

SIWISA'S SHORT STORIES: A CRITICAL APPRAISAL

by

PETER TSHOBISO MTUZE

submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for

the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in the subject

AFRICAN LANGUAGES

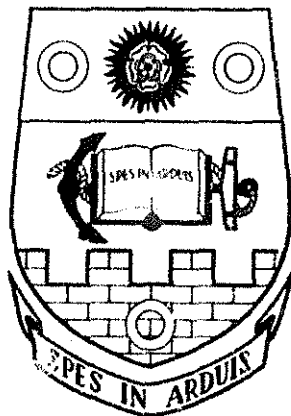
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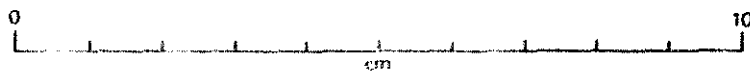
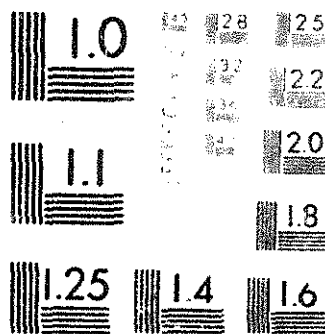
SUPERVISOR : Professor R. Finlayson

JOINT SUPERVISOR: Mr. A. Strachan



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"I declare that SIWISA'S SHORT STORIES: A CRITICAL APPRAISAL 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."

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I should like to express my sincere gratitude to the following people:

- 1 Mr. A. Strachan for reading through the draft of this dissertation and making invaluable suggestions with regard to its contents and style.
- 2 Dr S.C. Satyo for fruitful discussions and his readiness to make suggestions whenever I approached him.
- 3 Mrs B. Moolman for typing this work so meticulously.
- 4 Prof. R. Finlayson for her sound and patient supervision without which this study would never have been successful.
- 5 Messrs Richter and Van Deventer of De Jager and HAUM for duplicating and binding this dissertation.
- 6 Last but not least, to my wife, Nothandekile, for her moral support throughout my many years of study.

SUMMARY

The following aspects of Siwisa's short stories are dealt with in the dissertation:

- (i) His main themes and subject matter.
- (ii) Traditional concepts such as setting, characterisation and conflict in his short stories.
- (iii) Plot in Siwisa's short stories, and,
- (iv) his style and language.

Another issue that is dealt with at length in the dissertation is the confusion between the Xhosa short story and the essay.

Siwisa's main themes relate to crime, superstition and deviant behaviour. Because of subtle turns in the themes of some of his short stories, suggestion and implication play an important role in his writing. Although in some stories he uses direct commentary and what could be termed ancillary stories, these are effectively controlled so as not to detract from the main narrative. Some emphasis is placed on the ability of the Xhosa narrative to accommodate narration and direct commentary.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Aim of the study

The aim of this study is to make a detailed critical analysis of Siwisa's short stories as contained in his three books of short stories *Ndibuzen' Amathongo* (1956), *Amabali Angemigudu* (1962) and *Izimanga ZaleMhlaba* (1975). Where necessary, the books will be referred to numerically in order of their publication.

Siwisa's contribution is very significant because he began writing short stories almost simultaneously with G.B. Sinxo, the pioneer in short story writing. Secondly, Siwisa's literary involvement, especially with the short story, spans four decades. This should justify critical attention by literary scholars.

1.2 Scope of the study

The study purports to cover the following broad objectives:

- 1.2.1 To define the modern short story and to highlight the difference between this subgenre and other related subgenres;

- 1.2.2 To make a short survey of the development of the Xhosa short story in order to highlight the main contributions and the main themes in this subgenre and to place Siwisa in perspective.
- 1.2.3 To give a short biographical sketch of Siwisa's life and times thereby providing information that may be vital in understanding his works;
- 1.2.4 To discuss the relationship and confusion between the Xhosa short story and the essay. (Vide Chapter 2)
- 1.2.5 To make a general survey of Siwisa's themes and subject matter in order to consider their content value. (Vide Chapter 3)
- 1.2.6 To evaluate Siwisa's use of conventional concepts like setting, characterisation, dialogue and conflict. (Vide Chapter 4)
- 1.2.7 To make a critical analysis of the plots of Siwisa's short stories. (Vide Chapter 5)
- 1.2.8 To make cursory study of Siwisa's style, tone and language. (Vide Chapter 6)

Perhaps it is necessary to justify the selection of only these aspects of the short story to the exclusion of others. The idea has been to concentrate on the essential aspects of the short story while cursory reference would only be made

to other aspects as and when necessary. Cf. Day (1971:xi).

The short story is a piece of prose fiction which can be read at a single sitting; it presents an artistic and unified impression of life through many devices, especially theme, characters, actions involving conflict and crisis, setting and style.

Chapter 7 is a summary of the main findings regarding Siwisa's short stories and expression.

1.3 Method of approach

In this study, focus will be drawn to the main conventional literary devices as generally employed in Western short stories and Siwisa's short stories will be viewed against this theoretical background while making allowances, where necessary, for individuality, creativity and innovation. Definite stress will also constantly be placed on an African approach to the art of story telling. This is vital since Siwisa's short stories contain peculiar features which can only be explained in terms of this approach.

This latter factor has often been raised in contemporary criticism. Cf. Palmer (1982:1):

The view is gaining ground in African literary circles that African literature should not be judged by the criteria which have so far been used in the evaluation of western literature.

Palmer's (ibid:2) own view on the question is very sound:

The nationalistic and ideological objections to the use of western criteria are not very valid. If the purpose of criticism is to display as accurately as possible the genuine quality of a work, then our aim should be to use or evolve criteria which will be the most helpful in bringing out that genuine quality, whether those criteria have been used by the West or not. Our considerations must be literary and cultural rather than ideological, nationalistic or political. Nevertheless, there are some genuine cultural and literary reasons for the objection to western criteria.

This view is fully subscribed to. Consequently, western criteria will be the basic tools in the evaluation of the writer's short stories but they will be modified to suit Xhosa culture and tradition, where necessary. Even Palmer (ibid:4) has no objection to this practice if it is motivated by cultural reasons.

Contrary to Botha's MA dissertation, *Aspekte van die Xhosa-kortverhaal*, this study will be an in-depth study of a single short story writer. Cf. Botha (1978:iv):

Die eerste en belangrike beperking wat hier sal geld, is geleë in die feit dat hierdie studie hoofsaaklik van 'n oorsigtelike, beskrywende aard, eerder as 'n indringende, spesifieke aard sal wees.

Otherwise, the *modus operandi* will, basically, be along the lines followed by Botha (ibid):

T.o.v. elke van hierdie aangeleenthede sal aanvanklik 'n kernagtige oorsig gegee word van die belangrikste beskouinge van ervare literêre kritici en teoretici in dié verband. Daarna sal vasgestel word in welke mate die betrokke Xhosakortverhale dienoooreenkomstig saamgestel is en oor soortgelyke literêre eienskappe beskik. Langs hierdie weg sal dit dan moontlik wees om die literêre gehalte van die Xhosakortverhale onder bespreking te evalueer en te bepaal.

The idea of viewing Xhosa short stories in the light of certain basic requirements as pointed out by Botha (ibid:17) is also emphasised by Dutton (1984:44):

... that certain basic qualities are essential in literature, and that the job of the critic is primarily to assess the extent to which they are present in any particular piece.

It must be conceded that Botha's work will form a valuable background to this study for the reason that the two studies should be seen as complementing each other. Botha's work is a general survey of the Xhosa short story whereas this is a study of a specific writer of short stories.

1.4 The difference between the short story and other related subgenres

Before embarking on the main study, there are two basic questions to be answered in order to facilitate comprehension of the fundamental nature of the short story - what is the short story and how does it differ from an essay or

from a novel? These questions are very crucial with regard to the Xhosa short story as there is a lot of confusion in the minds of many short story readers as to the basic difference between these subgenres. The short story and the essay are regarded as subgenres in accordance with Wellek and Warren's (1982:227) classification of literary genres into prose, poetry and drama.

Stone, Packer and Hoopes (1976:5) pose a similar question:

What is the short story? Is it a truncated and incomplete version of the novel? Or is it a genre, that is, a category of art with a distinctive content, form and style?

After a lengthy discussion of the subject, the writers (ibid) come to the conclusion that the short story:

... is a unique literary form, with techniques and effects that cannot be achieved through another medium.

According to the writers (ibid) the following features distinguish the short story from other kinds of literature such as, for example, the novel:

The story should have the valid central emotion and inner spontaneity of the lyric It must have taughtness and clearness. Poetic taughtness and clarity are so essential to it that it may be said to stand at the edge of prose.

Like Botha, these writers (ibid) are also concerned with the question of form and structure in the short story.

The short story depends on concreteness, on sensual impressions that deliver their meaning without waste. Like the lyric, it is a lean form; it can tolerate little if any digression.

Harry Shaw (1972:343) summarizes the nature of the short story very articulately:

A relatively short narrative (under 10 000 words) which is designed to produce a single dominant effect, and which contains the elements of drama. A short story concentrates on a single character in a single situation at a single moment.

Literary critics answer the second question as to how the short story differs from other forms of literature as follows:

Stone, Packer en Hoopes (1976:5):

There are in the main three qualities that mark the short story as clearly different from other forms of prose fiction, that make it a "genre". The first quality is of course brevity. The second is its power of compensating for the consequences of shortness. And the third is the interaction of one and two.

The main area of confusion lies in the difference between the short story and the essay. This confusion manifests

itself very clearly in Siwisa's stories and this will therefore be dealt with in some detail.

Current-Garcia and Patrick (1974:33) postulate the following difference between the novel and the short story:

The difference between a Novel and a Novelet is one of length only; A Novelet is a brief Novel. But the difference between a Novel and a Short-story is a difference of kind. A true short story is something other and something more than a mere story which is short.

Before considering the difference between the short story and the essay, let us take a cursory look at what critics say distinguishes a short story from two related forms - the anecdote and the sketch.

Abrams (1971:157), concerning the difference between the short story and the anecdote, says:

The short story differs from the anecdote - the simplest and unelaborated narration of a single incident - in that it organizes the action, thoughts and interactions of its characters into the artful pattern of plot, which has beginning and develops through a middle to some sort of a denouement at the end.

Botha (ibid:26) quotes Shipley concerning the sketch:

A sketch lacks the depth of the short story;

narration may be subordinated, psychological atmosphere may be stressed.

One area in which there is some confusion in Xhosa literature is with regard to the basic difference between the short story and the essay. As will be evidenced in the study, many authors, including Siwisa and illustrious writers such as Jordan, do not clearly demarcate these subgenres in their books, leading to some confusion among the readers.

Dlamini (1975:62ff) distinguishes the two along the following lines:

- 1 A short story is a brief narrative in prose.
- 2 An essay is a discussion of the subject without necessarily trying to exhaust the subject.
- 3 Both genres require practitioners to observe the following:
 - a) limit the length,
 - b) keep to the subject,
 - c) arouse the reader's interest and hold his attention.
- 4 The story writer tells a story using characters, plot and diction.
- 5 The subject matter of the essay must be a realistic portrayal of manners, morals and experiences, presented from a point of view that reflects the critical intelligence and wisdom of the author.
- 6 The essayist may assume the reader's scientific knowledge and philosophic background.
- 7 The short story writer remains in the background and presents his story through the words and actions of his characters as well as through the plot.

- 8 The essayist differs from the short story writer in that he comes to the foreground. The egotistical element is the most distinctive feature of the essay.

It is in the interest of this study to consider the relationship or similarities between the short story and the folk tale. The folk tale is generally regarded as being akin to the short story. Huck (1979:157) remarks about the folk tale:

Born of oral tradition, these stories are usually short and have fast moving plots. They are frequently humorous and almost always end happily. Poetic justice prevails; the good and the just are eventually rewarded, while the evil are punished. Wishes come true but not without the fulfilment of a task or trial.

Perhaps the greatest similarity between the two subgenres lies in their structure. The following definition of the structure of the folk tale by Huck (ibid:164ff) can easily be applied to the short story:

The structure of the folk tale, with its quick introduction, economy of incident, and logical and brief conclusion contains interest through suspense and repetition. Because the storyteller has to keep the attention of his audience, each episode must contribute to the theme of the story.

Because both subgenres aim at tight compression, characterisation in both bears clear similarities. Cf Huck (ibid:166):

Characters are shown in flat dimensions, being symbolic of the completely good or entirely evil. Character development is seldom depicted. Physical characteristics may be described briefly, but the reader forms his own picture as he reads. Qualities of character or special strengths or weaknesses are revealed quickly

Sotashe (1979:5ff) also draws comparison between the two subgenres on the basis of the following:

Plot: based on conflict between two parties,

Character: one facet or side of the character is shown,

Milieu: ... the narrator does not give a detailed description of the physical environment or social life where the events or incidents take place.

Theme: traditional narratives would appeal directly to the readers' sensibilities.

Despite these similarities, Botha (ibid:27) warns about the two prose forms:

Ten spyte van die noue historiese verwantskap tussen hierdie twee prosavorme, is dit tog duidelik dat sekere grondliggende verskille hier geïdentifiseer word.

If these definitions and comparisons reveal anything about the nature of the short story, it is what Bates (1972:17) once said concerning the definition of the short story:

All these definitions have one thing in common. None of them has a satisfactory finality, none defines the short story with an indisputable epigrammatic accuracy which will fit all short stories.

Dogmatism and rigid application of the basic requirements of the short story should, therefore, be avoided at all costs. It is in the light of this that Botha (ibid:17) should be commended for the following observation in this regard:

Daar word alleenlik beoog om 'n aantal basiese riglyne of norme daar te stel aan die hand waarvan die betrokke Xhosa-kortverhale nou verder bestudeer kan word, maar waaraan dit nie noodwendig moet voldoen nie ten einde aanspraak te kan maak op aanvaarbare literêre gehalte.

(My emphasis)

1.5 A brief survey of the development of the Xhosa short story

The Xhosa short story, of which Siwisa, alongside Sinko, is one of the first exponents, has a fairly short history of existence in written form. Short story telling is not foreign to the Xhosas however, although one wonders why this kind of literature took so long to evolve and to develop.

The problem possibly lies with the techniques of the Western short story which, like some other literary devices, are often quite foreign to the spirit of the Xhosa short story teller. While we use the Western literary devices as a basis, we are becoming increasingly sceptical of the wisdom of applying these techniques too

rigidly to African literature, instead of trying to discover the African way of expression.

Lenake (1984:8) cites Sayce as summing up the critic's task in this regard as follows:

The critic's first and most important task must be to discover, as far as he is able, the objective characteristics of the work under consideration.

Satyo (1978:25) cites Ziervogel in support of this notion as stating that:

The modern Bantu literature is developing forms of its own which are neither strictly European nor strictly traditional.

It is conceded that Western literary devices should serve a useful purpose in evaluating our literature which purports to be based on the tenets of Western theory of literature, but it is also proposed that the unique features of this literature should be taken into account as well.

Because the Xhosa short story did not appear in a literary vacuum it should be interesting to relate its advent and development to the other genres. Although some of the dates which will be mentioned below are accurate, others, unavoidably, are approximations as most books fail to

reflect the year of publication. Scott's *Select Bibliography of the Xhosa Novels, Drama and Poetry, 1909-1959* (1973:24ff) has proved a very valuable guide in this regard. The scope of this study does not permit further discussion of this vexing problem which clearly manifests itself in the works of Vilakazi (1945), Gerard (1971) and in Opland's unpublished articles.

The gap between the appearance of the first serious Xhosa novel, Ndawo's *Uhambo lukaGqobhoka*, around 1909, and the first serious collection of short stories, Sinxo's *Isakhono somfazi*, around 1956, is astonishingly great. Several successful novels preceded the first appearance of the short story, e.g.

- 1909 Uhambo lukaGqobhoka by H M Ndawo
- 1914 Ityala lamawele by S E K Mqhayi
- 1922 UNomsa by G B Sinxo
- 1923 UZagula by J J R Jolobe
- 1927 Umfundisi waseMthuwasi by G B Sinxo
- 1929 UDon Jadu by S E K Mqhayi
- 1931 UNolishwa by H M Ndawo
- 1933 Umzali wolahleko by G B Sinxo
- 1934 Kuphilwa phi? by B A Bangeni
- 1934 Umandisa by V Swartbooi
- 1937 UNomathamsanqa noSigebenga by H M Ndawo

- 1939 UJujuju by Z Futshane
- 1940 Inggumbo yeminyanya by A C Jordan
- 1951 Kufundwa ngamava by M Dana
- 1952 UNtabaziyaduma by L Tsotsi
- 1954 Umvuzo wesono by E S M Dlova
- 1954 Inzala kaMlungisi by W K Tamsanqa

Although this list is by no means exhaustive, it clearly shows that many reasonably successful novels preceded the appearance of the first book of short stories which was in 1956. Even poetry, a more technical or complex genre, established itself much earlier than the short story, e.g.:

- 1927 Imihobe nemibongo by S E K Mqhayi
- 1928 Izibongo zeenkosi zamaHlubi by H M Ndawo
- 1936 Umyezo by J J R Jolobe
- 1937 UMhlekazi uHintsisa by S E K Mqhayi
- 1938 UThuthula by J J R Jolobe
- 1942 Inzuzo by S E K Mqhayi
- 1950 Amaqunube by S Mama and A Z T Mbebe
- 1952 Intlaba-mkhosi by A Z Ngani
- 1952 Izibongo zeenkosi zamaXhosa by D L P Yali-Manisi
- 1953 Iintsika zentlambo yeTyhume by R M Tshaka
- 1954 Izithuko by D D T Jabavu
- 1954 Indyebo kaXhosa by G S Mama
- 1954 Iqhashu by P M Ntloko

- 1955 Khala Zome by L M S Ngcwabe
 1956 Ukutya kweendlebe by M Huna

The essay and drama also took roots long before the advent of the short story:

Essay

- 1935 Imibengo by W G Bennie
 1939 Amavo by J J R Jolobe

Drama

- 1924 UNongqawuse by M W Waters
 1925 Imfene kaDebeza by G B Sinxo
 1928 Iziganeko zomKristu by E U Oules
 1954 Zangen' iinkomo by M Mbidlana

The short story, on the other hand, developed as follows:

- 1956 Isakhono somfazi by G B Sinxo
 1956 Ndibuzen' Amathongo by L K Siwisa
 1957 Hayi ke beth' iinto zomhlaba by A A M Mqhaba
 1960 Imbadu by G B Sinxo
 1961 Masibaliselane by S M Burns-Ncamashe
 1961 UNojayiti wam by G B Sinxo
 1962 Amabali angemigudu by L K Siwisa
 1964 Isitiya by G B Sinxo
 1971 Isiphetho sombulali by H N Yako

- 1973 Apha naphaya by D M Jongilanga
- 1974 Kwezo Mpindo zeTsitsa by A C Jordan
- 1975 Izimanga Zalomhlaba by L K Siwisa
- 1977 Amathol' eendaba by P T Mtuze
- 1982 Umhlinzeko by K S Bongela
- 1982 Ingwe idla ngamabala by L S Ngcangata
- 1982 Intsengwanekazi by L S Ngcangata
- 1984 Umphehlulu by P T Mtuze

It is remarkable therefore that the Xhosa short story appeared 47 years later than the novel, 29 years later than the first published poems, 21 years later than the essay and 32 years later than the first Xhosa drama.

Nevertheless, it is quite encouraging and significant to note that this new-comer to the Xhosa literary scene has since made great strides, with a book appearing almost every other year.

A final observation on this short bibliographic survey is that Sinxo and Siwisa were pioneers in the field of short story writing. Secondly, their contributions invariably coincided, both appearing in 1956 and then in 1961 and 1962 respectively - two decades of comradeship. Siwisa continued into the third decade and his influence has now stretched into the fourth.

1.6 Siwisa - his life and times

Langa Masiza Kerr Siwisa was born in Willowvale in Transkei on 14 February 1916. His father, The Reverend Mr W.D. Siwisa, was a Methodist minister at Mbangcolo in the Willowvale district. He was christened, Kerr, after the first principal of Fort Hare. His mother was Mrs Christina Elizabeth, nee Conjwa.

He began his primary school education at Tsomo in 1922 and proceeded to Healdtown Practising School where he did Standards 2-6, and to Healdtown High School for Standards 7-10. In 1940 he obtained the BA degree at Fort Hare, majoring in English and Social Anthropology. This was followed by a Teacher's Diploma.

He took up his first teaching post at Mariazell Teacher Training School in 1942. In the same year, he joined the staff of the then Grahamstown Native Secondary School (now Nathaniel Nyaluza High School) under the late Mr B.E.N. Mahlasela, who was the first black principal of a day secondary school for black pupils in the Cape.

From 1946-1965 Siwisa pioneered secondary school education in the Peddie district where he, together with the Reverend Mr Nathaniel Pamla of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa, founded and established the Ayliff Secondary School (now

Nathaniel Pamla High School). It began as a private school, financed by the people and the church, but became a fully subsidised school the following year, with Siwisa appointed as its first principal. He headed the school through its early years and its teething problems for a period of 19 years.

He was appointed to the Inspectorate in 1965 and served in the Queenstown and King Williamstown areas until 1969 when he moved to Transkei where he served in various areas.

In 1976 he returned to Ciskei to serve in the Hewu district as Inspector of schools, where he was stationed, prior to taking up the post of Education Planner and later Translator in the Department of Education.

'Oom Skerrie', as he is popularly known to his friends, has served on various language bodies - the Xhosa Language Committee, the Xhosa Language Bureau, and the Xhosa Language Board.

Besides the three books of short stories, he also published a radio play *Uyinkulu kabani?* and a collection of Xhosa plays, *Imidlalo yokulinganiswa*. In the non-creative field, he published a collection of Xhosa idioms and proverbs - *Imizekeliso namaphala* (1950).

His vast experience and good academic qualifications, combined with his rural and urban background, place him in good stead to portray life in its broadest sense.

1.7 Critical comments on some of Siwisa's works

Siwisa's record as a writer is chequered both with disappointment and praise. All his books did not receive warm acclaim. His candid and unflinching style raised eyebrows among some of the day's literary critics. The following unpublished comments by some of those critics point to the reactionary attitude of the post missionary era critics and to the inhibiting effect of some of their subjective views. These reviewers were, however, only concerned with books to be prescribed for school use.

Mr G G Mjali's review of the book *Amabali angemigudu*, countersigned by Mr C M Mothoa, both of Via Afrika, contains the following comments:

"Ah Njayibuzwa"

Many African people still believe in witchcraft. Stories of this kind implant superstitious beliefs in them. I would never have allowed such a story to pass to schools, no matter what the age group of children, without the ending changed. The ending is just no good for African children. The writer has left no doubt in the reader's mind that a person can keep a baboon and be rich thereby! The end is really very clumsy for African children who still believe that a written word is truth!

Mjali found the language to be good except for the numerous spelling and orthographical errors. On the story "Lingaba likhulu umbombo uyaqhosha", Mjali comments:

Stories that show the bad side of life are never good for children. The stress by the writer on the evils of men does not uplift the reader.

A second reader who, unfortunately, is not identified commented as follows:

These stories are characterised by utter simplicity of expression. The author relies upon the reality of the events he describes to convey the overpowering impression that he puts across. The stories are rich with the originality of the author's interpretations of the most ordinary, commonplace incidents. The author describes his stories in the most natural way possible.

This reviewer gave Siwisa a B symbol for his stories as well as for his good language. However, he also mentioned that the orthography needed revision.

A third reviewer, only identified as G S K in the then Bantu Education Journal (1965:23) expressed himself much more strongly in favour of the book and defended the contentious "Ah Njayibuzwa" quite vehemently:

The writer writes very good Xhosa which is easy to read. His Xhosa has no difficulty of coined words; it is simple to read. He has the knack of making incidents follow a logical sequence

in each story. For these reasons, this book ought to be held in high esteem by the Xhosa speaking people.

In defence of "Ah Njayibuzwa", this reviewer comments:

If we can read the first story in this book which carries this heading "Ah Njayibuzwa", we will find that even amongst religious people it does happen that a person gets converted and be a church-goer and his main aim is to hide his out-of-way methods of living, he has no spirit of God in him. He joins the church only to cover his abominable behaviour from which he will not deviate

My own impressions on these stories are contained in the main body of the study.

1.8 Resumé

In this short general introduction, the scope, aim and the method of approach of this study have been defined.

Secondly, the short story has been clearly defined and compared to various related subgenres, e.g. the novel, folk tale, anecdote, the sketch and the essay, in order to identify its unique form and expression. Since the first chapter is definitive, it has been essential, if not imperative, that the theoretical parameters within which we view the short story should be clearly defined. It goes without saying that the rest of the chapter was aimed at relating the Xhosa short story to other genres, to place Siwisa in perspective and to give some idea as to how contemporary critics reacted to Siwisa's short stories.

CHAPTER 2

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE ESSAY AND THE SHORT STORY

2.0 Introduction

If one studies the majority of Xhosa short stories, one cannot fail but note the direct comments or what some critics refer to as authorial comments in the stories. This phenomenon is so common in Xhosa short stories that I prefer to identify it as "essayism" by which personal coinage I have in mind all tendencies towards egotisticism, a feature which is normally associated with essay writing.

This tendency in Xhosa literature has led to some confusion with regard to the two subgenres. In this chapter it is intended to trace the confusion, explain it and to pinpoint it in Siwisa's and other writers' short stories.

The basic reason for this confusion is that both subgenres belong to one genre - prose. In Xhosa, the line of demarcation between the two is very thin, in fact, it is more imaginary than real. The two subgenres overlap. A Xhosa storyteller will continually comment on the facts of the story or on his characters while expecting his listener or interlocutor to react to some of the comments and to the

story as well. The story will therefore consist of narrative plus commentary and seldom of narrative only.

The didactic literature of the missionary era found easy acceptance by the writers of the day because it exploited this important feature of the Xhosa narrative. That is why *Sinxo* is still so popular with Xhosa readers.

Some commentary, albeit in a very subtle way, can also be found in the Xhosa *intsomi*, one of the earliest Xhosa narratives. In the *intsomi*, the narrator's subtle subjectivity filters through in his actions, manner of speaking and in other narrative devices. His voice therefore, will not fail to reveal the arrogance in the speech of, for example, the girl who refuses to lick the dirt from the old woman's eyes. Numerous other cases can be cited. The performer's voice, tone, expression and attitude cannot but make subtle or covert commentary on the characters.

This tendency can also be found in the Zambian language, *Tabwa*, especially in their "inshimi". Cf. Cancel (1981:41):

Inshimi performance is an art form which is most successful, most vital when an audience experiences a strong emotional and intellectual involvement with narrative events.

To achieve this goal, the Tabwa performers will, according to Cancel (ibid):

... at times accentuate the tonal pitches of words in order to express excitement or emphasize a point.

In some of our African literatures, e.g. Northern Sotho literature, this direct commentary is made by what is termed a "Narrating character". This technique is found mainly in Matsepe's novels. Cf. Serudu (1979:52):

In the three novels Matsepe's narrating character, assumes the role of a guardian of certain accepted norms whereby he approves or disapproves the actions of his characters. He tends to stand aloof and keeps a distance from the world of activity of the characters and watches their actions like a mentor. He does not hesitate to rebuke or discredit a character if he considers that its actions are not in accordance with his "normative reflections" (Wayne Booth, p. 221).

Siwisa does the same thing less artistically - he comments directly. This narrator-commentator feature is typical of the omniscient point of view which is engaged by Siwisa in his stories. Abrams (1971:134) says about this phenomenon:

Within this mode, the intrusive narrator is one who not only reports but freely comments on his characters, evaluating their actions and motives and expressing his views about human life in general ...

Kennedy, as cited by Serudu (1985:100) also confirms this age old practice:

In many Victorian novels it was customary for some commentator presumably the author, to interrupt the story from time to time, remarking upon the action, offering philosophical asides or explaining the procedure to be followed in telling the story.

Direct commentary can also be found in Xhosa songs, e.g.:

Narrative: Kwakukho intombi

Eyayizul' itsho ngesketh' esimnyama
(twice);

Commentary: Hayi bafana ilizwe lifile ...

Narrative/chorus: Eyayizul' itsho ngesketh' esimnyama.

(Narrative: There was once a girl
who wandered about wearing a black skirt
(twice);

Commentary: Oh no, young men things are bad in the
country ...

Narrative/chorus: Who wandered about wearing a black skirt)

There are many such examples but we shall not cite any more in this study, for obvious reasons. Digression is so much part of the African epic that its presence in any narration does not bother the listener in any way. This is confirmed by Okpewho as cited by Owomoyela (1981:5):

The singer's fertile imagination has the tendency now and then to digress from the main track of the story. A word or an idea suggests various associations, a line or an idea recalls an event or a tune, and the imagination is drawn off a tributary trail.

Kuse (1978:209) also maintains that this digression cannot be eliminated altogether from the Xhosa short story but it should be controlled:

In the vignette about the bandits, Mqhayi demonstrates that in African literature direct commentary on the characters need not be eschewed. However, it should be controlled digression which does not assume a life of its own independent of plot and theme. Direct commentary, while it may be generally typical of bad writing, can be fruitfully employed as a literary service, a dilatory device, to accentuate and enhance anticipation of the resolution. It also helps to mark and organise the subthemes of a plot line. Direct commentary and digression work well at the hands of a skillful writer even when they are not altogether subtle.

Western oriented critics refuse under any circumstances to reconcile these digressions with the modern short story. To them, this extraneous material is unacceptable and renders a story defective. Johnson and Hamlin (1966:2) put the case for the dropping of all digressions very uncompromisingly:

Again, the reader must be aware, must be constantly alert to the actions, gestures, expressions, descriptions which he encounters in the printed page, because in the good short story nothing, not one line, is superfluous.

Everything is necessary, everything bears toward the predetermined effect of the story.

Bates (1972:16) sounds much more final and resolute:

... in the whole composition there should be no word written, of which the tendency, direct or indirect, is not to one pre-established design.

Nearer home, Malherbe (1929:49) confirms the stand taken by the above critics by clearly emphasising:

Die skrywer laat van die begin af sy soeklig speel op wat tot die kliemaks moet lei, en vergeet vir geen oomblik wat die kliemaks gaan wees nie. Hy laat hom nie op sypaadjies verlei nie. Hy gaan met strakke gespannendheid op sy doel af.

2.1 The black storyteller and his environment

If we aim at a fair evaluation of the Xhosa short story, we are bound to examine the Xhosa writer's environment of which he is a product. Perhaps the basic difference between his *modus operandi* and the Western practitioner's lies in the environment.

In an unpublished speech, "Neuropsychological Contributions to Language Learning Psychology" delivered at Broederstroom on 10 September 1985, J J du Preez cited Lozanov as saying about the importance of man's environment:

The human individual as a psychosomatic entity is a product of the natural and social environment. It is impossible to regard the individual outside his environment, the social environment where he grows up and develops. The biological heritage is moulded, diverted and rebuilt under the conditions of the social environment.

The difference between the black storyteller and the Western practitioners can be traced back to Poe's restrictive view of the short story, cited by Aycock (1982:16):

Poe's aesthetic was audience oriented: how to hold, nay, captivate the attention of the reader. This he did by tightening the plot: avoiding discursive passages, unproductive digressions, interpolated stories, and the convolution of telescoping subplots.

If consensus is to be reached on this issue, it should first be reached on the fact, as Ransome (1909:276) puts it, that "each nation has its own conventional raconteur". Ransome (ibid) proceeds to state that each nation adopts an attitude for anecdote peculiar to its own genius. I therefore implore that we look at the Xhosa short story in this light.

2.2 Confusion between the short story and the essay

The fusion of narrative and commentary in the Xhosa narrative has led to serious confusion in some of our literary works. Unfortunately, even knowledgeable writers such as Jordan, Ncamashe, Tamsanqa and Siwisa present both essays and short stories in the same volume.

In the book *Kwezo Mpindo zeTsitsa* Jordan starts off with a very good short story "Idabi laseMpindweni" followed by three other equally successful stories - "Iindonga ziwelene", "Uvelebhayi" and "UMadliwa ziinyoka". The fifth story is more of a narrative essay than a short story and the rest of these writings are very essayistic, yet the book purports to be a collection of short stories.

The close relationship between narrative and commentary can also be seen in Burns-Ncamashe's short stories in the book *Masibaliselane*. Most of the so-called short stories are in actual fact narrative essays, e.g. "Ama-Rharhabe Agxwala Emswaneni Ngonina" and "USoSobose". The story "UZizi Uzuzwe nguZulu" is a typical example of a peculiar hybrid form consisting of three and a half pages descriptive commentary and two and a half pages narrative. "USozizwe kwaRharhabe" is another clear example of a narrative essay describing events connected with the arrival of King George VI in the Eastern Cape in 1947.

This contention is confirmed by the author himself in the next so-called short story "UMneno-Nciba uthetha noSozizwe":

Emveni kwenkcazo efana nale ikhova kwenziwa ngesiganekokazi esinje ngesokuhanjelwa nguKumkani uSozizwe nosapho lwakokwabo,... (p. 105)

(After the previous commentary about this great incident, regarding the Royal visit ...
(My emphasis)

This close relationship between narrative and commentary manifests itself in reverse in Tamsanqa's essays *Imitha yelanga*. Tamsanqa is very fond of using anecdotes in some of his essays to prove his point. Fortunately, he does not overdo this. Cf. this introductory phrase:

Ngenye imini kukhe kwenzeka into esisimanga,
mhla ndayiqonda le nto ibubuxoki ukuba
inamandla. (p. 12)

(A very strange thing once happened making me realize that lies are very powerful)

The essay in question is "Ukuxoka". The same technique can also be found in Jolobe's essays. "Impucuko" and many other essays in his collection *Amavo* contain several such little narratives.

This confusion between the essay and the short story comes out very clearly in Jolobe's book *Amavo*, in the introductory and prefatory pages, e.g. Jolobe states in the introduction:

Niyazi ukuba mandulo amadoda xa asekhaya abesa-
kubutha ngaseluthangweni phaya kutshaywa kuqoqwa
zintonga, kubazwa zinqawa, kusukwa zikhumba,
kukhandwa zacholo kuyiloo nto. Zonke ezi zinto
zisenziwa nje kudliwa amavo, oko kutsho kuyanco-
kolwa.

(You all know that in the olden days when the

men are at home they used to sit next to the kraal smoking, making grooves around their sticks, making pipes, tanning skins and making bangles and many other things. Right through this hive of activity they are chatting to one another)

This explanation fits Jolobe's conversational style in his essays, but Dr Bokwe's introduction to this book sows the first seeds of confusion. Cf.:

Kodwa ke ndiyazi ukuba umbuzo wokuba izincoko ziyintoni na unokubakho. Nam mfundi andiqinisekanga ukuba ndingawuphendula ngokuzeleyo lo mbuzo. Koko ndithe ndakufunda kwangathi kum zizincoko okanye amabali amafutshane, abhalwe ngendlela eyolisayo, - indlela ayibona ngayo umbhali loo nto abalisa okanye ancokola ngayo ...

(But I know that many will ask the question: what are essays. Even I, dear reader, am not sure that I could answer that question adequately. But on reading I got the impression that they are conversations or short stories, written in very entertaining style from the writer's own point of view.)
(My emphasis)

The innocent insertion of that single phrase "okanye amabali amafutshane" (or short stories), represents a confusion that has haunted the Xhosa essay for more than 45 years.

This confusion can also be found in Madala's essays *Amava Amafutshane* (1978). The essay "Nguwo nguwo ngumtshato" and the essay "Umdlalo webhola ekhatywayo" resemble short stories more than essays; the narrative element is too strong and the egotistical element is too weak in both of them.

Even the illustrious Dr D D T Jabavu could not escape this pitfall. In his book *Izidungulwana* (1958) the following comment appears on the back cover:

UGqirha uD.D.T. Jabavu, inkokeli ebalulekileyo kwisizwe esiNtsundu, umbhali wezi ncwadi: E-India nase-East Africa, EJerusalem nezinye, ngoku ubuye wasiphakela kuloo ndyebo yakhe yanava ngokubhala amabali amafutshane okuvula iingqondo nokusonwabisa.

(Dr D D T Jabavu, a very prominent leader in the African nation, and the writer of the following books: E-India nase-East Africa, EJerusalem and others, has once again provided us with something out of his vast experience in the nature of short stories to open our minds and to entertain us.)
(My emphasis)

To my greatest amazement, the book contains nothing else but essayistic writings on various biographical, cultural and historical issues!

Rubusana, in his famous *Zemk' inkomo magwalandini* (1911) and Bennie in his *Imibengo* were wise enough to give their books neutral titles enabling them to include several genres in one book, bringing the two subgenres, the short story and the essay close to each other.

Siwisa could not escape this sweeping tide, hence his landing in the same boat as the previous writers. The result is that his "Iintwana ezincinane nazo zibalulekile", "Mdala utat' omkhulu", "Amaqal' afike", "Qash' Qash' Kupnekwe ntoni namhlanje?", "Umzingisi akanashwa" and "Ziindlela

ngeendlela zokuphila" are essays and not short stories like the rest of the stories in the book. Fortunately, Siwisa avoids this confusion in his later works - *Amabali Angemigudu* and *Izimanga ZaloMhlaba*.

This close association between the short story and the essay is not peculiar to the Xhosa language only. Ransome (ibid:114) traces it two centuries back in English literature:

The Character, the neat driven team of short sentences, became in his hands something like a story. It became an anecdote with no other point than to bring alive the person described ... The eighteenth century saw the absorption of the periodical essayists into avowed storytelling.

Glorfeld a.o. (1967:2ff) clearly point out that this tendency to intrude is as old as the short story itself:

At the genesis of the art of fiction in the eighteenth century, it was common to find the author in the midst of his imaginative world, actively directing our attention to certain characters and scenes, moralizing on the action, and providing witty commentary to ease us from one event to the next. He was, in effect, leering over our shoulders, pinching and prodding us with persistent intrusions ...

Finally, as a traditional storyteller, Siwisa subscribes to Sawyer's (1966:18) view of the role of the storyteller:

Every traditional storyteller I have heard - and I have gone into many countries to find them - has shown above everything else that intense urge to share with others what has already moved him deeply ... Not a clever sharing of the mind alone but rather a sharing of heart and spirit. I think storytelling must do this if it is to endure.

Satyo (1977:98) also confirms that the Xhosa folk tales do not aim at entertainment only. In support of this, he cites Malcolm who states in this regard:

They are told for the purpose of enforcing or, at any rate, supporting some point of family discipline or tribal custom. They uphold conduct that is for the good of society and the welfare of the community.

This explains the didacticism and the authorial comments in our short stories. They have a purpose. They are not there by mistake or because of bad style. It is therefore important that they be seen in this light if the true nature of our literature is to be understood.

2.3 Examples of the difference between the short story and the essay

Despite the affinity between the Xhosa short story and the essay, there are basic differences between the two subgenres. These underlying differences make it possible for us to keep the two apart as distinct subgenres. If the two are to survive as separate and independent subgenres, serious

consideration should be given to their distinctive elements.

Dlamini (1975:62ff) highlights the following differences between the short story and the essay, which have been tabulated for easy reference:

	<i>ESSAY</i>	<i>SHORT STORY</i>
A	Discussion	O
E	O	Narrative
C	Limited length	Limited length
D	Adherence to subject	Adherence to subject
E	O	Action through character
F	O	Formal plot structure
G	Author in foreground	O
H	O	Author in background

The above tabulated list clearly indicates that the two sub-genres differ on points A and B; they resemble each other with regard to C and D; they differ radically with regard to points E and F, G and H.

The above facts will now be elucidated by means of comparative examples from Siwisa's works. Special emphasis will be placed on *Ndibuzen' Amathongo* (1983) from which those writings that have been rejected as genuine short stories will be selected and viewed under the above subheadings of the tabulated list. These writings only appear in the

aforementioned book.

A *Discussion*

"Intwana ezincinane nazo zibalulekile"

Khawuye ezilalini uzibonele ngokwakho izinto ezonwabisayo nezifundisayo nangona zincinane.

1 INJA YELALI. Yivelele ngentla ilali uya kuhlangatyezwa yinto esel' isineke kade, ibuza ngelithi, "Yintoni ngoku! Yintoni ngoku! Ngoku!" Yivelele ngezantsi kuba usithi wena ubaleka inkathazo, uya kuthi ungaqondanga ugutyulwe kwangaloo mbuzo, "Yintoni ngoku! Yintoni ngoku! Ngoku! Ngoku!!" (p. 3)

(Just pay a visit to the rural villages to see for yourself exciting and educative things although they are small.

1 THE VILLAGE DOG. Approach the village from the top side, you will be met half way by something grinning, asking you, "What's the matter now! What's the matter now! Now!" Approach it from the lower side saying you are trying to avoid trouble, the same question will come to you unexpectedly, "What's the matter now! What's the matter now! Now! Now!!"

"Mdala utat' omkhulu"

Mdala utat' omkhulu kodwa isimanga sezimanga akafuni ukuba kuthiwe ugugile. Kweyakhe ingqondo usengumnt' omtsha, waye eselula gqitha ukuba angenziwa ixhego. (p. 34)

(Grandpa is old, but strangely enough, he does not want anybody to say he is old. In his own mind, he is still a youthful person, too young to be regarded as an old man)

"Mthandi kangatha"

Kusasa lingekaphumi ilanga, uya kumva edokozelisa ilizwi komnye umzi ebika intloko ebuhlungu eyenziwa kukungaphungi. Liya

kuthi lishiya iintaba, umbone endolosa
enyusa ilali. (p. 37)

(Before sunrise in the morning, you will hear his gruff voice in one of the homesteads complaining about headaches caused by the fact that he had not had his morning coffee. By the time the sun rises higher than the mountains, you would see him strutting up the village)

In all these cases, the author discusses the subject matter. There is no question of a full scale narrative except in those cases where the author used an anecdote to illustrate a point. Discussion and point of view are two very striking features of the essay. Therefore they will be given special attention in this section.

E Action through character

"Amaqal' afike"

Par. 1 Yonke intetho yenziwa nguMbanjwa, yaziwa nguMbanjwa kuphela indlela yokuphathwa komfazi endlwini. "Uyabona, Mpinga, andinakho ukulibeka nomfazi alibeke kowam umzi, "... (p. 42)

(Mbanjwa is the only one who does the talking, he is the only one who knows how to treat a woman in the house. "You see, Mpinga, I cannot allow a woman to undermine my orders in my house,"...)

Par. 2 Uvuka ngonyezi uMbanjwa aqukeze phakathi komzi. Ukuba ugutyulwe ngumntu ephethe isitya okanye ikomityi, uyithi geqe phaya angxole umnene.

(Mbanjwa wakes up very early to do some household chores. Should anybody surprise him while doing so and find him either with a dish or a cup in hand, he will throw it aside and shout)

One could go on *ad infinitum* quoting all the paragraphs. One thing comes out very clearly - this is a descriptive essay on Mbanjwa. Although the essay depends on several anecdotes, its main purpose is to reveal Mbanjwa's character to the reader. He is the direct opposite of what he pretends to be. There is, therefore, no interaction of events. The events described need not form a unified whole with one central idea as they could show us different aspects of the same person's character. The author's personal comments are very vital as the incidents are designed to confirm them. The whole truth comes out at the end:

Kwalile ezinzulwini zobusuku lavakala ilizwi eliqhelekileyo. "Nondleko, uyandikrwitsha!" Kwathi cwaka umzuzwana. "Mbanjwa unantoni lento usoloko ugezela kum!" Kwalandela iimpama eziliqela. (p. 44)

(In the middle of the night the usual voice was heard. "Nondleko, you are throttling me!" It was silent for a moment. "Mbanjwa, why do you keep on bothering me!" A few smacks followed)

Mbanjwa was not only a henpecked man but he was also frequently assaulted by his wife. That is the whole purpose of the essay. All the accompanying little narratives are designed to prove this point. The essay does not depend on the incidents for its development. Instead, it depends on the writer's comments. The essay would still be successful even if the anecdotes were not there. In the case of

a short story this is utterly unthinkable. Something must happen because of something else.

F *Formal plot structure* "Qash' Qash' Kuphekwe
ntoni namhlanje?"

Par. 1 Uhlal' aph' ekhaya umthakathi, akathandi kubhadula kakhulu. Injongo yaziwa nguye kuphela, kuba ngekhe akuphendula xa umbuzayo isizathu sokungathandi ukuya kwamanye amakhwenkwe. (p. 48)

(The fellow stays at home. He does not like to walk about too much. He alone knows why, because if you could ask him why, he would not answer you or tell you why he does not like to go to other boys.)

Par. 2 Makubotshwe iinkabi kusiyiwa emasimini, uya kufika erhuqa umlenze, idolo okanye iqatha, selibuhlungu kalokunje. (ibid)

(Should oxen be inspanned so that the fields can be ploughed, you would find him dragging a leg, knee or ankle complaining of severe pain)

Par. 3 Kuyasa kona okungaliyo, ugaleleke uMvulo neembandezelo zawo zesikolo, ufike seleyinxeke-nxeke yento ehlininikayo kwakusasa. (ibid)

(The next day is bound to come, then the Monday comes with all its hardships with regard to attending school, then you will see how awful a picture he cuts as he is on the point of crying early in the morning.)

As can be seen above, the essay has no formal plot structure. It merely mirrors the author's views on the chosen topic, from aspect to aspect. In the above essay, we are introduced

to various facets of Mlomana's life. The story line does not depend on exposition, rising action, complication, climax and denouement. There is, in fact, no story line. We merely have several views on Mlomana's life and character.

G *Point of view*

"Umzingisi akanashwa"
(essay)

(Emva kokufunda isincoko esibhalwe ngesi-Ngesi nguMnu. Max Baerhom, sisithi: "Ukubuyela esikolweni", ndifikelwe zezi ngcinga):
(p. 53)

(After reading an essay written in English by Mr Max Baerhom entitled "Returning to school", the following thoughts came to my mind):

"Yiza, Feleni, yiza!"
(short story)

Kungongcwalazi lwemivundla, ezantsi kwama-khala akufuphi nendlu kaNdarhana (Daagen), unovenkile obalulekileyo wesi sithili.
"Uze ungene kuqala Madrayi, ucele amanzi ..."
(p. 23)

(It is just after dusk, below the aloes near Daagen's house. Daagen is a well known shopkeeper in the district. "You must get in first Madrayi, and ask for water")

From these two extracts it is clear that the author is in the foreground in the essay and in the background in the short story. In the first passage we are aware of the "I", e.g. "... ndifikelwe zezi ngcinga ...". This "I" does not appear in the second passage where we become aware of a narrator as well as another character who spurs Madrayi

on to enter the premises first. Both characters are definitely not the author as is the case in the first passage. It should be borne in mind that in the case of the short story this "I" is not necessarily the author whereas in the essay it is the author who speaks.

2.4 Resumé

In this chapter the source of the confusion that exists between the Xhosa short story and the essay has been traced. The main point made by the study is that emotional involvement by the Xhosa storyteller leads to a tendency towards essayism. An attempt has also been made to highlight the main differences between the two subgenres in the light of examples from some of Siwisa's essays. No doubt, the differences would have been much clearer if short stories written in the first person could have been used as illustrations. Unfortunately, all of Siwisa's stories are written in the third person omniscient point of view.

CHAPTER 3

SIWISA'S MAIN THEMES AND SUBJECT MATTER

3.0 Introduction

There seems to be some general agreement among critics regarding the definition of theme. However, because a slight shift in emphasis in some definitions is discernible, it should be worthwhile to restate theme as defined by a few eminent critics.

Abrams (1971:102) explains theme as follows:

Theme is sometimes used interchangeably with motif, but the term is more usefully applied to a thesis or doctrine which an imaginative work is designed to incorporate and make persuasive to the reader.

Fowler (1973:195) argues in favour of the restriction of the traditional meaning of the term:

There is a case for restricting the loosely formal use of the term; if we use 'theme' to mean a certain quantity of features in a work (iterative imagery or stylistic mannerism), we are confusing a symptom with a cause. For example, if we talk of the 'theme of drowning' in Dickens' Our Mutual Friend, we are only saying that it is a novel in which people are repeatedly drowned or drowning is frequently mentioned, whereas the 'theme of Christian redemption' offers an explanation of the significance of drowning.

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Perrine (1978:117ff) is even more decisive in his definition of theme. He lays down six principles which are a *sine qua non* in any conceptualisation of theme:

Theme must be expressible in the form of a statement with a subject and a predicate. It is insufficient to say that the theme of a story is motherhood or loyalty to country. Motherhood and loyalty are simple subjects. Theme must be a statement about the subject. For instance "Motherhood sometimes has more frustrations than rewards"

Theme is therefore highly significant because, according to Knickerbocker, Reninger, Bratton and Leggett (1985:10):

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

Although, like Ntuli (1984:59), "we use 'theme' in a wide sense to include the subject matter and the underlying idea ...", we shall also bear Lenake's (1984:15) differentiation in mind:

The term subject-matter relates to 'what is being said' in a poem, while theme refers to the underlying idea of the poem. The two concepts appear to be inseparable for literary analysis.

My preoccupation with the subject matter in the following discussion stems from Knickerbocker, Reninger, Bratton and Leggett's view:

Unless the literal facts of the story are clearly understood before further analysis begins, we are likely to misconstrue the story's total meaning (1985:8)

3.1 Ndibuzen' Amathongo

In his first book of short stories - *Ndibuzen' Amathongo* - Siwisa evinces a variety of subject matter and themes. Briefly stated, his subject matter varies from animals, cultural clashes and love, to hunting and crime.

"Mhla indalo yaxakana nendalo", deals with animals. Although this is a simple story about the jackal and the lamb, it has a very powerful theme which could be stated as "Victimisation of the weak by the strong cannot prevail forever". In the story, the wicked jackal is chased to death by an innocent lamb who mistakes it for its mother.

"Imfene nobubele bayo", is concerned with how people view and treat animals, especially a baboon, an animal which is associated with witchcraft in the Xhosa society. Although there are structural problems in the story that make it difficult for one to pinpoint the main theme, one can safely generalize that ignorance of the other person's culture can lead to very embarrassing situations. The White missionary thinks he is complimenting the black parishioner by referring to how well he looks after his baboon whereas in fact he is exposing a secret that the man is engaging in

witchcraft. The little girl who tells of her father's baboon unwittingly does the same.

"Hayi ubudenge" (Lumkela ubuhlungu benyoka) is about the African practice of injecting snake poison into a dog to make it vicious. A man who does this to himself becomes so vicious that he has to be killed. In the same story, a dog becomes so vicious after being injected with snake poison that it mauls several members of one family. It, too, has to be killed. The obvious theme here seems to be that evil backfires on the evildoer.

"Isimanga" is a story about the mysterious disappearance of Sifonondile and both his parents in magical circumstances. This is one of those stories in which Siwisa seems to suggest to us that there is more to the universe than we can comprehend, no matter what his missionary-era critics might say.

"Siyagoduka" is another mystery story about the spirit of a criminal which haunts his home and terrorises his unworthy heir. Not even trying to run away could save the heir from the visitation. Nobody can escape the wrath of the departed, Siwisa seems to tell us. This is a bold stand, given the vehemence with which the missionaries disputed the existence of such spirits.

"Vuka usenge" reveals most graphically the effects of superstition. Ndluku is tormented by his complicity in the death of an unpopular witchdoctor. The logical conclusion to be drawn from this story is that superstitious beliefs are just "figments" of our imaginations. Cf.

Barnard (1986:4):

Witch-hunts remained popular for a long time, but suddenly the whole thing faded out. Perhaps things got too close to home and too many favourite aunts were found with broomsticks in the cupboard. Whatever the reason, the church decided witches weren't such a menace anymore.

And that's all it took - a decision by a few sane people to allow a little harmless eccentricity. Witches, in short, were a figment of the imagination. (My emphasis)

(Sunday Times Metro, 9/2/86, p. 4)

"UNtozinani ... eNxuba" is a story about murderers who rob people at the Fish River ford and throw them into the river. One of them, Ntozinani, gets killed in the process. Retribution comes out very clearly in this story.

"Yiza, Feleni, yiza!" is also a crime story in which the criminals end up killing each other. Siwisa's popular theme - crime does not pay - comes out very strongly here.

"Apho kukho uthando kukho indlela" deals with two bosom friends who end up as arch-enemies. False fears relating to witchcraft are aroused when a bird starts frequenting

the other party's house. The woman, Nomfutho, later discovers that the bird had built a nest inside the house and that its presence there had nothing to do with witchcraft. Once again, Siwisa seems to say that superstition is a figment of the individual's mind. This is a confirmation of what Siwisa has said in the story "Vuka usenge".

"Umzingeli weembila ufel' eliweni" has an explicitly stated theme as can be seen from the proverb 'Ingcibi yamanzi ifa ngamanzi, eyezikhali zizikhali' meaning that you normally meet your death in your favourite pursuit. Given Siwisa's theme that crime does not pay, this is a very sound and appropriate warning to the wayward.

"Ijoni laphesheya kweqhiba" must be one of those stories which was not readily acceptable to the missionary-era critics. In this unusual story, Siwisa shows very clearly that the African's philosophy of life, sickness and death differs from that of the Whites'. There is no better cure to a sick African than to be visited by a close senior member of the family.

The theme - crime does not pay - can be found in the rest of the stories - "Amathol' erhamba", and "Izigigaba zikaNjengenja".

Some of the stories in the book have been deliberately left out because they are too essayistic to be regarded as short stories. These will be dealt with in chapter 6.

3.2 Amabali Angemigudu

Siwisa wrote his second book of short stories six years later than the first book. The book, *Amabali Angemigudu*, appeared in 1962. Experience-wise, Siwisa had, by then, been exposed to life both in the rural areas and in the urban areas - Mariazell, Grahamstown and Peddie.

The themes in the two books overlap and complement one another. It is interesting to compare the stories with one another in order to see whether Siwisa shows any changes in his themes or in the way in which he approaches certain sensitive issues.

The controversial story, "Ah Njayibuzwa" has serious magical overtones. It is about a church steward who kept a baboon for witchcraft purposes. This theme can be interpreted as signifying that forces of evil are not easy to eradicate. How African children will construe the story is not the point at issue and beyond the scope of this study.

Apart from the direct relationship between this story and the other stories that involve witchcraft or the power of

evil and supernatural forces, there is also a direct relationship between the stories that have retribution as their theme - "UNtozinani", "Miomana", and "Ah Njayibuzwa".

"Crime, in any form, does not pay" is Siwisa's clarion call.

While in some stories Siwisa questions or despises witchcraft, in others he does not do so at all, e.g. "Isimanga", "Vuka usenge", "Apho kukho uthando kukho indlela" and "Ah Njayibuzwa". Care should, however, be taken not to construe this as an endorsement of the practice by the author. Siwisa sometimes uses very subtle methods to register his disapproval.

In "Isimanga" he draws a very unnatural or supernatural picture of people who use magic sticks to disappear through the roofs of their huts. He does not question the practice at all, hence the wrath of the critics of the day.

Wavuka ngobunye abusuku uSifonondile wenyuka ngentsika,
wafika entungo warhola uluthi walutshisa esibaneni
lwaqhuma. Ngesimangalisayo isiquphe wesuka wee
shwaka waphela emehlweni ... ummangaliso!
(1983:12)

(Sifonondile woke up one night and climbed up the supporting pillar, when he got on top he took out a stick and burnt it in the lamp. It gave off some smoke. All of a sudden he quickly vanished into thin air ... wonder of wonders!)

Once again Siwisa does not point a finger to refute

this incident. In fact, he seems to confirm it in a very subtle way. The exclamation at the end seems to confirm the reality of the incident. The following evocative remarks produce the same effect:

Umhlola wakwamhlola ... Hayi ke ngoku, zaphela
iinyani emadodeni! (p. 12)

(What a strange incident! ... When that happened,
the men lost their wits!)

In "Vuka usenge" Siwisa first establishes that the witchdoctor from the other side of the Fish River was indeed performing miraculous and convincing deeds, proving his outstanding magical powers. He does not cast any doubt on this man's practice. Instead, Siwisa is quite positive about the witchdoctor's effectiveness:

Laligqugqisile kuloo lali igqirha laphesheya
kweNxuba. Umhlola laliwubona ngeyona ndlela,
abantu libanuka ngokungathethekiyo. Wonke
umntu wayekhala ngenkunkqele yegqirha, engazange
ibonwe ngaphambili kuloo lali. (p. 16)

(The witchdoctor from the other side of the
Fish River was working wonders in that village,
he could divine all sorts of sicknesses, and he
was smelling out people in large numbers.
Everybody was talking about this expert witch-
doctor who was the first of his kind in the
village.)

This positive view of the witchdoctor is cleverly contrasted with Ndluku's attitude and outlook. Ndluku has a guilty conscience over the death of the hated witchdoctor. He

suffers from hallucinations and dreams of his own funeral. Siwisa, therefore, implies that belief in witchcraft is purely psychological and imaginary and not at all based on sound reasoning. These twists in Siwisa's themes were overlooked by his erstwhile critics.

Siwisa's main objective is always to point out the mystery surrounding certain beliefs and not to set himself up as a judge to condemn these beliefs. Cf. "Apho kukho uthando kukho indlela":

Imimangaliso ayisayi kuze iphele esekho umntu emhlabeni. Izinto ezingaqhelekanga zisenzeka mihla le kwiindawo ngeendawo. (ibid: 25)

(Mysteries will never cease for as long as man inhabits the earth. Strange things happen daily in various places.)

Working through the character Nomfutho, Siwisa tacitly confirms rumours relating to Nonzingo's involvement in such practices:

Izikhumba zakhe uNonzingo zazibalwa apho elalini, zaye izigigaba zakhe zingangoboya benja. Wayezazi uNomfutho zonke ezi zinto, ezinye ade naye abe buzingqina. (p. 25)

(Nonzingo's victims were numerous in that village and her evil deeds were just as many. Nomfutho was aware of all those things and she could even confirm some of them in a way.)

It is obvious here that Siwisa does not want to commit himself. Instead he uses Nomfutho to state what he himself

does not wish to state overtly. In the same way as Ndluku, Nomfutho suffers from the psychological effects of these beliefs. She attributes evil intent to an innocent bird which frequents her hut because it has a nest there. Once again, Siwisa shows up the stupidity of believing in witchcraft.

As can be seen in the contentious story "Ah Njayibuzwa", Siwisa's method is designed to reveal various superstitious beliefs in his society as they are widely known and then he subtly and very covertly shows that some of these beliefs are without bases. It is therefore in this light that this controversial story should be seen. It should be seen in the context of Siwisa's philosophy and interpretation of his people's outlook.

Siwisa's greatest contribution in this regard is that he is bold enough to assert what many would not dare mention for fear of reprisals from the post missionary-era critics and to show, where necessary that some of the beliefs do not hold water. However, in doing so he does not discredit the affected party because to him the fear is genuine and in his worldview these things are a reality. Siwisa's critics overlook this. He interprets his characters' fears instead of attacking them overtly.

This twist in focus and emphasis can also be found in the story "UDideka". A casual look at the story would give one the impression that this is another crime story and yet in-depth study reveals Siwisa's real theme - 'criminal tendencies have disastrous effects on one's family'. Although Dideka is a minor character in the story, Siwisa has used her name in the title of the story. She is a docile and well behaved young woman as compared to her wayward brothers. As the story progresses, one becomes more and more aware of the effects of this wayward behaviour on Dideka.

Human nature and human frailty are also revealed in the story "Lingaba likhulu umbombo uyaqhosha". The innocent looking love story is designed to show us the other side of man. Man is by nature erratic. A young doctor causes the collapse of a young woman's love affair with an eligible young teacher. He ultimately dumps her and elopes with a nurse working in his surgery. Siwisa seems to suggest that whether man is involved in crime or in love, he is basically prone to error. The story "UDideka" contrasts very well with "Lingaba likhulu umbombo uyaqhosha" because in both stories a third party suffers.

In the story "Ndiza kuniyalekisa" Siwisa is more interested in the cause of crime rather than crime *per se*. He confirms the old adage that money is the root of all evil. Cf.:

Imali sisizekabani senkohlakalo kuba liya phalala
negazi ngenxa yayo. (1962:38)

(Money is the root of all evil because it easily
leads to bloodshed.)

Although crime plays a major role in Siwisa's stories, his theme and message are clearly designed to point to the fact that crime does not pay and, as shown by the last story in this book, crime will always be exposed. Vide "Myekeni ambulale".

3.3 Izimanga Zalomhlaba

Crime features very strongly in Siwisa's third collection of short stories *Izimanga Zalomhlaba* (1975). Because this book appeared nineteen years after the first book, it is interesting to see how Siwisa handles the subject of crime as opposed to the other themes such as superstition and love.

In the story "Umvuzo wethemba" Siwisa clearly shows that some crimes are as a result of misdirection or misguidance. This notion comes out very clearly in some of his earlier stories even though Siwisa has used superstition as his subject. We have seen with reference to some of his stories on superstition, that sometimes 'the problem is in the mind'. That is exactly the case with Mateyisi. He lives in a world of fantasy. He was told by Gypsies that he was going to be-

come rich. His hope led him to theft and culminated in his stealing his own father's money.

Once again, the theme - crime does not pay - comes out very strongly in the story "Umzila wokufa". Lucky kills his rival Samson and Thabitha his ex-girlfriend but he is also subsequently killed. Siwisa, once again, uses "state of mind" as a motivating factor in the commission of certain crimes. In this story jealousy accounts for this condition. Siwisa regards some of his characters' actions or beliefs as arising from a "psychological condition". Vide "Apho kukho uthando kukho indlela" and "Vuka usenge".

Crime does not pay is also the most obvious theme in the story "Sisonka sethu" and retribution is also a clear motif in the story, just as in the previous story "Umzila wokufa".

In the story "Indoda yelaka", Mathayi does not actually rob the victims but, thinking that he is a corpse rising from the dead, they flee and leave all their money behind and he readily expropriates it for himself. Once again, Siwisa does not overtly condemn the practice but if one views or weighs the contents of the story against the title, the irony of the situation becomes apparent - Mathayi's so-called luck was another crime in disguise. This is a further example of a story in which Siwisa gives us a glimpse of a character's sense of thinking. To the character, appropriating other

people's money for himself, is real luck despite the fact that he has deprived his victims of their well earned money and belongings. Siwisa's message is loud and clear - 'Crime, like superstition, emanates from a distorted frame of mind'.

This reference to the frame of mind can also be found in the story "Ungqondo-mbini". Zongezile literally has two minds. After falling from a donkey cart he suddenly acquires magical powers and becomes a witchdoctor. When Panky throws him to the ground he immediately loses these powers and his practice flops. This is further proof of Siwisa's great message that superstition is just a "state of mind". It only needs a hard jolt on the head to bring you back to your senses.

As further proof of this "state of mind" philosophy, Siwisa depicts, in the story "Wayengathandi yena", a woman who has an uncontrollable obsession for Barracuda cars. She falls in love with a man who possesses her favourite car but when her own husband dies from being crushed by his car and she is paid out R3 000 in insurance, she severs ties with the other man because, after all, she only had a psychological problem - obsession with Barracudas and not love!

Retribution, as an important motif in Siwisa's themes, comes out very clearly in the last two stories "Ukuqina

enyaleni" and "Namhla zigagene".

3.4 A comparative study of Siwisa's main themes

Siwisa is a product of the missionary era. Moreover, he is the son of a missionary. No wonder then that he should concern himself so much with the problems of witchcraft and superstition. Despite this background, a large part of his success can be ascribed to the fact that his approach is designed to examine and explain these problems instead of despising and deriding those who fall victim to them. His second advantage is that he has been fortunate in being born into the traditional society during a time when law and order were two golden rules. The ensuing degeneration with the advent of the so-called enlightenment could not but strike him, culminating in his concern for the spread of crime, hence his theme "Crime does not pay".

Before ending this chapter, I should like to compare the different themes as reflected in his three books. For the sake of clarity, the books will be numbered according to their chronological appearance, thus:

- 1 refers to *Mibuzen' Amathongo*, 1956,
- 11 refers to *Amabali Angemigudu*, 1962,
- 111 refers to *Izimanga ZaloNhlaba*, 1975.

These are not watertight compartments as some short stories can easily be categorised under more than one category:

<i>Crime</i>	<i>Book</i>
1 Hay' ubudenge	1
2 UNtozinani ... eNxuba	1
3 "Yiza Feleni yiza!"	1
4 Izigigaba zikaNjengenja	1
5 Ndiza kuniyalekisa	11
6 Myekeni ambulale	11
7 Umvuzo wethemba	111
8 Umzila wokufa	111
9 Sisonka sethu	111
10 Umgudu wokugqibela	111
11 Okugqina enyaleni	111
12 Namhla zigagene	111
13 Tshona!	111

Superstition (and other beliefs)

1 Isimanga	1
2 Siyagoduka	1
3 Vuka usenge	1
4 Apho kukho uthando kukho indlela	1
5 Ijoni laphesheya kweQhiza	1
6 Ah Njayibuzwa	11

<i>Immoral or errant behaviour</i>		<i>Book</i>
1	Amathol' erhamba	1
2	UDideka	11
3	Ungqondo-mbini	111
4	Wayengathandi yena	111
 <i>Miscellaneous</i>		 <i>Book</i>
1	Lingaba likhulu umbombo uyaghosha	11
2	Indoda yelaka	111
3	Umzingeli weembila ufel' eliweni	1

From this tabulation the following general conclusions may be drawn:

Siwisa's main preoccupation is crime which is followed by superstition and love, the latter to a very much lesser extent.

Siwisa's first book, *Mdibuzen' Amathongo*, mainly contains crime stories or stories involving errant behaviour including a few stories on superstition.

In his second book, *Anabali Angemigudu*, he touches almost evenly on crime, superstition, errant behaviour and love.

In his third book, *Izimanga ZeloMhlaba*, he once more goes all out on crime stories. He drops superstition altogether

but includes some stories on deviant behaviour and love.

The above findings coincide with significant stages in Siwisa's biography, thus pointing to the role played by his background and his experiences in the choice of his themes.

The impact of crime and violence as well as deviant behaviour should have been greater on Siwisa when he taught in Grahamstown from 1942-45 after spending his earlier life in the rural areas under a strong missionary influence.

Later in Peddie he was exposed to isolated cases of crime, errant behaviour as well as to superstition.

Using his experience and maturity as writer and teacher, Siwisa, in his third book, tries to give a balanced account and explanation for the incidence of crime among his compatriots and draws some interesting contrast between the two social problems - crime and superstition, as has been exemplified in this chapter. In this stage of his development he seems to regard superstition as unimportant

From a thematic point of view, Siwisa has, no doubt, succeeded in bringing alive various segments of his people's existence, to use Perrine's expression:

Good writers do not ordinarily write a story to "illustrate" a theme, as the writers of parables or fables. They write stories to bring alive some segment of human existence. When they do so searchingly and coherently, theme arises naturally out of what they have written. Good readers may state the generalization for themselves.

(Perrine 1978:14)

Ardent critics of modern Xhosa writers make undue capital of the fact that writers such as Siwisa completely avoid writing on sensitive political issues. Mkonto (1984:10) in this regard quotes Gerard who explains the Black writer's dilemma very articulately:

... the fear among authors that if they were to write on the political aspirations and problems of their people, the suffering and frustrations which their people experience in a White dominated country, the deep hurt caused by discrimination, then they would probably be unable to find a publisher willing to publish their works.

This surely accounts for Siwisa's total avoidance of this area of writing. In conclusion, I wish to cite Fenson and Kritzer (1966:71) on the question of the assessment of theme:

Thus our statement or consideration of the theme of the story is valuable to the extent to which it takes into account the artistic integrity and totality which is the story itself. The more we are aware of what is going on in the story - dramatically and emotionally, as well as intellectually - the more valuable and pointed our statement of theme and intellectual summing up of the meaning of the story is likely to be.

3.5 Resumé

In this preliminary chapter, an attempt has been made to define the term theme, explain its significance in a work of art and to differentiate between theme and subject matter. Thereafter an in-depth study of the most important stories has been made. This analytic study has revealed that it is unfair to overlook the gist of the theme and to make condemnatory statements based on a shallow view of the themes concerned. Siwisa's main thematic preoccupation has been found to be superstition, crime and deviant behaviour which he reveals by means of very subtle twists in his themes.

CHAPTER 4

SETTING, CHARACTERISATION AND CONFLICT IN SIWISA'S SHORT STORIES

4.0 Introduction

Before examining Siwisa's use of such conventional concepts as setting, characterisation and conflict, it should be reiterated once more that these are generally accepted conventions which do not, in themselves, determine the acceptability or success of a story as such. Secondly, the concepts should not be viewed in isolation but should always be related to the complete story and to the author's intention. Each concept will be defined and applied to the stories.

4.1 Setting

Fenson and Kritzer (1966:30) remark about setting:

One element of fiction which even the most inexperienced reader is likely to be conscious of is setting - the physical background against which the events of a story or novel work themselves out.

According to the two critics, setting has an important function in literature - to contribute to the total unity

of the story. Vide Fenson and Kritzer (ibid):

But as we learn to consider the story as a dramatically unified representation of, and significant comment upon, human nature, the element of setting comes to assume a fuller importance and interest for us. We begin to see setting as one of the elements contributing to the total unity of the story, its details chosen not merely because they are "realistic" or interesting in themselves, but because they contribute significantly to the working out of the theme.

These two critics fail to emphasise one important aspect of theme - historical time. Consequently, I favour Abram's definition as a more adequate definition of theme:

The setting of a narrative or dramatic work is the general locale and the historical time in which its action occurs; the setting of an episode or scene within a work is the particular physical location in which it takes place.
(1971:157)

Siwisa uses setting to maximum effect in his book *Ndibuzen' Amathongo*. In the story "Mhla indalo yaxakana nendalo" the narrator tells us a story involving three "natural" parties - the jackal, the lamb and the landscape. Ignoring the direct commentary which abounds in this story, certain passages that reveal setting or milieu will be extracted, e.g.

Kwakusemini emaganda, ilanga lithe futhu kanobom, laye ligqatsa ebuchotsheni. Imini le yaye izolile ngokusithukuthezi, yonganyelwe mpela nguPhezuko-mkhono, ngengoma ethi, "Phezu komkhono! Phezu komkhono!"

(It was midday, on a fairly hot day with the sun rays falling directly on one's head. It was an exceptionally quiet day, dominated by the cries of the red-chested cuckoo "Christmas Time! Christmas Time!")

The time of the day is very crucial in the story. It is in the vicinity of noon or midday when the heat is normally at its peak. This is definitely not the best time of the day for a running contest as seen in the story. Worse with the rays of the sun directly on one's head! The significance of the red-chested cuckoo is to point to the season of the year. It was in Summer and the day was not cool or warm but hot.

In the following paragraph the narrator explains the setting even more:

Kwithafakazi elikhulu eliselungqamekweni olongamele udada olubanzi, lujongene nendawo emxawuka yaba ngumsethuluka ekuyeni encotsheni, kwakuthe nwatya umhlambikazi omkhulu weegusha ezinomgqeku. Kuthe gqi irhamncwa elikhulu lezimvu, udyakalashé, enyusa intlanjana eveléla ithafa elo ezibe zikulo igusha. (ibid)

(On a very wide open veld which was at the edge of a steep slope facing a wide bushy area next to another rise forming a very sharp point at the top, a large flock of sheep lay leisurely on the ground with their young ones. All of a sudden, the jackal, the great enemy of the sheep, appeared and went up the valley above the veld in which the sheep were.)

In the beginning of the paragraph, Siwisa points to the ruggedness of the terrain. This confirms what had been

said in the previous paragraph and clearly indicates the toughness of the imminent battle. The picture that has been drawn leaves us with no doubt as to where the incident about to be related is going to take place. The sheep and the jackal are all presented in their natural habitat. The demographic features of the locale are essential to the theme of the story - the expansive veld, the bushy area, the slopes and the rises.

In the following paragraph we can see that the forces that had hitherto been building up have caught up with the jackal:

Wathi ukuba angene emsethulukeni, kwaqala kwanzima kaloku ngoku, kuba uyasiphuka umhlaba kwaye kuloo mgudu ungako wayelitsho lankone ubuso itakane. (p. 2)

(As soon as it entered the slope, things became even more difficult because the ground was too loose and in that great struggle, it had made the lamb's face terribly dirty.)

In the story "Imfene nobubele bayo" he begins his story by giving us a clear picture of the setting:

MLungu uthile kuloo dolophu inkulu yaseMonti waye efuye imfene esitiyeni sakhe. (p. 5)

(A certain white man in that city of East London reared a baboon in his garden.)

This brief setting serves a very vital purpose when contrasted with, and viewed against, what is going to happen

in the story. Whites have no sinister fears about keeping baboons on their premises, hence their keeping them where everybody can see them. This contrasts with Blacks, as will be seen in the following setting:

Mfo uthile owayeligosa eliphambili ecaweni, wahlala ngenye injikalanga etyisa imfene yakhe umvubo ekoyini. (ibid)

(A certain man who was a prominent church steward was feeding his baboon in a hut used for food storage one afternoon.)

The setting reveals a man, a prominent churchwarden, clandestinely feeding a baboon in a hut used for storing food. This immediately creates an air of mystery with regard to the man and his baboon. Surely, this is not an ordinary baboon otherwise it would have been kept and fed in the open. This is all suggested by the setting. The narrator confirms this by stating:

Kaloku abantu abaNtsundu abazifuyileyo iimfene bayazifihla, zingabonwa ngabanye abantu ... (pp. 6-7)

(And so it is that Blacks who keep baboons hide them so that no one should see them.)

Some of the stories resemble the fable. Their setting is left deliberately vague. One such story is "Hayi ubudenge":

Umfo othile wabulala inyoka enkulu engaziwayo kwisithili sexhaya lakhe, ... (p. 8)

(A certain man killed a big snake which was unknown to the people in his home district, ...)

Siwisa also uses setting to delineate his characters. He moves them from one environment to the other in order to reveal their real personalities. No amount of pretence could hide Njengenja's backwardness and the fact that he came from the rural areas. Njengenja remains the same Njengenja in Nxarhuni, Grahamstown or East London despite his frantic efforts to present himself as fashionable and sophisticated.

Sometimes Siwisa deliberately makes the setting extraordinarily wide, e.g. in "Tshona!". In this story, Tolwana operates a very successful but illegal transport service between Transkei and Cape Town. This gives his stories an air of universality especially with regard to evil and crime. Both know no boundaries.

Siwisa reflects historical setting in a very interesting way - by making use of car models and makes. This helps to indicate the approximate time in which the story took place. The cars involved are Dodge (1975:40), Chevelle (ibid:42), Pontiac (ibid:47), Impala (ibid:51), Renault (ibid:69), Valiant Barracuda (ibid:71), Ford Capri (ibid:75) and Valiant V I P (ibid:75). These car models are either presented as new to indicate modernity or as old, to indicate outdatedness. It is interesting to note that this technique has been used in one book only, viz. *Izimanga* by Mhlaba.

4.2 Characterisation

Abrams (1971:21) summarizes characterisation as follows:

Characters are persons, in a dramatic or narrative work, endowed with moral and dispositional qualities that are expressed in what they say - the dialogue - and what they do - the action. The grounds in a character's temperament and moral for his speech and actions constitute his motivation ...

Siwisa uses most of the conventional methods of characterisation at his disposal - direct description by the author, the dramatic method, dialogue, habits, discussion by other characters, character's reaction to various stimuli and naming. (Vide Satyo 1977:47.)

4.2.1 Direct description by the author

This is the commonest and the most popular method of depicting character in Xhosa literature. Siwisa, however, does not use this method extensively. In the story "Siya-goduka" he describes Sospani as follows:

Inene lamanene, enkangelekweni laye liyinto ngobunto bayo ... ehombe esisigcodolo, irhwanqa lomfo ozicande kubini iinwele entloko, wazibetha zalala waca; umsimbithi omnyama khaca uphantsi kwekhwapha, endolosa esihla enyuka. (1983:14)

(A real gentleman, one could see from his appearance that he was well off ... he had his best clothes on, a bearded man who had combed his hair in such a way that they showed a gap in the head and then he stroked them flat down, under his

armpit he was carrying his black stick made of ebony. He was strutting in a dignified manner.)

Siwisa does not describe Sospani's physical appearance only. The picture he has so successfully drawn here is that of a perfect Victorian gentleman. This can be seen from the hairstyle, the ebony walking stick etc. One could never associate this perfect gentleman with Sospani the mugger. Sospani even pickpockets the priest who is celebrating the last rites for him.

4.2.2 The dramatic method of characterisation

Siwisa also makes use of the dramatic method of characterisation to depict his characters. It is interesting to note that in order to avoid monotony he varies his methods in each story. Action is an effective way of showing character. Brooks and Warren, as cited by Botha (ibid:72) comment as follows on this method:

... for what a man is determines what he does, and it is primarily through what he does that we who observe him know what he is.

This method - character through action - can be found in "UNtozinani ... eNxuba", "Yiza Feleni, yiza!", "Umzingeli weembila ufel' eliweni" and many other stories. In the story "UNtozinani ... eNxuba" we see Ntozinani in action, murdering innocent people at the Fish River ford:

Kwalandela isithonga sikaduma-barwaqele,
omphefumlo unevumba lokufa ... Wha-a-a!
Kwaghughumb' iintlantsi, sandila isithonga
kulo lonke ihlathi ... Kwakhala tyolokobo-
tyobo-tyobo ... (p. 19)

(Thereafter a shot rang from the one who frightens
everybody, the one whose breath smells of death.
Bang! Fumes crossed the air, and the shot
shattered the whole forest ... footsteps followed.)

4.2.3 Dialogue

In the same story Siwisa uses dialogue to reveal Ntozinani's
predilection for murder and crime:

Kungathi ungxamele ukuba ethe-ethe ngoku,
Sotasi, mfondini. Ndikhangela indlela olifaka
ngayo ibhoso, nowisa ngayo ngebhanguza. Wugqibe
kakuhle umsebenzi wakho, akukho lusizi kule nto ...
(p. 20)

(It seems that you are becoming weak now Sotasi
man. I am looking at how you stab with the
carving knife and how you strike with the
knobkierie. Finish your work, there is no mercy
in this thing.)

Whereas the first method was very dramatic, with ideophones
heightening this effect even more, the second method is
highly revealing. Ntozinani is a merciless killer and
this comes directly from the horse's mouth! If the above
does not prove this, the following utterance by Ntozinani
should dispel all possible doubt:

"Sh-k- sapha elo lakho ibhoso ... bamb' apha
amahashe la wena. Ndifuna ukuchana nje intliziyo
kuphela." (p. 20)

(Sh-k- give me your knife ... hold the horses.
I just want to strike his heart.)

4.2.4 Habits

Perhaps a story that illustrates this method very clearly is "Izigigaba zikaNjengenja":

Kwilokishi yaseMonti, malunga kanye nale ndawo
kuthiwa kuseMaxambeni, kuvakala ngenye imini
ukukhala kwezinja nokukhonkotha kwazo ...
Uthe engayekanga loo "wele-wele" nokukhonkotha
kwezinja, kwaphawuleka nkwenkwana ithile ijiwuza,
ivuthulula izandla, ikhwaza nayo ngokwayo,
ibulisa, igxotha izinja, isithini! (p. 63)

(At the East London location, approximately near
the place called Maxambeni, people heard dogs
yelping and barking ... In the midst of that
bedlam, a little boy was noticed. He was
gesticulating very heavily as he tried to drive
the dogs away from him, shouting, greeting,
chasing the dogs away etc.!)

There is no doubt that it was usual for Njengenja to be
accompanied by a pack of dogs wherever he went, hence his
name, Njengenja (the one who looks like a dog). It proved
to be quite coincidental to read in the Sunday Times of
the 30 June 1985, in the Chris Barnard column, regarding
Klaas about whom he had this to say to endorse Siwisa's
story:

That was the funny thing about Klaas. There
wasn't a dog in the village he was afraid of,
not even the alsatians at the police station
or the dominee's bull terrier. Come to think
of it, there wasn't a dog in the village that

didn't try to wag its tail off when Klaas appeared. It was as if they all knew something that nobody else knew.
(Sunday Times Metro: p. 5)

4.2.5 The naming method

Satyo (1977:50) says about this technique:

This technique of naming characters is what O R Dathorne (1970:91) calls "pre-stabilization of character". By this he means that the audience can predict from the very outset what the character will do in the end.

Neethling (1985:88) crystalises this technique as follows:

One of the most obvious categories and the one in which characterization through naming is well manifested, is the category Alvarez-Altman calls the diactinic family or attributive names. She chose the term because these names are capable of transmitting intellectual actinic rays of light upon the characters and their attributes.

Siwisa uses this technique in several stories, e.g. Ndluku in "Vuka usenge", Ntozinani in "UNtozinani ... eNxuba", Mlomana in "Lubisi namhlanje esikolweni", Mbovane in "Umzingeli weembila ufel' eliweni", Hluziphela, Twezitakane and Dideka in the other stories. For brevity, only a few of these stories and the naming procedures will be examined.

NDLUKU (the tail end part of the large intestine) in "Vuka usenge" is a very unimportant character in the story,

like the part of the body after which he has been named):

Wayengena kuyo yonke imizi, ethanda ukunceda abafazi ngokubacandela iinkuni, khon' ukuze bamnike izonka bona. (p. 16)

(He was moving from house to house, fond of helping women by chopping wood for them so that they could give him bread in return.)

Ironically enough, and in typical folk tale fashion, it is this despised character who ultimately performs the most heroic deed in the story. He tricks the witchdoctor into diverting his evil spell onto himself.

MLOMANA (small mouth) in "Lubisi namhlanje esikolweni" has all the characteristics of a real mouth, e.g. he was good at talking himself out of trouble:

Aliphekwa kaloku iqhinga kuye apha. Uzikhusela ngeendlela ngeendlela. (p. 51)

(He had no problem thinking out a way of talking himself out of trouble. He could defend himself in various ways.)

He is very fond of food:

"Sisonka namhlanje, lubisi ngomso, yinyama ngomsomny' esikolweni". (ibid)

(It is bread today, milk tomorrow, and meat on the day after tomorrow at school.)

He is good at mumbling:

Udumzela nje, ashwantshwathe xa kwenziwa
isikhungo no - Amen. Kanti ngamanye amaxesha
uthula athi cwaka. (p. 52)

(He just mumbles and mutters when prayers are
said and sometimes he remains quiet ...)

Mlomana ends up stealing his grandfather's sugar. Vide page 52.

MBOVANE (the ant) in the story "Umzingeli weembila ufel'
eliweni" has the following ant-like characteristics:

He likes to be out in the open, hunting
He likes to creep into small holes and crevices.
He is very industrious.

In the following extract we see that Mbovane's posture when
he is caught up in a hole resembles that of a real ant:

... waza wafaka intloko yakhe phakathi kwaloo
matye, wakroba kancinane. Wayikhupha intloko
nengalo ukuphuma ... Waba ngabheka phambili,
ebuya ngomva akwanceda nto. Waxinga umfo
kwancameka. (p. 31)

(... and he stuck his head between those stones and
peeped in slightly. He later withdrew his head
and arms in an attempt to get out ... he moved
forward and backwards to no avail. He got stuck
completely.)

4.2.5.1 Derogatory connotations and the naming method

Sometimes Siwisa, especially in his second book *Amabali Angemigudu* (1962), attaches derogatory connotations to certain characters' names. The purpose is clearly to depict them as despicable or as unworthy.

HLUZIPHELA (one who strains or sifts a cockroach) in "Ah!

Njayibuzwa!" is clearly calculated to undermine the character's sense of self-esteem and integrity.

This is confirmed by the rather unsympathetic direct description:

Isigantsontso somfo oneziphika, othi, xa emile ethetha enkundleni, eyithe khunqu ingubo yakhe apha esingeni, ethe ga isifuba ngathi ligala, emana ekhwexa ngapha nangapha ngentloko, phofu ethetha into ephuthileyo, ... (p. 1)

(A strongly built man with conspicuous pectoral muscles who would stand up and speak in the courtyard with his blanket around his waist and with his chest thrust forward like that of a meerkat; he would occasionally rock his head to this side and then to that side but speaking absolute nonsense, ...)
(My emphasis.)

The derogation is very obvious. Siwisa's tone really reveals spite and contempt for the man. Even his salutation name is equally contemptible - A-a Njayibuzwa! (the unquestioned dog).

This passage is full of derision and sarcasm. The chief's name is Vuzizincwe (one whose saliva is streaming out) and his salutation name is equally bad - the one who pulls the lamb apart. This expression can have sinister or immoral connotations especially if one treats the lamb metaphorically. It is therefore obvious that Siwisa wants to present the chief and his counsellor in a bad light.

4.2.6 Nameless characters

Finally, Siwisa uses nameless characters in some of his stories. This is in typical folk tale fashion, e.g.

Mlungu uthile (a certain White man) in "Imfene nobubele bayo", and we also find the following such nameless characters:

Mfo othile, in "Hayi ubudenge".
Enye indoda, in the same story, "Hayi ubudenge".
Omnye umLungu in "Hayi ubudenge".
Umfundisi wecawa in "Siyagoduka".
Iggirha laphesheya kweNxuba in "Vuka userge".

Sometimes Siwisa seems to be aware of the affinity between his method of narration and that of the traditional folk tale: Compare his beginning in the story "Siyagoduka":

Kwaye kukho ... hayi kwaye kungekho ... ewe
 kwaye kukho kuloo lokishi yaseRhini ... (p. 14)

(There was ... no there was'nt ... yes there was once upon a time, in the Grahamstown location ...)

As in the folk tale, the namelessness of the character does not affect the stories. Instead the characters attain universality; they represent mankind in general.

4.3 Conflict

Because conflict in Siwisa's stories is mainly straightforward external conflict between man and man, it will not be given extensive attention in this study. It is included here for convenience and for the sake of completion of the aspects dealt with in this chapter.

Abrams (1971:128) explains conflict as follows:

Many, but far from all, plots deal with conflict. In addition to the conflict between individuals, there may be the conflict of a protagonist against fate, or against the circumstances that stand between him and a goal he has set himself; and in some works, the conflict is between opposing desires or values in a character's own mind.

Cohen (1973:181) elaborates even more on other important aspects of conflict. He defines conflict as:

The collision of opposing forces in prose fiction, drama or poetry. Conflicts can take many forms -
Between people,

Between man and his environment,
 Between ideologies and concepts, or
 Internal conflicts which can come from any
 of the forces above, from feelings within a
 person, or from causes unknown.

Although there is external conflict in the story "Mhla indalo yaxakana nendalo", as in most of Siwisa's stories, this is subconscious and ironical:

Kuthe kanti litakane legusha nangona yena,
 urheme lo wayengaliqondi ... Lathi ekothukeni
 kwalo laziphosa kuye, kubonakala ukuba lona
 lalisithi ngunina. (p. 2)

(It turned out that it was a lamb although the jackal did not realise it .. In its fright, it jumped onto the jackal thinking that it was its mother.)

The theme of the story is nature. This reaction from the lamb is natural and instinctive. This harmonises with the general theme of the story.

In the story "Imfene nobubele bayo" we find subtle conflict. There is a contrast between the outlook of the White people and that of the Blacks with regard to baboons. The Blacks associate these animals with witchcraft whereas Whites view them as harmless wild animals. The whole story is based on this subtle conflict. The following passage demonstrates the sentiments expressed above. The context is a White priest who surprises his churchwarden while the latter is feeding a baboon surreptitiously. Unaware of the meaning of this

deed to the Blacks, the White minister praises the churchwarden for his love for animals, much to the horror of the congregation and the embarrassment of the churchwarden:

Kusuke kwakhuza wonke umntu osecaweni. Laphuma enkonzweni igosa liyebe-yebeza. (p. 6)

(Everybody exclaimed in dismay and the churchwarden was visibly embarrassed as he left the church.)

4.4 Resumé

Two important aspects, setting and characterisation, have been dealt with at length in this chapter. The main findings in this regard are that Siwisa uses setting successfully to advance his theme and his plot and even to characterise certain individuals and to depict historical time. As far as characterisation is concerned, Siwisa uses conventional devices to depict his characters. It is to his credit to observe that some of his characters, although they have typifying names like Ndluku, are not always predictable. Siwisa has drawn them in such a way that although we can predict the characters' conduct, we cannot predict their fate. With regard to conflict, Siwisa prefers external conflict. Sometimes he uses other very subtle means to indicate this phenomenon.

CHAPTER 5

PLOT IN SIWISA'S SHORT STORIES

5.0 Introduction

Plot is one of the key aspects of the short story. The importance of structure can be seen from the following definition by Cohen (1973:67):

Structure refers to the basic organization or arrangement of events, details, words, images, or parts ... in a literary work.

Abrams (1971:127) defines plot as follows:

The plot in a dramatic or narrative work is the structure of its actions; as these are ordered and rendered toward achieving particular emotional and artistic effects.

Msimang (1983:39) comments after citing this same quotation:

From this definition, plot and structure appear to be synonymous. Indeed many critics view plot as structure.

It is common course that the conventional plot consists of exposition, rising action, climax and denouement. These elements may vary according to the objectives of the particular short story writer.

Because these elements are so vital both for the short story and for other kinds of literature, Cohen's (ibid:68ff) explanation of each is cited:

Exposition: ... comes at the beginning, provides the necessary background material for a reader. It establishes setting, creates the basic atmosphere, provides information about the pasts of characters, and delineates vital contexts for the events which will soon begin to unfold.

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

Climax: ... is defined as the highest point toward which the chain of events in the rising action has been moving.

Denouement: ... used to describe that part of the story in which an author explains or unravels what has happened up to the climax.

It should be pointed out that causality helps to maintain tension in the plot.

Botha (ibid:119) criticises Xhosa short stories for displaying inadequate tension:

Wat die Xhosakortverhale onder bespreking betref, is dit duidelik dat 'n doeltreffende spanningslyn selde bevredigend ontwikkel en deurgaans gehandhaaf word ...

The reason for this lack of tension is that causality does

not always play an important role in some of the short stories. The writers do not always deal with one issue through the exposition, rising action and climax and/or denouement. Instead, they narrate a number of episodes or incidents.

The short story has a basic structure that resembles the structure of the folk tale as indicated by Huck (1979:164ff). The aforementioned structure will be loosely restated here for convenience:

- i) It is simple and direct,
- ii) A series of episodes maintains a quick flow of action,
- iii) Characters are quickly delineated,
- iv) The action shows inevitable conflict and resolution,
- v) The ending is usually brief,
- vi) The introduction usually presents the conflict, characters and setting in a few sentences,
- vii) With little description, the storyteller goes to the heart of his audience,
- viii) The conclusion follows the climax very quickly and includes a few details.

Despite the long history of existence of the Xhosa folk tale, its basic structure which is characterised by a high sense of verbal economy, does not seem to have influenced the writing of the Xhosa short story. The latter is inclined to be wordy because of unnecessary extraneous material. This aspect has been dealt with in detail in Chapter 2. In the light of western literary norms, it must be conceded that Siwisa constantly violates one of

the golden rules of modern short story writing by making too many direct comments in his stories. Johnson and Hamlin (1966:14) regard this extraneous material as a serious structural flaw:

The most important aspect of plot is that it serves to develop the story, to move the narrative along to its end. Therefore, the good short story plot must be organic. This is to say that there should be no extraneous material within it; rather it should move directly towards its ultimate thematic goal, slowly perhaps, but directly.

5.1 Ndibuzen' Amathongo

Since Siwisa does not vary his plots in the three different books, this study will only concentrate on one book *Ndibuzen' Amathongo* (1983)

The story "Mhla indalo yaxakana nendalo" begins with a lengthy direct comment:

Kwakwimvela kamvela yadalwa igusha yalixhoba lika-dyakalashé. Yafundiswa yindalo ukumsaba udyakalashé isakumalama. Kuloko sithi sakuthi qqi esi silwanyana zithi dungu zonke iigusha ukusaba umsindo ozayo. Waye naye umfo lo enamacebo athile okuwurhawula nokuwughatha umhlambi weegusha. Kwazeka kakuhle kuye wonke umalusi wezimvu ukuba uthi apho akhonye khona udyakalashé, ange utsho kwelinye icala, nangona esitsho kwelinye, kuba kaloku unomkhwa apha wokuthi akhangele phezulu, andule ukuvakalisa udumo lwakhe, ngelithi "Aha-a-a-a!" (p. 1)

(Right from the beginnings of nature, the sheep was created victim of the jackal. It was taught by nature to run away from the jackal wherever

it comes across it. That is why sheep scatter in all directions when this animal appears, running away from the coming wrath. The fellow has certain plans of surrounding and cheating a flock of sheep. Every shepherd knows very well that if the jackal cries its cry appears to come from a direction different from that of its actual position, because it has a habit of looking up in the sky, then it makes its famous cry, saying "Aha-a-a-a!")

In the second paragraph, the commentator continues to explain the jackal's tricks:

Maxa wambi ukholisa ngokuthi awujikeleze umhlambi, ehamba esenza amanzi ngoku kanye kwengonyama. Elo licebo lokuba zithi zakufika apho enze khona amanzi zive ivumba zicingele ukuba nguye ngenkqu, andule ke urheme ukudlalisa ngazo. Elinye iyelenqe lakhe kukuthi xa ayisukelayo igusha awuvelise ecaleni umsila, ukwenzela ukuba ithi yakunga ingaphambuka yothuswe nguwo. (p. 1)

(Sometimes it surrounds the flock, urinating like a lion. This is just a ploy so that when the sheep approach the place where it urinated they would pick up the smell and think that it is around, then it plays the fool with them. Another trick of the jackal's is to thrust its tail one side as it chases a sheep in order to frighten it whenever it tries to change direction.)

This long explanation is carried into the third paragraph, ending with the words: "Kuloko ngaminazana ithile, indalo yaxakana nendalo, mhla udyakalashi wasukelwa litakane legusha". (That is why one day nature experienced problems with nature when the jackal was chased by a lamb.)

Obviously, Siwisa's purpose for this lengthy introduction is to show us why, on this particular day, nature exchanged

roles - the lamb chasing the jackal instead of the normal vice versa. Conflict in the story is between the lamb and the jackal. The real story begins quite appropriately, providing the time of the incident, the nature of the day in question and the time of the year - all essential data for the exposition:

Kwakusemini emaqanda, ilanga lithe futhu kanobom, laye ligqatsa ebuchotsheni. Imini le yaye izolile ngokusithukuthezi, yonganyelwe mpela nguPhezu-komkhono, ngengoma ethi, "Phezu komkhono! Phezu komkhono!" (p. 1)

(It was midday, on a fairly hot day with the sun rays falling directly on one's head. It was an exceptionally quiet day, dominated by the cry of the red-chested cuckoo "Phezu komkhono! Phezu komkhono!" (or Christmas time! Christmas time!))

The following paragraph presents the necessary setting in a very striking manner. First we are introduced to the open veld, the trees and the sheep. Soon thereafter, we are introduced to the cunning jackal. Good and bad are beautifully contrasted in this paragraph:

- (A) ... kwakuthe nwatya umhlambikazi omkhulu weegusha ezinomggeku.
- (B) Kuthe gqi irhamncwa elikhulu lezimvu udyakalashi, enyusa intlanjana evela ithafa elo ezibe zikulo iigusha ...

Walile xa akude kufuphi nawo umhlambi lowo, wabona sidulana sithile. Wachwechwela kuso umfo omkhulu, ngokomnyewu obathandayo abantu. Ngokuya esondela weva vunjana lithile lento ayaziyo, inyama yegusha. (p. 1)

- (A) (... a large flock of sheep lay leisurely on the ground together with their young ones.
 (B) All of a sudden the great enemy of the sheep, the jackal, appeared and went up the valley above the veld in which the sheep were.

As soon as he had moved quite close to the flock, he noticed a small antheap nearby. He walked softly towards it like someone who is shy but loves people. As he went nearer he smelt some familiar smell - mutton.)

The author has been extremely economical in his use of words. Direct commentary is confined to the introduction of the story only. The incidents described above follow each other in quick succession. The story is told in the third person omniscient point of view and it is gripping. The exposition is clear and it is equally obvious that the action is beginning to rise towards the end of the passage.

The climax comes when the lamb stands over the dead jackal not realizing that it has been responsible for its death.

The ending is not altogether free of authorial comment:

Ngaloo mini kwadyaki inyama yajika yayityhefu.
 Akwaba neempuku bezingakhe zijoke iingada kobu
 bufede bungaka bazo. Hayi izimanga zendalo. (p. 2)

(On that day in the jackal's life meat changed into poison. How I wish that even the mice could charge at the wild cats, in their fecklessness. Wonderful are the works of nature.)

Reference to mice and wild cats seems to have satirical connotations. There is a possibility that, taking the whole

story into consideration, Siwisa evinces strong but subtle political undertones in this comment with reference to Black and White relations in this country.

In the story "Imfene nobubele bayo" Siwisa begins with two paragraphs of direct comment. The actual story itself only begins in the third paragraph. While in the previous story the narrator tells a single incident, in this one he narrates five different episodes beginning each one as follows:

Mlungu uthile ...	(A certain White man)
Ngenye imini ...	(One day)
Mfo uthile ...	(A certain man)
Omnye umfo ...	(Another man)
Enye intwazana...	(One girl)

All five episodes revolve around a baboon, otherwise nothing else binds the episodes together. Once again, someone makes several direct comments in the story:

AbeLungu bona bayazifuya iimfene, kwaye
koku kuzifuya kwabo abananjongo yimbi
ngaphandle kwezokuzonwabisa ngazo. (p. 6)

(The Whites keep baboons and in doing so they have no other purpose except entertaining themselves by keeping baboons.)

This episodic structure can also be found in the story "Hayi ubudenge". In this story the commentator makes one direct comment:

Iinyoka ezi ziziintlobo ngeentlobo, zaye
zahluka-hlukene nangeendidi zobuhlungu bazo.
(p. 8)

(Snakes are of different kinds and they can also
be distinguished by their poison.)

The story covers three episodes each dealing with something
different but all having one general theme - a snake.

Temporal space at times covers several years:

Kwadolula iminyaka emininzi emva kokwenzeka
kwaloo nto, ... (p. 8)

(Many years passed after the occurrence of
this incident, ...)

Kwadolula iminyaka emininzi engaziwa eyona
nto anayo, ... (ibid)

(Many years passed and nobody knew what was
wrong with him, ...)

In the next episode we find the following temporal
references:

Kwagqitha iminyaka emibini ...
Yaliquhawula ityathanga ngenye imini, ...
Ngaminazana ithile ... (p. 9)

(Two years passed ...
One day it broke the chain, ...
One day ...)

Once again, Siwisa makes some authorial comment at the
end of the story:

Zinjalo iinyoka apha ngaphandle ezilalini, kwaye ukudlala ngobuhlungu bazo kunje ngosana lukhasela eziko. Siyazithanda thina, siziqhelile, sithanda nokuzizingela sizibulale, kodwa ... wamsa! Ubuhlungu bazo! (p. 10)

(Snakes are like that here in the rural villages, and tempering with their poison is like playing with fire. We (on our part) like them, we are also used to them; we like to hunt them and kill them, but, beware of their poison!)

Siwisa succeeds in maintaining unity in the story "Isimanga".

In the first three introductory paragraphs one central and vital question runs through the story, piercing like a sword, especially when viewed against the mysterious events, viz. "Uphi uSifonondile? Uyephi uSifonondile?"

In the fourth paragraph the incidents begin to unfold and the aura of mystery deepens. Sifonondile is ultimately found muttering words normally associated with wizards:

"Ndeza ngomv' ekhaya!
Ndeza ngomv' ekhaya!" (p. 11)

("I walk home backwards!
I walk home backwards!")

From this point onwards, the events begin to sound like those normally associated with the Xhosa 'intsomi'. They assume a cyclic order. Sifonondile uses a magic stick to vanish through the roof. His father follows the same procedure and also disappears through the roof. Thirdly,

his wife also follows the same procedure and ends up disappearing through the roof. There is a common motif in the Xhosa 'intsomi'. It is also typical of the 'intsomi' to have events following each other cyclically, with each character virtually doing exactly what others had done.

The necessary unity of action has been adhered to in this story. The rhetorical questions that run through it have the effect of a motif in the 'intsomi'. We can easily contrast the questions with the lack of answer, all leading to the theme "Some of the things under the sun are difficult to explain". To prove this, Siwisa ends the story very cryptically but very philosophically:

Izinja zihlutshezwa ngezicawu ezithile kuphela ...
 Iimazi zeenkomo zisilekwa ngobulongwe ... Abantwana
 balunyulwa ngokhalakhulu ... Imithi yeepesika iyakhu-
 hlelwa, ukunqanda amasela ... Wamsa ukuwubasa
 umphunzisa ... Aph' ezilalini. (p. 13)

(Dogs are made vicious by giving them only certain spiders to eat. Cows are smeared with dung on the udders ... Children are weaned by using the aloe ... Peach trees are treated with certain herbs to scare away thieves ... Don't you ever make fire of the shepherd tree ... Here in the rural areas.)

It is therefore clear that each feature of plot is important in the Xhosa short story. In it the writer has some message to put across to his audience.

Siwisa writes the beginning of the story "Siyagoduka" in

such a way that one gets the impression that he is about to read a fairy tale:

Kwaye kukho ... hayi kwaye kungekho ... ewe
kwaye kukho, kuloo lokishi yaseRhini. (p. 14)

(There was ... no there wasn't ... yes there was once upon a time, in the Grahamstown location.)

Sometimes he gives his story a dramatic ending without direct comments, e.g.:

"Ndluku! Ndluku!" labiza ilizwi.
"Tata!" waphendula omnye eziphosa kude iingubo.
"Vuk' usenge!" (p. 18)

("Ndluku! Ndluku!" a voice called.
"Daddy!" the other answered as he threw the blankets off.
"Wake up and go to milk!".)

It is only in this dramatic ending that we realise that Ndluku was only dreaming. In retrospect, we begin to wonder whether the whole story was not trying to suggest to us that all the stories about people mysteriously disappearing through roofs are just mere fantasy! If this applies to the Ndluku story, can it not be applied, one wonders, to so many other stories? Siwisa is fond of invoking this subtle epiphany at the end of his stories in order to cast doubt on what had been said. He uses the same technique in the story "Apho kukho uthando kukho indlela".

While in most of his stories Siwisa prefers to use the remote past tense in his narration, he succeeds in the story "UNtozinani ... eNxuba" in writing in the dramatic method with all the events reflected in the present tense. In this way his story achieves immediacy and has the desired effect. Here is the story's setting:

Kusesibhakadeni sehlathi. Liwuhlabhe kanobom ilanga. Kuthe cwaka. "Phezu komkhono! Phezu komkhono!" Kuphela kwengoma ehlokomayo. Apho ukubona umntu kuyinto enqabileyo. (p. 19)

(It is in the middle of the forest. It is a fairly hot day. It is all quiet. "Christmas time!" "Christmas time!" That is the only noise that can be heard very loudly. It is rare to see somebody here.)

The whole story continues very dramatically until its climax:

"Ndifikile ezibukweni. Thath' okwakho, undinike okwam nawe!"
"Yisaph' eso sipaji! lilandele kwakhona igunya.
(p. 19)

("I have arrived at the ford. Take your stuff and give me mine!"
"Give me that purse!" the order followed again ...)

The man is confronted and molested by the robber Ntozinani. In the following paragraph the events are narrated in the remote past tense as the robber kills the man:

Kwalandela isithonga sikaduma-barwagele omphefumlo unevumba lokufa ...
Wha-a-a! Kwaghuqhumb' iintlantsi, sandila isithonga kulo lonke ihlathi. Kwaphakama

iintaka. Kwakhala tyolokobo-tyobo-tyobo
ukukhweza loo ntlambo. (ibid)

(A loud shot rang from the one who scares the
wits out of everybody. Bang! Sparks scattered
all directions, the shot shattered the whole
forest. Birds flew away frantically. Footsteps
were heard crossing that ravine.)

The remote past tense used here helps to indicate that the
poor traveller was killed. This switch from the present to
the past jolts us to stark reality - the man was murdered.
'That is how innocent people were murdered' is the message
that pierces our minds as we come to the end of the story.

The other crime story "Yiza, Feleni, yiza!" satisfies
Botha's (ibid:107) definition of the intrigue:

Die intrige is dus 'n groep opeenvolgende
gebeurtenisse in besondere patroon.

In the exposition we meet Madrayi and his friends lurking
in the bush, ready to attack innocent people:

Kungongwalazi lwemivundla, ezantsi kwamakhala
akufuphi nendlu kaNdarhana (Daagen) unovenkile
obalulekileyo weso sithili. "Uze ungene kuqala
Madrayi, ucele amanzi. Nisebenze ngokukhawuleza,
madoda, ubusuku bufutshane. (p. 23)

(It is just after sunset, below aloes that are not
far from Daagen's homestead. He is a well known
shopkeeper in that district. "You must enter
first Madrayi and ask for water. You guys must work
swiftly, the night is short.)

Once again, Siwisa uses the dramatic method of narration. In the second episode Madrayi goes to buy an axe and declares:

"Kukho iimpuku ezimbini ... kuyafuneka zibulewe".
(ibid)

("There are two mice ... they should be killed")

The irony is that the two mice which he wanted to kill with pesticide are his two accomplices. Plotting and counter plotting take place until Madrayi is ultimately killed by Zenzile and Stwayi. They, on the other hand, die from food poisoning by Feleni. Feleni's conscience tortures him. He cannot forget the sight of Madrayi's dying eyes and his repeated anguished cry, "Yiza, Feleni, yiza!"

The story "Apho kukho uthando kukho indlela" is a good example of a plot that has unity and cohesion. As the events develop we gradually realise that Nomfutho's problem is psychological. However, we are kept wondering as to how to explain the mysterious events of the story, set out beautifully in the following extract:

Yazingisa intaka; yavakala into efestileni;
yagudlwa indlu yinto edumzelayo ... (p. 27)

(The bird kept on; something unknown scratched at the window; something else rubbed itself against the hut making mumbling noises.)

It is only at the end of the story that Siwisa unravels all the mystery - the innocent bird had a nest inside the hut and the other noises are made by a pig which scratches itself against the hut. Both actions have nothing to do with witchcraft.

5.2 Resumé

In the stories that we have discussed above and in those contained in the other books, the plot develops very well, culminating in some point of illumination or epiphany towards the end of the story. Each story is characterised by conflict.

This chapter has laid special emphasis on the beginning and on the ending of the stories because those are the two problem areas as can be seen from Botha's (ibid:136) assertion:

Die eenheid en gekonsentreerdheid van verhale word dikwels deur die aanwesigheid van oorbodige inhoudelike gegewens, skrywerskomentaar ens. verbreek. Die nadelige uitwerking hiervan is veral in die aanvangs- en slotgedeeltes van sommige verhale duidelik merkbaar.

CHAPTER 6

SIWISA'S STYLE AND LANGUAGE

6.0 Introduction

Botha (ibid:139) comments about language and style:

Taal kan beskou word as die materiaal waarmee die literêre kunstenaar sy werk skep. Waar die beeldhouer bv. van steen of klip as basiese materiaal gebruik maak waaruit die kunswerk gevorm word, word hierdie funksie in die letterkunde deur taal vervul.

As is the case with some of the aspects dealt with in this study, Botha's study could not go deeply into this aspect, hence his explanation:

Vanweë die uitgebreide inhoudelike omvang van 'n onderneming van hierdie aard, sou 'n meer gedetailleerde stilistiese analise nie binne die beperkte grense van hierdie studie moontlik wees nie. (ibid:146)

Nonetheless, Botha (ibid) enumerates the following as examples of positive and negative style:

Positive style:

- a) Proverbs,
- b) Sayings,

- c) Metaphor,
- d) Personification,
- e) Symbolism,
- f) Repetition.

Negative style

- a) Weak sentences,
- b) Divergent ideas in one paragraph,
- c) Weak paragraphs,
- d) Verbosity,
- e) Too much description of nature etc.,
- f) Direct commentary by the author,
- g) Bad grammar,
- h) Foreign expressions.

Botha's definition and elements of style agree with Cohen's (1973:49):

Style pertains to an author's choice of words and their arrangement in patterns of syntax, imagery, and rhythm. These arrangements of words constitute the author's imaginative rendering of whatever thoughts, emotions, situations, or characters he chooses to create and communicate.

In this study, some of Siwisa's short stories will be examined in order to establish to what extent he uses the above elements of good or bad style. The elements will not necessarily be studied in the given order. With regard

to direct commentary by some commentator, presumably the author, (cf. Botha, *ibid*:136) it will be essential to look into and exclude all those so-called stories that appear to be essays rather than short stories.

6.1 Essayistic material

6.1.1 Ndibuzen' Amathongo

"Iintwana ezincinane nazo zibalulekile", as the title clearly indicates, is an essay dealing with country life. The style of writing is personal and egotistical e.g.:

Khawuye ezilalini uzibonele ngokwakho izinto ezonwabisayo nezifundisayo nangona zincinane.
(p. 3)

(Pay a visit to the rural villages and see for yourself the exciting and educative little things.)

"Mdala utat' omkhulu" is a descriptive essay about old age. The introduction clearly shows that this is a conversational, essayistic, piece of writing, peppered here and there with a few anecdotes:

Mdala utat' omkhulu, kodwa isimanga sezimanga akafuni ukuba kuthiwe ugugile ...

Ziyahlekisa kodwa izinto zakhe utat' omkhulu. Izimbo zakhe zezomntu oselegugile, nangona yena engayifuni loo nto. Ngenye imini sabhuqa sifuna inqawa yakhe, esithi yena ilahlwe sithi. ... Kwalile sesibuncama, seva ngomnye wethu selesithi, "Tat' omkhulu, nantsi kuwe emlonyeni inqawa yakho!" (p. 34)

(Grandpa is old, but he does not want anyone to say he is old ... Grandpa's little deeds are quite amusing. His actions show that he is old although he does not want to hear about being old. One day we sought high and low for his pipe. He was accusing us of having misplaced it ... We had almost lost all hope of finding it when one of us shouted "Grandpa there is your pipe in your mouth!")

Even the ending confirms that this is an essay:

Kodwa, inene, mdala utat' omkhulu, nto nje akaziqondi. Unjani kodwa owakho? (p. 36)

(But, really, granpa is old but he does not realise that. How is your grandfather by the way?)

"Mthandi kangatha" is another descriptive essay about someone who is a glutton with a gigantic appetite for meat. Siwisa elaborately narrates a few incidents relating to him:

Seleyazi imizi ekholisa ngokuba nenyama, ezazi futhi neentsuku ethi ibekho ngazo inyama. Seleba ngumntu onemicimbi esisigxina ehanjelwayo nguye kuloo mizi ngezo ntsuku zenyama. (p. 38)

(He knows the homesteads which normally have meat, and he knows exactly on which days they have meat. On those days he will pretend to have some business or other that necessitates his going there.)

"Amaqal' afike" is a narrative essay about a henpecked husband, Mbanjwa. Mbanjwa swears high and low that he will never be dominated by his wife but in the end she does not only dominate him, but she also gives him a good hiding. The end of the narrative points to the purpose of the essay:

"Iwa-a! Uthiwe ngo ngempumla!"
Kwathi cwaka emva koko. (p. 44)

("There you are! You are henpecked!"
All became quiet thereafter.)

"Qash' Qash' Kuphekwe ntoni namhlanje?" is another descriptive essay. As with the other essays, the few anecdotes included in it help to give us a picture of Mlomana's behaviour instead of narrating a story. The introduction proves that this is an essay:

Uhlal' aph' ekhaya umthakathi, akathandi kubhadula kakhulu. Injongo yaziwa nguye kuphela, kuba ngekhe akuphendula xa umbuzayo isizathu sokungathandi ukuya kwamanye amakhwenkwe. Ixeshana lifutshane ethe nyebelele ubuye umbone enyoshoza engena. (p. 48)

(The fellow would stay at home; he does not like roaming about. He alone knows why, because should you ask him why he does not like to go to other boys, he would not answer you. He just disappears for a short while and then you would see him sneaking back again.)

"Lubisi namhlanje esikolweni" is a continuation of the previous story or essay. The style is the same - direct commentary by the author interspersed with one or two

anecdotes here and there, e.g.:

Wabulala iqaga ngenye imini walityanda eli qhubu lilapha phantsi komsila wazityikila amakhwapha la ngalo. Yathi isathi iyamfikila ezingalweni ititshalakazi yaqubisana neli vumba. Wakha wasirda okweentsuku ezimbalwa urheme. (p. 51)

(One day he killed a polecat and he cut open the stenchy part underneath the tail and smeared his armpits with it. When the lady teacher pinched him on the arms she came across the stench. For a few days the fellow went without punishment.)

In "Umzingisi akanashwa" Siwisa confirms the contention that this is an essay by making this prefatory statement as to what prompted him to write the essay or story:

(Emva kokufunda isincoko esibhalwe ngesiNgesi nguMnu. Max Baerhom, sisithi "Ukubuyela esikolweni", ndifikelwe zezi nginga): ... (p. 53)

(After reading an English essay by Mr Max Baerhom entitled "Returning to school", the following thoughts came to my mind ...)
(My emphasis)

It is obvious that some of these so-called stories are in actual fact nothing else but character sketches or character studies which normally form categories of their own. Cf. Phillips (1974:6):

The Character Sketch, in the very nature of it, cannot be a Short Story, for the character (hero) must remain perfectly still while he is being sketched by the literary artist. In other words,

the hero is inactive, while the author is full of action.

Phillips (ibid) makes similar comments about the Character Study, with the emphasis falling on the last words of this dramatic definition:

Character Study is too often something in the nature of a surgical operation on the character, who is compelled to lie perfectly still while his innermost and vital thoughts and feelings are laid bare with the scalpel of introspection

6.2 Siwisa's style and language

Turner (1979:233) seems to be in full agreement with the idea of laying down criteria of excellence, searching for them in the particular writer's work and evaluating them:

Evaluation presupposes description. A style is described, a criterion of excellence announced, the presence of that criterion found in the style and the evaluation made.

Notestein (1974:174) expresses serious reservations about laying down binding rules on style but admits that some general principles are essential:

The best style for a given story is that which is the most perfect expression of what the writer intended to say and of the impression he wished to convey. To attempt to lay down any binding rules for Short-story style would be foolish and hazardous. Yet there are certain general principles upon which even the variations are based,

principles derived from the essential nature of the Short-story as a form of fine art ...

Siwisa's style is varied and fresh. He has a good command of the language and a very subtle sense of humour. A few elements relating to style will be examined.

6.2.1 Proverbs and other figures of speech

Siwisa has a thorough knowledge of Xhosa proverbs having written a book on them himself - *Imizekeliso namaqhalo esiXhosa*. In the story "Amathol' erhamba" (p. 59), he uses the proverb 'Ubuhle bendoda bubuhlanti'. Although the more common version today is 'Ubuhle bendoda ziinkomo', Siwisa's version is fitting. He has substituted a kraal for cattle.

The mere presence of proverbs, other figures of speech or any other stylistic elements does not in itself constitute good style. What is most important is the effect achieved by the author by means of these figures of speech.

In the story "Amathol' erhamba", Siwisa uses figurative expressions very effectively. We find, in the first paragraph reference to 'emngxunyeni werhamba' instead of in So and so's house. This locative metaphor is consistent with the metaphorical title of the story. The latter refers to 'a puffadder's offspring' (said of children who

have been fathered by various fathers) whereas the former refers to 'a puffadder's hole' said of the house in which the family lived. This metaphor conjures up the idea of evil and disharmony.

Siwisa soon elucidates this metaphor by referring to the house in more common language as 'gumbini lithile' (in a certain room) and 'kula masango asemaTshonyaneni' (in the premises of the Tshonyane homestead).

The following figurative expressions are quite common - *ukutya amatye, wayengcolisive, bitumnyama ngokwelahle likalolise, wayekcolikanlebase*, but those less common are - *ibunzi lityhileke ngokwefusi phakathi kwamasini* (his forehead was as bald as a fallow field which is surrounded by others); and *Impuno yakhe yayingqongwe landlela* (his nose was as big as dry cowdung normally found along the road).

In page 60 of the same story Siwisa uses the expression *eneendevu ezirhaxale umlomo* (he had beard that grew all around his mouth, i.e. a moustache). In fact a literal rendition of this captures Siwisa's expression better: 'his moustache surrounded his mouth'.

Towards the end of the story Siwisa uses a slightly different word from 'amarhamba' namely 'amarhamncwa'. He has

changed the symbol of the puffadder to the carnivorous wild beast. The purpose behind this change is not difficult to discern. The wild beast fits in with the general purpose of the story better than the puffadder.

6.2.2 Personal symbol

Another unusual feature in Siwisa's writings is his use of the personal metaphor. In the story "Umvuzo wethemba" Siwisa refers to death as "inyathi" (buffalo):

Yagaleleka inyathi emzini wento kaMbulawa,
kungekudala igalelekile ingwevu yaseMatolweni
ekhayeni layo eZimbaba. Yavela yagila uMajali
ngequbuliso awathi ugqirha libangwe lihlwili
elixabe entliziyweni ngenxa yokukhathazeka (p. 7)

(The buffalo arrived at Mbulawa's son's house, not long after the old man of the amaTolo clan had arrived at his home at Zimbaba. It hit Majali unexpectedly and the doctor said her death was caused by a clot in the heart caused by too much worrying.)

Once again, he uses this personal symbol in the story "UDideka", in the book *Amabali Angemigudu*:

Yagaleleka inyathi nakweli zulwana ababezenzele
lona abakuloDideka. Yabetha yashicilela umnini-
khaya. (p. 9)

(The buffalo arrived even in this little heaven which Dideka's people had built themselves, and pulled down the head of the family.)

6.2.3 The use of foreign expressions

Siwisa's language leaves nothing to be desired although he deliberately uses foreign expressions to characterise certain individuals, e.g.

Wavakaia esithi uNjengenja akuyiva le nto

"Is nothing, ol' boy: Trong is venkile!" (1983:67)

As Njengenja struggles to climb the social ladder by dubious means, he lapses deeper and deeper into this mixture of languages:

"When you'm tshintshing de gear, you do so ...
when you'm taking de U-turn, you do like dis ...
and tshitshiliza to one side." (p. 73)

This type of language is used for comic effect especially in humorous situations. It does not harm the excellence of Siwisa's Xhosa especially since Siwisa uses it very discriminately.

Sometimes Siwisa uses colloquial expressions for the purpose of depicting his characters, e.g.

fak' inkcenkce ezimbanjeni instead of mhlabe (1975:4)

zimngca instead of zilungile (p. 13)

yitshay' izule instead of fak' amafutha (p. 13)

ivungu instead of imoto (p. 13)

wayitsala yavela instead of wanduluka (p. 13)

ngale weyi instead of ngale ndlela (p. 31)
 wayilaxaza instead of wayiphoxa (p. 41)
 siyuruze instead of sihamba-hambe ngayo (p. 75)
 unguzoko instead of ungumanganga (p. 105)

6.2.4 Spelling errors

This is certainly Siwisa's greatest downfall as a writer. His books are full of spelling and orthographical errors. Given Siwisa's education and experience, this cannot be condoned in any way. Botha has listed many of these errors in his dissertation, therefore. I merely wish to concur with his findings in order to register my disquiet concerning the matter.

To my mind, Satyo's criteria for good style are also equally significant. He emphasises the following stylistic elements: use of eulogistic or derogatory descriptions, use of words or phrases with similar connotations, repetition of the same verb, repetition of the same word within a passage and apt choice of words. Cf. Satyo (1977:139ff).

6.2.5 Eulogistic versus derogatory descriptions

Siwisa makes extensive use of this stylistic feature in depicting his characters. In "Amathol' erhamba", this is what he says about Tshonyane, Nowayini's first of a string of husbands:

Latsho ngelomeleleyo inxila elikhulu
selimbanguza ngoku yihorasi. (p. 59)

(The great drunkard said with a strong
voice, mad with frenzy)

In the following passage, Ginyizembe is not only described
as ugly but he is also described as a "skollie":

Ndoda yakwabani eyakha yangxathu
njengaye, sikoli sakwabani sona esakhe
salamba njengaye. Ubuso babumnyama
ngokwelahle likaloliwe, burhabaxa. (ibid)

(No man ever resembled his ugliness, no
skollie could ever be worse off than him.
His face was as black as coal and as rough.)

Nowayini's actions are also designed to depict her in a
very degrading manner:

Yathabatha konke okwayo intokazi yasemaBambeni,
konke hethu; abantwana, nezitya, nomandlalo,
nezitulo, netafii yembala, yaya kuhlala
noGiqwa kwaThulandivile. (p. 59)

(The lady from the Bamba clan took all her
belongings; children, kitchen utensils, the
bed, chairs and even the table, and went to
stay with Giqwa at Thulandivile.)

There is no doubt that Nowayini is depicted as a very loose
woman who has no respect for marital bonds if she had any
at all. The children are treated as her sole property
just like the kitchen utensils and furniture. That is
why it is so easy for her to just go and stay with Giqwa.

We have seen how many derogatory expressions have been used against Ginyizembe in this story. In the same story Siwisa treats Veletshona much more favourably:

Akubanga ntsuku zatywala wamana ukundwendwelwa uNowayini lityendye lomfo wasemaBheleni, umalamb' edlile. Wayemhle lo mfo, eneendevu ezirhawule umlomo lo wonke nempandla eqalayo ukuvela. (p. 60)

(Not long thereafter she was regularly visited by a slender man of the Bhele clan, a very slim man. This man was handsome, with a moustache all around his mouth and his head just starting to be bald.)

Besides Tolo whom Siwisa eulogises to a great extent, Jama Hleza is another character whom he describes in lofty terms in "Umgudu wokugqibela":

Kaloku uninzi lwabazali lwaluncamela kuye xa abantwana besoyisakala kwezinye izikoio, ivele ibakhuphe emagqabini ingwev' entsha, umfo kaHleza, izizi elihle, uFakoth' omkhulu, uJama kaSjadu, uNgxib' inoboya. (p. 40)

(The majority of parents resorted to him when their children failed in other schools and the young grey headed would bring them out tops (i.e.) the handsome Zizi gentleman, the Great Fakathi, Sjadu's Jama, the one whose frontal piece is hairy.)

6.2.6 Repetition of the same initial morpheme

A prominent stylistic feature of Siwisa's writing is his extensive use of the remote past tense. This tense is, from its very nature, characterised by the preponderant use of a long /a/. In the story "Mhla indalo yaxakana

"nendalo" the following words are a few examples of the words that appear in the remote past tense:

Yafundiswa
Waye
Kwaye
Waphethuka
Walutyhutyha

This tense and the common narrative past dominate most of Siwisa's stories, e.g. in "Vuka usenge" we find among others:

Laliqqugqisile
Lalisoyikwa
Kwakungadluli
Kwakungasekho
Wayesitsho
Kwakukubi

In the story "Ijoni laphesheya kweQhiba" e.g.:

Zaqenggeleka
Wayehleli
Yayiqondakala
Wayihleka
Babehleli

Siwisa avoids monotony by interrupting this remote past by either using the perfect tense and/or other tenses, e.g.

*Remote Past Tense***"Mhla indalo yaxakana nendalo"**

Waphethuka ngokokhozi emoyeni udyakalashi,
waqhwitha, ngokufumana loo mmangaliso.
Wehlisa kwaleyo ntlanjana wayeze ngayo, waya
kungena eludadeni, lingunonca itakane legusha
emsileni wakhe. Walutyhutyha lonke olo dada ...
(p. 2)

(The jackal turned around like an eagle in space
and ran away, when it was confronted with that
mystery. It went down the same ravine it came
out of and went into the thicket with the lamb
flat on its heels. It ran across the whole
thicket ...)

*Perfect Tense***"Yiza Feleni, yiza!"**

Kusile ngengomso, kuthunye uMadrayi noFeleni ...

Befikile evenkileni uMadrayi uthenge izembe
kanye nesonka ... (p. 23)

(When it became light the following day, they
sent Madrayi and Feleni ... When they arrived
at the shop Madrayi bought an axe and bread ...)

Perfect and the auxiliary

Sometimes Siwisa uses the auxiliary verb in the Perfect
Tense in the sentence initial position to indicate habitual
action:

"Imfene nobubele bayo"

Bekuye kuthi xa kusondela ixesha likatshayile
umbone umfo omkhulu ethe ngcu epalini, seleman'
ukuphanguza elindele iintwana-ntwana ezimnandi; ...
Ude wayiqhela le nto unkabi ... (p. 5)

(Sometimes just before time to knock off you would see the chap perched on a pole looking this side and that side for his friend. He used to come there and throw nice things at him; ... The fellow got used to this)
(My emphasis)

Present Tense

"UNtozinani ... eNxuba"

Kusesibhakadeni sehlathi. Liwuhlabe kanobom ilanga. Kuthe cwaka ... Apho ukubona umntu kuyinto enqabileyo. (p. 19)

(It is in the thick of the forest. The sun shines bright. It is quiet ... It is rare to see anybody there.)

In this story Siwisa blends the three tenses very well.

He moves from the present tense, as quoted above, to the

Perfect Tense:

Iphendule into enkulu ... (the fellow answered)
Lilandele kwakhona igunya ... (the order followed again)

From the Perfect Tense he once more moves back to the

Remote Past Tense:

Kwalandela isithonga
Kwaqhughumb' iintlantsi
Kwaphakam' iintaka. Kwakhala
tyolokobo-tyobo-tyobo. (p. 19)

(A shot followed
Sparks crackled
Birds flew away. The sound of bush
being trampled under feet followed.)

Siwisa achieves good effect with this style because he places all his verbals in the sentence initial position as shown above. Siwisa, on the other hand, avoids monotony by making use of introductory phrases in the initial position. Contrasted with verbals in this position, this technique helps a lot to reduce or to avoid monotony, e.g. in "Mhla indalo yaxakana nendalo":

Kwakwimvela kamvela yadalwa igusha yalixhoba
likadyakal Ashe. Yafundiswa yindalo ukumsaba
udyakal Ashe isakumalama. Kuloko sithi sakuthi
gqi esi silwanyana zithi dungu zonke iigusha
ukusaba umsindo ozayo. (p. 1)

(From the origins of nature, the sheep was
created victim of the jackal. It was taught
by nature to flee from the jackal whenever it
spots it. Consequently whenever this animal
appears on the scene the sheep scatter in all
directions running away from the impending wrath.)
 (My emphasis)

6.2.7 Contrasting questions with statements

Another stylistic device which Siwisa uses to break monotony in narration is contrasting questions with statements, e.g. in "Isimanga":

Uphi uSifonondile? ... Babebuzana ...
 Uyephi uSifonondile? ... Zawa ngokuwa iintetho ...
 Uyephi uSifonondile? ... Zabuza iintanga zakhe ...
 Uyephi uSifonondile? ... Wada waqheleka loo mbuzo.
 (p. 11)

While the question is an insistingly pointed one, the state-

ments vary and follow each other in hierarchical order:

Where is ^A Sifonondile?	... They were asking one another
Where has Sifonondile gone?	... The answers differed.
Where has Sifonondile gone?	... His peers asked ...
Where has Sifonondile gone?	... Everybody got used to that question.

Siwisa has used repetition very effectively in this passage. Note the same question in the sentence initial position and the same vowel in the same position. This helps to heighten or deepen the mystery of Sifonondile's disappearance.

He changes the pattern as soon as some light has been thrown on the mystery when Sifonondile is found in very mysterious circumstances:

A "Uvela phi Sifonondile?" wabuza uyise.
B "Andazi," waphendula umnene. (p. 11)

("Where do you com from Sifonondile?" his father asked.
"I don't know," he answered.)

The same rearrangement of the questions and the statements is repeated in the following passage:

A "Yintoni apha yise kaSifonondile?" wabuza izibilini ziphezulu.
B "Andazi"
A "Uphi uSifonondile?"
B "Andazi". (p. 12)

Once again, to avoid monotony, Siwisa who is very fond of placing his verbs in the sentence initial position, changes this pattern and puts nominals in this position:

Izinja zihlutshezwa ngezicawu ezithile kuphela ...
Iimazi zeenkomo zisilekwa ngobulongwe ...
Abantwana balunyulwa ngokhalakhulu ... Imithi
 yeepesika iyakhuhlelwa, ukunqanda amasela ... (p. 13)

(Dogs are made vicious by giving them only certain spiders to eat ... Cows are smeared with dung on the udders ... Children are weaned by using the aloe ... Peach trees are treated with certain herbs to scare away thieves)
 (My emphasis)

6.2.8 Words with similar connotations

Siwisa uses words like a master craftsman. Sometimes he uses words or phrases with similar connotations to reinforce his meaning, e.g. in "Vuka usenge":

Laligquqgisile ... (He had an amazing knowledge of herbs)
Umhlola laliwubona ngeyona ndlela ... (He could diagnose any illness)
 Wonke umntu wayekhala ngenkunqele ... (Everybody called him an expert)
 Lalisoyikwa ngenxa yobukhali balo ... (People were scared of him because he was so sharp)

(p. 16)

All four expressions have one thing in common - the witch-doctor's expert knowledge of traditional herbs. Siwisa has used these expressions with poetic precision. The same technique can be found elsewhere in the story "Vuka usenge":

Wagula uNdluku, wagula kwancameka. Wachubeka
ngexeshana elifutshane (p. 17)

(Ndluku became ill, so ill that people lost all hope of seeing him recover. He became emaciated in a short time.)

This technique can also be found in the story "Ah Njayi-buzwa":

Akukho nto izingca, nezigwagwisa amatshamba
njengentsukaze, ngako nje ukuba imise obesi-
bini ubuhlanti. (p. 1)

(No one is more proud and boisterous than a newly converted, as soon as he puts up a second kraal)

Wayelithemba elikhulu, nexhatha lika Twezitakane
kwezombuso. (ibid)

(He was a great hope and source of support for Twezitakane in political affairs.)

Sometimes Siwisa uses the same word to give different shades of interrelated meanings, e.g. "Indoda yelaka":

Walingena kakubi iKapa uMathayi, lathi kanti
alikamenzi nto liseza kumkapa, limkhaphe,
landule ukumkaphela. (p. 30)

All these words accurately portray the difficulties through which Mathayi had to go. They all reinforce each other and all are related in sound to the key word Kapa (Cape Town), which is given here the connotation of chopping (from kap).

6.2.9 Sentence construction

As far as sentence construction is concerned, Siwisa is equally at home with either hypotactic, paratactic or co-ordinated sentences as typified by the following sentence:

Mfo uthile (owayeligosa eliphambili ecaweni), wahlala ngenye imini etyisa imfene yakhe umvubo ekoyini. ((Kuthe ngeso sithuba)) kwafika umfundisi womLungu. Ufike wabuza igosa lakhe ebantwaneni, (abathe bona bamxelela, besithi baza kulibiza). (p. 6)

(A certain man (who was a prominent steward in the church) sat down one afternoon feeding his baboon in the mielie crib. ((Just at that time)) a White minister of religion arrived there. He asked from the children where his church steward was (who told him, saying that they were going to call him.) (All emphases mine)

6.3 Resumé

In this final evaluative chapter, Siwisa's style has been examined on the basis of several conventional stylistic criteria. Of necessity, all those writings which have so many essayistic tendencies that they cannot be included in this subgenre have been excluded. Siwisa uses two basic techniques to avoid monotony. Firstly, he interchanges verbals and nominals in the sentence initial position and, secondly, he blends two or three tenses within one narrative. It should be pointed out that in this discussion the popular expression 'authorial comments' has been substituted with 'direct comments'

wherever possible. This is in line with my own view that the author is only operating in the background in the short story. Reference to a commentator or narrator-commentator has also been done for the same reason.

CHAPTER 7

SUMMARY AND GENERAL CONCLUSION

7.0 Summary

In this brief summary and conclusion, the main observations and conclusions regarding Siwisa's short stories will be highlighted. Since Chapters 1 and 2 were more of a definitive and introductory nature, the study proper began in Chapter 3.

A study of Siwisa's themes reveals that his main objective is to focus on the futility of engaging in crime or physical violence. He also makes a subtle attack on superstition and deviant behaviour. It is therefore obvious that Siwisa addresses himself to contemporary social problems strictly in line with the writer's responsibility as set out by Jordan (1974:viii):

"The writer" says Maxim Gorky, "is like the eyes and ears of his epoch". By this I understand that a writer, being witness of his time, cannot yet be above it, as some critics would like us to believe. Like every member of society, the writer has a role to play. To be relevant, he must reflect the hopes and aspirations of his society, its struggles and tribulations, its triumphs and failures.

In this regard, Satyo (1977:181) states the function of the writer as follows:

- (i) To describe or diagnose some areas of disintegration in the social order which he sees as threatening the very existence of his nation, and then
- (ii) offer a remedy for this.

Siwisa has set himself out to do exactly that, in line with the broad objectives of the literature of the missionary era. Cf. Satyo (1981:79):

It has already been indicated that the birth of imaginative literature in Xhosa is inextricably bound up with Missionary enterprise. This enterprise was concerned not only with spiritual enrichment but also with social transformation. It touched ruthlessly on the very essence of the life-style and the philosophy of life of the Xhosas: it aimed at reforming not only their material side of life but also their supernatural beliefs and their world-view. This was bound to be reflected in the literature that followed.

In Chapter 4 it has been shown that Siwisa uses setting and characterisation to advance his theme and plot, to characterise certain individuals and to depict historical time.

In the story "Mhla indalo yaxakana nendalo" it is interesting to note that three "natural" parties are involved in the struggle - the jackal, the lamb and the physical background against which the incidents are taking place.

In fact, the jackal is killed by fatigue caused by having

to run up and down a very rugged terrain. Siwisa also uses car models to reflect historical time. By making use of expansive settings, e.g. in the story "Tshona", he gives universality to certain of his stories.

Siwisa conditions our responses and attitudes towards certain characters by using the naming device. He utilises the principle of pre-stabilization of character to control our responses towards them. Ndluku in "Vuka usenge" is, as his name suggests, a real nonentity, Mbovane in "Umzingeli weembila" is industrious and fond of holes and crevices. Fenson and Kritzer (1966:54) remark about this conditioning:

You must ask yourself not only why the characters behave as they do; you must also ask yourself how your reaction to what they do is controlled by the author.

Siwisa's characters are very successful because, as Perrine (1978:68) says, they are

... neither paragons of virtue nor monsters of evil nor an impossible combination of contradictory traits.

There is minimal evidence of characterisation by means of comments by other characters. The main reason for this is that the author plays an intrusive role himself as commentator-narrator. This is typical of most of the Xhosa

short story writers. Cf. Satyo (1981:80):

Other key aspects of this literary activity are: the commentator-narrator and his special rhetoric whose structural design has an unmistakable bias towards the goal that will have been clearly set out in the introduction to the given work. Through this especially structured rhetoric, the commentator-narrator maintains a happy balance between the ideal situation of the set of principles and the corrupted model.

Although the Xhosa short story does not adhere slavishly to the structure of its Western counterpart, this does not mean that it lacks structure. The various elements are directly related to the main theme. In this way the parts move back to the core, more like an inverted tree, instead of stretching outwards.

Siwisa's short stories show the following structural pattern -

1. They have a topic or title that encapsulates the main idea. This is the central idea that runs through the whole story, e.g. "Umzingeli weembila ufel' eliweni".
2. This is invariably followed by an introductory statement or by several authorial comments on the topic, e.g.

Iyinyaniso into yokuba ingciti yamanzi ifa ngamanzi, yaye eyezikhali isifa ngezikhali. (p. 30)

(It is true that one normally dies in one's favourite pursuit.)

3. The second paragraph carries the exposition and it is obviously aimed at proving the point raised in step 2 above.

Kwaba njalo kuMbovane ..

(That was what happened to Mbovane ...)

4. Several ancillary stories start branching out from here, e.g.

Mbovane is found dumb struck after a hunting spree, Mbovane gets stuck in a hole on the mountain, Mbovane falls down a precipice and meets his death.

This inverted tree pattern can be found, for example, in the following stories - "Imfene nobubele bayo", "Hayi ubudenge", "Isimanga", "Siyagoduka", "Vuka usenge", "UNto-zinani ... eNxuba", "Ah Njayibuzwa", "UDideka", "Lingaba likhulu umbombo uyaqhosha", "Ndiza kuniyalekisa", "Myekeni ambulale", "Umvuzo wethemba", "Umzila wokufa", "Sisonka sethu", "Indoda yelaka" and "Umgudu wokugqibela" to mention but a few.

It should be pointed out that pattern, in this regard, does not presuppose symmetrical or mathematical similarity. As long as there are constants and variables, there is some pattern.

Direct comments and subjectivity are part of the Xhosa narrative. The intention, it must be understood, in the Xhosa narrative, is not to exhibit evil, as doing so would be counterproductive, but to throw, in the course of the narration, checkpoints here and there to uphold national morality.

Siwisa's style, as explained in Chapter 6, is fresh and facile. This can be seen from his successful use of all the elements of good style that are propounded by Botha and Satyo. Although Siwisa's style is simple and straightforward, he uses suggestion, implication and insinuation to maximum effect in his stories. Most of his erstwhile critics shower him with unfair criticism because they fail to appreciate these insinuations. They miss the whole point of his style and philosophy. Compare the following example of hidden insinuation:

Wathi ukuba angene emsethulukeni, kwaqala kwanzima kaloku ngoku, kuba uyasiphuka umhlaba kwaye kuloo mgudu ungako wayelitsho lankone ubuso obu itakane.
(ibid:1)

(As soon as it entered the steep slope, things became even more difficult because the ground was too loose and in that great struggle, it had made the lamb's face terribly dirty.)

Although the author does not say so explicitly, there is every reason to believe that it was not only the dust that dirtied the lamb's face. On very close reading of the

passage a subtle twist in the narration is revealed ... "and in that great struggle" The reader is now being taken back to the struggle and its repercussions but because this is juxtaposed with the dust, it is not easy to spot the insinuation which would have been conspicuous if the dust was not there. Seen in this light, the jackal had, in its panic, defecated on the lamb's face!

Siwisa's main weapon against monotony is his change of tenses - from the past to the perfect and to the present in a single story. His use of authorial comments in some of his stories has, as its root cause, the traditional Xhosa narrative which consists of narrative and commentary. Nevertheless, there are cases where this has been so dominant that the writings concerned have had to be rejected as not fulfilling the basic requirements of the short story, e.g. "Iintwana ezincinane nazo zibalulekile"; "Mdala utat' omkhulu", "Mthandi kanqatha", "Amaqal' afike", "Qash' Qash' Kuphekwe ntoni namhlanje?", "Lubisi namhlanje esikolweni" and "Umzingisi akanashwa".

7.1 General conclusion

My final evaluation of Siwisa's short stories as being successful takes full cognisance of the facts raised by Knickerbocker et al. (1985:22) with regard to the question

as to "What makes a good story?":

Fortunately, there is no single formula to guarantee excellence. Fortunately indeed, because if there were, the fascinating variety in stories would be lost, and the formula would quickly bring boredom In our search for excellence, we may begin with one fairly stable assumption: we should judge all the elements in the story according to the consequences they produce in the story. Plot, character, theme, suspense - none of these things is good or bad except as its use makes it so.

To use Baumbach's (1966:15ff) general requirements, Siwisa's stories have, in varying degrees, their own original vitality and grip; they are general human truths; they give an objectivised reproduction of an emotion which was caused by an experience; they have, in their own way, unity and harmony in content and form. Viewed as a whole against these non-mechanistic, non-atomistic conceptual requirements, Siwisa's stories form a successful integrated whole with not only a clear message but also with a legitimate claim on literary value.

Perhaps the most important factor to bear in mind when analysing or evaluating these stories is their level of development; the time factor. We must not equate them too rigidly with their modern counterparts. This is emphasised by the development of the English short story as exemplified by Rohrberger (1979:2):

We know that Washington Irving, writing early in the century, produced stories very loose in structure; plots moved slowly, and actions were often impeded by lengthy comments or interrupted by apparently extraneous details.

Level of development does not include social and economic development. It relates to literary development only.

Dutton (1984:61) cites Marx as saying in this regard:

... there is no simple equation between the quality of literary work and the social/economic development of the civilization that produced it.

Siwisa is one of the pioneers of the Xhosa short story.

He belongs to the first fifty years of the development of Xhosa literature. Jordan, as cited by Couzens (1984:61) with regard to this period's literature, pleads:

The legacy of the first fifty years of Xhosa literary activity is to be respected. If some of our readers are inclined to think that we are over-indulgent when we make this remark, we have only to remind them, that these first writers had no written tradition to guide them, no Homer or Sophocles, no Herodotus or Plutarch, no Dante or Petrarch on whom to model themselves. If we remember this, then we must agree that theirs was no small achievement.

I wish to concede that Siwisa, like most African writers, uses the Western format as a broad base or as Satyo (ibid: 80) puts it, as a "corrupted model" but the number of departures from the Western norm point to the emergence of an African art form which draws for its strength from the

African background and from the Western tradition.

Groenewald (1985:3) puts one condition to this evolutionary development:

It (i.e. African literature) must assert the African presence, without becoming African at the expence (sic) of being literature.

It is my honest opinion that Siwisa's stories satisfy this golden rule and, therefore, they are an important contribution to the study of the subgenre and to Xhosa literature in general.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate Palmer's (1982:2) view that

... there are some genuine cultural and literary reasons for objection to western criteria.

Some of these criteria are not only foreign to African expression but they also stifle it. Olney, as cited by Ngcongwane (1981:3) confirms this difference:

African literature is unquestionably different from the literature of the Western world, primarily because the mode of cultural consciousness that it expresses is a different one, and it therefore requires and rewards an "approach" - a way of getting into it and of feeling out its special qualities.

It is however true that one cannot discard western criteria altogether because these form an essential model for the understanding of literary theory in general. It is exactly this model that our writers, according to Satyo (ibid:80) tend to deliberately corrupt in order to achieve their own goals in their literature. Dogmatism and rigid application of the Western literary norms and criteria should be avoided at all costs.

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