

ORDER, DURATION AND FREQUENCY IN *BAFANELE*  
*UKUGCOTSHWA* BY D.B.Z. NTULI

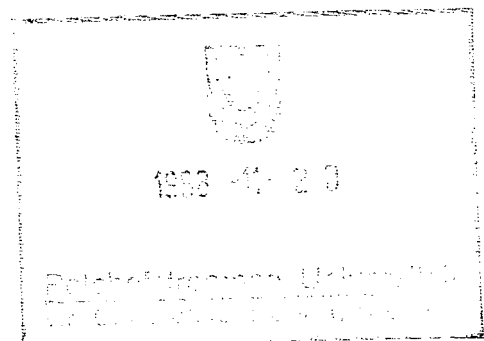
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# CHAPTER 1

## DEPARTURE POINT OF THIS STUDY

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

D.B.Z Ntuli is a well-known Zulu writer and his work has been extensively researched by a number of researchers in South Africa. Amongst them is Strachan who in 1989 completed a doctoral thesis on his short story *Uthingo lwenkosazane*, which was published in 1985.

Order, duration and frequency are concepts that are used by Gerard Genette (1980). They imply temporal aspects that are found in narrative art. Events are organised in a specific manner by an artist while he/she presents them on the text level. Where ORDER refers to the difference between the chronological order of events in the story as opposed to the "artistic" order of the text, DURATION implies the relationship between the amount of time covered by the events of a fabula and the amount of time involved in presenting those events. FREQUENCY, in its turn, implies the repetition of an event on the text level.

In the course of this approach it is significant that a distinction is drawn between the story-level and text-level. Where the story-level (known as fabula) refers to events, actors, time etc., as they are found without the involvement of an author, the opposite applies to the text level (known as sujet).

Researchers in African literature who researched time and events and who followed this above-mentioned theoretical framework are Ntuli (1994 ), Mkize (1996), Mollema (1994), Grobler (1990) and Strachan (1989).

Although these researchers have done valuable work in their applications of this theory to African languages, no similar research has been done regarding the short story *Bafanele ukugcotshwa*, by D.B.Z. Ntuli.

In view of the above-mentioned context, the following questions can be posed:

- 1) What do the concepts order, duration and frequency mean in narrative fiction?
- 2) In what way does the specific order of the events in the short story *Bafanele ukugcotshwa* contribute to its artistic value?
- 3) What is significant about the duration of the events in *Bafanele ukugcotshwa* ?  
How does this contribute to its artistic value?
- 4) What is the frequency of the events in *Bafanele ukugcotshwa*? How does this contribute to its artistic value?

## **1.2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THIS ANALYSIS**

The main aim of this study is to analyse the events of the short story *Bafanele ukugcotshwa* according to their order, duration and frequency.

Secondary aims are to:

- (1) do a theoretical analysis of the concepts order, duration and frequency;
- (2) analyse the events of *Bafanele ukugcotshwa* with special attention to order, duration and frequency.

### **1.3 CENTRAL THEORETICAL ARGUMENT**

This research will depart from the view that in narrative art there is a relationship between discourse and the events that it recounts on the one hand, and the same discourse and the act that produces it on the other. It means that a distinction is drawn between story (the signified or narrative content), narrative (statement, discourse or narrative text) and narrating (the narrative action). It furthermore states that a real or fictional situation exists in which this last mentioned action takes place (see Genette, 1980:27).

### **1.4 METHOD OF RESEARCH**

In this research attempt the theoretical principles of order, duration and frequency will be applied to the short story *Bafanele ukugcotshwa* by D.B.Z Ntuli. Grobler (1990) and Strachan (1989) will also be used as references which already succeeded in applying these theoretical principles to the African languages.

## **1.5 THE CHAPTER OUTLINE OF THIS STUDY**

### **CHAPTER 2**

The main aim of this chapter is a theoretical outline of the concepts order, duration and frequency.

### **CHAPTER 3**

In this chapter the theoretical principles of order, duration and frequency will be applied to the short story *Bafanele ukugcotshwa*.

### **CHAPTER 4**

Summary and final conclusion.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **ORDER, DURATION AND FREQUENCY: A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

Theorists in the field of narratology prefer to view events on two distinct levels, namely on a text-level and on a story-level (Genette, 1980; Rimmon-Kenan, 1983; Bal, 1985; Grobler, 1990 and Strachan, 1989). Agreement seems to exist that, although there should be a correlation between events in these two levels, they may definitely differ in regard to certain aspects, for instance order, duration and frequency.

Like any scientific field of study, order, duration and frequency are concepts which rely to a great extent on theories and principles. In this chapter an attempt will be made to explain and examine how scholars view these concepts.

In the following paragraphs the context in which the concepts order, duration and frequency situate itself, will be explored. Secondly a conceptual analysis of order, duration and frequency will be carried out.

## **2.2 A CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS OF RELATED TERMS IN THE FIELD OF ORDER, DURATION AND FREQUENCY**

### **2.2.1 Structuralism**

Structuralism is a framework of analysis which is found in both literature and linguistics. It is independent in nature, an all-in-one discipline because it can be adopted only as an alternative and not as an addition to academic habits (Jefferson,1982:92).

From the perspective of Russian formalism (which has its roots in the Prague School of Structuralism and has developed since the 1920's) language is seen as a sign. A literary work of art is seen from this perspective as a sign (or rather as a system of signs). From this angle both language and literary text are seen as a means of communication.

The structuralist theory or approach to literature suggests that the literary text itself should be studied in terms of its own inherent or characteristic features. It regards a text as a structure which has been structured in a specific and unique way by organising artistically indifferent material in such a way that it becomes meaningful . From the structuralistic angle a text becomes a field of analysis in so far as it possesses certain codes which construct meaning. Selden (1985:21) concurs with this view when he contends: "Structuralist poetics draws attention to the codes we used to construct meaning".

The actual meaning of a specific text is of secondary importance because the main focus lies in how literature produces meaning. Rather than the semantic interpretation of literary texts, a structuralistic approach propagates structures and devices of genres and subgenres.

Structuralist narratologists such as Bremond, Greimas, Todorov, Genette, Rimmon-Kenan and Bal aim at (developing) a poetics which would serve literature as linguistics serves language and which therefore would not seek to explain what individual words mean, but would attempt to make explicit the system of figures and conventions that enable works to have the forms and meanings they do (Culler in Genette , 1980:8).

### 2.2.2 Narratology

Narratology, according to Bal (1985:3) is “a literary theory of narrative texts”. The first question that thus seems relevant is: **What is a narrative text?**

Genette (1980:25) defines the narrative text as “... the oral or written discourse that undertakes to tell of an event or series of events”.

A narrative text is produced by a narrator and the action he/she performs is called narration.

Rimmon-Kenan (1983:2) concurs with this point of view when he contends that “the term narration suggests a communication process in which the narrative message is transmitted by addresser to addressee and the verbal nature of the medium used to transmit the message”.

In conclusion it can be said that narratology is the scientific discipline where narrative texts are analysed according to certain narratological principles (which will be dealt with later) as they are produced by a narrator. The action he/she performs in the production of narrative texts is called narration .

Narratology can thus be interpreted in the broad field of structuralism. In the foregoing it was mentioned that narratology is the theory of narrative texts or fiction. The question that seems relevant at this stage is: **What is narrative fiction?** Obviously it can be regarded as the narration of a succession of fictional events. If Rimmon-Kenan's (1990:2) view on the term narration , i.e. "a communication process in which the narrative as a message is communicated between addresser and addressee and which is verbal in nature" is taken into consideration, one can conclude that narrative fiction rather implies a succession of events. An event may be defined as something that happens which can be summed up by a verb or a name of an action. Narratives usually consist of more than one event.

### **2.2.3 The two-level distinction with regard to the analysis of events in narratology : the story level and the text level**

#### **2.2.3.1 Introduction**

Genette (1980:27) distinguishes between certain levels of analysis in narrative fiction. He bases this differentiation on three meanings assigned to the term narrative, namely the concepts of narrative discourse as spoken text (historic), narrative content (recit), and narrative act (narration ).

Rimmon-Kenan (1990:03) on his turn represented Genette's *histoire*, *recit* and *narration* as story, text and narration respectively. In this analysis two levels are relevant, namely the story-level and the text-level. To follow is a brief discussion of each.

### **2.2.3.2 The story-level**

The story in narratology implies the narrated events which are abstracted from the text and which are reconstructed in such a way that they appear in their chronological order - as if they happen in reality (with normality in regard to time, setting, people, etc.). It is therefore regarded as a point of analysis where the narratological elements are analysed from the perspective that they happen in reality and with real people.

### **2.2.3.3 The text-level**

In defining a text, Bal (1985:49) contends that "the story (in this analysis meaning the text: GNS ) does not consist of material different from that of *fabula* (in this analysis meaning the story:GNS), but that this material is looked at from a certain angle".

It can be argued that the material in the story is not yet organised into a particular pattern. It is chronological, in other words bound to reality. Consequently the story may be grasped as transferable from medium to medium, from language to language and within the same language (Rimmon-Kenan, 1983:8). It is also a product of imagination (Bal,1985:49).

The text is the ordering of the story elements by an organising instance (Strachan, 1990:10; Bal, 1985:49). The text permits the casual arrangement of material as desired by the writer. The text shows how events occurred rather than what occurred. The text thus displays the artistic skills of the writer.

In conclusion one can thus distinguish between the story-level and text-level in the sense that the former contains the what that happened to whom by whom where and when. The latter is a representation of the former. Both contain the same amount of information with regard to all the narratological elements.

## **2.2.4 Time in narratology**

### **2.2.4.1 Introduction**

In the previous section it was said that the text involves the act where events are rearranged and reorganised. It was also implied that, unlike a story, events in the text need not be logically and chronologically arranged. By having the power to rearrange events, the narrator acquires the ability to perform his/her art. The text actually permits the casual arrangements of material as desired by the author. It shows how events occurred rather than what occurred.

The text-level is therefore the scientific platform on which the artistic / literary value of the narrative artifact can be evaluated. From the foregoing it can be deduced that these two levels should in fact be interwoven:

- The text would not exist if there were no story to account. This implies that it is possible to argue that the story existed before the text.
- The text is derived form of the story. The story can only be known by means of the text.
- Certain things in the story do not appear in the text, although they were implied (actually appear as open spaces in the text). The story, being coloured and presented from a specific perspective in the text-level, can contain things which do not feature explicitly in the text.
- Time in narratology should be interpreted within this two-level distinction. The aim of the following paragraphs is to very briefly focus on this matter. The main aim with this is to determine where the concepts of order, duration and frequency situate themselves.

#### **2.2.4.2 Story-time, narrative-time, text-time and historical time**

Story-time as presented in the story, is not linked to the amount of time devoted to the presentation in the text. Chatman (1978:62) maintains that story-time is the duration of the events of the narrative. Usually story-time is expressed in hours, months and years.

The narrative act produces the narrative text. Narrative time is the time it takes to narrate. Text-time is connected to the time it takes to read the text. Mkhize (1996:11) contends in this regard “...the time it takes to pursue the discourse. Text-time is normally represented by words, paragraphs , and chapters”.

Text-time has a linear order. The linearity of text-time means that events in the text are not necessarily chronological; events may be arranged in any order depending on an organising instance.

A comparison of story-time with text-time should be preceded by the reconstruction of the story, whereby events are arranged in their chronological order (Mkhize, 1996:7). Such a reconstruction is not a simple task because not all stories are unilinear (in other words a story line which has a single structure). Some stories are in fact multilinear, which means that the main story-line and a subsidiary story-line run concurrently. The overlapping of events thus becomes possible which means that the overlapping of time is also possible. In comparing text-time to story-time one can exactly pinpoint these differences.

The last type of time which will be focussed on is historical time. This type of time can be linked to specific historical data such as certain historical events and dates. Unfortunately, not all stories give precise historical dates or data. In cases where events cannot be linked, speculation is the only answer. Speculation or clues can only be used to include, amongst other things, names of known people and places, social setting, languages, technology, norms and values of the people (see in this regard Mkhize, 1996:10).

To summarise one can say that the concept of time, besides the fact that it can be linked to specific historical facts and hence constitute historical time, is to be viewed on the different levels of narratology, namely on the narrative level, story-level and text-level. It was mentioned earlier that this analysis will focus on the latter two types, namely the story-level and the text-level. In comparing story-time and text-time, Genette (1980:35) considers three aspects, namely order,

duration and frequency. These concepts constitute the basis of this analysis and will be discussed thoroughly in the following paragraphs.

## **2.3 ORDER**

### **2.3.1 Introduction**

Genette (1980:34) and Bal (1985:60) mention the fact that the narrative text has a linear order. It means that more than one word cannot occur simultaneously in the text. Two paragraphs must follow on one another and cannot occur simultaneously. It has also been pointed out that the linear structure of the text need not occur in a chronological order. It is possible that the order of events in a text can differ from the order in which they occur in the story (see Strachan, 1990:101).

The organising instance can rearrange the events of the story as much as he/she pleases, provided the story-sequence remains discernable (see in this regard Chatman, 1980:63). The concept of order concerns itself with the relationship between the succession of events in the story and their arrangement in the text, and how this succession is linked to the general concept of time (Grobler, 1989:6).

To follow is an attempt to answer the question: **In what way can text-level order differ from story-level order?** To do this an analysis of the concept “anachronies” will be carried out.

## **2.3.2 Anachronies**

### **2.3.2.1 Introduction**

Due to the fact that the narrative text is presented in a linear manner, which means that events are presented one after the other in time, and not an artifact which can be perceived momentarily (such as a painting), the possibility arises of a change in the sequence of events.

The most common deviations between story-order and text-order are known as retrospections and anticipations. Genette (1980:94) refers to them as analepsis and prolepsis respectively. These diversions are used to introduce some effects. In this study Genette's terminology in this regard will be adopted.

#### **A) Analepsis**

Rimmon-Kenan (1983:46) describes an analepsis as “a narration of a story event a point in the text after later events have been told”

This means that the events narrated jump to the past or, in other words, the text takes a journey back to the past. There are three types of analepsis that can be distinguished : external, internal and mixed analepsis.

**External analepsis** means the covering of a period of time earlier than the starting point of the first narrative. It is therefore outside its (the first narrative's) temporal field and can never interfere with the latter (see Grobler 1989:11). Bal (1985:59) concurs with this when she defines external analepsis as "a retroversion that takes place completely outside the time span of the primary fabula".

External analepsis is important in that it supplies significant information which can highlight the past of characters and events.

**Internal analepsis** is also a retroversion but, instead of taking place outside the time span of the present story (like with external analepsis), it takes place well within the time span of the present story.

Genette (1980:50-51) distinguishes between two types of internal analepsis, namely heterodiegetic and homodiegetic. According to Genette heterodiegetic analepsis is not directly related to background information about a new element. It is rather about another (in other words not directly bound to the present story line) character, event or story-line (Rimmon-Kenan, 1983:47).

In contrast homodiegetic analepsis is directly linked to the narrative. In Rimmon-Kenan's (1983:47) words: "It is about the character, event or story-line mentioned at that point in the text".

If the period which is covered by the analepsis begins before the starting point of the first narrative, but at a later stage either joins it or goes beyond it, then the analepsis is considered “mixed”. This means that the events actually start before the commencement of the text and continue well within the scope of the text (see in this regard Mkhize,1996:14).

To summarise one can say that analepsis means the narration of an event or series of events which happened prior to the “present” events. This seems necessary to provide the recipient with background information as to let him/her understand something better. It can be events which happened long before the present events (in which case we refer to it as external analepsis) or it can be well within the boundaries of the present events (in which case we refer to it as internal analepsis).

With regard to internal analepsis we can distinguish between heterogietic and homogietic analepsis, where the former refers to the additional furnishing of information of some character or event without it referring to those in focus where the analepsis took place. The latter will, unlike heterogietic analepsis, furnish the recipient with direct information about a character or event.

Mixed analepsis means that the period which is covered by the analepsis begins before the starting point of the first narrative, but at a later stage either joins it or goes beyond it.

The foregoing discussion on analepsis can obviously be elaborated in much detail. Due to the limited space of this mini-dissertation, the above mentioned will be regarded sufficient for the

moment. Additional theoretical information will be given in chapter 3 if it proves necessary in the application of this theory to the short story *Bafanele ukugcotshwa*.

## **B) Prolepsis**

Rimmon-Kenan (1983:46) defines prolepsis as “a narration of a story-event at a point before earlier events have been mentioned”.

Here an excursion is actually taken into the future of the story (Genette, 1980:4).

External, internal and mixed prolepsis can be distinguished here. External prolepsis narrates events which occur outside the scope of the primary story while they were projected into the future, while internal prolepsis implies events which are part of the scope of the narrated events but which are also projected into the future. Both inform the reader about what will happen to characters. Mixed prolepsis refers to events which occur within the limitations of the primary narrative but which are logically outside. It actually means that the ending point of this prolepsis is not known.

Within internal prolepsis the same distinction exists as the one drawn with regard to internal analepsis, namely homodiegetic prolepsis and digressive prolepsis. The same meaning exists here, but with the difference that events mentioned refer to the future. Heterodiegetic prolepsis implies information provided to the reading audience furthering the present situation in the story line, but not specifically connected to the present one. Homodiegetic prolepsis is in the one or other way connected.

Some other categories can also prevail when referring to prolepsis. To follow is a very brief discussion on each of type.

Completing prolepsis provides information about an certain event that lies ahead of the narrated events at that point in the text. Repeating prolepsis in its turn notifies in advance of events which will take place later in the text. Mixed prolepsis refers to events which occur within the space of time of the primary narrative but are logically outside. It actually means that the ending point of this prolepsis is not known. Because of this fact it is difficult to determine the realisation of events.

Analepsis and prolepsis are techniques which can be used fruitfully in narrative fiction. Analepsis is used much more frequently than prolepsis for obvious reasons; it predominantly serves to inform the recipient, while the latter is mostly used to create tension.

Ellipsis is another concept that needs elaboration at this point. It implies the deliberate deletion of time on the text level. While the events can be anticipated on the story level, they do not appear in the text. The text-time is then “faster” than the story-time.

In connection with analepsis, it implies time deletion towards earlier events. With regard to prolepsis it implies the deliberate deletion of future events.

Another distinction in connection with ellipsis can be drawn, namely explicit ellipsis and implicit ellipsis. Explicit ellipsis, according to Genette (1980:106), occurs when there is a clear indication of the elided

time. An example would be a text three years or five months later, etc. Implicit ellipsis will be, for instance, the elision of time deduced from events, characters, etc.

### **2.3.3 Conclusion**

Order has been defined as the order in which events occur in the text. In the story-layer the order is chronological. In the text-level this needs not be the case. Here the sequence can deviate, starting for example from a different position. Analepsis and prolepsis are techniques which permit the referring backwards or forwards respectively of events. If these events happened before the first narrative and do not extend themselves into the narrative, it is called external analepsis. External prolepsis refers to the status quo with regard to future events. If past events are in fact linked to the time span in which the “first narrative” is situated, it is called internal analepsis. If it constitutes a “different story line” it is called heterogietic analepsis. If it constitutes additional information with regard to some character or event, it is called homogietic analepsis. The same applies to heterogietic and homogietic prolepsis.

Mixed analepsis implies a starting point of events before the starting point of events of the “first narrative”, but which at a later stage either joins it or goes beyond it.

Completing prolepsis provides information about a certain event that lies ahead of the narrated events at that point in the text. Repeating prolepsis in its turn announces in advance events which will take place later in the text. Mixed prolepsis refers to events which occur within the primary narrative, but which are actually outside this scope.

The last concept “ellips” implies the deliberate deletion of time on the text level.

To follow is an analysis of the concept “duration”.

## **2.4 DURATION ( Rhythm)**

### **2.4.1 Introduction**

Bal (1985:68) describes duration (rhythm) as the relationship between the amount of time covered by the events of a fabula (in our analysis known as story) and the amount of time involved in presenting those events. The former refers to the story-duration which is measured in terms of minutes, hours, calendars and years. The latter refers to the text-duration which is expressed in words, sentences, paragraphs, and chapters.

With regard to text-duration, the problem arises that it will differ because readers do not have the same reading pace and that they read under different circumstances (see in this regard Mkhize, 1996:18). Different interpretations to the same text will therefore prevail.

In this regard Genette (1980:87) proposes what he calls steadiness in speed or constant pace, which means that people have more or less the same reading speed and that a constant pace is taken as the norm. Rimmon-Kenan (1983:52) contends that no one can measure the duration of a narrative (1980:86).

Dautzenberg (1980:248) compares the speed of text-time with story-time. He says that the speed of the text-time with regard to story-time can differ. It can be faster or slower, or even equal it. By

comparing acceleration and deceleration of events in the text and in the story, the reader can interpret to a certain extent. Furthermore the point of view of the narrator can be deduced.

Certain types of duration can be distinguished, namely ellipsis, summary, scene and pause. Each of these will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

#### **2.4.2 Ellipsis**

Ellipsis occurs when a portion of the story is deleted in the text. It actually means that text-time is smaller than story-time. That which is deleted (the contents of the ellipsis) might perhaps not be unimportant events, but might be too painful to talk about, or might be too difficult to express in words (Strachan, 1990:103). According to Genette (1980:106-108) there are two types of ellipsis that can be distinguished : explicit and implicit.

An explicit ellipsis occurs when there is an explicit indication of the elided time, for example an announcement on the text-level: "three years later". Implicit ellipsis, on the other hand, is observed by the reader in the text. He/she (the reader) has to make inferences from the information suggesting an omission.

Rimmon-Kenan (1983:128) refers to an ellipsis as a temporary gap. She also emphasises that there are permanent gaps, those that remain open after the text has come to an end.

### **2.4.3 Summary**

In summary the text-time is smaller than story-time. An example of a summary can be found in *Bafanele ukugcotsha* where Sikhumbuzo's 4 years of studying is summarised in one day.

Rimmon-Kenan (1983:53) maintains that in summary pace is accelerated through a textual "condensation" or "compression" of a given period into a relatively short statement.

### **2.4.4 Scene**

Scene is an equivalence between a narrative segment and the narrated which it represents (see in this regard Prince, 1982:56). This implies that the story and the text have relatively the same or equal duration. Although they have more or less the same duration, it does not mean it is produced the same way as it was before. Sometimes it can be disturbed by the narrator's interruption on characters' actions or forms of behaviour.

Bal (1985:74) and Prince (1982:58) point out that scene is usually altered with summary. They further maintain that such changes help to bring about a balance in the text neither too fast so as to tire the reader, nor too slow to bore the reader (see in this regard Mkhize, 1996:20).

### **2.4.5 Pause**

Pause consists of a portion of the text in which the cause of time is implied. Serious attention is given to a certain element, while the story comes to a standstill. According to Bal (1985:76), a pause includes all narrative sections in which no movement of the fabula-time is implied. Here the

implication is that text-time is larger than the story-time, which in its turn implies that the story-time is zero.

Mkhize (1996:20) states that, although pause functions as a description, they might be argumentative or contemplative (functions which will not be elaborated on due to the limited nature of this investigation).

One thing that can be said of pause is that they all serve the same purpose: to slow down the text.

## **2.5 FREQUENCY**

The term “frequency”, originally distinguished by Genette (1980), applies to the relationship between the number of times an event occurs in the story, and the number of times it is presented in the text.

The following possibilities exist:

- 1) An event that happens once is presented once 1S/1T
- 2) An event that happens often is presented often (several times) nS/nT
- 3) An event that happens often is presented often but not equally often.

nS/nT

- 4) An event that happened once is presented several times 1S/nT

There are two phenomena which are found in this relationship, namely repetition and iterative presentation.

True repetition occurs when an event that occurs once in a story, is repeated several times in the text. It thus concurs with number 4 in the above-mentioned paragraph. The opposite of repetition is iterative presentation: a series of similar events in the story is presented once in the text (in other words, according to the formulae  $nS/1T$ ). (See in this regard Strachan, 1990:106 and Bal, 1985:78.)

## 2.6 CONCLUSION

In this chapter a theoretical background was given to the concepts order, duration and frequency. It was stated that these concepts are temporal aspects in the broad field of narratology. They are techniques which the narrator uses in giving an artistic colour to his artifact. It is therefore found in the text-layer but the story-layer is still relevant to the analysis because a comparison needs to be drawn before any analysis is possible.

Order has been defined as the order in which events occur in the text. In the story layer the order is chronological (which could, however, be fairly complex in the sense that certain events co-occur while others overlap) while in the text level it need not be chronologically organised. Then the sequence can deviate, starting from different positions. Prolepsis and analepsis are techniques which permit the referring backwards or forwards of events.

Duration has been defined as the amount of time covered in which an event happens. While it is on the story-layer a normal stretch of time as is the case with minutes, hours, days, months, etc., it can

deviate in the text-layer in the sense that certain events may take more time on the text-level than others.

Frequency implies the number of times a certain event is repeated on the text layer while it happened only once in the story layer. It could also be the other way round: the event happened frequently in the story layer, but it is only mentioned once on the text layer.

In the next chapter the short story *Bafanele ukugcotshwa* by D.B.Z. Ntuli will be analysed with special focus on the order, duration and frequency of events.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE ORDER, DURATION AND FREQUENCY OF EVENTS IN THE SHORT STORY *BAFANELE UKUGCOTSHWA* BY D.B.Z. NTULI

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

In chapter two it was stated that order, duration and frequency of events are temporal aspects which are found in narratology. It was also stated that these events become significant when the two-levels distinction (story-level and text-level) is borne in mind.

The main aim of this chapter is to investigate order, duration and frequency in the short story *Bafanele ukugcotshwa* by D.B.Z Ntuli. It is, however, necessary to elaborate somehow on the difference between story-level and text-level in the short story *Bafanele ukugcotshwa*.

#### 3.2 *BAFANELE UKUGCOTSHWA* AND NARRATOLOGY

In chapter two it was stated that narratology is the theoretical framework in which narrative texts are analysed. A narrative text is defined as an oral or written discourse which relates an event or series of events and which is produced by a narrator. It was also established that the act which such a person performs is called narration.

*Bafanele ukugcotshwa* is a short story which resorts under narratology, because it deals with a narrator who tells the story of Sikhumbuzo who had a vision from his childhood to become a priest.

He enrolled at eKuthuleni college where he was taught to become a priest. During this period he fell in love with Betty, a woman from the nearby location. Although he was married he did not reveal this to Betty. She (Betty) got pregnant and Sikhumbuzo convinced her to move to another place. He said that he would contact her as soon as he became a priest. In the meanwhile he finished his studies and would soon graduate. She wrote a couple of letters to him, to which he did not reply. She became worried and decided to visit him.

On her arrival she attended the graduation ceremony on the moment when he was delivering his introduction sermon. Sikhumbuzo saw Betty and revealed the long-hidden secret in the way he reacted when seeing her. The bishop saw this and held an inquiry into the matter. The college authorities decided consequently to withdraw his name from the list of successful candidates.

In narratology the story is separated from the text. On the story-level the narrated events are abstracted from the text and are reconstructed in such a manner that they appear in their chronological order, in other words, as if they happen in reality. Unlike a story, events in the text need not be logically and chronologically arranged. By having the power to rearrange events, the narrator acquires the ability to perform his/her art. The text actually permits the casual arrangements of material as desired by the author. It shows how events occurred rather than what occurred.

In *Bafamele ukugcotshwa* events on the text-level started on the morning of the graduation ceremony. Sikhumbuzo entered the building where the ceremony would take place together with three other

“successful” candidates. He was chosen to present a sermon on behalf of the group and, while he was delivering this sermon, he saw Betty who was carrying his child in her arms. Betty’s presence in the audience caused him to stutter, which the bishop saw. An inquiry into the illegal love-affair with Betty followed, which resulted in him being dismissed from the list of successful candidates.

Apart from these events, some other events occurred in Sikhumbuzo’s mind. While he approached the church where the ceremony would be held, events of his childhood occurred in his mind. He thought about his decision to become a priest when he was still in school, about his early years at the training institution and about his wife and the suffering she had to go through due to his absence. While he was delivering his lecture he also thought of some words of his lecturer who said that whenever he gets nervous while delivering his sermon, he should pray.

The narrator reveals the events by observing what the characters do as well as what they think. If the events are compared to those on the story level, one can clearly see that some of the events are deliberately hidden from the reading audience. Sikhumbuzo and Betty’s love-affair is mentioned at a very late stage while it actually happened earlier on the story-level.

### **3.3 TIME IN *BAFANELE UKUGCOTSHWA***

#### **3.3.1 Introduction**

In chapter two it was found that time in narrative fiction implies the relations of chronology between story and text. It was thus found that an investigation of time in narrative fiction will require a comparison between time as it appears on the one level, compared to the other.

In the following paragraphs attention will be given to the concepts narrative time, time on the story-level and time on the text-level.

### 3.3.2 Story-time

Story-time is associated with the amount of time devoted to the events on the story-layer (Strachan, 1990:9). Time has to do with how long the events lasted and also the period in which they happened.

In *Bafanele ukugcotshwa* the time in which Sikhumbuzo grew up, the time he attended school and college, the time of his marriage, the time in which he fell in love with Betty, the time when Betty fell pregnant and gave birth to a baby, the time he passed all his exams and the time he would be inaugurated as a priest, constitute the time on the story-level.

All these events that are not recorded explicitly in the text, are in fact taken as an ellipsis. One can roughly summarise as follows:

- From childhood (when he decided to become a priest) to his enrollment at eKuthuleni college: approximately 8 years (since the narrator revealed that he took the decision while he was in “esikoleni esiphansi” {primary school})
- At eKuthuleni college he spent four years (“...yayimine... {four years})
- The graduation ceremony and everything that happened there: one day

In total one can take it that the events on the story-level cover approximately 12 years.

In the following paragraphs more attention will be paid to the concept narrative-time.

### **3.3.3 Narrative time**

A general distinction can be drawn between the time of the thing told and the time of the narrative (respectively seen as the time of the signified and the time of the signifier). Three years of a hero's life can be summed up in two sentences in a novel.

In *Bafanele ukugcotswa* a period of approximately 12 years is squeezed into one day in the text. The main event is centered around the crisis that occurs after Sikhumbuzo's sermon. The author deliberately avoids the slow development of the story; instead, he prefers to disclose certain important events at a very late stage while he uses a number of accelerating techniques (see in this regard Mkhize, 1996:8).

The reconstruction of the story requires that a distinction between functional and non-functional events be made. Barthes (1975:248) uses the terms "cardinal functions" and "catalyses" whereas Strachan (1990:99) prefers to use Rimmon-Kenan's terminology "functional /non - functional" events. This study will use the latter terms.

According to Barthes (1975:248), cardinal functions open alternatives between two possibilities and are directly linked to the continuation of the story. This implies that functional events have a

remarkable bearing on the story and as a result they are of great significance. On the other hand, non-functional events are of less significance because they expatiate and elaborate on the information about functional events in the story (Barthes, 1975:250).

After functional events have been identified, they are rearranged in their chronological order, and events that occur simultaneously are represented with a number. The next step is the organisation of functional events into sequences. Sequences help to cut down the number of functional events (Mkhize,1996:8).

In *Bafanele ukugcotshwa* 9 sequences can be identified, namely:

1. Sikhumbuzo's schooling
2. Sikhumbuzo's marriage
3. His enrollment at EKuthuleni Bible School.
4. His love-affair with Betty, which resulted in Betty's pregnancy and the birth of a baby.
5. Sikhumbuzo's entering of the church (the start of the ordaining ceremony).
6. Sikhumbuzo's delivering a sermon.
7. The stopping of a sermon when Betty entered the church.
8. The inquiry into the matter by the Bishop.
9. Sikhumbuzo's confession and his ejection.

Three periods can roughly be identified, namely: Sikhumbuzo`s childhood, his enrolment at eKuthuleni Bible College and his being expelled by the College authorities.

### **3.3.4 Text - time**

Text-time is connected to the time it takes to read the text. In Chatman`s words, it is “the time it takes to pursue the discourse (1987:62)”.

Text-time is represented by words, paragraphs and chapters. In comparing story-time and text-time, Genette (1980:35) considers three aspects, namely order, duration and frequency. To follow is an in-depth analysis of each with regard to the short story *Bafanele ukugcotshwa* by D.B.Z. Ntuli.

## **3.4 ORDER, DURATION AND FREQUENCY IN *BAFANELE UKUGCOTSHWA***

### **3.4.1 Order**

#### **3.4.1.1 Introduction**

Order in *Bafanele ukugcotshwa* implies the sequence of events in the story. To determine the chronological order actually means the reorganisation of the events on the text-level. A reconstruction is therefore made of the story, based on a rearrangement of the events on the text-level, in their most probable chronological order.

The order on the text-level must then be compared to the order of events on the story-level. It can then be established to what extent the author has changed the chronological order of events (see Grobler, 1989:17). Grobler`s way of arranging events will be followed in this analysis (1989:24-25).

In the following paragraphs the difference in order between the text-level and story-level of *Bafanele ukugcotshwa* will be analysed.

#### **3.4.1.2 Order on the text-level and on the story-level of *Bafanele ukugcotshwa***

On the text-level of *Bafanele ukugcotshwa* the following order of events has been found:

- a) Sikhumbuzo`s entering of the church to be ordained as a priest after having passed all his examinations.
- b) His childhood and his wish to become a priest.
- c) His enrolment as a student at eKuthuleni Bible College.
- d) His marriage and his faithful wife
- e) The sermon which he has to deliver on behalf of the students.
- f) The interruption of the sermon when Betty entered the church.
- g) His love for Betty
- h) His confession and his ejection

Chronologically these events can be reorganised as follows:

1. = (b)
2. = (d)

3. = (c)
4. = (g)
5. = (a)
6. = (e)
7. = (f)
8. = (h)

It can be deduced that a noticeable difference exists between the order of events in the text-level and the order of events on the story-level. In the following paragraphs the specific differences will be analysed.

It was said in chapter 2 that analepsis means the narration of an event or series of events which happened prior to the “present” events. It can be events which happened long before the present events (in which case we refer to it as external analepsis) or it can be well within the boundaries of the present events (in which case we refer to it as internal analepsis). Mixed analepsis means that the period which is covered by the analepsis begins before the starting point of the first narrative, but at a later stage either joins it or goes beyond it.

In *Bafanele ukugcotshwa* the most common technique used by D.B.Z. Ntuli is analepsis. An example of the external type is found in the following quotation:

Ntuli (1984:14)

*Lesi yisiqongo sezinhloso zakhe. Usekhumbula esengumfana ukuthi wayethanda kanjani ukuba ngumfundisi: Ukhumbula esikoleni esiphansi ukuthi noma ezinye ezingane zibuzwa ukuthi zifuna ukuba zibe yini sezikhulile, zona zisho ubudokotela, ubuthisha, ububhalane, ubuphoyisa, yena avele athi nje ukuba ngumfundisi.*

(This is the climax of his dreams. He remembers when he was still a small boy that he wanted to be a priest. He remembers that, when he was in the lower classes, some children were asked what would they like to be when they were grown-ups. Some would say they would like to be doctors, teachers, clerks, and policemen. But he would just say he wanted to be a priest).

Other examples of analepsis are found in Sikhumbuzo's thoughts of his marriage, his enrolment at eKuthuleni College and his love-affair with Betty. These events actually constitute internal analepsis, because although their starting point is in the past, their relevancy is still present in the first narrative (in other words the events surrounding the ordaining ceremony).

With regard to internal analepsis, a general distinction can be drawn between heterodiegetic and homodiegetic analepsis. While the former is not directly related to the story-line, the latter is the opposite. The former is rather about another (in other words not directly bound to the present story-line) character, event or story-line, whereas the latter concerns the character, event or story-line mentioned at that point in the text.

Internal analepsis is only found in the form of homodiegetic analepsis in *Bafanele ukugcotshwa*. Sikhumbuzo's marriage, which started in the past, but which is still continuing in the present

narrative, constitutes this type of analepsis. Sikhumbuzo`s love for Betty as well as her pregnancy, constitute another example of internal analepsis. Both these last mentioned examples can also be seen as mixed analepsis.

No form of prolepsis was found in *Bafanele ukugcotshwa*.

### **3.4.1.3 Duration (rhythm) in *Bafanele ukugcotshwa***

#### **a) Introduction**

The term “rhythm” is used by Bal (1985: 76-84) to refer to the relationship between the length of time occupied by the events in the story, and the amount of time devoted to the presentation of the events in the text. The former refers to the story-duration which is measured in terms of minutes, hours, calendars and years, and the latter refers to the text-duration which is expressed in words, sentences, paragraphs, and chapters (see Mkhize, 1996:18).

In *Bafanele ukugcotshwa* story-time/duration was already determined to be approximately 12 years.

The text covers approximately 12 pages - to read approximately 20 minutes.

In chapter two it was established that various types of duration can be distinguished, namely ellipsis, pause, summary and scene. To follow is a brief discussion of each type with special reference to *Bafanele ukugcotshwa*.

## b) Ellips

Ellips means that a portion of the story is deleted in the text. Two types of ellips can be distinguished, namely explicit ellips and implicit ellips. An explicit ellips occurs when there is an explicit indication of the elided time, whereas implicit ellips should be observed by the reader in the text. Ellips can also exist at the end of the text where a permanent gap signifies an open end to the story.

In *Bafanele ukugcotshwa* certain events are not reported in the text.

- Although certain events during Sikhumbuzo`s schooling were mentioned, others were left out (for instance his matric examinations).
- Although certain events during Sikhumbuzo`s marriage were mentioned, others were left out (for instance the wedding ceremony).
- Sikhumbuzo certainly had to travel to the township while he had his love affair with Betty, which has not been mentioned in the text.
- Betty`s giving birth to a baby was not mentioned.

All these ellipses are examples of implicit ellips. No example of explicit ellips was found in *Bafanele ukugcotshwa*.

The fact that Ntuli made use of many ellipses is an indication that text-time is much shorter than story-time in *Bafanele ukugcotshwa*. In other words, it can be said that the duration on the text-level

is much shorter than the duration on the story-level. Alternatively it can be said that the rhythm of the events in *Bafanele ukugcotshwa* is fast.

### c) Summary

In summary the text-time is smaller than the story-time. Here pace is accelerated through a textual “condensation” or “compression” of a given period into a relatively short statement. In *Bafanele ukugcotshwa* Ntuli frequently made use of this technique. The following quotations are proof of this.

Ntuli (1985:15).

*Wamamatheka lapho ekhumbula ubungane bakhe*

He smiled when he thought about his childhood.

Ntuli (1985:16)

Ukhumbula iminyaka enzima edlule kuyona ngenkathi esekolishi uSikhumbuzo. Noma yayimine, kuyena yaba ngamashumi.

(Sikhumbuzo remembers the difficult years of the past when he was at the College. Although it covered a period of 4 years, he felt as if it was 10 years.)

### d) Scene

Scene is an equivalence between a narrative segment and the narrated which it represents (see in this regard Prince, 1982:56). This implies that the story and the text have relatively the same or equal duration.

In *Bafanele ukugcotshwa* Ntuli has implemented this technique frequently.

During the ordaining ceremony it was expected of Sikhumbuzo to deliver a sermon. This sermon clearly constitutes a scene because at this point in the text, story-time and text-time seem to be equal. During the inquiry concerning Sikhumbuzo's love-affair with Betty, text-time and story-time again seem to be equal.

#### **e) Pause**

Pause consists of a portion of the text in which the cause of time is implied. Serious attention is given to a certain element, while the story comes to a standstill. According to Bal (1985:76), a pause includes all narrative sections in which no movement of the fabula-time is implied. Here the implication is that text-time is larger than the story-time, which in its turn implies that the story-time is zero.

In *Bafanele ukugcotshwa* the story-time almost came to a standstill when the church bells were ringing, calling the people to the ordaining ceremony. It also came to a standstill when Sikhumbuzo and his company approached the church. These descriptions can be seen as pauses.

#### **f) Conclusion**

Duration has to do with the relationship between duration of the story measured in seconds, minutes, days, years and the length of the text measured in lines and pages (see in this regard Grobler,1989:6).

Bal, (1985:68) in her turn describes duration (rhythm) as the relation between the amount of time covered by events of a fabula and amount of time involved in presenting those events.

In *Bafanele ukugcotshwa* speed was measured by considering the size of the text compared to the story-time. It was established that the text covers 12 pages while the story-time covers a period of approximately 12 years.

Sikhumbuzo`s childhood and student days were presented by making use of ellips while his ordaining ceremony and the inquiry afterwards were presented as scenes. Pauses occurred when Sikhumbuzo approached the church. Summaries occurred frequently especially where Sikhumbuzo referred to his past.

The text-time of *Bafanele ukugcotshwa* is focused and devoted to all the events which occurred primarily in the church. At first glance it appears as if the text-time is unevenly divided. Text-time cannot be equally divided, because text-time is actually larger than story-time, which is a result of ellips, delay, summaries, etc. These techniques actually move the boundaries of text-time which in its turn sets the time-scene of the story-time. The narrator can, by experimenting with these techniques, add artistic flavour to his artifact. The scenic presentation towards the end of the text of *Bafanele ukugcotshwa* has a powerful impact and contributes to the dramatic ending.

#### 3.4.1.4 Frequency

It was said earlier in this investigation that “frequency” applies to the relationship between the number of times an event occurs in the story, and the number of times it is presented in the text. It was also said that true repetition occurs when an event that occurs once in a story, is repeated several times in the text. The opposite of repetition was said to be iterative presentation, which means that a series of similar events in the story is presented once in the text. Between these “poles” a few possibilities exist, which can be summed up as follows:

- 1) An event that happens once is presented once 1S/1T
- 2) An event that happens often is presented often (several times) nS/nT
- 3) An event that happens often is presented often but not equally often.  
nS/nT
- 4) An event that happened once is presented several times 1S/nT

In *Bafanele ukugcotshwa*, although happening once on the story-level, the ordaining ceremony was repeated several times by different characters and the narrator on the text-level. It can thus be seen as an example of repetition.

The narrator mentions that people of EKuthuleni were rushing to witness the very first ordaining ceremony of that specific College (Ntuli , 1985:13):

*Bonke bajaha ngoba bafuna ukubona umgcobo wokuqala*

(Everybody rushed to witness the first ordaining ceremony)

The graduation of the four graduates is mentioned to be in the mind of the bishop when he walks behind them while they were entering the church for the ceremony (Ntuli, 1985:4):

*Umcabango walomgqongqo wekhehla elingwevu uxile kakhulu kulaba abane abazogcotshwa namuhla*

(the mind of the old man is heavily occupied with these 4 people who will be ordained today)

The bishop mentions to the audience that these four people were the very first ones to be ordained as priests at the eKuthuleni institution (Ntuli, 1985:16):

*Achaze ukuthi leli yiqembu lokuqala labefundisi elizogcotshwa emuva kokuqeda izifundo kulelikolishi*

(he explained that these people were the first ones to be ordained as priests at this college)

The narrator refers to *Ukugcotshwa kwabefundisi* (the ordaining of the priests) (Ntuli, 1985:17) and repeats the same event on the same page, but then in the past tense *Walabo abakade begcotshwa* (of those who had been ordained).

The ordaining ceremony is seen as a final graduation ceremony of those who had passed their studies. Although four candidates entered the church, the main character, Sikhumbuzo, was expelled during the ceremony from priesthood because of an illegal love-affair with Betty. The topic of the uphill

road to become a priest was emphasised by the narrator by repeating it several times in the text. This constitutes another example of repetition.

Ntuli (1985:14)

*Uthi ngempela ngabe isifika ekugcineni indlela ende kangaka yeminyaka emine? Kufana nephupho lokhu. Bheka kukhona nabanye ebebefunda beshiye amakhosikazi abo le emakhaya. Bekunzima kulaba ukuphila impilo yobumpohlo.*

(Is it really true that at the end of four years the road could be so long? It is like a dream. Look at the others who studied while leaving their wives back home. It was hard to them to live the lives of bachelors)

Ntuli (1985:15)

*Kwaba nzinyana nokho ngoba lapha eKuthuleni kuqalwe zingakabi bikho izindlu zokuhlalisa abafundanayo kanye namakhosikazi abo*

(it was difficult because here at eKuthuleni no accommodation facilities were available who could accommodate the students with their wives)

Ntuli (1985:16-17)

*Yebo, inhliziyo ibuhlungu ngokuthi bakhona abangaphumelelanga ukuqedela izifundo zabo ngoba besuke bawa masinyane kanti ibanga lide*

(yes, it is heart breaking to witness the others who could not pass their studies and who fell because the road has been a long one)

The repetition of events in a text, such as those exemplified above, signifies the narrator's point of view and the significant meaning he attaches to certain events. The repetition of the verb stem **-gcotshwa** (ordain) emphasises the event and can be regarded as a skilful technique by the writer to create suspense and tension in the text so as to capture the interest of the reader. The same applies to the repetition of the topic of the uphill road to become a priest, which points directly to the dilemma in which Sikhumbuzo found himself towards the end of the story.

In *Bafanele ukugcotshwa* no example of iterative presentation was found.

### 3.5 CONCLUSION

The concepts order, duration and frequency were found to be temporal aspects which are visible when story-time is compared with text-time. The following questions seem relevant for such a comparison:

- In what way does the order of events differ on the story-level and on the text-level?
- How do the various durations of events on the story-level and on the text-level compare to each other?
- Are there any events which happened once on the story-level, being repeated on the text level?
- Are there events which happened more than once on the story level, but which were mentioned only once on the text-level?

In *Bafanele ukugcotshwa* it was found that the order of events on the story-level is very different from that of the text-level. The primary focal point of the text has been the ordaining ceremony,

while the story covered Sikhumbuzo`s life. The order of events on the text-level had an opposite character from those on the story level. The following conclusion was drawn:

Text-level	Story-level
1)	(2)
2)	(4)
3)	(3)
4)	(7)
5)	(1)
6)	(5)
7)	(6)
8)	(8)

What is significant of this schematic representation, is the fact that the “first” event of the story-level is presented more than half way through the text. The last event on the text-level is also the ending point of the story-level.

With regard to the duration of events on the text-level, compared to those on the story-level, the following conclusion was drawn:

The duration of events on the text-level is much shorter than that on the story-level. This is a result of the application of the duration technique “ellips”, which means the leaving out of information so that it could be deduced by the reader. It was also found that the narrator made use of scene as a technique, which means that the tempo of the text-level is brought down so that it equals that of the

story-level. By so doing a perception of reality was established. It was even found that the narrator brought the story-time to a standstill in this short-story, by making use of pause.

With regard to frequency it was found that certain “prominent” events were repeated on the text-level although they happened once on the story-level. It was found that the ordaining ceremony (which was the primary focal point on the text-level) was repeated frequently. The uphill road to become a priest was also repeated on the text-level although it is a fact once mentioned on the story-level. These two aspects have a prominent function in that both contribute to constitute the main theme of this short story.

## CHAPTER 4

### CONCLUSION

In this analysis an attempt was made to investigate the concepts order, duration and frequency in the short story *Bafanele ukugcotshwa* by D.B.Z. Ntuli.

It was found that in narratology, three levels of analysis could be distinguished, namely story-level, text-level and narration. This discussion was based mainly on the first two levels, namely the story-level and the text-level with special reference to time.

It was stated that the story and the text are mutually related to such an extent that one cannot occur without the other. It was found that the text forms the basis of the story and that a story can only be reconstructed from the text. After the story has been reconstructed, an analysis can be carried out, determining the difference between the two entities.

Order is viewed in this analysis as the order in which the events occur on the text-level, compared to that of the events on the story-level. It was found that the order of events on the story-level is chronological, in other words bound to reality. When comparing the text-level order with this chronological order of the story-level, one can come to a significant conclusion as to what the difference is.

It was found that in *Bafanele ukugcotshwa* the order of events on the text level are mostly situated around the ordaining ceremony, which constitutes the ending of the story on the story-level. The text, therefore, “starts” towards the end of the events on the story-level. It was found that, although a time span of approximately 12 years was covered on the story-level, a relatively scenic duration of events was sensed during the main events on the text-level. This was possible because the narrator made extensive use of ellipsis as a technique to “hide” certain important events.

Although the text-events started towards the end of the story-events, flashbacks in the mind of the main character, Sikhumbuzo, managed to fill in certain important events to complete the story on the text-level. It can therefore be concluded that analepsis, internal as well as external, was extensively used in this short story by Ntuli.

As far as duration is concerned, a distinction was drawn between ellipsis, summary, pause and scene. The former two types indicate techniques which result in the text-time being much shorter, compared to story-time, while the latter two techniques have more or less the same duration on text-level and story-level.

It was found that in *Bafanele ukugcotshwa* Ntuli has made use of all four types. At the start of the text, one could almost sense pause as a technique, while in the mind of Sikhumbuzo the techniques of ellipsis and summary were implemented. During the ordaining ceremony, scene as a duration technique was implemented.

Frequency implies the frequency with which events occurred on the text-level, compared to story-level, and vice versa. It was found that central themes, such as the ordaining ceremony and the “uphill road to become a priest” were repeated several times on the text-level. This was taken as normal because these events were regarded as being central to the topic of this short story.

The main aim of this study was to analyse the events of the short story *Bafanele ukugcotshwa* according to their order, duration and frequency.

Secondary aims were to:

- (1) do a theoretical analysis of the concepts order, duration and frequency;
- (2) analyse the events of *Bafanele ukugcotshwa* with special attention to the order, duration and frequency.

In conclusion one can say that *Bafanele ukugcotshwa*, as far as its temporal aspects of order, duration and frequency are concerned, fits perfectly into the theoretical framework which was stated in chapter two. This emphasises the fact that *Bafanele ukugcotshwa* reflects skill which must be credited to its writer, D.B.Z. Ntuli.

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