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## Dialogue in S. A. Dazela's *Izono zakho ziya kukujikela*

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This article investigates the use of dialogue in the depiction of the main character, Mpumlo's personality traits in S. A. Dazela's novel, *Izono zakho ziya kukujikela* ("Your sins will turn against you", 1991). Mpumlo is the lead character in the novel. The aspects of Mpumlo's personality, as depicted through dialogue, that feature prominently in the novel, include his kindness and humaneness, caring, being a liar, dangerousness, jealousy, cruelty, sarcasm, irresponsibility, cheating, rudeness and disrespect. All these traits will be highlighted. A discussion is also presented of the concepts of dialogue and personality in general and of Mpumlo's personality traits in particular. **Key words:** Dialogue, isiXhosa novel, S.A. Dazela, *Izono zakho ziya kukujikela*, personality traits.

#### Introduction

S. A. Dazela makes extensive use of dialogue in the depiction of characters in the novel *Izono zakho ziya kukujikela*. However, literary critics have paid no attention to this aspect of the novel. It is for this reason that the use of dialogue in the presentation of the personality traits of Mpumlo (one of the leading characters) is undertaken. This character's personality traits are more explicitly depicted through the use of dialogue. These personality traits will be judged by considering what Mpumlo says about himself or other characters, and what other characters say about him in their conversations.

Dialogue is an important literary device. It is mostly associated with drama, where actors speak for themselves (in direct speech) as they engage in conversation. For novelists dialogue is a key device through which characters are presented through direct speech, as confirmed by Baldick (2001: 65): "Dialogue is clearly a major aspect of drama, and is usually a significant component of prose fiction and some narrative poetry."

For Heese and Lawton (1988: 139) "Dialogue in the novel is an important way of revealing character. Novels are, by and large, about human relationships, which depend to a considerable extent on communication. Dialogue is a medium through which bonds between people are established, sustained and developed or destroyed."

Brooks and Warren (1959: 170) are also of the view that “one of the most important modes for character revelation is of course the way in which characters talk.” Hawthorn (1985: 51) sums up this general view on the importance of dialogue: “Dialogue in particular is a wonderful way of revealing character.”

It is by talking among themselves that characters are depicted in dialogue. Either the character speaks for himself or herself or other characters speak about him or her – words that point to the character’s personality, physical appearance or actions. In this way the author uses dialogue to depict the kind of characters he or she wishes to create. For the reader it usually takes no great effort to detect character traits in conversation. Abrams (2001: 62) expresses the significance of dialogue in revealing the personality traits of a character when he states: “A person’s speech [...] does not express a ready-made and autonomous individuality; instead, his or her character emerges in the course of the dialogue [...]” What characters say and how they say it reveals something about their personalities.

### **Terminology defined**

#### ***Dialogue***

Dialogue is a means of conversation between two or more people (Mtumane 1995: 75). Rooney (1999: 521) also views dialogue as “conversation, talk of any kind between two or more people” and in a work of literature dialogue refers to the “characters’ words; the words spoken by characters in a book, a film, or a play, or a section of work that contains spoken words [...] literary work in conversation form; a work of literature in the form of a conversation.” Baldick (2001:65) views dialogue in literature, as “a spoken exchange between or among characters in a dramatic or narrative work; or a literary form in prose or verse based on a debate or discussion, usually between two speakers.” Klarer (2002: 47) defines dialogue as “verbal communication between two or more characters.”

From the above definitions, it is apparent that in literature dialogue is conversation between characters, the imaginary persons created by the author. This study will illustrate how conversations between characters reveal Mpumlo’s personality traits in the novel under study.

#### ***Personality***

The common dictionary definition of personality denotes one’s “character, disposition, identity, individuality and make-up” (*Collins English Thesaurus* 1997: 461). According to Derlega, Winstead and Jones (2005: 3) “Personality can be defined as the system of enduring, inner characteristics of individuals that contribute to consistency in their thoughts, feelings, and behavior.” In the words of Ewen (2003: 4, 5) personality refers to important and relatively stable characteristics within a person that account for

consistent patterns of behaviour. For Cheek et al (2002: 94):

Personality is the characteristic and distinctive behavior, emotions, and thoughts that comprise an individual's response to his or her circumstances and environment. It affects the way people think and feel about themselves and others; it also influences the choices they make about career, family lives, romances, and social relationships. How people think and feel about themselves and others affects how they relate to others.

According to Bobelo (2008: 40) "personality refers to the combination of characteristics or qualities that form an individual's character." Mtumane and Bobelo (2008: 117) view personality as "an umbrella word for traits that determine one's character. These traits manifest themselves in one's stable and consistent behaviour in different situations and circumstances. They are also used to describe one's character or nature".

In terms of these definitions, the characteristics of personality are enduring, inner and consistent, that is they are stable over time. These characteristics are intrapersonal, that is, they are within the person and are part of his/her system. The individual's feelings, goals, motives and needs may lead the person to respond or behave relatively consistently across various situations. Personality is what makes individuals behave differently from one another in similar situations.

#### **Dazela's use of dialogue in *Izono zakho ziya kukujikela***

Siphokazi Angelinah Dazela is the author of the novel *Izono zakho ziya kukujikela*. Her other novels include *Owu Ndanele* ("Oh I have had enough", 1977), *Lumkela imintwe emithathu* ("Beware of the three fingers", 1981), *Abanyolukel' mali* ("Those greedy for money", 1987), *Soze kubenje ngakuqala* ("Things will never be like before", 1988). She has also written a drama entitled *UNomasomi* ("Nomasomi", 1989) and prepared an English drama entitled *The wise and the foolish ones* and a television drama series *Township Movements*. Besides isiXhosa literary works, Dazela has prepared isiXhosa and English OBE material for various school grades. She has worked as an educator, translator, editor, proofreader, book reviewer, scriptwriter and language advisor in different government departments and private organizations and has been ordained as a priest in the African Gaza Church.

In *Izono zakho ziya kukujikela* Dazela presents a story of two young men, Mpumlo and Sosiba. Earlier in the story, these young men were great friends. Later they became enemies. The bone of contention is that Sosiba, who Mpumlo has assisted during his joblessness, progresses faster after getting employed. This causes Mpumlo to become jealous and he tries by all means to prevent Sosiba from progressing further. Sosiba survives all Mpumlo's plots and conspiracies. At the end, Sosiba becomes a minister of religion while his wife, Nokholiwe, becomes a nurse. Their children also get

educated and help them with home chores. Mpumlo's wife, Nowam, on the other hand, divorces him and his friends desert him. His girlfriend, Sarah Mlibo, abuses him and he ultimately gets sick and dies. Sosiba who has never displayed any grudge conducts his funeral service.

In *Izono zakho ziya kukujikela* the personality traits of characters are a significant part of the work. They determine why characters act or behave in the way they do. Dazela's use of dialogue in revealing the personality traits of Mpumlo is apparent in quite a few instances. For instance, in a conversation between Mpumlo and Sosiba, the personality traits of these characters are detectable. In the scene where Sosiba is worried for having been dumped by Thandiwe but hides it from Mpumlo, the latter says: "But Sosiba even if you are used to misleading people, you will never confuse me at all. There is something serious that is worrying you; let us go to the movies so that you stop being sorrowful as if you are the only person with problems." (2).<sup>1</sup>

From these words it is easy to detect Mpumlo's personality. He is depicted as an observant character that is able to sense when another character is not happy. This points to his caring about other characters, especially Sosiba, his friend. Besides, Mpumlo is portrayed as a kind and humane character as he makes a plan for Sosiba to get relief from his worries when he suggests that they go to movies. Note the words, *ingathi nguwe wedwa umntu oneengxaki* ("as if you are the only person with problems"), are meant for Sosiba to realise that other people have problems as well. This consoles him and makes his worries subside. Mpumlo is revealed as a reasonable, kind and humane character that cares about the well-being of others.

Yet, it is also through the rendering of dialogue that the reader detects the other, more negative, side of Mpumlo. Later in the novel, his attitude towards Sosiba changes. He starts resenting Sosiba, as the latter seems to progress more in life than him. In a conversation with the manager of a furniture shop where Sosiba has bought furniture, Mpumlo says about Sosiba: "My lord, I have come to advise you, be careful of people who come here as they have different intentions. One may buy furniture intending to decorate his house and yet another one buys it because he wants to harm you and not intending to finish paying it up. I am not sure if you understand me well?" (22).<sup>2</sup> When the manager wants to know who wants to harm him, Mpumlo responds: "It is a friend with whom I grew up, my friend who is the son of Notiya." (22).<sup>3</sup> The son of Notiya, whom Mpumlo is referring to, is Sosiba, whose surname is Notiya. These words indicate what a liar Mpumlo is. He is making up all this as he is bent on bad-mouthing Sosiba. He wants the manager of the furniture shop to distrust Sosiba.

Mpumlo's being a liar further manifests itself when he continues in his conversation with the manager. About Sosiba he says:

Ten years ago we were together at Johannesburg. Again to satisfy his ambitions, he bought a bedroom suite for one thousand rand. He only paid the deposit, and thereafter sent that furniture home. Months went by with the White man expecting

something while Sosiba was nowhere to be found. I remained with a problem for the people who brought that furniture asked me about him. They never got any truth for I knew that even the address he gave them was false. It was a Soweto address; the name and surname were false. They rounded Soweto in vain; even now that furniture is at his home as he says he cannot make White people richer than they already are. (23).<sup>4</sup>

These words demonstrate how good Mpumlo is at fabricating stories about Sosiba. They also indicate how dangerous he is, as he is determined to make the furniture shop manager to distrust Sosiba. Mpumlo was never with Sosiba at Johannesburg. Sosiba never bought furniture with false particulars. In fact, he could not buy furniture as he was never employed before coming to Phuta-Ditjhaba, where he stays with Mpumlo. Mpumlo does all this because he is jealous of Sosiba who is progressing in life while he, Mpumlo, is not.

Mpumlo's cruelty is depicted in a conversation that involves himself and his friends, Sagwityi and Nkwenkwezi. Sagwityi lent a single bed to Sosiba on the latter's arrival at Phuta-Ditjhaba. In this conversation Mpumlo insists that they go and reclaim the bed during the night. His intention is to embarrass Sosiba in the presence of his (Sosiba's) mother who has paid a visit, and to move whoever might be sleeping in the bed. For this he says: "Oh yes, I have found an opportunity to embarrass him, and it is good that this is going to happen in the presence of that boastful guest who is his mother. This evening at nine o'clock we must go and fetch that bed. And I am sure we will find someone sleeping in it." (42).<sup>5</sup> Note the words *ndilifumene ngoku ithuba lokumphoxa* ("I have now found an opportunity to embarrass him"). These words imply that Mpumlo has been looking for an opportunity to embarrass Sosiba. This has been his motive for a while.

Mpumlo's cruelty is also depicted in a conversation where he, together with Sagwityi and Nkwenkwezi, conspires for Sosiba to be arrested together with an embezzler. In this conversation Mpumlo says:

If they do not get arrested then I am not Mpumlo. Sosiba is going to get the pain that was experienced by me before, I know the notoriety of that prison in Harrismith. I have really got him, I have tied him hands and feet, his wisdom is going to end and only stupidity will remain in that brain of his. I said I would persecute him until he died. I am not just a small nose, my name is Mpumlo ... (46).<sup>6</sup>

The sentence *Ndandithe ndiza kumtshutshisa ade afe* ("I said I would persecute him until he died") indicates Mpumlo's intention to harm Sosiba all along. From the above passage it is clear that Mpumlo wants to inflict pain on the innocent Sosiba so that he may endure the same experience endured by him (Mpumlo) when he was arrested for beating up his wife. More revealing is Mpumlo's intention to "end" Sosiba's

“wisdom”, to reduce him to a fool before the community. Mpumlo, in his insistence to humiliate Sosiba proves himself to be cruel and jealous.

When he hears that Sosiba was arrested at the station on his way to Fort Hare with his wife, Mpumlo’s *schadenfreude* is:

Nkwenkwezi! Have you heard about last night’s scandal? The four men who are directors of the Setsokotsane Company went to fetch the Great One on whom the sun never sets at Bethlehem. I am telling you the points of the King have dropped, he was embarrassed in that crowd, and they say the Queen ran up and down desperately begging for her husband. The journey to the Cape Colony has stopped. I have got them indeed ... (50–1).<sup>7</sup>

Sosiba was up for arrest and Mpumlo’s diabolical satisfaction points to a callous indifference and deviousness. The reader is not unaware of the ironic contrast for Sosiba and his wife, Thandiwe, were on their way to the University of Fort Hare and Victoria hospital where they were planning to study the noble pursuits of ministry and nursing respectively.

Mpumlo’s references to Sosiba and Thandiwe are caustic: Sosiba is referred to as *iNgangalala engatshonelwa langa* (“the Great One on whom the sun never sets”) and *ukumkani* (“the King”) and Thandiwe as *ukumkanikazi* (“the Queen”). These titles are normally used when referring to people of high status, people who are beyond reproach.

Being imprisoned is meant to diminish Sosiba’s status, to reduce his potential for greatness. His arrest is also tantamount to the setting of the sun at midday on him. The isiXhosa expression *ilanga limtshonel’ emini* (“the sun has set on one at midday”) refers to a person who finds himself in with an unexpected problem. *Ukumkani* is the isiXhosa word for king, a person revered and respected in his community. In fact, commoners often salute the king to show their respect. Under normal circumstances a king would not be arrested in the same way that Sosiba has been arrested. However, Sosiba is released shortly after his arrest and Mpumlo has to re-strategize as he says to himself:

“I cannot fathom Sosiba, it seems he is using black magic that makes him slip off. Oh, I am rather disappointed; I was already thinking I had stopped them. For Sosiba to have escaped being locked up in Harrismith last night his God must be alive. Yet!! Yet! We will meet at any time. I am going to take that Nokholiwe away from him and leave him holding his cheek!” (52).<sup>8</sup>

Mpumlo does not give up, he is bent on preventing Sosiba and Thandiwe from going to the university town of Alice, and destroying their marriage and eventually taking Sosiba’s wife for himself.

Besides his cruelty, his envy and his scheming nature Mpumlo is also presented through dialogue as an irresponsible and insensitive husband and unfit father. As he is working, he does not bring money home to his wife. When his wife, Nowam,

ultimately visits him at work, as he stays in Bethlehem, to ask him for money, he responds: "I told you that I will be bringing money, I do not know what you are doing here because I know the entrance into my house." (59).<sup>9</sup> Mpumlo says these words after having neglected to send money home for a long time, let alone visiting his wife and daughter. When Nowam asks if there is no money he can give her, as they do not have food at home, Mpumlo responds: "You are making yourself hungry intentionally for the money you should have used to buy food is the money you pay in busses while roaming about. If you are dizzy from hunger use your return fare and go back to Phutha-Ditjaba on foot." (59).<sup>10</sup>

Generally, among amaXhosa it is the duty of the man to fend for his family. When a man is working and staying away from home, he is expected to send money to his family from time to time. He does not need to be reminded of this, as it is his primary duty. Failure to take care or finding ways of making good amounts to irresponsibility on the part of the man.

For Mpumlo to order his wife to buy food with her return fare and walk back to Phutha-Ditjaba further reveals his disrespect for her; just as his failure to provide for his child underlines his irresponsibility. Besides the hunger that the family endures his daughter, Chwayita, does not have school necessities: "Weeks went by with Nowam waiting while, together with her daughter Chwayita, they were dying of hunger. What made the wife more concerned was the school necessities, she continued to endure for the month was about to end." (59).<sup>11</sup>

As is evident from the above it is in dialogue that Mpumlo's negative characteristics are revealed. The same happens when Mpumlo is depicted as a cheat and an adulterer. See when Nowam, his wife questions him about Sarah Mlibo, whom she found in his house in Bethlehem: "What is Sarah Mlibo doing in the house wherein you stay? I have seen that you stay together as her dresses are combined with your own clothes." (59).<sup>12</sup> It is because of his relationship with Sarah that Mpumlo does not send money to his family, yet his response reveals an arrogant carelessness with no hint of shame or contrition, signaling the breakdown of his marriage: "All that nonsense you must ask the day I go to Phutha-Ditjaba; furthermore, if you like you may return to your home in Pietersburg." (59).<sup>13</sup>

Mpumlo is also depicted as ill-mannered and as a character that lacks subtlety and sophistication. This is reflected in a conversation between Nowam and Nomeva, her mother-in-law, who is Mpumlo's mother. In their conversation Nomeva pleads with Nowam not to divorce Mpumlo. Nowam's response is:

... I do not want to be called by Mpumlo anymore. You know little about his rudeness as you are an elderly person. Where have you ever heard a husband telling one that one is too ugly while one is married to him? Do you know that Mpumlo calls me Nongayindoda? He told me directly that he regrets for having married me in the presence of Sarah Mlibo. (63).<sup>14</sup>

As his wife, Nowam has every right to demand respect from Mpumlo, yet his behaviour in front of his lover, Sarah, pains and demeans her. This may easily cause Sarah to disrespect Nowam as well. By doing all this, Mpumlo might be thinking that he embarrasses Nowam while is actually exposing his rudeness to his lover as well, a fate that might befall her later. For this Sarah might end up not respecting him. All this portrays Mpumlo as more foolish than wise.

*Nongayindoda* is a derogative name used to refer to a female who looks like a man. Among amaXhosa beauty is associated with femininity. For instance, when the land is beautiful and green, it is said to be *ilizwe liyintombazana*, literally meaning 'the land is a girl.' On the other hand, men are generally regarded as less handsome. A woman who is perceived as less beautiful is referred to as *Nongayindoda*, a woman with the features of a man. Even then such an insult is seldom said directly to a woman. For Mpumlo to insult his wife in her face reveals his deep-seated disregard for her and his lack of breeding.

### Conclusion

This article has examined the use of dialogue in the depiction of Mpumlo's personality traits in Dazela's *Izono zakho ziya kukujikela*. Earlier on in the text Mpumlo is presented as a character with positive traits of kindness, humaneness and caring, while he is later depicted with negative traits of being a liar, dangerous, jealous, cruel, sarcastic, irresponsible, a cheat, rude and disrespectful. Klarer (2002: 145) views such a "figure which is characterized through a number of different character traits" as a "rounded character". In its traditional definition this dynamism of traits would identify Mpumlo certainly as a rounded character, "complex in temperament and motivation and is presented with subtle particularity" involving an element of surprise and "as difficult to describe with any adequacy as a person in real life" (Abrams 2001: 33).

The depiction of Mpumlo proves Dazela's skill to create characters that represent complexity that goes beyond mere two-dimensional representation; much of this is created through the effective use of appropriate dialogue in credible settings.

### Notes

1. "Kodwa Sosiba nokuba sekusithiwa uqhele ukuqhatha abantu mna soze undibhide tu kwaphela. Inkulu into ekuhluphayo; masiye kumboniso-bhanyabhanya uyeke ukusoloko ukhedamile ingathi nguwe wedwa umntu oneengxaki." (2).
2. "Nkosam, ndize kucebisa, balumkele abantu abangena apha kuba baneenjongo ezahlukeneyo. Omnye uthenga impahla eza kuhombisa umzi wakhe kanti omnye uyithenga efuna ukwenzakalisa wena engazimiselanga nokugqiba ukuyihlawula. Andazi nokuba undiva kakuhle na?" (22).  
All the translations from the original are mine. The page references in parentheses refer to the cited edition of Dazela's *Izono zakho ziya kukujikela*.
3. "Ngumhlobo endikhula naye, umhlobo wam lo wakwaNotiya." (22).
4. "Kwiminyaka elishumi eyadlulayo sasikunye eJohannesburg. Kwangenxa yalaa mabhongo akhe wathenga impahla yegumbi lokulala yewaka leerandi. Wahlawula nje idiphozithi, emva koko



wayigodusa loo mpahla. Zaqengqeleka iinyanga umLungu ejonge enkalweni wabe uSosiba engavakali ndawo. Ndasala nogayi kuba ababezise impahla leyo bambuza kum. Zange bafumane nyaniso kuba ndandisazi ukuba kwankqu idilesi awabanika yona yayiyeyobuxoki. Yayiyiyidilesi yaseSoweto, nangoku loo mpahla ikowabo kuba uthi yena akanakutyebisa abeLungu behleli benemali kakade." (23).

5. "Heke-e, ndilifumene ngoku ithuba lokumphoxa, kunjalo le nto iza kwenzeka kakuhle kukho olwaa ndwendwe lunamagugu lungunina. Ngokuhlwanje ngentsimbi yesithoba zesiye kuthatha ibhedi leyo. Kunjalo ndiqinisekile siza kufika kukho umntu olele kuyo." (42).
6. "Ukuba ababanjwanga ndakuba andingoMpumlo. USosiba uza kufumana intlungu eyafunyanwa ndim ngaphambili, ndiyalwazi ugezo lwalaa ntolongo iseHarrismith. Ndimfumene ke khona, ndimbophe izandla neenyawo, buza kuphela ubukrelekrele kusale ubudenge kulaa ngqondo yakhe. Ndandithe ndiza kumtshutshisa ade afe. Andiyompumlwana nje kodwa, igama lam ndinguMpumlo ..." (46).
7. "Nkwenkwezi! Ulivile inyala laphezolo? Laa madoda mane aphele kwinkampani iSetsokotsane ebeye kuthatha iNgangalala engatshonelwa langa esitishini eBethlehem. Ndithi kuwe amanqaku kakumkani ahlile, uphoxwe kuloo nginginya, kuthiwa ukumkanikazi untantazele wancama ecengela umyeni. Uhambo lwaseKoloni luchithekile. Ndibafumene ke khona, ..." (50-1).
8. "USosiba lo noko andimqondi, ingathi usebenzisa uphuncuka-bemphethe. Owu, ndidanile kambe, besele ndisithi ndibathintele. Uphilile uThixo okhonzwa nguSosiba oko engavalelwanga eHarrismith phezolo. Kodwa!! kodwa! sakuze sidibane nokuba kunini na. Ndiza kumhlutha la Nokholiwe ashiyeke ebambebele esidleleni!" (52).
9. "Ndandithe kuwe imali ndiza kuyizisa, andiyazi into oze kuyenza kuba mna ndiyawazi umnyango wendlu yam." (59).
10. "Uzilambisa ngabom ngokwakho kuba imali ongowuthenge ukutya ngayo yile uyihlawula ezibhasini ujikeleza esithubeni. Xa unesiyenzi kukulamba yitya le uza kujika ngayo ukuze uye ngeenyawo ePhutha-Ditjaba." (59).
11. "Zaqengqeleka iiveki uNowam elindile baye besifa yindlala nentombi yakhe uChwayita. Okona kwabhokodisa inkosikazi ziimfuneko zesikolo, yaqala yanyamezela kuba nenyanga yayiza kuphela." (59).
12. "USarah Mlibo ufuna ntoni endlwini ohlala kuyo? Ndinibonile nihlala kunye kuba neelokhwe zakhe zidibene nempahla yakho." (59).
13. "Yonke loo mfunqumfunqum uze uyibuze mhla ndaya ePhutha-Ditjaba; ngaphezulu ukuba uyathanda ungaphindela kowenu ePietersburg." (59).
14. "... andisafuni mpela ukubizwa ngoMpumlo. Wazi kancinci wena ngogezo lwakhe kuba ungumntu omkhulu. Wakha wayiva phi indoda ekuxelela ezinkonkqeni ukuba umbi gqitha wakugqiba ukwendela kuyo? Uyayazi into yokuba uMpumlo uthi ndinguNongayindoda xa endibiza? Wandixelela ukuba uyazisola ngokutshata nam ekhona uSarah Mlibo." (63).

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