THE PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN IN SELECTED NOVELS OF K.E. NTSANE

by

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DECLARATION

I declare that THE PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN IN THE THREE NOVELS OF K.E. NTSANE is my own work and that all sources that are used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

P.S. Sebeho
SUMMARY

This study deals with the portrayal of female characters in three novels of K.E. Ntsane. The novels are *Masoabi ngwana Mosotho wa kajeno*, *Nna Sajene Kokobela*, *C.I.D.* and *Bao batho*.

CHAPTER ONE

This chapter deals with the aim and scope of the study, approach, the biography of K.E. Ntsane and his contribution to Sesotho literature, a short summary of the three novels, the cultural image of a Mosotho woman and the conclusion.

CHAPTER TWO

This chapter consists of the origin of feminism and its effect on women. The definition and method of characterization are discussed in relation to the female characters in selected works. The woman in a Sesotho culture is examined in some detail.

CHAPTER THREE

In chapter 3, the portrayal of female characters in the novels is discussed. Their behaviour as well as the author’s attitude is examined.

CHAPTER FOUR

Chapter 4 deals with Ntsane’s style in the three novels.

CHAPTER FIVE

This chapter is a general conclusion to this study.
DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the following people:

My parents: Frank and Paulinah Sebeho
My children: Maserame, Papi and grandson Itumeleng Sebeho
My late brother: Nthako Sebeho and my late niece
Ntswaki Ramonyathi
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CHAPTER 1

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Aim of the study

The aim of this study is to examine the role of female characters as portrayed by one of the Sesotho author, K.E. Ntsane in his novels. Ntsane, like some of his contemporaries, is inclined to portray women in a negative fashion. This attitude of male authors of viewing women as perpetual minors, has given rise to the feminism theory, which gained momentum during the 1960s.

Ntsane's attitude towards women is in line with the Sesotho culture where a woman is restricted by most men and the entire society to be engaged in menial duties that concern the household. This attitude usually denies a woman the right to make simple decisions which do not require the man's sanctioning. This seems to be with Ojo-Ade's assertion that:

Woman is a woman, mother, child-bearer, supporter of man.
If woman talks too much, she is considered uncouth, uncivilized.
If she is educated, she is classified as a weird specimen.
(Ojo-Ade, 1982:159)

Ojo-Ade's observation is further underlined by the observation of the first French missionaries made on their arrival in Lesotho in 1833. They saw women as oppressed people in the Sesotho society. This attitude was partly so due to the ignorance of these missionaries with regard to the division of labour in the Sesotho community. That is why they could afford to make such wild and unfounded allegations such as the following:

Women, they said, were overworked, oppressed and kept wrongfully in subservience by overfed, underworked bullying husbands. Most women would enter the portals of heaven without question, while their domineering patriarchs were destined to be punished by God on the Day of Judgment.
(Becker, 1969:124)
This quotation is ambiguous and demonstrates the arrogance based on sheer ignorance the missionaries displayed towards the Basotho men.

The scope of this study is limited to the three novels by Ntsane, but where applicable, reference will also be made to his other works such as essays and poetry.

1.2 Approach

The approach to be followed in this study is primarily comparative. The main character in each book will be selected and analysed fully. By comparative study we have in mind a restricted area of K.E. Ntsane’s three novels, and not that expressed by Swanepoel who refers to comparative study as the one which goes “beyond the confines of one particular country.” (Swanepoel, 1990:41).

1.3 Biography of K.E. Ntsane

Lenake sketches the biography of Ntsane as follows:

Kemuel Edward Ntsane was born on 4 April 1920 at Kolojane on the border of the Leribe and Berea districts in Lesotho. Kemuel was the second son of Edward and Evelina. He had two brothers and three sisters.

Like most Basotho boys, at about the age of eight he was a herdboy while alternately attending school at 'Muela where his father was a teacher/evangelist of the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society.

After completing lower primary education in 1932, Ntsane went to Cana Intermediate School at Mamathe’s for standards five and six. From Cana he proceeded to Morija Training Institution where he obtained the Junior Certificate and the Cape Primary Higher Teachers’ Certificate in 1939.

He held a temporary post at Hlotse Government Intermediate School from January to March 1940. When that period expired, he went to the mines where he worked as a
clerk of S.A. Lands (Sallies) near Springs from April 1940 to the end of the same year. From the mines, Ntsane returned to teaching at Hlotse. In 1943 he accepted a post at Roma College. In mid-1946, Ntsane was offered a scholarship to the United Kingdom.

He pursued a course in the teaching of English as a foreign language at the University of London’s Institute of Education and also at Glasgow.

The other schools where Ntsane taught were the following: Basutoland High School (today Maseru High School), Mahamba Secondary School in Swaziland and Leretholi Technical School in Maseru.

Apart from teaching, Ntsane also worked as Hansard Editor for the Basutoland National Council and as a Homes Trust Insurance Company representative and Government archivist/librarian. In 1969 he was appointed Press Secretary to the Prime Minister Chief Leabua Jonathan. He held this position under subsequent Prime Ministers and worked as an interpreter and translator of official documents and speeches.

He specialised in writing novels and poetry, his first novel being Masoabi in 1946, followed by Nna Sajene Kokobela, C.I.D. in 1963 and Bao batho in 1967. He has also written essays entitled Makumane. His Mohwebi wa Venisi is a translation of Shakespeare’s The Merchant of Venice. His two anthologies Mmusapelo I and II were published in 1961. He died in April 1983. (Lenake, 1984:1-3).

1.4 A summary of Ntsane’s Selected Novels

1.4.1 Masoabi Ngwana Mosotho wa Kajeno
The story of Masoabi begins with the events that happened the day Masoabi was born. On this day, his grandfather had died, hence his name Masoabi (sorrow) is associated with the event.
On that day, while other people were mourning the death of the old man, Manonyana, Masoabi’s aunt, stood outside and started ululating as an indication of happiness for the birth of Masoabi.

This appeared to be anomalous to some of the people who had gathered to mourn the passing away of Masoabi’s grandfather but because of the strain and anxiety which accompany the birth of the child, women usually burst out and ululate as a sigh of relief. The ululation was a spontaneous reaction from the said woman.

Masoabi stays with his aunt until he passes standard six. During this time, he experiences problems with his aunt who does not treat him well. Masoabi however manages to endure the hardships. In spite of all the hardships, his father encourages and motivates him to study very hard.

After std. 6, Masoabi proceeds to Bensonvale College. At the college he associates himself with the Johannesburg “bright” boys and this causes conflict between him and the authorities. Later Masoabi is summoned by the police to account for a fight between his girlfriends. He is strongly reprimanded. Masoabi changes his attitude and behaviour and works hard until he obtains a teachers’ certificate.

His first teaching post is at the Intermediate School under the leadership of Mr. Rapatsi. He works diligently and is liked by both pupils and their parents.

Mr. Rapatsi becomes jealous of Masoabi’s progress and Masoabi’s post is in jeopardy. Despite the difficulties he experiences at work, he stands firm. He eventually resigns and later marries Lineo.

1.4.2 Nna Sajene Kokobela, C.I.D.

The main character in the story is the young clerk, Kokobela, who wishes to become a policeman. Firstly, Kokobela wishes to become a policeman so as to gain fame around Lesotho. Secondly, he is encouraged by the injustices perpetrated by policemen upon innocent people. He realises that to remedy these wrongdoings, he should join the
police force. He joins and becomes a good and intelligent policeman. He is promoted to the rank of detective and he eventually becomes a detective-sergeant.

Thereafter Kokobela is sent out to investigate a callous ritual murder in Berea. He is accompanied by Lentswe and Tabola. In the evening, Kokobela and his companions leave for Berea. They arrive in Berea and stay at Rapotlaki’s home.

They realise that the only way of arresting the murderers is to disguise themselves so that the people should not be aware that they are policemen. This is done in order to gather more information.

Late that evening, they visit Topisi’s wife to introduce themselves to her. They inform her that they are sent to investigate the case of her husband’s murder. After introducing themselves and asking a few questions, Kokobela becomes suspicious of this woman as there is a man named Mafethe with her.

On several occasions, Kokobela visits Topisi’s wife and one night he hears her arguing with Mafethe. The argument is over the payment as part of the deal. Mafethe had promised Topisi’s wife to give her a certain amount after he has murdered Topisi. Kokobela then realises that these two are involved in the murder. The following day, Kokobela tries to get the truth from Topisi’s wife concerning her husband’s death, but in vain. He threatens to charge her if he finds evidence that she has murdered her husband.

Mafethe is the most fearsome man in Berea, even the surrounding chiefs in Berea are afraid of him. Mafethe becomes suspicious of Kokobela and his friends because on several occasions he meets them in disguise. One night Mafethe sends Sankwela to call Kokobela. Unfortunately Sankwela is captured and tortured by Kokobela and his colleagues until he reveals the truth. Mafethe who is standing outside at that moment, threatens to kill Kokobela and his accomplice.
The following morning Mafethe, Langwane and Topisi’s wife are seen leaving in the direction of the mountains. Kokobela, Lentswe, Tabola and Sankwela follow them but are unfortunately kidnapped and kept hostage in the cave by Mafethe. Mafethe gets a chance to reveal his bitterness. He tells Kokobela that during the war it was said that they were fighting for justice and were given promises which were not fulfilled. As far as he is concerned, there is no justice in this country. Instead, he is prepared to kill, to hurt people because people like Kokobela taught him to do so.

Kokobela escapes miraculously and is able to release the others. Mafethe is arrested and charged. Kokobela believes that crime does not pay whereas Mafethe believes that it does pay.

1.4.3 Bao Batho

This is a narrative about Rasello, a younger member and chairman of the tribal authority in his village. Hipo, a teacher, is the secretary of the same council.

Among other members is an old man who is willing to offer help and support to those who need it and to the younger generation too. He is also a mediator between the younger and elderly people and to those who experience problems in life.

One Sunday, Rasello prepares himself for the meeting in which various matters concerning their village are to be discussed. On his way to the meeting he meets a young woman Lucie, to whom Rasello is attracted. During the meeting Rasello is confronted by other members but the old man harmonises the situation. Thereafter they all agree to call a general meeting the following Wednesday. After the meeting, Rasello meets Lucie again and proposes love to her. He then decides to introduce Lucie to his mother but on their way, they meet Raditaba, Lucie’s former boyfriend and his friend Tjhotjholosa.

Raditaba is quarrelsome, provocative and stubborn. Rasello and Raditaba clash over Lucie. Tjhotjholosa comes to Raditaba’s assistance. However, Rasello is later joined by Hipo. Raditaba and Tjhotjholosa are bitter and decide to take revenge. On the day
of the next meeting, Raditaba gives Hipo a glass of poisoned beer. Hipo becomes ill and is taken to the hospital. Later Rasello receives a letter from Lucie informing him that they should part.

The old man helps Rasello by investigating the letter. He discovers that the letter was written by Kobokobo, Lucie’s friend, because Raditaba asked her to do so. Eventually Raditaba and Kobokobo are arrested. Kobokobo reveals to the police that Raditaba requested her to write the letter as revenge on Rasello. During the hearing both Raditaba and Kobokobo repent.

1.5 **The cultural image of a Mosotho woman**

Traditionally there were certain cultural rules which were to be followed by children in order to see them reach adulthood. When a Mosotho girl reached the puberty stage, she was told that she is no longer a child but had to abide by certain cultural rules. A respected woman from the village was called to advice the little girl on how to behave towards boys and adults in general. She was also advised not to eat food-stuffs such as eggs and tripe or any other food which was considered too rich for girls. This was done as a precaution to avoid girls maturing before they were of age.

At times a girl was sent to the initiation school where she was schooled for womanhood. She was taken there with her peers. At such a school they were taught tribal norms and values such as tolerance, obedience and respect for the husband, his people and adults.

They were warned against becoming deflowered before marriage because this could harm the marriage. Virginity was the key to acceptability for a bride to be judged as a person of good character.

All the proceedings at the initiation school were taboo and no one had to divulge the secrets that accompany the process of initiation. The duration of the initiation school differed from community to community. At the graduation ceremony a big feast was
held and the young initiates received presents and were now regarded as being ready for marriage because young men normally made their choice during such festivities.

During those days boys and girls had no privilege to choose a life partner of their own. The parents were the ones to determine their future husbands/wives. This was done to avoid a young person marrying someone whose parents were witches or known for their evil deeds or maladjustment in the community. In case the young girl was opposed to the choice made by her parents and tried to resist, she was pressurized in certain ways such as tying her small finger with a tiny sinew (lesika) until she yielded to the demand.

Although this practice might look as if it was cruel, it had its advantages. Most marriages concluded in this fashion lasted for life because of the mutual support the young people enjoyed from both families.

1.6 Conclusion

The aim and scope of this study has been outlined and touches on a number of important aspects: the author's attitude, the feminism theory, and how far it is in line with Ntsane's outlook on women. Seeing that Ntsane is a Mosotho, he seems to have been influenced by the general tendency among his folk that a woman is a perpetual minor.

This idea does not occur in the Sesotho communities only. It manifests itself in other African countries as well. Ojo-Ade, a Zimbabwean, fully support the notion. Speaking about the position of a woman, she says: "Woman is a woman, mother, child-bearer, supporter of man."

A comparative approach has been selected. Our approach is, however, limited to the three novels of K.E. Ntsane. The main women characters will be singled out and compared with one another. This is followed by a biographical sketch of the author, a summary of the works to be discussed and the cultural image of a Mosotho woman.
CHAPTER 2

2. FEMINIST THEORY

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter the origin of feminism and its effect on women is discussed. The study will further examine character portrayal and its implications on women characters. The position of a woman in Sesotho culture will also be reviewed.

2.2 Feminism

Feminism was originated in America by the Women’s Liberation Movement in the 1960s. The aim of this movement was to try to place women on an equal footing with men. The movement strove to extend the options of women beyond the domestic sphere. It sought to extend to women certain rights which were traditionally the man’s prerogatives.

Allen (1992:500) defines feminism as:

the advocacy of women rights on the ground of the equality of sexes.

According to Janet, feminism is

a mode of analysis, a method of approaching life and politics,
a way of asking questions and searching for answers.
(Janet, 1989:12)

The definition of Allen and Janet is further supported by Peck, who says that:

Feminist approach is the theory that demonstrates that literature is sexist in the portrayal of women by showing how texts reveal injustices of a male society where women are regarded as inferior.
(Peck, 1984:151)
Indeed, what Peck says tallies with our notion of how Ntsane portrays his women characters: they are regarded as inferior and subservient to their dominating male patriarchs. This will be demonstrated in our discussion of character portrayal section.

Male domination in Ntsane's works is not surprising because according to a Hebrew myth which the Christians inherited from the book of Genesis, the woman is created second after man. From this myth the woman enters history with a particular stigma attached to her.

This idea is demonstrated by Ntsane in his introduction of the essay on "Mosadi." He refers to Adam as lengelo (an angel) and Eve as phofofo (an animal).

The male-domination identified in the foregoing paragraph is often encountered in some magazines where women semi-naked bodies are displayed prominently to the discredit of the women-folk in general. This derogatory representation of women is called androcentric. "It is also sometimes referred to as phallocentric because according to the psycho-analytic theory, the phallus is taken to be the major signifier of power in phallocentric society." (Ruthven 1984:24).

The term 'phallus' is defined by the Concise Oxford Dictionary (1964) as the image of the penis venerated in religious systems as symbolizing generative power in nature.

This social system where the male dominates all social relations is known as patriarchy. Patriarchy as a social order implies that women function as the property of men in the procreative and socialising aspects of the society.

This system is defined aptly by Janet where he says that it is "the institutionalized system of male dominance and control over women." (Janet, 1989: 14).

This state of affairs is summed up significantly by Gaidzanwa who puts it this way:

Thus women who are idealised may be those who are obedient to their husbands even if their husbands are wrong and unreasonable.
They do not complain when they are badly treated. They patiently wait for their husbands to recognise their virtue and they may actually shield their husbands from the consequences of unreasonable or cruel behaviour because they are their husband’s property” (Gaidzanwa 1985:31).

It is for these reasons that the socialist feminist detests the idea that women must be kept in a position where they will fulfil the function of properties of men as well as the functions of wife and mother.

In many societies, including the Sotho, it is commonly assumed that women find fulfilment in bearing and raising children. To become mothers it is believed that their main function is to bear children. Hence Ryan states:

“Motherhood is respectable and held in high esteem as it goes with or is preceded by socially approved wifehood. However, if those women have no children either because they are unable to or because they choose not to, are classified as failures, abnormal, unnatural or deprived” (Ryan 1988:55).

Feminists react to the notion that women are naturally suited to domesticity and that the roles of wife and mother are biologically based. Ryan (1988:65) also makes mention of an important distinction between motherhood when it is an institution which involves suffering and deprivation, and motherhood as an experience which becomes a joyful creativity.

She describes the institution of motherhood as follows:

Institutionalised motherhood demands of women maternal instinct rather than intelligence, selflessness rather than self-realization, relation to others rather than the creation of self.

Feminism is a theory which originated in America, and immediately clashes with the norms of an African society in some respects. The advocates of this theory maintain that women in literature have been dealt with unfavourably. They argue that the idea that men are superior to women is a fallacy which should be done away with. The so
called inferiority of women to men is derived from the scriptures and regarded as a myth by the feminists.

Janet's reference to patriarchy tallies with that of the missionaries who referred to Basotho men as patriarchs who were dominating the wives, and thus destined to be condemned on the Judgment Day.

2.3 Modes of Characterization

Before discussing modes of characterization, it is important to discuss what characterization means as viewed by different authors through different approaches.

Cohen (1973:37) defines characterization as:

the art of creating fictional characters in words which gives them human identity.

Shaw (1972:71) states that:

....in effective narrative literature fictional persons, through characterization, become so incredible that they exist for the reader as real people.

This means that the dialogue amongst characters and the manner in which they perform things, depict them as real people in daily life. The language and actions of characters assist the reader in knowing and understanding them. It is therefore important for an author to use language that is understandable in order to have actions of the characters appealing to the reader's imagination.

Most authors and scholars agree that action and dialogue together reveal character. Without interactions of characters there would be no story. Therefore it is crucial that the author should use dialogue effectively and efficiently to enhance the process of communication with his readers, and also to develop the action.
The methods of characterization are inter alia the expository, the dramatic and the naming technique.

The novelist, unlike the dramatist, has the advantage of using all three methods in developing his characters without restrictions. This makes the characters of the novel easily conceivable, for they can be viewed through their actions, dialogue, dress, deportment and comments by other characters and by the author himself.

Hudson confirms this when he comments:

> The immense scope of the novel, its freedom of movement and its indifference to considerations of time and place, combine with the advantage just mentioned to give its special power of dealing with the character in making.  
> (Hudson, 1965:194)

In the above quotation, Hudson appears to be implying that characters in a novel can easily maneuver; they can move from one locality to another without hindrances or restrictions as long as those localities are within the scope of the narrative.

Time is also unrestricted because the characters can be portrayed within any space of time, for example, from birth to puberty to old age. For instance, in the novel Masoabi, the author describes the birth of Masoabi, his childhood as well as his adulthood. All events are arranged chronologically.

### 2.3.1 The Expository Method

In the expository method, the author introduces his characters and their circumstances to the reader. What characters say about themselves and about other characters is revealed through this technique. The narrator describes their physical features, their manner of dress, how they speak, their status as well as their attitude towards life in general. In Nna Sajene Kokobela C.I.D., for example, the author describes Topisi's wife as extraordinary beautiful, whose beauty makes men attracted to her. But in the same breath, Kokobela had suspicion about her that she might be involved in the murdering of her husband.
The author is free to create his characters in a manner that would suit him. When the character is presented, it is difficult for the reader to give his own opinion, description and judgment as the author has already done so for the reader. Even though the character can move freely with other characters, the technique has a disadvantage because it offers the reader very little scope for imaginative participation.

At times the author is able to manipulate the reader’s mind to feel the same way about a particular character or characters. Therefore most authors tend to be subjective and lead the reader’s attitude and feeling toward a character. It is therefore advantageous to allow readers to make their own assessment about a character, to discover the behaviour of the character.

There are women writers who have just emerged and have taken the initiative of writing about women from the point of view of women since female characters are not treated sympathetically by male writers who often project a negative attitude towards women.

Women writers like Emecheta, Nwapa, Aidoo and others have taken upon themselves to write novels where the female characters are treated with respect and dignity. They are committed in delineating the experience of women as women in destroying stereotypes of women created by men.

2.3.2 The Dramatic Technique
By means of this technique, the author reveals his characters through dialogue and action to reinforce their self-delineating by comments and judgements of other characters. Though this technique is mostly applied in drama, some novelists employ it to reveal characters.

Mafela (1988:18) states that:

Dramatic technique is the means whereby an author merely presents his characters, leaving them to the talking and acting.
This means that the reader will deduce a character’s personality through what the character does, says, thinks and behaves.

In Nna Sajene Kokobela, C.I.D., for example, the wife of Topisi answers boldly when asked by sergeant Kokobela about the disappearance of her husband. She says,

"E-e, jwale o mpoisa potso e thata. Ha ke ne ke sa tsamaya le bona ke ne ke tla tseba jwang moo ba batlelang teng?"

(No, now you ask me a difficult question. If I was not with them how would I have known the place where they were searching?)

The manner in which she talks to Kokobela indicates that she is brave and is not easily intimidated by what he says and thinks about her. She answers Kokobela with contempt. After the fight between Kokobela and Mafethe, Topisi’s wife talks in a harsh, uncompromising and threatening tone:

Ha ke isotello ho ya bona moo batho ba sa tsebisahaleng ba tsamayang ba lwana ka mora matlo a batho mme ba putotseng teng, feela e tle e be le nishenyeditse. Le madi ana a lona le be le llo a hlatswa. (1986:56)

(I do not care to go and check where unreasonable people were fighting behind the houses in the night causing destruction. But be warned if there is any damage caused. Even this blood you have spilled, you must come and wash it off.)

2.3.3 The Naming Technique

In this technique the author gives a character a name which has a bearing on a particular event or on that character’s behaviour. Most Africans are named after their grandparents or after a particular event which happened at their birth. For instance, Kobokobo, which means a tall, slender, clumsy woman who bends like a reed.

Kunene states that:

In naming a child, the Basotho did not, as a rule, choose a name simply because the parents liked it, but for its relevance to a given situation, or for a certain purpose that the name was supposed to fulfil, this in addition, of course, to naming the child after someone,
usually a relative. There was, besides, the belief that when it grew up, a child might act according to its name. The saying, "Lebitso-lebe ke Seromo", "An ugly name makes its bearer behave according to it", reflects this attitude. Thus choosing a name for a child was a serious matter, and not always an easy one.

(Kunene, 1971:13)

In naming a child after a relative, the Basotho were cautious. They would only choose someone whose behaviour was respectable (or even heroic) so that the child could possibly be influenced by such a name.

Although the naming of a child was a serious matter, there were instances where a child was given a derogatory name especially when the mother undermined her parents or gave birth to a child out of wedlock. Names such as Tello (contempt), Tshwabisi (shame) might then be given.

As far as the naming of places is concerned, a place may be named according to an historical event or sometimes the place may signify some natural resources. For example, Maokeng (Kroonstad) bears this name because of a specific type of thorn trees. The mountain range known as Magaliesburg near Pretoria is named after a Mosotho chief, Mogale. But because most whites either deliberately or contemptuously will always use an "a" instead of an "o" in most words that contain "o": Marula and Makete for Morula and Mokete.

In African tradition, names are of great significance. However, this is not always the case in Ntsane’s work, for example, Topisi.

2.4 Conclusion

Some aspects of feminist theory have been discussed which give foundation to the roles the female characters need to play in promoting equality of sexes.

Methods of characterization have also been discussed and Ntsane employs expository, dramatic and naming techniques successfully. The expository technique has been used
in portraying Topisi’s wife. The dramatic features are prominently once more in the portrayal of Topisi’s wife. In *Bao batho*, Ntsane uses the naming device abundantly. Most of the names of the characters, characterize their actions, physical appearance and talks.

Characterization therefore depends solely on the artistic ability of the writer. Whatever becomes of the narrative, depends on the circumstances, mood and temperament of the writer.
CHAPTER 3

3. THE PORTRAYAL OF FEMALE CHARACTERS IN THE THREE NOVELS

3.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the female characters in *Masoabi*, *Nna Saiene Kokobela*, *C.I.D.* and *Bao Batho*.

In literature the status of women depends on the skills of the author in presenting and delineating them. Sometimes the reader is outraged by what the author does to undermine a character. The reader remains with a number of questions that need answers but these remain unknown to him/her.

Women are categorized as either rural or urban (women). Rural women are portrayed as simple, innocent, submissive and adhering to traditional sex-role models to their male counterparts, whereas urban women are portrayed as learned, independent and liberated from the pros and cons of culture and tradition. In most cases rural and traditional women look upon their husbands as heroes. Their main role is to perform household duties, get married and bear children.

Thus Emecheta (1979:71) remarks that a woman’s function

is to cook and bear children and look after you and them.

Emecheta strongly rejects this traditional concept which confines the women to cooking, providing comfort for their husbands and bearing children.

It is for this reason that it is imperative to critically analyse the female characters in the three novels of Ntsane. In Ntsane’s case, he portrays the kind of female characters who are submissive, stubborn, cruel and ill-mannered.
3.2 Female characters in Masoabi

In chapter two of the novel Masoabi, the author introduces us to the birth of Masoabi. On that day everybody in the family is mourning the death of Masoabi's grandfather, who had drowned. People have gathered to console the bereaved family. Then the message arrives that Masoabi is born and one of the women stands up and starts ululating as a sign of joy.

Ntsane claims:

Eka e mong wa basadi, eitse ha a utlwa hore ha moholwane wa hoe ho hlahile ngwana moshanyana a hlabo moduduetsane. Batho ba ne ba dutse lebaleng, mme ba dutse ba hlomohile, ba lla, ba tlela qheku la bona le shweleng lefu le sehloho la ho ya le noka. (Ntsane, 1987:12)

(It so happened that when one of the women heard that at her brother's place a son was born, she ululated. People were gathered at the courtyard being mournful, mourning the death of their old man who had drowned tragically.)

Ntsane describes this woman in a sarcastic manner because this is the old man's daughter, and she is supposed to be mourning the loss of her father. Instead, she does something that borders on embarrassment, not only to herself but to the society at large.

Ntsane in his own style does not explicitly reveal that the woman ululating is the daughter of the deceased. He says, "eka e mong wa basadi......" (it so happened that one of the women...). This he does with the sole aim of juxtaposing the two occurrences, death as opposed to birth and sorrow and joy. This juxtaposition marks one of the most peculiar features in Ntsane's style in character portrayal.

Under normal norms and values of the Basotho such behaviour would be viewed in a very serious light. But as Ntsane has put it, we would equate it to the Sesotho saying that "Lefu leholo ke ditseheho" (laughter often occurs even under great strife.)
Earlier Ntsane referred to a woman who ululated. Later in his narration he reveals that the women is Masoabi’s aunt, the daughter of the old man who had died when Masoabi was born. This is a good example of flashback because Ntsane reveals the identity of the woman years later when Masoabi is already in the pre-school age and has to go and live with the aunt.

*Rakgadiae eo, ke yena yane wa ho hlaba moduduetsané mohla Masoabi a hlahileng, moduduetsane o ne o batle hore batho ba tshwarane ka maisoho.*

(Ntsane, 1987:17)

(That aunt, is the one who ululated the day Masoabi was born, the ululation that nearly cause disagreement.)

Masoabi stays with his aunt but life becomes unbearable. He experiences problems because ‘Manonyana, his aunt, is cruel towards him, but studies very hard and passes standard six very well. The day he leaves for home, he bids farewell to his aunt. ‘Manonyana is very disappointed to realise that Masoabi is not angry with her but instead is grateful for what she did for him.

*Rakgadi, ke a isamaya kajeno, mme ke leboa paballo ya hao eo o nketseditseng yona nakong yohle eo ke e ditseng hahao mona. O sale hanile*  

(1987:25)

(Aunt, I am leaving today and I thank you for the care you have shown me all the time I have been staying with you. Goodbye...)

Although Masoabi sounds grateful when he bids his aunt farewell, it is suspected that behind these words there is a lot of bitterness. Our assumption is supported by the aunt’s response to his farewell words.

*Tsamaya, o yo mpua hampe ho mmae kwana, o hle o di phete kaofela, o ntshenyé lebiso, molotsana towel le ho o batla, ha ke sa o batla.*  

(1987:25)

(Yes, go and talk ill about me to my younger brother, tell him everything, and spoil my name, you little devil, I don’t want to see you here again.)
Here again we have another example of a flashback. The above quotation reveals what was happening between Masoabi and herself during his stay there. It is clear that they were at loggerheads on many occasions. Her response about the examination results, seals the animosity that existed between the two.

After the standard six results were released, his aunt was not happy at all to find that Masoabi had passed. However she writes a letter to her brother informing him that Masoabi has passed. The letter is full of bitterness, once more a good example of a flashback.

Ke a o dumedisa. Ho thwe ke o bolele hore Masoabi o fetile buka ya hae, mme ke wa lekgolo ho bohle kaofela ba Lesotho. O batlile a tshwara setono! Kwana ke hlile ka mmona ma ngwaneno wa hao hore ha a ithute, ho hoholo ke papadi feele ha a etswa sekolong. ...Ka moo a neng a se a ntenne kateng ngwana eno, ke ne ke sa kgolwe hore leha a ka hlohw a ho feta, nka hlola ke mo amohela mona lapeng ha ka. Ha ke eso bone moleko o kang eno. 1987:29

(I greet you. It is said that I should inform you that Masoabi has passed and has obtained position hundred among all in Lesotho. He was almost the last in his class! I have seen that child of yours was not studying hard, he plays most of the time after school. I have had enough of that child and I don’t think I would take him back if he has failed. I have never seen such a devil.)

The foregoing quotation expresses the deep seated animosity in Masoabi’s aunt. We are given one side of Masoabi’s behaviour without the necessary motivation.

In Sesotho, an aunt is likened to a paternal father, hence the prefix (ra-) in “rakgadi” which stands for father of so and so. When someone gets married, the “bohadi” (bride price) is paid to the brides’ parents. During that “bohadi” celebration, a cow is slaughtered and the aunt gets what is called “sehlana” (fillet).
When it comes to the division of gifts from the bride side, the aunt gets a better share. For these reasons, Masoabi's aunt should have been proud of his achievements and not the other way round.

The manner again in which Ntsane portrays 'Manonyana is yet another example of how he generally views the womenfolk - he always paints a negative picture of them.

The manner in which he portrays 'Mamosoabi, underlines our assertion that Ntsane is inclined to bring out the negative side of a woman. We are not convinced that Masoabi's mother can send her baby of between 2-3 years old away from her, simply because she fears that the child would be influenced by the bad children in her village. During this period the child needs motherly care and love. It is likely that Ntsane tries to bring in the Sesotho culture where a child was normally sent to his grandparents, but in this case this is done for a different reason. The sub-title introduces Masoabi as Ngwana Mosotho wa kajeno (a Modern Mosotho child). So there was no reason that his mother would adhere to that culture.

The paradox of what Ntsane is trying to infer about 'Mamosoabi is contained in the following passage:

*Ya fihla nako ya Masoabi hore a titime. Ka hanong a ba hakaalo. Ditaba tsa hae e le tse ngatangata, tse sa feleng, tse qabolang ka mehla. Mmae o ne a sa jewe ke boditutu leha bana ba bang ba le siyo, kapa ntatae a le mane sekolong.*

Then the time arrived that Masoabi should start running. He enjoys talking too much. He always had many endless and interesting things to say. His mother was never lonely in the absence of other children or when his father was at school.

The passage above underlines our idea and disbelief that Masoabi's mother could have dreamt of sending her baby away at that tender age with all the joy she derived from the baby's company.
It is understandable that the father was a teacher and Masoabi’s mother too had been to school. It is amazing that she did not shoulder the responsibility of staying with her son instead of shifting this responsibility to the aunt.

There is a Sesotho saying which goes, “Mma ngwana o tshwara thipa ka bohaleng” (The mother of the child holds the knife with its blade.) ‘Mamosoabi’ s shifting of the responsibility contradicts this saying.

Lineo is another character in Masoabi. She is attracted to Masoabi. During the closing party at school, many are excited and are paired with their loved ones. As was arranged, Lineo is allocated a seat next to Masoabi.

The author describes the beauty of Lineo and how her beauty electrifies the body of Masoabi in this way:

_Bothe ha hae motho a ka bua ka bona ho sa!... Ene e re ha a re mahlo phatsa, e ke a phatsima khalare ka kwana ho Masoabi, mho e nyalohe sephitsheng mona, e mo karape e mo sebe, e mo ngwathhe, ha e geta, e mathele hlohung kwana e yo lesa ditshipe teng, e di siye di enuse modumo o moholo, e therose e yo kena moatong. Teng e ikerole, e iketsa dikokwana tsa ngata, di mathe hohle mmeleng, mme botsikinyane ha tsona bo mo fufuletse. Ngwana a fufuletse, ngwana a hatsele, ngwana a kgohledise bokata, a getelle a hoboise mahlo, eka moloi a tshwerwe ke dithokgtsa._ (1987:57)

(Her beauty one can talk about it until the next day...When she raised her eyes, it seemed as if they shone deep in Masoabi, then something would move up in his chest, scrape him, cut him, and dig him up, when it finished, it would run to the head to ring the bells therein, and leave them making a big noise, then it would descend and enter the feet. There it would divide itself into a lot of insects which would run everywhere in the body, and the itching they caused would make him sweat. The young man would feel cold, the young man would pretend to cough and end up with staring eyes like a witch caught up in a trap.)

Although Ntsane is inclined to be negative in portraying a woman, there are moments where he excels in showing the positive side of a woman. In the quoted passage
Ntsane uses poetic narrative prose, characterized by repetition of syntactic slots and concords: *mahlo phatsi, a phatsima; e mo karape, e mo sehe, e mo ngwathе.*

The passage further abounds in imagery: *mho e nyolohe, dikokwanyana, botsikinyane, a fufulehwe, a hatsele, e ka moloj a tshwerwe ke dithakgisa.*

### 3.3 Female characters in Nna Sejene Kokobela

The first female character we meet in *Nna Sejene Kokobela* is Kokobela’s wife, Mmaletswai. Whenever she tries to advise her husband Kokobela, he dismisses everything she suggests because he claims that he does not believe that a woman can talk sense.

He claims:

> *O bile o tseba hantle hore maikutlo a ka ha a dumele hore basadi ha kenakene ditaba tse sa ba tshwanelang. Borena boo Modimo a ba fileng mosadi ba fella letapeng ninе ha se borenanyana hle.* (1986:14)

>(You know my feelings very well. I do not want women to interfere in the affairs not meant for them. The power that God has given to a woman ends in the home and it is a mighty power.)

This again brings out the contempt Ntsane displays in his portrayal of women.

Women are therefore undermined even if they are capable of solving problems, or contributing towards the building of the nation. Apart from the woman discussed above focus will be on the wife of Topisi whose husband Topisi, is murdered.

With regard to Topisi’s wife, Ntsane uses contrast in a praiseworthy manner. He paints a beautiful picture of Topisi’s wife simultaneously with the negative aspects that accompany her beauty, he says:

> *E, o ne a bopehile enwa mothо, a le mosoonthwana a le boreledi sefaheho, mahlo a le maphatsiwana-phatshwana, ao e reng ha a tadina mothо a tshatjhametse a yo kena pelong ninе teng a bake moferefe re, mokutu, mothо a lalehlelwe ke mohopolo.* (1986:20).
(Yes, this woman was well built, her face was dark brown, and very smooth, her eyes were round, big and very sharp, when she looked at the person, they pierced into his heart and created great confusion and made one lose one’s senses.)

Here again we have a fine example of a poetic narrative prose. He uses the demonstrative enwa motho to emphasize that he is describing a special woman, then this is followed by a stream of repetition pattern such as, a le mosoothwana, a le boreledi, a le maphaishwana. The confusion created by the woman’s eyes to a man, results in moferefere (tumult), mokutu (agitation) and the man loses his senses.

In contrast to the beauty described above, Ntsane brings in the negative side of this woman. He says this about her:

Mosadi ha se hangata a bang motle seboepeho le pelo. Jwale ka ha ke hlola ke bolele, basadi bongata bo kgwahlahese hamphe. Mme ha se ba bebe feela ha pelo di kgubde, le tsono dipono tsena tsa lona di pelo di fetseng holoi. (1986:28)

(It is very rare that a woman can be beautiful and good natured. As I usually say, in most cases women are very wicked, and it is not only the ugly ones who are cruel, even these beauties of yours are very wicked.)

Kokobela, although admiring Topisi’s wife, has a deep rooted mistrust towards her. To him, her beauty covers up the wickedness contained in her heart and he has a strong suspicion that the woman had a hand in the murder of her husband.

The two women characters discussed are portrayed in the manner which tallies with what we said earlier in our introductory chapter. Kokobela treats his wife, Mmaletswai, as a perpetual minor whose power ends up in the kitchen.

In his encounter with Topisi’s wife, Ntsane, because his intention is to emphasize the negative elements in her, starts by not giving her a name, she is simply mohatsa Topisi (Topisi’s wife). Her beauty is used as an introduction to highlight his negative attitude towards beautiful women, for example, “Mosadi ha se hangata a bang motle seboepeho
le pelo “ (It is rare that a woman can be beautiful and good natured). Throughout the book, the negative image of Topisi’s wife continually comes to the fore and in the end Kokobela’s suspicion is affirmed because indeed Topisi’s wife had a share in the murder of her husband.

It is surprising that this woman should have a share in the murder of her husband, because when Kokobela asks her whether Topisi had friends, she claims:

Topisi e ne e le motho ya sa thwaelaneng le ba bang. Ha ho ya neng a ka re ke motswalle wa hae e moholo. Ha e le ho ba le dira teng, ha ke hopole a ne a kile a qhvedisana le motho mona motseng kapa hona metseng e ka mathoko (1986:53).

(Topisi was not used to other people. There is no one who could claim to be his best friend. Having enemies, I don’t remember him clashing with anyone in this village or villages surrounding us.)

The above words show that Topisi was very humble and cared for his family. From what Topisi’s wife said to Mefethe when they were arguing about money, there is an indication that she still loves her husband. She says to Mafethe:

Exeng o hopola hore Topisi ke ne ke sa no rate ka hoo ka no tela feela-feela tje ke sa funane seo wena o mshepisitseng sona. (1986:40).

(Do you think that I did not love Topisi that I can forget about him so easily without receiving what you promised me.)

The author does not convince his readers that because of certain reasons, Topisi’s wife is bound to plot against her husband. It is also indicated that Topisi was very young when he was murdered. He was only thirty-eight years old. He had no children and was not poor because according to his wife, he had a few goats and sheep. It is unacceptable that a woman can plot against her husband without valid reasons.
3.4 Female characters in Bao Batho

When Moloi refers to this book, he says that it is inferior to all of Ntsane’s work. He regards it as incoherent, improbable and full of unconvincing co-incidences. (Moloi, 1973:153.

This is true because when one reads it, it does not reveal Ntsane’s characteristic style, especially when compared to Masoabi and Nna Sajene Kokobela. However, in this analysis the focus falls on female characters.

The main character is Lucie because all events centre around her. The other female character is Kobokobo. Like all female characters in Ntsane’s novels, Lucie is also one of the beautiful girls. He describes her as follows:

\[ A \text{ qetela ka pelong feela, are, "le lele letsopa. Ekaba e be ke la kgo ho dife jwale lee? Mona o hopile Mmopi, le hona ho bonahala e ne e se ka Mogebelo ho matsansi, ho sa tatunya. Feelha ha ke mpe ke tiise maoto esere ka ferekana ka kgahlwa ke none e feita, etswa dibopana tsewa ke se ke eleletswe hore ha motho a sa suhe tseleng ya isona, dikgomo di ka ja mabele o ahlane! (1992:3) } \]

(He concluded in his heart, and said, what a beautiful image. I wonder to which ‘hen’ does it belong? This is a good creation of the Creator, it is further evident that it was not on a Saturday, and there was no hurry. But let me move faster less I fall into a trap by being attracted by a passerby, after all we are aware that when you do not give way to these creatures things might go wrong while you stand admiring them!).

In this passage, Ntsane once more uses his peculiar poetic narrative prose. The passage abounds in imagery. Lucie is \[ le letle letsopa \] (beautiful clay), \[ la kgo ho dife? \] (to which hen does it belong?). The idea that the Creator had time in creating Lucie is based on the notion that man was created on the sixth day of the week. In Lucie’s case that was not the idea—it was a special day.
While we are admiring the beautiful picture of Lucie Ntsane is painting, we are immediately introduced to the contrast. Ntsane uses sarcasm to bring in the negative element of a beautiful woman. She is *ume e bhotso* (a limping blesbuck), this means an untrustworthy person, *dhopnwa* (creatures). Ntsane refers to women as creatures, and not human beings. This he does to emphasize the undesirable element in women. The idiomatic expression *dikgomo di ka ja mabele* is yet another example of warning men about the deceitful nature of women.

Rasello, on his way to a meeting, meets Lucie near a river. Lucie and Rasello are attracted to each other. Rasello hurries to the meeting and after the meeting he meets Lucie again and proposes love. He therefore asks Lucie to meet him at the same spot the following day as he intends introducing her to his parents.

The following day they meet and while still talking, two men appear and one of them is Raditaba, Lucie's former boyfriend. A squabble starts between Lucie and Raditaba, Rasello and Tjhotjholosa. Lucie escapes, leaving Rasello in trouble.

Rasello and Raditaba fight. Hipo comes to Rasello's assistance and they both fight Raditaba and Tjhotjholosa. A few people appear and separate the two groups.

With regard to Kobokobo, the author introduces her to the readers when the detective investigates a letter written by Lucie to end the affair with Rasello. The detective discovers that the letter is written by Kobokobo through the influence of Raditaba. Raditaba wants revenge, so he uses Kobokobo to achieve his ambition. He bribes Kobokobo by giving her a R5 note.

Another reason why Kobokobo writes the letter, is that she was once disappointed in marriage.

After the investigations, Kobokobo is arrested and eventually confesses to have written the letter pretending to be Lucie. With characters like Kobokobo, Ntsane gives
us a vivid picture of a young Mosotho woman of low morals. She speaks with Lucie in this manner:

*Hei wena o mahlo a pelekaneng, lefetwa towe o tshabang tokoloho o e so e hone le ho e bona, tsamaya o yo batlela moeti Separeleleta sa batho ba batho. Feela ha ke re ha o mopholoswa mate? (1992:63).*

(Hey, you with squint eyes, you old unmarried one who is afraid of freedom even before you experience it, go and buy for a visitor the Sparletta for the adults. Anyway I think you are not a born again father?)

At her arrest, she says shameful and embarrassing things to the police accompanying her to the cells:

*"ma ke Kobokobo, is not hone nka eetswo caught, I mean to say arresting ka mahaka a flimsy so like niks, le letho! But ek is nie afraid for no police of jail nie. Mang? Not me, my shery! le thweta se ho be sa le le keholo batho feela fjee ha se na molato? Los my, jong....!" (1992:70).*

(I am Kobokobo, this does not mean that I should be caught or be arrested with flimsy reasons like these. Nothing, nothing at all! But I am not scared of a police or of going to gaol. Who? not me my shery! You are fond of arresting people without reasons. Leave me, man...!)

This statement reveals contempt and stubbornness towards authority. She does not care what the consequences of her behaviour could be.

She further says:

*Tsamaya, o se ke wa ma wa mela, dikela mangopeng kwana, lethataamomo towe o kgopane molale. (1988:70).*

(Go away, do not bother me, go down to the ditches, with your wrapped legs and dirty neck.)

Ntsane wrote this book in the early sixties, yet he already foreshadowed the present day codeswitching which is the order of the day. The mixing of English, Sesotho and Afrikaans words and expressions, is heard everywhere and at any time today. The
speakers of such mixture, go ahead unperturbed, and do not even realise that they are
doing their own mother tongue a lot of disservice.

Expressions such as these are not only disgusting, but also indicate that the Sesotho
speakers have no love and respect for their own language and culture. To the less
educated it is also a status symbol to use English expression in this fashion.

What could be the possible reasons for this code switching? This is done for several
reasons:
• Most of the youth who grow up in urban areas, lack the necessary Sesotho
  vocabulary.
• Most people lack the pride of appreciating their own mother tongue.
• To some, more especially the less educated ones, codeswitching is regarded as a
  status symbol.
• The indifference towards own mother tongue is the results of the number of
  reasons:
    * The mother tongue instruction which was introduced by
      H.F. Verwoerd in 1954 played a role in making the Basotho
      shun their language.
    * The Basotho equate their language with economy and feel that
      Sesotho will not enable them to compete favourably in the labour
      market. They say: *Sesotho ha se jese* (Sesotho does not empower
      one economically.)

Although our scope is limited to Ntsane’s novels, the portrayal of female characters in
his poetry will also be briefly discussed. A few examples will be cited to indicate his
negative attitude towards women. In “Ngwana lona” (Your child), the poet portrays
the bride as lazy, harsh and untidy. She ends up a wreck, drinking and doing
disgusting things. In the last stanza, the poet shows disgust to the bride and pleads
that her parents should fetch her:

*Latang ngwana lona re tenehile,
Re temwe ke mafura a fariki.*
Come and fetch your child we are disgusted,
We are disgusted of the fat of the pig,
Because this one is too fat,
The neck is full of dripping fat,
Her mouth is the vessel of insults -
She is burning, the child of the nation.

The stanza is highly metaphorical. Reference to a `pig' does not bring to mind the idea of a dirty fat pig. It bears a deeper meaning namely that her behaviour and mannerism are so disgusting that they are associated with very fat pork which after eating it, you become nauseous.

In Hwenene (Skokiaan) the poet describes the shebeen queen and her actions in this manner:

(The woman's pockets are full of five pennies,
This woman where does the change come from?
The woman's change comes from far away,
It comes from the inner pocket deeper in her body,
The shebeen queen does not even feel ashamed.)

These two poems show how Ntsane degrades and undermines women. The shebeen queen can be compared to Kobokobo because they both have the same characteristics of low morals and lack a sense of dignity.

In Makumane, one of Ntsane's collection of essays, he describes how dangerous a woman could be, especially if there are obstructions in her way:
Ya lekang ho se sisi a phakisa a hlaha koisi ka isela ts a mefuta-futa. Teng sebopuwa sena ha se lebe thibelo, ha se naise mafika, dinoka di phaphametse, difefo di roraka, letolo le thwathwaletsa. (1988:14)

(The one who tries to oppose her, soon gets injured in various ways. In that regard this creature knows no bounds, she doesn't care for rocks, rivers in flood, heavy storms and thunders.)

The author further states that:

Ya sa tsebeng sebopuwa sena mosadi, ha a tsebe lefu, ha a tsebe bophelo, hoba se ka phedisa sa tloha sa bolaya, mme teng ka sehloho se tshabehang. (1988:14)

(Who does not know this creature, a woman, does not know death, does not know life because she can bring to life and can kill brutally too.)

In the scriptures a woman is referred to as a weaker vessel, yet to Ntsane that is not the case. The extracts above refers to how a woman when angered can go to absurd extremes. Once provoked, she knows no bounds.

3.5 Conclusion

In Masoabi, Ntsane uses a flashback to indicate that there was animosity between Masoabi and his aunt during his stay with her. The conversation also foreshadows what might occur between Masoabi's parent and the aunt when the boy reaches home. By saying, "tsamaya o yo mpua hampe" (go and talk ill about me), she is trying to forestall a possible conflict that could develop between herself and her brother.

The picture Ntsane portrays of Masoabi's mother borders on the negative side of a mother. We are not convinced that the mother can easily sent her baby of 2-3 years away from her simply because she fears bad influence from its playmates. An idea such as this one can only come from a man such as Ntsane who shows great bias towards the women folk.
Despite his bias, there are moments where Ntsane does not hesitate to extol virtue to a woman where it is fitting. His description of Lineo for example, is done in the most appealing poetic narrative prose.

In *Nna Sajene Kokobela*, only two women are involved namely Mmaletswai and Topisi’s wife. To his wife, Mmaletswai, Ntsane displays the common superiority complex of a Mosotho man to his wife.

The second character, Mohatsa Topisi, is portrayed in such a way that both positive and negative attributes are brought out. On the positive side Ntsane portrays her physical appearance which is very attractive. The negative side is once more the suspicious nature Ntsane displays towards women. He views Topisi’s wife as suspect number one in the murder of her husband. This suspicion is not even based on any factual evidence. Her mere facial appearance makes him want to suspect her.

*Bao batho* being a novel that deals with youth, Ntsane successfully paints a picture of the youth with their petty jealousies and quarrels. It is also interesting to note that Ntsane, thirty years ago already foreshadowed the present day situation of codeswitching.
CHAPTER 4

4. THE SALIENT STYLISTIC FEATURES IN NTSANE'S NOVELS

4.1 Introduction

Ntsane has attempted various types of literary genres. Apart from history novels, which are the subject of this study, he has also composed poetry where he seems to be at his best in literary composition. His style in poetry for example, is characterized by heavy satire.

According to Lenake, the satire he uses comprises of the following:

(i) the invective type
(ii) the didactive and condemnatory type
(iii) the light-hearted type (Lenake, 1984:67)

Apart from these satiric features, Ntsane's language abounds in a host of communicative devices such as metaphor, simile, parallelism, contrast, sarcasm, irony and paradox.

Earlier we referred to some of Ntsane's style as being poetic narrative prose. The above mentioned devices are not restricted to his poetry only, but also feature prominently in his prose narratives.

4.2 Ntsane's style in Masoabi

In chapter 3, Ntsane relates the occurrences the day baby Masoabi is baptised. In his own humorous and satiric manner, he says:

"Ha re tsebe seo mmae le ntatae ba neng ba se rerile mabapa le lebitso la ha e kereke, re se re uthwa feela ha moruti a se a mo kolobetsa, hore ho thwe ke Mattheuse. Eka ba a ratile haholo bakreste mabitso ana a Bibeleng! (1987:13)

(We do not know what mother and father had in mind about his church (Christian) name. We only heard when the minister
baptises him that he is Matthews. It seems as if the Christians adore these Biblical names!

Mohla mokete oo, e ne e se, motho hodima motho e mong, e ne e le boiyane. Tjhe, e ne e se feela; ho ne ho theohile moruti ya ratwang haholo, wa mane Pitseng ha Tau. Moruti eo, ha eba Pitseng ha ba aso sokolohe kaofela, etlaba, ruri ba mo enise hampe; hope etlaba pina yane ya kgale e ntse ba lokela; pina eo pele e neng e le sesomo se seholo. Mantswe a yona, jwalo ka ha a bolela, a re boheiene ba teng ke bo boholo, a hile a batla a baba. Are:

(On that day people had gathered in great numbers. It was because the famous minister from Pitseng at Tau’s village had come to conduct the service. That minister if all the people of Pitseng had not yet repented, they would have done him great injustice; and again that old song would still be appropriate; the song which was originally regarded as a big disgrace. Its words as we are told suggest that great paganism is the order of the day, they sound somewhat bitter. They are as follows:

“O tswa kae, o sa tsebeng semate?
Ke tswa Pitseng, ha Jonathane, Leribe,
Ke tswa boheteneng ba pelo e thata,
Ke tla ke palame terene ya bosin!”

(“Where do you come from where smartness is unknown?
I am from Pitseng, Leribe at Jonathan’s,
I am from great paganism
I travelled by the night’s train!”)

On that day the minister read from the book of Galatians 6:7, 8. The minister frightened people, people shivered, they were confused, their emotions were disturbed. The women cried; the men simply bowed their heads, tightened their necks, cleared their throats continuously. When he said: “Basotho, what have you planted, and what do you hope to reap”, the heathens flocked to the stage, and gathered near the table, and surrendered to Almighty. A certain tall old man with great beard and bald head, who claimed to know Moshoeshoe well, wrote down their names.
Ntsane, in his own way, commences with implicit sarcasm by saying that Masoabi's parents might have had a Sesotho name in their minds. According to the first missionaries who brought Christianity to the Basotho, Sesotho names were referred to as heathen names and shunned by them hence the sarcastic way of saying that the congregation only heard the name when he was baptised as Matthews, a Biblical name.

The sarcastic tone which pervades the whole passage, is also contained in Ntsane's assertion that if people from Pitseng have by this time not yet repented, they have done the famous minister great disservice. Apparently the minister was well known and respected for his powerful sermons. On the same tone, Ntsane proceeds to infer that the Pitseng community are still engaged in their pagan practices. This he illustrates by quoting a well known sefela (migrant worker praise). This is possible because the migrant praise (difela) and the church hymns share the same name, difela.

The expression 'o sa tsebe semate' (not knowing smartness) suggests that Christians are regarded as the "smart" people, that is, good people who know God.

The answer to this rhetoric question entails the opposite of smartness. The people from Pitseng in Leribe district belong to the pagan society. They are from the core of paganism where women travel by a night train, implying the commonly known idea among the Basotho that the women witches fly by night using a broom.

To indicate that Christianity was presented to the Basotho in a way that instilled fear in them, and not voluntary acceptance, many people on hearing the days sermon were filled with fear and anxiety. This brought about great confusion, shivering and unquestioned acceptance. Their fear made them flock to the stage and confess their sins.
The confusion was brought about by the minister’s rhetorical question Basotho, le jetse eng, mme le tshepile ho kotula eng? (Basotho, what have you planted, and what do you hope to reap?).

In a poetic narrative prose fashion, Ntsane in introducing the old man who wrote down the names of the new confessed Christians, describes him in a repetition of phrases and expressions such as moholo e mong e molelele, ya re di putswa, ya lefatla, ya reng, distinguish this old man from the rest of the congregation. By implying that he knew Moshoeshoe well, means that he lived during Mashoeshoe’s days and was converted during that time.

4.3 **Ntsane’s style in Nna Sajene Kokobela**

Ntsane once more displays the negative attitude towards his female characters. Topisi’s wife is number one suspect towards the murder of her husband, Kokobela therefore questions the farmer about this woman:

*Ka botsa molemi hore o tseba dife ka isa mohatsa Topisi, bophelo ba hae le monna wa hae. Yena a re ka ha ha se kgale a le Berea mono, a ka sitwana ho hla a nna nnele, ha e se feela hore o uihwa monyenyetsi o reng o kile a shapa ngwana wa motho e mong hore a be a akebe. Ka botsa hore na o ne a mo tsekisang, a re ho thwe ngwana yeo o ne a pose fariki ka lejwe. Ka tihuwa hore enwa mosadi a ka nna a eisa dihaeza. Molemi a boela a mpoella hore ka mohlomong mosadi enwa a hlotha kgoho ditshiba yaba o e tlohela e tsamaya e le jwalo. Ka hlollwa le ho feta ha a mpoella hore hape o kile a kena katse katse ka ontong e nise e phela. Tsena kaeqela isa nna isa eketsa ho tisa se maikutlong aka, e leng tse ka etsweng ke mosadi feela, mosadi, pitsana e fokolang mmele empa pelo e tshafetse e le kweetza ya merero e tshabeeng Mosadi!* (Ntsane, 1986:23).

(I inquired from the farmer what he knew about Topisi’s wife, her life with the husband. In reply, he said seeing that he was not long at Berea, he would be unable to give me precise details. He suggested that he could only give me an outline of what he had heard about her.)
he was told that she once beat up a boy until he collapsed. When I asked for the reason why she did it, I was told that the boy had missed her pig with a stone. From that I deduced that this woman is capable of performing miracles. The farmer continued and informed me that one day, this woman defeathered a life hen and let it go like that. I was more surprised when told that she also put a live cat in the oven to roast. All these things affirmed my ideas that only woman is capable of doing such acts, a woman, physically a weak vessel, but with a hardened heart, and a deep pool of wicked intentions. Yes, a woman!)

Ntsane’s usual negative attitude towards women once more comes to the fore in the quoted extract. According to the farmer all what is said about Topisi’s wife, is just a hearsay and yet indicates the usual bias of men towards women. For example, a ka sitwa ho hla a nnea nnete, feela….o utlwa ka monyenyetsi (he would be unable to give me the truth, but...has heard from a hearsay. The incidents the farmer quotes, all points to one thing, the cruelty of the woman.

Ntsane rounds off his portrayal of a woman and her cruelty by using contrast, one of his strongest weapons when he attacks the woman. He says, a woman, physically a weak vessel and yet at heart very hardened, a deep pool containing treacherous intentions.

4.4 *Ntsane’s style in Bao batho*

"..." ha kena kgomohadi e telele, e tshesanyane, lesiha la mpshe ruri hoja ha se bona boketa bono ba yona. O ne a reitwe lebitso la boswaswi la Kobokobo. Masene, bokaako! “Dumelang, baratuwa, le phelse jwang kajeno? Ke a bo theselaka mna, le ipusang kapa le sa iuseng; rona mose ona ho Phuthiatsana kgale re ipusa ha lona le nse le re le sa ngoleise London kwana; bophele re ho tlamurela jwalo ka ngwana a ja lefura la fariki. Dumela le wena moeti, ha e ba o sa phetse? Rona re a bo jethemela; ho le jwang kapa jwang, re ya tokolohong. (1992:63)

("...then entered a tall lady, slender, a real beauty save her emaciated appearance. Her nickname was Kobokobo. Very cunning and proud! Goodday friends, and how are you today? Whether you are independent or not, we, this side of Phuthiatsana are long independent, while you are
In the passage from *Bao batho*, Ntsane suspects something cynical about a beautiful picture of a lady, tall, slender and very attractive. Her beauty is likened to the plumes of an ostrich. After this vivid positive portrayal of this lady, Ntsane reverts back to his usual scathing attack on women. She is emaciated and looks weak, above all she is cunning and conceited.

The woman’s negative attributes are further contained in her boastful utterances: she is liberated as compared to those beyond the Phuthiatsana river. The “liberation” she is referring to, is that of a low morals: *ke a botheselaka, re a bojethemela* (*bophelo*). I force my way through and jump on it - meaning that I know no bounds, and do as I please. This is how we enjoy life.

This woman of low morals, turns to the stranger and greets him in a pompous challenging way: *ha e ba o sa phela* (if you are still alive) implying that she is available if the man is interested.

4.5 Conclusion

Ntsane has a peculiar style characterized by satire. This is more biting when he deals with the female characters.

In *Masoabi*, for example, two main women characters who are negatively portrayed are ‘Manonyana and Masoabi’s mother. ‘Manonyana, who is Masoabi’s aunt, is put in a bad light from the day Masoabi is born. She ululates while the rest of the community is mourning the death of her father. When Masoabi returns to his home after spending a few years at her home, she sends him off with the most unpleasant words from an aunt to her brother, Masoabi’s father.
Masoabi’s mother is also portrayed as a grossly negligent mother. She sends her baby away from home for fear that he will be influenced badly by the local children. At a tender age of 2-3 years, we do not expect the mother to part with her child on such flimsy reasons.

In the quoted passage, Ntsane’s satire is at its best: only the minister and Masoabi’s parents know what name the child will get when baptised. A closer reading however, suggests that the possible Sesotho name the parents had in mind, was unsuitable. Every Mosotho child must have a name relating to the circumstances when it is born. Masoabi is born on the day when people are mourning. His name should have been Sello and Masoabi, but we only hear Mattheuse when he is baptised. But throughout the book, he is referred to as Masoabi, his real name although it does not appear on his baptismal certificate.

The manner in which Ntsane paints some of the women in Pitseng, suggests the common belief among the Basotho that the women folk fly by night using a broom when they are on an expedition of their witch hunt.

In Nna Sajene, once more two women are involved. Mmaletswai, Kokobela’s wife, is portrayed as a perpetual minor by her husband. Kokobela meets Topisis’s wife, who has no other name, she is simply “Topisi’s wife”. The description of this woman in the words of one of the local farmers is based on all the negative attributes of a cruel person. What is more, the narrator simply maintains that what he has heard about this woman, is a mere hearsay. Her beauty is likened to that of Delilah in the scriptures.

In the third novel, Bao batho, Ntsane gives us a vivid description of a Mosotho woman of low morals named Kobokobo. She uses township codeswitching slang and challenges a detective who has come to investigate a case in the village in a typical township style where anybody, even strangers are entertained with liquor - Separeleta sa batho ba baholo (Sparletta for adults). She uses the word mopholoswa (liberated from sin) to ridicule the
supposed abazalwana (young Christians whose sins have been forgiven). This is mockery to the supposed young people who have “repented” from their sins! To them liquor signifies great sin.
CHAPTER 5

5.1 GENERAL CONCLUSION

This research was intended to show how female characters are portrayed in the three novels by Ntsane.

In his three novels, Ntsane adopts a superior attitude toward his female characters, an attitude which is common in most male writers.

The author's general viewpoint is a traditional one: that female characters should be submissive to male characters. Thus, all those female characters who are not submissive to their male counterparts are portrayed as rude and wicked.

The author in Masoabi depicts 'Manonyana, Masoabi's aunt, as indifferent and harsh towards culture and her relative. She ululates during her father's death, something which is not common among the Basotho.

According to the explanation, the old man did not die a natural death but died suddenly by drowning. Many people were deeply shocked by the bad news, instead his daughter ululates after hearing that Masoabi is born.

Furthermore, the readers expect 'Manonyana to treat Masoabi well during his stay with her. However, this does not happen. The treatment is harsh and there is lot of jealousy towards Masoabi. She does not even show respect to her brother, because the type of the letter she wrote to him shows poor manners.

Masoabi's mother, too, fails to give her child motherly love and care which every mother gives to her child. She allows her son to stay with his aunt even though she is capable of giving her son proper guidance.
She is a housewife who spends most of the time at home doing household chores. She is the teacher’s wife and is also literate. She fails to understand that every child at the age of two to three years old says anything he can think of and repeats things he has been told. Ntsane makes Masoabi’s mother do things which are contrary to a Mosotho woman and a mother.

She is very hard because when Masoabi’s cousins come to fetch him, she is not affected by her child’s crying.

The author remarks:

Mmae a bona hantle hore ngwana hae o ila senyeha, a ithute dintho tse mpe tse sa lokang. A rera ke bona ho mo tloa motseng oo, ho mo isa ha rakgadiae, kwana Hlotse ... Mohla a tili latwa ke bomotswalae, a ila haholo, ... mmae a ba a mo gnehela. empa a re e ka kgona a tsamaye, leha a ka ila jwang kapa jwang (1987:17).

(His mother realised that her child would be spoiled, he would learn bad things which are unsuitable for him. She decided to take him away from the village, to go and live with his aunt at Hlotse ... The day his cousins came to fetch him, he cried, ... his mother felt sad and sorry for him but concluded that he must leave no matter how hard he cried.)

The child cries because he is taken away from his parents and his friends. It is amazing that Masoabi’s mother did not consider that there are children also at Hlotse. She probably knows the cruel nature of the aunt but pursues the idea of her child living under such conditions.

When Masoabi experiences problems at Hlotse, there is no mention that his mother once sympathised with him or even encouraged him to study hard. Instead, Masoabi’s father writes a letter to his son motivating him to study hard and to endure those hardships. It is only Ntsane’s women characters who could behave as Masoabi’s mother.
In the novel, *Nna Sajene Kokobela, C.I.D.*, the author singles out Topisi's wife though Mmaletswai, Kokobela's wife is also mentioned. Kokobela ridicules his wife whenever she tries to give her husband support. However, the focus is on Topisi's wife.

Topisi's wife is beautiful and well built, but her actions are similar to that of the devil. She is wicked, cruel, evil and bad. Kokobela suspects that Topisi's wife is involved in the murder of her husband, Topisi, although he does not offer any clues to support his suspicion. He monitors this woman's movements.

After Kokobela's fight with Mafethe at night next to Topisi's home, he decides to visit Topisi's wife the following day. He arrives and accuses her of the murder of her husband.

He reveals to her that he overheard her conversation with Mafethe the previous night. When she realises that Kokobela had heard everything, she suddenly changes her attitude.

The author describes this change in the following manner:

> Jwale mosadi a hlakola meokgo a lesa ho nna a hhwephetsa mamina, a nkgoboletla mahlo jwale ka ntho e sa tlalang. Ka fumana jwale mahlo ana ao pele a neng a le maphatshwana, a tletse lerato le lengata, jwale a tletse disuva, bora, ditshila, lefu, dihele le meleko ka ho fapana ha yona. Ka ba ka tshoha ka re esebe ke ntse ke re ke tadinane le motho athe ke tadinane le Satane a ikentse motho (1986:62).

(Then the woman wiped off her tears and stopped sobbing, she stared at me like a stupid fool. I then discovered that those eyes which earlier where bright, full of abundant love, had turned into hatred, enmity, dirt, death, hell and various turbulations. I even felt that I had mistakenly felt that I was dealing with a human being and yet it was the devil pretending to be a human being.)

This is gross exaggeration of a woman's character and personality.
Despite the fact that Topisi’s wife is demonised, Ntsane still makes her the winner who would not allow herself to be taken for a ride. She is tough and can stand and fight back against all abuses from the men she encounters.

Kobokobo is another female character from *Bao bitho*, who does not warrant our respect because of her low morals. She is weak and undignified.

Raditaba gives her money to forge Lucie’s handwriting because he wants to take revenge on Rasello. Kobokobo accepts bribery and ends up in trouble.

Finally, one might argue that the research into the portrayal of women characters reveals that they are marginalised and treated as though they are perpetual minors.
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