherein woman wields tremendous power despite the usual reference to her as "weak." For illustration, he looks into the dangerous mines that claim the lives of men by the hundred (men who get there to get the minerals that are wanted by woman), many great men who rise to great heights, inter alia, to impress woman, and the many women who, today, outmanoeuvre men in the men's field of politics. He, of course, also blames woman for the chaos the world is in today, and hits out at the meanness women sometimes show.

3.1 Treatment

3.1.1 The picture portrayed here is very clear and unimposed. The reader's knowledge of women is well acknowledged. Ntsane also credits his reader with a thorough knowledge of the Bible version of the creation to which he refers to show the character of women. This he does suggestively, by continually introducing each idea by "ho thwe" (it is said...).

3.1.2 Though many instances are referred to in order to show a woman's power, cunning and ruthlessness, it cannot be said that the writer is trying to exhaust his subject: it rather gives us a clear picture of the combination of beauty and venom that a woman is in his opinion, or according to his experiences with women. The subject remains compact throughout, with no stray or irrelevant idea coming in that has no bearing on the title.

3.2 Tone

3.2.1 The very opening clause suggests the writer's attitude to his reader: "Mangolong ho thwe....."

(In the Bible it is said .....

3.3.2 One wonders whether a woman's ruthless tenacity of purpose, however new, can be expressed in better terms than Ntsane's:

He regards the reader as one who can either accept or reject the idea if he pleases, i.e. he does not impose his ideas upon him. He regards the reader as a fellow-ponderer over the subject and addresses himself to him in an inviting tone that is ready to accommodate any difference of opinion:

"Bomadimabe boo sebopuwa sena se bo tlišitseng ... ruri bo tadimeha bo tshabeha."

(The misfortune that has been brought by this creature ..... really seems terrible.)

3.2.2. Throughout, he takes the reader into his confidence through the various steps, like one wanting to hear his opinion. His judgement does not sound final:

"Eo se (i.e. sebopuwa) mo hloileng yena seka mo etsa dihaeya, a qala ho bona hore leha hothwe ke pitsa e fokolang, ha se fokole, se mpa se le matla ka ditsela tse ding ....."

(The one it (i.e. the creature) hates, it can cause serious trouble for, that he may realise for the first time that it is not "a weak pot" as often said, but it is strong in different ways..)

### 3.3 Expression

3.3.1 The writer expresses himself appropriately and tersely in strong figurative language, especially where he expresses certain emotions. Describing the emotional conflict aroused within a sworn bachelor, he says,

"...esita le yena moitlami ya itlametseng ho phela bosowa matsatsi ohle a bophelo ba hae lefatsheng o a qhibidiha ha a bona sebopuwa sena, mosadi."

(... even the one who has sworn to spend the rest of his life on earth a bachelor, melts at the sight of this creature, woman.)

There is no better word than "qhibidiha" (melt) to express utter infatuation.

3.3.2 One wonders whether a woman's ruthless tenacity of purpose, however mean, can be expressed in better terms than Ntsane's:

3.4.0 ".....sebopuwa sena ha se tsebe thibelo, ha se  
3.4.1 natse mafika, dinoka di phaphametse, difefo  
3.4.2 di roraka, letolo le thwathwaretsa."  
(....this creature cannot be stopped. It takes  
no notice of rocks (i.e. overhanging dangerously  
loose), overflowed rivers, roaring tempests,  
thunderous lightning.)

3.3.3 His disgust at women's ways, in comparison with  
men, is clear in the question,

"Ke ofe monna ya tsebang ho ritela mokankanyane  
le dino tse ding tse kang oona, tse tahang ka  
mokgwa o sehloho, mme tse qetellang di bolaile  
motho?"

(Which man can brew mokankanyane<sup>1)</sup> and other  
related drinks that intoxicate in a cruel manner,  
and which ultimately take his life)

3.3.4 The writer's demonstrating material is varied and  
apt.

(i) To illustrate the deep-sitted ruthlessness  
of a woman, he cites the squabble over a baby  
in King Solomon's court, wherein one woman wanted  
the baby to be cut into two.

(ii) To illustrate her power, the writer cites  
the thousands of men who risk their lives in  
mines at the "command" of a woman. This is linked  
directly with the Bantu practice of "lobola"  
(dowry) for which a young man usually had to work  
in the mines, often losing his life.

(iii) He finally gives a practical example of a  
mother's influence in the family, putting it in a  
rather sarcastic manner:

"Ha o batla eng kapa eng ho ntatao, bua le mmao  
pele hobane o tsietsa ntatao hole ka matla ..."

(If you want anything from your father, first  
talk to your mother because she overcomes your  
father quite easily in strength .....

---

1. A kind of strong homebrewed alcoholic concoction.

3.4.0 Style

3.4.1 The writer chooses as his starting point the first woman, Eve. He shows how she was tricked, and in her turn, tricked Adam. This he regards as the point at which man's fate was sealed: he would have to suffer eternally at the hands of the creature he loves most, woman.

3.4.2 This fate of men the writer goes on to link with gold and diamond mines which are manned by men, all to get these minerals which are mostly used by women. With no exception all men work hard either to secure or to maintain a woman, or both, thus placing her still at a topmost position in man's life. Having thus placed a woman at this position, he draws the reader's attention to the many men who rose and fell as a result of the workings of women, inter alia, Samson who was delivered to the Philistines by Delilah.

3.4.3 The writer also makes great use of contrasts to bring out a clear picture of a woman in her wholeness:

(i) "Bomadinabe boo sebopuwa sena se bo tlišitseng ho Adama mmoho le moloko o tlileng ka morao, ruri bo tadimeha bo tshabeha" - (see paragraph 3.2.1)

(The misfortune that has been brought by this creature to Adam and posterity really seems terrible)

Then he later says,

"Sona sebopuwa seo se dištseng lefatshe koduwa ke se filweng lehlohonolo la ho ba nma Mora Mmopi..."

(That very creature that brought disaster upon the earth, is the one that was given the blessing to become mother of the Son of Man)

(ii) "Se ka tsoha se thabile, se tšheha tšheho se monate-nate .....empa yare tsatsi le ilo dikela sa be se fetahile....."

(It, i.e. creature, can wake up happily, laughing heartily ..... but just about sunset, you find it completely changed.....)

(iii) "Ya sa tsebeng sebopuwa sena, mosadi, ha a tsebe lefu, ha a tsebe bophelo, hoba se ka phedisa sa tloha sa bolaya....."

(Whoever does not know this creature, a woman, does not know death, he does not know life, for she can promote life as well as kill .....

In (i) I dare say the writer suggests that a woman, however wicked she may be, is likely to be favoured. Perhaps that is the case today. In (ii) the writer observes a woman's unpredictability, and in (iii) he observes the dual nature of a woman, extreme in both - love and hate.

3.4.4 Apart from asking questions that are not interrogative in function, (paragraph 3.3.3), the noun interjective is used for emphasis: "mosadi!" (a woman!). This has the extra meaning that a woman is too deep to be sure of.

3.4.5 The ending here is very terse and appropriate, and is a forceful summary of the views expressed, and lingers in the mind for some time after reading:

"Ha o rata o rate mosadi, ha o tshaba o tshabe mosadi!"

(If you love, love a woman, if you fear, fear a woman!)

### 3.5.0 Humour

Ntsane uses lively language here. He keeps the reader's interest awake throughout with plain humour and humoristic satire.

3.5.1 Referring to the defaulting of women, which he links with that of Eve, he says,

"Ha ba se ba le bangata ba qala ho bontsha mokgwa wa bona, ke hore ba futsa nkgonwa bona, Eva;..."

(When they had multiplied, they began to show their true colours, i.e. they took after their grandmother, Eve.)

3.5.2 After describing the outward beauty of women, he satirises men for loving beautiful women, unaware of the



women's inner selves:

"Ha ho makatsehe he ha monna a kgahlwamme a labalabela ho ba pela sebopuwa sena hobane botle e sa le bo kgahleha ho feta bobo."

(It is not surprising then that a man will desire and wish to be near this creature because beauty/goodness has always been preferred to ugliness/badness.)

He plays on the double meanings of "botle" (beauty or goodness) and "bobo" (ugliness or badness) and chuckles at the idea that most men are only aware of the first mentioned meanings even where the second are most probable.

3.5.3 In describing a woman's anger, Ntsane satirically refers to the first defilement in the garden of Eden:

"... sa kwata, sa reselaka, sa fetoha jwalo ntle ho mabaka, sa iketsa noha kasebele, wa ba wa hopola mohla se rerang bolotsana le noha tshimong ya Edene."

(... it got angry, thumped about, changed like that without cause; behaved like a real snake; and reminded one of that day when it planned evil with a snake in the garden of Eden).

This essay has many such satirical references that are characteristic of Ntsane's writings.

#### 4.0 B O Q H E K U

On the whole this is a satire on these people who long for the past when old age has set in. Ntsane ridicules the old women who go all out for clothes and make-up in order to conceal old age. He further observes that some associate with the youth and hate any reference made to their age. Others go as far as losing interest in life due to the handicaps of old age. The lovable ones, he observes, are those who go through their old age cheerfully, looking well after themselves, and giving valuable advice to the inexperienced youth.

#### 4.1.0 Treatment

4.1.1 The treatment of the subject here is, in my opinion, not satisfactory. The writer does not give a clear picture of his subject and develop it. While we think he is describing the ludicrousness of excessive make-up on a deeply wrinkled face, the airs put on, coupled with a queer gait, we suddenly find him discussing the preferred company of youth. Then we are told that the old people are never satisfied with their lifespan. This is in its turn followed by a lecture on the three stages of life, a lecture that has very little, if anything at all, to do with "Boqheku" (old age).

4.1.2 We find that no solid picture has been portrayed by the writer. His wandering of the mind from one idea to another, makes us feel he cannot quite get a good grip on his subject. Having failed to do so, he resorts to telling us to be satisfied with old age.

#### 4.2.0 Tone

Here Ntsane's tone varies from friendly and accommodating, through hard and matter-of-fact, to elevated and didactic.

4.2.1 His friendly disposition to the reader is clear in, "ako phonyohelwe o re motho wa bona ke ntatamoholwao o tlo bone ....."

(just make the mistake of addressing one of them as grandfather, and see .....) )

While the possessive construction "motho wa bona" (their person, i.e. the chappy/afr. "die meneertjie") is designed to ridicule the old person, it has the effect of establishing friendly relations between the writer and his reader.

4.2.2 The writer's tone hardens and we feel that he is of no intention to argue, when he says,

"Moriri o meputswa ha re o bona re koqama ka mangole, dipelo di a kokomoha, re re tsa mehleng ya kgale re tla di utlwa boputsweng boo. Empa ha leqheku le ikentse ngwana, re re na ho no uwe kae maobane?"

(When we see the grey hair we bow down in respect. Our hearts feel happy and we feel that we shall hear things of the past from that greyness. But when an old man makes a child of himself, we wonder where he was yesterday?)

4.2.3 Then he ascends the platform and speaks down on his reader, and the reader must just accept it:

"Bongwana, Botjha, Boqheku, ke tema tse tharo tseo mang le mang, ha eba a ke ke a kgaoletswa ke lefu, a lokelang ho feta ho tsona ....."

(Childhood, Youth, Old age, are three stages through which everyone, if death does not intervene, must pass .....) )

4.2.4 He goes further to give a solemn warning to his reader, as a father to his son:

"Empe ebe tshiung tsa hao tsa boqheku o ka hopola tsa bongwana le botjha ba hao ka hlomphe."

(Let's hope that in your old age days you will ponder over your childhood and young days with respect.)

#### 4.3.0 Expression

4.3.1 Like in most of his works, and the essays already discussed, Ntsane has proved a master in self-expression. His feelings of disgust at some old ladies' attempts at concealing their oldness under a mask of make-up, is unmistakable in:

"... jwale a imeqile ka dimethamafosa, a ikgasitse ka dipoiri, jwale di haneletse maswebeng mona eka mefophodi."

(... then she is marred with "metamorphosa"<sup>6</sup>), sprinkled with powders, and these, stuck in the wrinkles, are like dried fluid marks).

The words "imeqile" (marred), "ikgasitse" (sprinkled oneself) are particularly expressive of disgust. The writer could have used the normal "itshasitse" or "itlotsitse" (applied)

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6. Metamorphosa: a brandname of a face cream.

in both instances if he didn't deliberately wish to express the above sentiment. His strong feelings are strengthened by the plural form "dipoiri" which is, under normal circumstances, used in the singular form "poiri" (powder). He then leaves the reader face to face with the image of a wrinkled, weird face, which makes him not help sharing the writer's feelings.

4.3.2 We also can't help chuckling at Ntsane's boyish naughtiness as evidenced in the fun he obviously derives from ridiculing the old women who try to stand their own in the world of high heeled shoes:

"O ntsa gothoma tjee ka lerutle la puleng."

(She keeps hopping like a grasshopper in the rain.)

The locative qualificative "la puleng" (lit. of in the rain) has an added ridiculing effect.

4.3.3 Ntsane's mastery of expression is also felt in the terseness with which he draws his cruel fun from the unattainable ambitions of some old men:

"O tle o makale le ho feta jwale, ha o bona mobu o dilemo tse fetang mashome a tsheletseng o nyala lesea la dilemo tse leshome le metso,..."

(You will be more surprised to see "soil", i.e. a hopelessly old man, getting married to a "baby" of a teenager,)

4.3.4 We also cannot fail to feel his admiration for a level-headed, wise old man:

"Ana keletso tsa hae tse tswang kelellong e betlehileng di mafura hakakang.....!"

(O, how wonderful is his advice which comes out of a well-carved mind!)

Ntsane feels that thinking is as much an art as is carving, hence his reference to a clearly thinking mind as "well-carved".

#### 4.4.0 Style

Unlike in the other three essays, the writer has no central theme around which to build up and develop what he wishes to say about old age. As already pointed out

under treatment, the ideas put across are disjointed.

4.4.1. The writer has, however, compensated beautifully for the above defect, with forceful figures of speech:

4.4.2 (a) Hyperbole:

(i) "jwale a imeqile ka dimethamafosa, a ikgasitse ka dipoiri, jwale di haneletse maswebeng mona ....."

(then she is marred with metamorphosa, sprinkled or spread powder on her face, and these cling to the wrinkles, or literally, refuse to leave the wrinkles).

(ii) "ha e sa le maswebe e se e le diforo..." (they are no longer wrinkles, they are furrows)

(b) Similes:

(i) "o ntsa gothoma tjee ka lerutle la puleng" (she keeps hopping like a grasshopper in the rain)

Grasshoppers hop in the same way at all times, but the writer makes the situation more ridiculous by making us picture, not the grasshopper, but the old woman hopping on high-heeled shoes in the rain.

(ii) "...di haneletse maswebeng mona e ka mefophodi" (clinging to the wrinkles as if, or resembling, white fluid marks)

(iii) "...o bone molala o qhashaletse e ka thupa" (You see the neck hard and stiff as if (it is) a stick).

The simile forms e ka (as if), used in (ii) and (iii) above, are deliberately used (rather than "jwaleka") not "for a change", but with an aim. The writer does not wish to say that the powder in the wrinkles makes long marks like fluids do, but that it looks like the dried up fluid.

"Mefophodi" is usually used in reference to the long white marks left by Bantu beer on the sides of a calabash. So we can imagine such marks on an old face.

Similarly, in (iii), the neck is not stiff like a stick is, but is itself like a stick, or looks like a stick. Ntsane, therefore, used this form of simile deliberately with hyperbolic implications.

4.4.2 Another technique used, is clarity of images by contrasts:

(i) "... ha o bona mobu wa dilemo tse fetang mashome a tshelentseng o nyala lese la dilemo tse leshome le metso..."

(... when you see soil that is over sixty years old getting married to a baby of a teenager).

The metaphors "mobu" (soil, i.e. a man who is so old that he is about to return to the soil, from which he cometh) and "lese" (baby) are diametrically opposed extremes, and this makes the picture the more ridiculous.

(ii) "Ho hotle hakakang ho buisana le leqheku le hlatswehileng pelo le moya .....

... Empa ha leqheku le ikentse ngwana, re re ho no ho uwe kae maobane?"

(O, how wonderful it is to discuss with a contented old man .....

... But when an old man makes a child of himself, we wonder where he was yesterday, i.e. in his own days?)

The contrast between a contented old man and a fastidious one is highly expressive of the writer's attitude towards the latter. The impersonal reference to him adds more to the sting:

"... ho no ho uwe kae maobane?"

(... where had people gone yesterday).

The infinitive prefix ho used in reference to people typifies contempt.

4.4.3 Even here there is a masterly command of language which results in strong imagery. Referring to the correct attitude to old age to be adopted by the old themselves, he says,

"Koro e butswitse mme e loketse ho helwa."

(The corn is ripe and therefore ready for harvest).

What a beautiful portrayal of the inevitable!

4.4.4 About an old person, who has overlived and still wishes to live on, he says,

"He Modimo jwale le ona o ka tenwa ke ho lelefatsa tshiu tsa motho yeo eo ka tshwanelo e ka beng e le kgale dikgomo di fula ka hodima hae!"

(Now God must also get tired of increasing the days of that person over whom, in fact, cattle should long have grazed.)

This way Ntsane beautifully expresses even the time factor: the man should have been buried so long ago that grass would have grown on his grave.

4.4.5 He finally appeals to the old to nobly accept the fact that they have had their days, by comparing them to travellers who have reached their destination:

"Moeti, o tsamaile eto la hao mme o fihlile pheletsong ya lona; bea thoto fatshe o phomole."

(Traveller, you have travelled your journey and have reached its end; put down your baggage and rest.)

He likens life to a long journey, and old age as its end. All the cares, desires and ambitions he compares to a traveller's baggage. One can hardly think of a better image.

#### 4.5.0 Humour

4.5.1 This is present throughout the essay, and is often intermingled with his ridiculing of the old, and his cruel satire on them. We come across humour from the very opening sentence:

"O tla utlwa motho wa bona leha e se e le mobu, a le menepe, ..... a ntse a re: 'ho tsofala ya ratang'"

and the left with that feeling of incompleteness lingering on. That feeling of emptiness, or belonging together, of every point mentioned in Mogadi is sadly lacking

(You will hear a person, the soil and wrinkles that he is, saying, "old age comes to those who like")

4.5.2 Their gait is described in a humorous manner: "Motho wa bona ha a tsamaya o ka hauha hoba maoto a se a itaela"

(When a person walks, one can pity him because the legs already control themselves.)

4.5.3 In many instances throughout, we detect humour in the writer's tone, even before he mentions anything amusing:

"Ako phonyohelwe o re motho wa bona ke ntatamoholwao ....."

(Just make the mistake of addressing one of them as grandfather .....) )

4.5.4 Besides 'Mosadi', this is one essay in which Ntsane has made great use of humour. This is particularly suitable for his style with regard to the subjects.

## 5.0 Evaluation

Though I have read all of Ntsane's essays, I cannot, due to space limitation, discuss them all here. I have found them to be all of a more or less the same literary standard. From the above sample I am of the opinion that Mosadi is the best, with Bogheku being slightly below the rest due to the few flaws I tried to point out. I will therefore attempt to compare the two briefly.

5.1 In "Mosadi", Ntsane's portrayal of a woman is clear and unimposed. The reader's knowledge of the woman, directly and from the biblical point of view, is acknowledged and made use of in the development of the picture the writer wants to portray. In "Bogheku," on the contrary, one feels doubtful as to whether the writer himself has a clear picture of what he wants to portray. Before clearly discussing one aspect of old age, he leaves it for another, and yet another, and so on. No single idea is developed fully, and in the end the reader is left with that feeling of incompleteness lingering on. That feeling of compactness, or belonging together, of every point mentioned in Mosadi is sadly lacking



in Bogheku.

5.2 While in Mosadi the writer takes his reader into his confidence throughout and is willing to accommodate any difference of opinion, in Bogheku his tone varies according to the different behaviour patterns and mannerisms described. Here the writer equips himself very well, but this inconsistency of tone lands him later into speaking down on his reader, lecturing him, not on Bogheku (old age), but on the different stages of life:

"Bongwana, Botjha, Bogheku, ke tema tse tharo tseo mang le mang ..... a lokelang ho feta ho tsona ....."

(Childhood, Youth, Old age, are three stages through which everyone, ..... must pass .....) )

5.3 I must say that in the expression of the different emotions and dispositions in both Mosadi and Bogheku, as in all the other essays, the writer has proved a master. In this respect both essays seem to be on the same plane.

5.4 Ntsane's style in Mosadi shows better and more effective planning than in Bogheku. In the former he takes us back to the creation, back to where man's first mistake was made because of a woman. He then develops this same picture, taking us through the ages and cultures, to the present set-up of the world, with every idea or minor digression contributing towards the wholeness and clarity of the picture he is painting. I must say that the consistency of the warm and inviting tone contributes greatly towards the cementing together of the different ideas.

5.5 In Bogheku, there is no skeleton around which the subject revolves, or on which the different ideas are pieced together into a unified whole. This, in my opinion, is the major flaw of this essay. I believe that, if the paragraph quoted in part in paragraph 5.2 above, was the opening paragraph of this essay, it would be a good starting point. It would, from the outset, show the inevitability and significance of old age. From

this the writer would then develop this idea in many ways, reading meaning even into what we always think ridiculous about the old people. Unfortunately this paragraph is the last but one of the essay, hence changing the whole tone of the essay into a sermon at the end. There is such a great contrast between this ending and the ending of the essay Mosadi:

"Ha o rata o rate mosadi, ha o tshaba  
o tshabe mosadi!"

(If you love, love a woman,  
if you fear, fear a woman!)

6.0 In conclusion I would like to make the daring remark that Ntsane can be regarded as a good essayist. He has boundless stores of vocabulary which he uses very appropriately. It is this command of rich vocabulary that enables him to express himself so vividly, and to be as ridiculous as he can become when he feels like it - indeed it is this mastery of the language that has also earned him the reputation of master satirist, as evidenced in his two volumes of poetry (see paragraph .00).

6.1 Together with his rich vocabulary is the fact that Ntsane can develop a single idea in a convincing tone, using effective figures of speech, and yet without trying to exhaust the subject or impose his views upon his reader. Wherever he makes a slip, he compensates beautifully in one way or another, as seen above. In all his essays it is clear that he is expressing his own opinion about the subject, making allowance for any difference of opinion, but he does it in such a convincing way that the reader feels that his own ideas are being expressed. This undoubtedly, is because his demonstrating material is "oor iets in ons almal se wêreld"<sup>7)</sup>.

6.2 It would be quite interesting to make a detailed comparative study of the essays of Ntsane and S.M. Mofokeng's master piece PELONG YA KA.

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7. Louw, N.P., van Wyk: Op cit p.140.

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