

**A CRITICAL APPRAISAL OF P.T. MTUZE'S  
SHORT STORIES**

BY

**BEAUTY NONZWAKAZI NOMFUNDO NGUNA**

Submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for



**University of Fort Hare**  
*Together in Excellence*

**MASTER OF ARTS**

in the

**FACULTY OF ARTS**

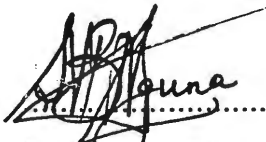
of the

**UNIVERSITY OF FORT HARE**

**Supervisor :** Professor C R Botha  
**Date Submitted:** February 1997  
**Date degree awarded:** April 1997

## DECLARATION

I, **Beauty Nonzwakazi Nomfundo Nguna**, do hereby declare that the work in this dissertation is entirely my own with the exception of such quotations or references which have been attributed to their authors or sources and that all sketches are made or drawn by me save where I have acknowledged that another is the author.

  
B.N.N. Nguna



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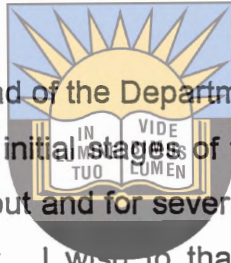
**DATED AT FORT HARE UNIVERSITY THIS 28th DAY OF FEBRUARY 1997.**

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I dedicate this work to :



My dearest mother 'Ntozie'  
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My loving son 'Ndya'

and my sweet daughter 'Ntosh'

## ABSTRACT

### INTRODUCTION

The main purpose of this study is to investigate critically Mtuze's short stories. It has been undertaken because, while the treatment of the genre of the short story is popular in that it is written and read in Africa, literary scholars have largely ignored its existence.

The aim of this study is to clarify some of the difficult aspects in interpreting the author's intentions which lie beneath the various literary theories and aspects such as theme, plot, character, language and style and theme.

Thus, my task as a literary scholar becomes obvious in that it is an attempt on my part and also a challenge to other critics to help to dismiss views on the relegating of the Xhosa short story by undertaking a thorough and systematic study of this genre.

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To present a complete picture of a Xhosa short story, Mtuze's short stories are chosen in addition to Botha, Sotashe and Mtuze's research work.

All important aspects are defined and investigated with a critical eye because every story is unique and important and because good short story writers strive for perfection and originality.

One hopes however, that this study will enable Mtuze's books of short stories to draw critical attention to the vibrant genre of the Xhosa short story by highlighting aspects of its social aesthetic values.

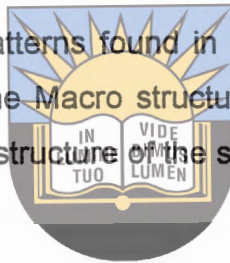
### CONTENT

Chapter 1 comprises the introduction where the importance of stories, aims and objectives of study, scope of study and method of approach are indicated. A brief

overview of the author's life and times is also given in this chapter.

In Chapter 2 a theoretical discussion on the short story as an independent literary genre is presented. This comprises the historical development of the short story, its various definitions, its distinctive features and its functions. A comparative study of the short story with other literary genres, both longer and short, will be part of this discussion. The development of the literary features of the Xhosa short story will be investigated and present information on this aspect is used. A debate on the valid literary criteria that can be used to evaluate the Xhosa short story, is part of this investigation.

Chapter 3 deals with structural patterns found in the short stories of Mtuze. The discussion of plot includes both the Macro structure and the Micro structure. The possible variations on the general structure of the story as found in Mtuze's work are identified and discussed.



In chapter 4 different methods of character portrayal and the use of conflict in its different forms to portray characters, are investigated.

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Chapter 5 comprises the stylistic patterns and language of the writer. This material includes Figures of Speech and other modes of linguistic expression which makes the author's work peculiar.

In Chapter 6 a survey of some of the main and important relevant themes evolved by Mtuze in his short stories and the in-depth meaning reflected in them through the modes of linguistic expression such as symbolism, irony and satire, are explored and analysed.

## CONCLUSION

In Chapter 7, this study comes to certain conclusions regarding the literary merit of Mtuze's short stories and his literary contribution to Xhosa literature as a whole.

Suggestions on various avenues for future research in the field of Xhosa literature, particularly on Mtuze's short stories, are also indicated.



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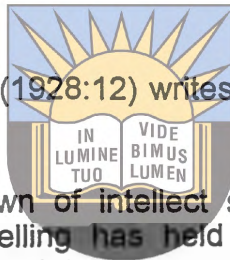
## CHAPTER 1

### GENERAL INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 THE IMPORTANCE OF STORIES

Over the years the narrative has proved itself as a popular literary medium which has been enjoyed by readers of different ages and from different backgrounds. Stories about people are, in some areas at least, probably the most important group of narratives. Such stories are of many different kinds and deal with a variety of topics and themes.

To show this importance Albright (1928:12) writes :



From the dawn of intellect some form of short story telling has held the foremost place in human interest.

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This is true because man has an inborn craving to tell stories. As far as is known, people have always wanted to enjoy stories of some sort, from the era of the primitive myth and folktale, right up to the present day. There has never been a time when people of diverse ethnicity and heritage have not had a strong and inexhaustible desire to listen to stories, of how other people lead their lives, and to be held in suspense as to "what happened next". And these are the features of a story: it gives vicarious experiences and it holds our interest by adequately arousing our curiosity and satisfying it. This desire is universal (Schreiber, 1965:20).

From preliterate times, stories were told in the evenings by the fireside. Their content ranged from myths, legends and folktales to true stories on a host of topics and incidents. These stories were presented orally to various audiences and according to Forster (1954:28) "... the primitive audience was an audience of shock heads gaping around the camp fire..." To the people of Africa the narration of stories was equally important. Okpewho (1992:222) says :

..., in the traditional setting storytelling is only one of the entertainments provided on an evening of relaxation (for instance), and may come only after other forms of activity ...

The decision to undertake a study on the short story and the Xhosa short story in particular, has been influenced largely by the general importance of the narrative as shown above and by the popularity of this particular genre within the African continent.

## 1.2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The general aim of this study is to make a critical assessment of the contribution of a particular writer towards a specific genre in the field of Xhosa literature and, in this way, to contribute towards the study of this specific literary genre against the background of the African literary tradition.



The genre which is to be studied in this dissertation is the short story because, while it is widely written and read in Africa, literary scholars have up to now not paid the necessary attention to this literary genre. Besides the studies of Botha (1978), Sotashe (1979) and Mtuze (1986) on the Xhosa short story, there are but a few others by African literary scholars such as Makwela (Sotho, 1977), Mabuza (Zulu, 1988), Strachan (Zulu, 1990) and Sebate (Sotho, 1994) .

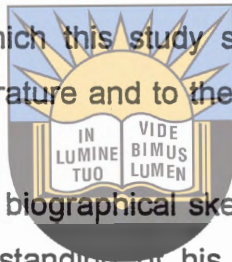
The aim of this study is to make a critical appraisal of Mtuze's short stories. Although Mtuze is widely regarded as one of the leading authors in the field of Xhosa literature, no specialised study of his contributions in the field of the short story has thus far been made. This study attempts therefore, to define and describe the literary canon in terms of which Mtuze's short story art succeeds. Furthermore, this study seeks to give an analytic description of the important aspects of literature, such as narrative style, plot structure, theme and character which are implicit in Mtuze's short stories.

These will be critically examined so as to establish the salient characteristics of Mtuze's style and to define the aesthetic principles that generally serve as an

acceptable criterion for the writing of a short story.

### 1.3 SCOPE OF STUDY

As will be shown in the sections that follow, Mtuze is a most prolific writer, who has produced a large number of short stories in three anthologies. Owing to the limited scope of this study, however, not all the stories in these anthologies can be dealt with on an equal basis. Preference will therefore, be given to the analysis of those stories which reveal the narrative tendencies of Mtuze's work in the most effective and representative manner. Delimitation of the study material will, however, not be rigid. Reference will, where possible, also be made to Mtuze's other works on a comparative basis. The aesthetic principles which this study seeks to examine are the basic qualities which are essential to literature and to the short story specifically.



In the remainder of this chapter, a biographical sketch of the writer's life and times, which may be vital to the understanding of his works, will be presented. His contributions towards the development of Xhosa literature and specifically the Xhosa short story will also receive attention in this chapter.

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Chapter Two of this study consists of an account of the historical development of the short story genre and a theoretical discussion on the short story as an independent literary genre. A variety of definitions of the short story as presented by leading literary scholars, will be considered in order to highlight the distinctive features of the genre. This will, to a large extent, be done by comparing the short story, as a genre, with other related genres such as the novel, essay, drama and poetry.

In Chapter Three the structure of the short story will be analysed. The basic narrative phases such as Exposition, Rise and Development, Crisis, Climax and End will be given attention, and possible variations on the general structure of the short story as found in Mtuze's work, will be identified and discussed.

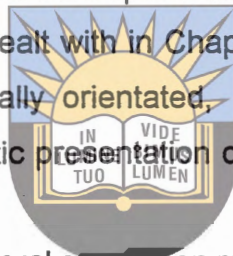
The role and function of characterisation in the short story is dealt with in Chapter

Four. The various methods of character portrayal and the different types of characters depicted in Mtuze's short stories will be investigated here.

The stylistic devices employed by the short story writer in general and by Mtuze in particular will be discussed in Chapter Five. This entails a close look at the writer's conversance with the Xhosa language. The method used by the writer to convey his thoughts effectively, the appropriateness of the words used and the ability of the writer to apply different word connotations to call up the desired response will receive attention in this chapter.

The mutual relationship between the concepts of theme, moral and subject matter, as found in Mtuze's stories, will be dealt with in Chapter Six. This entails investigating whether Mtuze is more traditionally orientated, informative, defensive or socio-politically orientated in the thematic presentation of his stories.

The final chapter consists of a general conclusion regarding Mtuze's achievements as a Xhosa short story writer. This will be done by revisiting the findings made in this study and by re-interpreting them within the wider context of Xhosa literature.



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#### 1.4 METHOD OF STUDY

The aim of this study, as stated above, is to examine and evaluate the literary content and form of Mtuze's short stories. In order to realise this aim an approach will be used which concerns the evaluation of the texts and whatever has been written on them. The aim is to establish how far Xhosa literature and in particular the Xhosa short story has been influenced by the work of Mtuze. Various critiques on the theory of literature will be consulted in order to find out how far Mtuze's writings on the short story conform with or depart from current views on literature and on the short story in particular.

This evaluation of Mtuze's work is based mainly upon universally acknowledged literary criteria. African literary and social values and in particular Xhosa culture and

tradition will, however, also be taken into consideration in this evaluation process (see also 2.4.4).

In this study the extrinsic approach will be applied as far as possible. This entails the use of existing sources and critical texts or articles in the examination of Mtuze's work. Existing discussions on the Xhosa short story in general will also be taken into consideration. This study is based upon a close study of the author's personal background and on the manner in which this is reflected in his work. The data pertinent to the biographical outline of the writer as presented in 1.5 below has been obtained by conducting interviews with the author himself, his family and other respondents who know him personally. With this information a thorough investigation of the author's works is made possible.

As stated above, Mtuze is a most productive Xhosa short story writer who has up to now produced three short story anthologies, namely,

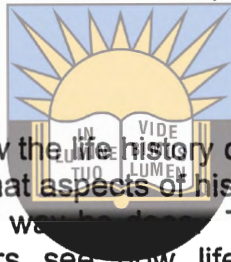
- 1) **AMATHOL'EENDABA**, (1977)
- 2) **UMPHEHLULU** (1984)
- 3) **SH-S-SH-H UNGAKHE UXELELE MNTU** (1990)

Mtuze has, as stated above, included a total of forty-six short stories in these anthologies and it will be practically impossible to analyse all of them within the limited scope of this study. Only those stories, therefore, that illustrate the main features and tendencies in Mtuze's work most effectively and clearly will be selected and studied. This does not however, imply that those stories not analysed here are necessarily of inferior literary quality. In this study emphasis is rather on the general and unifying characteristics of individual stories, which means that the peculiar and individual is sacrificed for the general in a blended study.

In this study the anthologies mentioned above will be referred to by their respective titles and years of publication. Individual stories will be referred to by their titles and the year of publication of the particular anthology to which the story belongs.

## 1.5 BIOGRAPHICAL OUTLINE OF P. T. MTUZE AND HIS TIMES

Mtuzze is a modern writer who has contributed extensively towards the development of Xhosa literature through his creative writings. For the purpose of this study, it is important to present a brief overview of Mtuzze's personal life and background, including environmental factors such as the home, the school and the church in order to be able to assess his development as a writer. This approach is supported by various leading literary critics. Qangule (1979:32), for instance, claims that in addition to the analysis of any writer's works, the analysis of the biographical material pertaining to him, if available, generally contributes towards the success of a literary study such as the one envisaged here. Mtumane (1995:40-41) strongly agrees when he writes :



When we know the life history of a writer, we easily understand what aspects of his life have made him see things the way he does. This life history also makes readers see how life has affected his writings, especially when it is of literary value; that is, one's life history ties in with one's artistic work.

Mkonto (1992:14) also comes to the conclusion that the study of the life history of a writer affords one an opportunity to examine the writer's practical experience of life.

The bulk of the information presented here was obtained through a series of personal interviews with the author held during the period 1988 to 1990 at Rhodes University in Grahamstown, from discussions with his wife in their home at Zwelitsha and from a friend of theirs, a Mr Nqikashe at Fort Hare. His autobiography **INDLEL' EBHEK' ENKUNDLENI** (1976) and the publication **UMHLOBO WABAFUNDI BESIXHOSA** (1995), of which he is a co-author, also provided valuable information on his personal background and his contributions. All the information obtained from the latter sources will be documented accordingly.

### 1.5.1 The man and his family

Peter Tshobisa Mtuze was born in the Karoo region (which provides the setting for almost all his books) on Leeuhoek, a farm owned by a Mr Wolfaardt, on 2 November 1941. The name Tshobisa was given to him because he was born a big baby. His parents were Kusi Appolis Mntuze, (a quiet but short-tempered man of the Dlomo clan), and Nosajini MaGando Matshini of Lady Frere. Though he liked them both, he favoured his mother more because she was a strict disciplinarian. His paternal grandparents were Ndleleni Mntuze and Noveki Ndungwana. Mtuze is the youngest of five brothers and five sisters. He is married to Nomathemba Ngwatyu of the Mawawa clan and they have one son, Dumisani. Dumisani is named after Dumisani Tabata, the eldest son of one of his secondary school teachers and a well-known attorney in the area of King William's Town. Originally the author's surname was "Mntuze". At school however his teachers would normally refer to him as "Mtuze". After a while the author became used to this new name and decided to change his surname formally to "Mtuze" (Mtuze, 1976:22). This is how he is known today. Mtuze is a humorous type of person. This was noticed during interviews and personal contact with him.



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### 1.5.2 Primary School education

After nine years of moving from one farm to another with his family, and of helping his father in the building of dams, he was finally able to attend school for the first time. Although his parents preferred that he should help them at home, Mtuze decided that it was time for him to go to school. During the period 1950-1953 he completed his lower primary education at the St Simons farm school at Katkop. After having been promoted, Mtuze attended Conway farm school in 1954 -1955, where he completed Standards Three and Four under the headship of Mr H M Siko. It was in this school that he first showed signs of brilliance when he proved himself right in a mathematical problem, proving his maths teacher wrong. It was also in this school that Mtuze wrote his first article for **WAMBA** (n.d.) also entitled **UMHLOBO WABANTWANA**. This was taken as a great achievement as it was the first of its kind ever published by a black

pupil. His teacher encouraged him to write more articles.

In 1956 Mtuze went to Cradock to do Standard Five as that level of education could not be offered by farm schools. His class teacher at the St. James Primary School was Mr J N Mbayise. It was at this school under the headship of Mr Majeke Mali that his second article, which was written in English, won a prize in the "Detto!" competition. According to him (Mtuze, 1976:22) it was this achievement which gave him the ambition to write a book one day. He completed Standard Six in 1957 with a first-class pass. It was then that he again proved his brilliance by occupying the first position in the Grahamstown Circuit, which at that time was the largest in the area with about 400 candidates.

### 1.5.3 Secondary School Education



In 1958 Mtuze enrolled at Cradock Secondary School, where he studied Form I under a Mr Zambodla, a Ghanaian principal, who was soon succeeded by Mr J Hlekani. At the end of the year he passed Form I with flying colours. Among his teachers was a Mrs Tabata, with whom he stayed for some time before moving to the home of his aunt, a Mrs Mose.

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It was also during the same year in this school that he encountered financial problems because he did not qualify for a bursary as he was a "farm boy". He was helped by the Congress Choir (which, for political reasons, later became known as the "Modernaires") under Canon Calata. In his autobiography ( Mtuze, 1976:25) he interestingly reveals the financial problems he encountered and which had a negative impact on his progress in education. There is good reason to believe that Mtuze was inspired to present this experience in the form of a short story entitled **Injombe** (1977) (see 4.3.2.2.1).

In 1959 Mtuze completed Form II at the same school with financial help from Miss M Joubert of Cradock. He excelled in debates and was also good in poetry in which he still excels in, even today. He had a good memory and also excelled in gymnastics.

When the Cradock Secondary School was destroyed by fire as a result of political unrest in 1959, some pupils were asked to attend the Lwana Primary School in the neighbourhood. It was during this period that Mtuze showed a strong sense of responsibility and leadership by offering to teach during the absence of teachers and to conduct the morning prayers on a daily basis under difficult circumstances. He was also given the responsibility of orientating new members of the Modernaires Choir. By that time Mtuze was also a member of the African National Congress (Mtuze, 1995:107).

During those years the Andrew Smith Bursary was offered annually to Cradock pupils but unfortunately Mtuze did not qualify, as he was a "farm boy". This had a negative impact on his studies, the standard of which gradually deteriorated. During these difficult times Mtuze was loyally supported by his closest and brilliant friends.



In 1960, while doing Form III, Mtuze developed a more jovial personality. Wherever he was, pupils were always laughing. One notices during interviews that he has not changed much over the years. Mtuze was concerned more with intellectual matters than with cultural activities. He also excelled in the languages. At the end of that year he was one of three friends who passed Form III (with a first class pass) after being helped by Principal Hlekani and his teachers.

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Owing to severe financial problems, Mtuze was unable to enrol for Matriculation the following year. He was forced to enrol privately and it took him almost ten years before he could register for and pass his matriculation. Ironically, his first novel, **UDINGEZWENI** (1966), was one of the prescribed books for Xhosa (First Language) during that year. He obtained his matriculation certificate in 1971.

#### 1.5.4 Tertiary education

Mtuze had always had a desire to pursue his education since his early childhood years (Mtuze, 1976:8;24). With the help of the then Ciskei government, he was able to register at Rhodes University in 1978. In 1980 he was awarded the BA degree (in

Translation). Mtuze now devoted himself even more to research and completed both his Honours (1984) and Masters (1986) degrees in African Languages at the University of South Africa before completing a Doctoral thesis (1992) at the University of Cape Town on Xhosa literature. Besides these formal studies, his skills as a researcher are also demonstrated by the fact that he has published numerous articles in various academic journals, including the "South African Journal of African Languages". He is at present studying towards the Bachelor of Theology degree at the University of South Africa.

### 1.5.5 His married Life

It was in the year 1959 whilst doing Form II at St James School that Mtuze met his wife, Nomathemba Ngwatyu, who is today known as Nothandekile (a name given to her by Mtuze's brother when they married). When Nothandekile met Mtuze she was doing Standard Five. They met in the neighbourhood where there were only two houses in between their respective homes. They married in 1965 whilst Mtuze was working as a court interpreter at Somerset West. Mtuze never proposed marriage and his wife claims that she was invited to Cape Town to see "a seriously ill" Peter and was caught by surprise when she was given traditional bridal clothes to wear. They were married by a Mr van der Watt (the then magistrate) who also became a witness. The newly wedded wife had to return to Cradock because she had no permit to stay in the Western Cape, but Mtuze made an appeal to the department of Home affairs and was eventually given permission to stay with his wife at Nyanga near Cape Town.

In February 1967, after two years of marriage, Nothandekile gave birth to a son, who was named Dumisani and who seems to be as talkative as his father. The name Dumisani suggests that Mtuze was very thankful for his son. Mtuze loves his wife and son and his family as a whole to such an extent that in **ISIGODLO SIKAPHALO** (Mtuze, 1983) he composed a poem "Kondimthandayo" (to the one I love) where he expresses his feelings and love for his wife, praising her and advising her as follows on some delicate and important traditional issues:

NguNo**th**andekile igama lakhe,  
NguNomathemba ithemba lam.  
Sam**th**anda ngokumthemba thina bakwaDlomo,  
Bamthemba ngom**th**anda kowabo kwaMawawa.  
(p.70)(My emphasis: BNN)

(Her name is Nothandekile,  
She is Nomathemba, my hope.  
We love her through certitudes, we of the Dlomo clan,  
They trusted her by infatuation, her Mawawa clan.)

The repeated use of the word "thanda" (to love) in this stanza illustrates Mtuze's deep feeling of affection towards his wife. The name "Nothandekile" (the one who is loved) speaks for itself. In fact Mtuze's wife is not only loved by Mtuze himself but by both the Dlomo and Mawawa clans. Her maiden name was Nomathemba but when she came to stay with the Dlomo clan, she was given a new name, Nothandekile (the one who is loved).



The title of the poem "Kondimthandayo (the one I love) suggests that Mtuze is dedicating this poem also to the members of his family. He mentions his parents Kusi and Nosajini; his grandmother who he claims to love most; his in-laws Nopityo and Nkungwana and his only son Dumisani respectively in the following stanzas (Note that the footnotes form part of the original text):

Ulibonil' inyang' u**Kusi**<sup>1</sup> likuncumele,  
Umbonil' u**Nosajini**<sup>2</sup> egaxel'imixhaka,  
Kodw' inene ndithi akubonanga nto  
Kuba akumbonanga u**MaNdungwana**<sup>3</sup>.

(You have seen the antiquated Kusi smiling at you,  
You have seen Nosajini in ardoned garments,

---

<sup>1</sup> Uyise wembongi  
(Father of the poet)

<sup>2</sup> Unina  
(his mother)

<sup>3</sup> uninakhulu  
(his grandmother)

But you have seen nothing,  
Because you haven't seen MaNdungwana.)

Iqalile k' indlela enyuk' intaba,  
Usakh' umzi ungumntwana nomnye  
Kude lee no**Nopityo**<sup>4</sup> ... ndambiza!  
Intomb'ebomv' eyayithandwa ngu**Nkungwana**<sup>5</sup>.

(The ascending pathway to the mountain has begun,  
Erecting a homestead as a progeny and the other  
Far- flung from Nopityo ... I hailed her  
A radiant girl adulated by Nkungwana).

**Dumisani**<sup>6</sup> yindumiso, babulel' abaThembu  
Yintonga yokuvika ekuphela kwayo tshu.  
UNosajini ndimgcinile, ubawo enguntondo  
Wagcin' uMaNdungwana, ke nyana, nank' unyoko.

(Dumisani is the encomium, the Thembus showed gratitude,  
It is the shrine stick and the only one.  
I have safeguarded Nosajini, My father being the last born  
Fostered MaNdungwana, son, here is your mother).  
(~ 70-74) (My emphasis: BNN)

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Mtuzé is not simply making a general statement here, but is actually referring to his own family. This is confirmed by the contents of the footnotes that appear at the bottom of the page of the original text.

### 1.5.6 His church Life

When Mtuzé was nine years old, his parents moved from Conway farm to Katkop. They left Mtuzé behind with his two brothers, Siphetho and Phumelele. Mtuzé visited them at Fish River and refused to go back, hiding in the mealiefield. He then attended

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<sup>4</sup> **umkhwekazi**  
(his mother-in-law)

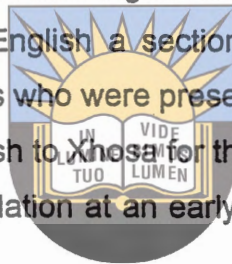
<sup>5</sup> **uSomfazi**  
(his father-in-law)

<sup>6</sup> **Dumisani**  
(his son)

school for the first time at St Simon's School in 1950, where he was taught about the church and the word of God and was baptised by an Anglican Church Canon, Rev J A Calata.

The church played a very influential and important role in Mtuze's life, especially at a very early age while he was still a secondary school pupil. After his school was burnt down in 1959, Mtuze was permitted to conduct morning prayers at Lwana Primary School without assistance; and in 1961, whilst he was working at Hofmeyr as a translator, he became a lay preacher under Canon Calata.

In 1971 he attended the opening of the Anglican church building at Dimbaza, where he was asked to translate into English a section of Reverend Mr Vika's sermon (prepared in Xhosa) for the Whites who were present. He also had to translate other sections of the sermon from English to Xhosa for the Africans present, thus revealing his inborn skills in language translation at an early age.



Bishop Bill Bennett, who was one of those present at the Dimbaza church opening ceremony, thereafter nominated Mtuze to serve in the council of the Anglican church. One of the main tasks of this council was to find solutions to problems such as racial discrimination and to work towards the improvement of race relations. This theme forms an important part of the short stories which were later to be written by Mtuze, (see 6.4.3).

Mtuze's close involvement with church matters is clearly reflected in his literature. The religious theme for instance is often encountered in his novels, e.g. **INDLEL' ECAND' INTLANGO** (1981). Canon D T Matebese as quoted by Mtuze and Tena (1995:149) comments as follows with regard to this particular novel:

I was impressed by your knowledge of the Bible. Congratulations.

The religious theme is also strongly present in his short stories (see 6.4.1).

Mtuzze's prominent role in church affairs is illustrated *inter alia* by the fact that, on the promotion of Bishop Bill Bennett to Archbishop, he was also elected, as a representative of the St John's circuit in King William's Town, to say a word on their behalf. His speech was prepared in English and he mentioned in particular how the Archbishop as a total Christian, would often go out of his way to encourage good relationships between Christians of all races.

As a person who has lived and worked in the former Ciskei for quite some time, Mtuzze has always been very faithful to the church and co-operated very well with Canon J P Ncaca at the St John's and St Chad's Church in Zwelitsha. The sermons of Canon Ncaca often served as an inspiration for Mtuzze in writing some of his stories, e.g. "**Uze ungabhokabheki**" (1984). (see 6.4.1). This was confirmed by Mtuzze whilst he was a guest speaker at a farewell function held in November 1994 at the St. Johns and St. Chads Anglican Church in honour of the retiring Canon.



Although he is a staff member and Head of the Department of African Languages at Rhodes University, before he was ordained as a minister in 1995 Mtuzze spent most of his free time at Zwelitsha with his immediate family, where he attended church at St John's and St Chad's Church as a lay preacher. Because of his interest in religious matters and his leading role in the church he always wanted to be more than just a lay preacher. As already stated, he is at present privately registered at UNISA for the degree of Bachelor of Theology. At the end of 1994 his wishes were fulfilled as he was ordained as a priest of the Anglican Church, which is another great achievement. Since 1995 he now spends most of his time in Grahamstown, where he also regularly attends the local Anglican Church.

### 1.5.7 His professional life

After passing the Junior Certificate examinations in 1960, Mtuzze went to Middelburg to look for work. He looked in vain because he had no lodger's permit. Fortunately a lawyer helped him to obtain one and he was hired to sell cosmetics. Because of his sound knowledge of Afrikaans and English he was soon appointed as a Court

interpreter. In 1961 he was transferred to Somerset West, where he was promoted to the position of Deputy Clerk of the Court in 1964, the first black man in South Africa to occupy this position. His work gave him the opportunity of becoming acquainted with different types of criminal offences and their punishment.

His devotion to his work is evident from the fact that on one occasion he had to interpret in a case involving people of North African origin who were not familiar with any of the local languages. His brilliancy is also evident from the fact that he could interpret for the deaf and dumb. Although he was merely an interpreter he would sometimes assist the Magistrate in the evaluation and judgement of some cases (Mtuzze, 1976:40-41). In 1966, he was transferred to Noupoort, where his salary was raised because of his good service to the government. He was given another promotion upon his transfer to Uitenhage as Senior Clerk of the Court. This was the first time that Mtuzze worked with a team of interpreters and not with individual interpreters as he was used to.



An important step in his career was taken by Mtuzze in 1968 when he took up the post of radio announcer at the SABC studios in King William's Town. He worked with prominent figures like Zama Gebeda, who is now a professor at the University of Transkei. He resigned from his post at the SABC in 1971 in order to accept an appointment as a book representative at the offices of Via Afrika Publishers in King William's Town. This gave him the opportunity of visiting most schools in the Border Region and of becoming more acquainted with the people of this region.

Mtuzze entered the service of the then Ciskei Government as Chief of Protocol in 1976. In the same year he was appointed as the General Secretary of the Xhosa Language Board and has served in its Executive Committee for several years, sometimes acting as Deputy Chairman. After completion of his studies towards the Honours degree, he was appointed as a lecturer in the Department of African Languages at the University of South Africa in 1985. He was then promoted to Senior Lecturer in 1986 after completing his M.A Degree. In 1987 he was employed at the University of Fort Hare as Director and Editor in Chief of the Xhosa Dictionary Project, which involves the

compilation of the Xhosa/English/Afrikaans Dictionary. He was promoted to Professor in 1988, but left Fort Hare at the end of that same year, having completed the third volume of the dictionary, to take up the post of Professor and Head of the Department of African Languages at Rhodes University. In his autobiography, as already mentioned, he emphasises the fact that he wanted very badly to be educated and it is therefore not surprising to learn that although he occupied such a high position at work he proceeded with his studies and obtained his Doctoral degree. Mtuze is involved in various bodies whose main aim is to upgrade Xhosa as a language in its own right.

According to Mtumane (1995:44-45) Mtuze was a member of the Xhosa Language Board for several years and served on it in various capacities such as General Secretary, member of the Executive Committee and Deputy Chairman. He is also a prominent member of the African Languages Association of Southern Africa (ALASA). He is presently the Editorial Adviser for Literature for the official quarterly journal of the Association in which he has published various articles on different aspects of literature. He has also read papers at Biannual Conferences of the Association at national as well as regional level.



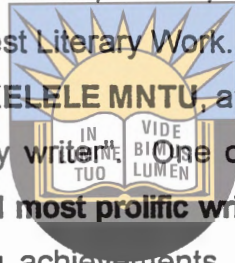
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#### 1.5.8 Mtuze as an author

Mtuze's status as an author emerged during the youthful stages of his life, when he wrote an article for **WAMBA** (n.d.) and an essay entitled **The Battle versus Disease** for the "Dettol" competition whilst he was doing Standard Four. Owing to the encouragement he received from his teachers under the headship of Mr H M Siko, his inspiration to write never diminished, as the paragraphs below will illustrate.

Mtuze started his literary career in 1966 when he produced his first novel, **UDINGEZWENI**, followed by another novel, **UMSINGA**, in 1972. After about four years he produced works belonging to three different genres - a drama, **UMDLANGA**; an autobiography, **INDLEL'EBHEK'ENKUNDLENI** and an anthology of poems, **UGADLA**, all in the same year (1976). The following year (1977) Mtuze produced an

anthology of essays, **INGQAGABA**, as well as his debut anthology of short stories, **AMATHOL' EENDABA**, which won him the title of "the writer of the Seventies" (Satyo 1983:85). A third novel, **INDLEL' ECAND' INTLANGO**, was produced in 1981, followed by an anthology of poems, **VINGCAN' AMAZIBUKO**, in 1982. This was followed by another anthology of poetry, **ISIGODLO SIKAPHALO** (1983), of which Mtuze is the co-author with Opland. Immediately thereafter, a second anthology of short stories, **UMPHEHLULU**, was produced in 1984. An collection of essays, **UGEME**, of which Mtuze is the co-author with Mjamba, was also produced in 1984. In 1986 two literary works were published, viz. a novel, **ALITSHONI LINGAPHUMI**, and an anthology of poetry, **UYAVUTH'UMLILO**, of which Satyo is co-author. The following year (1987) a second drama, **ITSILI**, was published, for which Mtuze received the Educum Award for Best Literary Work. In 1990 a third anthology of short stories, **SH-S-SH-H UNGAKHE UXELELE MNTU**, appeared, for which he received the award of "best Xhosa short story writer". One could rightly, in Satyo's (1983:85) terms, regard him as **the best and most prolific writer of the Eighties** (my emphasis: BNN) because of his outstanding achievements. In 1992 an anthology of praise poems entitled **IZIBONGO ZUMTHONYAMA** was produced.



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What is impressive about Mtuze is that he has produced a large volume of literary works belonging to four different genres including an autobiography. His contribution to Xhosa literature has won him not fewer than three titles, viz. "best short story writer", "best literary work" and "writer of the Seventies". Two of these awards are in the field of the short story genre. What cannot be left unnoticed is the fact that some of his works are also read by blind people as they have been transcribed into Braille (Mtuze, 1995:108).

In addition to his eighteen creative contributions, Mtuze has produced not fewer than three works on Xhosa for teaching purposes. These non-creative works are a reader, **FUNDA UQONDE ISIXHOSA** (1986), **ISIXHOSA SEZIKHUTHALI IBANGA 5** (1986) and **ISIXHOSA SEZIKHUTHALI IBANGA 8** (1986). **IZWI LABANTU** (1994), is a work on the development of Xhosa literature, edited by Mtuze and Opland. In 1995 Mtuze

together with W M Tena as co-author produced a student companion entitled **UMHLOBO WABAFUNDI BESIXHOSA**, a work which is meant for the upgrading of the standard of the Xhosa Language and for its preservation. The last three works contain sections on both linguistics as well as literary theory.

As indicated above, this study will concentrate mainly on his three short story anthologies. It is this particular field which will be examined in greater depth in the chapters that follow. The contents of these three anthologies will now be dealt with briefly in the paragraphs below.

The stories in **AMATHOL' EENDABA** (1977) represent Mtuze's first attempt at this genre, hence the title, literally meaning "small news" or "not big news". The 20 stories listed in this anthology are generally short, simple and straightforward. The material dealt with here ranges from religious topics to traditional topics. The religious topic, for example, is dealt with in **Zinik' iphephal** (1977), where it is shown how a priest arrives at an enclosure where aggressive ostriches are kept. He ignores the warning of the watchman not to enter the enclosure, stating that he is free to go where he wants to, as he is a man of God (implying that he is always protected by God). Commenting on the religious nature of these stories, Qaba as quoted by Mtuze and Tena (1995:148) declares :

Sakufeza ukufunda iincwadi ezilolo hlobo  
besimele ukuphelelisa elukholweni  
naseluzukweni IOSenyangweni.

(After having finished reading books of this  
nature we ought to have ended up in faith  
and glory of the Almighty.)

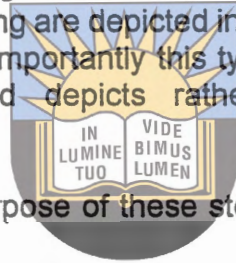
Other religious stories are **Isilingo** (1977) and **Impendulo yeempendulo** (1977). Stories such as **Isivamna** (1977) and **Iqolomba** (1977) deal with the topic of tradition in this anthology.

**UMPHEHLULU** (1984), which literally means "the last drop of milk", represents

Mtuzi's second attempt at short story writing. This is a collection of twenty short stories about a variety of subjects. Some are based on common jokes which the writer has expanded on (Jafta, 1987:154). It may in general be regarded as a more complex work, because the writer himself states clearly that these stories are largely symbolic and dynamic :

... apho kuzotywa izinto neziganeko ngamazwi ambalwa kanti kuqulathwe apho intsingiselo enzulu. Ikakhulu olu hlobo lwebalana luyabonisa, luyazoba endaweni yokubalisa.  
(Mtuzi 1984 : back cover of the text)

(... where things and situations that contain a deep meaning are depicted in a few simple words. More importantly this type of a story illustrates and depicts rather than just narrating).



Saule (1986:11) interprets the purpose of these stories as follows:

... ngamabhalana amafutshane amoniniba woburharho obujikelele okuthetha ngqondo ezinenkwethu nasekugqutheni umphula kwabo banga bayeva kanti abakhange baqalise kuva ukuphulaphula.

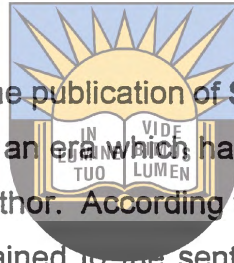
(...they are short stories with a satiric vein which are intended to give clarity and understanding to perverted minds and to remove wax from the ears of those who seem to have heard whereas they have not even started to listen).

The complex nature of this publication is illustrated, *inter alia* by the fact that it deals (as will be shown in the chapters that follow) with a variety of themes, which range from the political to the religious, the cultural and the economic.

Mtuzi's third anthology of short stories is **SH-S-SH-H UNGAKHE UXELELE MNTU** (1990) (literally: "you must tell nobody"). These stories dwell, in general, on the early stages of the decline of the Apartheid era, as a story such as "**Ungakhe uxelele mntu**"

clearly illustrates. This story, for example, deals with the leaving of one's country to seek refuge in another because of racial oppression and discrimination. A story such as **Umthandazo kaSteve**, on the other hand, deals with the principle of the unity and equality of all races. The author seems to have succeeded in compiling an anthology which clearly reflects the important changes of the time. These changes were described as follows by Derek Henderson in a speech delivered at Rhodes University Graduation Ceremony on April 7, 1989:

"Now was an exciting time to begin the journey of life, when the first grey streaks of dawn were signalling the beginning of the end of the dark night of apartheid".



As will be illustrated in this study, the publication of **SH-S-SH-H UNGAKHE UXELELE MNTU** (1990) signalled the end of an era which had placed severe restrictions upon the artistic freedom of the black author. According to Moloji (1974:198) a writer could not operate freely, as he was chained to the sentimental tastes of the then Bantu Education authorities and the financial interests of the publishers whilst he was also a victim of poor book reviewers whose incompetent examination of books had eliminated many a good manuscript. This means that the restrictions imposed on black writers during that period were unnecessary and very destructive. But Mtuze, because of the political changes that were taking place, was one of the first authors to obtain freedom to write on whatever topic he wished.

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Structurally, the short story may not necessarily be as short as the name of this genre implies. The length of a short story depends largely on the extent of the material which is included in it and some stories might therefore be shorter whilst others might indeed be longer. Various writers agree that there is simply no criterion for the length of a short story other than that provided by the material itself (O'Connor, 1965:27). Hence we have in general, "long" short stories and "short" short stories. Mtuze has also written stories of different lengths i.e. shorter stories such as those found in his first two anthologies and longer stories such as those found in the third anthology.

In the chapters that follow, it will be illustrated how most of the stories in these three anthologies have a bearing on the abnormality of the modern life of the South African Black man. Mtuze's aim is to point out the evils which arose from the African community's modern way of living in the urban areas as well as in rural areas. The author seems to have first-hand knowledge of both these spheres of life (see 1.5.1 - 1.5.8).

## 1.6 CONCLUSION

In this chapter an attempt to define the aim and scope of this study as well as the method of investigation has been made. A large section of this chapter deals with the background of the author and with his literary contributions. It goes without saying that Mtuze is a prolific writer and therefore his exceptionally important contributions have been given special attention.



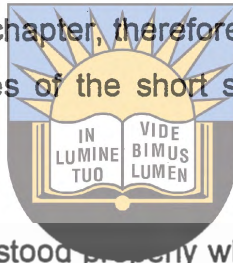
Although scholars such as Botha (1978), Botashe (1979) and Mtuze (1986) have completed investigations into the short story, no specific analysis of Mtuze's short stories has been made so far. The aim of this study, therefore, is to analyse this author's work and to evaluate it according to established literary norms. This approach is based upon the view of Hopkins as cited by Fitz Gerald (1968:349) that the short story is a rich and relatively unexplored literary genre which "needs more precise definition". This is exactly what this study aims to achieve.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE THEORY OF THE SHORT STORY : AN INTRODUCTION

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study, as already outlined in the previous chapter, is to analyse and evaluate the short stories of Mtuze. The aim is to establish the extent to which the features of the short story in general and of the Xhosa short story in particular, are successfully realised in the works of Mtuze. In order to achieve this goal, the general theoretical principles of the short story will first have to be identified and discussed in a particular order. The aim of this chapter, therefore, is to present a brief synopsis of the most important literary features of the short story as an independent form of literary art.



A literary genre can only be understood properly when its historical background has been put into proper perspective. This chapter, therefore, will be introduced with a brief outline on the historical development of the short story. In the subsequent section the definition of the concept of the short story as a distinctive literary genre will be followed by a discussion on the most important features of this genre. A comparative discussion of the relationship between the short story and other literary genres also forms part of this section.

The work of a Xhosa author such as Mtuze can be fully understood only when it is evaluated against the proper background of African literature in all its facets. This chapter will, therefore, be concluded with a brief survey of African literature with specific reference to the development and present state of the Xhosa short story. The relationship between African literature and other literary traditions and the very controversial matter of the criteria which should be applied in the evaluation of African literary texts will also receive attention here.

## 2.2 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE SHORT STORY

In this section, a brief outline of the historical development of the short story as an independent literary genre will be presented. The presentation of this outline stems from the fact that the short story as it is known today, may rightfully be regarded as one of the oldest and most widely practised of all literary genres. The short story can, therefore, be understood within its proper context only when its development over the ages is traced from ancient times up to the modern age.

The existence of the short story can be traced back to a time long before people could write, when tales generated by the various folk cultures were cast into verse and collected into huge narrative poems. These were transmitted by word of mouth as recitation, sometimes with musical accompaniment, sung like lyrics or acted like plays. Whilst this literary form is nearly as old as humanity itself, it was not before the 19th century that it was acknowledged as a distinct literary genre as it is known today.

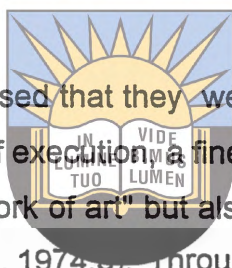


The modern short story can be traced back to primitive tales of ancient societies and cultures. Some of these tales were later recorded in writing, though most were orally transmitted from generation to generation. In the early cultures of the Hebrews, Hindus, Greeks, Romans, Indians and Egyptians, tales were generally recorded as a means of amusement. Some of the Hebrew short stories were, however, recorded as parables, for example "the Prodigal Son" in the New Testament of the Holy Bible. This parable was told long before man developed a definite notion of the short story and is a very old prose text used by Jesus to illustrate a basic truth about life. In other words, these tales reflected moral issues in society rather than serving as amusement.

During the medieval period, before the development of the art of book printing, the development of this genre did not take place as rapidly as would otherwise be expected. During this period, however, an author such as Boccaccio (1313-1375) did make a major contribution to the development of this genre with his "Decameron", a series of historical narratives in Italian. In England Chaucer (1340-1400) also made

an equally important contribution towards the development of this genre with his "Canterbury Tales", a series of more dramatic narratives (Stone, et al. 1983:43).

The modern, more sophisticated short story genre as it is known today originated in America only in the early 19th century. Writers, however, initially disagreed about a proper name for the genre. Irving, Poe and Hawthorne, for example, respectively termed it "the tale", "the short prose tale" and "the sketch". They also differed about the aims, purposes and methods of writing the short story, as Irving wanted to entertain, while Poe wanted to achieve a "totality of effect" and Hawthorne wanted to open up an intercourse with the world by treating serious themes (Current- Garcia, 1974:3).



These writers, however, soon realised that they were working with a separate entity which not only required a "nicety of execution, a finesse in style, a completeness and unity which made it a distinctive work of art" but also combined the basic features of the tale and sketch (Current Garcia, 1974:3). Through this combination a written short story was realised and consequently given its name. That means it shared common features of both the tale and the sketch.

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Poe's inductive reasoning led to the constitution of literary criteria and suggested some basic features for a short story such as a single impression, economy of language, lifelike characters, relevancy to them, a fitting setting and compactness. Poe's outline of rules was later refined by Henry James who suggested fewer characters, a single incident and one point of view (Johnson and Hamlin 1966:1).

During the 19th century the short story also developed quite rapidly in various other parts of the world. This was a new stage in the evolution of short fiction, one in which the short form undertook a new seriousness and gained vitality and respect. In Russia writers such as Gogol "The Overcoat", Chekhov and Pushkin all contributed towards laying foundations for this new genre. In France writers such as de Maupassant and Balzac made similar contributions. These authors were encouraged to grasp the concept of the short story as a distinctive literary genre, for various reasons. For

short story had been a mere adaptation of traditional tales focusing on historical experiences and hunting adventures. As time went by, however, short stories on modern life, illustrating moments of crisis in contemporary experience, began to appear.

Panwitt (1964:18) concurs with Gérard by saying :

The short story, in one sense, is probably the oldest kind of fiction, but at the same time, in another sense, it is also the newest kind to be distinguished as a separate literary genre.

Although the short story genre is an old literary phenomenon which is synonymous with the earliest history of man, it should primarily be regarded as a sophisticated product of the 20th century. That is why Bates (1943:13-14) comes to the conclusion that "The short story proper ... belongs to modern times".



## 2.3 LITERARY FEATURES OF THE SHORT STORY

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### 2.3.1 Introduction

In this section the basic nature and essence of the short story as an independent literary genre will be determined as comprehensively as possible. This will be achieved, firstly, by presenting a definition of the genre and secondly, by identifying the essential literary features of the short story. This section will be concluded with a discussion on the relationship between the short story and other literary genres.

### 2.3.2 Definition of the short story

The Encyclopedia Britannica (1986: 761) defines the short story as :

... a **brief fictional prose narrative** to be distinguished from longer, more experienced narrative forms such as the novel, epic, saga and

example, the novelists often discovered richer possibilities in short fiction. The rapid spreading of magazines and newspapers also created a wider outlet, as a number of short pieces could be published in a single issue. Among the writers there was a common desire to create stories and there was swift expansion of the market. Competition was another influence as this motivated writers to produce superior stories, which were then published in current magazines. The result was an increase in the number of periodicals as the century advanced. Editors also competed more and more vigorously for compact, fast-paced and powerfully written stories (Current-Garcia,1974:4). By the end of the 19th century, the short story was a well-established, highly popular literary form. Though some critics were still concerned about its name and its critical definition, the short story could now be distinguished from other genres through its qualities of conciseness, compression, originality and ingenuity.



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In the first half of the 20th century, the appeal of the short story continued to grow and it soon evolved into a well defined or even an overrefined, independent literary form. Literally hundreds of writers, including nearly every major dramatist, poet and novelist, published thousands of excellent stories. It is also during this period that the art of short story writing spread to various other cultures. In Xhosa literature short story writing began to emerge only during the second half of this century. Sinxo may be regarded as one of the pioneers of this genre. His first collection of true short stories, **ISAKHONO SOMFAZI**, was published in 1956 and was soon to be followed by other collections (by the same author) such as **IMBADU** (1960) and **ISITIYA** (1961). Sinxo may, therefore, rightfully be regarded as the father of the Xhosa short story. In the other Southern African indigenous languages, narrative texts forming part of this genre also started to appear at that time. In Zulu, for instance, the first collection, **IZIGEMEGEME**, was published in 1960, whilst in Southern Sotho the equally successful collection of **SEBOGODI SA NTSOANA-TSATSI** was published in 1943 and **SWAI RIVALA A SWI HELI** in Tsonga was published in 1967.

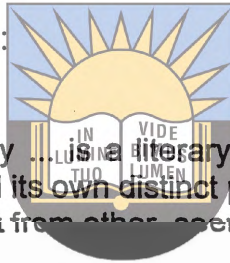
One could then sum up this development of the short story genre in Gerard's (1971:154) words. According to this critic, who seems to have carefully observed its beginnings as well as its rapid growth, it should be noted that in the early decades the

romance.

(My emphasis:BNN)

This definition not only confirms the epic nature of the short story, but it also emphasises the briefness of the short story in comparison with the longer genres such as the novel, epic, saga and romance. But Gullason (1964:13) makes it clear that though short it may be, a short story is not in its origin an outgrowth or an offshoot of the novel, although it is frequently spoken of as if it were a mere by-product of the novelist's art. Albright (1928:10-11) concurs when he emphasises that a short story is **not** a cut down novel or a variety of prose. It is also not an expanded anecdote, a mere narrative tale or a development of the informal essay.

Kos (1968:455) also rightly states :



The short story ... is a literary personality with its own name and its own distinct physiognomy, which distinguishes it from other, seemingly similar forms.

The short story, therefore, is as sophisticated as the other genres, with a great concern for craft, for techniques and for style, as well as for complexity of emotions and ideas, all presented "... on a miniature scale" (Gullason, 1964:13).

Although the short story is closely related to other literary genres (as will be shown in 2.3.4) it still remains an independent work of art. The short story, therefore, has a specific nature which may be expressed in the following terms:

... it is a unique literary form with techniques and effects that cannot be achieved through another medium (Stone et al. as quoted by Mtuze, 1986:6).

The fact that the short story is discussed at length by Botha (1978), Sotashe (1979) and Mtuze (1986) when they compare it with the novel, drama, poetry, sketch, anecdote, essay and folktale, is an indication that it is distinct and autonomous. These scholars have (as will be shown in 2.4.3) made valuable contributions towards the

study of the theory of the short story. It is, however, also a fact that all these studies were completed more than ten years ago and, consequently, seem to be somewhat outdated. In the sections that follow, the views of these critics will therefore be expanded upon, in order to define the essential nature of the short story as accurately as possible within a more contemporary theoretical framework.

In various definitions of the short story genre, some critics seem to be strongly aware of the various epic elements upon which this genre is based. In his definition of the short story, Day (1971:xi), for example, says the following :

The short story is a piece of prose fiction ... it represents an artistic and unified impression of life through many devices, especially **theme, characters, actions** involving conflict and crisis, **setting** and **style**.

(My emphasis: BNN)

Guerin et al. (1979:59) concur when they describe a short story as "... a relatively brief narrative prose fiction characterised by considerably more unity and compression in all its parts - theme, plot, structure, character, setting, mood ... than the novel."

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From the above definitions the epic elements of the short story are clearly discernible. These are : **theme, character, plot** and **style**. Important as they are, these elements of the short story will firstly be defined separately and then discussed fully in the chapters that follow. In each chapter a thorough investigation will be made on how each element is functionally and effectively utilised within the context of Mtuze's work.

### 2.3.3 Essential features of the short story

Stone et al. (1983:5) cite eminent writer-critics like O'Connor, O'Faolain and Bates who unanimously do not think that a short story is merely a work that happens to be short, but a unique literary form, with techniques that cannot be achieved through another medium. The point to be made is that a short story is not short because its action is short but because it is presented in a compressed and economical way.

Matthews (1974:37-38) concurs with the above cited writer-critics when he states:

... the short story is in reality a genre, a separate kind, a genus by itself.

From the above discussion it becomes clear that the short story is unique and possesses its own set of literary features according to which it may be classified as a different kind of prose. De Grandsaigne (1985:2-4) gives sufficient reasons for the modern short story's defined individuality by outlining its unique features. The short story is of a single preconceived effect. It is concise and condensed, focussing on a single main character. This genre has a restricted point of view, keeping to a single narrative line and has economy of language. The short story leaves aside superfluous elements and does not make a detailed description of the few characters that appear in it. It portrays a single theme.



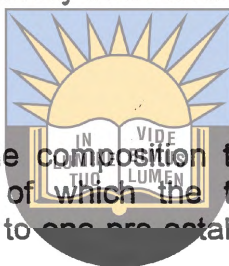
The short story aims at creating a vivid picture of a brief moment of life in such a way as to render a preconceived idea or impression. Its material, which is limited to a single situation, furnishes a fundamental unity of design. It is constituted out of not merely people and events but out of people in their relation to one another and to their environment. The short story also has a fundamental idea of some sort which is an absolute prerequisite in that there is a deliberate and conscious use of impressionistic methods, together with the increasing emphasis on the situation. Stress is laid on the unity of impression and the avoidance of details. The author's aim is to present a particular phase of life in a vigorous, compressed and suggestive way (Gullason, 1964:13).

From the above description, one notes that stress is laid on unity and avoidance of unnecessary details which results in economy and compression. One therefore draws the conclusion that the short story is governed by the principles of unity, economy and compression. In the paragraphs that follow, these principles will be briefly discussed.

### 2.3.3.1 Unity

Within the particular context of the short story, all the events normally contribute towards the unity of the story. This implies that the events are logical, i.e. one event leads to another in order to keep the reader interested to know what will happen next. This logical appearance of events in the story develops through its main phases, from the beginning to the middle, to the climax and to the end. That is why Albright (1928:5) says that "... the short story has a unity that can be distinctly felt."

In this particular genre, the story is structured firmly around a particular thematic nucleus, and events are selected strictly in accordance with their functionality. That is why Bates (1943:16) says :



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

### 2.3.3.2 Economy **University of Fort Hare** *Together in Excellence*

According to Yelland (1980:187) effective economy is an essential quality of the short story. This refers particularly to the economy of language used by the writer. Sebate (1994:40) refers also to the importance of the right choice of words, the avoidance of expansive elaboration and too much detail. That is why Shaw (1983:46) says that the short story "... cannot linger to unfold for the reader the little incidentals, and wayward episodes, the dull patches and uneventful intervals...."

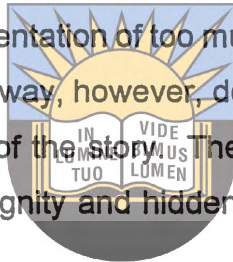
Careful selection plays an important role. By this is meant that the writer has to select those facts that seem most useful for the particular purpose of his story and arrange them in a particular sequence, thus avoiding authorial comment. Johnson and Hamlin (1966:12) concur with Shaw (as quoted above) saying that the short story is told with greater economy of words. And because of less space there is little opportunity for the description of character; setting is described in a few words and dialogue is limited. The aspect of the economy of language will be discussed in greater depth in

Chapter Five of this study.

### 2.3.3.3 Compression

Satyo (1987:89) the well-known Xhosa critic, regards the Xhosa equivalent of the term 'compression' quite rightly as **Uqulunganiso** (literally to say more in a few words). This is exactly what the short story writer wants to achieve in his work.

According to Sebate (1994:36) compression calls on the author to exclude some obvious happenings or ideas, since the success of a short story depends on leaving some things out. In other words, compression is achieved through the avoidance of expansive elaboration and the presentation of too much detail. The limitation of either the characters or the events in this way, however, does not imply simplification of the general meaning and significance of the story. The process of compression should not in any way interfere with the dignity and hidden depth of the plot.



Liddel (1953:251) says that in order to attain compression one has to "... employ the fewest possible words and create the effect that one is concerned with." This should be done so as to suppress the inessentials and to reject material that does not serve one's purpose. The aim is to choose that which is pre-eminently effective. Compression is different from omission in that facts are explained within a short period of time, excluding some obvious happenings or ideas but explaining all events in a few words. In this case economy of language is of the greatest importance. For a story to be classified as being good, the revelation of character, behaviour or mood should linger in the readers' minds. In other words the author should choose the most suitable language to ensure that these are remembered.

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### 2.3.4 Relationship between the short story and other literary genres

#### 2.3.4.1 Introduction

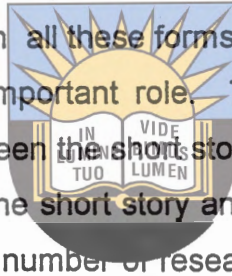
The aim of this section is to identify the relationship between the short story and other

modern literary genres. This discussion is inclusive as it involves not only related prose genres such as the novel and the essay, but also the other main genres such as drama and poetry. Owing to the limitations of this study, however, this discussion will only be of an introductory nature and only the most important points of agreement and difference between the respective genres will be attended to here.

#### 2.3.4.2 Relationship between the short story and other prose genres

##### 2.3.4.2.1 *Relationship with "longer" genres*

As a modern prose form, the short story is closely related to other modern epic forms such as the novel and novelette. In all these forms the basic elements of character, action and background play an important role. There are, however, also some important points of difference between the short story and these other modern prose forms. The relationship between the short story and the novel has in the past been investigated by various critics in a number of research documents.



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The Encyclopedia Britannica (1999:147) defines a short story as a kind of prose fiction usually more compact and intense than the novel and the short novel (novelette). The compactness of the short story suggests being condensed, brief and packed together (Fowler and Fowler 1990:230-231). This means that the events in the short story generally take place within a limited space of time. The action is also restricted in that there are generally but a few characters actively involved in the story. The short story is intense because it moves swiftly from one incident to the next and reaches its climax quickly before coming to a speedy end. Most of these features are found wanting in either the novel or the novelette. Compactness also suggests a more compressed plot for the short story than for the novel.

Although both the short story and the novel are narratives, Mphahlele (1982:3) defines a short story as a finished, self-contained piece of writing, independent of the novel or any other form of literature. Describing the novel, Lever (1961:16) on the other hand says :

a novel is a form of written prose narrative of  
**considerable length...**

(My emphasis : BNN)

From the above excerpt it is noted that these two genres differ largely in terms of length in that the novel has extended length while the short story is generally restricted in length. In addition to the difference mentioned above, the short story also differs from the novel in other important areas.

The short story, for instance, has only one main theme but the novel, on the other hand, can have more than one dominant theme. The short story generally is restricted in volume, less details are presented and economy of language is applied as far as possible. In the novel there can be an elaboration of setting, character and action as there is ample space. The short story deals with issues from reality by suggestion and the story moves swiftly from one event to the next. In the novel, issues from reality are dealt with directly and the story can move at a slower tempo. The short story is extremely condensed, it is narrated in a moment and there is a uniform perspective throughout. There are fewer characters and the focus is on one main character. The novel has a looser structure. It can be narrated over a longer period of time and the perspective of the narrator may shift during the course of the narrative. The novel may accommodate a number of characters and may be constituted out of more than one subplot in addition to the main plot.

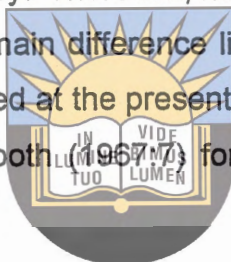
From the above, it is clear that there are certain important differences between the short story and the novel. Although the short story differs from the novel in certain respects, it cannot be totally alienated from the longer genres, as it shares some important similarities with them. Matthews (1974:33) states:

... of a truth the short story is not only a chapter out of a novel or an incident or an episode extracted from a longer tale, but at its best it impresses the reader with the belief that it would be spoiled if it were made larger, or if it were incorporated into a more elaborate work.

#### 2.3.4.2.2 Relationship with "shorter" genres

As a shorter prose form, the short story is, in some respects, closely related to other modern prose genres such as the essay and the sketch. This relationship will be analysed briefly in this section.

As far as the essay is concerned, Pretorius and Swart (1985:13-14) acknowledge this relationship when they define an essay as: "... a short piece of prose about the length of a short story, at times even shorter ..." The relationship between these two forms, therefore, lies basically in the fact that both may be regarded as forms of prose which belong to the 'shorter' prose category. There are, however, also important differences between these two genres. The main difference lies in the fact that the essay is a literary form which is primarily aimed at the presentation of the personal views of the author on a particular matter. Booth (1967:7) for instance, defines the essay as follows :



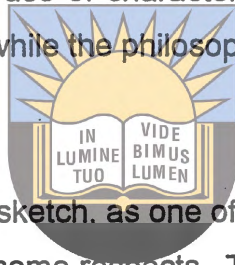
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... the essay is a literary form whereby  
expression is given of individual views on subjects  
that are regarded as important by the writer.

In a more informative fashion, Maphike (1978:3) writes :

The essay is ... a prose composition of moderate length, dealing in an easy and casual way with any chosen theme, reflecting the writer's own point of view, often persuasive in nature, but showing no conscious attempt at exhausting the subject. Although belonging to what could be "imaginative literature", and also having structural properties that resemble those of other literary forms, the essay is a **non-fictional, argumentative form** of art in which skilful structuring, witty formulation and the arousing and maintenance of interest play an important part.

(My emphasis:BNN)

Although the essay is related to the short story, critics have also observed that it is in some respects different from the short story. In support of Mtuze (1986:36), who has successfully clarified the differences between the short story and the essay, it may be stated that the short story is a fictional form of prose narrative where the author remains in the background and conceals his presence in the narrative as far as possible. The essay may be seen as a form of non-narrative prose based upon discussion that does not necessarily exhaust the subject. The author is in the foreground and advances his ideas without concealing himself. The short story unfolds itself through character, plot and action and presents itself as a model of reality (de Grandsaigne 1985:4). The essay, on the other hand, consists of a discussion. There may be limited use of character, but plot is absent. The author presents his argument reflectively while the philosophical background of the reader is taken for granted.



It has already been stated that the sketch, as one of the modern shorter prose forms, is also related to the short story in some respects. This relationship is acknowledged by Yelland et al. (1980:189), who define a sketch as follows :

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A **short** play, story or character description ...  
Literary sketches may be **narrative** (short-shorts),  
but are more often **brief** descriptions of an incident,  
a situation or a character.

(My emphasis:BNN)

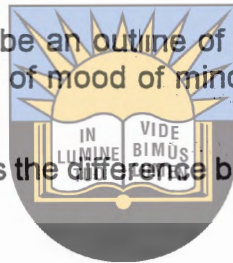
From the above excerpt it is inferred that the sketch is related to the short story in that they are both short in length and that they may both be brief narratives. Therefore, the relationship between these two forms lies basically in the fact that both may be regarded as forms of prose which belong to the shorter prose category.

Although this may be the case, there are also important differences between the short story and the sketch. The sketch usually involves only one of the basic narrative elements, whilst the others remain largely in the background. This means that the sketch writer sometimes puts emphasis on, for example, character, whilst action and

theme receive less attention. In other cases, emphasis is laid on action, whilst theme and character remain in the background. This, however, is not the case with the short story, where the emphasis is rather laid on the unity of all three basic elements, namely, action, character and theme. That is why Shipley (1970:301), for instance, says that a sketch lacks the depth of the short story because the narrative may be subordinated and there may be stress on the psychological atmosphere. In the short story, on the other hand, there is more substantial development of plot and character on a simultaneous basis.

Matthews (1974:36) concurs when he says :

A sketch may be an outline of character, or even a picture of mood of mind.



That is why Hills (1987:2) describes the difference between a short story and a sketch as follows :

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... a short story tells something that happened to somebody. A sketch is by definition a static description of a character or a place or whatever. Any incident in a sketch is rendered as an example of a character's behaviour, not as the account of something that happened to him that moved or altered him, as it is in a story.

In a short story, therefore, something must be done, and there must be an action. This means that the emphasis must be not only on character or personality but on action as well. Brooks and Warren (1979:6) also believe that in order to be successful a story must form a unity. This means that the most emphasised element (i.e. character) must be integrated with the other elements (namely :action and theme).

One may conclude by quoting the following remark by Brickell (1974:111) on the difference between the sketch and the short story :

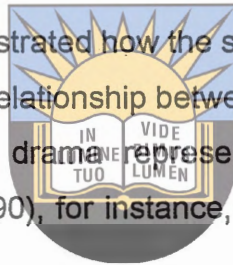
The distinction is not at all difficult to make since the sketch is **static** and the short story **dynamic**.

(My emphasis:BNN)

By "dynamic" it is understood that in a short story there is always something new happening, whilst in the sketch life is presented in a more static form. " A character is capable of being moved, and is moved, no matter in how slight a way" (Hills, 1987:2).

#### 2.3.4.3 The relationship between the short story and the drama

In the preceding sections it was illustrated how the short story forms part of the genre of narrative art. In this section the relationship between the short story and the drama will briefly be considered. The drama represents a separate genre, namely, performing art. Shipley (1970:89-90), for instance, says :



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Drama is... something to be interpreted by the actors ~~Towards the Excellence~~ i.o.w. it designates a play written for interpretation by actors.

In spite of the fact that these two art forms belong to two completely different genres, they still have a number of literary features in common. One of the most important common denominators is that of character delineation. Fredette (1994:32), for instance, writes :

Every story or novel you read and every film or play you see depends, in scene after scene, on the writer's or actor's ability to create characters that hold a place in your memory.

From this excerpt it becomes clear that the short story and the play have something in common in that there are characters involved. Another common denominator is that of dialogue. It is evident that this feature plays an important role within both genres.

That is why Yelland et al. (1980:47) say that in the short story dialogue is used as "... the medium for portrayal of character whilst continuing to play a part in the development of the plot. In drama it goes hand in hand with action, or takes the place of action entirely."

Perhaps the most important literary feature, however, shared by these two literary forms, is that of dramatic unity. Stone et al. (1983:9) cite Pritchett, for example, who states that "... every short story is a drama ..." This means that the short story largely displays the qualities of drama.

In this regard the modern short story and the modern one-act play in particular have a variety of features in common. That is why Stopforth (1954:12) says that it is the aim of both art forms "... to show the main character in the glare of the footlights for a brief space of time." The fact that both genres, for instance, normally have few characters and the reader is encouraged to focus strictly on the main character, proves that the short story and the one-act play are closely related to each other. Other common qualities are condensedness, one main theme; no subplot; a dramatic single episode; very few, swift and condensed scenes; precise and simple language and maximum unity of action.

It is evident, therefore, that these two literary forms are closely related to each other. The only basic difference between them lies in the fact that the short story projects a chosen life image in narrative form, whilst the drama projects it in the form of actors on the stage.

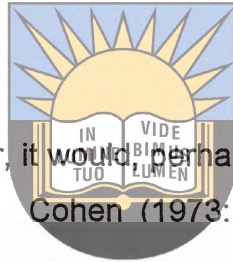
#### 2.3.4.4 The relationship between the short story and poetry

As in the case of the preceding discussion on the relationship between the short story and the drama, the short story and the poem also belong to two different literary genres. Whilst the short story (as already stated) belongs to the genre of narrative art, the poem belongs to the poetic art genre. The difference between these two genres lies, in particular, in style, i.e. in the way the author communicates his ideas to the

reader. Shipley (1970:245) puts it as follows :

Prose communicates (or expresses) only roughly and cumulatively and without finesse, in poetry, there is more precise, more compressed and more highly charged expression or communication, wherefore poetry can express or communicate much that prose cannot.

From the above excerpt it is noted that the difference between prose and poetry is mainly that of effect. It is, therefore, true that some critics today regard the character of meaning of a poem as unlike that of the meaning in a piece of prose. Shipley (1970:244) therefore, comes to the conclusion that prose is ordinary speech whilst poetic speech is extraordinary.



Within the literary context, however, it would perhaps, be unwise to over-emphasise the above-mentioned differences. Cohen (1973:16), for instance, comes to the conclusion that :

Some prose, however, is so poetic and poetry so prosaic that the distinction can become blurred.

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The poetic elements to which the short story writer has access are imagery, symbolism, tone and devices of sound (Cohen 1973:60-62). This means that most of the resources of the poet are available to the short story writer.

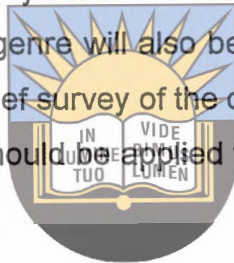
The basic stylistic aspects of the short story will be discussed in Chapter Five of this study. In that discussion it will be shown how the short story writer normally presents his story in accordance with the principles of linguistic economy and conciseness. It is evident that the short story is stylistically closely related to poetry, as the essential brevity and structural unity of the short story are manifested in the way that the narrator expresses himself linguistically. That is why O'Faolain (1948:151) regards the typical style of the short story writer as "... the language of poetry, magnificently taken over by prose." Barrows, as quoted by Botha (1978:144-145), also states that :

... the short story, as a result of its brevity, has available to it an intensity that resembles the intensity of poetry.

## 2.4 THE XHOSA SHORT STORY

### 2.4.1 Introduction

In the introduction to this chapter (see 2.1), it was pointed out that the work of the Xhosa author can only be understood properly when evaluated against the background of African Literature. In this section therefore, attention will be given to the historical development of the Xhosa short story within the broader context of African Literature. The basic literary features of this genre will also be attended to in this section. The chapter will be concluded with a brief survey of the debate which is in progress on the question of literary norms which should be applied to an African art form such as the short story.



### 2.4.2 Development of the Xhosa Short Story in Xhosa Literature *Together in Excellence*

Short story telling in the form of traditional tales is an old and established art in Xhosa culture. It is customary for women in traditional society to narrate tales to children around the fire in the evening. Originally tales were not recorded as was the case in other societies such as Hebrew and Indian societies but were mostly preserved in memory. Mtuze (1986:12), therefore, states that "... short story telling is not foreign to the Xhosas ... although it took so long to evolve and develop."

It was only after the mid-19th century that Xhosa narratives started to appear in print. Some of Tiyo Soga's stories, for instance, were printed in **INDABA** (established in 1862), whilst others were published in **IMVO ZABANTSUNDU** (established in 1884). In 1906 Gqoba's compositions from the late 19th Century were preserved and included by Rubusana in his **ZEMK'IINKOMO MAGWALANDINI**, whilst in 1935 a few of Tiyo Soga's compositions were included in Bennie's **IMIBENGO**, which is an anthology of prose and poetry. One could mention a very interesting short story, **UGxuluwe**

**nabaThwa** (1935:32-36), which is one of those also written by Soga.

Whether these early contributions did, in fact, qualify as short stories, is debatable. Herdeck (1973:512) for instance, describes them as "folktales", whilst Mahlasela (1973: 10) describes them as a mixture of essays and short stories.

Mtuze (1986:12), on the other hand, is sceptical of the wisdom of evaluating Xhosa short stories on the basis of Western techniques. This could perhaps be the reason why Herdeck (1973) differs from Mahlasela (1973) in the classification of the works cited above. This matter will be dealt with in more detail in 2.4.4.

The early Xhosa pioneers of the serious collection of short stories are Sinxo and Siwisa, whose collections **ISAKHONO SOMFAZI NAMANYE AMABALANA** and **NDIBUZEN' AMATHONGO** respectively were both published in 1956. More short story writers such as Mqhaba and Burns-Ncamashe followed in 1957 and in 1961 respectively. Mtuze (1986:16-17) presents a complete record of the development of the short story from its first serious appearance up to 1984. All these collections, plus those that appeared after 1984, are listed on page 267-268 of this study.



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From both Mtuze's survey and my own, one notices that almost every year one or two anthologies of short stories have been published in Xhosa and this in itself shows a great deal of progress in the development of this unique and interesting genre. Mtuze's own contribution towards this genre is even more significant, as he is the only modern writer who, since the 1970's, has produced a number of anthologies equal to those of Siwisa during the fifties and sixties. It is hoped that in the years to come he (and other writers) will produce even more collections as his third anthology **SH-S-SH-H UNGAKHE UXELELE MNTU** (1990) has won him a first prize award. It should also be noted from the biographical survey (see 1.5.8) that Mtuze has produced an anthology in each decade since he made his debut in 1977.

On average a significant number of short story collections has been produced by different short story writers in each decade. This illustrates the rapid growth of the

Xhosa short story since its beginning in 1956. Mphahlele (1969:474-478) attributes this to the fact that Africa does not have a leisured, enlightened class, big enough to support the novelist and sustain an interest in this longer literary form among its readership. This seems to illustrate a preference for short stories amongst African readers. The growing significance of the short story can also be attributed to the fact that it permits the author to spill out his/her thoughts in the most direct manner. The sense of emergency, the desire to say things that plague one's thoughts, and to express one's feelings within a short space of time as soon as one desires, all these and other factors, prompted the author to look for a short cut to prose effects which are almost impossible to achieve within a novel.

#### 2.4.3 Literary features of the Xhosa short story



In this section the general literary features of the Xhosa short story will be defined briefly. The specific features of this genre will be attended to in more detail in the chapters that follow. The investigation in this section will be based mainly upon the research already completed by three literary scholars on the Xhosa short story, namely, Botha (1978), Sotashe (1979) and Mtuzé (1986). Each of these scholars' work (and specifically the most important literary features identified by them) will now be dealt with chronologically in the paragraphs below.

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The first comprehensive research work to be completed on the Xhosa short story is a Master's dissertation entitled '**ASPEKTE VAN DIE XHOSA KORTVERHAAL**' (Aspects of the Xhosa short story) which was submitted by Botha at the University of Stellenbosch in 1978. In spite of certain minor weaknesses which will be pointed out later in this study, this work may be regarded as a valuable pioneering contribution towards the study of this particular genre. In his study, Botha pays attention to aspects of the Xhosa short story such as character, structure, style and narrative view point. He bases his observations on an analysis of nine collections which were published between 1956 and 1975. Botha (1978) comes to the conclusion that the presence of a range of obvious literary shortcomings identified by him in the volumes under his scrutiny may be attributed to the fact that the authors concerned are not

always fully acquainted with the basic literary principles governing the short story. The unsatisfactory literary standard of many of the stories in question may be attributed to the fact that the authors do not always possess the required knowledge of the unique and peculiar literary nature of the short story as a separate prose genre. His conclusion is based on the presence of certain striking shortcomings and defects of a basic nature displayed in the volumes under his scrutiny. He mentions, for instance, that the stories are generally not imaginative enough and that authors tend to rely too heavily on material of a documentary or historically verifiable nature. The fictional character of the short story, therefore, is not fully utilised by these authors.

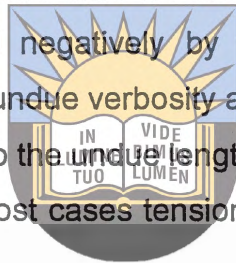
Pertaining to the portrayal of character, Botha (1978) claims that there are several defects which require a considerable measure of criticism. Frequently, for example, more than one main character is depicted and in some cases several main characters follow one another during the course of events. This tendency often disturbs the unity of the short story. He further claims that there is a dominant preference for more direct methods of character portrayal which in the main boils down to a summarising description of the character's chief personal features by the author himself. As a result the indirect methods of portrayal are less frequently found and, if present, are used mainly for the superficial portrayal of physical action and violence. Significant illustration of inner personal characteristics in an intensive and profound manner is rare.

Botha (1978) furthermore claims that the key scenes are not properly utilised or exploited by the authors concerned. The character, therefore, is seldom presented with sufficient opportunity for independent action and dialogue. As a result he/she often ends up taking drastic and major decisions without the reader being aware of any form of inner conflict, doubt, or fear that might be experienced at the time. The reader is thereby prevented from intimate involvement in the events and the character thus largely becomes a stranger to him.

With regard to structure Botha (1978) comes to the conclusion that the technical unity and concentration of the stories concerned is not always adequately realised because

of the inclusion of superfluous material and ineffective selection of events in the story. The stories under scrutiny are mostly predictable because of the simple and naive nature of their contents. This often leads to a loss of interest on the part of the reader.

During his discussion on style, Botha (1978) identifies certain positive as well as negative features. He cites Moloï (1974:39) and Gérard (1971:379) with whom he concurs that traditional literature has played a positive as well as a negative role in influencing the authors concerned regarding style. The positive influences identified by him include matters such as idiomatic expressions, imaginative use of language, imagery and repetition. At the same time he feels that the styles of the authors concerned have been influenced negatively by tendencies such as weak and injudicious sentence construction, undue verbosity and exaggeration of events. This, according to him, has contributed to the undue length of the stories concerned. Unity in these stories suffers whilst in most cases tension is also affected by this.



As far as the narrative viewpoint is concerned, his survey reveals that most Xhosa short story writers use the external narrative viewpoint in presenting the story content. Despite the wide range of possibilities which this narrative viewpoint offers for character portrayal, it is not always utilised effectively by the Xhosa authors Botha has considered in his project. Botha claims that most of them do not make sufficient use of their status as omnipresent and omniscient story-teller in order to thoroughly probe the inner personality of characters and to portray the same within the story. Most authors do not camouflage their presence adequately and tend to reveal their presence as story-tellers in the story by intervening with commentary of a personal nature about the course of the story's events, and by the maintenance of an informal, conversational tone containing rhetorical questions, while sometimes the reader is also addressed directly.

Despite the above-mentioned shortcomings, Botha (1978) has not overlooked the fact that there are writers like Jordan who, in certain respects, attain a higher literary standard than that of their fellow-authors. Although some of the shortcomings

discussed above are also evident in Jordan's work, their presence is much less noticeable. Although not all of the prose sections found in his volume **KWEZO MPINDO ZETSITSA** (1974) can be classified as short stories in the true sense of the phrase, it is nevertheless clear that the few that can be so classified are generally of a remarkably high literary standard.

Botha (1978) concludes by saying that in his view there is a necessity of successfully combining both the traditional and modern literary forms in order to improve the literary level of the work of Xhosa writers.

Sotashe's research on the Xhosa short story entitled **THE ART OF D M JONGILANGA : A STUDY OF HIS SHORT STORIES** (1979) forms part of a research project towards the Honours degree at the University of Fort Hare. Although it is only a mini-dissertation and therefore not as comprehensive as that of Botha (1978), it still makes a valuable contribution towards the study of this particular topic. In his study Sotashe (1979) pays particular attention to **APHA NAPHAYA** (1973), a collection of short stories written by the well-known Xhosa writer, Jongilanga. In the different sections of this study, attention is given to aspects such as plot, character, milieu, language, style and theme. Sotashe (1979) comes to the conclusion that the modern short story in all languages has its roots in folklore and in religious material. The influence of the early narrative is therefore discernible in many modern short stories (Sotashe, 1979:4). In his view, the influence of tradition is unavoidable and he therefore focuses on that phenomenon in his study. For example, the influence of folklore is clearly discernible in the depiction of character. In Jongilanga's stories the main character often has only one facet or side, i.e. he possesses only either good or bad personal features. As in the case of traditional literature there exists, therefore, a strong tendency towards the polarisation of character in Jongilanga's stories. There is often an abrupt and weakly motivated transformation of character. With regard to the aspect of theme, Sotashe (1979) has discovered that when the narrator addresses his readers, he appeals directly and openly to their sensibilities. He has also discovered that the narrator often lauds the heroic and virtuous whilst castigating or denigrating the villainous characters. The author's approach to his subject is didactic and the theme is explicitly shown. As

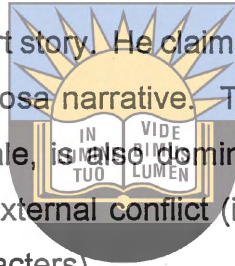
far as milieu is concerned, there is less detailed description of the physical environment or social life where events and incidents take place, as these are only briefly mentioned. Sotashe (1979), however, also mentions that as far as the stylistic features of Jongilanga's stories are concerned, the language is natural and characterised by conventional expressions such as interjections, ideophones, idioms and proverbs. The most prominent stylistic feature of traditional stories (figures of speech) is also used by the author to enliven the utterance and to present the events in a realistic manner. Dialogue is mainly used to verify conflict between characters in the stories and plot is based largely upon conflict between one party and another.

Mtuzé's Masters dissertation entitled **SIWISA'S SHORT STORIES : A CRITICAL APPRAISAL**, which was completed at the University of South Africa in 1986, may be regarded as the most recent contribution towards the study of this Xhosa genre. Although this study is already more than ten years old, it still provides valuable insight into the particular features of this literary form. In his study Mtuzé (1986) pays attention to the difference between the short story and essay and to the important literary aspects such as theme and subject matter, setting, characterisation, conflict, plot, style and language. Mtuzé's analysis of the Xhosa short story is based upon a study of the collections **NDIBUZEN'AMATHONGO** (1983), **IZIMANGA ZALO MHLABA** (1975) and **AMABALI ANGEMIGUDU** (1962) published by a well-known Xhosa author and pioneer of the Xhosa short story genre, Siwisa. In his brief survey of the development of the Xhosa short story, Mtuzé mentions the fact that the Xhosa short story writer uses the Western literary devices as a basis of the writing but has become sceptical of the wisdom of applying these techniques too rigidly to African literature. They instead are "... trying to discover the African way of expression." (Mtuzé, 1986:13). This view is confirmed by Satyo (1981:25), citing Ziervogel, who argues that modern Bantu literature is developing forms of its own which are neither strictly European nor strictly traditional. Therefore, according to Mtuzé the Xhosa short story writers tend to comment directly in their narratives (in other words, the narrator-commentator is a typical feature of the omniscient story teller which is employed in the Xhosa narrative). Mtuzé (1986:25) cites Abrams, who describes the narrator-commentator as "... the intrusive narrator who not only reports, but freely comments

on his characters, evaluating their actions and motives and expressing his views about human life." Mtuze claims that the narrator in this way interrupts the story from time to time.

Digression (use of extraneous material) is another feature noted by Mtuze in the Xhosa narrative as a part of the African epic. Mtuze (1986:27) agrees with Kuse, who claims that this phenomenon cannot be eliminated from the Xhosa narrative, but should be controlled so that it does not assume a life of its own and become independent of plot and theme.

Concerning characterisation Mtuze notes that the direct description is the commonest and most popular in the Xhosa short story. He claims, therefore, that direct comments and subjectivity are part of the Xhosa narrative. The naming technique, which is a result of the influence of the folktale, is also dominant in the Xhosa narrative. The Xhosa writers also prefer to use external conflict (i.e. concentrating on the physical actions and dialogue of their characters).



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With regard to plot, Mtuze states that the Xhosa narrative lacks unity owing to the presence of authorial comment. There is also a lack of tension in the Xhosa narrative because causality does not always play an important role and because the writer tends to concentrate on a number of separate issues, which results in a number of episodes or incidents being presented by the author within the same story. In the Xhosa narrative there is a tendency to summarise key scenes whilst the less important ones are dramatised. The Xhosa writers are preoccupied with themes of superstition, crime and deviant behaviour.

Commenting on Siwisa's work, Mtuze (1986:28) comes to the conclusion that the most important factor that should be kept in mind when analysing or evaluating Siwisa's short stories is their level of development and role of the time factor. People should not equate them too rigidly with their modern counterparts. As one of the pioneers, he belongs to the first fifty years of development of Xhosa literature and should, therefore, be respected as he had no established tradition to guide him. Mtuze also

concedes that Siwisa, like most African writers, uses the Western literary format as a broad base of reference. He further states that the frequency of departure from the Western norm points to the emergence of an African art form which draws its strength from the African background and from the Western tradition (Mtuzze, 1986:129-130). With regard to Siwisa's stories, Mtuzze concurs with Groenewald (1985:3), who is of the opinion that African literature must assert the African presence without becoming African at the expense (sic) of being literature. Siwisa's stories, therefore, are an important contribution to the study of the subgenre and to Xhosa literature in general. Although the Xhosa short story does not adhere slavishly to the structure of its Western counterpart, this does not mean that it lacks structure (Mtuzze, 1986:124).

Like Palmer (1972:2) Mtuzze rejects some of the Western criteria on the short story, maintaining that they are foreign to African expression and also tend to stifle it. Ngcongwane (1981:3), also confirms that there is a difference between African literature and Western literature because the mode of cultural consciousness expressed by each is a different one. Mtuzze concludes by saying that Western criteria should not be discarded but their rigid application should be avoided at all costs (Mtuzze, 1986:131).



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In the preceding paragraphs, the research of three eminent scholars on the Xhosa short story was briefly analysed and their findings were discussed on an introductory basis. The work of the first scholar, Botha (1978), is based upon the works of a number of Xhosa short story writers and most of his findings may therefore be regarded as valid and representative of the genre as a whole. The research of the remaining two scholars, on the other hand, is based on the work of individual authors, namely, Jongilanga and Siwisa respectively, and are therefore of a less inclusive nature. Nonetheless, the findings of these two scholars may also be regarded as equally representative of the short story genre in Xhosa, as both short story writers in question are widely acknowledged as eminent Xhosa writers who produced not only short stories but other works of literature such as novels, dramas and poetry as well.

From the above analyses it has become evident that the Xhosa short story possesses various interesting features. As far as style is concerned, idiomatic language is often used in the Xhosa short story. This is largely attributable to the fact that proverbs normally represent a complete argument that cannot easily be denied. Moreover, it contributes to brevity when information can be imparted to the reader in ways that avoid circumlocution. Various forms of imagery are also found in Xhosa short stories. The authors often use them in order to convey vague and abstract concepts to the reader by relating them to phenomena of a more familiar, everyday nature. Phenomena of a rural traditional kind could, for example, be used to indicate an author's attraction to the rural way of life. Metaphor and personification are also found. Ideophones are another feature used for the most effective and economical portrayal of the content and atmosphere of the story. Brevity, therefore, is one of the salient features of these short stories. Other features include suggestiveness, implication and subtleness, although those who fail to appreciate these, often criticise Xhosa writers because they fail to grasp the true meaning of the expression.



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With regard to characterisation, Xhosa short story writers tend to play an intrusive role as commentator-narrators, which minimises evidence of indirect characterisation. Satyo (1981:80) says, for example :

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.

Character portrayal is mostly by the direct method, and as a result these stories are often difficult to believe and accept. There is also a tendency to summarise the key or most important moments, instead of exploiting them for the sake of interest and understanding. The naming technique is prominent in the Xhosa short story through

the influence of the folktale.

With regard to the structure of the Xhosa short story, various weaknesses may be identified. To some short story writers it seems as if the difference between the short story and other related genres is somewhat vague, with the result that texts which could be classified as essays, folktales etc. are often included in short story collections. In Xhosa short stories there is often superfluous material which results from poor selection of characters and events. This generally adversely affects the build-up of tension and the reader tends to lose interest in the story. Some Xhosa short stories are extended in length because of the inclusion of extensive and romantic descriptions. Illogical and unconvincing interrelation of events is another weakness that is identified in Xhosa short stories.



As far as the narrative viewpoint is concerned, Xhosa short stories are mostly narrated by an external story teller. The first person narrative viewpoint is seldom encountered in these stories. As already stated above, the external narrator tends to interfere unnecessarily during the presentation of events.

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In Xhosa short stories, themes of a social nature are mainly dealt with. This includes social phenomena such as crime, drunkenness, married life, superstition, customs and tradition. It is evident that the Xhosa short story writer is deeply involved in matters affecting his community. Mzamane (1975:253) affirms the notion that African society cannot afford the luxury of art for art's sake. The communities are faced with pressing problems from which no writer can afford to divorce himself. The writer, therefore, has a social commitment in his society which can be unveiled effectively through imaginative and critical writings. Unfortunately, the successful presentation of the thematic component is in some cases harmed by the unnecessary tendency towards moralisation and didacticism. Rather than presenting his material in a sober and objective manner for the reader to interpret independently, the author often prefers to influence the reader and to overemphasise the negative or positive results of the story. Botha (1978:190), for example, cites Sobukwe, who in his review of Sinxo's collection of short stories **ISAKHONO SOMFAZI NAMANYE AMABALANA** (1958) comments as

follows :

"Both stories are in the true Sinxo tradition. They are bound in moralisation, as they needs must, if the author is to carry out what he considers to be the sacred duty of an author : `To preach, not only from the church pulpits, but from the pulpits of the world, to a world congregâtion."

Finally, it is evident from this discussion on the literary features of the Xhosa short story that there exists a narrow relationship between the Xhosa short story and traditional literature. Botha (1978), Sotashe (1979) and Mtuze (1986) have all identified some shortcomings in the Xhosa short story, which, in most cases, are seen as the result of this relationship. Whether these are real 'weaknesses' in the African context needs further investigation. This phenomenon will therefore be discussed in more detail in the section that follows.



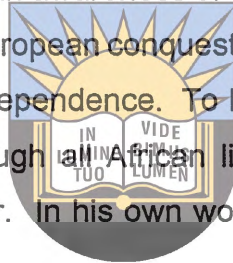
In the preceding discussion, the most important literary features of the Xhosa short story were identified and discussed on an introductory basis. In the chapters that follow the short stories of Mtuze will be analysed with a view to establishing the extent to which his stories possess the basic features of the Xhosa short story as outlined above. The manner in which Mtuze's work either conforms with or deviates from the established Xhosa short story tradition will therefore be determined and his contribution towards Xhosa literature will thereby be examined critically.

#### 2.4.4 Debate on the validity of literary criteria

In the previous section certain 'weaknesses' concerning the literary quality of the Xhosa short story were identified. It appears, however, to be a point of serious debate amongst literary scholars whether these features should indeed be regarded as 'weaknesses', because of differences in cultural background which exist among authors all over the world. In the paragraphs that follow, the debate concerning the validity and applicability of a specific set of literary criteria within a particular cultural environment will be addressed. The aim of the discussion is to determine the extent

to which criteria which are not necessarily indigenous to the African cultural milieu may or may not be applied in the evaluation of African literary works.

It appears as if some critics are in favour of a model for the criticism of African literature which is quite strongly based upon the Western model. These critics base their views upon the fact that Western literature has come to Africa as a completely alien phenomenon, which implies that certain basic concepts and abilities must firstly be mastered by the African author. Irele is one of the scholars who are inclined towards the application of Western norms. In his article **In Praise of Alienation** (1992:201-224) he seeks to defend the Eurocentric approach through a description of the term 'alienation'. He displays an awareness of the fact that the Africans' historical experience has been shaped by European conquest, showing that Africans have come a long way from imperialism to independence. To Irele the theme of alienation as an existential predicament runs through all African literature, inspired by the colonial experience in one form or another. In his own words, Irele (1992:202) writes:



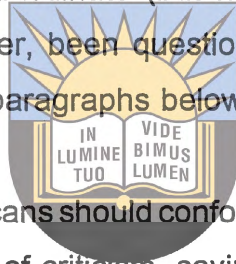
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.... we are conscious of the irreversible nature of the transformations the impact of Europe has effected in our midst and which are so extensive as to define the really significant frame of reference of our contemporary existence. The traditional pre-colonial culture and way of life continue to exist as a reality amongst us, but they constitute an order of existence that is engaged in a forced march, in a direction dictated by the requirements of a modern scientific and technological civilization. It also happens to be the case that Western civilization, at least in its contemporary manifestations and circumstance, provides the paradigm of modernity to which we aspire.

This awareness of the influence and presence of European civilisation in Africans' lives implies an acceptance of Western standards of living. Irele further says that the standards of the Western world should not be rejected on the premise that Africans do not belong there, because they are partly influential in the development of the

Western culture. He then encourages Africans to utilise these standards in order to analyse and understand their own African culture. Irele, therefore, supports a sociological approach in the use of Eurocentric criteria for the evaluation of African works of art.

An acknowledged critic such as Groenewald has also addressed this aspect of literary criticism in the African context. Groenewald seems to prefer the term 'universal criteria' as also used by Irele. Groenewald is strongly inclined towards the application of the African criteria in the evaluation of the African literary text. Cited by Van der Poll (1981:2) he tends to regard localised criteria or 'material elements' (cultural elements) as supportive of or subordinate (but not unimportant) to the universal. Groenewald's views have, however, been questioned by other scholars of African literature as will be shown in the paragraphs below.



Palmer (1972:x) proposes that Africans should conform to conventional western criteria rather than evolve a different sort of criticism, saying:

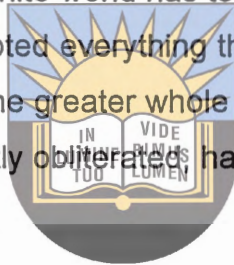
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Even if the form of African novels were different [from European ones], this would not mean that a different set of criteria should be evolved for their criticism ... Since we are still concerned with the same genre, the same criteria should still apply. To allow different critical criteria is to provide loopholes for mediocrities.

His approach is different from that of Irele who champions a purely sociological approach to literary criticism of African works. Palmer (1979:9) says that the sociological aspect should be coupled with artistry in order to do justice. Although some scholars of African literature are clearly in support of the application of literary standards which are foreign to Africa, it must also be kept in mind that Western ethics and values often give rise to literature which differs drastically from the traditional philosophies, conceptions and world-views of the Black man. This often causes problems for African authors as they are caught in between the Western and the African set of ethics and values. As a member of the Black community, the Black

writer is constantly busy, similarly discovering new facets of the Western way of life and digesting them from day to day. The acculturation process thus entails that sundry far-reaching changes take place in the literary field also. Hence the black writer often finds it difficult to fully comprehend the specific principles on which literature is based and to digest them for himself so that he may integrate them in his own work. He is often forced to choose between traditional life values and customs and modern education, and finds himself in a comprehensive conflict situation that affects all aspects of his daily existence. Ziervogel (1966:386) confirms the existence of this conflict when he says that the black writer is still largely entangled by African traditions and customs on the one hand and by Western values on the other. Van Niekerk (1993:11) also confirms that the white world has totally underestimated the power of the black world view. Africa accepted everything the West handed out and imposed upon it, and has tried to fit it into the greater whole of its own world view. Traditional assumptions, sometimes apparently obliterated, have been retained to a remarkable degree.



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In Africa today creative writing is still strongly influenced by the literary traditions of the past as regards both form and content (Gerard 1971:39). Before the arrival of the white man in Africa, the indigenous inhabitants did not exist in a literary vacuum. Even then there was an own inherent literature in an oral form among the different peoples of Africa.

Chinweizu et al. (1980:32) espouse a view of the Eurocentric critics which is a preconceived notion against the oral form and which manifests itself in the claim that whatever there was in the African narrative tradition has had a negative influence on the African novel, contaminating it with the deficiencies of the oral medium. The Eurocentric remonstrance is that African literature is bad because it is oral and the European narrative is good because it is in written form. For Africans, therefore, to break through this boredom, they must mimic European narratives. Some scholars of African literature felt, therefore, that literary criteria, more indigenous to Africa, should be applied in the evaluation of the African literary text.

From the discussion above it has become clear that Eurocentrics adopt a position of unwarranted presumption that in order to qualify for inclusion in one category (genre) or another, an African literary work must conform to the rules or criteria developed within the European tradition. They feel that if it does not, it is problematic (Chinweizu et al. 1980:17).

Unfortunately these views of the Eurocentric critics has had an adverse effect on some African writers. This factor, combined with imperialism over the past decades, has led to the active repression of African literature and to the persecution of writers, artists and scholars in several African countries. Basically, this has to do with the class character of the national leadership. The African bourgeoisie that inherited the flag from the departing colonial powers was created within the cultural womb of imperialism. That is, it was a bourgeoisie with a mentality, an outlook of the bourgeoisie in the colonizing countries. So even after they inherited the flag, their mental outlook, their attitudes towards their own societies, towards their own history, towards their own languages, towards everything national, tended to be foreign; they saw things through eyeglasses given them by their European bourgeois mentors. (Ngugi wa Thiong'o 1984:10).



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Having a full understanding of the trite ideas espoused by the Eurocentric critics, these African critics felt that it is within their ambit to rectify these proportions. They reject the Eurocentric norms which they claim are imposed and forced on them. Certain African critics strongly emphasise the fact that African literature has characteristics exclusive to itself. For instance, Van der Poll (1981:2) cites Jafta who emphasises the peculiar character of Xhosa drama, and Larson who in turn emphasises the peculiar character of African literature written in English. Instead of slavishly applying the Western norms, they desire special criteria to be applied when evaluating their work.

Chinweizu (1984:13-14) claims that African literature and scholarship ought to be written from the centre of African experience and for the illumination of African life. He goes on to say that "the international scholars may, of course, say whatever they want about our literature, but we reserve the right to throw out ninety percent or more

of what they say if we feel that that position has no relevance to our lives."

African literary scholars like Ngugi in **MOVING THE CENTRE: THE STRUGGLE FOR CULTURAL FREEDOMS** (1993) and Ndebele in **REDISCOVERY OF THE ORDINARY** (1991) believe in shifting the base from which to view the world from its narrow base in Europe to a multiplicity of centres. Both believe that knowing oneself and one's environment is the correct basis of absorbing the world and that there could never be only one centre from which to view the world but that different people in the world have their culture and environment as the centre (Ngugi, 1993:9). This means that they both reject the fact that the great tradition of European literature should define the world view and reposses Africans of their imagination. Ndebele goes to the extent of accusing South African writers in English of being preoccupied with urban culture only, whilst there is a lack of interest in a tradition of such compelling and imaginative recreation of rural life. He then attempts to explore new ways of understanding the nature of South African society in relation to the value of the South African response to it and how this response extends the horizons of their literary culture.



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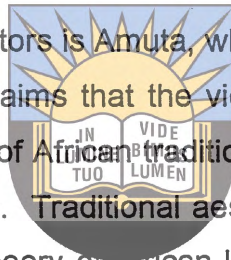
Iyasere (1972:34-36) cites two African critics who totally reject Western criteria. Okpaku insists that African literature belongs to the Africans and should therefore evolve their own set of aesthetic standards. Both Okpaku and Melone according to Iyasere (1972:34-36) are doggedly certain that Western aesthetic and critical standards are invalid for an analysis of African works. This implies that the forced application of these criteria stifle the normal development of African literature.

As far as the question of universality is concerned (as addressed by Groenewald above), a critic such as Elliot (1965:55, 56) also thinks it might be helpful to challenge and remind the Eurocentrics about the question of universality, saying :

Universality can never come except through writing about what one knows thoroughly ... And, though it is only too easy for a writer to be local without being universal, I doubt whether a poet or novelist can be universal without being local too.

While a work of art must satisfy certain universal requirements, according to Msimang (1986:206), there is no disputing the fact that such work will always contain subtle nuances which cannot be fully appreciated unless the critic is acquainted with the cultural background and the view of life of the people who are depicted in such a work of art. Wright (1966:108) concurs when he emphasises that the knowledge of the cultural background is necessary for a better understanding of Black literature. Groenewald (1978:66-84) also confirms the possibility for African literature to have exclusive characteristics but emphasises the fact that African and universal criteria should not clash, because the author ought to develop local ideas whilst always bearing the basic literary principles in mind.

Belonging to this category of mediators is Amuta, who in his work **THE THEORY OF AFRICAN LITERATURE** (1989) claims that the views of the authors of traditional aesthetics are not a true reflection of African traditions because of their exposure of these authors to colonial education. Traditional aesthetics cannot therefore, be the sole criterion for determining the theory of African literature. Amuta's suggestion is that the only valid theory of African literature will be the one that will combine both traditionalist and formalist theories. He furthermore suggests that this combined theory be referred to as the Dialectical theory.



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From the above discussion it can be concluded that whilst the Eurocentrics claim that Western standards are appropriate to African literature, it is believed that African literature cannot be defined in terms of Western literary standards only. When the Europeans came to Africa they neglected the otherness and subsumed sameness of works, and consequently African works were evaluated and often found to be of an inferior standard. In reality it is the notion of canon that is used to evaluate the standards of African literature that results in an unacceptably biased evaluation of African literature. On the other hand, it has been observed that responsible critics of Western literature do not always agree with regard to their views on a particular literary principle. For example, literary critics often differ in their views on the handling of the time element in Shakespeare's works **OTHELLO** and **HAMLET** (Chinweizu *et al* 1980:106-107). Another aspect in question is the use of the English

language, which, according to Palmer (1972:xiv), Joyce and Virginia Woolf have handled differently.

Having cited reasons given by Eurocentrics who are in favour of the application of solely Western criteria in the criticism of the African text, it should be noted that although they agree on certain aspects, they also seem to differ on others. Irele, as already mentioned above, champions a sociological approach, whilst Palmer (1979:9) believes that the sociological aspect is inadequate on its own and should, therefore, be coupled with the principle of artistry in order to do justice to the act of criticism.

On the other hand Afrocentrics believe that a thorough knowledge of the traditional background is of vital importance in the criticism of the African text. Mphahlele<sup>1</sup>, for example, claims that African writers are always tuning in to their oral beginnings and this can be seen in their use of the language. As a supporter of exclusive African norms, Mphahlele states that the cultural context is of vital importance in African literature and so African writers need to evolve their own critical standards as African literature does not correspond on a one-to-one basis with Western literature. It is, therefore, unfair to impose solely Western standards on African literature because they are insufficient and fail to make provision for all the facets of African literature. According to Mphahlele, literature should be looked at as a socio-cultural document, a document which contributes to the history of feeling, and as such its language should be looked at quite differently. Critical standards indigenous to Africa should, therefore, be applied in the criticism of African works. This serves as an opportunity for African writers to search for their identity because "the dominant function of literature is that of self expression" (Mphahlele)<sup>2</sup>.



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Van Niekerk (1993:78) cites Van der Hooft who, in an interview, admitted that black poets are protesting against the whole Western culture which coldly analyses

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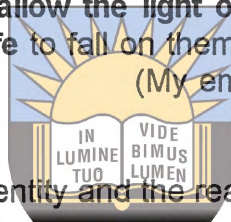
<sup>1</sup> Interview which was held at the University of Fort Hare TV Studio by the Department of English and Comparative Studies on 15 August 1996

<sup>2</sup> Public lecture by Mphahlele at the University of Fort Hare on 12 August 1996.

everything in a rational manner and takes it apart. In other words the Western approach is a violation of the primeval experience of oneness. Black writers, in his understanding, are searching for African identity because they have experienced problems with the Western world and it is therefore time for Westerners to start realising that there is such a thing as an African perception or an African experience of reality. Van Niekerk (1993:111) furthermore states:

We must all remain alive to a greater reality that challenges and transcends each and every culture, be it Eastern, Western or African... Many things in our civilization which we accept without questioning look different if **we allow the light of an entirely other view of life** to fall on them.

(My emphasis BNN)



Both the black writers' search for identity and the realisation by the white world of the existence of African experience could perhaps play a major role in constituting a hope for reconciliation and for sustaining faith in the face of challenges that are otherwise indeed formidable. Mphahlele, cited by van Niekerk (1993:3), states :

In Africa's case the challenge arises from the invasion of our traditional values by Western values. Modern African literature is all a product of the encounter and fusion between two sets of cultures ... It seems to me a writer in an African setting ... must strive towards some workable reconciliation within himself. It is an agonizing journey.

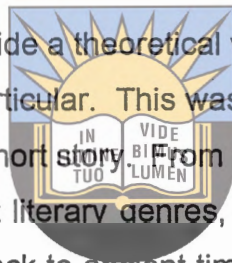
In conclusion, the approach that is regarded as most suitable for this project is the one that integrates both the Western and the traditional literary criteria so as to acknowledge the unique character of African literature that would take into account both its originality and its creativity. This approach is chosen in order to escape the dominance of the Western criteria on the African text as these two forces are complementary and should depend on each other in the evaluation of the African literary text. "An approach of this nature is a challenge that calls for the best creative

thinking of Africans as well as non Africans... fuelled by the right attitudes and fearlessly willing to explore differences which are all too easy to deny." (Van Niekerk, 1993:12)

In this study the literary views of acknowledged scholars of western origin will be taken into account in the study of Mtuze's work. At the same time, however, the Africanness of these texts will be fully recognised and studied along with the views of well-known African literary scholars.

## 2.5 CONCLUSION

The aim of this chapter was to provide a theoretical view on the short story in general and on the Xhosa short story in particular. This was done by firstly tracing the origin and historical development of the short story. From this survey it was discovered that the short story is one of the oldest literary genres, which means that it is as old as man's history and can be traced back to ancient times. The earliest narratives were originally referred to as "tales" or "sketches". Out of this the short story developed and began to emerge in the 20th century, where it was referred to as the short story for the first time.



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In the ensuing sections, the literary nature of the short story was clearly defined and found to possess literary features which make it an independent literary genre. Its uniqueness results from its essential features, namely, unity, economy and compression. These features were briefly discussed and defined. It is worth noting that the short story is not merely short as the name suggests because its action is inherently small, but rather because the author has chosen in working with an episode or plot to omit certain of its parts. Its uniqueness is, therefore, noted by comparing the short story with other genres such as prose, drama and poetry. In this comparison it was discovered that the short story is closer to poetry than to any of the other genres.

The characteristics of the Xhosa short story also received attention in this chapter, since this study involves the Xhosa short stories of a particular Xhosa writer, Mtuze.

In this section the historical development of the Xhosa short story was surveyed. It was discovered that there were some so called Xhosa "short stories" written prior to the second half of the 20th century about whose classification there is still debate as to whether they are short stories in the true sense of the word. The first proper Xhosa short stories appeared in 1956, written by pioneers, such as Sinxo and Siwisa. Much progress had been made up to the present. It was also discovered that the Xhosa short story possesses its own unique set of literary features which according to some critics, resulted from the influence of African tradition. According to the three literary scholars (Botha 1978, Sotashe 1979 and Mtuze 1986) on whose studies this investigation is based, the Xhosa short story possesses certain interesting features. As confirmed by one of these scholars, some of these features are regarded as 'shortcomings' because it is claimed that they resulted from a deviation from acceptable norms.



An investigation into whether these are real 'weaknesses' or not led to a review of the debate on the valid literary criteria that should be applied in the evaluation of African texts. After the various criteria which can be applied in the analysis of the Xhosa text had been looked at, it was suggested that for the purpose of this study an approach be followed whereby the universality of the text as well as its African character be acknowledged in a balanced manner. This is the approach which is to be applied in the chapters that follow.

## CHAPTER 3

### STRUCTURAL PATTERNS

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

Any story deals with action, and action implies change and event. For any proper appreciation of fiction it is essential for a reader to appreciate the shape or design which an author as a rule quite instinctively imposes on his work (Leggett 1934:120). In other words it is through the framework of incidents that the reader is able to realise what the intention of the author is. This "framework of incidents" could, within the context of literature, be referred to as the "plot" of the story.



It is the author's duty to develop a neatly patterned plot with effects so prepared for and spaced that the audience is kept expectant from start to finish. Yet Shipley (1970:241) affirms that " ... in the 1960's some works have abandoned plot for haphazard happenings or indeed the thoughts and words of characters, without action." He further says that "... such unity as these works present is not of story structure, but of character or style or mood or intention." From Shipley's affirmation one becomes aware that there are authors who present coherent plots, while others rather seem to concentrate on other elements of the story. The aim of this analysis of Mtuze's short stories is, therefore, to find out more about the structural patterns found in his stories and to determine the priority he gives to the development of a successful plot structure in his works.

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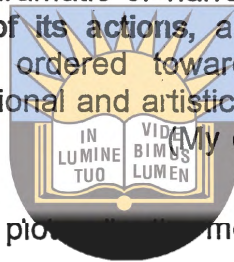
This chapter is introduced with a more theoretical section, in which the concept of plot and its various related aspects will be determined as clearly as possible by given definitions, since plot is one of the key aspects of the short story. This theoretical discussion on plot will be followed by a section in which the plot structure of Mtuze's stories is analysed. Not all Mtuze's short stories will be dealt with here and attention will only be paid to those which are regarded as most relevant for specific arguments. This chapter deals, therefore, with the structural patterns of Mtuze's short stories, as

the heading indicates. A major part of the chapter concentrates on an analysis of the external structure or Macro Structure, where individual facts are grouped into larger narrative units. A subsequent part of the chapter deals with the internal structure or Micro Structure, where the manner in which the author combines individual, smaller segments of action to form a story, is investigated.

### 3.2 DEFINITION OF PLOT

Abrams (1971:137) writes :

The plot in a dramatic or narrative work is the **structure of its actions**, as these are rendered and ordered toward achieving particular emotional and artistic effects.  
(My emphasis: BNN)



Fenson and Kritzer (1966:7) regard plot as a meaningful **arrangement of events**.  
(My emphasis : BNN) What is quite clear, however, is that plot is the structuring or arrangement of the events in the story in a particular manner.

Owing to the different critics' views about the nature of plot, one notes that plot has no standard, fixed definition. On the other hand, most critics agree that plot is structure and that structure is the arrangement of events in a particular order. For example, Day (1971:423) defines structure as :

... the arrangement of the various elements in the story in order of presentation so as to give artistic continuity to the whole.

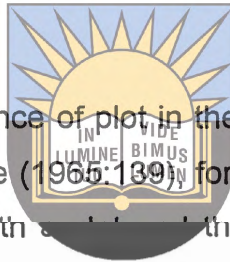
Hawthorne (1986:56) agrees with the above-mentioned critics but prefers to use the term 'organisation'. To him, structure is broader than plot, because "... it encompasses the work's total organisation as a piece of literature ..." and "... refers to organisation and patterning which is the way in which the component parts fit together to produce a totality."

With the same view Msimang (1986:40) comments :

Structure in a broad sense takes into account the total sum of all the component parts of a whole. The whole might be a single word, a sentence or language in general.

In this chapter the main concern is with the 'organisation' or plot structure of the story and with the governing laws involved. Other aspects such as theme, character and style will be dealt with more specifically in the remaining chapters of this study.

### 3.3 IMPORTANCE OF PLOT



Divergent views about the importance of plot in the narrative have in the past been expressed by literary critics. Grace (1965:139) for example, classifies short stories into two groups, namely, those with a plot and those without one. In agreement, Yelland *et al.* (1980:148) point out that there are modern stories which contain no plot and little or no action.

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There are, however, critics who feel that a story without a plot is no story at all. For example, Hills (1987:80) says :

It is inconceivable to have a short story without plot because we'd then have a sketch.

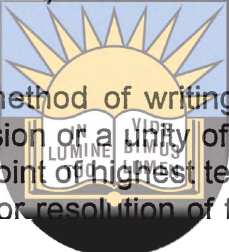
Fredette (1994:198-199) also claims that this is "... a limited field that contradicts much of what the beginner has been told about short story writing." He further claims that "... the reader may not know the past and future of the characters..." Both the above quotations emphasise the essentiality of plot for the existence of the story.

At the same time it should be borne in mind that a story with a well developed plot only is often regarded as less artistic. One could say that it is never there for its own sake but mainly to move the character through by action in a meaningful manner.

From this point of view one notes that in itself it does not constitute a story and therefore cannot be equivalent to the whole story.

On the whole, plot is neither more nor less important than other narrative aspects such as setting, language, theme, character and tone, because they also play a major role in determining the meaning, style, atmosphere and other aspects of the short story. This means there is no separateness of aspects and one would agree that the theme of a successful short story is inextricably embedded in all of its aspects.

Since the discussion in this section is on the importance of plot in the narrative, the following definition of Grace (1965:139) should be considered :



It (plot) is a method of writing in which a unity of impression or a unity of mood leads to a climax or point of highest tension and to the conclusion or resolution of this point.

From this excerpt it becomes obvious that in order to be successful, the author has to write a story with a well-designed plot, because this element stimulates the imagination and concentration of the reader in that its circumstances must of themselves be of interest and artistically acceptable. A short story without a successful plot may leave the motive for an act uncertain. It is, therefore, important for the sake of clarity for the narrative to have a well designed plot since "... it gives unity, form and purpose to a story" (Yelland et al., 1980:149).

### 3.4 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PLOT AND OTHER LITERARY ASPECTS

Having defined the nature and role of plot in the short story, it is necessary to give an outline of the relationship between plot and other elements of the story because it is obvious that when one deals with plot, one is also dealing with all the narrative elements of the story rather than with isolated incidents. Two of these elements will now be discussed on an introductory basis only to illustrate their inseparability from the plot. These elements will be given more attention in the discussion on the Macro

and the Micro plot structures.

### 3.4.1 Plot and theme

Every story should aim to have a worthy purpose and, more than any other form, the short story has a mission. It should be borne in mind that there is a direct relationship between plot and theme in the short story in that the theme is the basic fact upon which the plot of the story hinges. This is confirmed by Dietrich and Sundell (1974:115) who define plot as :

... the **arrangement of events and actions** in a story to **convey a theme.**

(My emphasis:BNN)



From this definition one notes that plot goes hand in hand with the theme of the story. It is mainly through the plot that it (theme) is conveyed. But the theme should not override the plot. This is confirmed by Wellek and Warren (1980:30-31) in their discussion on the interplay between the literary concepts of the *dulce* "sweetness" and the *utile* "usefulness" of literature. They come to the conclusion that :

When a work of literature functions successfully the two 'notes' of pleasure and utility should not merely co-exist but **coalesce.**

(My emphasis:BNN)

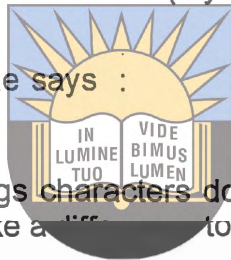
From this excerpt it becomes clear that, while one enjoys the pleasure of literature through a well designed plot, its usefulness and meaningfulness should never be neglected. These two elements should be developed on an equal basis throughout the story. Therefore, in portraying a particular theme in a work of art, the writer should not neglect the plot itself (and vice versa).

### 3.4.2 Plot and character

In a story, the character must express himself effectively and something must happen to him as a result of something which he has done. This shows that there is a close relationship between plot and character, since the events are largely determined by the character/s involved. This is confirmed by Pitkin as cited by Notestein (1974:12) who defines plot as :

... a climactic series of events, each of which both **determines and is determined by the characters** involved.

(My emphasis:BNN)



Fredette (1979:41) concurs when he says :

Plot is the things characters do, feel, think, or say that make a difference to what comes afterward.

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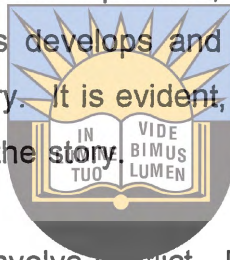
From these definitions it becomes clear that if the character/s in the story tend to be more passive, the plot will not be very complete or advanced. The characters, therefore, play a major role and are mutually dependent with the incidents to form a successful story. If characterisation is neglected, the whole story is weakened because the motive of the story involves an interplay of motives of the characters. It goes without saying that, to be successful, there must be substantial agreement between character and action within the story.

Having illustrated that plot is important in that it gives a clearly developed line of action, one could now pay attention to the most important basic element that determines the line of action the story takes, namely, conflict. This element, which is generally regarded as the most important cause of instability in the story, will be only briefly discussed here, as it will also be attended to more comprehensively in chapter 4 of this study.

### 3.4.3 Plot and conflict

Perrine (1978:42) defines conflict as "... a clash of actions, ideas or wills." Since conflict suggests "opposition", "struggle" or "contrast", it involves two opposing forces. The conflict may be between two individuals, or between an individual and society or within the individual himself. Conflict can either be of an inner nature or of an outer nature and it is usually characterised by a clash of interests.

Conflict and its effects always seem to permeate all aspects of the story from beginning to end. Mkonto (1984:36), for example, claims in his discussion on Xhosa Drama that conflict is "... forecast in the exposition, rise and develops from it." From this initial point the conflict always develops and intensifies progressively until it culminates in the climax of the story. It is evident, therefore, that conflict forms an integral part of all the problems of the story.



It is unavoidable that all plots will involve conflict. In some narratives the conflict is single, clear-cut and easily identifiable, as in the case of most short stories, though in others it is multiple, varied and subtle, as in the case of most novels. To emphasise that conflict is an essential element of the short story, Boland (1960:52) writes :

... there must be a conflict, otherwise there is no story. Any short piece of writing that has no conflict is not a short story, whatever else it might be.

A novel, play, short story, folklore or tale, therefore, is based on either physical, mental, emotional or moral conflict.

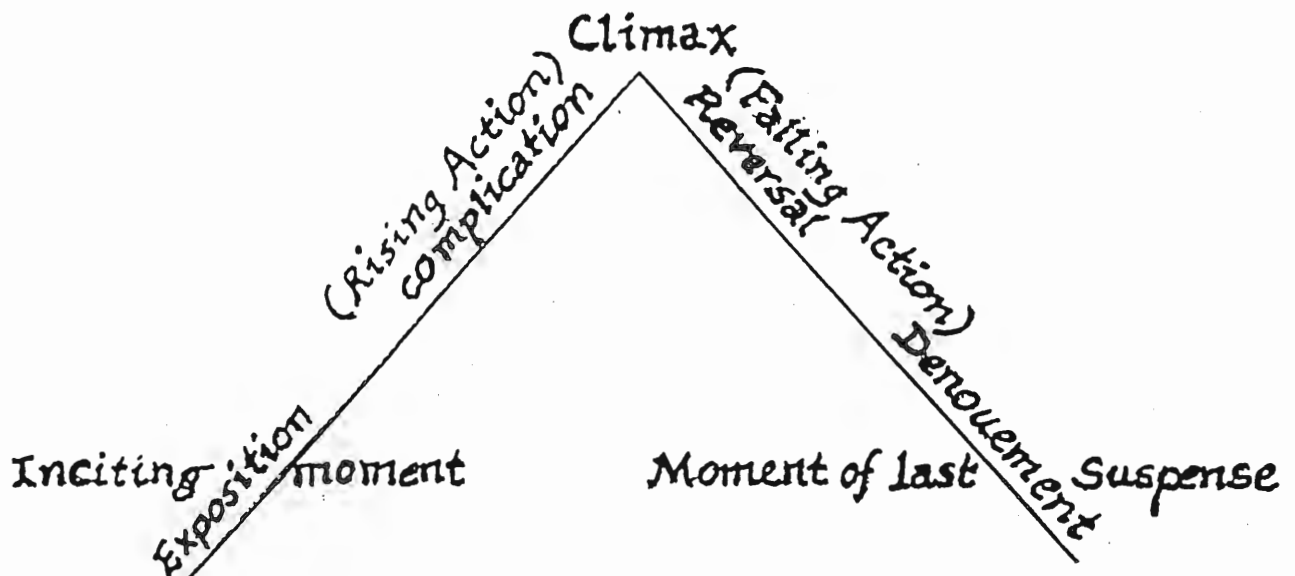
Critics seem to differ with regard to the manner in which the study of plot should be approached. Msimang (1986:40), for instance, refers to his approach as a study of the various 'aspects of the plot'. Day (1971:424) on the other hand, refers to his approach as a study of the 'elements of the plot'. For the purpose of this study, however, the plot structure of Mtuze's short stories will be studied according to the two main structural components of plot, namely, the Macro Structure and the Micro

Structure. These two structural components will now receive attention in the sections that follow.

### 3.5 MACRO STRUCTURE

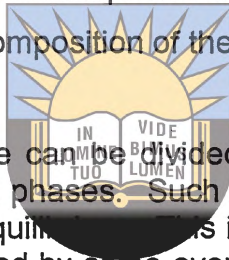
In the study of plot, one of the most important aspects, which needs to be considered by the literary critic, is the composition of the external structure, also referred to as the Macro structure. Hills (1987:96) claims that "... narrative structure has always been divided up into three thoroughly natural parts : the beginning, the middle and the end."

The beginning is an element that presumes further action, the middle presumes both previous and succeeding action, and the end requires the preceding events but no succeeding action. The unity of plot is thus the result of necessary relationship and order among the events. These elements are conventionally known as exposition, rising action or complication, climax and denouement or resolution. The plot structure is evaluated by most critics in terms of these phases and the writers are expected to comply with these phases when they create their works. According to Sirayi (1990:115) these phases constitute a pyramidal structure when they show up. The vital importance of the phases can be determined by the following pyramidal diagram, which was propounded by Gustav Freytag and is therefore known as Freytag's Pyramid (Hills, 1987:96). These elements will be discussed not in one single paragraph, but when each different stage is dealt with.



Freytag's Pyramid (Hills, 1987:96) is a diagram which clearly depicts the various phases of the action, as well as the way in which suspense rises and recedes. This diagram applies to all forms of narrative prose, including the plot of the short story. It also applies to the plot of the drama. Mkonto (1984:18), for instance, cites Jafta, who identifies the same structural patterns for Xhosa plays, namely exposition, complication, climax, denouement or conclusion, i.e the beginning, the middle and the end.

Most critics evaluate plot structure in terms of the same set of requirements since any story is based upon a series of events. These events are brought about by specific circumstances which lead to certain consequences. This can be seen by Dietrich and Sundell's (1967:117) view of the composition of the plot structure, which reads thus:



... the structure can be divided into certain clearly defined phases. Such stories begin in a state of equilibrium. This initial stability is then disturbed by some event that incites conflict. The conflict is intensified through a phase of rising action, until a crisis occurs, a point at which the fortune of the protagonist turns up or down towards a change in his life. After the crisis scene brings on the climax, the intensity of the conflict diminishes through a brief stage of falling action, leading to a resolution or denouement.

Although the structure of the short story can also be divided into these phases, it should be borne in mind that a short story should be as much of a oneness as possible. The forced separation of these phases could destroy the unity of the short story. It should also be kept in mind that the various phases referred to in the above quotation do not necessarily have to appear in this particular sequence in the story. The position of these phases can vary from one story to the next. For example, the climax can be placed near the beginning of the story, rather than at its end.

In the section below, the different phases of the Macro Structure will now be treated

separately. Specific attention will be given to the depiction of these phases in Mtuze's short stories.

### 3.5.1 Exposition / beginning

It is certainly true that every story must have a beginning. To the reader, the first impression is generally the most definite because his mind is free and ready to receive whatever the author has to say to him. It is therefore natural that the exposition is important structurally and therefore deserves careful handling by the author.

Cohen, as cited by Mtuze (1986:83), presents some specific features of the exposition by saying :



It comes at the beginning and 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.

In addition, Hills (1987:96) writes :

The beginning will suggest the basic line of the conflict .... what all the trouble is going to be about.

One strongly agrees with the views of these two critics regarding the most important features of the exposition because this explanation by the narrator is necessary to equip the reader with the background information as he proceeds with his reading of the story. Because of the importance of this phase, it should not be neglected by either the author and the reader. The author should, therefore, present the exposition in such a way that it captures the reader's mind. Sotashe (1979:09) strongly agrees when he cites Dlamini as follows :

It is very important; it must be gripping ...

The opening may present a question which captures the reader's attention.

Besides supplying background information, the ability of the exposition to arouse the reader's curiosity, hope and fear has a major effect on the movement of the plot. One will be curious to know what happens next and one will remain curious until a solution is reached. Leggett (1934:33), who supports the notion of this arousal of interest by the exposition, states :

A preliminary description of the circumstances ... is to enable the reader to take an intelligent interest in what follows.

It is also important for an author to convey the specific tone and atmosphere of the story from the outset so that the reader understands the author's emotional attitude towards his material. Tone and atmosphere are closely related and will make it easy to identify them.



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The exposition generally plays a most important role in Mtuze's short stories. In the story **Izilo Zilunguzene** (1977), for instance, two colleagues, namely Nkomiyahlaba and Siyongwana, are at loggerheads. The latter, however, has a weakness for liquor and his opponent plans to make use of this weakness to take revenge on him. One day a friend, Bhanqo, brings Siyongwana some liquor at work and the two of them go off and drink. Nkomiyahlaba notices this and follows them. He then catches Siyongwana in the act of drinking strong liquor but Siyongwana pretends to be tasting to see whether Bhanqo (his friend) is carrying water, as he claims to be, or liquor. Consequently Siyongwana is not found guilty and escapes from Nkomiyahlaba's attempts at revenge.

In the first phase of the story, Mtuze introduces us to a well-known setting, Rosmead Police Station in the Middleburg (Karoo) area. The time of the year is indicated in a very suggestive and interesting way by the mere mentioning of the coldness that severely affects people and their activities. Mtuze writes:

Yimini ebetha umoya osika okwentshengece  
ezindlathini.

(p.7)

(It is a very chilly day; the wind strikes  
bitterly on the cheeks.)

From this we deduce that it is winter. The atmosphere seems to be very tense and because of the effect of the cold weather on their jawbones, people do not talk to one another and all is quiet. In this phase readers are introduced to two male characters, namely, Nkomiyahlaba, a White sergeant and Siyongwana, a Black policeman. Nkomiyahlaba was once a soldier whilst Siyongwana comes from a poor rural area. This results in their different behaviour in that the white man behaves more like a typical soldier than a policeman. The manner in which the background is portrayed here forecasts conflict and this kindles interest in the mind of the reader.



Having been given this background information, the reader soon becomes interested to know what will happen next. It is clear that Mtuze has been able to give more energy and credibility to the progression of the story through this exposition. This phase becomes even more exciting when the reader is informed about two intelligent characters who have an unhealthy relationship. Mtuze writes :

... aba babini babengokhelani mlilo ncam  
kodwa kuhlange ne iinkcuba-buchopho  
zombini.

(p7)

(...these two couldn't see eye to eye, yet  
they were great minds...)

The reader realises that something of great interest may result from this tense situation. The fact that they are not on good terms although they have to work closely together as colleagues, creates the potential for severe conflict and tension to develop in the story. The reader expects that a series of interesting events will develop from this situation. In this story, therefore, the exposition phase is presented in a most satisfactory manner by the author. He has given a clear and full description of the

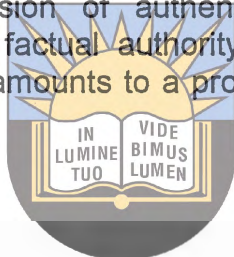
situation and it is evident that he has an unerring instinct for characterisation and a great talent for creating the necessary atmosphere by his contrast of personality and his association of winter with the unhealthy relationship between the two characters. Mtuze has been able in this exposition, to indicate very definitely the type of story one may expect, which in this case is a character story, judging from the captivating title **Izilo Zilunguzene**. The use of the term 'Izilo' implies that the behaviour of these two characters does not befit human beings but rather that of animals. Other stories where the exposition is presented successfully are **Abahlobo ababini** (1984), **Akakho** (1984), "**Ungakhe uxelele mntu**" (1990)

In some of his stories, Mtuze shows a tendency to present an exposition where the background is commonly known to the average reader. This includes localities such as the church, the urban neighbourhood etc. In the story **Abamelwane** (1984), for instance, two neighbours, Zamani and Jamani, have an unhealthy relationship which has lasted for many years. Their first clash is caused by Zamani's chickens feeding on Jamani's plants. Further clashes are caused by incidents such as the barking of Jamani's dogs, the cats of one neighbour eating the fowls of the other neighbour, etc. This culminates in a fire which destroys Zamani's home. Jamani, who is alerted to the fire, does nothing to help and simply puts the lights off and goes to sleep in his own house. Jamani, thereafter, wakes up in hospital, only to discover that the fire has also spread to his own house, killing his whole family. Zamani's house and family are also destroyed in the fire, except for one son, who manages to escape unhurt because he has gone for initiation.

In this story Mtuze does not bother himself with presenting a specific place and time in the exposition as in the case of **Izilo zilunguzene**. He rather assumes that he is dealing with a background commonly known to the reader. He directly introduces us to characters like Zamani and Jamani, who have an unhealthy relationship, thus presenting from the outset a situation in which there is some element of instability. Rather than providing the reader with setting and local colour, he prefers to weave these elements into the action as the story progresses.

On the whole one would commend Mtuze for the way that he presents his exposition. Most of his stories begin quite appropriately with the presentation of time, incident, place, character and the cause of conflict as essential data to acquaint the reader with the situation in general and to suggest lines of conflict. The situations presented are realistic and there is frequent allusion to well known places, which ensures that the reader will become interested in the development of events. His efficiency in this regard can be seen as confirmation of what Kempton (1967:03) says about the literary value of the exposition :

Whatever the approach, whatever the material and method, every story begins with a tacit profession of authenticity, as if simulating the factual authority, of written history, which amounts to a promise by the author.



### 3.5.2 Rising Action

According to Hills (1987:105) "... even if a story doesn't have a beginning or ending as such, it more or less has to have a middle." This shows how important the middle of the plot of the story is. The rising action is part of this middle stage whilst the other part is climax. It is important, therefore, to know what this phase encompasses and what its boundaries are.

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"Complication" and "Development" are other terms used by critics to identify this phase. Because of the limited volume of the short story, a lengthy and more complex phase of development is seldom possible. The term "Development", however, is a more acceptable term because the pace of movement of the story increases gradually in accordance with the development or unfolding of the events already presented during the exposition phase. This is confirmed by Joseph (1928:65) who says :

The story must 'march' and the pace is a gradually increasing one until the catastrophe or climax..."

Defining the boundaries of this phase, Cohen (1973:68) claims that this phase "... 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, develop his characters..."

The first event that Cohen refers to is, according to Brooks and Warren (1979:34), also the beginning of the conflict as it (the conflict) can only be implied or specified in the exposition. Therefore, the rising action is the phase where the conflict is incited in such a way that each event is rising and we, therefore, speak of rising action. This implies that the author in this phase develops his basic situation and also his characters, since character cannot be separated from action (Notestein, 1974:82).

For the story to progress satisfactorily, there must be something at stake for each contending party and each opposing party should act out of necessity. The opposing parties must be evenly matched and there must be a sense of action and counter-action. This process is only possible when a character's purpose encounters opposition in a story. In this way the story usually becomes credible and interesting to read and follow. In this phase, as the name suggests, the increasing difficulty encountered by the characters to maintain stability is presented. What is of great interest to the reader is to see characters really struggling to overcome and resisting being overcome - hence the development of conflict and the stimulation of reader's interest by a rising pattern of action.

Mtuzze's stories are generally characterised by a definite pattern of rising action and growing conflict. A story where the development is worked out very well to a pattern of rising conflict and tension is *Ityala* (1990). In this story a black driver (Lindile) is accused of overtaking another vehicle on a barrier line by a white traffic officer. Because Lindile feels that he is not guilty, a lengthy argument between him and the traffic officer develops. Eventually Lindile accepts the ticket but drives directly to the Magistrate's Court, followed by the traffic officer. They both explain their positions to the prosecutor and the matter is referred to court. Lindile hires a well-known, efficient attorney but when the matter is heard in court he is still found guilty. He is given

permission to appeal against his fine to the Appeal Court in Bloemfontein. Because he feels that the law is protecting the traffic officer and he will automatically be found guilty, he decides not to appeal.

In this story the two leading characters, Lindile and the traffic officer, seem to be evenly matched. Though the traffic officer has the authority to issue him with a fine, Lindile believes in the principle of being innocent until one is proven guilty. He, therefore, decides to oppose the traffic officer by taking the matter to the prosecutor. He even decides to go to court in order to prove his innocence. Even when the law seems to assert its authority he does not give up until he is given permission to appeal. His decision not to appeal is not a sign of giving up but a realisation of the unfairness of the law as applied within the context of the then apartheid system, particularly in this case.



The event which triggers the conflict in this story is when the traffic officer fines Lindile for an offence which he believes that he has not committed. The conflict escalates when Lindile refuses to accept the ticket. He argues with the traffic officer and says:

Uze uzilungiselele kuba siya kudibana  
emaplangeni apho iza kucaca khona  
inyaniso ebuxokini. Uza kubazi abantu, maa  
dad'ethu!

(p.29)

(You must prepare yourself because we will  
meet at the office where truth will be  
distinguished from lies. You will be taught a  
lesson, I swear to you!)

Lindile's decision not to give up causes an escalation of conflict. As a result, both characters go to see the prosecutor, who listens to both of them before referring the case to court. We also note the development of character here, because the traffic officer is not walking any longer but running and Lindile is not breathing normally but hissing like a snake (p.30) because he feels that his interpretation of the incident is the only one that should be accepted. There is a further escalation of conflict when

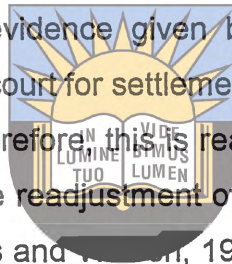
Lindile decides to hire a well-known, efficient attorney. And the actions of the two strong and evenly matched characters prompts Mtuze to say about them when they meet in court:

... Ziqubisene okunene izinto ebezikade zizondana.

(p.31)

(... the great enemies were really fighting it out.)

In the above story Mtuze may be commended because as the story progresses tension mounts, as each character refusing to yield to the views of the other. Because of the comprehensive evidence given by these two characters to the prosecutor, the case is referred to court for settlement. It should be noted that Lindile is not prepared to give up, and therefore this is really a story which clearly exhibits the development of conflict and the readjustment of forces as they struggle to settle into a new kind of stability (Brooks and ... 1979:34). Other stories where this phase is also presented are *Supersophy of Fidele by Kuluqam* (1990), *Akusenani ntombi kaMzilandlu* (1977) and *Indondo* (1984).



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In some stories the development of conflict is not well presented. There are, however, very few cases where this tendency is evident. In the story **Zinik'iphepha!** (1977), for instance, an Evangelist is on his way to conduct a morning service at Xhaphithanga farm on a Sunday morning. In order to save time he decides to use a short route which passes through an ostrich field. At the entrance to the field he meets a watchman, who informs him that he is not allowed to enter. His response is that no one can tell him where to go, or not to go because he is in possession of a permit for preaching the word of God all over the world. He enters the field and the ostriches chase him. The watchman then shouts at him, telling him to show them the permit. The Evangelist manages to reach the fence and hastily forces himself through it and falls flat on the ground, finding it hard to breathe properly. In this story the development of conflict is not presented satisfactorily. Rising conflict is expected when the preacher is prevented from entering the ostrich field. Although the preacher

does show signs of frustration and anger, the action of the watchman is not clearly depicted. The watchman does not manhandle or obstruct Mvangeli but lets him through without any exchange of words. There is not an exhibition of difficulty encountered by Mvangeli on his way through until the appearance of the charging ostriches.

It is clear that the characters in this story are also not equally matched in that the watchman is very respectful towards Mvangeli, whilst Mvangeli is arrogant and domineering. This does not surprise the reader, because even in real life a person of Mvangeli's calibre is a respected person in society, whilst the watchman is seen as an underdog. Mvangeli, therefore, does not meet with any opposition from the watchman. And consequently a strong build up of tension and conflict does not take place. Other stories where conflict and tension is not convincingly developed and readjusted, are **Akasayi kulibala** (1984) and **Aas Jongumsobomvu!** (1984). Because tension and conflict is not developed satisfactorily, the reader tends to lose interest in these stories.



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Generally speaking, in both **AMATHOLEENDABA** (1977) and **SH-S-SH-H UNGAKHE UXELELE MNTU** (1990), Mtuze has presented conflict and tension satisfactory. It is only in his second work **UMPHEHLULU** (1984) that conflict is less satisfactorily developed in some stories. As already stated, rising action can be experienced only where there is a growing intensity of conflict and tension which will keep the reader in suspense.

### 3.5.3 Climax

Shipley (1970:52) defines climax as :

... the decisive moment in the dramatic conflict.

This implies that each event is dramatised until a crisis occurs which then brings about what is known as the turning-point. Joseph (1928:86) calls it a "final revelation" in

that we are now at the stage of awaiting the outcome of what has been going on in the story. Since conflict primarily involves the characters, we now see the final clash between them and we await the final result with the elimination of either participant. It is this result or consequence that we are now at this phase concerned with.

Giving us a clear outline of this phase, Brooks and Warren (1971:36) write :

The complication moves toward a moment, an event, when something has to happen, when something has to crack ... This moment is the point of highest tension, the moment when the story turns towards its solution.

Cohen (1973:69) concurs when he says :



Climax is defined as the highest and most important point towards which the chain of events in the rising action has been moving. It can be the point at which issues and conflicts in the plot are fully and clearly resolved... A climax in a story may be a moment of disaster, of joyous discovery or of sober recognition of truth previously unknown to the character.

This implies that climax is the incident towards which all episodes lead. The function of climax, therefore, is to settle the core conflict between opposing parties so that there is a change in the story from instability to stability. This happens only when pressures on the characters build up to breaking-point. In this phase there must be a tremendous change either in the life or in the social relations of the chief character, and the obstacle should be removed.

The features of a successful climax are revealed by Joseph (1928:86) when he mentions that amongst other things "... the reader should feel a definite emotional shock, whether it be surprise at the final revelation, satisfaction at the triumph of right over might, sorrow at the tragic outcome or thrill at reaching a high water mark of

excitement." The importance of the climax in the writer's work of art lies in the fact that it forms the "kernel" of the story, (Hunt, 1950:88) and it represents "the conscious purpose of the story" (Notestein, 1974:58).

In most of Mtuze's stories the climax phase is presented successfully. In the story **lindondo** (1984), for instance, the reader is given information on the main character Mguyo, who is a successful farmer and a regular winner of awards at agricultural shows held in the Chalumna and Peddie areas. One year a terrible drought occurs just before the show is scheduled to begin. This troubles Mguyo as he knows that he is a sure winner of an award at the show. Mguyo tries all he can to feed and dress his well-known bull, but unfortunately the drought becomes worse and there is not a single green leaf, rivers run dry and water is scarce. He goes to various places in search of help for his bull, but in vain. He even pleads for the postponement of the show, but this is also in vain. When Mguyo's bull refuses to eat, he designs other means for it to eat. Days pass by without his having any sleep until one day, he decides to invent sunglasses with green lenses so that to his bull everything will appear green. Mguyo thinks that this is a solution as the bull starts to graze very well. He goes to sleep that day hoping that the next day his bull would have gained some weight. People come from various places to see a bull wearing green glasses. The day before the show, however, it dies unexpectedly and the sunglasses are broken. A postmortem reveals that the bull has eaten poisonous plants.

Mtuzze in this story presents a particular form of conflict, namely that between man and nature (drought). Mguyo is seen fighting against this opposition and devising the means of overcoming the problem. The fact that the bull dies the day before the competition comes as an emotional shock, not only to the main character but also to the reader. The death of the bull is the final result of the conflict between Mguyo (the owner of the bull) and nature. Mguyo makes a desperate attempt to counteract the devastating effects of the drought. He does not realise, however, that man is unable to fight against nature. He is destroyed in the process and his social life is changed drastically in that he will no more be receiving the first prize at the agricultural shows and will no longer be respected by people.

In this story Mtuze has succeeded in presenting us with the most effective climax. The reader experiences a definite emotional shock when the bull is found dead after it has eaten well and had gained some weight, as a result of the green sunglasses invented by Mguyo. This is really a moment of highest tension.

Another story where Mtuze also succeeds in presenting a most effective climax is **Uthweso-zidanga** (1984). In this story, for instance, the long-standing animosity between a father and a mother culminates in the death of their son (Siphiwo) by suicide. The significance of this tragic event lies in the fact that it occurs immediately after a University graduation ceremony. The author succeeds in creating a climax where the tragic death is contrasted with the happiness and joy of people who have just been capped after many painful years of study. Other short stories where the climax is also presented successfully are **Izilo zitunguzene** (1977) **Isilingo** (1977) and **Ityala** (1990).




This investigation has, however, also revealed that the climax is presented less successfully in some of Mtuze's stories. In the story **Abamelwane** (1984) (already summarised in 3.5.1), for instance, Mtuze presents an intense conflict which builds up to a climax in an effective and purposeful manner. The conflict progressively intensifies as measures and counter-measures are taken by each of the parties. The climax occurs when both parties are destroyed by fire and where fate becomes the only winner in the conflict. Although these events are most significant, they lack impact because of the general use of summary in the presentation of the events. The method of dramatisation (see 3.5.1) is not used at all in this story. The author, therefore, fails to sensitise the reader to the events and so the climax fails to have the necessary impact.

In some of the stories under discussion the climax phase cannot be identified clearly. In the story **Ilitye likaPhungela** (1984), for instance, Mtuze presents a clash between two parties of the same denomination which is led by Reverend Siliyeza. In the early parts of the story the reader is not informed about the cause of the conflict, but it is clear that there is a serious difference of opinion among the members of this

denomination. This results in the two groups being at loggerheads. One day the first group gathers outside the local church singing a revolutionary song like "Qula Kwedini" whilst the other group is inside the church building singing softly and sadly. A fight then breaks out when the group which is outside enters the church building and attacks the group which is already inside. The police in their vans arrive at the scene with police dogs and the members of both parties are arrested and taken into custody. It is only in court that the cause of the conflict between these two parties is disclosed to the magistrate but not to the reader.

In this story action is kept lively throughout. The two conflicting parties fight each other physically. Mtuze (1984:7) describes it as follows :



Kuthe sebenxaphile kwagaleleka iqela  
 lesibini elibonakele ngokungenelela kweli  
 cala lidudulwayo ukuba likweliphi na icala.  
 Kukhale intonga imama nesihlangu,  
 kucacile ukuba kudlala intsimbi.

(My emphasis: BNN)

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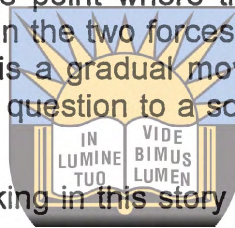
(Exhausted with fighting, there arrived a second group that, by joining the one being overcome, displayed which side it supported. Fierce fighting with sticks, fists and kicking ensued. It was clear that both groups were quite strong.)

Although the cause of the conflict in this story is not known to the reader, it builds up in an effective way. An old man is seriously beaten up first, then the group that is inside the church building is assaulted and thereafter the church building itself is nearly destroyed. But it is noted that the action in this story is not well motivated through characterisation because there are no direct words spoken by the characters. Instead, the narrator himself reports what is being discussed by the characters. It seems, therefore, as if the action in this story is merely there for the sake of action. As a result the crisis does not lead up to a logical conclusion since the conflict is not solved and the outcome is not clear. Instead of the two groups fighting it out, an external agent (the law) is used to halt temporarily the conflict existing between the

two parties. The real cause of the conflict is only disclosed in court. The outcome, however, is also not made known because the reader is not informed by the narrator about the cause of the conflict or about the solution. One could say in Day's (1971:421) terms that in this story "... the action does not carry through from a beginning to a logical conclusion." This results from the omission of the most important phase from the plot structure of the story, namely the climax.

The portrayal of the climax is most important because it shows conclusively the final outcome of the main conflict. This is confirmed by Skenjana (1995:14-15) when he says :

... climax is the point where the prevailing conflict between the two forces reaches the apex ... there is a gradual movement from the problem in question to a solution.



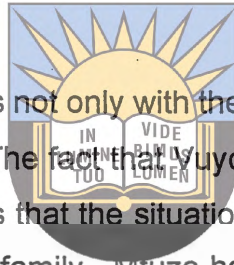
This solution is exactly what is lacking in this story and the successful development of the micro structure is severely affected. Other stories where this tendency is evident are *Impendulo yependulo* (1977) and *Ischwithi* (1984). In these stories one could say that, though they are narrated effectively, the conflict in them is not finally solved or settled, as is supposed to be the case in the climax phase.

#### 3.5.4 Ending

Joseph (1928:29) claims that anything that follows climax is known as either denouement or conclusion. It functions as a phase which represents that part of the story in which the author explains or unravels what has happened up to the climax. In other words "... it gives us the outcome of the conflict, the solution to the problem and the basis of a new stability." (Brooks and Warren, 1979:36). Since instability normally occurs throughout the story, the ending has to normalise and stabilise the situation. And since the tension rises in the story there is a gradual decline at the end as the outcome of events is explained to us. The ending of the short story normally differs from the ending of other genres. According to Hills (1987:106-107) "... the ending of the modern short story does not require a long summary of what happened

afterwards."

Mtuzze's short stories normally end on an interesting note. He, therefore, satisfies the requirements of the short story genre in his endings. In the story **Intambo** (1990), for instance, the chief character, Vuyo, spends a long time in jail because he is suspected of committing arson and murdering people by the 'necklace' method. He has to leave home at a young age and has to stay in jail for crimes which, in fact, he has not committed. After some time he is found guilty and sentenced to death. His attorney appeals to the Court of Appeal in Bloemfontein and Vuyo is, in fact, found to be innocent. He is released and taken immediately to the railway station in order to depart for his home.



The ending of this story provides us not only with the solution to the problem, but also with the basis for a new stability. The fact that Vuyo, who was accused of crimes he did not commit, is now free, means that the situation becomes normalised in that he is now able to go and live with his family. Mtuzze has not neglected the fact that this is a short story, and as a result the ending is very brief and there are no further explanations after Vuyo is informed that he is free to go home. The ending of this story leaves us with a single impression, namely that 'good always triumphs over evil'. Other stories whose endings are presented clearly and economically are **Hamba Bhotile** (1977), **"Undivusile"** (1984), **Umthandazo kaSteve** (1990) and **UMhlekaz'omhle** (1984).

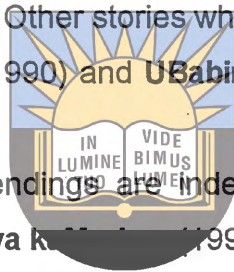
Mtuzze has applied various other interesting techniques in creating the endings of his stories. Some of these stories end with an unexpected twist. In **Isilingo** (1977), for instance, the selfish actions of Reverend Diliza Ngxaki lead to the death of an old lady (Esther Yanta) who is a member of his congregation. At the funeral of this old lady the minister (Diliza) confesses that his bad actions have in fact caused her death. The reader would at this stage expect an antagonistic reaction from the members of the congregation. Their reaction, however, is to thank him for his honesty and to express their support for him as their minister. Mtuzze reports as follows :

Unanamhla basamilela umfundisi uDiliza abantu base Nxarhuni ngenxa yokuba wayethetha inyaniso, nokuba ichaphazela yena siqu okanye inkosikazi yakhe uThokozile.

(p.55)

(People of Nahoon still remember Reverend Diliza to this day because he spoke the truth, whether it affected him or his wife Thokozile or not.)

It becomes clear in this excerpt that Mtuze portrays Reverend Diliza Ngxaki's credibility in a way that will point to the moral of the story. And the twist in this story is found very close to the end of it. Other stories which end on a similarly unexpected note are : **Umthandazo kaSteve** (1990) and **UBabini no Silwanyana** (1984).



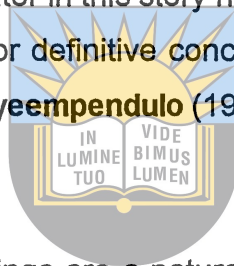
In some of Mtuze's stories the endings are indeterminate because no definitive conclusion is arrived at. In **Indle'eya kaMabasa** (1990) the story ends where Jackson, a farm foreman is forced to go into hiding when his life is threatened by his employer, Rooi Willem Poggenpoel. The latter is led to believe that Jackson has died and stops looking for him. After some years Jackson returns to the farm, only to find that his employer has now grown very old and lonely because his family is already dead. After some conversation with his master about how he has come back from the "dead", Jackson tells Rooi Willem that he comes from heaven, where he lives happily with Madam and Rooi's daughter "Klein Miesies" Emmarentia. An unresolved confrontation crops up between Jackson and his master.

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In this story the reader is not given a definitive ending. It is vague in that the reader is not told what the response of the master is after he has been directed by Jackson. At the same time, the reader is also not told what Jackson does after his response to Rooi's questions. There has been a conflict between Rooi and Jackson throughout the story but this conflict has not been resolved. It is noted that as a result (at end of this story) there is still instability. This is confirmed by the conversation between Rooi Willem and Jackson at the end of the story, as well as by their attitude towards each other. The reader, therefore, is unable to figure out what will happen to both these

characters after their argument.

Hills (1987:107) argues, however, that in a contemporary short story the writer needs to make no more 'explanations' in his endings than in his beginnings. It appears that in this story the climax does not turn the story, towards its solution, i.e. determining how the opposition between Rooi Willem and Jackson will be resolved. Because the author does not present any more explanations in the ending of this story, the reader is not satisfied with this presentation as no single impression is left in the mind of the reader. It becomes clear that the ending has a closer connection with the events of the story than with the beginning because it is through the ending that loose ends of the plot are knit together. The narrator in this story has, therefore, been unsuccessful in arriving at a clearly determined or definitive conclusion. Other stories where this tendency is evident are **Impendulo yeempendulo** (1977) and **"Ungakhe uxelele mntu"** (1990).



In some of Mtuze's stories the endings are a natural outcome and no secret plan is put into operation to achieve a bad end. These endings are logical and not accidental outcomes. Such an ending should simply gather up loose strands and satisfy the final curiosity. Yet it may be unsuspected until the last sentence or even the last word. In **"Undivusile"** (1984) the story ends up in court, where Vusi, whom people think is very friendly, respectful and noble, becomes the first suspect in various crimes such as murder, breaking in and robbery, and is charged and sentenced to death.

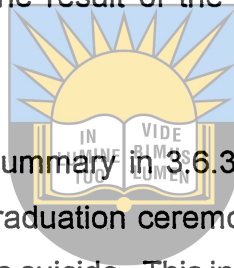
In this story Mtuze portrays a character who poses as a kind-hearted and vulnerable person at the beginning of the story. It is only after he is suspected of these crimes and investigations are made that he is accused as the perpetrator despite the deceptive manner in which he victimises other people. Although people are shocked after the death sentence has been given, they are satisfied with the verdict. This is a natural outcome because it becomes clear to them that Vusi is "a wolf in sheep's clothing" and therefore deserves punishment.

Mtuze in this story does not let the perpetrator go free because he is loved and

respected by people. Because he has committed a crime and the investigations have proved so, he is charged. This case is discussed in court and all evidence is proved against him. Therefore, the impression we get is that the author is warning his readers to be aware of wolves hiding in sheep's clothing.

The endings in some of Mtuze's short stories are unhappy endings. In most cases, however, these endings are logical in terms of what precedes them and by the fullness of revelation they afford. Stories such as **Akukho bani ukhathalayo** (1984), **Akakho** (1984), **Akusenani ntombi kaMzilandlu** (1977), **Uthweso-zidanga** (1984), **Abamelwane** (1984) and **Isilamba** (1990) have unhappy endings but because the events are logically arranged and represent the result of the actions of the characters, these endings are quite acceptable.

In **Uthweso-zidanga** (1984) (See summary in 3.6.3), for example, the festive mood which reigns after the University graduation ceremony is shattered when one of the young graduands, Sipiwo, commits suicide. This incident can be attributed to a long-standing quarrel between his parents, who eventually became separated.



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Perrine (1978:46) gives two justifications which may be made for an unhappy ending:

Many situations in real life have unhappy endings, therefore, if fiction is to illuminate life, it must present defeat as well as triumph.

The unhappy ending has a peculiar value for writers who so wish to ponder life.

The reader needs, therefore, to understand and expect defeat as well as victory in the short story. An unhappy ending may cause the reader to brood over the results, to go over them in his mind and thus by searching out its implications to derive more from it. We can also see more deeply into life when it is pried open for inspection because it deals with significant issues. In the ending of the above-mentioned story the reader is once again made aware of the tragedy which may be caused by chronic

marital tension.

Not all of Mtuze's short stories, however, have unhappy endings. Stories with happy endings are **Intambo** (1990), **Abahlobo ababini** (1984) and **Injombe** (1977). In the story **Abahlobo ababini** (1984) for instance, a hostile relationship between Nkomiyahlaba and Bhayilenja at the beginning of the story develops into a warm friendship by the end of the story. The reader is inspired by these events and is once again made aware of the fact that healthy race relations can be achieved in this country if both parties are willing to co-operate.

It is the function of the ending not only to bring a story to a fitting close but also to fill it out to completeness by representing a single impression in its final intensity. (Notestein, 1974:103-104). Mtuze has achieved this feature in most of his stories as they often leave the reader with a single impression. In the story **Uthweso-zidanga** (1984) (see summary in 3.5.3), the reader is left with a final impression that when parents become divorced or separated, the victims are always the children because this inflicts pain on them which sometimes results in suicide.

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In most instances the ending of the short story is determined by the specific nature of the story and by the creation of a single, final impression. The story normally ends when a valid solution is found to the main problem. Hunt (1950:88) argues that:

The last paragraph or two will have many queries to answer, many doubts to dispel, many wonderings to satisfy.

In most of his stories Mtuze has achieved this goal and has not manoeuvred a secret plan to achieve an "illegal end." (Botha, 1978:107) In some of Mtuze's short stories formal endings seem to be absent. This, however, should not be regarded as a demerit because in some stories there is no real need for such an ending. Frey (1988:97), for instance, sees no need for a formal ending in a story, when he says that "A good climax leaves the reader feeling that the story is finished."

Most critics seem to support this view. Joseph (1928:29), for instance, claims that "... the climax itself may in some stories end the story rendering denouement or conclusion unnecessary." This is a very good merit in a short story. It should be noted that there are times when the normal story plot has climax and conclusion so close as to be almost if not quite identical so that most critics never bother themselves by trying to analyse it separately (in such cases) to avoid redundancy. Ending, therefore, in the true sense of the word becomes unnecessary.

In the story **Zinik'iphepha!** (1977) (see summary in 3.5.2) Mtuze does not tell us what happens after the climax phase, i.e. whether Mvangeli wakes up after he is chased by the ostriches and whether he continues on his way to the church service or not. It is evident though that the narrator has made his point in the climax phase when he says:

... uMvangeli ethiwe minxi' liphika naziintloni.  
(p.15)

(... the preacher was unable to breathe and he was quite embarrassed.)

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In this story, therefore, there is no need for a formal ending because the author has already stated his point quite effectively in the climax, namely that "Pride comes before a fall."

On the whole, Mtuze succeeds in presenting the ending quite effectively in most of his short stories. There is a pleasant degree of variation in the way that his stories are brought to an end and the effects of monotony are largely avoided. This contributes towards making his short stories acceptable and interesting to the reader. His endings are brief, containing only the necessary details so that the reader is left with a strong, final impression in each story.

## 3.6 MICRO STRUCTURE

### 3.6.1 Introduction

The Micro structure represents the second important component of the total plot

structure. In this section the term Micro structure will firstly be interpreted theoretically. The main features of this component, as found in Mtuze's short stories, will then be investigated and critically evaluated.

Cohen (1973:68) describes what plot entails by saying :

Plot structure ... encompasses every means which an author uses to arrange and unify his materials.

Phillips (1974:37) concurs with Cohen when he says :

We proceed coldly, artificially, only seeking to **convert a given mass of material** into **units that will best suit our purposes**, enforcing our own **logical order** by twisting Time by the tail, as it were.

(My emphasis, BNN)

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This conversion involves the transformation of "raw" materials into manipulated action. These components are also referred to as the *Fabula* and *Sjuzet* respectively, in literary terms. This is due to the fact that no situation in real life is, in its original form, suitable for presentation as the plot of a story. This implies that "raw materials" should firstly be adapted or manipulated to form a unit with a logical narrative structure. Plot, then, is the meaningful manipulation of action (Brooks and Warren, 1979:34).

Various criteria may be applied to complete this transformation. Brooks and Warren (1979:39) state :

... always we must keep in mind that real life - or historical records - never give the fiction writer what he needs - all he needs - to create the illusion and his own interpretation of life ... the fiction writer may choose or

"create" facts in accordance with the pattern of human action and values that he wishes to present.

On the other hand Phillips (1974:37) says :

We thus make Selection and Elimination our greatest virtues; and Detail and Digression our greatest vices.

Therefore, the basic criteria that are needed to transform the raw material into plot are:

1. Selection of relevant material from the original situation
2. Addition of fictional facts as needed
3. Placing these events in a particular sequence



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### 3.6.2 Specific Requirements of the short story

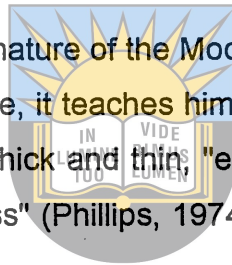
It should be borne in mind that in some way the plot of the short story is different from that of the other narrative forms in that it requires careful selection and re-arrangement of its materials and compactness to make it fit into a definite pattern. As compared to a Novelist who enjoys spreading his material over a great length of time, the short story writer usually gains in control, in power and in meaningfulness by his arts of distillation, telescoping and understatement (Gullason, 1964:30). This is confirmed by Notestein (1974:54) who says that short stories rarely have the complex plots that are found in novels. In the short story there is a representation of only a single series of events where the relation of a specific event to the one which immediately precedes it or directly follows it is clear and necessary, and the focus is upon a particular episode or situation rather than on a chain of events. This makes the plot of the short story invariably short and compact. Shortness, however, does not imply simpleness but rather compression, as there is dignity and hidden depth in it. In the short story

compression often results from the avoidance of expansive elaboration and too much detail. It is, therefore, probably good to begin and end the story as near the middle as possible.

Shaw (1983:46) confirms this notion when she states :

If a short story is to achieve a single concentrated impression, then it must move swiftly, it cannot linger to unfold for the reader the little incidentals, and wayward episodes, the dull patches and uneventful intervals ...

On the whole the discussion of the nature of the Modern Short Story admonishes the author to suppress details. Likewise, it teaches him/her to choose a single event or happening, and stick to it through thick and thin; "employing only such incidents as play a vital part in bringing it to pass" (Phillips, 1974:50).



### 3.6.3 Discussion of the main elements of the internal plot

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#### 3.6.3.1 Selection

Phillips (1974:37) writes :

Details, episodes and incidents that have no bearing on the direct line of movement of the story in hand, no matter how much we may cherish them, or how beautiful and effective they may be in themselves, ruthlessly must be thrown aside.

By selection of facts is meant the inclusion of those facts that seem more useful for the particular purpose of the story. The writer cannot include all the facts that form part of a specific situation. Selection of facts plays a very important role in the short story in that it gives vividness and significance to the story. In agreement Perrine (1978:47) states :

There **must** be nothing in the story that is **irrelevant**, that does not contribute to the total meaning, nothing that is there only for its own sake or its own excitement.

(My emphasis:BNN)

Brooks and Warren (1979:35) concur with Perrine on the function of selection, by saying :

The vivid detail that catches the imagination helps to create the special quality, the 'feel' of a story, and this feel, this atmosphere is an element of the meaning.

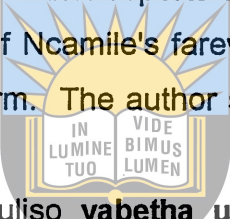
It is therefore important for the writer to select the details that he thinks are important, relevant and suggestive since action involves the infinite mass of detailed characteristics of events in the real world. Notstein (1974:51) claims that selection is even more important in the short story plot since it differs from that of larger narrative forms. Careful selection, therefore, is required. Bound by one of the essentials of a short story, namely "condensation", the writer has no alternative but to select only the most relevant events, making his work more effective and enabling him to achieve the most by means of the least(...umbhali esebenzisa isixhobo esiluluqulunganiso...lwezinto ezininzi kumazwi ambalwa. (Satyo, 1989:242).

Mtuzze has in all three anthologies of short stories maintained the principle of selectivity quite strictly, omitting most of the redundant facts. His stories are mostly quite limited in length, maintaining an average of 3 pages per story in **AMATHOL'EENDABA** (1977) and an average of 1½ pages per story in **UMPHEHLULU** (1984). The briefness of these stories is, to a certain extent, detrimental to the literary quality of Mtuzze's work.

The tendency of the author to be too brief (with an average of 1½) pages, for instance, is notable in the story **Akasayi kulibala** (1984). Ncamile, the central character in the story, is a loyal member of the local church who more than once saves it during times of crisis. In the end, however, he is disappointed at the negative reaction of the congregation when church members are reluctant to lend their support to a farewell

function which has been organised in his honour.

In this story we find the depiction of one specific situation and one central character (Ncamile) in the church, which means that the features of the short story are largely adhered to. The author, however, does not go into the detail of the situation in the story. For instance, he does not present the real conflict between Ncamile and the congregation, and, therefore, it is noted that selection has been overdone. The reader is neither given the opportunity to hear Ncamile talking nor see him doing something as the narration is only reported by the author. Moreover, a large part of the story is presented in summarised form, and as a result the reader tends to lose interest in it. For instance, the scene where the author reports about the happenings of the day which is supposed to be the day of Ncamile's farewell is presented in summarised form, rather than in dramatised form. The author simply states:



Ngemini yombuliso **yabetha umoya icawe** ngaphandle kweqelana ekwakucacile ukuba lona belingazi nto ngombuliso. Kuthe xa kuphuma umthandazo kwafika isigidimi esithi umbuliso umisiwe...

(p14) (My emphasis:BNN)

(On the day of the farewell there was nobody in church except a group who knew nothing about the farewell. After the evening prayer a messenger arrived with the information that the farewell had been postponed...)

This implies that an important scene which was supposed to be dramatised is often summarised. There is no depiction of the direct words or actions of a central character. Other stories where this tendency towards brevity is found are **Uyavuth'umlilo** (1977), **Ilitye likaPhungela** (1984) and **A-a Jongumsobomvu!** (1984). It is evident that Mtuze's stories are too brief and that selection has been overdone in that some important facts are left out. As a result these short stories appear to be brief sketches rather than stories.

In his third collection of short stories, **SH-S-SH-H UNGAKHE UXELELE MNTU** (1990),

Mtuzze has been less selective, and as a result these stories are generally longer than those in the first two collections. The tendency here is to include more facts related to the plot of the story. The average length of the stories in this publication is eight pages. Length, however, should not be regarded as the only valid literary criterion. Some short stories might be shorter in length whilst others might be longer. There are, therefore, generally short short stories and long short stories.

In the story "**Ungakhe uxelele mntu**" (1990), for instance, a mother (Mrs Kelembe) has lost her husband during the Uitenhage massacre. She also is unable to trace the whereabouts of her son (Jongilizwe), who has left the country at an early age. Neither the security police nor her son's friends can help her. Despite the fact that he does communicate with his mother through unaddressed correspondence, Mrs Kelembe is misinformed about her son's death. **She is left not knowing what or whom to believe.**

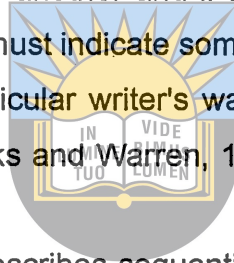
The events in this story are mostly presented in a dramatised form, which makes the story more interesting and vivid to the reader. There are, however, some events which are less important and which the writer ought to have presented in a summarised form. On page 1, for instance, the process of the growth of a foetus up to the birth of an infant is strongly dramatised. There is nothing exceptional to this and, therefore, there is no need for the author to dramatise it. It should also be remembered that the facts included in the story are not all equally important. Some are less important than others and, therefore, the author should concentrate on the more important events by dramatizing them whilst summarizing the less important ones so as to present his work more effectively. In general, however, the material in these anthologies has been selected quite satisfactorily and authorial digression as well as unnecessary explanations have been largely avoided. Among those stories which show an effective selection of facts are: **Abahlobo ababini** (1984), "**Uze ungabhekabheki**" (1984) and **Hamba Bhotile** (1977) and others.

### 3.6.3.2 Sequence and causality

Having selected his facts, the author faces the task of arranging them in a particular

order. In some cases these facts may be presented in strict chronological order whilst in other cases the chronological order may not be adhered to. This violation of sequence can in most cases not be avoided for reasons beyond the author's control. Mentioning one of these reasons, Brooks and Warren (1979:35) postulate that no writer can present simultaneously in his narrative two incidents which occur simultaneously.

When we refer to the plot of 'a novel' or 'a story' we instinctively imply the idea of unity. We imply that the parts, the various individual events cohere, that is, they hang together. To begin with, there is the matter of cause and effect. In any story we expect to find one event leading to another and if there is no logic whatsoever, the reader loses interest. Every story must indicate some basis for the relation among its parts, for the story itself is a particular writer's way of saying how one can make sense of human experience (Brooks and Warren, 1979: 20).



Hills (1987: 108-109), therefore, describes sequential causality by stating that:

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It is often thought to be the difference between a simple story, which just presents events as arranged in their time sequence, and a true plot, in which one scene prepares for and leads into and causes the scene that comes after it ... Each incident can be shown to be related to the whole symbolic structure of the story.

The question of causality, therefore, also plays a most important role and binds the author in his plan of order. In describing this matter Hills (1987: 108), whilst referring particularly to the short story, writes:

In a short story a scene somehow relates more to the rest of the story than it does to just the scene adjacent to it.

With the same view Reid (1977:5) cites Prince, who argues:

No story exists until three or more events are conjoined, with at least two of them occurring at different times and being causally linked ...

This implies that no scene or event is there incidentally for its own sake, because incidents in the story are causally related and coherent. The various stages of the story are linked together in a chain of cause and effect so that each is related to the whole structure of the story. The logical order of events results in causal effect. Plot, therefore, is a series of causally related events in a narrative.

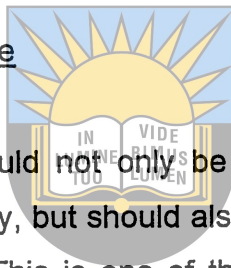
Looking at Mtuze's short stories, the critic finds that in some of them the normal chronology is successfully maintained. In the story **lindondo** (1984) (see summary in 3.5.1) events in the story are clearly tabulated in chronological order, starting with Mguyo's preparations for the show, up to the stage where the bull dies. Other stories where the normal chronology is maintained are **Hamba Bhotile** (1977) "**Uze ungabhekabheki**" (1984) and **Ityala** (1990). These stories display a strong degree of structural unity.

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In some of Mtuze's stories structural unity is also obtained through strict adherence to the law of causality. In the story **Abahlobo ababini** (1984) (see summary in 3.5.4), for instance, the white driver of the car discovers that his car has a puncture. This forces him (cause) to replace the tyre in the midst of a snow storm. The nuts, however, refuse to be loosened (effect) and Bhayilenja comes to his assistance (cause). The white man, however, is not friendly towards him (effect) but owing to the problem of the nuts (cause) he allows the Black man to assist him (effect). The general outcome (effect) of this story is that a warm friendship develops between these two men and that racial prejudices are terminated between them. In this story Mtuze successfully maintains the law of cause and effect throughout, thereby developing the story into an interesting, successful narrative. The dramatic effect is strengthened by the way in which the facts are arranged on the basis of rising conflict. Other stories where this tendency is also achieved are for example: **Ityala** (1990), **Akakho** (1984) "**Sala nelo zulu lakho**" (1984) and **Akusenani ntombi kaMzilandlu** (1977).

In some of Mtuze's short stories, however, the pattern of cause and effect is not developed quite satisfactorily. In the story **Abamelwane** (1984), for instance, (see summary in 3.5.1) the initial cause of the animosity between the two sets of neighbours is not known clearly. The reader is only informed about the effect of this original conflict which leads to further incidents such as the destruction of property, the creation of public disturbance, and finally the death of those involved. The fact that the reader is not informed about the root of the problem makes it difficult for him to identify himself with the pattern of cause and effect in the story. Other stories where this tendency is evident are for example: **Ilitye likaPhungela** (1984), **UBabini no Silwanyana** (1984) and **Izidungulwana** (1977).

### 3.6.3.3. Tension and suspense



In the short story the events should not only be linked together logically and in accordance with the law of causality, but should also be linked together on the basis of rising tension and suspense. This is one of the main factors which keeps the reader involved and interested in the events which unfold in front of him. In a story the sequence of events should be conceivable, and according to Mtuze (1986:83) "... it should be pointed out that causality helps to maintain tension in the plot" of a story. The only way to obtain tension in a story is for the writer to deal with one issue throughout from beginning to end and not to narrate several unrelated incidents in one story.

Shipley (1970: 331) confirms this idea by describing tension as:

Strain, excitement or suspense, caused by a movement in many poems, novels, and perhaps all plays: an initial promise and expectancy, the inception of action followed by acceleration (with keyed-up anticipation) until the resolution or consummation, and a decline or 'cadential finish'.

The reader is, therefore, kept in a state of expectancy and anticipation or doubt. The

movement that Shipley writes about is the growing conflict between the opposing characters or forces which results in or causes tension and suspense in the plot of the story. Interest is built up through this rising conflict or complication of the conflict.

Most of Mtuze's short stories possess tension because the law of cause and effect is adhered to successfully. In the story **Umthandazo kaSteve** (1990), for instance, a memorial service is organised on the 12th of September in honour of Steve Biko, the political activist. This service is held at the Anglican church, which becomes full of both young and old activists and ordinary people who have come to pay tribute to this hero. It is also full because people have been informed that the service will be led by two well-known critics of the apartheid system, Bishop Russell and Canon Tisani. When the service is about to start a fully armed group of soldiers arrives and enters the church building. Bishop Russell requests them several times to take their weapons and vacate the church as the service is about to begin, but all this is said in vain. He eventually ignores their presence and continues with the opening of the service. After the opening the Bishop, Canon Ezra Tisani, (who has also served a prison sentence on Robben Island), conducts the sermon, in which he begins by relating how Biko met his death and the consequences thereof, and then informs the people about his contributions towards the struggle. After the sermon a prayer is requested from anyone who so wishes and the captain, followed by the soldiers, is the first to fall on his knees to pray. After the captain's painful prayer, which touches almost all the people's hearts, a vigorous hymn is jointly sung (by both people and soldiers) for the collection of donations. Holy Communion is prepared and people including the soldiers take part in it.

In this story the arrival of the soldiers and their entering the church when the memorial service is about to start creates a tense atmosphere. The tension grows when Bishop Russell unsuccessfully pleads with them to leave. The soldiers occupy the church fully armed, whilst he continues with the service. More tension develops when Canon Tisani begins with the description of the life and work of the deceased, Steve Biko. In the story Mtuze has used some phrases to show the growing tension. The narrator, for instance, describes the conduct of the soldiers after they had entered the church

building where the service was about to take place, by saying;

...zithule zathi cwaka, ngathi zithi namhla kunamhla, uza kubonakala umahluko phakathi kokunqula uThixo nokushumayela ezepolitika. Ezinye zazo ziphetho oonomathotholo ekucace ukuba ngabokuqhagamshelana nezona zikhakhamela xa kunyanzelekile ukuba kuhlatywe uyawekela.

(p.22)

(... they remained silent, as if saying that today was the doomsday, there was going to be a clear line of demarcation that distinguishes the worshipping of God from the worshipping of politics. Some of them carried radios, apparently for communicating with senior officers during an emergency.)

The effect of tension on the first person narrator can be clearly felt when he says:

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Kubekho nto ithe mandizingcwenge ndiphume nokuba kungefestile ndinyele umchiza ...

(p.22)

(The idea came to my mind that I must escape if possible through the windows and flee ...)

It is not only the narrator who experiences the tension created by the presence of these soldiers but also Bishop Russell himself, who bursts out painfully:

Ndiyacela kuMphathi walo mkhosi ndingazi nokuba ngowamapolisa na okanye ngowamajoni kusini na ukuba ayalele la madoda axhobileyo ukuba akhwelele nezo zikrweqe apha kuba kusecaweni.

(p.15)

(I wish to request the commander of this unit

of either policemen or soldiers to instruct these armed men to leave the building with their arms and ammunition as these are premises of the church.)

This is said in vain and with no response. He then informs the soldiers that the church belongs to the people and not to the government and he therefore has a right to request them to leave. The silence that follows and the building up of tension is described as follows:

Into owawunokuyiva kuphela kukuwa kwesipeliti phantsi kangangencwakaha eyoyikekayo eyayilapho, kungekho nomntwana okhalayo. Into yesibini eyayivakala ngamandla ngathi ziimvalo zabantu yimizuzu yokuncinciza kwaloo wotshi inkulu iseludongeni lwecawe.

(p.24)

(It was so terribly silent that one could even hear the noise of a falling safety pin, not even a baby cried. The second sound which was as clearly audible as the heartbeats of the congregation was the ticking of the big clock that hung on the wall of the church.)

The narrator reveals the tension experienced by himself and the congregation at large when Canon Tisani describes how Biko met with his death and why he died. The narrator says:

Mandiyithethe into yokuba ukuqala kwalo mfo wasemaTshaweni ukuthetha ndandibambe amazinyo ndisithi olu gxogxo lwasemzini luza kuphakama luthi luyawuvuala lo mthandazo ukuba kuza kuthethwa ngoBiko endaweni yokuthandaza...

Lihambile ixesha abantu bengathi babanjwe ngumnatha namadoda omkhosi ndibona ukuba adla amathambo entloko.

(p. 25-26)

(I must state that when this gentleman from

the Tshawe clan began to speak I had reservations anticipating that this tall visitor would rise and propose closure of the prayer meeting if the focus of the speakers was to be on Biko instead of devotions ...)

(For minutes the congregation was as if it was caught with a fishing net. On the other hand the soldiers appeared to be meditating.)

It becomes clear that the tension is reaching breaking-point as neither of the parties is prepared to yield to the views of the other. It is evident that in this story Mtuze has achieved a successful degree of growing tension and suspense. Other stories where this is also achieved are *Ityala* (1990), *Akusenani ntombi ka Mzilandlu* (1977) and *Intambo* (1990). Although he has achieved satisfactory results in his first two collections, Mtuze is particularly successful in this regard in his third collection, **SH-S-SH-H UNGAKHE UXELELE MNTU** (1990).

Botha (1978:119) comes to the conclusion that Xhosa short story writers do not achieve an adequate degree of tension in their stories. He says:

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

(As far as the Xhosa short stories under discussion are concerned, it is clear that an effective line of tension is seldom satisfactorily developed and maintained throughout.)

Although Botha's observation is correct, the achievement of Mtuze clearly indicates successful growth and development regarding the depicting of tension in the Xhosa short story since his (Botha's) observations were made.

Suspense is also as important as tension because it is one of the methods by which "aesthetic pleasure" is created in fiction, (Hills, 1987:35). To be effective every story

must develop suspense. Commenting on this, Grace (1965: 143) writes:

Suspense implies that the writer tells the reader in the course of the story enough to arouse his curiosity, but not enough to satisfy it.

Perrine (1978: 558) concurs when he describes suspense as :

That quality in a story that makes the reader eager to discover what happens next and how it will end.

This implies that the reader should not be informed what is going to happen in the story until it reaches its ending. The reader is kept in a state of "prepared waiting" (Hills, 1987: 35). Suspense becomes most intense when the reader's curiosity is combined with anxiety about the fate of some sympathetic character (Perrine, 1978: 43). As long as the reader does not know what will happen, the events tend to come to him/her with an element of surprise which is closely connected with the element of suspense. The surprise is proportional to the unexpectedness of what happens. It becomes pronounced when the story departs radically from the reader's expectation and such radical departure is most often found in a surprise ending, i.e. one that reveals a sudden "unexpected turn" or twist (Perrine, (1978:558).

Most of Mtuze's short stories evoke suspense. For instance, in the story **Ilitye likaPhungela** (1984), (see summary in 3.5.3). Mtuze achieves a strong degree of suspense by introducing a degree of mystery. The mystery in this story results from the fact that the cause of the conflict is not revealed to the readers. More suspense is created by the opening lines of the exposition, which read thus:

Kuthe sisathetha njalo kwee gqi iqela  
lamarhamente lisitsho **ngohlwahlwane**  
**Iwengoma** endithe ndakumamela ndeva  
ukuba asiculo eli liculwayo koko ligwijo elithi

**Qula kwedini.** Ngaphakathi kwakumana kuvakala **iculwana elitsholo phantsi libubula kalusizana.**

(p.27) (My Emphasis : BNN)

(While we were engaged in a conversation, a group of congregants appeared singing a **loud and exciting song**. When I listened attentively, I discerned that it was not a hymn but a revolutionary song with the lyrics **Qula kwedini**. Inside a **sad hymn** that was sung softly could be heard at irregular intervals.)

Reading these lines, the reader finds himself confronted with several questions. He instinctively wants to know why there is such a difference in volume between the songs sung by the two groups; why the reader is informed about the title of one song and not of the other song. The reader also wants to know why these two groups are singing songs of a different nature and what the outcome will be. All these questions cause curiosity and anxiety in the reader and automatically motivate him/her to read further in order to get some answers to them. When these questions are answered in the ending of the story, the reader's curiosity is satisfied when he learns that the cause of the conflict is the bad leadership of Reverend Siliyeza which has resulted in the division of his circuit into two separate factions.

Mtuzi clearly displays his awareness of the fact that suspense is closely connected with the element of surprise. This can be witnessed in stories such as "**Undivusile**" (1984) (see summary in 3.5.4), where the spotlight falls mainly on the actions of the central character (Vusi), who is described by the narrator as a pleasant and delightful fellow and whose celebrated expression of "undivusile" (you have woken me up) intensifies his high position in society. He wins many friends and becomes popular, trustworthy and ever willing to display an admirable openness and sincerity. Positive response is reflected in his use of the words "enkosi"(thank you) and "undivusile"(you've woken me up) denote his observance of the moral code of behaviour. But after it is discovered that he has killed a farmer he is charged with murder, found guilty and sentenced to death.

The fact that Vusi becomes the first suspect in the murder of the wealthy farmer, comes as a surprise to the reader, because Mtuze's description of the character (Vusi) leads the reader to believe that he is a noble character who would not commit a murder. It is only in the ending that the reader becomes aware that he is not as noble as the reader thinks he is because he is eventually found guilty of the murder of the farmer and therefore, sentenced to death. Suspense is created in this story by the repetition of the phrases that Vusi always uses in response to questions which are put to him and comments referred to him, for example "Undivusile ntangam" (You've woken me up, my friend). In this story, therefore, we find a surprise ending where a character who generally behaves in a noble manner is found to be a criminal and is punished by the law. Other stories where this tendency is evident are: **Isilingo** (1977), **lindondo** (1984) and **Akakho** (1984).

It is evident that Mtuze is quite successful in the creation and maintenance of tension and suspense in his stories, and his success as a short story writer can be largely attributed to this quality in his works.

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### 3.8 CONCLUSION

The aim of this chapter was to investigate the main structural patterns found in Mtuze's short stories, in order to determine how events and incidents of everyday life are dynamically intensified and developed into successful plot structures.

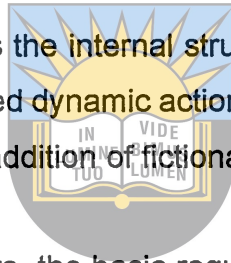
A definition of plot was given, and its importance and its relationship with other related literary aspects, was discussed. This was done to show that theme, plot and character are interdependent and that for a story to be successful these elements should be developed on an equal basis throughout the story. Certain aspects of conflict as a basic element of plot were discussed and it was observed that it is an essential element of the short story plot since it forms an integral part of the phases of the story. The study of plot in this chapter was done according to the two main structural components, namely the Macro and the Micro Structures.

The Macro structure, also known as the external structure, is composed of different phases, namely, exposition, rising action, climax and denouement or ending. In the exposition, Mtuze has generally been successful in presenting the time and place of the action, and the characters involved in it, as well as the cause and suggestive lines of conflict. Situations are realistically presented through the use of well-known settings and background commonly known to the reader. Time is often indicated in a suggestive and interesting way. Mtuze has been able to indicate in the exposition what type of story one should expect, thus ensuring the reader's interest in the development of the events. His exposition is generally clearly and effectively presented. His brilliance is noted when the environment is used to develop types of character that reflect the influence of the environment in their actions.

Most of Mtuze's stories reflect a definite pattern of rising action and escalating tension. The intensity of both tension and conflict keep the reader in suspense. In most cases the conflict is presented in a dramatic form for even greater effect. In some of his stories, however, the conflict is not well-developed and readjusted. This is often a result of unequally matched conflicting characters in the stories concerned. Except for minor weaknesses such as these, Mtuze has generally been successful in presenting this second phase.

In most of Mtuze's stories, an effective climax resulting in the experience of an emotional shock on the part of the reader has been successfully presented. This is achieved through the use of the technique of contrast, the use of dramatisation to sensitise the reader. There are however, also instances of less successful climaxes owing to the fact that dramatisation is not used at all, with the result that the climax fails to have the necessary impact. It was also found that in some stories the climax cannot be clearly identified because the conflict is not maintained throughout the story, and as a result it is not solved. In such cases Mtuze tends to use a third agent/ force to solve the problem in an indirect manner. In general, however, his climax is presented satisfactorily, convincingly and as near to the end as possible. The narrative leaves the reader with a sense of completeness when he reaches the end because there are no loose ends.

Most of Mtuze's endings are presented quite successfully and effectively. There is a marked variation in the way his stories come to an end to avoid monotony. He employs various techniques in creating the ending. For instance, some stories end with an unexpected twist, whilst others end either happily or unhappily, thereby illuminating life and helping the reader to see more deeply into it. In some stories there is an absence of a formal ending because the reader is left satisfied by the climax which restores the equilibrium of the events. What is most impressive about Mtuze's endings is that they generally leave the reader with a single unified impression. In some stories, however, there seems to be no definite ending because the reader is not fully informed of the solution to the problem.



The Micro Structure, also known as the internal structure, involves the manipulation of 'raw' events into a system of unified dynamic action. The criteria applied to achieve this transformation are : selection, addition of fictional facts and ordering of the facts.

Since a short story is a unique genre, the basic requirements pertaining to the Micro Structure were discussed comprehensively. It was pointed out that the short story needs careful selection of all its parts because of its conciseness and compactness. Short stories rarely have complex plots and, therefore, a single series of events which are causally related should be presented and the author should remain with it throughout, employing only the relevant facts.

The principle of selectivity is quite satisfactorily employed and maintained in most of Mtuze's stories whilst redundancy is largely avoided. In some stories, however, Mtuze tends to be too brief, because he merely reports certain incidents rather than forming them into an artistic unit. As a result there is no real dramatisation of important scenes and the conflict never develops. Other stories are mostly dramatised, which affects their length. This is not regarded as a demerit since the length of a story is firstly determined by its material.

Mtuze's short stories are mostly presented chronologically. His high level of craftsmanship is revealed by this approach, since chronological presentation generally

has the disadvantages of making the story move slower and of necessitating beginning too far back in the history of the characters, thereby admitting irrelevant details. In most of his stories Mtuze adheres strictly to the law of causality, thereby developing the story in an interesting fashion. In a few stories, however, cause and effect are not satisfactorily developed as the reader is not properly informed about the root of the problem. This makes it difficult for the reader to identify himself with the logic of the story and with the fate of the characters..

Most of Mtuze's short stories do not lack tension. He develops a tense atmosphere, resulting in growing tension which keeps on mounting until it reaches breaking-point. Suspense is also evoked in Mtuze's stories. This is achieved mostly by the introduction of mystery, which awakens the reader's curiosity and motivates him to read further until his questions are answered. An element of surprise, which is closely connected with the element of suspense, is often presented. Mtuze has achieved the creation and maintenance of tension and suspense quite successfully and his success as a short story writer is largely attributed to this quality. He has successfully fulfilled the most important function of plot, which is "to carry us forward" (Boulton, 1979:47).

The few demerits that were observed in his plot structure are on a par with those that are generally observed in Xhosa literature as a whole (see 2.4.3). The structural demerits of the Xhosa short story, such as : the fictional character not being fully utilised, key scenes not being properly utilised, (i.e. not dramatised) and the character seldom being presented with sufficient opportunity for independent action and dialogue, are to some extent also found in the stories of Mtuze. But in spite of these few demerits it should be noted that generally, Mtuze has made an outstanding contribution towards the growth and development of plot in the Xhosa short story.

## CHAPTER 4

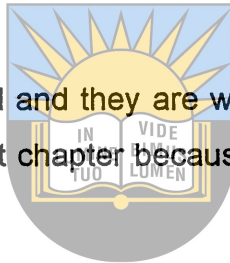
### CHARACTERISATION

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

At the heart of every story lie three elements, namely :

- i) a central character
- ii) a central conflict
- iii) a central theme

These elements are closely related and they are what the story is ultimately about. Theme will be dealt with in the next chapter because the main focus of study in this chapter is character and conflict.



The aim of this chapter is to analyse some of the main tendencies regarding characterisation in the short stories of Mtuze. The degree to which these tendencies agree with those that already exist in the Xhosa short story will also be evaluated. This investigation will be based firstly upon a theoretical survey of the role of characterisation in the short story. The short stories of Mtuze will thereafter be analysed with regard to features such as direct and indirect methods of characterisation, the use of the naming technique and the role of conflict.

Within the context of literature characters are representations of persons. They are of primary importance in fiction because fiction is a dramatisation of human relationships. The author has an important task of not only creating fictional characters but also of selecting and shaping them for the purpose of dramatising human life with its variety of manifestations. These characters should be individualised by qualities which are imparted to them to render them different from one another. This creation of imaginary people is the basis of all good fiction because this is "... one of the highest aims of literary art" (Yelland et al., 1980:31). It is

important, therefore, for the author to motivate the character's behaviour so that the reader may appreciate his reactions.

This importance of character in a story becomes clear in most definitions of fiction given by various scholars. Brooks and Warren (1979:1) claim that :

Fiction is a story, a made up story about characters.

With the same view O'Faolain (1948:172) states:

... unless a story makes this subtle comment on human nature, on the permanent relationships between people, their variety, their expectations and their unexpectedness, it is not a story in any modern sense.

From the above statements it becomes clear that without characters there can be no story. In the short story, however, the number of characters should be limited to a minimum (See 2.3.4.2.1). Each of these characters play different roles which can roughly be categorised as major and secondary roles. In the short story there is a strong emphasis on the central character because the focus is him/her and he/she is relevant to every event in the story. Usually these events cause some change either in him or in the reader's attitude towards him. In this process of change, conflict plays a major role and therefore it is necessary to deal with conflict in this chapter as well.

Malepe (1967:38) defines conflict as "... a painful tension set up by a clash between opposed and contradictory impulses in an individual, specifically the antagonism existing between primitive desires and instincts and moral, religious or ethical ideals, that is, the study and philosophy of human conduct ..."

This is perhaps one of the first reasons why a study of conflict has been included in this chapter, since it mainly comprises a contest between opposing characters or groups of characters. This contest can either be a character who is faced with one

or another challenge of a serious nature. This challenge might consist out of a physical contest or struggle against another character or it might assume the form of a moral contest against a force such as fate. The character could, however, also be involved in a struggle against the environment (nature) or even in a struggle with himself. This latter form of struggle is also referred to as internal conflict whilst the former categories could be referred to as external conflict.

In the previous chapter it was pointed out that in the short story, the reader is normally confronted with the portrayal of a single situation. There can therefore, be only limited development of the central character. O'Faolain (1948:170) claims that "... the most that can be done is to peel off an outer skin or mask, by means of an incident or two in order to reveal that which is - as each writer sees this "is". The character will not change his spots; there is no time."



#### 4.2 DEFINITION OF CHARACTERISATION

The art of creating these fictional characters in words and of giving them human identity is characterisation. Msimang (1986:99) defines characterisation as follows :

Characterisation is a sum total of techniques employed by an artist in presenting characters in a literary work of art so that characters are perceived by the audience/reader as persons endowed with moral and dispositional as well as physical qualities ...

The above statement reveals what perhaps is the most important point about characterisation, namely the presentation of life-like characters which appear convincing to the audience. In effective narrative literature imaginary persons become credible because they are firmly grounded in reality.

Cohen (1973:37) concurs with the above when he sees characterisation as :

The art of illusion whereby the characters created seem to become people with traits and personalities which a reader can recognise, respond to and analyze.

Mphahlele (1969:478) claims that it is an exciting experience to find characters that approximate real life people in a sophisticated short story. The only way to achieve this, is to check the validity of characterisation against our own sense of human behaviour. Realistic writers always pay attention to human nature where we all share the same perception of human behaviour. With the same view Hills (1987:7) states:

It is an effective way of achieving characterisation in fiction to show how a character regularly behaves, what his actions are in his everyday life. All these actions indicate or are capable of indicating something significant about him.

It becomes clear that what a man does or says habitually or with premeditation without influence or reward in a story indicates his character. And a defining test of a character trait, although perhaps not always essential, is desirable, especially in the character story. Moreover, in order for a story to be interesting, the character must be shown to possess individual human qualities.

The importance of successful characterisation is noted by Notestein (1974:130), who makes it clear that such characterisation will bring all one's powers of imagination, of observation, of reflection, of sympathy and of insight into play. It will demand a sure technique, a deft touch and a discriminating knowledge. In other words the reader becomes involved in the story either by being sympathetic or antagonistic towards a certain character, and will as a result become emotionally involved in whatever conflict the character becomes involved in. On the other hand Hunt (1950:92), claims that the secret of good characterisation is deep human knowledge and sensitiveness. The writer should be aware of the fact that he depends mostly on observation since he cannot hope to live in intimate contact with all the types he would like to portray in his work.

To present a character successfully there are various methods which can be applied. Satyo (1977:47) presents a list of these conventional methods which include " ... direct description by the author, the dramatic method, dialogue, habits, discussion by other characters, character's reaction to various stimuli, and naming." On the other hand Botha (1978:55) and Perrine (1978:66) agree with Satyo but classify these methods into two main groups, namely, the direct and indirect methods of presentation. This study will, in the remainder of this chapter, analyse Mtuze's stories according to these two main methods of character portrayal. In addition to the direct and indirect methods a third method of characterisation which will be considered in this analysis of Mtuze's stories is that of the naming of characters. This technique will be treated separately in this study because it is unique to African Literature and has already been studied by a number of African scholars.



#### 4.3 METHODS OF PORTRAYAL

As already indicated above (see 4.2), the depiction of characters may be done according to two basic methods, namely, the direct and indirect methods. Both methods play a most important role in narrative prose, because they are the only basic methods that the narrator has at his disposal to reveal his characters to the reader. Both methods are important and neither is more effective than the other.

This is confirmed by Sirayi (1990:82) who argues that what matters is the aesthetic relevance of each, that is, whether or not the method used satisfies the demands of the plot or theme. Dietrich and Sundell (1967:77) also argue that :

In the sense of artistic worth, one method is no better than any other. What counts is how effectively the author provides the kind of characterisation needed to convey the theme, move the plot and engage the reader.

On the other hand it should be noted that these methods have a relationship which

according to Fenson and Kritzer (1966:23) "... may be a much more intimate one." This means that the narrator can present the character's physical appearance, which in turn will contribute towards the character's development; at the same time the character can use words and perform some actions which will also contribute towards his development. Both methods, therefore, if used aesthetically, enable the narrator to write a classical narrative in which people are portrayed with insight and are always credible and in some cases dynamic. (Freud, 1965:202). This means that a work of art is judged by reality and must be true to life.

Naming is a method which may be used in addition to the two methods mentioned above. This is a method whereby characters are given names which reveal or hint at their traits and qualities. It is regarded by most critics as the simplest method of portrayal and is widely used in African Literature.



#### 4.3.1 Direct portrayal

Characterisation in the short story is direct when the narrator himself tells or informs the reader about a character's features. This information may be expository, descriptive or both. Serudu (1979:30) describes this method by saying :

In general, the expository technique comprises of (sic) a description of, among others, the physical appearance, the mental appearance and other deeds of character **by the narrator himself...**

(My emphasis: BNN)

The purpose of this short description is to give readers keys to characters. In other words, it serves as a basis of later identification. It is a technique whereby basic traits may be revealed with a few words and it is, therefore, very economical.

Looking at the advantage of using this method, one notices that although it might cause a delay in the unfolding of events, this method could, if artistically applied,

achieve the desired aesthetic effect such as providing the necessary background information and offering authentic commentary essential to the reader's understanding of the characters. Fenson and Kritzer (1966:23) endorse the advantage of this method by stating that "... it is used in order to supply just enough flesh and bones to the characters so that the reader may enjoy concrete figurations of the inhabitants of the story." This enables the reader to easily know and become familiar with the characters because both the outer and inner features are revealed through this method. The author also enables the reader to foreshadow what is likely to take place, making him aware of certain issues.

Like other techniques, when the direct method is not aesthetically applied, it has certain distinct disadvantages. One of these is that if a long description is given by the narrator, it might interrupt the narrative and thus interfere with the rapid movement of the story. Also, if this method is used too frequently in the story, the concentration of the reader may be lost. This is confirmed by Sirayi (1990:182) who claims that "... it arrests the forward flow of the narrative because the narrative cannot proceed while the characters or their actions are being described or evaluated." This could result in boredom on the part of the reader because his curiosity is suspended. The narration also becomes rather too authoritative.

Although the incorrect use of this method has disadvantages, it should not be avoided because "... if the author made every presentation of character indirect, insisting that each character gradually unfold himself through natural talk and gesture and action, the procedure might become intolerably boring" (Brooks and Warren, 1971:169). It is evident, therefore, that this method is most functional in a work of art. Mtuze (1986:70) claims that this is the most common and popular method of depicting a character in Xhosa literature. Perhaps this is the reason why he has used it extensively in some of his stories. It was also pointed out in the previous chapter that the use of such a method by Xhosa or African writers is often because of the influence of Folklore (see 2.4.3).

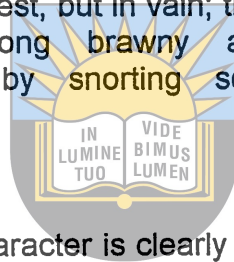
#### 4.3.1.1 Outer / physical appearance

In the story **Abahlobo ababini** (1984) (see summary in 3.5.4) Nkomiyahlaba's physical appearance is depicted as follows while he is trying to remove the flat tyre :

Sitsho sancama eso **sigantsontso** sihamba  
ngeziqula ezo **ngalo zindembelele zinoboya**  
ziphelekwe yimifutho nemincwino yomfo  
osebenza ngathi akaboni ...

(p.1)(My emphasis : BNN)

(The burly muscular man who wore a short pair of trousers that exposed his muscular legs, tried his best, but in vain; the efforts of his hairy strong brawny arms were accompanied by snorting sounds and groans...)



In the above quoted section the character is clearly depicted by means of the direct method as a strongly-built, muscular man. In this scene the reader is effectively introduced to a character who possesses the necessary physical strength to perform tasks such as these on his own, without any assistance. The reader is surprised to find out that he is unable to unscrew the nuts on his own.

In this scene, therefore, Mtuze makes successful use of the direct method to portray the leading character. This is also achieved on a regular basis elsewhere in his work. For example, in the story **Xa ingakhalanga iyayekwa** (1984) Nokuzola is directly described as :

... loo mbelukazi umzinjana umtyingaty-  
tyingana ... ukumila **kwezo zinxonxo, iituma**  
**ezithe rhwelele kuhle, amashiya aqhamileyo**  
**namehlo amakhulu anomtsalane...**

(p.15) (My emphasis : BNN)

(... the beautiful light-skinned lady with an elegant figure ... those dimples, side whiskers tidy and neatly trimmed, long

eyebrows and big attractive eyes...)

In the story **Isilamba** (1990) the man who pretends to be a lady and to whom the taximan (Sisa) gives a lift, is described by Mtuze as follows :

Ewe, nokuba izinto ziyafana, olo lwaluluxwabiya lwendoda entamo ineentsinga. Ezo ziqhitsi zingwanyalala zazintama ezo ziqha neziquluba phantsi kwaloo lokhwe inde. Loo phemu imomozayo yoyiswa kukufihla obo buqololwane bakhe.  
(p.13)

(In all similarity, he was a tall huge man with a strong muscular neck. His strong manly legs under the long dress were of course in correspondence with his hard cheeks. His freshly permed hair could not mislead anyone concerning his true identity.)

In the first story quoted above, the direct method is applied effectively to describe Nokuzola's attractive facial appearance whilst in the second story the unconvincing manner in which the passenger tries to hide his true identity is also portrayed effectively by means of the direct method.

Another tendency which Mtuze applies in his physical description of characters in his short stories is that of 'contrastive depiction' where one character's physical appearance is contrasted with another. It should be noted that this tendency is only applied to characters who are in conflict with each other in the story. According to Satyo (1989:147) the advantage of contrastive depiction is that it facilitates the quicker development of the plot and characters can be depicted more economically. He further comments on the contrastive depiction presented by Mtuze in the story **Izilo zilunguzene** (1977) :

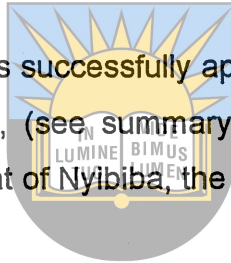
Izimo ezi zabalinganiswa uzibeke kwiqondo lobumatshisi ukuze zidwanyazele okomlilo kavutha apho kuthiwa huntshu khona. Izimo zabo uzenze azangqinelana ngoku kodwa,

wadibanisa isixhiphothi sejoni  
elimanqwanqwa nelazi indlela enye,  
"ucwangco nomgaqo"; lo wendlu eMnyama  
yena umenze wanguphuncuka bemphethe  
umakade netha engenabhatyi ...

(p.7)

(The non-corresponding conduct of the characters is put to the highest degree of combustibility so that when inspired, can explode like fire that has been ignited by magical incantation. A gigantic, experienced, conservative white soldier, a typical servant of the law is compared with an unreliable, poor and lax black one...)

Another story where this tendency is successfully applied is in **Umthandazo kaSteve** (1990). In this story, for instance, (see summary in 3.6.3), Mtuze contrasts the depiction of Bishop Russell, with that of Nyibiba, the Captain of the soldiers. Bishop Russell is portrayed as follows :



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Luzwathi olungenasiqu, weyekile, uthambile  
yaye nobuso bakhe buntama ububele  
nothando ibe imeko ifuna isiqololwane  
esibuso bungwanyalala.

(p.23)

(He is tall and slender, looks less strong and soft, his facial appearance shows that he is kind and loving whereas the situation requires a strong man with a fearsome appearance.)

In contrast the captain of the soldiers (Nyibiba) is depicted as :

... mde, unesithozela, uxhobile, mnyama  
okokhozo lomya. Kwakungathi kuza kuthaka  
amalangatye kuloo mehlo akhe noxa  
wayethule ethe cwaka nje.

(p.24)

(He is tall, dignified, armed and pitch black.  
It was as if his eyes were a ball of fire,

however, he was just silent.)

If we compare Mtuze's short stories with other Xhosa short story writers we find that they are on average too short. This can be attributed to his effective use of the technique of contrastive depiction which enables him to depict his characters economically and within the shortest space of time. Other stories where this tendency is evident are **Abahlobo ababini** (1984) and **Impendulo yeempendulo** (1977).

The direct method is generally applied effectively by Mtuze because the descriptions provide the reader with valuable insight into external features of the characters involved. These features are also presented with a strong degree of objectivity on the part of the narrator.



#### 4.3.1.2 Inner qualities

The direct method is also used for the presentation of internal features of some characters. Besides the physical appearance of the characters, Mtuze gives the reader more information on certain personal qualities or traits of a character which make him/her different from others. This information may include the description of either the mental state or emotional nature of a character.

In the story "**Side sahlulwe kukufa**" (1984) Mtuze depicts the good human relationship between a white employer, Eben Jansen (Magqadaza) and his black employee, Mbali. This relationship started when they were still young, and then became even more intimate in their adult life. Eben's kindness and humanity extends to the other labourers as well. His wife Nokwindla follows suit. One day Eben dies and when the funeral service is about to start, Mbali and other Black labourers are harassed and chased out of the building by Whites who refuse to proceed with the service in the presence of the Blacks. Nokwindla tries to intervene but they walk out of the church.

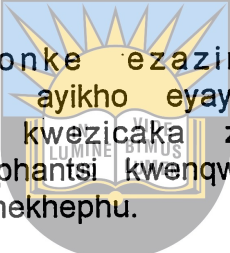
In this story Mbali is introduced to the reader as follows :

... uMbali esisicaka sikayise esasingazanga sawubona umnyango wesikolo.

(p.36)

(... Mbali was his father's servant who was not educated.)

Mtuze's intention is to make the reader aware of Mbali's illiteracy and the fact that he is a servant. This description contributes towards conveying the theme of the plot, namely that good and healthy relations, not necessarily to kinship but to another human being irrespective of colour or creed. Another character in this story on which the reader is given information is 'Magqadaza' himself. Mtuze writes :



Kwizinto zonke ezazingafunwa nguMagqadaza ayikho eyayifana nale yokugxothwa kwezicaka ziyokuhlala esikhululweni phantsi kwenqwelo kusina imvula kusiwa nekhephu.

(p.36)

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(In all the things that Magqadaza hated there is nothing like the dismissal of servants who had to go to wait at the station hiding under the truck when it rains and snow falls.)

In the description above 'Magqadaza' is individualised and becomes different from the typical white farmer. This description provides a foreshadowing of the problem that will arise through 'Magqadaza's different personality.

The internal qualities of characters are also depicted elsewhere in Mtuze's work by means of the direct method. In the story "**Sala nelo zulu lakho**" (1984), for instance, Matyani's qualities are depicted as follows :

Inkosikazi yakhe, uMatyani yayisaziwa jikelele ngamandla nefuthe layo enkonzweni. Yayisithi ukuba ikhe yathandaza kwenzeke

imimangaliso. Kuvuke imilwelwe kuthi de naloo mahlaba ibisifa ngawo.

(p.30)

(His wife Matyani was widely known for her powerful role during Church services. Her prayers usually resulted in great wonders such as that the sick would recover and would regain good health.)

In this scene Matyani's qualities as a faith healer and strong sense of religion, is effectively depicted by means of the direct method.

In the story **Umthandazo kaSteve** (1990) Bishop Russell's qualities are depicted as follows :



Omnye wamakhalipha aziwayo kwicala lokunyola amakhwiniba kwezombuso.

(p.21)

University of Fort Hare  
*Together in Excellence*  
(One of the brave men who was well known for his strong criticism of the government's shortcomings.)

From the examples above, it is clear that Mtuze has used this technique effectively without providing too much detail of the internal features of the characters involved. He succeeds in familiarising the reader with his characters through direct presentation. The reader is prepared effectively for the events which are to follow in each specific story. These inner features are also presented with a strong degree of objectivity on the part of the narrator.

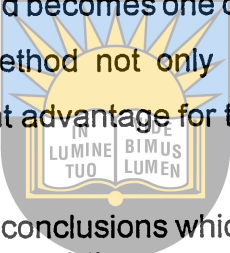
#### 4.3.2 Indirect portrayal

The indirect method of characterisation concerns the presentation of character in a dramatised manner through the presentation of action, dialogue and thought. Brooks and Warren (1971:169) state that : "The very nature of fiction suggests that the latter (i.e the indirect method:BNN) is its characteristic means (of portrayal:BNN)." As in the

case of the direct method, the indirect method is also subject to certain limitations. Brooks and Warren (1971:169), for instance, come to the conclusion that :

If the author made every presentation of character indirect, insisting that each character gradually unfolds himself through natural talk and gesture and action, the procedure might become intolerably boring.

The use of the indirect method should, therefore, be limited to the most significant scenes of the story where dramatic presentation should receive preference above the summarised description as found in the direct method. If utilised judiciously by the narrator, however, the indirect method becomes one of the most powerful and effective forms of characterisation. This method not only allows for vivid presentation of character but it also has an important advantage for the reader in that it allows him to:



... form his own conclusions which are firmer and seem more real than any given to him by the author. This sense of self-activity also draws the receptor more fully into the flow of the tale. (Shipley 1970:51-52)

Indirect characterisation consists of three equally important components, which are action, dialogue and thought. The role played by each of these components in Mtuze's short stories will now be investigated in the paragraphs below.

#### 4.3.2.1 Action

The importance of action in a work of art is revealed by Perrine (1978:67) when he writes:

The characters must act, if there is to be a story; when they do not act, the story approaches the conditions of an essay.

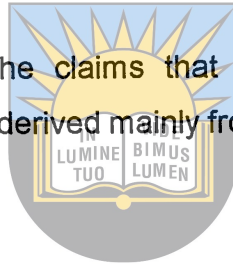
Scholes and Kellogg (1978:106) agree by saying :

What is character but the determination of incident? What is incident but the illustration of character?

It stands to reason, therefore, that character and action go hand in hand in the short story. This means that action plays a most important role in the depiction of character. Brooks and Warren (1971:168) put this importance of action in a story in a simpler form by saying :

... 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.

Botha (1984:117) concurs when he claims that "... our knowledge of specific characters and their personalities is derived mainly from the deeds they perform in the story."



From the above observations we note that action is a fundamental technique in portraying a character and therefore, this method has received strong attention in this analysis of Mtuze's stories. The advantage of this method is that the trait or quality is not interpreted but merely displayed and exemplified, leaving the reader the task of inferring the quality the action implies. The narrator is not responsible for our guesses because the "... character demonstrates itself in action." (O'Faolain, 1948:184)

#### 4.3.2.1.1 *Types of action*

Various types of action are found in Mtuze's stories. Owing to the limited scope of this study, however, only the most important types will be mentioned here. Mtuze tends to give preference to the portrayal of actions of a violent nature in his work. In some instances this violence occurs between people of different racial groups while in others it is between people of the same race.

In the story **Indlel' eya kuMadam** (1990) (see summary in 3.5.4), for instance, the character Rooi Willem Poggenpoel, also known as 'Madangatye', reacts violently when

his foreman, Jackson, asks to be allowed to marry 'Klein Meisies' Emmarentia, who is Rooi Willem's daughter. Mtuze depicts his reaction as follows :

Ibuyengathi ziindudumo impendulo epheleke  
owekati wona umtsi wathi eqabuka wabe  
selecinezelwe ngedolo phantsi seso  
sigantsontso.

(p.40)

(The response came like thunder  
accompanied by a stride of a cat and when  
he regained consciousness he was pressed  
down with the knee by that huge man.)

From this description we become aware of the stoutness and masculinity of Rooi Willem. His strength enables him to lift Jackson up. One may see this act as one of intimidation and a confirmation of what Meyers (1988:53) means, when he claims that "... in everyday life oppressors similarly disparage their victims." This is exactly what Rooi Willem is doing in this story. This action also confirms what Mtuze says about this character when he first introduces him to the reader at the beginning of the story. This act of cruelty becomes even worse when one considers that Rooi Willem is the one who offers Jackson an opportunity to ask for anything he wants. This cruelty culminates in his instruction to his workers to throw Jackson into the burning oven.

Other examples of the depiction of violent action are found in stories like **Izidungulwana** (1977), **Abamelwane** (1984) and **UBabini noSilwanyana** (1984). In these stories we find violent actions of Black on Black.

Not all of Mtuze's short stories, however, contain such violent actions. In some of his stories, actions of a more peaceful nature are also depicted. In the story **Abahlobo ababini** (1984) (see summary in 3.5.4) Bhayilenja's actions, in the process of his offering assistance to Nkomiyahlaba, are depicted intensively as follows :

Emva kokuduntsuza okutsho wabila xhopho  
kuloo ngqele uye wancama uBhayilenja ....  
Baye babambisana ngaloo macala mane

esipanera sokukhulula ivili.... Basijike kunye ngamandlakazi amakhulu yatsho yakhululeka inathi yokuqala. Benze njalo nakweyesibini kwada kwaya kweyokugqibela. Bakuba bezikhulule bajongene ngamehlo azele yimincili kucacile ukuba baswele nje indlela yokuqhagamshelana.

(p1-2)

(Having struggled, resulting in heavy sweating in that bitter cold, Bhayilenja eventually gave up. They both held the spanner with those four sides ... They turned the spanner with all their might till the first nut became loose. They did the same thing with the second nut up to the last one. With all the nuts loose, they looked at each other with excitement and it became obvious that all that they still lacked was a means of communication.)

From this description it becomes clear that Bhayilenja tries his best to assist Nkomiyahlaba, who is a total stranger to him. This is an act of sympathy and kindness, bearing in mind the fact that no other motorists stop to help Nkomiyahlaba before Bhayilenja, although only a pedestrian, comes to his rescue. Bhayilenja is not at all discouraged or affected by Nkomiyahlaba's attitude. His humanity becomes clearer when he does not give up after having tried in vain to loosen the nuts alone. Instead he asks Nkomiyahlaba to hold on the other side of the wheel-spanner so that they can both use their strength to loosen all four nuts. Having completed the job Bhayilenja does not just leave because he cannot communicate with Nkomiyahlaba, but excitedly looks at him to show his satisfaction at the fulfilled offer of assistance. Bhayilenja's actions are peaceful throughout this episode and his attitude not at all changed by the bad attitude of Nkomiyahlaba and the fact that he cannot communicate with him. Bhayilenja's positive attitude changes Nkomiyahlaba who in the end forms a good relationship with a man of Bhayilenja's calibre.

Other stories where these non violent actions play an important role are **Akasayi kulibala** (1984), **Umthandazo kaSteve** (1990), **Xa ingakhalanga iyayekwa** (1984),

**Akakho** (1984) and **UMhlekazomhle** (1984). It is noted that most of such actions take place within a religious atmosphere. Other typical actions found in Mtuze's work include secret conspiracies between characters as in **Ityala** (1990) and **Intambo** (1990); and dishonesty as in "**Undivusile**" (1984), **Injombe** (1977) etc.

#### 4.3.2.1.2 *Incorrect use of indirect method*

As shown above, Mtuze presents a wide spectrum of actions in his stories. These actions form an integral part of Xhosa society. Unfortunately, some of these actions are not always presented dramatically. Mtuze tends to summarise important actions (see 3.6.1) thus denying the reader the opportunity of observing the character closely enough. In the story **Abamelwane** (1984), for instance, (see summary in 3.5.2) key scenes like the one involving the two families (Jamani and Zamani) in arson, should have been dramatised to enable the reader to see how Jamani feels when he sees Zamani's house going up in flames and what he thinks of the situation, rather than merely reporting that Jamani puts out the lights and sleeps. At the same time the reader is not given a chance to experience Jamani's reaction now that the fire has begun destroying his own home. This way the reader is unable to see the characters unfolding themselves through natural talk, gesture and action. At the same time the reader is unable to form his own conclusions about the characters as this is supposed to be the climax of this story. As it is the highest point of tension it ought to have been depicted dramatically by the author, rather than presenting it so briefly in a summarised form.

Other examples of key scenes in which this incorrect use of the indirect method is evident are found in stories such as **Akasayi kulibala** (1984) (see discussion in 3.6.1); **Iindondo** (1984) (in particular the scene of the death of Mguyo's bull and his reaction to it), **A-a Jongumsobomvu!** (1984) (the scene of the arrival of the crew at the island, the discovery of the chief's graves and all that happened, ought to have been dramatised).

On the other hand some scenes in Mtuze's short stories are of less importance and,

therefore, ought to have been summarised instead. In the story **Isilamba** (1990) a taxi man (Sisa) while on his way to Mooiplaats, meets a beautiful young lady with a sweet and soft voice. He gives her a lift and falls in love with her. He takes her to Mdantsane, where they both enjoy food, listen to music and ultimately sleep together. Just before the clock strikes twelve midnight, Nomalinde decides to leave alone, refusing Sisa's offer to accompany her. The next morning Sisa takes a young boy with him to visit his girlfriend but to his amazement he is told by her parents that Nomalinde had died some time ago. When Sisa shows them the second address she gave him, the previous night, he is told that it is Nomalinde's grave number. When Sisa is taken to this grave he sees his jacket lying on top of it. He is shocked and taken to Cecilia Makiwane hospital, but dies on the way.

In this story the most important scene is the meeting of Sisa with his girlfriend Nomalinde for the first time, and the consequences thereof (i.e. what leads to Sisa's death). But the author gives a long dramatic presentation of the taximan's thoughts before presenting this important scene. Mtuze ought to have summarised Sisa's thoughts and what was related to him by one of his friends, Jimmy, and his own appraisal. It takes the writer about four pages out of ten (1990:10-15) to relate this scene and yet it is not so important. This incorrect use of the indirect method affects the reader in that he becomes bored. This is what happens in this story because the reader becomes bored until he reads about Sisa's fate, which is the most important incident in the story (1990:15-19).

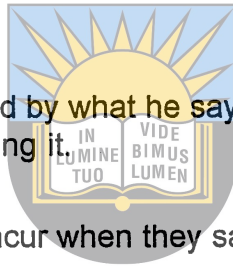
Other stories where almost every presentation of character is indirect, so that the character unfolds himself, are found mostly in Mtuze's third collection of short stories **SH-S-SH-H UNGAKHE UXELELE MNTU** (1990). Every leading character in these stories unfolds through speech, action and thoughts. The indirect method has, therefore, been overdone and in the end this bores the readers. What is supposed to have been narrated in five or six pages has been done in ten pages. In general however, Mtuze has been successful in using this method judiciously, apart from a few instances.

#### 4.3.2.2 Speech/Dialogue

The most important material of characterisation is speech. The term 'speech' refers to the continuous verbal utterance of a single character in a closed situation. Either the speaker may be talking to himself without interruption (soliloquy) or, if there are others present, they neither reply nor make entrances or exits while he speaks (monologue). The speaker may also be speaking to another character who in turn replies (dialogue). Owing to the limited scope of this study, however, only the role of dialogue will be investigated here.

Notestein (1974:154-155) argues :

A man is judged by what he says and by his manner of saying it.



Brooks and Warren (1971:170) concur when they say that one of the most important modes of character revelation is of course the way in which characters talk. This is true because there are various ways of putting words together when one is talking and all these different forms of utterance reflect differences in character. One should also bear in mind that it is not only the manner of talking that reveals character but also the content. In working out an effective means of characterisation, manner and content should, therefore, be intermingled by the narrator.

Although speech is the most important aspect of the story, it should not be allowed to dominate the narrative. Brooks and Warren (1979:109) crystallise the idea that speech is an important element which should be a rich resource for dramatic presentation but should not be used incessantly, since too much talk will 'kill' the story. Stevick (1967:277), in agreement, writes :

... the lavish use of a dialogue is an important element in the dramatic method and is perhaps the most obvious means of producing the illusion of immediacy and presentness of the reader.

This method should, therefore, be used judiciously and the functions of dialogue as given by Van der Poll (1981:105-107) and Boulton (1979:109), who say that the dialogue device can be used to further plot and evince the theme should be borne in mind. One of its functions is to provide background information vital to the revelation of characters. It serves as a clue to a character's social status, standard of education, outlook, mood or attitude, moral and psychological-make-up. It serves as a dialectic entailing the contrasting natures of the characters. It also functions as an implication of or a clue to the possible physical action. In addition to these functions, Albright (1928:135) says that it should be used to reveal setting or give history. It should be used to reveal typical characters and conflict. Dialogue should, therefore, be made attractive and should be progressive.

Mtuzé frequently makes use of speech as a method of characterisation. Owing to the limited scope of this study, only the revelation of the personality of the character by means of speech and the naturalness of speech in Mtuzé's stories will be investigated. In the process the investigation into the adequate use of speech will, however, also be discussed.

#### 4.3.2.2.1 *Revelation of personality*

Mtuzé often succeeds in revealing his characters by means of speech. In the story **Indlel'eya kuMadam** (1990) (see summary in 3.5.4) for instance, Rooi Willem's reaction to Jackson's request to marry his master's daughter is successfully depicted by Mtuzé through speech. Rooi Willem says :

Sikhohlakalindini sesicaka. Kanti kuhleliwe nje ucinga la manyala? Uza kundazi namhlanje into endibhinqe ngayo. Kudala ndikubona ukuba sowungoyena mLungu kule fama... Mthatheni nimphose eontini. Mna ndiza kuya kuhlala phaya endulini ndiphethe umbhaxa wam. Ukuba uzama ukubaleka nibuye nje umva nina undilingene.

(p.41)

(You arrogant servant. All this time you are thinking about this horrible thing! Today you have had it. You have acted as the owner of the farm for too long!... Take him and throw him into the oven. I'll watch from the hill top carrying my shot gun. Should he break loose, just retreat, I'll be ready with my gun.)

On Jackson's arrival later in the story, Rooi Willem utters the following questions :

Jackson, andibi kanene wabhubha?

(p.42)

(Jackson, didn't you die?)

Uvela phi? Jackson, ubuye njani ndiba wafa nje?

(p.42)

(Where do you come from? Jackson how did you resurrect from the dead?)

From this conversation one concludes that Rooi Willem is a stupid, cruel person and a merciless killer. He does not hesitate to instruct his workers to execute Jackson. If one looks at the cause of the argument between Rooi Willem and Jackson, one would say that it is petty in that Rooi Willem could have simply told him that he was not prepared to let him marry his daughter, Emmarentia, rather than wanting to have him killed. Rooi Willem's reaction on seeing Jackson alive is one of amazement rather than one of regret. He cannot believe that he has been a fool all along and also unsuccessful in killing Jackson. This shock causes him to ask stupid questions concerning Jackson's escape from death.

Mtuzze's mastery in the revelation of character by means of dialogue is also manifested in a story such as **Injombe** (1977). In this story Fuzile's father buys a lorry advertised by Robert Ntantiso in **IMVO ZABANTSUNDU**. They both strike a deal that Fuzile's father will get the lorry after he has paid for it in full but Robert Ntantiso does not give the lorry to Fuzile's father after it is fully paid for. Fuzile, after having been told about this incident by his father, decides to study further to become a lawyer

because he wants to take vengeance on Ntantiso by sending him a letter of summons. Unfortunately it takes him five years to complete his studies. By the time he wants to send the summons to Ntantiso, legal prescription has taken place and it is too late to revive the case. His father, who has been going out of his way to discourage his son Fuzile from taking the law into his own hands, is however very pleased about this outcome.

Mtuzi presents a conversation between Fuzile, who bears a grudge against the man who has cheated his father, of a lot of money, and his father who is the victim of circumstances. Fuzile's father's personality is effectively revealed through the method of dialogue. We here find Fuzile's father uttering these words:

Ndimncamile uNtantiso nyana wam. Kodwa  
impindezelo mayingabi yeyethu.

(p.26)

(My son, I have given up talking to Ntantiso  
but let us not take revenge.)

and also:

Hayi, nyana wam, musa ukuvumela  
ingqumbo ikulawule. Akunakulungisa nto  
ngenqala. Masimxolele simphose kwichibi  
lokulibala uNtantiso. Nokuba woza ube lelo  
gqwetha uze umeke uNtantiso, ndiyakucela.  
Musa nyana wam ukuphindezela ububi  
ngobubi. Khumbula abantwana bakhe xa  
kufuneka angene ezindlekweni abuyise imali  
angasayaziyo nokuba wayitya njani na.  
Silahlekelwe yintoni ngoko kusibetha kwakhe  
ngemf iphindiwe?

(p26-27)

(No, please my son, do not overreact to this.  
Revenge is destructive. Let's forgive him  
and forget all about it. I ask you not to  
bother about him even if you become a  
lawyer one day. Two wrongs do not make a  
right anyway, my son. Consider his children  
when he has to refund the money which he  
can no more recall how he had used it.

After all, his tricks have done us no harm.)

From this utterance the reader learns that Fuzile's father is a patient, good and strong man who believes that God is his protector. He is a man of good morals and values and does not allow this incident to affect him. He is not selfish in that he does not let his son lose control because of anger and grudge. At the same time he also thinks of Ntantiso's children who would suffer in trying to pay back his money, should Fuzile succeed in his mission. He is very honest and is a parent in the true sense of the word and a hard worker too. When Fuzile fails in his mission, his father is very happy because he always insisted that they should forgive Ntantiso and at the same time forget about what has happened but his son could not listen. Fuzile's father is happy because everything has gone his way and Fuzile has nothing more to do with this incident.



Through the presentation of dialogue Mtuze has been able to give the reader an opportunity to know the character because it is revealed to its full potential. Therefore, the reader comes to a full understanding of the real motives, needs or aspirations of the character. Similar tendencies are also found in *Izilo zilunguzene* (1977), *Zinik'iphepha!* (1977) and *Inxeba lendoda alihlekwa* (1984).

#### 4.3.2.2.2 *Naturalness of speech in Mtuze's stories*

In Mtuze's stories dialogue is mostly presented naturally and the verbal utterances of a specific character are mostly in line with the general mentality of that character. In the story *Akakho* (1984) for instance, a priest goes to a well-known shebeen looking for his son, Mfesane. On arrival he meets two ladies who are badly intoxicated. They harassed him. After he has told them that he has come to this place because he believes that his son is there, the shebeen queen (Notsuki) denies any knowledge of such a person. The priest asks if he may enter in order to satisfy himself that his son is not there but is harassed. Then the priest goes to the police for help. Gqatsafly (one of the police) comes to his assistance and forces his way into the bedroom with the priest following behind him. When the priest enters the room he finds his son lying

on the floor severely intoxicated and in a dreadful state (uncombed hair, his mouth dripping saliva, and wearing wet trousers). The priest is so shocked by this scene that he goes back to the shebeen queen to confirm that his son Mfesane is not there. After thanking the policeman for his help, the priest quietly goes back home.

In this scene Mtuze presents the utterances of the two intoxicated ladies so naturally that the reader does not even question the fact that these characters are under the influence of liquor. The language they use is totally different from everyday normally used language. The intoxicated ladies' utterances are presented as follows:

Ngumjojo womfundisi wantoni lo sizonwabele kamnandi thina. Uthi siza kujema phi xa usigqogqa nasezishibhinini? ... Asimazi umntu ogama linguMfesane apha. Andibi uMfesane yilaa ou kuthiwa nguBra Fez idyola nalaa tshiki inenjibhabha ... Mfundisi musa ukundithwalisa amazingi kukho umoya ... Shame torho mfundisi ufuna imvu elahlekileyo. Yiyeke iza kuzibuyela.  
(p.38) (My emphasis : BNN)

(Goodness me, why does a pastor come to a shebeen? Where does he think we're gonna enjoy ourselves if he comes here? ... We do not know a person called Mfesane, here. By the way is he not with that partly bareheaded lady ... Pastor please don't inconvenience me ... Your lost sheep will return you don't have to look for it.)

The verbal utterances of Notsuki and her friend are natural because people under the influence of liquor or any other drug usually disregard the moral code of behaviour and Mtuze has been able to reveal this effectively through their utterances. Since these two ladies are under the influence their mentality as well is also influenced. Even though they are aware of the fact that they are talking to a well respected person such as the priest, they cannot control their immoral state. They harass him and use an unacceptable type of language that is not used in everyday life, especially in talking to an elderly man, let alone a priest. Words and phrases like these are not easily

understandable to people who are not members of shebeens. For example, 'ukujema' (sit-in) is a term that can be clearly explained by those who do it. Therefore, Mtuze has succeeded in presenting the natural speech of the shebeen queen (Notsuki) and her friend, who are sarcastic and rude whilst the priest remains calm and collected and is forced to appeal to the law.

Mtuze's mastery in the presentation of natural speech is also evident in the story **UBabini noSilwanyana** (1984). In this story a man (Babini) stabs and kills his wife and then becomes mentally disturbed. He goes up and down looking for the "murderer" (Silwanyana). He reports the incident to the police, telling them how Silwanyana "murdered" his wife and ran away. After keeping him in custody for a while the police allow him to go and bury his wife. Whilst out of jail he continues his search for the killer until he believes that he has found him. He then goes to the police to confirm that he has at last found Silwanyana. When the police ask where the murderer is, his response to them is that he is two persons in one body, i.e. Babini (himself) and Silwanyana (the person who has murdered his wife).

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Mtuze portrays this utterance of Babini in the most natural way, as follows :

Bahlekazi, andinakuyazi into ecingwa sesi sigwinta. Lo mfo uthe xa abinza kuma ngomkhonto ndaziwisa, ... 'Ukugqibil' uSilwanyana'. Kwangoko usimbele isinqe ukuya kuphuma ngomnyango. Bendinokusithatha phi isibindi sokubulala uNosimo wam endimthandayo? NguSilwanyana yedwa obenokwenza isikizi eli nje, Ubaleke waya kutshona phi na kaloku gorhandini? ... Mandingalali ndedwa entolongweni. Vuya Nosimo.... Ndimfumene uSilwanyana ...

(p.11-12)

(Gentlemen, I may not know what this killer thinks. When he was about to stab me with a spear I pretended to be caught ... There and then he ran away. How would I have the guts to kill my beloved Nosimo? It is

only Silwanyana who is able to commit such a gruesome act ... Where have you hidden, you so called brave man? ... I should not be left to sleep alone in jail ... Be glad Nosimo ... I have found Silwanyana ...)

When he reports to the police that he has found Silwanyana, Babini offers the following explanation :

Qiqqa, Sajini, umdala ungaka nje. Kaloku kusithiwa ndingu Babini nje kungenxa yokuba sibabini. Kukho mna, le nkenenkene ibihamba ilila apha esithubeni ifuna uSilwanyana. Kukho uSilwanyana umngonyameli ongenanceba obulele unina wabantwana bam. Kudala exela imbabala yolwantunge kweli lizwe kodwa ndide ndamoyisela ekuthini masizinikezele, ayadliwa naphezulu.

(p12)

(Comprehend, Sajini, you are old now. Bear in mind that when they merely call me Babini it is because we are two. There is me, this one always crying, the one who is loitering up and down looking for Silwanyana. There is Silwanyana a merciless lion, who killed my children's mother. He has long been operating like a Bushbuck in a boundless forest. In this world I have come to the conclusion that we must surrender, even in heaven they are consumed.)

This utterance is so natural that one never doubts Babini's mentality. He is so mad that he thinks he is not the murderer. It is so clear that Babini is the killer because he has blood all over his clothes but he goes to the police to report the case as if somebody else had committed the murder. The police give him the benefit of the doubt at first but Babini comes back and confirms that Silwanyana is the murderer - denying the fact that he actually is the killer. Mtuze has used dialogue in this story so judiciously that the reader becomes fully aware of the psychological make up of the character Babini. Other stories where this tendency is evident are **“Ungakhe uxelele**

**mntu**" (1990) **Izilo zilunguzene** (1977) and **Isilamba** (1990). In these stories Mtuze is able to show the language used by people who belong to a particular social group/sector of the society. His sharpness and his powers of observation are in this way effectively displayed.

Unfortunately, however, Mtuze does not make adequate use of the advantages of this method of characterisation. In some stories there is a marked absence of dialogue in certain scenes which are of vital importance. In the story **Abamelwane** (1984) (see summary in 3.5.4) we are not given an opportunity to hear the conflicting parties (Zamani and Jamani) uttering a word throughout the story.

In another story **Izidungulwana** (1977) a man, (Andrew Nganga), cruelly kills his wife, sucks the blood from the dead body, sprays the body with a perfume usually used at funeral parlours where he works, cuts her body into small pieces and packs these pieces in a big trunk. He then hires a taxi to Mthombe hotel, taking the trunk with him. When people ask him about the heavy trunk he is carrying, he pretends to be investigating different kinds of stones found in South Africa. People become excited to see that even Black people are able to do scientific research. Whilst at the hotel he locks himself in his room and nobody is allowed into the room during his absence. His meals are served in the room and sometimes he doesn't eat at all. He claims that he does not want any disturbance because he is busy writing a book about his discovery. During the day he locks himself in his room, and in the evening goes out always carrying a parcel, and coming back with some stones. When asked why he collects these in the evening, he claims that he uses a special light to examine these stones because he is looking for stones which are powerful enough to reflect light. In the third week of his stay in this hotel a heavily-armed group of policemen surround the hotel, catching Andrew Nganga coming out and carrying a small parcel as usual. When this parcel is opened a shoulder of a human being is discovered. Without saying a word Andrew Nganga gives himself up and when his hotel room is searched, a lot of stones and the spray perfume he used to scent the pieces of his wife's body are discovered. He is taken back to East London, where he is sentenced to death for cruelly killing his wife and mutilating her body.

In this story the character is not revealed to its full potential in that dialogue is not adequately used by the narrator. The only speech is the utterances which give answers to the people's questions pertaining to his so-called research. Therefore, the reader fails to come to the full understanding of the character's real motives, needs or aspirations. He does not know why this man has killed his wife and why he decides to bury her the way he does, and so on. Similar tendencies are also found in stories like **Uxolo ehokweni** (1984), **Akasayi kulibala** (1984) and **"Uze ungabhekabheki"** (1984). It should also be noted that this tendency is chiefly evident in **UMPHEHLULU** (1984), where his shortest stories are collected. In these stories Mtuze relies more on the actions than on dialogue to reveal his characters. In general however, Mtuze has been successful in portraying his characters through dialogue.

#### 4.3.2.3 Recorded thoughts



A character's speech as a silent activity in the mind can be indicative of a trait or traits both through its content and through its form. Altembernd and Lewis (1972:57) confirm that through a character's recorded thoughts in a story we are able to make deductions about his personality, his attitudes and his relationship with other characters. The modern critical reader is interested, not only in the external actions of a character but also in his internal actions, i.e. what his private thoughts and motives consist of. For Brooks and Warren (1971:4) therefore, a basic requirement of modern fiction is that it should "... sufficiently involve character and motive; and that it should ... answer fully enough ones basic interest about human action."

In some of his stories Mtuze succeeds in revealing his character's thoughts to the reader in a clear and convincing manner. In the story **Intambo** (1990), for instance, (see summary in 3.5.4), Vuyo is nearly hanged for a crime he has not committed. While he is on death row, there are a few things that he thinks about. Vuyo reveals his thoughts as follows:

Ndicinga ukuba enye yezinto ezazindigqiba  
kukuba oogxa bam, abona bantu ndicinga  
ukuba babekho mhla wabulawa uGozolo,

babegwetywe iminyaka entolongweningenxa  
yobudala babo kanti mna ndandingekho  
nokubakho ndigwetywe intambo.

(p.49-50)

(I think that one of the things that frustrated me is that my friends who I think were present on the day when Gozolo was killed, were sentenced to years in jail because of their age and I was given the death sentence, yet I was not there.)

His thoughts continue as follows :

Ndandisithi khona ndakufika endaweni  
ethetha ngokujika kwemithetho engqongqo  
kaMosisi kukufika kweNkosi yethu apho ithi  
khona thina masibaxolele abo basonayo  
singaphindezeli okubi ndinge mandimbuyise  
emazulwini uBawo wethu azokumisela loo  
mthetho phambi kokuba ndife ndingenatyala.

(p.51)

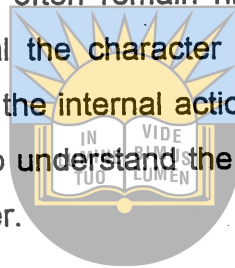
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(It was worse when I thought of the change made by Jesus Christ to the strict commandments of Moses where He said we must forgive all those who trespass against us and not retaliate. I felt like bringing our Father from heaven to come and establish that commandment before I die, being innocent.)

In this presentation of Vuyo's thoughts, his internal motives are clearly revealed to the reader. Firstly, the reader receives confirmation of the fact that Vuyo is not guilty of the murder. Furthermore, it becomes clear that Vuyo is a deeply religious person who believes that Jesus Christ has died for the sins of humanity, in the same way that he is now going to die for sins committed by other people. Another personal feature which is revealed here is his unselfishness: he is more concerned about his relatives and friends' reaction to his death than about his own death.

Through this presentation of Vuyo's thoughts, Mtuze gives the reader the opportunity

to know the character intimately. His internal emotions and thoughts during a moment of intense crisis are revealed effectively to the reader. The portrayal of character by means of thoughts is also found in other stories, for example **Impendulo yeempendulo** (1977), **Isilamba** (1990) and **Zinik' iphepha!** (1977). It is clear that this method of characterisation is applied with a large measure of success in Mtuze's stories.

During this investigation, however, it was also found that the characters' thoughts are not always presented adequately in some of Mtuze's stories. The author tends to rely too much on the methods of action and dialogue for the portrayal of his characters whilst this important method is often underutilised. The result of this tendency is that the internal motives of characters often remain hidden from the reader. This is because the author fails to reveal the character as a totality (unity) and simply presents the external action whilst the internal action is not presented satisfactorily. The reader, therefore, often fails to understand the real motives behind the specific actions or utterances of a character.



In the story **Abahlobo ababini** (1984) (see summary in 3.5.4), there is a scene in which Nkomiyahlaba takes a cigarette out of his pocket and smokes whilst Bhayilenja is trying to loosen the nuts. Whilst smoking Nkomiyahlaba has a few words to say which Bhayilenja cannot understand because he does not know nor speak English. Another scene is the one in which Nkomiyahlaba offers Bhayilenja some money as a sign of his gratitude, which Bhayilenja refuses to accept. These two scenes are very important, because it is where these two characters come into close contact of each other. It is therefore important for the author to present Nkomiyahlaba's thoughts so that the reader fully understands him. Omitting his thoughts unreported means that the reader is left guessing about Nkomiyahlaba's personality, because he does not know what is going on in his (the characters) mind. The reader knows that Nkomiyahlaba is irritated but cannot tell what has irritated him. One could say that he is irritated by the dirty black man who thinks he can do better than him, a white man, or he may be irritated because of the puncture, which has resulted in his delayed arrival at whatever place he is going to, or he may even be irritated because the other motorists ignore him, or by the cold weather which has contributed to the stiffness of the nuts. If the

thoughts of Nkomiyahlaba were adequately presented there would not be so much vagueness and the reader would be able to analyse the white man's personality more effectively.

Another story where the thoughts of the character are not adequately presented, is **Izidungulwana** (1977) (see summary in 4.3.2.2.2). In this story Mtuze does not penetrate the thoughts of this character well enough and as a result the reader does not fully understand Andrew Nganga as a character. The only thing that is obvious in his personality is that he is very cruel because he has committed such a gruesome act, of killing his wife, sucking blood from the dead body, mutilates it and buries the pieces one by one. But this judgement is not sufficient because the author has not revealed Andrew Nganga's private thoughts and motives. This insufficient involvement of character and motive causes the reader to speculate on the true nature of this character. In other words, the reader finds it difficult to come to accurate deductions about Andrew Nganga's personality, his attitudes and his relationship with his wife.

Other stories where this tendency is evident are **Ingongolothela** (1977), **USomali** (1977) and **Uxolo ehokweni** (1984). In these stories the reader is unable really to acquaint himself with the various characters and their respective personalities. Had the thoughts of the characters in them been presented more accurately, this problem would have been eliminated to a large extent. Characterisation, therefore, is affected negatively by the presence of this tendency in Mtuze's stories.

#### 4.3.3 Naming technique

In this section, the role of the naming technique in Mtuze's short stories will be investigated. According to Wellek and Warren (1980:219) the simplest form of characterisation is naming. Each "appellation" is a kind of vivifying, animating individuality. Satyo (1977:50) citing Dathorne, concurs with the above critics, saying that this technique enables the audience to predict from the very outset what the character will do in the end. This means that the personal features of a fictional character can be manifested beforehand by the name given to him. This announces

in advance the properties that will be attributed to that character. Names, therefore, should be carefully chosen by the author.

Since this technique is widely applied in African literature, Sirayi (1990:83) is able to explain where it originates, saying that it emanated from the African practice of giving names in terms of, among other things, historical events, parents' tastes and wishes, a person's physical appearance, psychological make-up and behavioural traits. The analysis of a name could, therefore, provide valuable insight into the personal features of a character.

Mtuzze's short stories are generally personality-centred, and therefore it is not surprising to find the name-giving technique being frequently employed by him. His characters often represent particular societal ideas and ideals and henceforth propel movement in action. They feature as a means to the portrayal of certain cultural views and therefore the act of naming is generally quite functional. The role of the naming technique in Mtuzze's short stories will now be investigated in the paragraphs below. Owing to the limited scope of this study, however, it will be possible to pay attention only to a limited number of the most relevant examples.

#### 4.3.3.1 Naming by parents

In his use of the naming technique Mtuzze employs different categories of Xhosa names to depict his characters. One of the most important categories is that of Christian names given to characters by their parents.

Parents are the well-wishers of their children's future. In African communities it is the parents who play a big role in name-giving ceremonies. They are the ones who choose names of their own taste for their children. These names are carefully chosen as "it is believed that certain names given to some individuals may have an influence on their background and personalities" (Serudu 1979:30).

Lodge (1992:36) concurs when he says:

Our names are usually given to us with semantic intent, having for parents some pleasant and hopeful association which we may or may not live up to...

In the story "**Ungakhe uxelele mntu**" (1990) (see summary in 3.6.1) Jongilizwe (the one

who takes care of his country) is a very important character in that the story revolves around him. There is evidence in the story that this boy was given this name by his grandmother (p.6) and that it is probably this name that makes Jongilizwe behave as he does. One could say that he lives up to his parents' wishes because he leaves school at an early stage, begins to occupy himself with politics and eventually leaves the country illegally for political reasons. In this story the naming technique is used successfully to portray the rebellious nature of Jongilizwe as an African patriot.

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In some cases however, the name given to the character by the parents is used ironically by Mtuze to reveal character. In **Injombe** (1977) (see summary in 4.3.3.2) the name 'Fuzile' (one who has taken after his parent) is given to a young boy by his parents. The hope of the parents in doing this is obviously that the boy will follow the example set by his father when he grows up. The father is depicted as a patient, unselfish kind of person who does not seek revenge against those who have offended him. Fuzile does not have the same views or attitude towards life as his father. He is determined to take revenge on the enemies of his father and does not heed his father's advice that this should be left to God. In this story the actions of Fuzile are in sharp contrast to the name given to him by his parents. In this instance the name 'Fuzile' is used ironically because the personal features revealed by the character do not correspond with the features normally associated with a bearer of that name.

Other instances where personal names are used to reflect the features of the characters are Sisa (a very generous person) in **Isilamba** (1990), Diliza Ngxaki in

**Isilingo** (1977) and Mathemba (a person who is very hopeful) in **Uyazenzisa** (1984).

#### 4.3.3.2 Naming by community

Another category of Xhosa names used by the author to depict his characters is that of names given to characters by members of the community. In most instances these names originate from certain deeds performed by these characters within their respective communities and their behavioural traits. Because a character does not live in isolation, it is often the community which judges whether his deeds are good or evil. It is through this judgement that a certain name is then given to a particular character.

In the story **UMhlekazomhle** (1984), for example, a well-known teacher, Ndleleni, dies. During his funeral service speeches are made by various people who refer to Ndleleni's work and how the name 'Mhlekazomhle' originated. When he was a teacher at Healdtown he used to stand at the door on the closing day greeting each one of his pupils and addressing each as 'Mhlekazomhle'; his reason for using this term being that those pupils were the leaders of tomorrow. This became a standard procedure so that even when he was not there, one of his pupils would pretend to be Ndleleni and stand at the door, making all the gestures and using the same words that Ndleleni would utter (like the term 'Mhlekazomhle') as if he was present personally. As a result the name 'Mhlekazomhle' was given to Ndleleni by his pupils and was used by everyone in the Healdtown area, including visitors. Another speaker cited Ndleleni's research article (for his Masters degree) which dealt with the failure of society to allow pupils to play a role in societal matters. Ndleleni saw this as an act of resisting progress. The last speaker referred to Ndleleni's instructions to the students to collect empty bottles, which were then sold to generate funds. These funds were used by Ndleleni to meet the school needs of disadvantaged pupils.

From the story we become aware of the fact that this teacher is favoured not only by pupils, because he respected and assisted them, but by the parents as well. Ndleleni also wanted the pupils' involvement in societal matters and in return they showed their

gratitude, respect and love; they also called him by the same name, 'Mhlekazomhle' (a respectable person). As a result of the noble deeds he performed, the community also gave him the same name, ' Mhlekazomhle'. This name reflects their gratitude towards him. Mtuze successfully uses this name which originates from part of the community (the pupils) to depict his character's noble qualities.

Other stories where Mtuze has also been successful in employing this principle of naming by the community are **UMafutha nemali yesiporho** (1977) where the leading character, Mafutha is referred to as 'A-a Mangangedlovu' because of his obesity, **Isilingo** (1977) where Diliza Ngxaki is referred to as "Dilizingxaki" (problem solver), and **Ityala** (1990), where a well-known Black attorney is quite aptly referred to as "Dubulegeqa" (a very efficient and the most respectable person in his field).

#### 4.3.3.3 Nicknames



The final category of names found in Mtuze's short stories could be described as 'Nicknames'. These nicknames can have either positive or negative connotations. In this instance a person is referred to by his original personal, name as well as by a 'nickname'. In **USomali** (1977) for instance, the leading character (Thambekile Mthambeka) is also referred to as "Somali". Similar examples may be found in **Indle'eya kuMadam** (1990) where Willem Poggenpoel is also referred to as "Rooi" or "Madangatye" and his daughter (Emmarentia) as "Klein miesies."

In all these cases the origin of the respective nicknames is not clear: it could have been given to the character either by the author, or by the community or by the character himself. Nicknames are of free volition or imposition. What is important about these names, however, is that they make a most important contribution towards the portrayal of the respective characters. In some cases reference is never made to the character's christian name, except when he/she is initially introduced at the beginning of the story.

In the story **USomali** (1977) the leading character Thambekile Mthambeka is depicted

as a person with a strong greed for money. One day he draws money from the bank but loses it on his way home. All his attempts to find the money are in vain and he finally decides to report the matter to the local headman, promising that he will reward any person who picks up the money and gives it back to him. A poor old lady then reports to the headman that she is the one who has picked up the money. When Somali is informed about this, he refuses to reward the old lady, claiming that it is not the full amount. In this story, therefore, the nickname 'Somali' (the one who is greedy for money) is most functional. One could in Kunene's (1971:11) terms, claim that it 'labels' or 'identifies' the character. In a similar manner Rooi Willem Poggenpoel's fiery and short-tempered nature, in the story **Indle'eya kuMadam** (1990), is depicted by his nicknames 'Rooi'(the short-tempered one) and 'Madangatye' (flames) whilst Eben Jansen's energetic nature is accurately described by the nickname 'Magqadaza' (the energetic one) in the story "**Side sahlulwe kukufa**" (1984). In the story **EPampoenfontein** (1977) Van Blerk is aptly described by the nickname "Maqhajana" (a brave, courageous, intrepid one).

From these examples it is clear that Mtuze has succeeded in making effective use of nicknames to assist him in the depiction of the internal and/or external features of his characters. By using the naming technique, Mtuze has succeeded in maintaining the principles of economy and brevity which are of fundamental importance to the short story genre.

#### **4.4 CREATION OF CONFLICT THROUGH CHARACTER**

##### **4.4.1 The importance of conflict in the story**

In this section some aspects of the role of conflict in the depiction of character in the short stories of Mtuze will be analysed. Conflict as an essential element of the story will firstly be defined. Its role and importance in fiction in general will be briefly discussed and thereafter an investigation will be made on how Mtuze depicts his characters whilst they are involved in conflict in his short stories.

Perrine (1978:42) defines conflict as "...a clash of actions, ideas or wills." Since conflict suggests "opposition", "struggle" or "contrast" it always involves two opposing forces. This is confirmed by McMahan et al. (1989:1091) who argue that "the struggle between two opposing characters or forces that causes tension or suspense in the plot is conflict." There must be a tangible cause of opposition or a goal that is generally approved by the reader to make the story credible.

All fiction, therefore, involves conflict at one or other level. Conflict forms an internal part of the story and Mkonto (1984:37,54) confirms that conflict is "...forecast in the exposition, rises and develops from it...intensifies in the rising action.... and .... reaches a moment of great concentration in the climax." It can therefore be concluded that the decisive moment of the depicted struggle marks the climax of the story and once the climax is over, so is the story. It then becomes obvious that the events depicted in the conflict form the basis of the plot of the story. Ryan (1963:48) confirms this idea by saying that "... the plot of a novel is based on conflict" (though he is referring specifically to a novel, it is the case with the short story as well). Therefore it is unavoidable that all plots will involve conflict. In some narratives the conflict is single, clear cut and easily identifiable, as in the case of most short stories, though in others it is multiple, various and subtle, as in the case of most novels. To prove that conflict is an essential element of a short story, Boland (1960:52) postulates:

... there must be a conflict, otherwise there is no story. Any short piece of writing that has no conflict is not a story, whatever else it might be.

Therefore, any novel, play, short story, folklore or tale is based on either physical, mental, emotional or moral conflict.

#### **4.4.2 Role played by conflict in the depiction of character**

Conflict plays a vital role in the successful depiction of character. Brooks and Warren (1971:172) claim that "... conflict has the closest relation to character." Through their

struggle against certain forces, the characters reveal their personal qualities which could be either positive or negative in nature. A story, therefore, can only be understood fully when the nature of the conflict and the characters' reaction to it is fully investigated. In broad terms the struggle of the characters may be described as either external or internal. External conflict is of an outer nature where characters either clash amongst themselves or struggle against the elements of nature, while internal conflict has to do with a character's conflict within himself.

According to Brooks and Warren (1971:172) conflict in the short story manifests itself in three different forms. More than one of these forms of conflict may be found in the same story. In the paragraphs below, the manner in which Mtuze uses these different forms of conflict to depict his characters will briefly be investigated.

#### 4.4.2.1 Character vs external forces



This type of conflict consists of , in Brooks & Warren's (1971:172) view, "... man's conflict with the elements or with some other inanimate force." In this instance the character is usually depicted while involved in a struggle with some or other impersonal force such as the elements of nature (fire or water) or a serious disease. Such an opposing force, although not human, usually takes on the form of another human being in the mind of the threatened character (i.e. the adversary). In some of Mtuze's short stories characters are depicted whilst involved in a struggle with natural forces. In the story **lindondo** (1984), for instance, (see summary in 3.5.3) Mguyo, the leading character, is faced with the problem of a serious drought which threatens to ruin his chances of winning an award at the Annual Agricultural show. His idea of inventing green spectacles for his bull may be seen as an attempt to counteract the devastating effects of the drought. Mguyo, however loses this contest when the bull dies and he becomes the laughing stock of the neighbourhood.

In other stories by Mtuze, characters are depicted while involved in a struggle with serious diseases. In the story **Uyazenzisa** (1984) a well-educated teacher's niece, is suffering from an unknown serious disease. All attempts by medical doctors (including

specialists) to cure her fail. Eventually, the uncle (Mathemba) is advised to take her to a faith-healer at Cancele. She is subjected to prayer and has to drink the water that has been prayed for, and she is ultimately cured.

In both stories mentioned above the characters are depicted while involved in a struggle with forces which cannot be defeated by any normal human being. In the first instance the struggle is lost by the main character, while in the second instance the struggle is won. The respective struggles depict certain important features of the characters involved. In the case of **lindondo** (1984) the struggle contributes towards the depiction of the main character (Mguyo) who is determined, has strong will power and does not give up easily. The merits of his plan to make the bull eat the dry 'green' grass are however, doubtful, and reveal a certain degree of fool hardiness on Mguyo's part.

In **Uyazenzisa** (1984) the struggle against the impersonal force of an unknown disease contributes towards the depiction of the leading character, Uncle Mathemba, as a person with strong determination who is prepared to investigate all possible avenues in order to find a cure for his niece. Although he does not believe in faith-healers, when advised to do so he does not hesitate but sends his niece for treatment. When the doctors claim that his niece is only pretending to be ill, he is not easily swayed but carries on with his investigation until a solution is found.

Mtuzze has made successful use of the struggle between character and impersonal forces to reveal some of the basic personal features of his characters. Other stories where struggle against impersonal forces is evident are **Uyavuth'umlilo** (1977) and **Impemb'enkulu** (1977).

#### 4.4.2.2 Character vs character

The second form of external conflict often found in the short story is that which occurs between character and character. Brooks and Warren (1971:172) describe it as follows:

The great and typical human conflict is one human being's conflict with other human beings. This is the material out of which most of our fiction is made.

In the short story the conflict normally occurs between the protagonist and the antagonist. Supporters of both parties may also be involved in this conflict.

An analysis of Mtuze's stories has revealed that this category of conflict occurs mainly within a particular social context. It is usually members of the same social group that are depicted as being in dispute with one another. In these stories the conflict between church members is dominant. In some stories the conflict occurs between individual church members, as in, for instance, **Impendulo yeempendulo** (1977). In other stories the conflict occurs between groups within the congregation, as in, for instance, **Ilitye likaPhungela** (1984), and others the conflict may occur between a group of members on the one hand and an individual member on the other, as in, for instance, **Isaqhwithi** (1984). Owing to practical considerations only this last category will be discussed here.

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In **Isaqhwithi** (1984) a church congregation is loyally served by the minister, Mzananda. Certain incidents take place which cause friction between Mzananda and his congregation, which leads to their not attending services or donating to the church. The conflict also leads to the demand that Mzananda be removed by the church authorities, who finally give in to these demands. Mzananda is replaced by a young minister, Ndudula. The church members, however, soon start to complain that the new minister is too involved in politics.

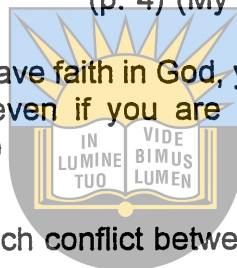
In this story the conflict occurs chiefly between an individual (Reverend Mzananda) and a group of characters (the congregation). Certain important features of both parties (characters) are revealed during this conflict. Mzananda is revealed as a non-aggressive but outspoken kind of person. He is patient, bold enough and truthful. The congregation is depicted as a group character which collectively portrays certain "personal" features. It is clear that they are a selfish, unreasonable and ungreatful

group of people who refuse to acknowledge the valuable services rendered by their minister. This is confirmed when they start to complain about their "new" priest Ndudula shortly after his arrival. Mtuze in this story wishes to emphasise a typical feature of many church congregations, namely : that of people who are seldom satisfied with the services rendered by the church minister. This dissatisfaction is confirmed by the church authorities whose response to the demands of the congregation reads thus:

Ukuba aninawo umoya kaThixo, **anisayi kuze naneliseke** nokuba ninokuthunyelwa umfundisi ovela ezulwini.

(p. 4) (My emphasis:BNN)

(If you don't have faith in God, you will never be satisfied even if you are sent a priest from heaven.)



Another social environment in which conflict between individuals is often depicted in Mtuze's short stories is that of the Urban neighbourhood. In these stories conflict either occurs between neighbours, as in **Umjojo** (1977), **Abamelwane** (1984) and **Uxolo ehokweni** (1984) or between characters in the work situation, as in, for instance, **Izilo zilunguzene** (1977).

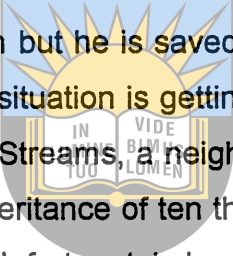
In **Abamelwane** (1984), for instance, (see summary in 3.5.2) the conflict occurs between two neighbours, Jamani and Zamani. The conflict escalates until both characters and their families die. In this story conflict of an intense form is depicted. It is full of action, whilst the depiction of dialogue and thoughts are neglected by the author. Conflict, therefore, does not reveal characters effectively because of the brief and summarised manner in which the clashes are portrayed. Both characters look alike in that one does not see anything wrong with his own actions while while one is quick to judge the wrong done by the other. Neither is better than the other as they both clash as a result of petty matters and are not prepared to sacrifice. There is an element of selfishness and stupidity in both Zamani and Jamani. It is these features which also lead to the death of both families.

Another example of conflict which takes place in this kind of environment is found in the story **Izilo zilunguzene** (1977) where clashes occur between individuals, Nkomiyahlaba and Siyongwana, who are colleagues at the Rosmead police-station in the Middelburg area. Certain important features of both characters are revealed during this conflict. Nkomiyahlaba is depicted as an aggressive and very strict disciplinarian who obviously has a certain goal (of catching an intoxicated Siyongwana so that he may be dismissed). Nkomiyahlaba is too authoritative and tends to undermine Siyongwana. Mtuze depicts Siyongwana as a person who cannot resist temptation of drinking during working hours. He is a quick thinker and intelligent because when he is caught in the act of drinking liquor, he quickly thinks out an explanation, namely that he is tasting the fluid to find out whether it is liquor or not. He is also tolerant because he does not refuse to go and make fire as has been instructed to do so by Nkomiyahlaba. In this story therefore, the conflict develops from the opposing views of the two leading characters.

The last social environment for conflict to be discussed in this study, is where conflict occurs between individuals within the farming sector. In stories such as **Indlel' eya kuMadam** (1990), **EPampoenfontein** (1977) and **"Side sahlulwe kukufa"** (1984) the conflict occurs between the farmer and one or more workers, between the workers of the same farm and between the neighbouring farmers respectively. In the story **Indlel'eya kuMadam** (1990) (see summary in 3.5.4), for instance, conflict develops between Willem Poggenpoel and two of his workers. Firstly he clashes with Ngxamfinya and then with his favourite worker, Jackson. In the case of the first conflict situation Willem is depicted as a person who is not so strong as he thinks because Ngxamfinya over powers him. He is a discriminator who readily dismisses a worker who is not loyal to him. Willem is an employer who always looks down upon his workers and as a result does not have a healthy relationship with them. He bullies and undermines his workers. His cruelty and wickedness are clearly shown when he decided that Jackson should be thrown into the hot oven. He abuses the workers by giving them an instruction which is far beyond their normal call of duty, namely to kill a co-worker. In his second clash Willem is depicted as a person who loves his family and is protective towards it and feels threatened by Jackson's request. Willem is also

a malicious person because he still reprimands Jackson about his request even though he (Willem) has now grown into an elderly man.

In the story **EPampoenfontein** (1977) there is a clash between a black worker and other black workers. In this story a strong friendship develops between a farmer (Van Blerk) and his foreman (Napoleon), who has served his employer since he was ten years old. This service is quite appreciated by Van Blerk, who feels that Napoleon has contributed greatly towards his status. Unlike other workers who are not progressive Napoleon's loyalty eventually enables him to have a large herd as compared to the other workers. His disciplinarian measures towards his fellow workers soon result in enmity and Napoleon is accused of thinking that he is superior. One day the workers attempt to kill him but he is saved by Van Blerk, who dismisses all those men after realising that the situation is getting out of hand. Napoleon decides to leave Pampoenfontein for Two Streams a neighbouring farm. When Maqhajana (Van Blerk) dies, he leaves an inheritance of ten thousand rand to Napoleon if he is still working at Pampoenfontein. Unfortunately he does not get it because he is not working there.



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In this story Napoleon is depicted as an obedient, devoted working employee who unfortunately also takes advantage of his status as a foreman. He is a person who never changes his mind. He is a trustworthy person because Van Blerk (Maqhajana) lends him his motor car if he wants to go to town. To Van Blerk he is a very special person because of his skills, to develop the farm. The workers on the other hand are (as a group character) very jealous, selfish and naive. Their wickedness is shown when they plan to kill Napoleon, accusing him of acts he has not committed. The farm workers are depicted as a group of sadists who simply laugh at Napoleon when he leaves Pampoenfontein because they believe that his future progress in life will now be ruined.

Mtuzze's use of conflict of character versus character has been successful and effectively depicted in his short stories. The readers fully understand most of his characters because their motives are revealed adequately through the creation of

conflict between them.

#### 4.4.2.3 Character versus himself

In the paragraphs above the role of external conflict (i.e. the struggle of characters against the environment or with each other) in Mtuze's work was analysed. In this final section on this topic, the role of internal conflict (i.e. the struggle of a character with himself) will be investigated. This type of conflict, which is generally found in stories of greater sensitivity and depth, is described as follows by Brooks & Warren (1971:172):

For human beings, being the mixture of good and bad that they are, frequently find themselves at cross purposes and in conflict - not only with outsiders but with aspects of their own natures.

In the short story, therefore, the depiction of conflict should not only be purely physical or external but it should also include the conflict which exists within the character concerning his private feelings, his internal motives, and also a possible conflict of ideas. It is only when a character is portrayed in this manner that his actions may be fully understood or appreciated by the reader.

In some of Mtuze's stories the internal feelings and motives of characters are revealed during moments of intense crisis. In **Isilingo** (1977) (see summary in 3.5.4) the main character (Diliza Ngxaki) experiences severe emotions of self reproach after the incident which leads to the old lady's (Esther Yanta) death. His feelings are reported as follows:

Zitsho kabuhlungu emxhelweni wakhe ezo zithonga zokukhenkceza kwaloo ntsimbi yayixelela nophiphphi ukuba lindulukile elo gorhakazi. Itsho isizungu intsimbi kuba umfundisi wayengasaziva ezibuza ngaphakathi ukuba ngaba wone ntoni na eNkosini imohlwaya ngoluka Bhenya nje.

(p.54)

(The painful blows of the ringing bell that pierced one's heart declared even to the equidistant one that the heroine has passed away. The bell made a monotonous sound because the reverend was not conversant asking himself inwardly what wrong he had done the Lord that he was giving him such an unbearable punishment.)

It is evident that Diliza is an honest and sensitive person who heeded to the temptation of taking the old lady's money during a moment of human weakness. Eventually he is forced by his feelings of intense guilt to admit publicly that he is the one who stole the purse. In this story the main character's internal motives are successfully revealed, enabling the reader effectively to assess the main character's personality. Other stories where the same level of success is achieved are **Injombe** (1977), **Zinik'iphepha!** (1977), **lindondo** (1984) and **Uyavuth'umlilo** (1977).

In spite of the examples mentioned above, this analysis of Mtuze's work has revealed that the internal feelings or emotions of characters during moments of intense conflict are not always revealed adequately. In **Izidungulwana** (1977), for example, (see summary in 4.3.2.2) the main character, Andrew Nganga, commits one of the most violent and gruesome acts by murdering his wife, sucking her blood and chopping the body into pieces. Eventually he is caught and the story ends when he is found guilty and imprisoned. The author simply presents the reader with the external actions of the main character without explaining his internal motives or reasons for committing these actions. The reader is left completely in the dark as to why Andrew Nganga committed this ruthless act and what kind of a person he is. While, judging from the external physical action, he appears to be a violent, cruel person, this is not confirmed through the revelation of his inner thought processes. The reader therefore, is unable to assess his personality fully and is left in a state of uncertainty when the story comes to an end. Similar tendencies are found elsewhere in Mtuze's short stories, for example in **Akukho bani ukhathalayo** (1984), in **Akakho** (1984), **Akusenani ntombi ka Mzilandlu** (1977) and **Akasayi kulibala** (1984). It seems as if the author has failed to make optimal use of this important method of characterisation.

## 4.5 CONCLUSION

The aim of this chapter was to analyse characterisation in the short stories of Mtuze. In order to achieve this, a theoretical framework of the role of characterisation in the short story first had to be presented. During this presentation aspects such as the important role of characterisation in fiction, definition of characterisation and identification of different methods of characterisation such as the direct and indirect methods of portrayal, the naming technique and the method of creation of conflict to depict character, were dealt with. The basic principles identified here were then applied in a critical manner to Mtuze's short stories. The aim of this was to establish whether Mtuze has succeeded in realising the basic principles of characterisation and whether these principles are successfully and effectively applied in his short stories. Unfortunately, owing to practical considerations only some of the most relevant stories could be dealt with here and only the most typical tendencies could be identified.

It was found that the direct method of portrayal in Mtuze's short stories has been effectively and successfully employed. The physical appearance of characters is well described. In some stories the contrast of physical appearance is presented in the development of conflict. Inner qualities in some stories are revealed by the author himself to make the reader aware of these abstract inner qualities. Mtuze has been very economical in his use of the direct method and has not used this method extensively in his work, thereby avoiding authorial intrusion.

Mtuze has also been successful in employing the indirect method to reveal his characters' qualities. A wide spectrum of actions has been used, some of the most important types of action identified in his stories being violent actions, non-violent actions, conspiracies between characters and actions of dishonesty. These actions have been successfully and effectively used by Mtuze to reveal his characters' personalities. The incorrect use of this method is also present in Mtuze's short stories. It was noted that the most important actions in some of the stories are not presented in a dramatic manner but summarised, thus preventing the reader the opportunity from understanding the character closely. Scenes which are of less importance are often

dramatised instead of being summarised, thus affecting the length of the short story and resulting in boredom on the part of the reader. Other stories are dramatised throughout and therefore the use of the indirect method is overdone thus affecting the length of his stories, especially those of the third collection. In general Mtuze however, has successfully and effectively used action to depict his characters.

Speech has been judiciously used by Mtuze to reveal his character's personalities. His characters' dialogues are natural in that the verbal utterances of his characters are in line with their mentality or their situations. Unfortunately Mtuze does not make adequate use of speech. In some stories dialogue is absent in certain important scenes. In some stories there are utterances which serve as responses to questions asked. Mtuze seems to rely more on action than on speech to reveal his characters.

With regard to the recorded thoughts of characters, Mtuze has succeeded in revealing these clearly and convincingly in some stories manner. In other stories however, this method is not adequately employed. Mtuze seems to rely mostly on action rather than on thought for the portrayal of his characters. In this regard Mtuze seems to be on par with other Xhosa writers because this (that is the depiction of characters' thoughts) is generally lacking in Xhosa fiction (see 2.4.3). This lack of the depiction of thoughts results in the internal motives of characters remaining hidden from the reader, who then fails to understand the real motives behind their specific actions and/or utterances.

In his application of the naming technique Mtuze has used different categories of Xhosa names to depict his characters. Names given to characters by parents are sometimes used for influencing the character's personalities, while in some stories these names are used ironically. Characters are also given names by members of the community on the basis of their deeds and behavioural traits. Nicknames are also given by Mtuze to his characters. Mtuze informs the reader about the character's real name while also using his nickname. This method has been mostly used in stories concerned with the farming sector, where the white farmers are given names by the workers, e.g. Willem Poggenpoel is referred to as 'Madangatye' because of his cruelty.

In some cases the origin of these nicknames remains unknown. In general Mtuze has been successful in using the naming technique, which is the simplest and most frequently used technique in Xhosa literature because of the influence of traditional literature. Therefore, Mtuze is on a par with his colleagues (Xhosa writers) in the dominant application of this technique.

The creation of conflict to depict characters is another method that has been successfully and effectively used by Mtuze in his short stories. Three different types of conflict are found in these stories and more than one of these forms of conflict may be found in the same story. In some stories the struggle against natural forces which cannot be defeated by human beings is found. In these stories the struggle is automatically lost while in others it is won because of the power of prayer. Whilst this method of portrayal reveals characters' qualities quite effectively, it is unfortunately less frequently found in Mtuze's stories. Another type of conflict is that of character versus character, which is the one most frequently used by Mtuze. This conflict consists out of three categories, namely: character against character, a number of characters against an individual and a clash between two groups of characters. These characters belong to different kinds of social environment (eg the church, the urban neighbourhood, work places, and the farming sector). The most prevalent of these is the clash that takes place between/amongst church members. Mtuze has been successful in depicting his characters through the creation of conflict, especially in that he has done objectively so without being in favour of one group rather than the other, (e.g. in the farming sector qualities of both the farmer (master), his workers and neighbouring farmers are clearly, sincerely and effectively depicted.) Character versus character is the most frequently used type of conflict in Mtuze's short stories. This is the most prevalent type of conflict in fiction as a whole, mainly because characters may be fully understood by readers as more features can be revealed through this type of conflict. The final type of conflict, where a character struggles against himself, is also successfully and effectively employed by Mtuze in some of his short stories. It is in these stories that the internal feelings and motives are revealed during moments of crises. In some of his stories however, these are inadequately revealed. Judging from the few examples in which Mtuze has been successful in the

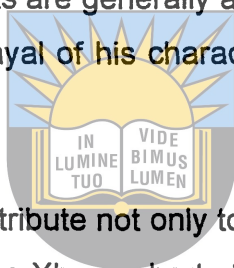
presentation of this type of conflict, it seems as if he has failed to make adequate use of this important method. This is also the case in most other sectors of Xhosa literature as has already been stated in 2.4.3 of this study.

It was also noted that in some of his stories Mtuze has just signalled the presence of conflict but has not effectively developed it. For example, in stories like **Akasayi kulibala** (1984) the author does not go into the detail of the situation as no direct words from the central character are presented. Signs of conflict are present, but these are not effectively realised, and the story is presented in a summarised manner. Thus the conflict in such stories does not become a reality (see 4.3.2.1.2). Besides the few demerits mentioned above, Mtuze has been generally successful in presenting his characters in an effective manner and in depicting their respective personalities adequately.

In Chapter 2 of this study, the general literary features of the Xhosa short story were identified (see discussion in 2.4.3). It was pointed out that characterisation in the Xhosa short story is mainly done by means of the direct method. The writer plays an intrusive role as commentator - narrator whilst the indirect method is less frequently used, mainly for the superficial portrayal of physical action and violence. Significant illustration of inner personal characteristics in an intensive and profound manner is rare. There is often an abrupt and weakly motivated transformation of the character. Key scenes are not properly utilised or exploited. The character is seldom presented with sufficient opportunity for independent action and dialogue and as a result the reader is prevented from intimate involvement in events and the character becomes a stranger to him/her. More than one main character is used and the main character always has only one facet (i.e. he possesses only good or only bad personal features.) The naming technique is the commonest and most popular technique in Xhosa literature.

This analysis of Mtuze's stories has revealed that some of these features of the Xhosa short story are also present in Mtuze's work as has been illustrated in the paragraphs above. It has also been noticed, however, that Mtuze's work contains additional

features not generally found in other Xhosa short stories. He concentrates on one main character in one situation and has been able to employ the indirect method very extensively, unlike most Xhosa writers whose work is dominated by the use of the direct method. In his work Mtuze has to a large extent included the thoughts, inner feelings and motives of his characters so that the reader is able to understand his characters fully. These are significantly illustrated in an intensive and profound manner. Unlike other Xhosa writers, Mtuze has not only concentrated on the external conflict but has employed the internal conflict so that his characters do not take drastic steps or decisions of which the reader is not aware. In this way the reader becomes intimately involved in the events of the story and the character does not remain a stranger to him. Dramatic comments are generally avoided and Mtuze has to a large extent been objective in his portrayal of his characters and in depicting their inner qualities.



It is evident that these features contribute not only to the quality of Mtuze's own work but also to the literary quality of the Xhosa short story in general.

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## CHAPTER FIVE

### LANGUAGE AND PATTERNS OF STYLISTIC DEVICES

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, an attempt will be made to look at Mtuze's style of writing as a peculiar mode of expression in the short story genre. The term "literary style" will first be defined as accurately as possible. Thereafter, the various theoretical concepts of style will be outlined and discussed. The principles identified here will be applied to Mtuze's short stories. This analysis will be based upon the assumption that the stylistic qualities of the short story are **not necessarily** different from those of other prose genres, and that there are no rules laid down as to a "proper" style for the short story. At the same time, however, it should be borne in mind that this genre possesses certain special qualities including those of brevity, economy, condensation and simplicity of language. The language of the short story writer should contribute towards the general aim of this genre, namely, the creation of a single artistic impression.

Language is the primary medium of expression in literature in the same way that stone is for instance, the primary medium of expression in the art of sculpture. Although a work of art consists of various elements such as plot, theme, character, and ideas - without language these elements would not be what they are; in other words they are realised and given form through the medium of language (Ngara, 1982:10). It is therefore, important that when we deal with a literary study we have thorough knowledge of language, its nature and functions. One of the main functions of language is that of communication, because any work of art has a meaning which the writer conveys and to which the reader responds because " ... literature is written in language, using the techniques and features of language such as tone, grammatical structure, diction and metaphor" (Ngara, 1982:11). In a study of this nature, therefore, a comprehensive analysis of the author's usage of the language (in this instance

Mtuzze's usage of Xhosa) is of utmost importance. In this study, therefore, attention will be given to Mtuzze's style by looking at the language he uses to express ideas and emotions, to depict characters and to describe situations in his three collections of short stories. Since " ... style is as useful a key to total meaning ... and to say something about style is to contribute fresh insight into the artistic contours of the work as a whole" (Stevick, 1967:208), the aim of this study, is to evaluate the quality of the author's style and to establish its significance in his work. Wellek and Warren (1980:176-177) confirm this notion, by saying:

... linguistic study becomes literary only when it serves the study of literature, when it aims at investigating the aesthetic effect of language - in short when it becomes stylistic.

In order to realise this goal successfully, this analysis of the linguistic features of Mtuzze's work should be related to the considerations of content value and aesthetic quality in art. To do this, one must consider the nature of the utterance, in other words, not only what the author says but also how he says it; the reader's own competence and experience in appreciating literary works of art; and the usefulness of the method and approach adopted by the reader (Ngara, 1982:14). It, therefore, becomes clear that language is the basic element of style and to arrive at a satisfactory understanding of literature, one must have an understanding of language, its functions and its operation.

Msimang (1986:178) discusses the importance of language in style, saying :

The basic element of style is language, a rich vocabulary which will allow the writer to choose the word that best communicates his ideas.

With the same view Botha (1984:111) writes about the style of language and the tone with which events are presented, claiming that the language reflects in a very efficient manner the exciting effects that the incidents have on those involved. He prefers not

to speak of "style" only but rather of "style of language" to show that language is one of the most important elements of the narrative. Also commenting on the importance of language, Ngara (1982:24) claims that "the writer must have achieved a high degree of competence in his chosen language, to be able to write effectively and artistically." Through language, therefore, the author is able to express his own emotions effectively and accurately.

Language contains features such as a rich vocabulary which includes figures of speech, which are the "universal elements of style and dialogue" (Msimang, 1986:178). In the first section of this chapter, therefore, Mtuze's skilful use of figures of speech such as simile, metaphor, personification, repetition and onomatopoeia, will be made. The second section of this investigation will focus on other modes of expression such as proverbs and idioms, ideophones, biblical expressions and humour. Other modes of expression such as symbolism and irony will be discussed in the next chapter.

## 5.2 DEFINITION AND CONCEPTS OF STYLE

In this section the basic principles of literary style will be defined and briefly discussed. The stylistic features of Mtuze's prose fiction will be evaluated on the basis of this discussion.

Shaw (1972:360) defines style as :

The manner of putting thoughts into words; a characteristic mode of construction and expression in writing and speaking; the characteristics of a literary selection that concern form of expression rather than the thought conveyed.

Kennedy (1991:110) emphasises the aspect of choice of linguistic expression when he claims that in general, style refers to the individual traits or characteristics of a piece of writing : to a writer's particular way of managing words that the reader comes

to recognise as habitual or customary.

Kirkman (1992:6) concurs with Kennedy when he argues that:

Style in writing is concerned with choice ...  
Every writer has available the enormous  
resources of a whole language ... The  
choices we make create the style which is a  
term covering balance, emphasis and tone.

The above definitions are quite accommodative in that they acknowledge the right of the writer to use his own choice of words to express whatever he has thought of writing about, so much so that the reader is able to differentiate one writer's works from those of others merely by looking at the linguistic peculiarities of that writer which give that writer's work a distinctive style. Each writer, therefore, selects the arrangement of linguistic items that he thinks will best give the balance, emphasis and tone necessary to produce the desired response from his reader though the writer cannot guarantee a specific response. The manner in which the reader receives the text is a most complex matter which could be dealt with in a separate study.

The term "style" is derived from the Latin word *stilus*, which designates the instrument which was used to inscribe linguistic symbols on wax tablets. According to Lucas (1955:16) in Classical Latin the word *stilus* was extended to mean, firstly, a man's way of writing and then, more generally, his way of expressing himself, in speech as well as in writing. In French it has been narrowed down to signify "a good way of expressing oneself". From this brief historical interpretation it becomes clear that style is not merely concerned with a way of writing, as the above critics claim in their definitions, but also as a "good way of writing". This means that it is the duty of the literary scholar to determine whether the language of the text has been used effectively and, therefore, whether the style of the author is acceptable or not.

Smith (1979:5) claims that style:

... (is) neither the same as a writer's ideas

nor the vehicle for his ideas, but rather his habitual means of arranging concepts, experiences and implications into a significant form.

In analysing the stylistic nature of a text, therefore, the critic should recognise the unique status of each individual text. Any attempt to lay down binding rules beforehand for the style of the short story would be unacceptable. This is confirmed by Notestein (1974:174) who states that "... 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."

Murray, as cited by Msimang (1986:177), emphasises the intimate relationship between an author's personality and literary style. According to Murray, a writer's style is closely associated with his personality which means that elements of his personal feelings, thoughts and experiences are evident in the type of language he uses. This means that in order to appreciate fully the stylistic content of the text, the reader ought to be acquainted with the writer's background because the factors that may have shaped or affected his personality may also be reflected in his literary style. This however, does not mean that the critic is not able to comment on the style of a writer whose background is unknown to him. Stylistic analysis of a text is to a greater or lesser degree still possible without any knowledge of the author's background.

As already mentioned (in 2.3.3) there are some basic requirements for a short story as a unique genre. Its individuality is based on certain unique features which exist also on the stylistic level. A short story is a concise and condensed genre which has an economy of language, leaving aside superfluous elements and avoids detailed description throughout. Botha, Sotashe and Mtuze (see 2.4.3) discuss the stylistic features of the Xhosa short stories as identified by them in their various investigations while mention is made of positive features such as skilful use of idiomatic expressions, proverbs, ideophones, interjectives, simile, metaphor, personification, symbolism and repetition. Reference is also made to "negative" forms such as weak structuring of sentences, the presence of divergent ideas in one paragraph, unsatisfactory division

of paragraphs, verbosity, ungrammatical forms and foreign expressions.

Our main concerns in this chapter are with the stylistic features of Mtuze's short stories, his skill in expressing himself, and how he maintains the economy of language in the process. Mtuze's literary style will be described in terms of its dominant features and the impression it makes upon the reader. The effectiveness and functionality of various stylistic features will also be determined. The role of Mtuze's past experiences as well as any other background information as presented in chapter 1 (see summary in 1.5.1 - 1.5.8) will be taken into consideration in this stylistic analysis of his work. This, however, will be attempted while it is also borne in mind that "... a writer's style might even be characterised by features that need not be peculiar to himself or to himself alone at least" (Shole, 1981:107).

### 5.3 STYLISTIC FEATURES OF MTUZE'S SHORT STORIES

#### 5.3.1 Introduction



In this section the most important stylistic features of Mtuze's short stories will be identified and analysed. As an introduction to this investigation, the various aspects of style in the context of the short story will be discussed. The style of an author generally manifests itself in the manner in which it deviates from the "normal" form of expression in a particular language. One could, therefore, either refer to "literal language", where the speaker means exactly and completely what he says, or to "figurative language", where this direct relationship does not exist. It is this latter type of language which is mainly found in literature and which is used to add vividness and clarity to what is being communicated. This is confirmed by Peck and Coyle(1985:139) who state that "language is used figuratively to make ideas vivid." Yelland et al. (1980:74-75) describe figurative language as follows :

Whenever a writer calls on our imagination to make comparisons and transfer ideas (as in simile, metaphor, personification, metonymy) or to realise that he is

exaggerating (as in hyperbole) or that he means the opposite of what he says (as in irony), he is using figurative language.

Goedhals et al. (1990:259) concur when they claim that :

... figurative language calls on the reader's imagination. It often says one thing in terms of another, so we are encouraged to look at this thing in a different way. In other words, figurative language calls upon associations or connotations in our memories (usually related to feelings produced by physical sensations such as touch, taste, smell, sight, sound or movement). These connotations enrich our view of the things being compared. Figurative language is tightly-packed, saying a great deal in few words. Often the effect of using it will be one of surprise, insight or added depth, because of the unexpected quality of the language used.

The short story writer generally has a wide variety of stylistic forms at his/her disposal. Figures of speech such as simile, metaphor and symbolism may be used effectively within this particular genre. Other forms of figurative language such as the proverb and the idiophone may also be used effectively in order to strengthen the unity, economy and brevity of the short story as an independent literary genre.

In the remainder of this chapter the role played by stylistic techniques such as those mentioned above in the short stories of Mtuze will be examined critically. This examination will, for practical purposes, be divided into two main sections. In the first section specific figures of speech most often found in Mtuze's work will be discussed, while in the subsequent section various other modes of figurative expression in his work will also be analysed.

### 5.3.2 Figures of speech

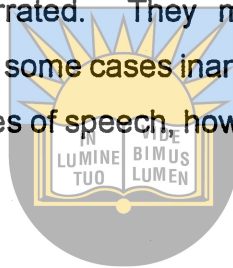
Shipley (1970:120) defines a figure of speech as :

... an intentional deviation from the normal  
(1) spelling (2) formation (3) construction or  
(4) application of a term.

Cohen (1973: 51) describes a figure of speech in a more informative way, by saying:

Figures of speech are images that are often intentionally indirect; they generally depend on a process of association, the deliberate linking of two elements.

Figures of speech include forms such as those already mentioned above. They possess various functions in literature and may, for instance, be used to clarify or to illustrate that which is being narrated. They may also be used to stimulate associations or to raise laughter. In some cases inanimate objects are animated. The most important function of the figures of speech, however, is to contribute towards the aesthetic value of the text.



The figure of speech which is most frequently found in Mtuze's work is the **SIMILE**. The author has generally put preference to the description of aspects of the narrative by comparing one phenomenon to another. In some instances one object is directly described in terms of the other. In **Isilamba** (1990) (see summary in 4.3.2.1) the main character (Sisa) thinks about an unfortunate incident involving one of his friends (Jimmy) which was related to him by Jimmy himself. While on his way back from Chalumna, Jimmy gave a lift to a hitchhiking "lady" criminal about whom he later became suspicious. Along the way he pretended to be having a problem with the starter of the car. He then asked this criminal to help him kick-start the car. When the criminal tried to push the car from behind Jimmy quickly drove away intentionally leaving the criminal behind. On arriving home he opened a parcel left by this criminal in the back of his motorcar and found a sharp instrument.

In this situation the sharp instrument found by Jimmy is described by Mtuze as follows:

... sisinkempekazi esibukhali okwentshengece.  
(p.15)

(... it is a big instrument as sharp as a blade.)

In this scene the sharpness of the instrument is compared to that of a blade because it is used by the criminal to perform his criminal acts successfully without any delay. Other instances where this form of comparison is used are :

Simile	Translation	Story
... mnyama okokhozo lomya	(he was pitch black)	<b>Umthandazo kaSteve</b> (1990:24)
... waba ngumbono ongajongekiyo ngathi likwakwini	(he was a most repelling sight like a turkey.)	<b>Isingqala sikaZilindile</b> (1977:43)

In some instances the actions of characters (rather than the characters themselves) are compared to a specific element. In **Zinik'iphepha!** (1977) (see summary in 3.5.2) the evangelist is chased by the ostriches in the field. He runs as fast as he can but the ostriches are too fast for him. When they are about to catch him (Mvangeli), he runs quickly and forces himself through the fence (surrounding the field) before they can get hold of him. Mtuze describes Mvangeli's action as follows:

Uphumele phulukutshu ngokotolo umvangeli  
elucingweni.

(p.15)

(The evangelist climbed quickly through the  
fence like an arrow.)

In this scene the lay priest's quick escape through the fence is compared to an arrow because it moves swiftly when released from a bow towards the object it is aimed at. Mtuze has used this metaphor successfully because he has been able to paint a clear picture of the manner in which the evangelist forced himself through the fence to escape from the wild ostriches. Other instances where this form of comparison is used are :

Simile	Translation	Story
Kuthe esazul' exel'igqwirha...	(As he was moving in circles like a witch ...)	<b>Hamba Bhotile</b> (1977:21)
Ufuthe okwerhamba uLindile...	(Lindile was breathing like a puff-adder...)	<b>Ityala</b> (1990:30)
... ephatha kuqhwaya nasenkunkumeni ngathi sisikhukukazi...	(... he kept on scratching in the rubbish like a hen...)	<b>USomali</b> (1977:11)

In his stories Mtuze has successfully employed the simile to make a simple comparison, to appeal to our imagination, to reinforce meaning, to add a pictorial element and to create associations. It is noted that Mtuze prefers comparison of actions to objects rather than comparing two objects.

Another figure of speech which plays an important role in Mtuze's short stories is the **METAPHOR**. This figure of speech is to some extent similar to the simile in that it is used by the author to describe a particular phenomenon. However, whereas a simile is a direct comparison between two things, a metaphor "... does not announce the comparison and proceeds indirectly to indicate an identification of the two items involved" (Brooks and Warren, 1971:685).

The metaphor comprises the substitution of one thing for another and thus it takes us a step further than the simile. Instead of asking us to imagine one thing as being like another, we are asked to picture one thing as being another. In other words, a metaphor implicitly identifies two different things with each other in a limited number of ways, implying that they have something in common, but not everything. Tambling (1988:41) claims that a metaphor replaces one signifier by another.

Metaphors are, as already stated above, frequently found in Mtuze's short stories. In the story "**Ungakhe uxelele mntu**" (1990) (see summary in 3.6.1) Mtuze refers to the

mother of a freedom fighter who experiences hardship through the loss of a child, firstly through exile and thereafter by death. She is furthermore harassed and beaten up by the police, who claim that she knows his whereabouts and yet she doesn't. Since she has to endure all these hardships, Mtuze describes her conduct as follows:

Umama weqabane yintsimbi.

(p.6)

(A comrade's mother is a piece of metal.)

In using this expression, Mtuze identifies the conduct of the mother with the strength of a piece of metal. He wishes to emphasise the fact that she must be strong under all circumstances. She must not yield to any kind of pressure.

Metaphorical language in Mtuze's short stories may be subdivided into two important categories. The author firstly makes use of a wide variety of idiomatic expressions to describe certain phenomena as accurately as possible. Expressions such as the following may be found :

Metaphor	Translation	Story
...eseso sikhova kulomzi uMadangatye	(Madangatye was an owl in that homestead.)  (He was alone)	<b>Indle'eya KuMadam</b>  (1990: 42)
... babeyinyoka nesele	(They were great enemies.)	<b>Abamelwane</b> (1984:9)
... liyintombazana	(It resembled a girl.)  (It was beautiful)	<b>Impemb'enkulu</b>  (1977:78)

The author uses these idiomatic expressions in his stories to create a vivid picture of what he is referring to in his stories, because they are well-known to Xhosa speakers. This also shows that Mtuze has a good command of Xhosa.

In the story **EPampoenfontein** (1977) for instance (see summary in 4.4.2.2) the friendship between a foreman (Napoleon) and his employer (Maqhajana) is depicted as follows:

Bada baya kungena empumelelweni  
bengumtya nethunga.

(p.6)

(They remained together as bosom friends  
until they achieved success.)

The point that Mtuze is making here is that these two characters were very close friends and their friendship lasted until they had raised the standard of Pampoenfontein farm.

Animal and Bird symbols are also used metaphorically by Mtuze to describe the behaviour of certain characters. An animal such as the hyena is referred to, for instance, in **Inxeba lendoda alihlekwa** (1984). In this story, two friends, Nyelenzi and Gasela, suffer from a hangover and decide to roast meat for themselves. When they see their friend, Nzimeni, who is known for his greediness approaching, they hide the dish of meat. Also suffering from a hangover, Nzimeni arrives and asks them for money so that he can also buy a piece of meat. When he leaves, Gasela and Nyelenzi continue eating the meat and when they are almost finished, Gasela cuts himself on the lower lip with a knife. On his arrival, Nzimeni discovers that Gasela has cut himself because of stinginess and voraciousness. While laughing at Gasela, Nzimeni also accidentally destroys his own eyesight by stabbing one of his eyes with a knife.

As a result of his conduct, Nzimeni is identified with a hyena by his friends, Gasela and Nyelenzi, as follows :

Masenze msinya, Gasela phambi kokuba laa  
ngcuka inguNzimeni ifike.

(p.25) (My emphasis:BNN)

(Let's make haste, Gasela, before Nzimeni, the hyena, smells the cooked meat and comes.)

In this story the behaviour of Nzimeni is compared to that of the hyena. The point of comparison is that of greed and it is even suggested that Nzimeni's conduct is similar to that of an animal, which is generally unacceptable.

Birds are also used metaphorically in Mtuze's stories. In **Isaqhwithi** (1984), for instance (see summary in 4.4.2.2) members of Reverend Mr Mzananda's congregation abstain from attending church services and supporting the church. They are reprimanded whenever they attend funeral services. At the funeral service Mzananda refers to those who have attended metaphorically as birds, by saying that :

... loo nginginya yayize kumkhunga  
ngamahlungulu.

(p.4)

(... the multitudes that come to venerate him  
are ring-necked ravens.)

In this instance the author metaphorically compares the conduct of the people with the qualities of the ravens which feed on dead animals. Ravens rejoice when they see a dead animal because they live on it, thus benefitting from it. Therefore, these people who have abstained from attending church services have lost the opportunity of being able to listen to the word of God. They rejoice when one of their members dies because they are going to attend his funeral, and benefit from it since the priest will be preaching during the service. In other words these people live on the death of others. Mtuze has effectively and imaginatively used this metaphor to depict the way these particular people behave. He uses his knowledge of animals to depict characters in his short stories.

In the preceding paragraphs it was shown how the metaphor is used by Mtuze to compare human beings to certain features of non-human objects. Further research into the stylistic features of Mtuze's short stories has, however, revealed that in order

to describe some of their features, some non-human objects are endowed with human qualities, in other words, they are personified. Goedhals et al. (1990:267) define this figure of speech as follows:

Personification describes something that is not human as if it were human, doing something that only a human being can do.

**PERSONIFICATION** is generally regarded as an important part of the category of figures of resemblance or of relationship, as well as of literary expression, where inanimate objects or other living things are endowed with human attributes and especially with human feelings. Although these details of style may seem trivial in fiction, their effects can be far-reaching, because the fundamental meaning of a piece of fiction can be conveyed in terms of such details.

Personification in the works of Mtuze concerns firstly the manner in which nature is depicted. In **lindondo** (1984:5) for instance, (see summary in 3.5.3), the ideas of the main character are ruined by a serious drought. The effects of this devastating drought are described as follows:

Yagunya imbalela. (p.5)

(The drought reigned.)

In this example the author makes an effective use of personification realistically to describe the effects of the drought on the main character. Mguyo is portrayed as a person who becomes so preoccupied with this problem that he regards the drought as a personal enemy rather than nature which is simply taking its course.

In other instances personification is used to depict certain features of animals as observed by human beings. In the story **Uyavuth'umlilo** (1977) the Mangcotywa family, who have only one child (Lizo), lose its beloved small dog (Sibi). Mr Mangcotywa goes out in search of this dog while his wife remains home very worried

and nervous, fearing that her son, who has gone to sleep unaware of the loss, might wake up and find out. Mr Mangcotywa, having given up the search, arrives home cold and very upset. He then writes a poem in honour of his missing pet before going to bed. The following morning the dog is found sleeping in a cupboard.

In this story the author makes use of personification to depict the special relationship which exists between the Mangcotywa family and their dog. In this story human qualities are attributed to the dog in the following lyric written by Mr Mangcotywa :

Andimazi **umama** wakhe, andimazi **utata** wakhe.  
Andilazi **igama** lakhe, andilaz' **ikhaya** lakhe.  
Wahlala yen' uSibi engumntwana wam  
Ethandwa ngumntu wonke **umntwan'** omtwanam ...  
(p.57-58) (My emphasis:BNN)

(I don't know his mother, I don't know his father  
I don't know his name, I don't know his home ...  
Sibi stayed as my child  
My grandchild being loved by everybody.)

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In this excerpt Mr Mangcotywa and his family's love for this dog is clearly shown. It is evident that to him this is not merely an animal but rather a true human friend who to him resembles a grandchild.

The dog is also personified elsewhere in Mtuzze's short stories. For instance, in the story **Akukho bani ukhathalayo** (1984:21) the old man refers to the dog as follows:

Zange ndimbone usokadala wenja.

(I have never seen a dog which is an old unmarried bachelor)

and :

Sowungoyena mlondekhaya kulo mzi.

(You are the real protector of this household.)

The snake and the bird are also personified elsewhere in Mtuze's short stories. In the story **"Uze ungabhakabheki"** (1984) for instance, an elderly dying father (Jongintaba Melitafa), gives a dying charge to his eldest son, Mzuvukile, to go and climb a hill called Nomeva. The road to this hill passes through a dense forest (Qalathethe). Vukile has to keep in mind that while passing through the forest one should not look about because doing so will result in failure to reach the hill of wealth. After his father has died Vusi starts his journey and whilst in the forest he hears the sounds and noises he has been warned about, but he cannot resist looking about and is killed by the big snake of the forest. The same happens to his brother, Siphoh, but their youngest sister Nonceba's determination helps her reach the hill successfully. She is welcomed, and given land and the power to make things happen by the mere uttering of words.

The snake in this story is endowed with a human quality, as follows :

Linge liyaduduma elo hlathi kukuhleka  
kwaloo nyoka.

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(When the snake was laughing it was as if  
the forest was rumbling.)

Mtuze says the snake was laughing because it is taken as a human enemy which rejoices when victory comes its way. In this story the snake laughs because it has been able to kill the two brothers.

In another story **Uxolo ehokweni** (1984), two family pairs of the narrator's son's doves are always at loggerheads, especially the males, where the one dove bullies the other. These two males fight every day and the narrator's son makes a schism to try and curb the aggressive dove from attacking the peace loving dove. One day the female of the aggressive dove dies and the aggressive dove violently grabs the coward's female and makes her his new wife. Unfortunately the new wife also dies within a few days. The coward is trapped and dies while the aggressive is left alone feeling very great and honoured. A few days later he is also killed and eaten by his owner who

fears that he will attack other doves which are put into the cage.

In this story the coward (dove) who has lost a mate is referred to as follows, by the narrator:

Yeka ke incwangu yomhlolo ...  
(p.40)

(You don't say so about the widower's  
irateness...)

The dove in this story is personified because of its bad conduct. Doves are symbols of peace but this one has deviated from the norm by victimising the others. In this way the aggressive dove becomes the personal enemy of the other doves.

The use of animals and birds in this particular context may be attributed to the influence of traditional literature upon the author's work. In African tradition animals and birds are often portrayed in particular roles which display their basic features. Mtuze applies this principle in his work and thereby succeeds in identifying the basic personal features of his characters in a vivid, imaginative and accurate manner.

Personification in the works of Mtuze also concerns the manner in which the background, especially that which has affected the emotions and behaviour of its people, is depicted. Mtuze has achieved this through the use of the suffix - "ndini". In "**Ungakhe uxelele mntu**" (1990), for instance, (see summary in 3.6.1) Mrs Kelembé, the main character, is emotionally affected by the fact that the political uprisings of Uitenhage had resulted in her husband's death and that she was left alone to look after her son, who also left the country, leaving her all by herself. Mtuze presents her agitation on the serious events happening at Uitenhage since she lost her husband, as follows :

Ndiyivuyele loo nto kuba asikuko nokuba  
ndandingasalali buhlayo ngamaxhala  
eziganeko ezazisenzeka kubantwana

babantu kule **Tinarhandini**, ukususela kulo  
ntlekele yakwa Langa ngomhla wama 21  
kuMatshi 1985.

(p.2) (My emphasis: BNN)

(I was happy about that because I had spent  
sleepless nights thinking about incidents  
happening and affecting the children of  
Uitenhage ever since the Langa massacre  
on the 21 March 1985.)

The town (Tinarha) is depicted as a person who appears to be the enemy of the people because of the events affecting both the young and the old people of this town. The person who is mostly affected is Mrs Kelembe, who calls the town 'Tinarhandini' to reveal her great contempt as a result of the loss of her loved ones. Other stories where the background is personified are **Umjojo** (1977), and **Isilamba** (1990) where Mdantsane is presented as 'Mdantsanendini'.

The repeated use of the verb "-azi" (to know) and the noun "umntwana" (a child) (although used in different forms of grammatical meaning) in the poem mentioned above (page 175), is indicative of a further, equally important stylistic feature of Mtuze's short stories, namely that of **REPETITION**.

Repetition may be described as the repeated use of some formative words and even sentences. This means that some of the various units in a work of art may be repeated while others are not. Repetition is regarded as a basic principle of art.

Shipley (1970:13) explains where repetition occurs :

... at the beginning of lines of poetry or  
clauses or sentences of prose.

From the above excerpt it becomes obvious that repetition is most frequently

employed in poetry as well as in modern prose, where it may be endlessly fertile.

Although referring to oral literature, Okpewho (1992:7) claims that repetition:

... is one of the most fundamental features which has both an aesthetic and a utilitarian value in that, it is a device that not only gives a touch of beauty or attractiveness to a piece of oral expression (whether song or narrative or other kind of statement) but also serves certain practical purposes in the overall organisation of the oral performance.

Various forms of repetition may be used in the literary text. In prose narrative forms such as the following are also found: repetition of a word, (which is called anaphora), repetition of clauses or phrases and repetition of sentences or passages. Anaphora may be defined as the repetition of a particular word within the text with the specific aim of achieving a particular premeditated effect. This is confirmed by Mkonto (1988:186) who defines this feature as follows

when the same word is skilfully ordered in a passage or incident ...it is in most cases meant to achieve a certain effect or to serve the purpose of emphasis.

Repetition, as a figure of speech is frequently used by Mtuze in his short stories. In the story **Intambo** (1990), for instance (see summary in 3.5.4), the main character (Vuyo) is kept in custody and expresses his experiences, whilst awaiting the death sentence to be carried out, as follows :

Wawuthandaza **uncame** ulile **uncame**  
uqalekise **uncame**, unqwenele ukufa  
**uncame**.

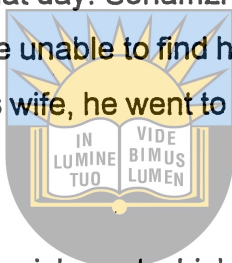
(p.50) (My emphasis : BNN)

(You could pray in vain, weep in vain, curse  
in vain and wish to die, in vain.)

The mere use of the term "uncame" (in vain) reveals that the character has lost all hope of success. He wishes that he could die. Mtuze emphasizes the seriousness of Vuyo's emotional state through the use of anaphora. In this way the author uses

this stylistic feature successfully to depict the manner in which Vuyo experiences the slow passing of time while on death row.

In some instances the repetition of a verb, firstly in the negative form and then in the positive form, is used to create a vivid image of an action which is highly dramatic in nature. In **Sala Ngqolomsila** (1977), for instance, a letter, found under the door of Sonamzi's home, containing rumours that he has severely beaten up his wife (MaNgxabane) and destroyed his home, lands up in the hands of his mother (MaGaba). Investigations reveal that the house has not been destroyed and MaNgxabane has not been beaten up; instead she has left with her son (Zongamele) because Sonamzi had arrived late that day. Sonamzi also disappeared for a very long time, his relatives look for him but are unable to find him. When he comes back home he claims that after a quarrel with his wife, he went to visit a friend (Luyanda) and they became very intoxicated.



The serious nature of the corporal punishment which, according to the letter found on the doorstep of Sonamzi, is meted out to MaNgxabane, is presented in this story as follows :

... ayimnkulanga imnkunkuthile umfazi.  
(p.35)

(He gave the wife a good hiding.)

Mtuze has used this figure of speech to reveal the seriousness and the extent to which the wife is beaten by her husband.

Repetition of a verb in a sentence, is also used in an accumulative way, in Mtuze's stories. In the story "**Ungakhe uxelele mntu**" (1990) (see summary in 3.6.1) the reaction of Mrs Kelembe after she has heard the news of her son's absence from examinations at school and the fact that he has left the country, is described by Mtuze as follows:

... ndingxamele ukoyisakala ngokoyisakala.  
(p.4)

(I was gradually becoming weaker and weaker.)

The repeated use of the verb "-oyisakala" ( to become weak) effectively describes the gradual increase of what is taking place. In other words, the action is accumulating. In some instances emphasis is also achieved through the repetition of words which are synonymous in meaning. In the story **Izilo zilunguzene** (1977), for instance, (see summary in 3.5.1) the author wishes to emphasise the small quantity of liquor which is left in the bottle, by saying :

Libe layintoni **ithanyana** ... **isikretyana** sejini  
kumntu obonakala **elinene** njengalo.

(p.9) (My emphasis : BNN)

(What is a little gulp ... a tot of gin to a  
person who is a gentleman of his calibre.)

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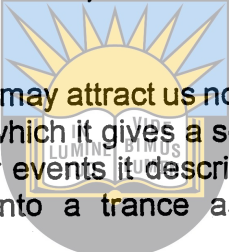
Elsewhere in his work Mtuze also makes use of repetition in the form of phrases to emphasise certain aspects of the narrative. The expression "Likhohlakele ilizwe" (the world is cruel) is, for instance, used repeatedly in the story **Isilamba** (1990) (see summary in 4.3.2.1). By doing so, the writer wishes to prepare the reader for the different kinds of crime that he wishes to reveal in the story.

From the discussion above, it becomes clear that repetition plays an important role in the stylistic nature of Mtuze's work. This phenomenon may be attributed to the influence (conscious or unconscious) of traditional literature on this author's short stories. It is well-known that this stylistic feature plays an important role in traditional praise poetry "Izibongo". Finnegan (1984:131) confirms this notion, by saying :

Parallelism and repetition are marked  
features in praise poetry.

It is evident, therefore, that the prominent role played by repetition in Mtuze's short stories may be attributed to the influence of this important genre (traditional poetry). This influence is clearly notable in the repetition found in the poetic lines written by Mangcotywa in the story **Uyavuth' umlilo** (1977) as already cited above (see poetic lines on page 175). Repetition in this instance is used vividly, effectively and with urgency so as to serve as a binding force between the dog (Sibi) and his owners (Mr Mangcotywa and his family).

Another figure of speech which is used abundantly in Mtuze's short stories is that of **ONOMATOPOEIA**. This is the use of words in which the sound of a specific action is imitated linguistically. Boulton (1980:62) writes as follows about this figure:



Onomatopoeia may attract us not only by the accuracy with which it gives a sound-picture of the things or events it describes but also by lulling us into a trance as a kind of incantation.

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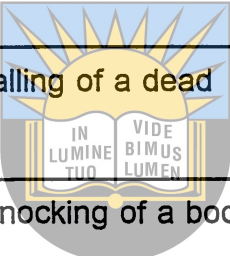
Constant use of these words is found in the short stories of Mtuze. In the story **Ingongolothela** (1977), for example, a beautiful young lady invites the Lord to her home. During her preparations for the coming visitor, the children are taken to the neighbours to prevent Jesus from hearing their bad utterances, and the house is thoroughly cleaned and sprayed with freshening scents. While she is still busy, an unexpected visitor, looking dirty, ragged and ugly arrives at the appointed time and asks the young woman for food and water. The lady does not welcome this visitor and becomes very furious, throws him outside and bangs the door behind him claiming that she is expecting a decent and respectable visitor. The next day when she sees Jesus walking up and down preaching, she confronts him for not honouring their appointment. Jesus tells her that he is the man whom she threw out of her house. In shock, the humiliated woman drops to the ground in an unconscious state and is taken back home.

In this story the re-action of the woman when asked for food and water by the beggar, is described by the effective use of the ideophone "mba" (p.17) ( a sound made by the

banging of the door). The use of this term creates a vivid and clear picture of the action taking place here (i.e. how forcefully the door was closed).

Other examples of onomatopoeic words found in Mtuze's short stories are :

Onomatopoeic words	Translation	Story
Thaca	(The dropping of a piece of sausage on a plate)	<b>Isingqala sikaZilindile</b> (1977:43)
Khiqa	(the dropping of a book case)	<b>Zinik'iphepha!</b> (1977:15)
Qithi	(the falling of a dead body)	<b>"Sala nelo zulu lakho"</b> (1984:31)
Mbo, bham	(the knocking of a body against a horse)	<b>Hamba bhotile</b> (1977:21)

  
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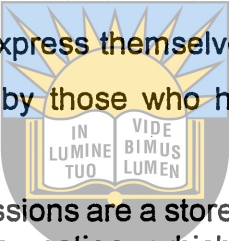
Onomatopoeic expressions in Mtuze's short stories are mainly used to heighten or increase the dramatic effect of the actions taking place in the story. In *Ingongolothela* (1977), for instance, the action of the nameless main character is presented more effectively and dramatically through the use of the term "mba" (sound made by a banged door). Similar effects are also achieved elsewhere in Mtuze's work through the realistic imitation of certain sounds. The use of this figure of speech also contributes towards strengthening the unity of the text. The use of onomatopoeia contributes towards the brevity and economy of the presentation, thereby enhancing the quality of the text as a short story genre.

The variety of onomatopoeic expressions found in Mtuze's work shows that the author is a close observer of the actions and sounds normally found in the African environment. It also shows his ability to present these sounds in his stories in a vivid and realistic manner, thereby once again illustrating his excellent, accurate command of the Xhosa language.

## 5.4 OTHER MODES OF EXPRESSION

In addition to the figures of speech discussed above, this analysis of Mtuze's work has also uncovered a number of different stylistic expressions which will be dealt with in the paragraphs that follow. The manner in which each of these forms contribute towards the stylistic uniqueness and artistry of Mtuze's short stories will particularly be highlighted.

Mtuze's work abounds with **IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS**. These include not only idioms, but also proverbs and ideophones of a wide variety. Certain Xhosa idioms are frequently found in his stories. An idiom is a characteristic method by which the speakers of a particular language express themselves. Differences between idioms of different languages are noticed by those who have studied foreign languages. According to Kwetana (1987:77):



idiomatic expressions are a store room of the wisdom of a nation which serve as reinforcements and make pleasant reading....

He (Kwetana) goes on to say that situations in the text should be described with fitting expressions and that these expressions should be used sparingly and effectively, as overabundance impedes free expression and is distasteful.

The frequent use of idiomatic expressions by Mtuze is accompanied by preference for a particular idiom. The same expression "Inkungu nelanga" (a large number of people) is for instance used in different stories such as: **Sala Ngqolomsila** (1977:37), **Isilingo** (1977:55), **Impemb'enkulu** (1977:28), **UMhlekazomhle** (1984:19), **Umthandazo kaSteve** (1990:21) and **Intambo** (1990:48).

Other idiomatic expressions such as "Ukulala obentlombe" (deep sleep) and "Latshon'emini" (loss of hope) are frequently used by Mtuze. The former expression is found in stories such as **Uyavuth'umlilo** (1977:58), **Abamelwane** (1984:10), **"Undivusile"** (1984:23) and **Indle'eya kuMadam** (1990:42). While the latter is found in **Umjojo** (1977:61), **Xa ingakhalanga iyayekwa** (1984:16), **Impendulo yeependulo** (1977:76) **EPampoenfontein** (1977:76) and **Intambo** (1990:51).

It is observed that Mtuze's knowledge of Xhosa idioms is sufficiently comprehensive to enable him to avoid the too frequent repetition of the same idiom. For instance, the same situation may also be depicted by a variety of idiomatic expressions in different stories. The notion of a large quantity of people, for instance, is presented differently in various stories, by means of the following idioms:

Idiomatic expression	Story
'Inkungu nelanga'	<b>Sala Ngqolomsila</b> (1977:37)
'Umbo nomXesibe'	<b>Umjojo</b> (1984:62)
'Ime ngembambo'	<b>'Side sahlulwe kukufa'</b> (1984:37)



The notion of running fast is also presented through the use of various idioms in different stories:

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Idiomatic expression	Story
'Iligqabi'	<b>Akukho bani ukhathalayo</b> (1984:22)
'Ukucela kwabentsente'	<b>UMafutha nemali yesiporho</b> (1977:49)
'Ukusimbela isinqe'	<b>Zinik'iphepha!</b> (1977:15)

Other incidents, actions and notions which are differently represented in Mtuze's short stories are death, enmity, emptiness, happiness and war. The use of idioms in this manner clearly reveals the author's in-depth knowledge of Xhosa. It further plays an important role in limiting boredom and monotony on the part of the reader and is, therefore, of both aesthetic as well as practical value.

In his stories Mtuze uses idioms to depict some basic aspects of human behaviour. In the story **Isilingo** (1977) (see summary in 3.5.4), for instance, after Reverend Diliza

Ngxaki has confessed his guilt in front of his congregation and all those who have attended the old woman, Esther Yanta's funeral, regarding the cause of her death. All the people are surprised, and this amazement is expressed by Mtuze through the use of the following idiom :

Uwe ngamadolo umfundisi waphakama nalo  
olo daba lwatsho wonke umnto **wayinkuku  
esikwe umlomo.**

(p.55) (My emphasis:BNN)

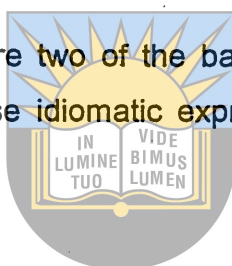
(The priest knelt and stood up to confess his  
guilt after which all people were completely  
dumbfounded.)

The physical state of the people in this situation is dramatised and clearly described by means of a fitting Xhosa idiom. Situations involving human behaviour are also depicted through the use of various idioms, elsewhere in Mtuze's short stories, for instance :

Situation/action	Story	Idiomatic expressions
Happiness	<b>Umjojo</b> (1977:62)	"kuxhelw'eXhukwane"
death	<b>Isilamba</b> (1990:19)	"ukunabela uqaqqa"
enmity	<b>Uxolo ehokweni</b> (1984:40)	"yinyoka nesele"
war	<b>Intambo</b> (1990:47)	"Lifile ilizwe"
threat	<b>Ingongolothela</b> (1977:17)	"ukwenza inkawu ngenja"
warning	<b>Isivamna</b> (1977:45)	"inyath' ibuzwa kwabaphambili"
good relationship	<b>EPampoenfontein</b> (1977:45)	"ngumtya nethunga"
crying	<b>"Ungakhe uxelele mntu"</b> (1990:2)	"ukucela kule nto yabantwana"

From the above discussion it becomes clear that idiomatic expressions have played a very important role in Mtuze's short stories and have been used very accurately and effectively to reinforce the meaning in the short stories. The abundance and masterful use of these idiomatic expressions can be attributed to the narrator's love and his thorough knowledge of Xhosa life and language. Traditional literature has played an important role in influencing Mtuze to employ these idiomatic expressions extensively. This is a tendency which is frequently found amongst modern African writers. This is confirmed by Moloji (1974:39) though referring to South Sotho literature specifically that stylistic features such as the extensive use of proverbs, metaphor and comparison can also make their appearance in modern literature.

Brevity and compression, which are two of the basic principles of the short story genre, result from the use of these idiomatic expressions as they are models of compressed language.



In Mtuze's short stories idiomatic expressions are also manifested in the use of the **IDEOPHONE**. This stylistic feature plays an important role in the manner in which the author expresses himself in his stories. Doke (1988:255) describes the ideophone as: a word, often onomatopoeic which describes a predicate in respect of manner, colour, sound or action.

Literary critics agree that style lends originality to the story, as the writer says things in his own peculiar manner and uses his personal idiosyncrasies for communication. This becomes particularly evident in Ziervogel's (1956:60) comments about ideophones when he says:

Ideophones ... are to a great extent a matter of taste regarding use and information. The speaker may coin his own ideophone as occasion arises.

The various functions for which the ideophone may be employed in a writer's work of

art are reflected in Satyo's (1987:60) definition which reads thus:

Isifanekisozwi ligama elicacisa isenzeko, isichazi, isihlomelo, esinye isifanekisozwi, isibanjalo, kanti lisenokuzimela. Licacisa nobunjani, nebala, nesandi, nokwenzeka kwesenzo.

(An ideophone is a word that signifies an action, a qualificative, an adverb, another ideophone a copulative, yet it can be independent. It also describes manner, colour, sound and the way in which an action takes place. It usually imitates its object of reference.)



Satyo (1987:60) further says about the ideophone:

Likholisa ngokulinganisa into ebhekiselele kuyo. Amandla alo, asekuhlongozeni, ekuvuseleleni, ekuzobeni, nasekuchukumiseni.

(Its power is in provoking, invoking and to portray. The ideophone gives a vivid picture of what is being described.)

An ideophone, therefore, has a wide range of applications as a stylistic device which is mostly used to achieve vividness in narratives. Moreover, ideophones can be used to achieve more dramatic effect than any words in a language. Okpewho (1992:92) cites Mvula who claims that:

The images created by using ideophones help the audience to see, hear, feel, touch and enjoy the narrative.

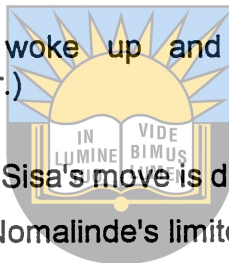
In his stories, Mtuze has exploited the ideophone with its dramatic effect to lend additional force to the expression. He uses the ideophone not merely for embellishment but for the creation of a particular artistic effect. According to Msimang (1986:180), ideophones introduce a sense of suddenness and urgency. Mtuze's skills

in a sense, should be praised for using the ideophone to reveal the situations instead of simply describing them. This makes them dramatic and more gripping. In the story **Isilamba** (1990), for instance, (see summary in 4.3.2.1) Nomalinde desperately wants to go home before Sisa wakes up and decides to accompany her. However, as she leaves the room Sisa suddenly wakes up. As it is already very late and lest something bad may befall her on her way home, he decides to go with her. Mtuze describes the manner in which he wakes up, as follows:

**Uthe khwaphululu uSisa efuna ukumkhapha.**

(p.17) (My emphasis:BNN)

(Sisa quickly woke up and wanted to accompany her.)



The quick dramatic action by which Sisa's move is described, adds more effect to the unity of the story. The urgency of Nomalinde's limited time of arrival before midnight is expressed by Mtuze as clearly as he possibly can, through Sisa's quick action. Another similar example is "Zathi hlasiinja ..." (they grabbed a dog ...) in the story **Indle'eya kuMadam** (1990:41) where the urgency of Jackson's survival is described in terms of grabbing and killing a dog instead.

In **Isilamba** (1990) (see summary in 4.3.2.1), Nomalinde writes her two addresses down on a piece of paper. One of the addresses is written vividly while the second is not clear enough for one to see. Mtuze describes the way the second address is written, as follows:

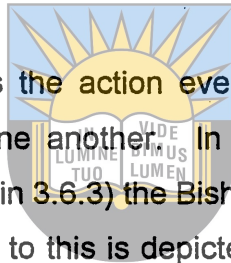
Uthe akutsho (uSisa) yacela ipetshana  
inzwakazi yabhala inombolo yabuya yee  
**rhixi-rhixi** enye into ebunombolo nayo  
ngezantsi kwaleyo ...

(p.18) (My emphasis:BNN)

(When he (Sisa) said so, the beautiful lady asked for a piece of paper, wrote a number and then scribbled something like a number

below that one...)

In this example the ideophonic expression is used to emphasise the difference between these two written addresses. The author wishes to emphasise through comparison, the fact that the first address is written properly while the second one is scribbled in such a way that it becomes difficult for Sisa to read nor trace it. He, therefore had no choice but go to the first address which later proved to be the lady's home address. Sisa here was given the shocking news that the second address is the number of Nomalinde's grave in the local graveyard. The use of the ideophone not only increases the dramatic nature of the action but also describes it (the action) effectively to the reader.



In some cases Mtuze emphasises the action even further by using two or more ideophones in combination with one another. In the story **Umthandazo kaSteve** (1990), for instance, (see summary in 3.6.3) the Bishop requests the soldiers to leave the church building. Their reaction to this is depicted as follows:

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Kuthe cwaka mu tu akwabonakala nencinci  
intshukumo kuloo mkhosi ujalileyo.

(p.23)(My emphasis:BNN)

(There was complete silence, no one spoke  
and no noise could be heard and there was  
absolutely no movement by that displeased  
army.)

In this quotation a combination of ideophones is used to describe as effectively as possible the soldiers' total rejection of the Bishop's request. Not only is the dramatic effect of the story increased through the use of this set of ideophones, but the situation is also described as briefly and economically as possible, thereby increasing the internal unity of this short story. The tendency to use ideophones in combination with one another is also found elsewhere in Mtuze's short stories e.g. "saa, bhazalala" in **Indle'eya kuMadam** (1990:36), "Mbho, bham" in **Hamba Bhotile** (1977:21) and xhwithi, phethu" in **Alitshoni lingenandaba** (1977:49).

The role played by repetition as a figure of speech in Mtuze's short stories has already been discussed in the preceding section. This figure of speech is also sometimes used in combination with the ideophone in that the same ideophone can be used in repetition in order to obtain a particular narrative effect. The use of the ideophone "rhixi-rhixi" has already been illustrated above. Other ideophones used in this manner are:

Ideophone	Translation	Story
nya-nya	(to disappear for some time.)	<b>Isilamba</b> (1990:18)
rhixi-rhixi	(to scribble something.)	<b>Isilamba</b> (1990:18)
chiphi-chiphi	(slowly dripping down of tears.)	<b>Impemb'enkulu</b> (1977:77)
qotho-qotho	(to pour in small drops.)	<b>Isilamba</b> (1990:16)
gingxi-gingxi	(quick stop of a car while it is still in gear.)	<b>Ityala</b> (1990 :30)

In these instances, repetition is mainly used to depict continuity of action or to describe the rhythmic nature of action.

In some instances ideophones can be used descriptively as already stated by Satyo (1987:60) in his definition of the ideophone. The ideophone, in other words, gives more information about the predicate, qualificative with which it is used or adverb. In the story "**Ungakhe uxelele mntu**" (1990), for instance, (see summary in 3.6.1) when Mrs Kelembe is asked about the whereabouts of her son and when last did she see him, her response is that her son went to Cape Town at the end of 1985. When asked about his clothes and who took them to Cape Town, Mrs Kelembe tells the prosecutor that his suitcase is still with her, full of clothes and that nobody was asked to take them. The narrator writes:

... nantsiya isuthkeyisi yakhe isazele **mome**  
ezo mpahla...

(p.8) (My emphasis:BNN)

(... there's his suitcase still full of those  
clothes...)

The ideophone in this instance is used to describe how full the suitcase is. Other ideophones used descriptively are "tixi" (very wet) in **Iqolomba** (1977:41), "qhwa" (pure white) in **Abahlobo ababini** (1984:1), "xhopo" (heavy sweat) in **"Uze ungabhekabheki"** (1984:28)



The ideophones in some of Mtuze's stories are lengthened through repetition of the last vowel. The author's purpose in using this form is to depict either continued action or width in space. In some cases it may also be used for emphasis. In **Isingqala sikaZilindile** (1990) two poor elderly people, Zilindile and Novanya, stay with their grandchildren because their only married daughter is irresponsible. Mtuze emphasises the fact that out of their six daughters, **only** one is married, by saying:

... yayinye **jwii** kwiintombi ezintandathu.

(p.42)(My emphasis: BNN)

(... it was only one of the six girls.)

Other examples are "Kwathiwa saa" in **Sala Ngqolomsila** (1977:37), "Wathi tywaa" in **Hamba Bhotile** (1977:21) and "Wee tyaa" in **Umjojo** (1977:62).

In the examples mentioned above, the ideophones are used in a conventional manner. The basic components (namely "-thi" or a variant of it, followed by the ideophone) are present in all of the examples mentioned. In other instances, however, Mtuze tends to use the ideophone in a different grammatical context. In some instances verb constructions are formed from the ideophones. In **Isilamba** (1990:18), for instance,

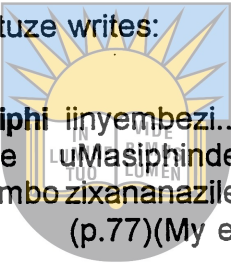
(see summary in 4.3.2.1) when Sisa presents the note in which Nomalinde has written her two addresses to her parents, their reaction is described as follows:

Bangqinelene **zichiphi-chiphiza** iinyembezi...

(p.18)(My emphasis:BNN)

(They agreed whilst teardrops were falling...)

In the above quotation the verb "chiphichiphiza" (teardrops falling) is derived from the ideophone "ukuthi chiphichiphi" (the falling of teardrops). Mtuze also uses this ideophone in the story *Impemb'enkulu* (1977:77) to describe Bantubandile's reaction when he looks at his dying bull. Mtuze writes:



Zithe **chiphichiphi** iinyembezi... Xa ebona iqhayiya lakhe uMasiphindelele esiza erhotyzoza imbambo zixananazile kukunqina.  
(p.77)(My emphasis:BNN)

(Teardrops fell when he saw his pride Masiphindelele coming slowly and looking very weak with its ribs clearly visible through the skin.)

In these examples the ideophone is used as a verb to depict the emotional state of the respective characters in a vivid manner. A similar derivation is also found in the story *Umthandazo kaSteve* (1990:24) where the verb "ncinciza" (the ticking of a watch) is used. This verb is derived from the ideophone "ukuthi nci" (sound made by the ticking of a watch).

Structurally, Mtuze uses a wide variety of ideophones in his short stories. This includes monosyllabic as well as polysyllabic forms. Examples are as follows:

Form	Ideophone	Translation	Story
Monosyllabic	jwi	(only)	Isingqala sikaZilindile (1977:42)
	gu	(to move to the side.)	Abahlobo ababini (1984:1)
	tyu	(to hand something on something.)	Isilamba (1990:19)
Disyllabic	khiqa	(to fall.)	Zinik'iphepha! (1977:15)
	ndwanya	(to stare at something.)	Uyazenzisa (1984:33)
	qatha	(to remember something.)	"Ungakhe uxelele mntu" (1990:7)
Trisyllabic	qwakaqha	(to meet something unexpectedly.)	Iqolomba (1977 :41)
	nxokotho	(to open the mouth as if you are tired.)	lindondo (1984:5)
	xhakamfu	(to catch something.)	Indle'eya kuMadam (1990:40)
Quadrisyllabic	galakaxa	(to arrive at some place.)	UMafutha nemali yesiporho (1977:49)
	nqwadalala	(to sit together as at an <u>imbizo</u> .)	Inxeba lendoda alihlekwa (1984:5)
	qolokotho	(to enter unceremoniously.)	Ityala (1990:30)

No examples of pentasyllabic ideophones could be found in Mtuze's work. This is in accordance with the conclusion arrived at by Pahl (1985:20) that ideophones of this nature are rarely found in Xhosa. In some cases, however, the last vowel of a monosyllabic ideophone is lengthened as already stated in the above discussion.

In section 1.5.6 of this study, Mtuze's strong religious background was described. Not only does he deliver sermons on a regular basis as a church minister but he is also a student of religion who is formally registered for the Bachelor of Theology degree at UNISA. This strong religious orientation of the author is clearly visible in the manner in which he expresses himself in his stories. **WORDS AND PHRASES OF BIBLICAL** origin are frequently found in his work, e.g.:

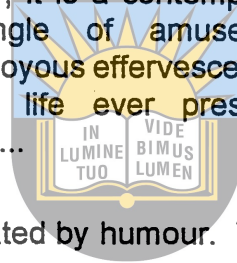
Statement from text	English version from Good News Bible	Story	Biblical text
Imfundo eninzi iyakugezisa Pawulosi	Great learning is driving you mad, Paul	Isaqhwithi (1984:3)	Acts, Chapter 2 verse 24
Dlisa izimvu zam	Take care of my sheep	Umthandazo kaSteve (1990:27)	John, Chapter 21, verse 17
Uyingcwele, uyingcwele, uyingcwele	Holy, holy, holy	'Sala nelo zulu lakho' (1984:32)	Isaiah, chapter 6 verse 3
... esikaRakheli isimbonono	Rachel's sound of bitter weeping	Indlel' eya kuMadam (1990:41)	Matthew, Chapter 2 verse 18
cela ... into ndikwenzele...	Tell me what you want me to do for you	Indlel' eya kuMadam (1990:41)	Kings II, Chapter 2 verse 9
Siwakhande amakrele ethu abe ngamakhuba	Let us hammer our swords into ploughs	Umthandazo kaSteve (1990:27)	Micah, Chapter 4 verse 3
Masibaxolele abo basonayo	Let us forgive the wrongs that others have done to us	Intambo (1990:27)	Matthew, Chapter 6 verse 12

Mtuze's style is strongly characterised by expressions of biblical origin. The question is whether these expressions are being used deliberately by the author to coax the reader towards accepting the word of God or not. The older Xhosa authors did in fact follow this practice in an attempt to influence their readers to become Christian converts. An author such as Sinxo is a good case in point (see also 2.4.3). Mtuze's presentation however, is more refined and subtle in nature, and this may be attributed

to his strong Christian background (as has already illustrated in 1.5.6). Although the tradition of influencing the reader has been set by Mtuze's predecessors, Mtuze himself seems to deviate from this tradition by being less moralistic and by leaving everything to the reader to decide for himself as these biblical expressions form an integral part of each story in which they are found.

Another mode of expression regularly employed by Mtuze in his short stories is that of **HUMOUR**. This stylistic device may occur where two versions of reality may not agree. Mkonto (1988:10) cites Russell, who describes humour as follows:

... intellectually, it is a contemplation of life from the angle of amusement, and emotionally, a joyous effervescence over the absurdities in life ever present to the discerning eye...



Obviously there is pleasure generated by humour. The humorist does not intend to deceive us about his values and his deliberate distortion is in the spirit of fun (Grace, 1965:125). Mtuze is well-known for the humorous manner in which his stories are often presented. As already mentioned in 1.5.1, Mtuze is a humorous type of person who is always ready to recognise the lighter side of life. This feature is clearly reflected in his work.

In the story **Isingqala sikaZilindile** (1977), a man (Zilindile) lives with his wife, Novanya, and their five grandchildren. They are poor, but manage to make ends meet from the small quarterly pension they both receive. Their daughter tends to neglect them by leaving her unhealthy children in their care. Zilindile and his wife are great Christians and one day an unknown voice gives them the opportunity of asking for three things. Novanya immediately asks for a piece of sausage and receives it on a plate. Zilindile becomes angry because his wife has asked for such a triviality and expresses the wish that the sausage should become stuck on her nose. His wish is fulfilled immediately but he is so shocked by this that he then asks for the removal of the piece of sausage from his wife's nose. The chances of asking for anything else are now exhausted as this is the third of their three requests.

Mtuze presents this story with humour, as he clearly describes how Novanya looked when the piece of sausage hung from her nose. He completes this picture by saying:

... waba ngumbono ongajongekiyo ngathi  
likwakwini elimboko urhuqa phantsi.

(p.43)

(... it was a terrible sight, it looked like a  
turkey of which the nose was reaching to the  
ground.)

Humorous incidents and expressions abound in Mtuze's work. In **Zinik'iphepha!** (1977) (see summary in 3.6.2), for instance, the evangelist's refusal to heed to the warnings of the watchman has serious consequences when he is chased by the ostriches. While the evangelist is running for his life, the watchman shouts at him, saying:

Mvangeli, zinik'iphepha! Zinik'iphepha kaloku!

(p.15)

(Lay preacher, give them the paper! Give  
them the paper! )

The humour of this incident is enhanced by this remark. The author makes effective use of sarcasm to depict the watchman's insensitivity towards the plight of the lay preacher.

Humorous comments or remarks of a similar nature are also found in **Isaqhwithi** (1984) where the narrator describes the people who bring gossip to minister Mzananda, by saying:

Onokrawuzana babe bila besoma bexhaphe  
amagwebu bethuth'ezishushu phakathi  
komfundisi nerhamente.

(p.4)

(The gossip mongers were sweating and  
frothing, carrying gossip to and from the  
minister and the church members.)

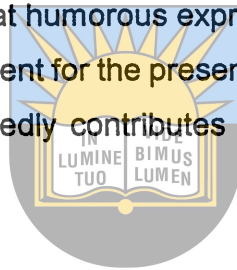
In *Indle'eya kuMadam* (1990) Jackson is given the opportunity to ask for anything he needs. When he asks to be given 'klein meisies' to be his wife, he is violently grabbed by Willem Poggenpoel. The narrator describes the way Jackson is caught as follows:

Wena wakha wabona impuku ithiwe  
xhakamfu yikati kujubalaza imilenze yodwa.

(p.41)

(If you have ever seen a rat held fast by a  
cat, when only the legs are dangling in the  
air.)

From these examples it is clear that humorous expressions form an important part of Mtuze's work. The author has a talent for the presentation of incidents in a vivid, light-hearted manner and this undoubtedly contributes towards the artistic quality of his work.



## 5.5 CONCLUSION

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The aim of this chapter was to make an analysis of Mtuze's style as a short story writer. The point of departure of this investigation was the thesis that style concerns the choice of words which are put together to construct a unique narrative. It is the way a writer distinctively expresses himself. Style is important in literature in that it is the perfect technique by which the writer can accurately express what he intends to say and to convey his views to the reader. Style, therefore, is a useful key to the investigation of the meaning of the narrative. In the short story genre a specific style is found that is based on the laws of compression, brevity and economy. Although style is important in literature it should be noted that there are no binding rules or fixed requirements for the evaluation of this literary aspect. Every literary text is unique, and should be judged accordingly.

The primary medium of expression in literature is language which has a rich vocabulary, which is created by means of stylistic techniques and features. In a stylistic analysis therefore, an investigation on the aesthetic effect of language is done.

We speak, therefore, of the style of the language where language reflects effects in an efficient manner. Language contains a vocabulary which includes figures of speech known as "universal elements" of style and other modes of expression.

The method of investigation in this chapter was based on a division of the study material into two sections, the first of which entails a survey of the different figures of speech found in Mtuze's short stories while the second section deals with other modes of expression found in these stories.

Some of the figures of speech used by Mtuze in his short stories are simile, metaphor, personification, repetition and onomatopoeia. This investigation has shown that Mtuze has used these figures of speech accurately and effectively for various purposes such as emphasis, vivid description, reinforcing meaning and expressing conduct and emotions. The influence of traditional literature is also notable. This is evident from the manner in which his choice of vocabulary is often based upon concepts such as nature, animals, birds, and other traditional objects. It is also noted that Mtuze has a thorough knowledge of the environment as these elements are used accurately and in some cases in comparison with one another. As the discussion on his background reveals (see 1,5), he has experienced both rural and urban life, and this has been the greatest contribution to his knowledge. It is obvious that he is a good observer of the environment as well as of the actions and sounds which form part of it.

Besides figures of speech, other devices such as idiomatic expressions, ideophones, biblical expressions and humour, are also realistically and effectively employed by Mtuze for various important reasons, such as reinforcing the meaning of his stories. It is here that Mtuze's artistry and craftsmanship are observed. His excellent command of the Xhosa language is also observed in his use of its wide variety of idiomatic expressions and ideophones. As a humorist, Mtuze has also successfully employed his craftsmanship, and his strong religious background is revealed in his stories through the subtle and refined manner in which the biblical expressions used by him form an integral part of his stories without being superimposed on them.

Mtuzze has so successfully and effectively employed figurative language and this contributes towards unity and economy of expression in his short stories. His stories are brief and compressed in that, for example, instead of explaining in long sentences the action that took place in a story, he puts it in the form of figurative language or imagery. As a result, each of his stories leaves the reader with a single, unified impression.

It is clear that as a writer of both poetry and prose (see 1.5.8) Mtuzze is strongly influenced by traditional literature. In his work, the normal differences between poetry and prose often become less pronounced, so that in some of his stories, he goes to the extent of writing poetic lines. In the stories for example, **Uyavuth' umlilo** (1977:57-58) and **Isilamba** (1990:14), techniques of traditional poetry such as repetition, rhythm and rhyme are noted. This confirms that Mtuzze has employed his craft as a poet in his prose as well.

What has particularly been seen in this chapter is the readability of Mtuzze's style. His vocabulary is short and economic. He tends to be indirect and suggestive rather than explicit, though not misleading. In this way he involves his ability to interpret. He avoids being elaborate and tedious, giving a description in only a few words. His economic use of words makes his style most effective and at times too tense for the reader to relax, as in the story **Uxolo ehokweni** (1984), which many people may find hard to understand. He tends to be too brief at times.

One may compliment Mtuzze on his complete, motivated and effective style in that he gives one a clear, unified picture rather than simply giving details. Mtuzze's style exemplifies most of the considered opinions of what constitutes good style (i.e he reveals situations instead of describing them) thus making them more dramatic and more gripping. His work has contributed largely to the quality of Xhosa literature as a whole through the avoidance of undue verbosity and through the skilled application of traditional Xhosa expressions and for the use of selected vocabulary which is most descriptive and accurate.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **THEME**

#### **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

In the preceding chapters of this study, aspects of the form and technique of Mtuze's short stories have been analysed and discussed. In this penultimate chapter the contents of these stories will specifically be investigated. While the emphasis up to now has been mainly on the aesthetic nature of these texts the aspect of meaning will now specifically be attended to. In this chapter the discussion will be introduced with some theoretical reflections on the significance of theme as interpreted by some experts in the literary field. Thereafter the thematic nature of Mtuze's short stories will come under discussion. Owing, however, to the limited scope of this study, only the most important thematic aspects will be attended to here. The aim of this survey is to establish the author's basic views on contemporary African society as reflected in his stories.

  
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#### **6.2 DEFINITION OF THEME**

Brooks and Warren (1971:272) define theme as " ... what a piece of fiction stacks up to." Glorfeld et al. (1976:30) concur when they define theme as follows :

Theme in fiction is the controlling idea the author has chosen to particularise in his story. It may be a moral, a message, a belief, an attitude or a world view but it is invariably the central insight the author wishes to communicate.

To enable him to communicate effectively, the author should have a thorough understanding of his society, customs, law, religious beliefs, political practices and social organisations. The importance of this principle is emphasised by Gordimer (1973:11) when she states :

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

(My emphasis:BNN)

According to Gordimer the author plays a vital role in his community because he gives meaning and direction to the national aspirations of the people. Not only aspirations should, however, be given meaning and direction, but the frustrations of, as well as the erroneous views about the oppressed, should also be expressed by the author. Moloi (1974:11) substantiates these ideas by saying :

If they (writers) divorce themselves from the live issues of the day and what affects their people most, then the authors are dead and the community they hope to lead is dead.

The relationship between the terms theme and moral as applied by Glorfeld *et al* above, is further illuminated by McMahan, *et al* (1989:11) when they argue that :

The theme of a work of art is the moral. In a sense it is true, but a moral suggests a neatly stated, preachy comment on some vice or virtue, whereas a literary theme will seldom be so pat and never sound preachy. In order to discover theme you need to decide what you have learnt from reading the story.

Theme, therefore, is a message which is conveyed in a more subtle manner than a moral. But this does not mean that a moral is an insignificant characteristic of a literary work of art. Mkonto (1988:79) substantiates this idea by saying that "... any significant writer has behind him 'traditional' or 'Aristotelian' morality which forms the basis of his moral commitment."

What can be deduced from the above discussion is the fact that morality presents an

essential world view of humanity and as a result it is a significant characteristic of almost every literary form. Feinberg (1963:27) concurs when he writes :

Almost all adventure and conflict fiction expresses, in terms of its own culture's morality, the struggle between 'right' and 'wrong' and almost always permits "right" to win.

It may be concluded, therefore, that in any literary text, no matter how elementary its contents may be, a basic moral will be reflected. The aim of this study, therefore, is to analyse the contents of Mtuze's short stories in order to establish the type of morality reflected in them and to evaluate the success with which the meaningfulness of the text is communicated to the reader.



### 6.3 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THEME, TOPIC AND SUBJECT MATTER

Within the context of literature the terms theme, topic and subject-matter are closely related to one another. While there are certain points of agreement between these concepts, important differences between them are also noted. These concepts have often been applied inappropriately by literary critics in the past. It is therefore important that the basic differences between them be outlined in the paragraphs that follow.

The relationship between theme and topic is outlined by Brooks and Warren (1971:272) when they state :

The theme is what is made of the topic. It is the comment on the topic that is implied in the process of the story.

What is significant in this statement is the close relationship that exists between theme and topic, which implies that the theme is generated by the topic. Generally topic refers to the major intent of a given piece of writing. It is suggestive intent towards which expression is directed. The difference

between subject-matter and theme is clearly outlined by Lenake (1984:15) when he states :

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.

It should be noted that although Lenake refers to poetry, this view could also apply to other genres.

In 3.6.1 the concepts of '*fabula*' and '*szujet*' were discussed. In terms of the distinction made between these concepts, the role of '*fabula*' is unmistakable because it serves as "the raw material of the story, its subject matter" (Stone *et al.* 1983:594). Since creative writing is concerned with the presentation of a particular idea in an impartial manner, the faculty of imagination, (that is, "... seeing with an inward eye and creating new images, characters, situations and incidents in the mind...") is according to Yelland *et al.* (1980:95) "... strongly exercised when a topic for a particular story is originated or formulated." On the basis of this argument topic is strongly interconnected with theme and subject-matter, because they all reveal facts about the behaviour of human beings and the conduct of society. The terms topic and subject-matter will for the purpose of this study be used synonymously, since in fact they generally serve the same purpose, as explained above.

In anticipation of the discussion of the themes found in Mtuze's short stories, it is important that some of the topics treated by him be discussed briefly and that examples which belong to the various categories be presented. The purpose of such a discussion, however, is not to exhaust the matter, neither is it to interpret the deeper meaning that could be generated by these topics. It is simply meant to introduce the reader to some of the leading topics dealt with by Mtuze.

The majority of Mtuze's short stories are based on the topic of Christianity. Various aspects of the role of the church within African society are dealt with. In general there

is no specific Christian denomination that Mtuze illustrates in his short stories except that either an urban setting as in the short story **Umthandazo kaSteve** (1990) or a rural setting as in the short story **Zinik'iphepha!** (1977) is used. Christianity in Mtuze's short stories is illustrated from the point of view of both church officials, as in **Impendulo yeempendulo** (1977) and ordinary members of the church as in **Ilitye likaPhungela** (1984). A good illustration of Christianity and faith where some of the above-mentioned observations can be found, is in the story **Zinik'iphepha!** (1977) (see summary also in 3.5.2). The main character, an evangelist, is late for the Sunday morning service after having attended an evening service the previous day. He decides to take a shortcut via a path which passes through an ostrich field. At the entrance gate he meets a watchman who warns him about the prohibition of people passing through this field. After having uttered furious words and claiming to have a paper (permission) he defies the watchman's warning. On his way through, the evangelist is attacked by the dangerous ostriches but runs for his life while the watchman asks him to give them the paper. He is able to push himself through the surrounding fence and escape, though finding it very difficult to breathe.

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In this story the evangelist's behaviour seems to deviate from the general code of conduct of most Christians. The fact that he speaks rudely and that he undermines and insults the watchman by defying his warning, speaks for itself. Other stories of the same category are **Ingongolothela** (1977) where a Christian drives away a hungry, dirty, ragged man, denying him food and water; only to discover the following day that it was Jesus himself. In **Akasayi kulibala** (1984) members of the congregation adopt an ungrateful attitude towards the main character, Ncamile, who has saved the church several times from chaos and misunderstanding between the authorities and the members.

A further important topic found in Mtuze's short stories is that of crime and its effects on society. In most cases the villain is caught and rightly punished for his misdeeds. Not only are family members murdered by other family members, as in the stories **Izidungulwana** (1977) and **UBabini noSilwanyana** (1984), but members of the society (in general) are also murdered by other members of the society as in the story

**"Undivusile"** (1984). In **Izidungulwana** (1977), for instance, a man murders his wife, mutilates the body, sucks the blood and buries the pieces. In the end he is caught, sent to jail and punished. In **UBabini noSilwanyana** (1984) a similar crime is committed when Babini's wife is murdered. The murderer eventually hands himself over to the police. In **"Undivusile"** (1984) a number of crimes are committed by the main character (Vusi). He is the main suspect in crimes such as murdering a farmer, beating and crippling the farmer's wife, stealing their belongings and thousands of rands. Other crimes committed by Vusi are house-breaking and robbery. He is eventually sentenced to death by the Supreme Court. In **Intambo** (1990) the violence and arson which form part of the political uprisings of the 1980's is depicted. In this story governmental buildings such as the post office, rent office, beer halls and schools are burnt down by angry residents. This arson includes the death of the Hletyiwe family which is suspected of being informers. Vuyo, the main character, is amongst those suspected of such criminal acts and is sentenced to death. Evidence proves him innocent while he is awaiting to be hanged and he is set free. The villains are punished for their misdeeds. What impresses in these illustrations is that none of the murderers goes free and all are punished by law. Those who are not guilty, on the other hand, are exonerated as in the case of **Intambo** (1990).

Human relations between Blacks and Whites form a very important topic in Mtuze's work. In some stories this topic is dealt with on a purely social level, where Mtuze primarily concerns himself with the unhealthy relations between these two different race groups. He places his characters in different situations and backgrounds. In the story **Izilo zilunguzene** (1977) an urban working situation is dealt with, while a farm working situation is also dealt with in the story **Indle'eya kuMadam** (1990). The relations between members of the general public is best illustrated by the stories **Abahlobo ababini** (1984) and **Ityala** (1990). To illustrate some of the observations pertaining to unhealthy relations between Blacks and Whites, the story **Ityala** (1990) is used, where a white traffic officer indulges in a bout of accusing black drivers of offences they have not committed. While Lindile, a black driver, and his friend are on their way to King William's Town, they meet this white traffic officer who accuses Lindile of having overtaken on a barrier line although he has not. What amazes

Lindile is that there was no other car ahead of him and he cannot figure out what he is supposed to have overtaken. Lindile challenges the traffic officer in court, but in vain, and he is charged for the offence (see summary also in 3.5.2).

Other stories which illustrate bad relations between Blacks and Whites are "**Side sahlulwe kukufa**" (1984) and **Epampoenfontein** (1977). Characters representing the different race groups, such as Poggenpoel and Jackson (a White and a Black respectively) are depicted in **Indlel'eya kuMadam** (1990).

In other stories this topic is presented within a political context. The struggle of the African community for political freedom based upon democratic principles is strongly emphasised. In the story **Umthandazo kaSteve** (1990) a memorial service is held at an Anglican church in honour of an activist (Steve Biko). While this is to be an ordinary service, the government sends a troop of soldiers, who enter the church heavily armed. When asked by the Bishop (Russell) to leave the church building, they defy his request and stay until the service begins. Cannon Ezra Tisani carries on with his sermon, after which a song is sung and Bishop Russel asks for anyone who feels like praying to do so. The Captain of the soldiers (Nyibiba) is the first to kneel and pray and his soldiers follow suit. After his prayer, everybody takes part in the Holy Communion. (see summary also in 3.6.3)

In this story, after having lost a freedom fighter, an activist and a leader such as Steve Biko, the Black people are not free to pay their last respects to the man who has fought for so long. The mere presence of the soldiers in a situation such as this (memorial service) speaks for itself. The fact that the soldiers have come here to listen to what is going to be said in this memorial service shows that Blacks were not politically free under the apartheid government. This is shown by the fact that even when Blacks are in God's house praying, a heavily armed troop of soldiers is present and ready to shoot at anyone who does not obey them and the law they stand for. This conduct is a great inconvenience to the people. Other stories of a similar nature are "**Ungakhe uxelele mntu**" (1990), **Uxolo ehokweni** (1984) and **Intambo** (1990).

Mutual relations between members of the African community is another topic dealt with by Mtuze in his stories. In this category, Mtuze illustrates the unhealthy relations that exist between Blacks. He does this by depicting a family life situation as in the story **Isivamna** (1977), of a neighbourhood life situation as in the story **Abamelwane** (1984) and of the general public in stories such as **Akukho bani ukhathalayo** (1984), **Umjojo** (1977) and **Injombe** (1977).

Some of these relationships are clearly illustrated in the story **Umjojo** (1977), in which a lady teacher is accused by her neighbour of having stolen her hen. The lady teacher is fetched from school by police who search and find the hen in the teacher's bedroom. She is taken to court but is found not guilty because she claims that she was only safeguarding the hen against thieves and had hoped to find the owner. On the other hand the teacher's neighbour claims that she had seen the lady teacher locking the hen into her house but had said nothing to her. The lady teacher is found not guilty by the court of law because of the evidence presented by her. In a way one could say that the lady teacher was being blackmailed by her neighbour. Other stories of a similar type are **UMhlekazomhle** (1984), **Uyavuth'umlilo** (1977), **Iqolomba** (1977), **Uthweso-zidanga** (1984) and **Akusenani ntombi kaMzilandlu** (1977).

Like all Xhosa authors, Mtuze does not completely neglect the fact that there are some beliefs amongst his people although he writes very little about it, unlike his predecessors. The belief in ancestors is illustrated by the story **Impemb'enkulu** (1977) while belief in witchcraft is depicted in **Isilamba** (1990). Faith healing is another belief that people of today have strongly accepted. This is illustrated in the story **Uyazenzisa** (1984) (see summary also in 4.4.2.1) where the main character's (Mathemba Mawonga) niece is taken to various medical doctors and specialists and not a single one is able to diagnose her illness. After going from one doctor to another with his niece's condition deteriorating, Mawonga is asked to take her to Cancele, where only water and prayer are the answer. Having gone there his niece becomes better each day until she is totally cured.

From the above categories of topics one observes that a story may belong to more

than one topic. This is the result of the nature of that particular story's contents. Therefore, the above grouping of stories under various topics cannot be taken as final or watertight, as can be illustrated by the story **Akakho** (1984) where one could argue that it is about Christianity, human relations and liquor abuse.

Mtuze's work, therefore, reflects a wide diversity of material and content, which applies to most spheres of African social life, especially the religious life which appears to be his main concern. This can be attributed to his personal background as a Christian (as stated in 1.5.6.)


A general characteristic of Xhosa prose in the decades preceding the publication of Mtuze's works is a tendency towards oversimplification of daily events and resolution of intricate problems by means of acts of superstition, magic, dreams etc. This tendency is often found in the works of earlier writers (Botha, 1984). It is evident, for instance, in Sinxo and Siwisa's short stories where superstition is one of their main themes. It is also evident that with regard to Sotho fiction there are some writers who see life as not being a complex and entangled puzzle to be resolved but as a fairly simple riddle whose solution may be found in dreams, wishful thinking, coincidence and the intervention of supernatural beings and magic. Though this is true in some cases, one has to keep in mind the period when the work was written and published, and matters that were important or popular during that period. For instance during Sinxo's times the society was struggling with the problem of education and one had to write stories to show the importance of education (e.g. **UNOMSA**, Sinxo : 1965)

Supernatural events have in the past often formed an important part of Xhosa prose narrative. But these have today been declared "figments" of our imagination (Mtuze, 1986:47). He cites Barnard, who claims that this practice has now faded out and that "... the church decided witches weren't such a menace anymore" (Mtuze, 1986:47).

Mtuze seems to deviate to some extent from the general tendency found in Xhosa and Sotho literatures in the past. He has concerned himself mostly with the power of prayer as is the case in the story **Uyazenzisa** (1984). Most of his stories seem to

concentrate on a problem which is worked out to its natural conclusion; for instance, in the story "Undivusile" the main character, who has won the hearts of most of the people with his unique utterances, and by pretending to be noble, is suspected of murder, robbery, house-breaking, etc. He is charged and sentenced to death. This case is solved by logical means, based upon police investigations. There is no use of magic or other supernatural means in the solution of this problem. In his third collection **SH-S-SH-H UNGAKHE UXELELE MINTU** (1990) Mtuze has moved even further away from beliefs, superstition, magic or witchcraft as dealt with by his predecessors, to deal more directly with modern problems such as the apartheid and post-apartheid eras and the effect of their policies on the lives of the Black people.

## 6.4 THEMES



The aim of this section is to identify the various main themes found in Mtuze's short stories and to discuss them in accordance with acknowledged literary criteria regarding the short story. The theoretical background to the aspect of theme has already been dealt with in the section above (see 6.2). The various themes found in the stories under discussion will now be dealt with under separate sub-headings. The variety of the main themes evolved by Mtuze in his short stories as found in his three collections will now be discussed. For practical considerations only the most important themes will be dealt with here. These, however, may not necessarily be the only themes existing in Mtuze's short stories.

### 6.4.1 Socio-Religious theme

To Africans, belief in a supernatural being is common practice. This is evidenced by a statement made by Mbiti (1975:1) when he writes :

Religion is the strongest element in the traditional background, and exerts probably the greatest influence upon the thinking and living of the people concerned.

The greatest influence mentioned above is evidenced by the prevalent Christian practice found in most African homes these days. This has been necessitated by the co-existence of Christianity and African traditional religion. A common ground is presented by similar principles regarding human morals and conduct in African society. It is within the confines of these common principles that Mtuze evolves his religious themes. As already indicated in this study, Mtuze is strongly orientated religiously. Not only did he grow up in a Christian household, but in all of his adult life he has always been and still is deeply involved in church matters (see 1.5.6). The aim of this section is to establish the extent to which this strong religious orientation is reflected in his work.

In the preceding section it was shown that a large number of Mtuze's short stories do in fact deal with the topic of Christianity. A survey of these stories has indicated that the author wishes to communicate a particular message to his reader through these stories. In these stories the writer always tends to put to the test man's faith and trust in the Lord. Since faith implies unflinching loyalty to God, it further suggests a deeper conviction of fidelity and integrity even in the face of oncoming danger. The reliance placed on the Lord by Christians amid expected problems and dangers is unstable. This is a flaw on the part of many Christians who pledge to put their trust in the Lord with all their hearts but who then become weak in the face of danger. This theme is strongly pursued by Mtuze in his short stories, as will be illustrated in the paragraph below.

In *Zinik' iphepha!* (1977) (see summary in 3.5.2), an evangelist's faith is humorously demonstrated when he wishes to enter into an ostrich field in spite of the urgent warnings of the watchman. The priest makes it clear to the watchman that to him as a messenger of God, the ostriches do not pose a threat. His pride and obstinacy are immediately diminished by his unwelcome encounter with the ostriches which attack him. The watchman has no better advice to give other than to suggest that he should 'give them the paper' he had boasted to him about, meaning that the evangelist should read to them from the Bible in order to save his life. This comment of the watchman is clearly ironical as he is the one who has just been reminded by the evangelist of the

strength and importance of the word of God.

This incident clearly underlines a theme which Mtuze wishes to portray in many of his stories, namely, that no human being is elevated above the threats and dangers of this world even if he is a servant of God. In spite of this it is still expected of all Christians to put their faith in the Lord regardless of the danger with which they are confronted.

Events similar to those found in this short story are also narrated in a poetic form in Mtuze's anthology of poetry **UGADLA** (1986). It seems, therefore, that this theme is of central importance to the author. This phenomenon of presenting the same theme in both narrative and poetic forms, seems to contradict the observation made by Moloji (1974:186) (when he investigated Ntsane's works) that the author's themes, when he is composing poems, generally tend to differ quite significantly from his themes when he is writing prose.

Another story in which Mtuze clearly demonstrates the theme of hypocritical faith and pretence is **Ingongothela** (1977) (see summary in 5.3.4). The faith of a beautiful young and conceited "Christian" is put to test through her contact with the Lord. Her pride comes to the fore as she prepares for her respectable visitor but fails her when a dirty, ragged, shivering, hungry and ugly man arrives at the appointed time. Her hypocrisy is displayed through her bad behaviour towards the unexpected visitor since she was expecting a most decent and respectable, smartly-dressed visitor, Jesus.

The behaviour of the "Christian" lady in this narrative contrasts with such expected values as sincerity, wisdom, rationality, refinement etc. In a sense it is hypocritical behaviour which is displayed by the lady. Hypocrisy, according to Mkonto (1988:92), contrasts with sincerity, wisdom etc. It is, therefore, this hypocrisy that has made the "Christian" lady to fall into the trap of unconscious dishonesty which she only realises after she has enquired from the Lord the following day. Her Christian pride is strongly diminished when she learns the truth about the person who had visited her the previous day.

In this story Mtuze wishes to emphasise that some people who are generally regarded as Christians are in fact not Christians in their private lives. This is illustrated by the manner in which the "Christian" lady firstly cleans her house, spraying it with air freshener, to make a good impression on her visitor; secondly by the way in which she sends her children to the neighbours in anticipation of the visit of the important guest and thirdly by the manner in which she mercilessly chases away the beggar. Her unchristian conduct is such that she chases away Christ himself when his appearance is not to her liking. In this narrative Mtuze wishes to underline the fact that people who are Christians only in name and in the public eye, will eventually be exposed and rejected by God.

In his portrayal of the religious theme in his short stories, Mtuze shows a strong awareness of the temptations of earthly pleasures to which Christians and non-believers are exposed to on a daily basis. In the story "**Uze ungabhekabheki**" (1984) (see summary also in 5.3.3) a father, Jongintaba Melithafa, on his death bed instructs his eldest son (Mzuvukile) to go up the hill of Nomeva where he will receive endless wealth. Vukile is told that the path to this hill passes through a very dense forest, Qalathethe, and when one passes through it some frightening sounds made by animals and human voices are heard and therefore if one wishes to reach the hill safely one must not look or turn aside in trying to respond to the sounds and calls. Both Vukile and his brother Siphon attempt to reach the hill but fail to heed to their father's instruction and die. It is the youngest Nonceba who manages to pass through and reaches Nomeva hill, where she is welcomed as a princess and receives her share of unending wealth.

A similar incident in the Bible (Genesis 19 vs 26) is found where Lot and his family were told not to look back when they left Sodom and when his wife did, she was turned into a pillar of salt. In this story Mtuze uses symbolism to reinforce meaning: a forest, a snake and a hill. Cirlot (1973:112) cites Zimmer who stresses the following with regard to the forest symbol :

... in contrast with the city, the house and

cultivated land, which are all safe areas, the forest harbours all kinds of dangers and demons, enemies and diseases.

Jobes (1962:594) concurs, though referring to mythology, by saying that universally the forest in myths refers to a realm of supernatural spirits where souls of dead animals may sometimes cause death to wanderers.

The hill according to Jobes (1962:770) symbolises the everlasting, while the snake (1962:1468) symbolises a killer. The symbols of the forest, the hill and the snake are mostly found in traditional literature playing the same role that Mtuze has given to them in this story. In traditional literature the forest is as dangerous as in any story. The snake plays the role of a killer, while the hill is always hard to reach because of having what is everlasting. Thanks to the influence of traditional literature, Mtuze has been able to use these symbols very accurately and effectively because the two brothers are killed by the snake in the dangerous, dark forest whilst Nonceba reaches the hill where she receives everlasting wealth.

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The events in this story clearly illustrate that it is important that Christians should resist the temptations of earthly pleasures. If they do not they will succumb to the domination of Satan. Similar views are expressed by the author in "**Sala nelo zulu lakho**" (1977) and **Isilingo** (1977). In the former, Matyani (who is a Christian lady) goes out of her way to lead her husband (who is a non believer) to Christianity. In the end, however, he rejects Christianity because of earthly pleasures. In the latter a priest is tempted to steal an asthmatic woman's bag containing money and her tablets. Because he only needs the money, he destroys the tablets, thus causing the asthmatic woman's death.

In some stories the ungrateful nature of many church members is effectively portrayed. In **Isaqhwithi** (1984), (see summary in 4.4.2.2) for instance, a church congregation rejects its own minister (Mzananda), claiming that he has some weaknesses. When a new minister (Ndudula) is sent to replace Mzananda, he is also, after a period of six months, rejected by this congregation, which complains about some weaknesses on

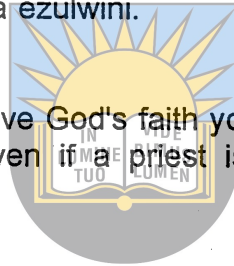
the part of this new minister.

The good work done by minister Mzananda is largely ignored and only his weaknesses are acknowledged by the congregation. The authorities of the church, though unable to find substance in their complaints, are forced to remove him because of pressure from the congregation and to replace him with a new minister. The ungratefulness of the members of the congregation is revealed through the following words uttered by the authorities in response to the unfair rejection of Mzananda :

Ukuba aninawo umoya kaThixo anisayi kuze  
naneliseke nokuba ninokuthunyelwa  
umfundisi ovela ezulwini.

(p.4)

(If you don't have God's faith you will never  
be satisfied even if a priest is sent from  
heaven.)




When the young minister Ndudula eventually replaces Mzananda everything goes well for only six weeks. The congregation then starts to complain again to the authorities about the so-called weaknesses of their new minister. The critical and ungrateful nature of many congregants is emphasised in this story and the author wishes to place a question mark behind the true Christian integrity of the members of the church.

In the paragraphs above some thematic views of the author on the modern day Christian church in African society have been identified. It is clear that these views are mainly of a negative nature as they deal with matters such as the failure of faith, hypocrisy, the temptations of earthly pleasures and the ungrateful nature of Christians. Further analysis of Mtuzze's work, however, has shown that he is also strongly aware of the positive aspects of the modern-day Christian church. These aspects are in fact present in many of his stories and will now be dealt with in the remainder of this section.

Good Christian behaviour is one of the positive themes that Mtuzze concerns himself with in his stories. One of the most important characteristic features of a good

Christian is that of doing good work for the church without expecting any reward for it. The fact that church members are often ungrateful, has already been revealed in the above paragraphs. In the story **Akasayi kulibala** (1984) (see summary in 3.6.1) the main character, who is a preacher, has served the church for many years and has been loyal to it. In some cases he has saved the church from destruction and has played the role of treasurer, for example, when the congregants enquire about church funds. In some cases he has to sacrifice and do the impossible to keep the church on its feet, sometimes he is mocked at by the congregants but he ignores the mockery and continues the good work. Prayers for the bereaved and church meetings are conducted by him during the absence of the church minister. Despite all this good work and efforts, he is denied a farewell by the congregants when he decides to go and further his education, but Ncamile is not discouraged by this. Instead he makes it clear that he never expected nor wanted any reward from the congregation. Ncamile utters the following words before he leaves for college :



Mna ndandingafuni nambuliso ngaphandle  
nje kokuba sidibane ngomthandazo  
silibandla sahlukane ngoxolo.

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(I did not want any farewell whatsoever  
except that we meet in prayer as a  
congregation and part in peace.)

The nobleness of Ncamile's personality can be clearly discerned from this utterance and his faith manifests itself in prayer. The controversy that surrounds his farewell function is dealt a deadly blow by the above utterance, which reveals that, to Ncamile, the spiritual offering in the form of prayer cannot be measured against material possessions. He values fellowship and prayer and is uninterested in material indulgence. His fellow Christians however, misunderstand him in this regard.

Ncamile's response makes one believe that the attitude of character in the story could reflect Mtuze's personal views about the value of prayer. It is a fact that in most if not all his writings, his belief and faith is observed. Saule (1986:14) has correctly perceived this aspect when he says :

UMtuze uyayibethelela into yokuba umthandazo sesona sixhobo angathi umntu oyise ngaso ngawona maxesha amnyama ebomini bakhe.

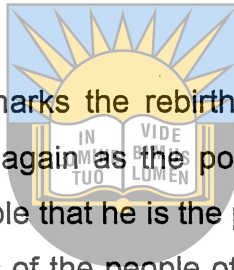
(Mtuzze emphasises that prayer is the weapon with which a person vanquishes during the darkest moments in his life.)

Another story where the power of prayer is portrayed by Mtuzze is **Impendulo yeempendulo** (1977), in which a young priest, Zwane, is asked by the church elder (Liso) after a dispute between him and the senior priest he is assisting, to pray for guidance. It is again reflected in the same story where Liso asks Mayisele to join him in prayer for the presence of Christ in their church. It is evident that Satan had played a major role in the dispute between two ministers, but is overpowered by prayer..

The power of Christian faith is another positive aspect that Mtuzze has dealt with in this thematic category. In times of temptation one is able to overpower evil if one believes or has faith in Christ. In the story **Alitshoni lingenandaba** (1977) a prophet (Khonkotha) relates a story in one of his sermons on how he had "died" after being Satan's servant for the whole of his life. Throughout all those years he had discovered Satan's inability to rescue him from dangers and problems he had encountered. In one of his dreams, Khonkotha met Jesus and Peter, who asked him to mention three things he would wished for. He asked for the power to be able to control Satan and that was given to him. One day Satan came as usual to tempt him and Khonkotha was able to get rid of him because of the power he had received from Christ.

In this story death is used symbolically as it does not refer to literal death but rather implies the death of sin in Khonkotha because, after he had 'died', he rejected being controlled by Satan. Death in this story marks the rebirth of a new personality, as Khonkotha could no longer speak a language that was understood by the people and had to make use of interpreters. The three powers that Khonkotha had asked for from the Lord, enabled him to defeat Satan and his tempting influences. One could say that Khonkotha had been wise enough to ask for what to other people may seem stupid and valueless. It becomes obvious though that after Satan had forsaken

Khonkotha, there is no comparison between Christian faith and Satan himself. Another story where the power of Christian faith is depicted is **Isilingo** (1977) where Mtuze exposes a man's folly who, even though he is a priest, may find temptation too great to resist. As a person who experiences quite a lot of financial problems, Diliza Ngxaki picks up an asthmatic woman's bag in church, takes the money, little as it is, and destroys the tablets which he finds worthless to him. The asthmatic woman (MaGando) comes back looking for her bag and dies on her way back home after Diliza had denied seeing it. After the funeral service of the old lady, Diliza prays and confesses to the congregants that he is the cause of Magando's death. Instead of becoming angry, the congregants love him the more because he has told the truth (see summary in 3.5.4).



In this story the woman's death marks the rebirth of the priest, who, after being controlled by evil (Satan), is born again as the power of Christ is working in him, enabling him to confess to the people that he is the perpetrator. The power of Christ also works in the hearts and minds of the people of Nxarhuni (Nahoon) who accept and love Diliza more because he has told the truth.

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In his depiction of this theme, Mtuze wishes to illustrate the fact that the moral values of honesty and sincerity are other trademarks of a good Christian and can be used successfully to overpower evil. More encouraging is the confirmation of other writers such as Kuse (1977:80) who say :

Truth empowers so that when times of crises comes, and when anxiety filled hours of the end of life arrive, adherents to truth, it is prayed, should face the trials of the time with steadfastness and tranquillity.

The priest's moral victory is reflected in the text as follows :

Unanamhla basamlilela umfundisi uDiliza abantu baseNxarhuni ngenxa yokuba wayethetha inyaniso nokuba ichaphazela yena siqu okanye inkosikazi yakhe uThokozile.

(p.55)

(People of Nxarhuni (Nahoon) still remember Reverend Diliza to this day because he spoke the truth whether it adversely affected him or his wife Thokozile or not.)

In his other stories Mtuze wishes to remind his reader of the fact that even if one has been swayed by the devil, there is still room for repentance. Sometimes one repents by realising one's sin and resorts to confession. In other words, a villainous character is made to reform and a new personality is reborn as the sinner convincingly turns over a new leaf. Repentance or the possibility of repentance is portrayed as a sub-theme in **Umthandazo kaSteve** (1990). On September 12 a memorial service in honour of a patriot, Steve Biko, is held at an Anglican church and conducted by Bishop Russell. When the service is about to begin a troop of soldiers arrives, some of them entering the church building with their weapons while others surround the building on the outside. Bishop Russell asks the soldiers to move out of the church building but there is no response until he decides to continue. The sermon is conducted by Canon Tisani, who is also an ex Robben Island political prisoner. It is very tense, people are afraid of the soldiers while the soldiers in turn are tensely watching every move that is taken, let alone what is to be said about Steve Biko. After the sermon, when Bishop Russell asks for anyone to pray, to everybody's surprise, the captain of the soldiers (Nyibiba) is the first to kneel, followed by the troop, and he makes the most painful and sad prayer which touched most people's hearts. A vigorous hymn is jointly sung for collection, after which the captain and his soldiers take part in the holy communion (see summary in 3.6.3).

This story portrays one of the saddest days in the life of Blacks when the same people at whose hands one of the country's black patriots died, have come to watch the proceedings of their victim's memorial service. People are scared, to the extent that even the narrator makes mention of the fact that he at one stage wanted to go through the window to hide (ndiphume nokuba kungefestile ndinyele umchiza) (to go out even if it is through the window, and flee). By this he indicates that these soldiers are dangerous and that their deeds of killing people are sinful in the eyes of God. The power of God's compassion however enables the soldiers to reform and at the same

time be accepted by the very people who were their victims. When the captain prays people are sympathetic to such an extent that some people cannot control their tears. Their being accepted is depicted by the fact that they are allowed to take part in the holy communion which is referred to as the body and blood of Christ.

The day of the funeral, as the narrator puts it, was a day of pain and sorrow in that people are mourning the loss of a patriot, Steve Biko. At the same time it is a day of victory for the people because their oppressors, represented by the troop of soldiers, who came as animals, distancing themselves from the people and denying the truth, are tamed by the power of God. The victory is pronounced by the narrator as follows:

Umzuzu olandelayo uphele sigudlana  
ngamacala naloo mapolisa sisamkela kunye  
umthendeleko ...



(p.27)

(The next minute we were rubbing shoulders  
with the soldiers and taking part in the Holy  
communion ...)

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This victory in the story successfully indicates that repentance is possible, no matter how sinful one may be. The power of God has worked in the minds and hearts of the police officers and the soldiers to make repentance possible. The phenomenon of death in this story has been used to make the process of reform possible, as in **Isilingo (1977)**

The preceding discussion has shown that the theme of religion plays a most important role in Mtuze's short stories and that a number of sub-themes relating to this central theme, may be identified. In his depiction of this theme, the author wishes to draw the reader's attention to the fallacy of hypocritical faith, the possibility of repentance and most of all, the value of prayer in so many ways. He illustrates how one can use the power and strength of Christ to outwit evil.

Most of Mtuze's short stories are based on socio-religious values. His strong adherence to these values is revealed in his words uttered in a discussion in

**INDLELE'EBHEK'ENKUNDLENI** (1976:75) on Ntloko's book entitled **KUKH' UTHIXO KULE NTO** (There is God behind this thing) when he states :

Lundivuyisile olo daba kuba **andihambisani nento engenabuThixo**

(My emphasis : BNN)

(This news excited me because I do not go along with unGodly things.)

Although God enables sinners to reform from evil deeds, as the previous paragraphs have clearly stated, this does not mean that God is weak, because He is able to discipline anyone who violates His commands. Jesus, whilst at Jerusalem, punished the merchants who were trading in God's temple, claiming that they had turned it into a hideout for thieves (Luke 19. v 45. Holy Bible. Good News version, 1988:106). One of God's commands is that one should love one's neighbour. It is important that one should heed this command for if one violates it then one is villainous and should therefore be punished. This is another sub-theme that Mtuze particularly concerns himself with in his short stories.

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In the story **Inxeba lendoda alihlekwa** (1984) for instance, two friends Nyelenzi and Gasela after having been heavily drunk the previous night decide to buy meat and roast it. When their friend (Nzimeni) comes to join them, they hide the dish of meat. On his arrival Nzimeni asks them for a few cents because he also wants to buy meat for himself. When he has left to buy meat, Nyelenzi and Gasela take out the dish and continue eating the meat. When they are almost finished, Gasela cuts himself on the lower lip with a knife. On his arrival Nzimeni discovers that they have been eating meat in his absence and because of his stinginess and voraciousness Gasela has cut himself. While laughing at Gasela, Nzimeni also stabs himself, accidentally destroying his eyesight with the back of a knife. A doctor is called for both of them by Nyelenzi who is threatened by the fact that Nzimeni who does not sympathise with Gasela is immediately punished (see summary in 5.3.2).

The events in the story illustrate the fact that God punishes villains. Nzimeni has been

a villain in that instead of helping Gasela after he has stabbed himself, he laughs at him because he is denied a piece of meat. The fact that Nzimeni refuses to assist an injured person and insteads mocks him, is unacceptable in the eyes of God and in African society as a whole. One of the commands of God is that one should love one's neighbour with all one's heart. Nzimeni has violated that command and is therefore, punished by losing his eyesight through stabbing himself too in the eye. Nyelenzi comments as follows in the story, thereby revealing the whole question of punishment which is meted out by God to the one who sins (villain) :

Ndoyika nokubhekisela kuloo nto kuba ndijongile nje lo Thixo ukhoyo unxibe ibhuluhwe emfutshane.

(p.26)

(I don't even want to refer to that issue for as far as I can see God answers promptly these days.)

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When Nyelenzi utters these words he is really threatened because he has been an eye witness to the punishment meted out to Nzimeni after having mocked at Gasela. The message we get here is that God who so loves the world is also a disciplinarian when it comes to the violation of His commands.

### 6.4.2 Social values and problems

In the preceding section the thematic portrayal of the most important component of human relationship, namely, the relationship between man and God in Mtuze's short stories has been analysed and discussed. In this section the second component of this relationship, namely that between man and man, will now receive attention.

In his stories Mtuze often tends to make a critical investigation of certain aspects of African social life within the traditional as well as the modern environment. As far as traditional life is concerned, the matter of the erosion of traditional values receives

frequent attention, whilst modern African life is investigated with regard to the pressing problems such as violence and crime which occur in the socio-economic arena. In this section the depiction of African social life within both of these contexts by Mtuze in his work will be critically investigated.

An important theme evinced in Mtuze's short stories is that of the erosion of traditional social organisation and values. Giving us the importance of good moral conduct, Mbiti (1978:181) writes :

African religious beliefs, values, rituals and practices are directed towards strengthening the moral life of each society.

The above can only be realised when the philosophical and ideological doctrines of humanism are observed. Hall *et al.* (1985:198) cite Maslow who says that humanism asserts the overall dignity and worth of human beings and their capacity for self-realisation.

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This fundamental African sentiment is called **UBUNTU (HUMANISM)** which to Africans not only stands for the 'growth of persons' and 'respect for differences of approach' as suggested by Hall *et al.* (1985:198) but also refers to unselfishness, benevolence, kindness and natural affection, generosity, lack of self-concern and altruism. It is true that African humanism is defined primarily in the context of the community. For the African, it is not enough only to be a human being. Unless one shares a sense of belonging with the community, one can easily turn out to be part of the enemy. According to Muzorewa (1958:17-18) the basic view is that the individual exists only because others exist and that our nature as human beings-in-relation is a two-way relation : with God and with our fellow human beings. There exist according to Mbiti (1975:205) many laws, customs, set forms of behaviour, regulations, rules, observances and taboos, constituting the moral code and ethics of a given community or society. A breach of this code of behaviour is evil, wrong or bad, because it is regarded as an injury to or destruction of the accepted social order and peace.

This view as held here by Mbiti is clearly portrayed as an underlying theme in many of Mtuze's stories. The importance of traditional values and the manner in which this is threatened by modern developments seems to be a point of serious concern to the author and other writers such as, for example, Mzamane and Wilson (1978:116) who postulate that with the advent of the western technology, the roots of the African traditions were shaken up to the extent that they moved to a different position. This is a position where we cannot delete these new innovations nor discard the basic traditions of the people. The only resource left for Africans is to make use of both traditions.

Mtuze seems to be particularly aware of the erosion of traditional family ties and forms of kinship as a result of modern influences. In *Akusenani ntombi kaMzilandlu* (1977) for instance, an unmarried mother's son Nceba, dies while staying with his illegal father's brother (Gxekimbo Mbangutha). The corpse is taken to the mortuary but is stolen before the legal relatives arrive for the funeral. The funeral service takes place at the illegal relatives' place after an unresolved argument between these two families. The conflict intensifies when it is announced that the deceased cannot be seen but is ultimately seen. It becomes clear that the chosen speakers for the service do not know the deceased as his own family members, who because of this decides to leave even before the service is over. The conflict grows even further when it is not clear what will be done about the donations offered by people until it is resolved that these be given to the legal mother, Nobonke, who is unable to attend the funeral because of ill health.

The events in this story illustrate the chaos which ensues when traditional African values become eroded because of modern influences. The theft of a corpse by members of a feuding family group is in the African community generally regarded as a serious insult against those who are related to such a deceased person. The comment which is implied in these events is that embarrassing situations such as these may be avoided through strict adherence to traditional norms of behaviour regarding family kinship and the burial of a family member. The Mbangutha family had no legal right to the corpse as nothing was paid to the Mzilandlu family either in

the form of 'lobola' or maintenance of the child since its birth.

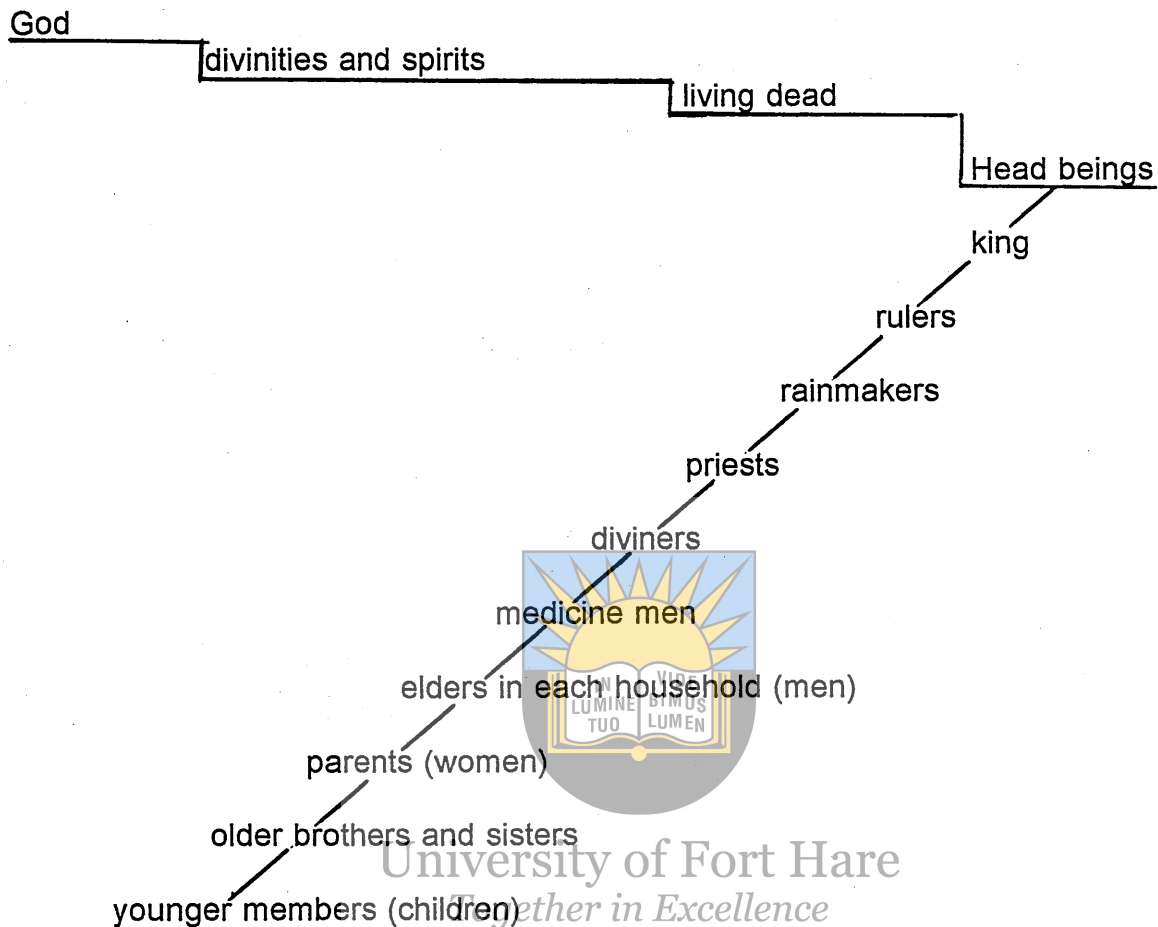
The deterioration of traditional family values is also effectively illustrated in "Akakho" (1984). A father who is also a church minister visits a local shebeen, which is also used as a brothel, to look for his son Mfesane. He is taken to a room where he finds his son in a severe state of intoxication and lying on the floor, unconscious. The father reacts to this by saying : "Ubunyanisile ngokwenene akakho unyana wam" (p.39) ('You were right. My son is really not here') and then departs from the scene as fast as possible. As a church minister, he feels embarrassed to be associated with a person who is in such a terrible state of neglect.

In this story the weakening of traditional family ties in modern society is clearly depicted. The minister's refusal to accept responsibility for his son is something which traditionally is totally unacceptable. Within the African community a parent always has to accept responsibility for his child, regardless of the consequences it might have for him/her:



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In his stories Mtuze also expresses concern about the weakening of traditional patterns of hierarchy within the modern environment. Within the African community there exists a definite hierarchy of authority based according to Mbiti (1975:205), partly on age and partly on status. This pattern discerns as follows :



Infringement of law and order "arising out of disrespect for members of another social position bear tremendous consequences in a traditional society" (Mkonto 1988:150). But the western culture has uprooted the operation of this rule of law and order and has replaced it with new social value systems where the emphasis is no longer placed on the communalistic or corporate structure of Xhosa society, but on individuality. Disrespect according to Mphahlele (1986:9) is a source of a considerable disadvantage and damage of African tradition and is a result of migrant labour, the removal of whole communities from their ancestral ground and landlessness. The African family has been scattered, and the regrouping in urban and rural life is excruciatingly insecure.

The deterioration of the traditional hierarchy of authority is clearly depicted in Mtuze's short story **Akukho bani ukhathalayo** (1984) where a very old widower, Cedume, lives

alone in an old dilapidated house and is looked after by his dog, Gcinumzi. One day, while he is counting his pension, a very young criminal, beats and robs him of his fifty rand. After a few seconds however, the young criminal is bitten by a snake and asks Cedume to cure his wound if he wants his money back. Feeling sorry for the young boy Cedume kills the snake, and cures the wound. In return the criminal stabs the old man to death and his dog pays its last respects to him by licking Cedume's body.

This story illustrates the violation of the sacred social order of things and of the unwritten rule of traditional law. This infringement of law and order arises from the disrespect shown by the young boy towards the old man. Within African society and according to the traditional hierarchy of authority, the young boy is supposed to show respect to his elder relative as he belongs to the bottom of this hierarchy (see diagram on page 226). The social order is thus violated by the young boy when he beats up the old man, robs him of his pension, and ultimately kills him. In African society this is a very serious violation of traditional law. This deterioration of the traditional hierarchy of authority is attributed to modern influences, which tend to destroy or damage the accepted social order. The disrespect and disregard shown by the young man who robs Cedume, alias "Lindinxuwa", is characteristic of the present era. It is in fact aggravated by the physical attack and climaxed by the stabbing of the old man, who is a very senior member of his society. The unnamed young robber's action is strongly depicted by the writer. This action is ascribed to the usurpation of the revered traditional norms by the neo-cultural activities of modern times. The message is loud and clear that the present generation has no respect for life, for age, for authority, for morality, or for the final point of reference, the Supreme Power, God. Things have changed so much that dogs are even better protectors who know the values of their masters.

Another story where respect for the traditional hierarchy of tradition has been eroded is **Isivamna** (1977) in which a married woman (Nolimithi) is always insulting and fighting her husband, Duma. According to traditional law, women should respect men, and Nolimithi continues to violate that law. Her neighbour, MaGatyeni, gives her a

root to put underneath her tongue so that she is unable to start any quarrel with her husband. The situation then improves dramatically. A month later MaGatyeni reminds Nolimithi that:

Esona sivamna emfazini kukuqhubosha  
ulwimi ayeke ukube eyichukusha indoda  
ukuze ahlale enesidima kuyo.

(p.46)

(A dignified woman just keeps quiet and stops always harassing her husband so that she is always respected by him.)

This advice given by MaGatyeni indirectly reminds Nolimithi of the traditional norm that wives should respect their husbands. Although in this story the victim of violence is the man, it is noted that in most of Mtuze's stories the victims are women. For instance, in *Izidungulwana* (1977), *UBabini noSilwanyana* (1984) and *Uxolo ehokweni* (1984) females or wives die because of maltreatment while in *Sala Ngqolomsila* (1977) a woman is the victim of physical violence.

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It becomes clear that Mtuze is keenly aware of traditional norms of behaviour because according to traditional law a woman always plays a passive role in the home. Mzamane (1959:43) in his novel **IZINTO ZODIDI** depicts the position of women in traditional society as follows :

Lasuka lamkhohla uMamNzotho, watsho  
waphelelwa ngamathemba akayazi nento  
amakayenze xa kusuka kubonakale nje  
ukuba kanti umfazi ngokwesiko labaNtsundu  
yinkomo ephumpulwe iimpondo ngolu hlobo.

(It astonished MamNzotho, she lost hope  
and did not know what to do when it became  
clear that a woman according to traditional  
custom is a cow with cut horns.)

Mtuze (1990:19) concurs with Mzamane when he says :

... Women's lives are characterised by jealousy, passion, passivity, victimization by men or other folktale creatures such as ogres and cannibals. In most cases women are depicted as docile and helpless...

Mtuzze condemns this violent victimisation of women by men and, therefore, the villains are punished by law because they do not know the value of a human life. Mtuzze does not only comment on African traditional life, but on certain aspects of modern African society. Problems such as liquor abuse, for instance, are effectively dealt with in stories such as **Hamba Bhotile** (1977) where a young black man's (Phindile Jikumlambo) personality changes after he has been allowed to buy liquor directly from a liquor store for the first time in his life. After having drunk the first bottle he buys another one which he intends drinking on his way home. He goes to visit his girlfriend where he usually had problems with her parents and because he is intoxicated he feels it is his right to pay his girlfriend, Nontsizi, a visit. He also feels that his parents should allow him to come home with liquor. At Nontsizi's home he is kicked by a horse and becomes unconscious. After sometime he wakes up and goes back to the liquor store to buy some more liquor which he drinks and becomes more intoxicated thus unable to stand on his feet. He then decides to go to the nearest police station to ask for a place to sleep. Here, he is charged for making noise while drunk by the policeman on duty. The next day he is brought to court but because he is able to defend himself by saying that he was avoiding being seen intoxicated by the public, he is set free. Another story where the same theme is evolved is **Akakho** (1984) (see summary in section 4.3.2.2). The destructive effects of this social evil are clearly brought to light in these stories.

The importance of the education of African youth represents another main concern of the author. In a story such as **UMhlekazomhle** (1984) the importance of education in the preparation of the youth for their role as future leaders of their country is strongly emphasized. The theme of social violence and its consequences for those involved, however, forms the most important, integral part of Mtuzze's work. This theme will now be dealt with in greater detail in the paragraphs that follow. As already shown in 4.4.2.2, violence between different characters often assumes serious

proportions in his stories. The depiction of such a theme is not only logical but also quite necessary in a society which is constantly plagued by violence in various forms.

In his stories Mtuze frequently portrays the matter of marital tension and the violence which ensues from it. In **Uthweso-zidanga** (1984) (see summary in 3.5.3) for instance, the festive atmosphere which characterises the University's annual graduation ceremony is shattered when one of the graduands commits suicide by shooting himself in the parking area immediately after the ceremony. The constant quarrelling between the parents with regard to custody of the child (Siphiwo) is the cause of this tragic incident.

In this story Mtuze illustrates the tragic consequences that chronic marital problems may have. The author's strong consciousness of this theme is illustrated by the fact that it is portrayed not only in his narrative fiction but also in his essays. In **INGQAGABA** (1977:50), for instance, the responsibilities which accompany marriage are discussed extensively in the essay, **UMahlekabulawe**.

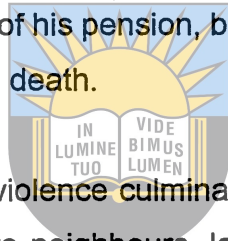
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Elsewhere in Mtuze's work, problems within marriage and the violence which may be generated by it are also frequently portrayed. In **UBabini noSilwanyana** (1984) the mental instability of one of the partners leads to the murder of the other partner. The importance of mental health as a basic requirement for a stable marriage is emphasised here. In **Izidungulwana** (1977) the gruesome murder of the wife and the mutilation of her corpse by the husband (Andrew Nganga) are illustrated. Unfortunately, thematic portrayal does not take place successfully in this particular story as the real motive behind this gruesome incident is not explained satisfactorily to the reader. The reason for the conflict (if any) between Andrew and his wife is unknown and so the reader is unable to interpret the significance of the events presented here (see summary also in 4.3.2.2).

The author's intention in presenting this particular theme is to sensitise the reader to the fact that marital problems which might occur should be solved timeously. Should this not take place, it could have severe consequences for those involved, including

acts of physical violence. Within the traditional environment, marital conflict and violence are equally unacceptable. Hunter (1936:45) points out that if a woman in marriage should behave badly, either she is to return to her parents' home or she might decide to resort to this on her own initiative. Marital violence is, however, not seen as a solution for marital problems. The existence of the well-known Xhosa proverb 'Induku ayinamzi' (Mesatywa, 1980:196) confirms the fact that the physical beating of a wife by the husband is not acceptable within the African tradition.

In some of Mtuze's stories the theme of social violence is closely related to crime. In "**Undivusile**" (1984), for instance, the criminal acts of the main character (Vusi) are accompanied by incidents of severe violence. In **Akukho bani ukhathalayo** (1984) the young criminal not only robs Cedume of his pension, but physically beats him until he is unconscious and then stabs him to death.



Other stories in Mtuze's work where violence culminates in death, are **Abamelwane** (1984) where the conflict between two neighbours Jamani and Zamani arises from minor incidents and escalates rapidly until both families are destroyed by fire, and **Uxolo ehokweni** (1984), where the domination of one dove family by another results in the death of both dove families.

In these stories Mtuze wishes to draw the reader's attention to the serious level of crime and violence which exists in modern African society. In a society where these phenomena have become daily occurrences, people tend to become used to their effects (death in most cases) and to accept them as a way of life. Through his portrayal of this theme in his stories, the author wishes to renew the awareness of the reader concerning these matters and he wants to encourage him/her to oppose (resist) these tendencies in the community. In this respect Mtuze's work is closely related to that of Peteni, as found in his novel **KWAZIDENGE** (1986).

In the novel the author also endeavours to sensitise the reader to the short-sightedness of seeing violence as a means of solving problems and to its effects on the people. To oppose violence from which there is nothing to gain, there should be

peace, goodwill and love amongst men. To live in peace and harmony, people should value one another as human beings.

#### 6.4.3 Protest against factors affecting race relations

In the preceding sections of this chapter, Mtuze's interest in and close concern about human relations was illustrated. This pertains to human relations, not only at the vertical level (between man and God) but also at the horizontal level (between man and man). As far as the latter is concerned, Mtuze's stories tend to depict human relations, not only between Africans (as discussed in the preceding section) but also between Africans and members of other race groups. It is this aspect of his work which will now be examined in the paragraphs below.

In his stories Mtuze shows particular awareness of the relationship between Black and White within the South African context during the years before transformation. In his portrayal of this theme Mtuze's work tends to take on the form of Protest Literature in that he often expresses strong criticism of the manner in which members of one race group are often discriminated against by members of the other group. Before this discussion on Mtuze's portrayal of the theme of race relations can continue however, the concept of Protest Literature will first have to be attended to on an introductory basis.

Up to the fifties, creative writers seemed to simply titillated the readers with good stories, while journalists concentrated on writing about politics, sports, fashion, etc. But at the end of the fifties, and following the banning of the ANC and the PAC, we began to see the popular emergence of what has been called Protest Literature. This means that there was a movement away from stories written with the purpose of entertainment towards stories written with the purpose of revealing the spectacular ugliness of the South African situation in all its forms : the brutality of the Boer, the terrible farm conditions, the poverty of African life, crime and a host of other things (Ndebele, 1991:40).

Losambe (1994:1) cites Ndebele who has discerned two basic traditions in the writings of Black South African authors, namely the "spectacle tradition" of protest literature and "a certain human validity" in the character of the oppressed through a detailed depiction of the ordinary. In this investigation, it will be determined to which of these categories Mtuze's work belongs.

Ntuli (1978:156) defines protest as follows :

Throughout the ages writers have been found to express their displeasure about certain conditions or practices.

The Concise Oxford Dictionary (1982:1226) concurs with the above author when it defines protest as "... a formal statement of dissent and disapproval." From these two definitions it can be concluded that protest is the expression of disapproval of injustices of any kind. Protest literature is thus written for the purpose of voicing this dissatisfaction with and disapproval of some aspects of life by the writer. One could sum up by saying that protest arises where ambitions are frustrated or denied. Verschoor (1972:3) claims, although referring to poets, that "... protest implies that the poet is profoundly, often painfully aware of the world of man around him, fully cognisant of what to him seems reprehensible and wrong with it and deeply disturbed thereby." This observation applies to the writer of the short story as well. The protest writer is also deeply involved in the situation that prevails and rejects what seems to him to be unjustifiable. Verschoor (1972:3) writes :

He will be under strong compulsion to become proportionate in strength to the urgency of his feeling to express his inability to accept those things with which he is at variance.

One can deduce that the writer is committed to revealing truths and in this way he becomes "... the voice of the people beyond any glib political connotation of the phrase ..." (Gordimer, 1973:11). This means that the author has the duty of opening the eyes of the reader, creating awareness amongst his readers about the

incongruities of life (Fowler , 1973:106). The narrator shares his experiences with them, and thus overcomes the isolation of self. There is a very strong notion about the commitment of the writer to his people and various critics have emphasised this commitment, for example Moloji (1974:229) avers :

Authors are a vital part of any community. They are the ones to bring forth meaning and direction to the national aspiration of the people.

Mtuzze (1986:121) cites Jordan who also points out that:

The writer... is like the eyes 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.

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Weaknesses of society may be manifested at the social and political level. Protest should not, therefore, be perceived as being only political. The artist should suggest solutions to the problems and not only mention them.

Besides commitment, the civil rights leader, Martin Luther King Junior suggests that the protest writer should not be violent if he wants to be understood. King cited by Garrow (1978:220) postulates :

Non-violent resistance does not seek to defeat or humiliate the opponent, but to win his friendship and understanding. It is constantly seeking to persuade the opponent that he is mistaken and seeks to awaken a sense of moral shame in the opponent.

In identifying any disagreements and in voicing his disapproval, the writer should avoid using intense language. In the paragraphs below, the various aspects of the theme

of race relations, as depicted by Mtuze in his stories, will now be analysed.

#### 6.4.3.1 Farming sector

The depiction of the theme of protest in Mtuze's stories first and foremost manifests itself in the portrayal of the relations between Black and White within the agricultural sector. In Section 1.5.1 of this study it was stated that Mtuze was born and grew up on farms in the Cradock/ Middelburg area. It is evident that the author has first hand experience of conditions in the farming sector and it is inevitable that this will be reflected in one way or another in his work. In the paragraphs that follow, the depiction of this particular theme will now be investigated more closely.

In the story **Indlel'eya kuMadam** (1990) a farmer by the name of Rooi Willem Poggenpoel, who is well-known to his labourers and fellow whites, is feared by everybody including the members of the police force. He is so cruel that his nickname 'Madangatye' (the hot one) fits him well. His labourers often resign because he will wake them up by means of a bell, even before the sun has risen. Anyone who comes late for work is discharged after having been beaten by Madangatye. His labourers are afraid to turn to the police for help because he in turn will accuse them of theft. In spite of all the cruel behaviour and dismissals on this farm, one labourer who is able to tolerate Rooi Willem is Jackson who has grown up on this farm. Because of the many years he has stayed on this farm and his closeness to Rooi Willem, Jackson is not trusted by the other labourers. One day Rooi Willem tries to prove to the other labourers that he is not as cruel as they think he is, by enquiring from Jackson what he would like his "master" to do for him. When Jackson asks to be allowed to marry his "master's" daughter, Emmarentia, Rooi Willem becomes furious, grabs him and orders the other labourers to throw Jackson into the hot brick oven while he fetches his gun. Jackson is helped to escape by his fellow labourers and a dog is thrown into the oven instead. After some years, Jackson returns to the farm. The farmer is shocked to see him alive and asks him where he comes from. His response is that he comes from heaven where Rooi Willem's wife is, and that she has sent him to ask her husband to send her a specially prepared dinner. Rooi Willem refuses to

cooperate and accuses Jackson of being untrustworthy. He, however, asks Jackson to show him a way to heaven as he wants to visit his wife whereupon Jackson tells him that its path passes through the burning oven (see summary also in 3.5.4).

The attitude shown by Rooi Willem in this story is despicable. The way he treats his labourers is unacceptable and it appears that even the law cannot curb the misconduct and brutality shown by this man. Rooi Willem's labourers have to work long hours under difficult circumstances. They have to wake up at about four o'clock in the morning and late-comers are dismissed. He is feared by his fellow Whites and members of the police force because of his brutality. He is a cruel murderer.

On the other hand, Jackson is a loyal labourer who is very tolerant towards his employer Rooi Willem. Even when he comes back after his escape, his loyalty and trust are not shaken or disturbed by his master's cruel actions in response to the marriage request which cause the final crisis and are a true reflection of Rooi Willem's personality. This is proved by the use of the possessive pronoun Jackson uses in his conversation with his master on his return, saying:

Hayi phofu mLungu **wam**, indlela eya  
kuMadam ilula kakhulu ...

(p.43) (My emphasis: BNN)

(No, in fact my master, the road to where  
Madam is, is very easy ...)

The use of this possessive pronoun **wam** (mine) indicates that Jackson is still attached to his "master", Rooi Willem. This portrays the genuineness of Jackson in this relationship, while Rooi Willem shows signs of insincerity and unpredictability. Can Themba in an interview with the editor of **DRUM** (1956:158) addresses the matter of the unpredictability of White men in general, by saying:

They are unpredictable, you never know  
where you are ... and whatever you do, you  
must avoid annoying them. If they want to,  
they can wreck you.

Rooi Willem in this story, therefore represents a group of racists while Jackson represents the oppressed group. Rooi Willem is an extremist and Mtuze rejects his unacceptable actions, making it clear that there is no room for extremists in this world. Jackson is saved by the other labourers, who throw a dog instead into the hot oven. The symbolic action of throwing in a dog symbolises the fact that a human being cannot be treated like an animal. The extremists who do not value the life of a Black human being, treat Blacks worse than they do to animals and this is totally unacceptable to Mtuze. This symbolic action has been used effectively by Mtuze to reinforce the meaning of this theme of bad relations between White farmers and their Black labourers. The harassment and misery experienced by Africans in European employment is also confirmed by Mdaka (1992:72-73).

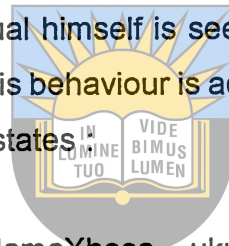


The positive relationship between Black and White racial groups in the farming sector is also explored by Mtuze in the story **EPampoenfontein** (1977). A strong mutual relationship develops between a farmer, Van Blerk (Maqhajana) and his foreman, Napolisi (Napoleon), who has served his master since his youth. His loyalty to his master enables Napolisi to be treated exceptionally well by Van Blerk, who allows him to keep as large a herd of stock as he wishes, and who lends him his car to go to town. The other Black labourers eventually become jealous and accuse him of being a sell-out. One day Napoleon is saved by his master from being killed by angry co-workers who are in turn asked to resign and leave. Van Blerk's action results in enmity between Napoleon and the other black labourers. He, therefore, decides to leave for Two Streams farm. When van Blerk (Maqhajana) dies he leaves a ten thousand rand inheritance for Napoleon on condition that he is still working at Pampoenfontein. Unfortunately he does not qualify for it because he had left that specific farm a long time ago.

The behaviour of the farmer, Maqhajana, in this story differs quite substantially from that of the White farmer as portrayed in **Indle'eya kuMadam** (1990). Whilst the latter is a hot-tempered person who intimidates his workers, Maqhajana is a more moderate person who behaves sympathetically towards his workers, in particular towards his black foreman, Napolisi (although Maqhajana's motive in imposing the strict conditions

for the ten thousand rand inheritance to Napoleon may be questionable). Whilst Napoleon is loyal to his employer, the other black workers still see Maqhajana in a stereotyped manner, as a brutal oppressor who exploits his workers as most white farmers tend to do. Napolisi's behaviour in cooperating harmoniously with his employer soon creates a feeling of hatred amongst the other black workers and he is forced to resign.

In this story the division and enmity which traditionally exists between Black and White is effectively illustrated. Any attempt of cooperation between a moderate Black person and a moderate White person is met with serious opposition by Blacks. The behaviour of a Black person such as Napolisi is regarded as a threat to the unity of the Black community and the individual himself is seen by them as a sell-out, who deserves to be severely punished. This behaviour is according to Mtuze, nothing new in the Black community because he states



Kambe lisiko lamaXhosa ukumchukela  
umntu akuthandwa ngumLungu.  
(" Ungakhe uxelele mntu", 1990: 38)

(It is a long-standing practice of the Xhosas  
to victimise a person when he is liked by a  
White person.)

This behaviour may be attributed to the fact that the uprooting process has disturbed the rhythm of the lives of Black people, setting up tensions and filling them with apprehensions. At the same time this behaviour confirms Mbiti's (1975:209) view that by nature Africans are neither angels nor demons and that there are many occasions when their feelings of hatred, strain, fear, jealousy and suspicion also become readily externalised. This makes them just as brutal, cruel, destructive, and unkind as any other human being in the world.

In "**Side sahlulwe kukufa**" (1984) (see summary also in 4.3.1.2) the author once again explores the possibility of closer cooperation between Black and White in the Agricultural (Farming) Sector. In this story a white farmer, Eben Jansen alias

"Magqadaza", has very strong and healthy relations with his foreman, Mbali Vukuza, who has served his family since childhood when they were young friends. Magqadaza spends most of his time with his wife, Nokwindla, and Mbali. They drink tea in the same cups and play tennis together. Jansen's family avoids visiting Magqadaza, claiming that he is spoiling the servants by letting Mbali sit next to him or his wife whenever they drive to town, thus violating the tradition of letting Mbali sit at the back even when it rains but Magqadaza tells Mbali and Nokwindla that only death will separate them. Jealousy crops up amongst the fellow Black labourers and the fellow White farmers as Nokwindla sees no problem in their friendship with Mbali, claiming that it is their right to do as they like in their own home. Jansen's untimely death comes as a great loss to the labourers who are all treated as friends. They all cry for him and before his funeral service starts the labourers sing Magqadaza's favourite song "AbaNtsundu nabaMhlophe mababulele kunye" (Blacks and Whites must pray together). However, when the service is about to begin, the Black labourers are sent out because there are some Whites who do not approve of their presence. They march out with great dignity, ignoring Nokwindla's hand signal that they must not leave.



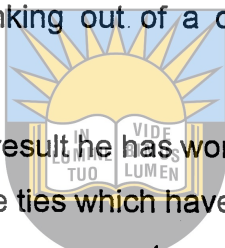
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In this story the behaviour of the White farmer, Magqadaza, is even more cooperative and sympathetic than that of Maqhajana in the previous story. He treats his foreman, Mbali, and his other labourers not as slaves, but rather as fellow human beings and as friends. On their part Mbali and his fellow workers are loyal to their employer and they fully accept him as part of their circle of friends.

The farmer's wife, Nokwindla, initially is reluctant to accept such a relationship between members of different race groups but eventually she overcomes her prejudices and accepts the workers as her friends. The members of the White community, however, are totally opposed to the mutual friendship between the farmer and his workers to the extent that they order the Black workers to leave the church during the funeral service of Magqadaza. Perhaps, according to Selby Ngcobo as cited by Sampson (1956:157) "... the Europeans, probably because of their materialistic outlook, lack the essential quality of human beings, which is best conveyed by the

word 'Ubuntu' (Humanism)." In agreement with the above statement Sampson (1956:36) confirms that, as a white editor for a Black paper, he found freedom of movement among Africans which he could never have enjoyed among his own race because he could mix with everyone from gangsters to film stars. The fact that Magqadaza and Nokwindla could share everything with Mbali who is Black and illiterate, reminds one of the attitude of most Europeans when it comes to sharing the same tea cups. Sampson (1956:61) speaks of the "battle" of the tea cups, saying :

There is an old South African theory that, although you have a native cook in your kitchen, and a native nurse-girl who baths your child, there is something particularly terrible about drinking out of a cup that a native has used.



Magqadaza is an exception, and as a result he has won the hearts of all his labourers and not only of the foreman Mbali. The ties which have already been forged between the deceased and his workers are, however, so strong that the negative behaviour of the other Whites does not have any effect. This is illustrated by the spontaneous singing of the late Magqadaza's favourite song by the Black workers, 'AbaNtsundu nabaMhlophe mababulele kunye' (Blacks and Whites must pray together). They respond to Nokwindla's hand-signal that they should not leave by saying :

Bayeke Nokwindla bamngcwabe ngaphandle  
kwethu umlungu **wethu** ... naku ke namhlanje  
sisahlulwa kukufa.

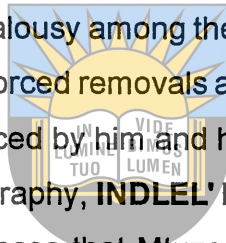
(p.37) (My emphasis:BNN)

(Let them bury **our** master without us,  
Nokwindla... Here today we are separated by  
death.)

The use of the possessive pronoun 'wethu' (our) shows their deep affection for Magqadaza. This affection is a result of the good treatment they received from Jansen. This also shows that Blacks always appreciate what is done for them, i.e. they are humanitarian by nature.

In this story Mtuze wishes to illustrate that cooperation between Black and White is in fact possible provided that all members of the community are prepared to contribute to such an effort. He has also shown how these efforts may be jeopardised through the actions either of members of the Black group (see **EPampoenfontein** : 1977), or by members of the White group (see **"Side sahlulwe kukufa"** : 1984). These two groups belong to the extremists for whom Mtuze claims there is no room in the process of maintaining healthy relations. Healthy relations cannot be established immediately because they demand a great deal of patience.

In this section Mtuze has concentrated mainly on race relations because he grew up on a farm where he was part and parcel of the suffering group. The favouritism which results in dividing the labourers, the jealousy among the labourers themselves and the exploitation by the white farmers and forced removals are not things of hearsay to him, but things that were actually experienced by him and his family. This is confirmed by his views as expressed in his autobiography, **INDLEL' EBHEK' ENKUNDLENI** (Mtuze, 1976:13) These are the bad experiences that Mtuze claims, have made him resort to education at the relatively late age of ten years.



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Mtuze looks at the ills of society, especially human relations between a master and a servant. He makes use of characters of different races to show the importance of good or healthy human relations, not necessarily with kinfolk but with another human being irrespective of colour.

#### 6.4.3.2 Civil service

A significant number of Mtuze's short stories deal with the whole matter of race relations within the civil service. In 1.5.7 of this study it was shown how Mtuze had been a member of the civil service for a number of years, initially as a senior court interpreter and thereafter as the first Black deputy clerk of the court in South Africa. It is to be expected, therefore, that this aspect of South African social life will also be reflected thematically in his work.

In the story **Ityala** (1990) (see summary also in 3.5.2) the author explores the theme of race relations within the security service. A white traffic officer accuses a Black driver of an offence he has not committed. After a long argument with the traffic officer, Lindile takes the matter to the clerk of the court, who pretends to be busy and refers him to the prosecutor. The Magistrate finds Lindile guilty and also fines him. Lindile is also asked to appeal, but decides to pay the fine of thirty rand because he knows that he will still be found guilty even if he appeals to the court of appeal in Bloemfontein.

In this story the traffic officer is portrayed as a person strongly opposed to and prejudiced against Black people. This is confirmed by the name Dubulegeqa (literally, the one who shoots to kill, and figuratively, the one who always prosecutes successfully) which is given to him by the Blacks because this affected only the Black drivers. His decision, therefore, to stop Lindile and to issue him with a traffic fine, is clearly politically motivated. Lindile is portrayed as an average, law-abiding Black person. He tries to prove his innocence to the traffic officer and also to the court but without success. The fact that he has a witness to support his evidence, is also of no help to him. Even his attorney (Dubulegeqa) is unable to rescue him from the situation he finds himself in.

The theme which Mtuze wishes to portray in this story is that of the unfair, discriminatory application of justice in South Africa during the Apartheid years. The fact that Lindile is found guilty without the necessary proof, can be seen as criticism not only of the conduct of the traffic officer but also of the prosecutor and the magistrate, who all happen to be White. The fact that Lindile does not react violently to the verdict of the court is, however, also significant. By presenting the character in this manner, Mtuze wishes to stress the fact that protest against racial discrimination should always take place in a non-violent manner. At the same time, the author is strongly critical of the apartheid system and its application in daily life. The duty of the traffic officer is to maintain law and order on the road and not to harass Black drivers simply because they happen to be Black. The verdict passed by the court is also strongly criticised as it confirms the suspicions of Blacks that they do not have the necessary protection against the misuse of the law. This is

confirmed by the following paradoxical statement made by the magistrate before passing sentence.

Ndisengxakini ke yokuba ndiyakholelwa kummangalelwa yaye andinasizathu sokungakholelwa nangummangali. Andisiboni isizathu sokuba asuke ajikijele ummangalelwa ngetyala angalenzanga. Ngenxa yezo zizathu nangenxa yokuba ndikholiwe bubungqina bommangali, ndiza kuwisa kwa esiya sohlwayo besiwiwe, andiz'ukusinyusa, ndikufumanisa unetyala, ndikufayina amashumi amathathu.

(p.33-34)

(I have a problem believing the accused and I have no reason for not believing the plaintiff, I see no reason why he can denounce the accused for an offence he has not committed. For these reasons and because of satisfactory evidence given by the plaintiff I am imposing the same fine, I am not going to raise it. I find you guilty, your fine is thirty rand.)

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Whether the magistrate honestly believes Lindile's interpretation of the incident is doubtful and he is possibly influenced by the fact that the defendant is a Black man and the witness is also Black. This is confirmed by the views of Cartey (1971:51) who says :

One reason which white officials often give for the suppression of the native is his lack of trustworthiness as evidenced by his continual lying.

What Mtuze is also revealing in this story, is the fact that the bias of the law and its members plays a major role in straining human relations between Blacks and Whites. In the previous section it was pointed out by Mtuze that Rooi Willem was feared by members of the Police Department, who therefore could not curb his brutality towards the workers (see discussion on **Indle'eya kuMadam** in 6.4.3.1). This is noticed by many Blacks who, after Lindile's refusal to appeal, express their agreement by saying:

Uyalungisa kuba baninzi abantu abatyatyulwa bengenandlela yokuzithethelela

kwezo ndlela kuba la magosa endlela  
ethenjwa zezi mantyi.

(p.34)

(You are right because many people who  
have no way of protecting themselves on  
those roads are suppressed because  
Magistrates rely on these traffic officers.)

In another story, **Izilo zilunguzene!** (1977) (see summary also in 3.5.2), the author once again portrays the theme of discrimination in the police services. In this story two policemen, one White, Nkomiyahlaba and the other one Black, Siyongwana, are not on good terms. Nkomiyahlaba is a strict disciplinarian whilst Siyongwana has a very mean and relaxed behaviour. Siyongwana has a weakness of drinking liquor even during working hours and Nkomiyahlaba thinks this is what he is going to use in taking his revenge. One day a friend Bhanqo brings a bottle of gin to Siyongwana. They both drink it and are caught drinking by Nkomiyahlaba, but Siyongwana pretends to be tasting what Bhanqo is drinking and is found not guilty by Nkomiyahlaba, escaping scot free from his revenge.

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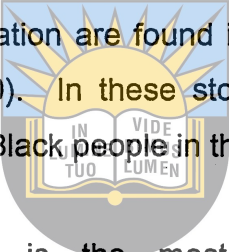
It is evident that there are strong differences between the White officer and the Black officer in this story. The White officer is a strict disciplinarian who approaches his work in a professional and stereotyped manner. Siyongwana on the other hand, shows a more relaxed attitude towards his work and the fact that he is more flexible in his approach is illustrated by the way in which he is described by the author as 'umakad'enetha engenabhatyi' (One who survives the most difficult and unbearable conditions of life - a very lax person)(**Izilo zilunguzene!**,1977:7).

Nkomiyahlaba cannot tolerate the relaxed attitude of his colleague and he plans to expose him whenever the opportunity arises. His attempts, however, do not succeed and Siyongwana is able to continue with his work as a policeman. There is strong reason to believe that the friction between the two police officers is racially motivated. Nkomiyahlaba is a typical representative of the traditional White police officer. He is rigid and unsympathetic in his approach towards Blacks. He wishes to destroy Siyongwana's career as he does not believe that he, as a Black man, is fit to be a

police officer. The fact that his attempts fail, may be interpreted as a critical rejection by the author of any views based upon apartheid and discrimination.

In this story the author may be criticised for the incomplete manner in which the racial theme is portrayed. The true motive behind the intense conflict between Nkomiyahlaba and Siyongwana is never clearly revealed and it is left to the reader to come to the conclusion that the conflict is politically motivated purely on the basis of the circumstantial evidence presented by the author. Owing to the severe shortness of the story, certain important facts have undoubtedly been omitted by the author and this has led to the incomplete portrayal of the theme.

Other similar situations of discrimination are found in stories such as **Umthandazo kaSteve** (1990) and **Intambo** (1990). In these stories Mtuze disapproves of the unfairness of the law with regard to Black people in the "old South Africa". According to Balogun (1991:21):



State violence is the most important instrument employed by the government and its agents, notably the police, to maintain the injustice of apartheid.

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Perhaps Mtuze just like Bloke Modisane (1963:217) has learnt that in South Africa the law is White and Whites therefore, may be manipulated by the process of the law, not to conform to principle. The white law's mission is not only to protect the interest of the few, but to maintain and perpetuate them in a position of arbitrary authority. It must be emphasised that Mtuze does not undermine the duties of the civil service but he deprecates the manner in which they are performed.

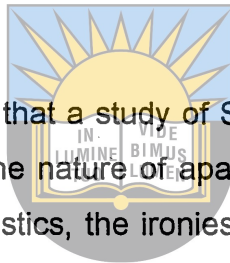
#### 6.4.3.3 Apartheid and its effects on the people

In describing apartheid, Mona (1994:2) cites Davis who states :

Apartheid, ..., is much more than a system of intense racial discrimination. Fundamentally it, like the segregationist policies which

preceded it, is a system of economic, social and political relations designed to produce a cheap and controlled Black labour and to generate high rate of profit.

In some of Mtuze's short stories the general effect of apartheid on the average citizen of South Africa is accurately depicted. His aim is to show that race relations during the years prior to 1990 were quite unhealthy and needed to be critically investigated and rectified. In doing this Mtuze addresses a theme which plays the most important role in African Literature and in the short story genre in particular. According to Odun Balogun (1991:20) the theme most dominant in African short stories is apartheid and this is because South African writers patronise the genre more often than writers from any other regions of Africa.



This critic comes to the conclusion that a study of South African short stories yields abundant information concerning the nature of apartheid, the system by which it is maintained, its dominant characteristics, the ironies it engenders, and the solutions that would ensure its eradication. In this critic's view, practically every story about apartheid stresses its essential nature as a legalised system of racial discrimination that respects the rights of the so-called superior White race while denying any rights to the supposedly inferior Black and Coloured races. Even when a white and a black South African have established human rapport, the relationship between the two always remain at the master - servant, superior - inferior level.

Numerous sociological studies have, however, found that people from all racial and ethnic groups have equal potential for any job or any kind of social behaviour. This refutes the conservative view that there are inherited biological differences which make Blacks intellectually and physically inferior. Sherman and Wood (1982:90) argue that this view is used by racists to the detriment of the oppressed group.

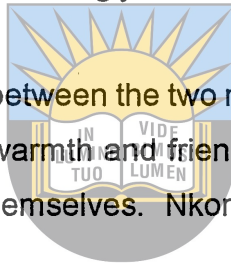
The general effects of apartheid on the lives of average South African citizens (both Black and White) are clearly reflected in **Abahlobo ababini** (1984). In this story a White traveller, Nkomiyahlaba, is held up when his car gets a puncture on the way to Noupoort in the Karoo. It is early in the morning and so cold that the whole area is

covered by snow and people are unable to warm themselves with hot drinks because the water is frozen. While collecting some coals along the railway line to make a fire, a local Black man, Bhayilenja notices a stationary car next to the tarred road, which judging by its appearance has been standing there for a long time as it is covered by snow. What amazes Bhayilenja is the fact that the owner of the car seems to be having trouble. He decides to go and render some assistance. On his arrival on the scene he finds a strongly built White man who is trying to unscrew the nuts of a wheel that has a punctured tyre. To Bhayilenja's amazement no other White motorist stops to assist Nkomiyahlaba. He ascribes this to the fact that the car carries a Natal registration plate, which means that Nkomiyahlaba is unknown in the Noupoot area. Bhayilenja offers his assistance, but as he is slenderly built, Nkomiyahlaba adopts a sceptical attitude and, standing aside, takes out a cigarette and begins to smoke. He utters some words which Bhayilenja does not understand. After a while Nkomiyahlaba tries again, but as the wheel nuts are frozen tight, his attempts are all in vain. Bhayilenja suggests that they should turn the wheel spanner together. This time the White man accepts his help and the two men succeed in loosening all the nuts. As a sign of gratitude, Nkomiyahlaba offers to pay Bhayilenja but Bhayilenja does not accept the cash as to him, human trust and friendship are more valuable than money.

In this story the hostility of the relations between Black and White in the South African context is clearly revealed. Nkomiyahlaba is depicted as a typical example of a racist White male, as he initially ignores the presence of Bhayilenja and also refuses to accept his offer of assistance. He even humiliates the Black man by blowing cigarette smoke in his direction while uttering some words which Bhayilenja cannot understand. Bhayilenja, as a member of the Black labourer's class, shows understanding of the situation. He is not oversensitive to the White man's attitude of superiority. He keeps on offering his help, although it is initially rudely refused by Nkomiyahlaba. In the opening scene, the coldness of the relationship between the two men and thus, between Black and White in the general South African context, is effectively symbolised by the cold, snowy conditions, by the chilliness of the weather and by the desolateness of the flat Karoo landscape.

Eventually, Nkomiyahlaba is forced to accept Bhayilenja's help and the wheel nuts are successfully loosened. This illustrates the fact that obstacles in the South African context can be successfully overcome when there is cooperation between White and Black. The problems with which South Africa is faced cannot be solved effectively if they are tackled by members of one race group independently of the other group. This has been proved by the incidents prior to the 1994 elections when all racial groups came together for negotiations and a compromise was reached so that today we speak of a "new South Africa". Although this story was written long before such incidents took place, Mtuzi ought to be praised for his far-sighted vision with regard to the fact that races can only live together in peace and harmony if they can cooperate, trust and love each other willingly.

The cooperation which takes place between the two men in this story and the success thus achieved creates a feeling of warmth and friendship between them despite the cold conditions in which they find themselves. Nkomiyahlaba's change of attitude is described as follows :



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Iye yafudumala intliziyo yakhe. Ucinge nzulu amehlo emilile kuBhayilenja.

(p.2)

(His heart became warm. He thought deeply, his eyes staring at Bhayilenja.)

The drastic improvement in the relationship between the two men is also described as follows :

Bakuba bezikhulule bajongene ngamehlo azele yimincili kucacile ukuba baswele nje indlela yokuqhagamshelana.

(p.2)

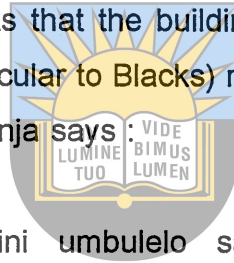
(After having loosened them, they looked at each other with eyes full of excitement and it was clear that the only stumbling block was how to communicate with each other.)

Bahlukana apho ingulowo efudumele ... Kanti nemiphefumlo yayizele yimivuyo ngenxa yobuhlobo ababenze ecaleni kwendlela.

(p.2)

(They left each other, each of them experiencing a feeling of warmth... On the other hand their souls were full of excitement because of the friendship they had made next to the road.)

In this instance the author wishes to stress the fact that relations between Whites and Blacks can be completely normalised through the cooperation of both parties. The fact that Nkomiyahlaba offers Bhayilenja payment and that the latter refuses to accept it is also significant. This suggests that the building of healthy relations is to the average South African (and in particular to Blacks) more important than materialistic remuneration. That is why Bhayilenja says



Sawusa emalini umbulelo sawubuyisela entliziyweni.

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(p.2)

(Gratefulness which is sincere is more important than material reward.)

The importance of a change of attitude amongst South Africans in general is not only stressed in **Abahlobo ababini** (1984) (as illustrated above) but is also underlined clearly in **Umthandazo kaSteve** (1990) (see summary also in 3.6.3). This story ends where the attitude of the soldiers and their commander changes completely, to the extent that they take part in the Holy Communion. The important role played by the Christian religion in bringing about this change in people, is suggested through the quotation of the following Biblical phrase (Micah 4 v 3) by the author :

Siwakhande amakrele ethu abe ngamakhuba.

(p.27)

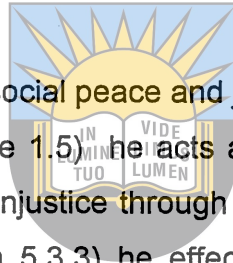
(Let us hammer our swords into ploughs.)

Mqhayi as cited by Qangule (1979:103) is another writer who has used the same

phrase in Rubusana's **ZEMK'IINKOMO MAGWALANDINI** (1906). This phrase is a suggestion that people should change their problems into challenges and opportunities. In the modern South African context this means that groups who are in conflict with one another should find solutions to their differences so that they can work together in the building up of the new South Africa.

The necessity for the Whites and Africans of South Africa to share the nation's wealth on the basis of humanity, mutual respect and love is also Balogun's (1991:21) suggestion in support of Mtuze's views in the story **Umthandazo kaSteve** (1990). The obvious implication of this story therefore, is in Balogun's (1991:23) terms that the whites in South Africa will only recover their lost humanity by dismantling apartheid.

Mtuze is known as an exponent of social peace and justice. As a church minister and a preacher of the word of God (see 1.5) he acts as an exemplum, and, therefore, tends to reveal any form of social injustice through his writings. In the story **Uxolo ehokweni** (1984) (see summary in 5.3.3) he effectively illustrates the effects of apartheid on people which has been in existence since the arrival of the White man in this country.



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In this story the narrator's son is a lover of doves (pigeons) and whenever he gets money he buys some more. He owns different kinds of doves and one day the narrator notices that his son has a problem which he finds difficult to solve. This problem is caused by two male and two female doves which he has recently received. The two male doves are great enemies and one can hear them fighting each other every morning. One of the doves is very weak and always runs and hides behind the females while the other is aggressive. The reason for the hostility between them is unknown and the narrator's son is unable to mediate between them. One day the boy decides to make a partition in the cage but the aggressor still finds a way of reaching the other dove. Enmity between these two doves reaches its peak and one day the aggressor's mate dies and the aggressor takes the weaker dove's mate by force. The fight continues until the other female dove is also killed. The hostility between these two doves increases but in the process the weaker dove is caught in a trap by

unknown boys and dies because it has concentrated on the aggressive dove and has almost forgotten about other enemies. The stronger dove survives but one day is caught by his owner, killed and eaten. The owner's explanation for this is that the stronger dove will act aggressively towards any other doves which he might buy in the future.

In this story the flock of doves is initially kept together in their cage. They seem to live together harmoniously and without any problems. The arrival of the new male dove, however, creates serious problems to the extent that a partition in the cage has to be built. In this story the flock of doves represents the South African population. The aggressive dove is called Maqhajana, a name which is also used for a white character in the story **EPampoenfontein** (1977) (see discussion in 4.2.2.2). It may, therefore, be concluded that this dove symbolises aggressive elements within the White community and that the weaker dove represents the Black community. The separation of the cages is symbolical of the apartheid system and the creation of separate living areas in the country for the different race groups. The bullying of the weaker dove by the stronger dove represents the suppression of Blacks by the White community and the dispossession of the wife of the weaker dove represents dispossession of the mother land through the use of force.

In this story Mtuze suggests that stability, peace and mutual understanding can only exist once apartheid and its laws are abolished and all people are allowed equal citizenship rights and privileges regardless of race, colour and creed. But the White man is obsessed with power. This obsession leads to suffering, ruthless loss of life and maltreatment of the female dove, who tamely accepts the stronger dove as her new spouse because of victimisation. This situation reflects Black South African society which because of oppression has become dehumanised. Mtuze points out that oppression leads to the erosion of moral values as well, since a period of courtship is necessary before doves 'marry' :

Ibe ngumnqa nale yokuhlalisana lula  
kangaka lo gama amahobe adla ngokufuna

ukutshatiswa kuqala.

(p.40)

(It was amazing that they were able to live peacefully while doves usually need courtship first.)

In this story the doves are placed in confinement, which means that they are not free. Instead of striving for the freedom of the whole flock the aggressor is obsessed with power and frequently assaults his fellow doves. This means that some South Africans are more concerned with personal issues than with national issues such as political freedom. The fallacy of this is also strongly revealed in Mtuze's poem entitled "Inkululeko" found in **VINGCAN'AMAZIBUKO** (1982 :27) part of which reads as follows:

Unokonwaba njani uniel' ugogekile  
ungenakuphuma kwikhej' evaliweyo  
ungenanto?

Kuthe kant' usisidenge. Utshilo uNondlwane.  
**Akuzaz' iipolitiki, inkululeko nantsi  
engqondweni.**

(My emphasis:BNN)

(How can you be happy when you're bounded and can't go out of a closed cage, having nothing? )

(Seemingly you are a fool, says Nondlwane. You don't know politics, freedom is in the mind.)

The stupidity of the aggressive dove is revealed by the fact that although it is left alone in a closed cage, all it does is boasting about its own kingdom, forgetting that it is also vulnerable to the enemies. As a result at the end he is caught and killed.

Mtuze's plea in this story is that Black and White citizens in the Republic of South Africa are to strive for peace, unity and the upliftment of the nation as a whole. He is against the exploitation and deprivation of the weaker by the stronger or turning this

country into a 'jungle' where only the fittest will survive. Mtuze clearly shows his disapproval of apartheid and its laws which have broken the social order previously existing in the country. Not only is he aware of the problem of the White man who wants to make South Africa "a White man's land" through segregation, but he also offers a solution to this, namely that permanent control of one race by the other should be avoided. The story **Uxolo ehokweni** (1984) illustrates the abuse of power under the apartheid system and its effects on the population.

## 6.5 CONCLUSION

The aim of this thematic survey was to investigate how Mtuze's basic views on contemporary African society are reflected in his short stories and to establish and evaluate the success with which meaningfulness of the text is communicated to the reader. This has been achieved by first presenting theoretical reflections on the significance of theme as interpreted by some experts in the literary field. This has been done by defining what theme is and what its relation with the term 'moral' is. The relationship between theme, topic and subject matter has also been briefly scrutinised and found to be inter-connected because they reveal facts about human behaviour and society's conduct. A brief survey on some of the leading topics dealt with by Mtuze in his short stories, have been investigated. Christianity was found to be the most popular topic found in his stories, followed by human relations, crime and traditional beliefs which are found in very few stories. It was also noted that because of the contents of the stories one story can belong to more than one topic category and that Mtuze's work reflects a wide diversity of material and content which applies to most spheres of African life. His primary concern is with religious life, which is attributed to his Christian background.

Botha (1984:41) points out that Mtuze's predecessors had a tendency to oversimplify daily events and to resolve intricate problems by means of superstition, magic, dreams and so on. Mtuze, however, has deviated from past tendencies because problems in his stories are worked out to their natural conclusions and the modern problems of the apartheid and post-apartheid eras and the effects of these on the lives of the Black

people are dealt with in a sober and realistic manner.

Some of the main themes treated by Mtuze are the religious theme, social values and protest against human relations. With regard to the religious theme, Mtuze has reflected both negative and positive views on the Christian church in an African society. Negative sub-themes identified were : hypocritical faith, failure to resist temptations of earthly pleasures and the ungrateful nature of church members; positive sub-themes were the value of prayer, the possibility of repentance, God's power and strength to overpower evil, trade marks of a good Christian and God's disciplinarian nature. In his depiction of the religious theme, Mtuze has concerned himself with the relationship between man and God.



In his depiction of the theme of social values and problems, Mtuze has mainly concerned himself with the relationship between man and man within the modern African environment. The importance of traditional values and the manner in which they are threatened by modern developments seems to be a point of serious concern to the author. African humanism, whose philosophical and ideological doctrines should be observed in order to strengthen the moral life of each society, is shaken by the socio-economic problems. Sub-themes reflected in this category are : the erosion of traditional family ties and forms of kinship; the weakening of the patterns of hierarchy; marital tension; victimisation of women; importance of education; liquor abuse; crime; and most of all, violence, which seems to be the key result of the death of characters in some of the stories discussed here. In this category, Mtuze wishes to renew the reader's awareness of the unacceptable erosion of traditional life and therefore encourages him to resist such tendencies.

Race relations in the form of protest is another theme developed in Mtuze's short stories. This theme is based on strong criticism of the manner in which Blacks are discriminated against by Whites in the South African context. In Mzamane's (1975:3) terms, Mtuze has set himself the task of not only voicing his people's aspirations and frustrations, but also of correcting some erroneous views about the oppressed of South Africa. It appears that Mtuze has first hand experience of the conditions he has

written about (see 1.5.1 - 1.5.8). The depiction of this theme has manifested itself in the portrayal of race relations between Blacks and Whites in different situations such as the farming sector, the civil service and the effects of apartheid on the general public. In the farming sector Mtuze has been able to reflect both positive and negative relationships between the farmers and their labourers which in most cases shows the disingenuousness of the White farmers and the loyalty of their workers to them. This has been illustrated by the use of the possessive pronoun by these workers, under many circumstances, when referring to their "masters". Favouritism and jealousy, exploitation and forced removals are phenomena his stories are based on. Mtuze's aim is to illustrate that cooperation between Black and White in the farming sector is possible if all members are prepared to contribute to such an effort and that the improvement of relations demands a lot of patience on the part of both groups.

The discriminatory application of laws in South Africa during the Apartheid years, with specific reference to the Civil Service, is another theme which is frequently depicted in Mtuze's work. The bias of White officers of the law has greatly contributed to the strained relationship between Blacks and Whites. In his work, Mtuze does not undermine the Civil Service in itself, but deprecates the manner in which it executes its duties.

The rejection by the author of any views based upon apartheid and discrimination against the average citizen of South Africa prior to 1990 is also reflected in the stories. In this theme Mtuze has revealed apartheid's essential nature as a legalised system of racial discrimination that respects the rights of the so-called superior White races while denying any rights to the supposedly inferior Black races. Human rights are denied to Blacks everywhere. In the street, for instance, a White man looks down upon the Black as being inferior; in the church state violence has played a role in maintaining the injustices of apartheid and according to Mtuze the White men have been so obsessed by power that they have turned this land into a "jungle" where only the fittest survive.

As an exponent of social peace and justice Mtuze has pointed out that relations

between Blacks and Whites in this country can be completely normalised through racial cooperation. Solutions to their mutual differences should urgently be found, so that both groups can work together in the building of the new South Africa, where every individual can be free, and there is no control of one race by another and people are able to strive for peace, unity and the upliftment of the nation. Mtuze also suggests that stability and mutual understanding can only exist once apartheid and its biased laws are abolished and all people are allowed equal citizenship rights and privileges regardless of race, colour and creed.

In general, the depiction of theme in the short stories of Mtuze has been successful except for a few cases where it is not revealed fully enough, because some relevant facts have been left out. In these cases the reader finds it very difficult to confirm some of his ideas because the stories are too short and the reader is, therefore, left to guess what the author's aim is in writing a particular story. As already stated in 4.3.2.3 the motives of characters are in most cases not clearly revealed and this makes it difficult for the reader to understand the actions of the characters, thus making it difficult for the reader to make accurate interpretation of their personalities. The successful depiction of the theme is, therefore, strongly handicapped by this weakness. In such stories, Mtuze has used summary rather than dramatisation through action, dialogue and thought, thus preventing the theme from coming to the surface clearly enough.

Despite these few demerits Mtuze has generally been successful in portraying his themes and has largely avoided moralisation, sermonisation and didacticism. This is a great improvement on the work of his predecessors such as Sinxo, Siwisa and others where these tendencies were rife. Mtuze has achieved this success through the constant use of humour, which prevents the story from becoming more like a Sunday school lesson. Other methods used by this author to depict his themes are symbolism and irony.

Although Mtuze's work contains a strong form of protest against injustices committed in the country, no violent nor vulgar language is used by him in his stories. He does

not wish to incite his reader to commit acts of violence. In the final analysis his main concern is with the living conditions of the ordinary people and on the improvement of these conditions.



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## CHAPTER 7

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

#### 7.1 INTRODUCTORY PERSPECTIVE

One may suggest to first time readers and literary scholars that if any of them have any interest in reading Xhosa short stories, they should start by reading Mtuze's works because they are short and interesting throughout.

Much has been said in the past about Mtuze's skilful writing in general. A prominent literary scholar and author, Satyo (1983:85), for instance, claims that Mtuze is generally regarded as the best writer of the Seventies. This is indeed an appropriate assessment, since one of his collections of short stories, **AMATHOL' EENDABA** (1977), was published during that decade. Another literary scholar, Saule (1993), in a discussion on S.A.B.C T.V also commented on Mtuze's ingeniousness as an artist.

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Mtuze's success as one of the most prominent artists of modern Xhosa literature becomes even more explicit when the variety of genres in which he has thus far published is taken into consideration. He has produced novels, drama, poems, short stories, essays and a biography. He is an award winner in three of these genres. In addition to this, Mtuze is a well-known researcher in the field of Xhosa literature and language. His flair in the Xhosa language is revealed by the fact that he has recently completed a study on the historical development of Xhosa literature (see **IZWI LABANTU**: 1994).

#### 7.2 SUMMARY AND ASSESSMENT

The Xhosa short story with its own unique features has been skilfully demonstrated by the masterful pen of Mtuze, as shown in the preceding chapters of this study. The author's success may be ascribed, firstly, to his thorough knowledge of the basic literary features of the short story such as unity, economy and compression and the

manner in which these features contribute towards its uniqueness. This uniqueness is easily discernible when one compares a short story with other literary genres such as the novel, drama, poetry and the essay. Its formal limitations, however, have not led to stagnation of the genre (see historical development of the Xhosa short story page 267-268).

In its present shape, the short story as an artistic form has been practised from as early as the previous century across the world. With the exception of certain developments that appeared only in later stages, the modern short story as we know it today emerged during the previous century from the pens of masters such as Poe, de Maupassant and others. In Xhosa literature the short story in its present form was developed only considerably later. It is especially writers such as Sinxo and Siwisa who, during the fifties of the present century, led the way with their well-designed short stories. The use of this literary genre by Xhosa writers has rapidly increased since that time, so that a considerable number of works have since been published.

Despite the significant increase in the use of this form of prose, the majority of Xhosa short stories as investigated by literary scholars such as Botha (1978), Sotashe (1979) and Mtuze (1986) continue to display certain striking shortcomings and defects of a basic kind which result from their deviation from the basic acceptable norms. Some literary critics and writers, however, are reluctant to classify these as weaknesses, as they feel that the influence of African tradition has played a major role in the creation of these texts. Universal principles, therefore, should be considered with great circumspection when evaluating an African text because both its universality and its African character should be acknowledged in a balanced manner. In this study, therefore, universal principles as well as African poetics have been considered in the evaluation of Mtuze's stories.

In accordance with the observation of Peltzie (1966:703) that "every work of art has structure", Mtuze's stories follow the traditional pattern of exposition, rising conflict, climax and ending. These elements represent the Macro structure of the story (see Chapter 3).

The opening paragraphs generally arrest the reader's interest in most of Mtuze's stories. Situations are realistically presented through the use of well-known settings and in some cases a universally known background, such as the church or the school, is portrayed. Time is depicted in a suggestive and interesting way. Mtuze generally introduces the main character successfully and in most stories the conflict is presented from the outset. This conflict is gradually developed by a series of scenes and convincingly resolved at the end. There is a swift line of progression and the cause of the conflict is identified at an early stage in the story. From this point the action is followed to a crisis and a conclusion.

A definite pattern of rising action and escalating tension is reflected in most of Mtuze's stories. The reader is kept in suspense by the intensity of both the tension and the conflict. While in some stories conflict is dramatically presented, in others it is underdeveloped because of the unequally matched characters. The use of the technique of contrast and dramatisation results in an effective climax in most stories, but the presentation of summarised important events unfortunately leads to a less successful climax in some stories. In this case Mtuze makes use of a third agent or external force in an indirect manner to reach a resolution. His climaxes in general are presented successfully, convincingly and as near to the end of the story as possible. A variety of endings is one important feature of Mtuze's work. His stories end in one or other of the following ways :

1. with an unexpected twist
2. with a happy or unhappy ending
3. with an indefinite ending
4. with no formal ending

By following this strategy the author ensures that monotony is avoided on the part of the reader. The fact that some of his stories do not have a formal ending does not affect their literary success because in most of them the reader is left with a single impression and his/her curiosity is satisfied.

According to Bader (1945:88) modern stories which normally satisfy "... do exhibit the traditional structure of conflict, action and resolution." These literary aspects are present in most of Mtuze's stories, thus making them real and aesthetically satisfying.

The manipulation of raw materials into a system of unified, dynamic action has been handled successfully by the author through the application of conventional criteria. To achieve this Mtuze has successfully and effectively applied the criteria of selection, the addition of fictional facts and the judicious ordering of facts. While most of his stories are presented chronologically, the normal time sequence is altered in a few instances. This contributes towards the creation of an interesting narrative approach in his work (see Chapter 3).

With regard to character portrayal, apt characterisation has placed Mtuze's work among the best ever written in Xhosa literature. Characters are portrayed in various ways. His primary technique is that of being more dramatic and less descriptive in the portrayal of characters to avoid boredom. In his descriptions Mtuze has economically and skilfully portrayed the inner qualities of his characters, thereby avoiding authorial intrusion. In his use of the indirect approach, the characters' actions, speech and thoughts are skilfully dramatised, although in some cases important scenes are summarised thus compelling the reader to make his or her own conclusions with regard to the inner motives or intentions of the characters involved in the action.

The naturalness of speech of Mtuze's characters is one important feature which has contributed to his success as a writer. His characters' speech is judiciously presented. Contrastive depiction is another "tool" used by Mtuze. This interesting feature is intended to propel his plot swiftly in order to reach the end of the story in the shortest possible time.

The simplest and most popular approach applied by Mtuze in his characterisation is the Naming technique. A variety of names, ranging from Christian names to nicknames, are effectively and successfully used to individualise the characters. It has also been noted that this technique is frequently used by many other Xhosa writers.

Mtuze, therefore, could not escape this general and most impressive technique because it is grounded in societal norms, habits and tradition.

The use of conflict to depict character has been effectively applied by Mtuze. Different types of conflict such as character against natural forces, character against character and character against himself, are used. The most frequently used type of conflict in Mtuze's stories is character against character, which is also the most dominant in fiction as a whole. The least frequently used is that of character against natural forces such as drought, fire, etc.

In general, Mtuze's style is simple, readable and flowing. His skilful use of the Xhosa language is noted through his economic and accurate vocabulary. His economic use of words makes his style most effective, though sometimes too tense for the reader to relax (see stories such as *Uxolo ehokweni*: 1984). Mtuze's language tends to be indirect and suggestive rather than explicit, without misleading the reader. The stylistic features of his work contribute to the understanding of his intentions and his views. This is done through the use of figures of speech such as simile, metaphor, personification, repetition, onomatopoeia, symbolism, irony and humour (see Chapter 5). The last three also contribute towards the interpretability of the contents of Mtuze's stories (see Chapter 6).

These figures of speech are effectively used by the author for various purposes such as emphasis, vivid description, adding force to meaning and expressing conduct and emotions. His vocabulary is based on concepts such as nature, animals, birds and other traditional objects which can be attributed to his thorough knowledge of the rural environment. Close observation on the author's part is another "tool" that has helped Mtuze to be accurate and successful in his style. The influence of traditional literature has played a major role in the evolution of Mtuze's unique and accurate literary style.

Other modes of expression such as ideophones, idiomatic expressions, biblical statements and humour are realistically employed. The author's excellent command of Xhosa is observed through the use of a variety of idiomatic expressions and

ideophones. Mtuze's artistry and craftsmanship are furthermore attributed to the effective use of figurative language which is employed for various reasons. As a humorist (see 1.5) Mtuze has succeeded in displaying his craftsmanship in a subtle and refined manner. Relevant biblical expressions with deep meaning are used without being superimposed upon the reader. The essential characteristic of a good short story namely, the intense striving for unity and concentration, is achieved by Mtuze in his stories through his predilection for implication and the use of suggestive language. He has largely avoided what is propounded as negative stylistic features which are found in most Xhosa writers' works. These are according to Botha (1978: 196-198) undue verbosity, exaggerated description of events, extensive descriptions and injudicious and weak sentence construction and paragraphing (See also 2.4.3).

According to Wellek and Warren (1980:30) the true essence of literature lies in the "*dulce et utile*" (sweetness and usefulness). This principle is not neglected by Mtuze because his stories are not written only for entertainment but are also known for their usefulness. His stories, therefore, should be read with great alertness and understanding.



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Mtuze deals with various important themes of the day. He mainly focuses on the depiction of themes such as religious life, human relations and social values. As he is a person with a strong religious background (see 1.5) most of his stories are based on the religious theme. His investigation of social issues such as opposing human values and problems is also indirectly a way of showing his moral commitment to the social order of his people. This is done through the revelation of ways in which people should approach moral issues that affect the whole community. His objective in the depiction of this theme is to focus on the futility of engaging oneself in violence which most people see as the shortest way of solving mutual problems. With regard to race relations, Mtuze protests against the horrible injustices committed in the country during the apartheid era. He investigates in particular the systematic mechanisms that were designed by Parliamentary legislatures to discriminate along racial lines.

Mtuze's commitment as a writer has caused him to adhere to what has been

diagnosed as the primary function of an African writer. He has, therefore, not only described that which threatens the existence of his nation, but also offers a remedy or suggestion for this. For example, Mtuze suggests that if apartheid and its systems could be abolished, people could live in harmony and there could be mutual understanding among them. But as this process could take its own time, he appears to be appealing to his reader to exercise patience.

In his expression of protest, Mtuze generally refrains from inciting his reader. He avoids violent, vulgar and instigating language but does not fail to prick the conscience of the evildoers. His main message is forgiveness, understanding, tolerance and reconciliation. This is ingeniously illustrated by the strategic manner in which he handles the phenomenon of protest. His stories are characterised by non-violent actions. For example, Jackson, in the story *Indle'eya kuMadam* (1990) ought to have been angry and seeking for revenge because his White employer wanted him dead. Instead, when he comes back to meet his employer, Jackson is cool, calm and collected. His response to Rooi Willem's questions reveal that Mtuze is sending a message that one should do to others what one expects others to do to one. In this way Jackson does not humiliate his opponent, but seeks to alert him to his wrong action, thus making him feel ashamed. Such an approach demonstrates that Mtuze's protest illustrates a quest for social order based upon the principles of fairness and equitability.

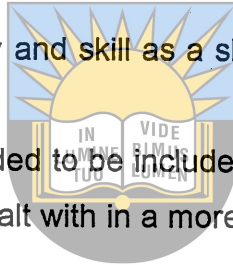
Although some shortcomings were observed in the short stories of Mtuze, it should be noted that the greater strengths or merits observed override these weaknesses by far. Mtuze, therefore, can be classified as one of the best short story writers in Xhosa literature.

With regard to his contribution to Xhosa literature as a whole, Mtuze has contributed tremendously to the raising of its quality (standard) by improving on some of the so called "shortcomings" mentioned by Botha (1978). One could, therefore, classify him as one of the best modern writers of Xhosa literature. His literary contribution can be measured in terms of both quantity and quality and there is hardly any genre that he

has not contributed to. Thus, Mtuze has to be applauded for his valuable attempts and efforts to restore the standard of Xhosa literature.

Future research on Mtuze's stories may focus on the following topics :

1. Imagination in Mtuze's short stories
2. Tension and Suspense in Mtuze's works
3. Setting in Mtuze's short stories
4. Artistic sensibility in Mtuze's short stories
5. A Survey of the use of the Naming technique in Mtuze's short stories.
6. Mtuze's artistry and skill as a short story writer.



These are topics which were intended to be included in this study but because of its limited scope, they could not be dealt with in a more comprehensive and informative manner.

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### 7.3 FINAL EVALUATION

Mtuze's short stories are excellent and appealing to the reader. Brooks and Warren (1971:27) say that a successful presentation should :

... always involve a coherent relating of action, character and meaning.

Mtuze has always adhered to this principle throughout his short stories. His stories are carefully arranged, systematically proportioned and have a carefully adjusted description of character and action. This investigation has brought to light Mtuze's remarkable ability to successfully handle such a sophisticated genre as the short story. One can in Breed's (1962:82) terms say that Mtuze is " 'n baas verteller" (a master of narration) because he is able to move his readers the way he wants them to react. Davies (1964:28) outlines the duty of a true literary artist as follows :

Modern criticism is pragmatic. That is to say, it upholds no canons, and attempts to lay down and to abide by no rules, except the rule that a work of art should be judged according to the intention of the artist. If a thing works, if some experiment, however wild, or some vagary however whimsical, moves his audience exactly as the artist wishes his audience to be moved, then the artist must be praised for his skill.

It is evident that the role of the artist, as outlined here, is fulfilled *par excellence* by Mtuze in his work.



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**A CHRONOLOGICAL SURVEY OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE XHOSA  
SHORT STORY**

- |             |  |                                       |
|-------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| <b>1956</b> | "Isakhono somfazi" (G. B. Sinxo)                   | Johannesburg: A.P.B.                  |
| <b>1956</b> | "Ndibuzen'amathongo" (L. K. Siwisa)                | Johannesburg: A.P.B.                  |
| <b>1957</b> | "Hayi ke beth'iinto zomhlaba"<br>(A. A. M. Mqhaba) | Lovedale:Lovedale Press               |
| <b>1960</b> | "Imbadu" (G B Sinxo)                               | Johannesburg: Bantu<br>Pulbishing     |
| <b>1961</b> | "Masibaliselane" (S. M. Burns-Ncamashe)            | Cape Town: OUP                        |
| <b>1961</b> | "UNojayiti wam" (G. B. Sinxo)                      | Lovedale: Lovedale Press              |
| <b>1962</b> | "Amabali angemigudu" (L. K. Siwisa)                | Cape Town: Via Afrika                 |
| <b>1964</b> | "Isitiya" (G. B. Sinxo)                            | Lovedale: Lovedale Press              |
| <b>1971</b> | "Isiphetho sombulali kukufa..." (H. N. Yako)       | Cape Town: Via Afrika                 |
| <b>1973</b> | "Apha naphaya" (D. M. Jongilanga)                  | Cape Town: Via Afrika                 |
| <b>1974</b> | "Kwezo Mpindo ZeTsitsa" (A. C. Jordan)             | Lovedale: Lovadale Press              |
| <b>1975</b> | "Izimanga zalomhlaba" (L. K. Siwisa)               | Cape Town: Via Afrika                 |
| <b>1977</b> | "Amathol'eendaba" (P. T. Mtuze)                    | Johannesburg: Educum                  |
| <b>1980</b> | "Khawufan'ucinge" (G.S. Budaza)                    | Pietermaritzburg: Shuter &<br>Shooter |
| <b>1982</b> | "Umhlinzeko" (K. S. Bongela)                       | Pietermaritzburg: Shuter &<br>Shooter |
| <b>1982</b> | "Ingwe emabalabala" (G S Budaza)                   | Pietermaritzburg: Shuter &<br>Shooter |
| <b>1982</b> | "Intsengwanekazi" (L. S. Ngcangata)                | Cape Town: Maskew Miller<br>Longman   |
| <b>1983</b> | "Ngxatsho ke Lawundini!" (T. A. Ndungane)          | Pietermaritzburg: Shuter &<br>Shooter |
| <b>1984</b> | "Umphehlulu" (P. T. Mtuze)                         | Cape Town : Maskew Miller<br>Longman  |
| <b>1984</b> | "He! he! Ndiyeva Lawundini!" (H. N. Mjamba)        | Pretoria: De Jager and Haum           |
| <b>1985</b> | "Inxili" (K. S. Bongela)                           | Pretoria: De Jager and Haum           |

- 1986** "Lo mhlaba uyajikeleza" (D. M. Lupuwana) Cape Town: Maskew Miller Longman
- 1989** "Amahla-ndinyuka" (M. V. Mabusela) Pietermaritzburg: Shuter & Shooter
- 1989** "UMakhwekhwetha" (R. Mcimeli) Johannesburg : Educum
- \*1990** "Sh-s-sh-h Ungakhe uxelele mntu" (P. T. Mtuze) Johannesburg: Skotaville
- 1990** "Yivani ezi ndaba (Yivani bantu nonke)" (S. C. Satyo) Cape Town: Vlaeberg
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- 1993** "Bunjalo ubomi" (L. S. Ngcangata) Umtata: Shuter & Shooter
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\* (Has won a first prize award)

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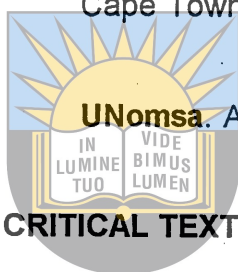
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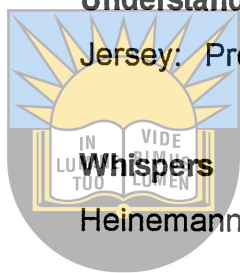
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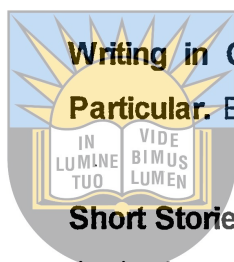
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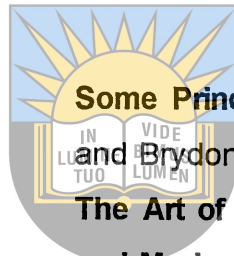
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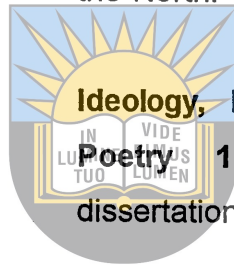
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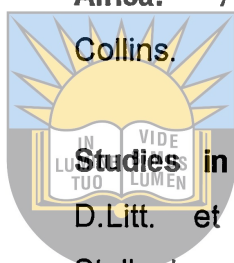
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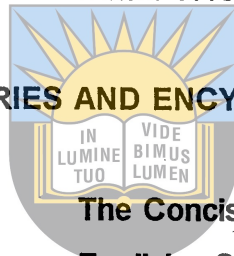
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