

**A STRUCTURAL, SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS
AND INTERPRETATION
OF L.Z. SIKWANE'S PLAY: MATSHEDISO
WITH EMPHASIS ON DIDASCALIES**

M. H. ZEBEDIELA

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by

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2001**

DECLARATION

I declare that

**A STRUCTURAL, SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF
L.Z. SIKWANE'S PLAY MATSHEDISO WITH EMPHASIS ON DIDASCALIES**

is my own work, that all the sources used or quoted have been indicated by means of complete references, and that I did not previously submit this mini-dissertation for a degree at another university.

M.H. ZEBEDIELA

06/12/2001
DATE

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to analyze and interpret L.Z. Sikwane's play: *Matshediso* from the perspective of didascalies.

The study comprises five chapters. The aim, scope and methods of research are outlined and motivated in chapter one.

In chapter two, an overview of the research into didascalies is undertaken. Questions such as: "what are didascalies?" "how do didascalies in a play help produce meaning and shape?" etc. are dealt with. Later, the study shows how didascalies are linked to the other structural elements of drama such as theme; plot; characters and setting.

In chapter three an analysis and interpretation of *Matshediso* from the perspective of the importance of didascalies is undertaken. This analysis focuses on the plot; didascalies and characters; didascalies and space; and didascalies, props, and set. Limitations characterizing performance are also dealt with.

In chapter four, an integrated interpretation of *Matshediso* is provided. Thereafter a set of guidelines for performing the play is developed. This covers aspects such as: stage setting; the characters; dialogue; sound and costume.

Chapter five sum up the main findings of the study and the value of the didascalies approach. By way of conclusion, I argue that Sikwane has not just written a play, but also pictured how it should be performed. This is confirmed by the didascalies included in this play and the value of the didascalies approach.

KEYWORDS:

DRAMA; PLAYS; STAGE; SEMIOTIC APPROACH; PERFORMANCE;
DIDASCALIES; MATSHEDISO; SIKWANE, L.Z.; SETSWANA.

OPSOMMING

Die doel van hierdie studie is om L. Z. Sikwane se toneelstuk: *Matshediso* vanuit die perspektief van didaskalia te ontleed en te interpreteer.

Die studie bestaan uit vyf hoofstukke. Die doel, omvang en metodes van navorsing word in hoofstuk een verduidelik en gemotiveer.

Hoofstuk twee is 'n oorsig in die navorsing van didaskalia onderneem. Vrae soos: “Wat is didaskalia?”; “Hoe help didaskalia in 'n toneel om betekenis en vorm te skep?”, ensovoorts, word hier beantwoord. Later wys die studie uit hoe didaskalia met die ander strukturelemente van 'n drama soos tema, intrige, karakters en agtergrond gekoppel word.

Hoofstuk drie is 'n ontleding en interpretasie van *Matshediso* vanuit die perspektief van die belangrikheid van didaskalia. Hierdie ontleding fokus op die intrige, didaskalia en karakters, didaskalia en ruimte; en didaskalia, rekwisiete en verhoog. Beperkinge van die verhoog is ook bespreek.

In hoofstuk vier is 'n geïntegreerde interpretasie van *Matshediso* gegee. Daarna is 'n stel riglyne vir die opvoering daarvan ontwikkel. Hierdie riglyne dek aspekte soos: verhoogruimte, karakters, dialoog, klank en kostumering.

Hoofstuk vyf vat die hoofbevindings van die studie saam. Ten slotte argumenteer die navorser dat Sikwane nie slegs 'n toneelstuk geskryf het nie, maar tegelykertyd uitwys hoe dit opgevoer moet word. Dit is bevestig deur die didaskalia wat in die toneelstuk ingesluit is.

SLEUTELWOORDE:

DRAMA; TONEELSTUKKE; VERHOOG; SEMIOTIESE; BENADERING;
OPVOERING; MATSHEDISO; SIKWANE, L.Z.; SETSWANA.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXTUALIZATION

Nicoll (1978:37) describes drama as “a literary work written, by an author or several authors in collaboration, in a form suitable for stage presentation”. Taylor (1981:102) argues that the characteristic that distinguishes drama from other genres is that it is “basically a performing art”. Boulton (1960:3), when she considers performance, is of the opinion that

“a true play is three-dimensional; it is literature that walks and talks before our eyes. It is not intended that the eye shall perceive marks on paper and the imagination turn them into sights, sounds and actions; the text of the play is meant to be translated into sights, sounds and actions which occur literally and physically on a stage.”

Although plays are meant to be staged, some plays (that Taylor, 1981:4, refers to as ‘closet dramas’) are meant only to be read. In many cases they are impractical or unsuccessful on the stage. Writers of ‘closet dramas’ might not have had performance in mind when they wrote their texts. It might be that African writers of closet dramas have followed the advice of Visser (in Groenewald, 1985:143), viz. that “the African dramatist would be well advised to build great literary drama first before attempting to write acting plays.” Boulton (1963:26) emphasizes that “a closet drama, in this context is not one that would be better put away in a cupboard and forgotten, but a play which is better read than acted.” On this Shole (1988:26) remarks:

“Ga se gore terama e e iseng e diragatswe, ke teramapuiswa kgotsa ga e ise e nne terama.”

(This does not mean that a drama which has never been performed is a ‘closet drama’ or not yet a drama.)

Matshediso is an exception among Tswana dramas because it seems to have been written for performance. Sikwane, the playwright, on the cover page of his book, explicitly writes:

“Matshediso ke terama ya ntlha ya
bodiragatsi mo Setswaneng.”

(*Matshediso* is the first stage drama in Setswana.)

With *Matshediso*, Sikwane might have proven one publisher wrong who said: “Swart dramas kan nie opgevoer word nie en sal waarskynlik nooit opgevoer word nie” (Groenewald 1985:145), because the dramatic elements in *Matshediso* are arranged in a way that will produce a good performance.

Approaching drama from a performance perspective is a relatively new way of analyzing dramatic texts. This is particularly suitable for a text that the author claims is a performance text. Moreover, according to the databases consulted, no specific studies have yet been undertaken of this significant play by an important author. Research into didascalies has been neglected maybe because ‘didascalies’ as an element of drama were not given the proper attention. Up to the present moment theoretical studies that could be traced covering didascalies are: Teodorescu-Brinzeu (1981/1982), Savona (1982), Mouton (1988) and Gabashane (1996), but no study of didascalies in Setswana plays has yet been done, although Shole (1988) does devote some space to didascalies.

To my knowledge the play has never been staged though it has formed part of the prescribed work in schools and colleges for many years. This mini-dissertation will therefore be a contribution to the eventual performance of this play and to the modern ways of analyzing and interpreting it so that it can be meaningful to the readers or audience.

Important guidelines for the analysis and interpretation of plays are provided by Reaske (1966), Levitt (1971), Mogapi (1985), Pfister (1987), Shole (1988) and Conradie (1989). Mogapi (1985:57), writing about the act of naming the dramatis personae, emphasizes that

“mo Setswaneng bakwadi le batlhami ba atisa go raya
batshameki ba ditlhamo tsa bona maina a a nyalanang
le ditiro gongwe botho jwa bona.”

(in Setswana, authors and writers usually name their
characters according to their actions and personalities.)

Didascalies is a term which refers to anything in the play which is not dialogue – i.e. the title, the character list (‘dramatis personae’), the foreword, the prologue, epilogue, and the stage directions. Keuris (1996:64) and Combrink (1997: vii) refer to it as subtext – that which comes alive in the realization of the play on stage and which offers a wealth of information not immediately apparent in the written word confronting the reader of the text. The importance of the didascalies in a play or in a dramatic text therefore is that they provide the readers with instructions on how the performance should take place and allow them to perform the dramatic work in their imagination during the process of reading. In this regard Shole (1988:230) argues that

“dikaelo ga di thuse fela mo boaneding. Tota tiro ya tsona
ya botlhokwa ke go supa tsela e tiragatso ya terama e
tshwanetseng go tsamaisiwa ka yona.”

(didascalies do not only help in characterization.
Their important function is to give guidelines for
the performance of the dramatic text.)

Furthermore, Shole (1988:231) in the evaluation of Ntsime's dramas is of the opinion that

“dikaelo dingwe, ga di mosola mo tiragatsong,
e bile di a e ketefatsa. Ke tse di ka tseelwang
manno ke ditlhaloso tsa baanelwa mo mmuisanong
wa bona.”

(some of the didascalies are not useful in
performance and instead make it difficult.
These can rather be substituted by the explanations
given in the characters' dialogue.)

In the past two decades structuralists and semioticians have contributed the most to our understanding of didascalies in the play and their relationship to other elements of drama. According to Swanepoel (1990:16)

The concept “structure” refers to the total relations between the elements of a text. Structuralism is therefore the theory and method of investigating these relations with special interest in the relationship between the parts of the whole, and then, between the part and the whole.

In this perspective didascalies as part of the text will need to be related to the other parts and to the whole of the play. Semiotics, on the other hand, as defined by Jakobson (in Swanepoel, 1990:21) is the science of signs.

The two approaches have been chosen because, as stated by Van Luxemburg *et al.* (1982:58):

“Semiotiek is een vorm van structuralisme, maar bestrijkt een groter gebied. Waar structuralisten de tekst zelf bestuderen, is het semiotici juist te doen om het hele communicatieproces.”

(Semiotics is a form of structuralism, but covers a wider area. While structuralism studies only the text, semiotics has to do with the whole communication process.)

Studying the didascalies semiotically thus means studying them as signs made possible by codes and as part of the process of communication between playwright and audience.

In view of the above the following questions can be posed:

- a) What does an analysis of the didascalies add to our understanding of Matshediso?
- b) Can an analysis of the didascalies in Matshediso lead to the development of a set of guidelines for performing the play?

1.2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- a) To determine what an analysis of the didascalies add to our understanding of Matshediso.
- b) To determine whether an analysis of the didascalies in Matshediso will lead to the development of a set of guidelines for performing the play.

1.3 THESIS STATEMENT

The present study seeks to argue that the analysis of Matshediso from the perspective of didascalies will lead to a more meaningful interpretation of the play, as well as to show how the didascalies are linked to other structural elements of the play. This will lead to the development of a set of guidelines for performing the play.

1.4 METHOD

In this mini-dissertation, a structuralist-semiotic approach as outlined above will be used. The next chapter will deal with the theoretical perspectives on didascalies and then show how didascalies relate to other structural elements of the drama.

CHAPTER 2: DIDASCALIES

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Research on didascalies has been neglected for some time, maybe because as an element of drama didascalies were underrated. In support of this assertion Swanepoel (1987:64) comments that "... non-verbal codes, derived from enactment, décor, costume and the like, which pertain to the science of theater, [is] an aspect normally excluded from the literary study of drama". Van der Merwe (1995:140), in a broader sense, agrees with Swanepoel and maintains that "as a field of study, didascalies have been neglected and have, until recently, been seen by critics as instructions provided solely for the benefit of the director, actor, announcer or sound producer in the performance or broadcast of the drama".

Although the above critics' statements are not wrong, their observations seem to refer mainly to written material performed in the theatre and have nothing to do with the dramatic texts mostly used as literary works in black schools. Theodorescu Brinzeu (1981/82), however, takes a somewhat different view, arguing "the stage-directions are of major significance not only in establishing the necessary link between the text and the performance, but also in the reception of the text as a literary work".

It is for this reason that I undertake to investigate the literary signs in the dramatic text, which help both the reader and the audience to see how the dramatist / playwright constructs and transmits his message to them.

2.2 SIGNS AND DIDASCALIES IN THEATRE AND DRAMA

At this stage of the discussion it will be useful to define what signs in theatre and drama are because they do not refer to behavioural signs of animals or traffic signs as one may think, but they refer to literary signs.

According to semioticians, literary texts should be scientifically read so that we can understand how signs help to convey messages or meanings to the audience / reader. This scientific reading process of literary texts is described by Culler (1974:981) as an act whereby the text is viewed as a system of signs, i.e. a system of functional units operative in the work.

According to ANON. (s.a.: 3) “a sign is a stimulus – the mental image which is associated in our minds with that of another stimulus. The function of the former stimulus is to evoke the latter with a view to communication.”

C.S. Peirce, the father of modern semiotic theory, suggested that there are three types of signs, i.e. the icon, the index, and the symbol. Esslin (1987:43) and Elam (1988:21). Semioticians such as Roland Barthes, Umberto Eco, Erika Fischer-Lichte and Patrice Pavis further developed this idea. To differentiate these signs, the following should be considered:

2.2.1 THE ICON:

This is the simplest type of sign that can be identified because it is the image of the object it signifies. Esslin notes that it is named after the Greek word for ‘picture’.

Realistic or photographic pictures such as the figures in skirts or trousers on lavatory doors, art in the form of paintings, sculpture, photography and the sound of a car horn in a play are iconic signs. Esslin (1988:43) comments: “All dramatic performance is basically iconic: every moment of dramatic action is a direct visual and aural sign of a fictional or otherwise reproduced reality.”

2.2.2 THE INDEX:

The index is a ‘deictic’ sign derived from the Greek word meaning ‘showing’. It is a sign, which points to an object. Personal pronouns like ‘you’ or ‘he’, which may point to the character present, near or named before, demonstrative pronouns such as ‘this’ and

‘now’ are deictic signs. A knock on the door also may point to or indicate that someone is outside and wishes to be allowed inside.

2.2.3 THE SYMBOL:

According to Elam (1988:22) a symbol is a sign that refers to the object that it denotes by virtue of convention, usually an association of general ideas. Esslin (1987:44) states that this “third principal category of signs comprises those that have, unlike index signs and iconic signs, no immediately recognizable organic relationship to their ‘signifieds’ ”.

This implies that the use of the symbol is based on an agreement between its users. In English the letters ‘t-a-b-l-e’ represent a three or four-legged piece of furniture. If one does not belong to the group who subscribes to this convention, he/she will not understand what these letters stand for.

The forgoing discussion demonstrates that there is a great need for the reader, spectator, actor as well as the critic to study this typology of signs. The knowledge will allow the aforementioned to acquire maximum pleasure and gain more insight into drama.

In conclusion, Esslin (1987:51) is of the opinion that:

“... a semiotic approach to dramatic performance should, nevertheless, prove a useful and, above all, practical approach, a worth-while methodology, towards establishing an understanding of how the groundwork, the prime constituents of a dramatic performance, its basic meaning – what Brecht calls ‘the fable’ - emerges and crystallizes from the interaction and combination of all the different sign-systems present and operating throughout its course”.

This is mostly acceptable because sign systems are practical approaches to the act of communication and if we understand what the dramatist intended establishing and bringing across to the audience/reader, a better understanding of the drama will be achieved. Now that we have distinguished the different signs we can proceed to the theoretical aspects of the didascalies.

2.3 DIDASCALIES DEFINED

Hartnoll (1983: 787) defines didascalies/stage directions as notes added to the script of a play that help to convey instructions about its performance not already explicit in the dialogue. The didascalies, therefore, are everything that comes directly from the playwright to the reader. They are significant because through them the reader is able to see how the dramatist constructs and transmits his message.

A drama text can be divided into two sections – the ‘main text’ and the ‘side text’ as Ingarden (1973:208) calls it. The ‘main text’, which sometimes is referred to as the ‘primary text’, is verbal and has lines to be spoken by the characters or actors, mainly in consecutive turns. The ‘side text’, sometimes called ‘secondary text’ or the ‘sub-text’, refers to everything that is non-verbal.

It gives information about characters, acts, or scenes, the locality, where scenes take place and the time of the day at which events occur. It also indicates the décor, costumes or settings, sound effects, movements, entrances, exits, intonation and gestures.

It is for this reason that these signs, each on its own, can be studied in order to see their importance in conveying significant information during a performance of a play.

To help the reader distinguish between the ‘main text’ and the ‘sub-text’, didascalies which are mainly concerned with the actor’s movements and the scenery, are often printed in italics or placed in brackets. The playwright provides didascalies especially for the benefit of the director, actor, announcer and whoever may be involved in the production of the play. Its presence enables the director to comprehend and interpret the

play well. This in turn allows him/her to select suitable actors, determine the tempo of the play and in general direct the actors effectively. An actor, as a sign for a fictional character, is able to display meaningful and effective body language or to express different moods by showing the correct variation in his/her voice and gestures. The manner in which s/he speaks and acts helps the audience to understand the play. The announcers as well as those involved in the production of the play know exactly what to do and when to do it, as they have the script and understand the directives.

In short, didascalies form instructions for a performance. The playwright should avoid too many demands when providing stage directions. If the instructions are not limited, the director may find it difficult to fulfil some of the playwright's requirements. Suppose the playwright requires the director to use a tall and stout lady with beautiful features as an actor. To find an actor with such qualities may be difficult. Finally, the actors together with the directors, as skilled persons, may improvise and perform the play according to how they understand it. Whilst we know that the performance cannot really be true to the author's intention, we understand that this situation may leave the playwright quite unhappy.

2.4 TYPES OF DIDASCALIES

The aim of this section is to identify different types of didascalies and to determine how the dramatist uses them. It will also focus on how the reader can gain insight into the interpretation and the understanding of the dramatic text. Didascalies can be divided into two major categories – those associated with the playwright, and those associated with the fictional world of the drama.

2.4.1 DIDASCALIES ASSOCIATED WITH THE DRAMATIST/PLAYWRIGHT

These are the words or paragraphs written by the dramatist in honour of a certain individual. They form part of the didascalies that cannot be transposed on to the theatrical stage because they are not performance oriented.

2.4.1.1 DEDICATIONS AND PREFACE

Dedications and prefaces in a dramatic text serve almost the same purpose. They may be regarded as being synonymous because they both refer to sentences or paragraphs, short in nature, appearing at the beginning of any written work or dramatic text. They are words written by the playwright in honour of his personal friends, relatives, parents, role models, fellow Christians, politicians or any public figures whom the author may be or have been acquainted with. It does not matter whether the person to whom these words are directed is dead or alive. It is the author's choice to mention the reason why the work is dedicated to that particular person or he may choose not to mention it. Whatever inspired the author to write the text may appear in the preface. Characters in the drama may represent people mentioned in the preface and therefore become iconic signs enriching the dialogue with the elements that could have been omitted by the author.

From the above, it can be deduced that the information supplied will provide the reader / audience with useful background about the dramatist's motivation for writing the play as well as a framework for interpreting it.

Since dedications and prefaces, like other types of didascalies, may not be transposed on to the theoretical stage, it would be advisable to include them in the programme so that the reader or the audience may go through them before the show starts. *Matshedis*, the play to be analyzed, does not have a dedication or a preface. This does not diminish the meaning of the text because the playwright's dedication/preface is secondary. Modern playwrights do not often write prefaces. They prefer the text/play to speak for itself.

2.4.1.2 PROLOGUE AND EPILOGUE

The prologue is an introductory speech or song of an actor in a play and the epilogue the concluding one. The aim of the dramatist with the prologue and the epilogue is to present the readers and the audience with the important facts concerning the situation, the

beginning and the end of the conflict in the drama and to introduce the main characters. Morongwa's songs in *Matshedis* are an example.

2.4.2 DIDASCALIES ASSOCIATED WITH THE FICTIONAL WORLD OF THE DRAMA

Unlike didascalies associated with the dramatist, these are performance oriented and significant in helping to bring about meaning in a play.

2.4.2.1 THE TITLE

The first important sign, which appears on the cover of the book, is the title of the play. It is of great importance to the reader/audience because it can be regarded as a key word or words which inform the reader about the theme of the dramatic text. It may also refer to the name of a main character in a play or may be a symbolic representation of the events of the dramatic text. Gabashane (1996:91) translated what Mouton (1989:170) stated and noted:

“the main function of the title of a dramatic text is to name the fictional world of the drama in such a way as to highlight, for the reader, either a central aspect of this world, an important character involved in the action of the drama, an important set of events, some appropriate symbol related to the action or whatever else the writer deems appropriate to name the work”.

The title, then, as a vital sign, should clarify the point the playwright wants to make.

For example, Ntsime's (1987) title, *Ke batla go itse rre*, meaning 'I want to know my father', is the theme of the dramatic text. The title then should reveal the essence of the story but not too much of it as that would take away the surprise element. At the end the actors will be unable to determine whether the play was a success or not because most

important, the audience will not show any excitement. Finally, if the title is self-explanatory, the readers will be deprived of the opportunity to use their own imagination during the reading of drama.

During production, verbal signs are translated into theatrical signs, and if the audience is not going to see them, it would be advisable that the play be well advertised before it is staged. The title of the play, then, needs to be attractive so that the audience can respond positively to it. Again, in Ntsime (1978), the title, *Pelo e ntsho* "Black heart", summarizes the events on witchcraft. In some cases the title can refer to situations other than those of witchcraft but bad in nature. This title is of great significance to the audience/reader because it raises expectations which can only be fulfilled by reading the text or watching the play.

2.4.2.2 THE LIST OF CHARACTERS

The second sign used by the playwright is what some dramatists or playwrights refer to as *dramatis personae*. This list enables the playwright to introduce the characters and briefly describe their physical qualities. In prose narrative, this is approached in a different way because the narrator names and describes the characters. From the list the director knows how many females or males there are and how they relate to one another. He/she is then able to select suitable actors to play the roles.

If the producer wants to decrease the number of the actors in the cast, he may substitute the ones that appear only once or twice on the stage by the ones acting in other scenes. The reduction of the number is also significant because it lessens the cost of the production. The list, which normally appears at the beginning of the play, provides the reader and the audience with the names of the characters who are going to participate in the play. Next to the names, personal data such as age, relationships, profession, appearance, etc. are given. Another important factor is that the list is hierarchically divided and arranged, with the main character's name appearing at the top.

In addition to naming the characters and the order of their presentation in the list, Savona (1982:26) states that the didascalies:

“not only name the characters but also endow them with individual speech through the name that proceeds each one of their lines. Here we have a function which is twofold: it is an indexing process, the didascalies being used to indicate the identities of the intradiegetic speakers; and it is also a structuring device, which permits the text to be divided into sequences.”

Apart from the use of the names from the list in the indexing process, the names may be used as a structuring device that reveals the characters by what they say. Every actor knows exactly when to come on and when to leave the stage because of informative words such as exit and return. Through this list, the reader is provided with the identification of the characters, which enables him/her to follow the events easily. The list can be included in the programme to orientate the audience before the play starts.

According to van der Merwe (1995:142) the list of characters is at the continuous disposal of the reader who, unlike the audience, can page back to it every time she/he is confronted with a new character, to obtain details about that character. This information is valuable because should the character happen to re-appear in the later acts or scenes, the reader will be able to remind himself who the character is and how he/she relates to the others on the list. For the audience the only solution to the problem is to rely on the auditive and visible information from the actors.

From the preceding discussion characters are created by the playwright and presented in the *dramatis personae*. The playwright then distinguishes them from each other by assigning specific names to them, providing information about their facial and physical

appearances, their age, their relationships and the jobs they perform. The stage directions further provide information about how the characters express their feelings and how they get into arguments. The whole information assists the audience to understand the characters better.

2.4.2.3 STAGE DIRECTIONS

Stage directions are informative printed commands in a dramatic text giving instructions concerning modalities, emotions, time, space and events. Modern dramatists include them in their scripts before they go to print because they regard them as signs that reveal whether the dramatic text has the potential for staging or not.

As noted by Levitt (1971:36) stage directions are of two kinds: written and spoken.

Written stage directions, like other types of didascalies mentioned earlier in this chapter, appear in the secondary text and are only there for the benefit of the reader, the producer and the actor. In transposition from the text to performance, stage directions are translated into theatrical signs like costumes, lighting, movement, gesture, props and set.

According to Teodorescu Brinzeu (1981/82:m1), “stage-directions are of major significance not only in establishing the necessary link between the text and the performance but also in the reception of the text as a literary work.”

As it is not practically possible for all the dramatic texts to be performed, it is correct to say that individuals read them as literary texts. This is done notwithstanding the fact that drama comes from the ancient Greek word “drao” which according to Griffiths (1982:8) is translated as “I do”. In other words, “drao” means that action or performance is of primary importance in a play. Therefore, the playwright who wants the play to be read as well as performed should remember the importance of the relationship between the dramatic text and its performance.

The playwright uses stage directions to establish a certain order and a certain logic, which enables each individual spectator to perceive the basic information about what is happening in the drama. The reader, on the other hand, becomes critically aware of what he/she is reading.

Spoken stage directions, found in the main text, are mostly concerned with many different kinds of announcements. For example, a straight announcement indicating the arrival of a new actor may be cited. In some cases, one actor may ask about another, and immediately thereafter the latter may be seen on stage. Furthermore, the character may describe the scene in words, thus providing the audience with spoken decor.

The next section of the discussion will pay attention to the beginnings and the endings of acts/scenes.

2.4.2.3.1 ENTRANCES AND EXITS

Entrances and exits of characters/actors form part of the verbal stage directions. According to Levitt (1971:41):

“The verbal stage direction serves no less important functions than the printed stage direction. It facilitates the smooth flow from one scene to another by having the first character, on hearing or seeing the second, alert the audience to the latter’s arrival. When that alert is accompanied by an introduction concerning the character’s history and / or personality, the verbal stage direction is serving as exposition, providing background and characterizations for the audience.”

The importance of both the verbal and non-verbal stage directions cannot be ignored. As viewed by Aston & Savona (1991:73) in Ingarden, stage directions and dialogue are

complementary and interdependent signifying systems. In other words, the didascalies and fictive dialogue are indivisibly linked and function together as integrated parts of the structure of a dramatic text.

When the dramatist presents the didascalies separate from the main text, the reader should read them aloud as part of the dialogue and vice versa. This helps the reader to understand the play better because didascalies and dialogue complement one another. If the spoken lines are kept separate they become skeletal and need the stage directions to supplement their function.

Straight announcements made by one character about the arrival of another, with full coverage of his personality and background, helps the audience to understand who the character is. From the information provided, the audience then becomes aware of what to expect from the latter.

In the exposition, the playwright may provide explanations about himself/herself and his/her characters. The entrance of a new character gives the audience a new element in the conflict. At the same time the play maintains a rhythm and develops the logical coherence of ideas. As Levitt (1971:35) further notes: "Exits and entrances condition the spectator to expect or anticipate what is to come, because the logic which governs the action in most plays holds that the exit of one man anticipates the entrance of another."

From the above, it is obvious that exits and entrances should be arranged with great care because of their significance to the play. The playwright should consider the different scenes in each act that share the same sub-theme, same locations and same time-span and he/she should know exactly where and when to introduce a new character. Usually it will be when one character leaves the stage. In certain plays, the exit of one actor and the entrance of another are indicated by the lowering or the raising of the curtain. The curtain, then, becomes the signal of the end of the act or scene and the beginning of another. As this takes place, the audience/readers are conditioned to be filled with anticipation and they expect the arrival of a new actor who will introduce a new element

into the conflict. The end of one problem facing the protagonist introduces another, which gives an impression that the protagonist is still in danger.

Exits and entrances help produce meaning and shape in a play because they act like cuts in movies – setting up significant boundaries, framing strips of action, emphasizing certain scenes and selecting what is important to focus on. Cutting also means shifting from one scene to another in movies, for example, cutting from the living-room to the street. Cutting the film also means determining the sequence of scenes, how long they will be, etc. In plays cutting deals mostly with the selection of scenes from a potentially long strip of activities. Sometimes it becomes unnecessary to cut scenes but, instead, a mere change to the location of the scene may be introduced. Too many scene changes, on the other hand, are not convenient because each scene needs a separate set. To erect a set at the beginning of each scene and to dismantle it at the end is time-consuming. The practicality and the costs also should be taken into consideration because sets are costly. As the audience views certain actors at a certain locality, numerous changes will interrupt the action they are watching. The playwright can avoid this problem by grouping the scenes that are going to use the same set together and by bringing about changes of locality only at the end of the second or third scene. This process will help in reducing scene shifting.

2.4.2.3.2 COSTUME AND MAKE-UP

Costume and make-up are sign elements that establish the actor's identity, or they may symbolize the entire performance by making the audience believe that what they are seeing on stage is actually true. In principle, the main character may wear bright colours and the secondary characters dull ones, because bright colours attract the eyes of the audience. When the actor appears on the stage the first sign to identify the role he /she plays is his/her costume.

Clothes worn for special occasions such as garden clothes, sports wear, and mourning attire, can be described as clothing for special roles. A black dress according to the

Batswana culture indicates a mourner, a white coat a physician and a military uniform a soldier. In reality, the actor's costume has the ability to influence his gestures, movement and behaviour. For instance, a lady wearing a tight skirt will have to take short steps when she walks.

By taking note of the characters' costumes, the audience has the ability to differentiate the characters. The criteria used for differentiation may be age, position, social status, wealth, religion or nationality. The elements contributing to the significance of costume are:

Age: Bright young actors should best wear coloured clothing. In Batswana culture, it is morally unacceptable to see a married lady wearing a mini skirt but a young girl would be well presented in it.

Position: A military uniform is a sign indicating the rank in the army occupied by the wearer. It also indicates the rights or benefits he/she is entitled to. A white coat, worn by a certain man in Hillbrow Hospital, as in *Matshediso*, is a sign for a physician – someone who has the right to treat and to perform operations on patients.

Social status: Generally in traditional Batswana communities, a black dress, which is the sign of mourning, is often worn against the wearer's will. Usually it has a certain stigma attached to it. Mourners in this type of costume are not allowed to roam around town or village especially after sunset. It is believed that bad luck may come their way. In communities, chiefs wear leopard skins and acting chiefs do not have to put them on.

Wealth: Rich people usually wear clothes made from expensive fabric. Jewellery, watches and hats with certain styles also indicate an individual's wealth. Many people, especially those from rural settlements, respect an actor wearing such clothing, since it indicates that the wearer has a high social standing.

Religion: Usually in black culture there are costumes that distinguish women belonging to different denominations. For an example, the Dutch Reformed churchwomen wear black skirts, black jackets and white collars. Women belonging to the Methodist denomination wear black skirts, red jackets and white collars. When women put on these costumes they conform to the uniform of their groups. These types of costumes are therefore signs of different religious affiliations.

Nationality: Men or women wearing blankets and hats both in winter and summer indicate people belonging to the Southern Sotho group. When this group appears on the stage, the audience are able to recognize their nationality long before it can hear the language they speak.

Costume has the ability to produce an illusion of reality. When make-up is not available, appropriate signs of forms of action like horror and revulsion may be shown or described by the actors.

2.4.2.3.3 SETTING

Setting is an iconic sign that pictures the environment in which the events and actions unfold, e.g. a room, in the street etc. As Abrams (1988:172) states,

“When applied to a theatrical production, (setting) is synonymous with *décor* and *mise en scène*, French terms denoting both the scenery and the properties, or movable pieces of furniture, on the stage.”

It falls under the contextual stage directions that gain their meaning within the context of a particular work. The main function of these stage directions is to provide the spectator with the basic information needed to understand the place, the time and the social position of the characters.

Since the audience sits in the theatre for a limited time of about two to three hours, which covers the whole play, it is suggested that few localities be used. The playwright has to select the most significant events. If this is considered, the set needed will be affordable and the time needed for the erection and demolishing of the décor will be reasonable.

2.4.2.3.4 STAGE PROPERTIES AND DÉCOR

The term décor, as indicated above, refers both to the scenery and to the stage properties such as the furniture, tools, instruments and other movable objects used by the actors in the dramatic text. Their function as signs is to make the spectator aware of the setting and to create certain expectations. They also serve as a device of great importance in implementing meaning and transitions in a play. Levitt (1971:46) sums up the significance of props by saying:

“When an inanimate object is used for more than decorative purposes, whether to foreshadow, or carry the action over ‘dead spots’, or to assist the plot, it becomes an essential structural feature, contributing to meaning in the scene and clarifying the relations between scene and play.”

Usually in a play, inanimate objects such as tables, chairs, wardrobes or wall clocks are used. The use of these objects by the playwright familiarizes the audience with the space in which the events take place. These objects are there not only to decorate the stage but also to add meaning to the action in a play. The use of a clock will assist the audience in following events based on time and in the end, due to the fact that the dramatist cannot present everything, they will be able to fill in the gaps covered during the untold time in the play.

2.4.2.3.5 LIGHTING, MUSIC AND SOUND

According to Baldick (1990:45), the contextual stage directions may be defined as the parts of a text preceding and following any particular passage, giving it a meaning fuller or more identifiable than if it were read in isolation. They are non-verbal/written elements covering lighting, music and sound, and can be grouped together because they have at least one common stage function – that is, to create mood and meaning in the play. Lighting, music and sound may be used to ask sensory responses from the audience. Lighting plays an important role among the visual signifying systems of drama. For example, the events happening in the dark establish a mood of gloom and hopelessness and those taking place in daylight establish joy. Depending on the type of music or sound and the manner in which it is played or used music or sound reveals moments of deep feelings and sometimes acts as background mood for the action. These three elements play an important role as signifying systems in the play because they produce a picture of what the author wants to put across to the audience.

Lighting effects that are iconic in nature may indicate daylight. A wall clock may also be shown on the stage to determine the time of the day the events are taking place or the time may be heard from the character's dialogue. In the absence of lighting when the stage becomes dark, the interpretation given by the spectator should be that of daylight fading in the evening. It also has the power to show that it is night or becoming dark. Lighting effects are also very powerful in directing the spectator's attention to the focal point of the action.

Different types of sounds, musical or non-musical, play a significant role in a dramatic performance. Some of them indicate setting or mood in a play. These are either natural or artificial; and may be produced by the actors themselves, e.g. the sound made by the slamming of the door, which indicates an actor's anger, or the sound produced by the blowing of the wind indicating the time of the year - Spring. All these have their part to play.

Recorded sounds like the blowing of the car horn, widens the scope of the sound effects and can rightfully be used because a car usually is not used on the stage during performance. The function of these sounds is to create a dramatic world and to give it depth. It also keeps the audience awake and fully attentive as emphasized by Griffiths (1982:3) when he says: “A playwright’s first duty is to keep the audience awake, to hook, retain, and intensify their interest. Unless he holds their attention, the play fails.”

Music adds more life to the story, assisting in dramatizing the events. In addition, music has the ability to reveal the mood, the hidden thoughts and the emotions of the character - be it happiness, anger or depression. Music also helps with the important structural element of structuring the flow of action that is, creating suspense, bridging scenes and showing moments of deep feeling in the scene. Because of this, the director of the play has the right to choose a suitable melody with a particular rhythm to form the background.

This rhythmic melody can only be realized by the conscious mind of the audience because it is powerful in establishing the mood and meaning of the action. This then enables the audience to remember the events with ease. In most cases, different acts and scenes are separated by music and this keeps the interest of the audience while the cast is allowed a few moments of rest or time for changing costumes.

2.4.2.3.6 SUMMARY

From the foregoing discussion, which mainly covered the theoretical part on didascalies, it is clear that didascalies form an important element of a dramatic text. Without didascalies a play will be incomplete and the reader, during the process of reading, will be denied the opportunity to perform the dramatic text in his imagination. If the visual signs on the stage are lacking, there will be nothing to arouse the spontaneous applause, laughter and verbal encouragement by the audience. In the next discussion, the information given above is now going to be used to show the importance of the didascalies and the structural elements of the play.

2.5 DIDASCALIES AND THE STRUCTURAL ELEMENTS OF THE PLAY

2.5.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this section is to give the analysis and interpretation of *Matshedis* with emphasis on didascalies. In order to succeed, certain structural elements of the dramatic text together with the didascalies should be discussed. This approach will enable the researcher to analyze the text from a performance point of view.

2.5.2 THEME AND DIDASCALIES

Theme is widely regarded as an essential element of any play or dramatic text. It is a larger framework containing the central idea that helps the playwright to succeed in writing a good play. According to Bronfeld (1981:63), the theme should not be confused with the message since the theme should be there before the playwright starts writing, but the message will only be realized after the play has been read or watched. He further states that the theme assures a better, more unified construction of the script, for it proves a general reference point to guide the direction of the plot and the development of the characters. No dramatist ever comes out and informs the audience about the theme of his dramatic text. It is revealed through the actions of the characters covered in both the primary and the secondary texts.

Once it is there, the playwright is able to select relevant events and characters for his play. Examples of themes mostly used in playwriting are: love, jealousy, hatred, chieftainship, religion, etc. It is therefore important to realize that theme cannot be determined without considering the events covering both the main and the sub-texts of the play. Now that I have dealt with the theme let me proceed to the discussion of the plot, which is regarded as the most important element in drama.

2.5.3 PLOT AND DIDASCALIES

Critics are sometimes confronted with the problem of determining which element is more important in drama - plot or character. According to Bronfeld (1981:61), plot is paramount and the people caught up in the action are merely vehicles to advance the story line. But various theorists believe that plot and characters are indivisibly linked.

In other words, they are welded together and they cannot be separated. The two function together to fulfil the particular purpose of the play. A good plot should be in a logical, sequence of events having a beginning, middle and an end. The question that arises is where does the plot come from? It is derived from the events covered in the main text as well as in the sub-text (the didascalies).

These events have to indicate cause and effect and clearly reveal how they are related. It should be kept in mind that although in reality events happen in a chronological order, the choice of their arrangement on paper depends entirely on the playwright. He may choose to present them in their chronological order or a technique of flashbacks may be applied. The latter technique in drama is not easy to use because it needs artistic means of transition. Another important factor that should be considered is the economy of action that compels the playwright to include only events that are necessary. The difference between plot and story, which are both narratives, should also be taken into consideration. Unlike the story, the plot has to do with the selection and the ordering of the events.

The plot structure in many instances is determined by the different elements of the conflict. These are: exposition, development, complication, climax and denouement. But what is conflict? With regard to conflict Thomas (1992:79) has this to say: "The word conflict stems from a Latin root meaning to strike together, from which comes its current meaning of a battle, quarrel, or struggle for supremacy between opposing forces."

From this quotation, Thomas (1992:80) further notes the different types of conflict:

- Conflict between one character and another or between groups.
- Conflict between character and environment.
- Conflict between character and destiny or forces of nature.
- Conflict between character and ideas or even among forces inside a character.

The situation of conflict in a play should therefore present characters caught up in stressful situations and they should exert their strength to win. As this occurs, the dramatic intensity of the conflict will be raised, arousing curiosity, causing doubt and creating tension among the audience.

Let us consider a football match between Kaizer Chiefs and Orlando Pirates, the teams regarded as best in Premier Soccer League. If Kaizer Chiefs leads Orlando Pirates by three goals to nil at half time, the game becomes boring to the losers. Winners will be excited. But suppose the two teams become competitive and perform a goalless draw up to half time. The game becomes interesting and every person watching it becomes doubtful of the final outcome. If at the eightieth minute of the game Kaizer Chiefs manages to score, Orlando Pirates will exert more energy to equalize and if they manage it, the spectators will enjoy the contest between the two teams of comparable strength. The same applies to conflict in literary work. The two opposing forces should exert great energy to win, and as Roberts (1992:52) states “there should be uncertainty about ultimate success, for unless there is doubt about the outcome there is no tension, and without tension there is no interest”.

Next, I will discuss the main phases of the plot as they are distinguished in drama.

2.5.3.1 EXPOSITION

This is the section of the play, which the playwright uses to introduce the situation, the characters and their relationship towards each other. The background of the issues that contribute to the central conflict, that is, the cause that influences the opposing groups to

do what they are doing, is also revealed. Finally, the playwright should come up with the setting of the events. All these should be drawn out of words and actions that help to keep the audience's attention. In *Matshediso*, the exposition reveals the certification of Gadifele's death on arrival at Hillbrow Hospital and the birth of Matshediso by caesarean section. The first scene catches the attention of the viewers because they see someone's corpse in a ward lying on a bed. (cf. didascalies p.1) The viewers want to know who that person is and what led to his/her death.

2.5.3.2 DEVELOPMENT

The playwright at this stage sets the mechanism in motion for the beginning of the play. Thomas (1882:69) adds that at this stage the leading character enters with an event that sparks the main action of the entire play. Katametsi (1998:34) in her work further notes that development is the point where the chain of events that constitutes the main action of the play is set in motion. In *Matshediso*, this stage is reached when Tibe and his mother accept Matshediso as their baby. Later, Ditshele warns Tibe not to accept Matshediso as his daughter. She stresses that no dead woman can give birth to a living child.

2.5.3.3 COMPLICATION

At this stage, a new force is brought into the play. This force, which is sometimes called the first crisis, affects the direction of the course of the action. Boulton (1960:43) adds that

“this first crisis will lead on to other actions, events or modifications of character which may in their turn have new consequences carrying the play further forward. Probably the whole plot now proceeds for some time from crisis to crisis. The crises may succeed one another as causes and effects, or some fresh crisis may arise from another cause.”

As this occurs, the protagonist encounters difficulties caused by his opponents and things move from bad to worse. The suspense is now intensified. In *Matshediso*, this stage is reached when Tibe refuses to listen to anything his mother is saying about Matshediso. He leaves his home to stay with Ditshele at her house.

When the second crisis occurs, the conflict becomes more intensified. The characters make major changes about important things in their lives. In *Matshediso*, Tibe plans to kill his mother and Matshediso because he regards them as obstacles to his marriage. Moabi and his wife, on the other hand, take Matshediso to their home for safety and MmaTibe remains alone at Tibe's place.

2.5.3.4 CLIMAX

At this stage the maximum disturbance of the equilibrium, as well as the point of no return for the opposing sides are reached. If this conflict is between two characters, they no longer point fingers at one another - they start fighting - and this may lead to one of them dying. As this happens, the audience's attention also reaches the highest point. In *Matshediso*, Tibe is still planning to kill his mother and Matshediso. The police and the hospital staff are ready to prevent that, because they know that Tibe will be appearing at night as Moutlwatsi, Tibe's friend, had told them.

2.5.3.5 DÉNOUEMENT

After the climax, the final resolution of the difficulties and the completion of a course of action are reached. Depending on the type of drama, the antagonist or the protagonist may end up in triumph or both parties may lose the battle. What is important is that at the end of the play the audience/reader must be convinced that the end is appropriate. In the said play, MmaTibe and Matshediso survive death and are united with Tibe. Manko dies, Ditshele dies, and Moutlwatsi and Moapei get what they deserve. At the end the playwright's message is revealed. Ditshele, who planned to kill Tibe, commits suicide.

In Setswana there is a saying “Moepalemena o a le ikepela”, meaning “One who digs a hole, digs it for himself.”

The total plot of a play as indicated above shows that the play is made up of various interdependent parts such as acts, scenes, different localities where events take place, sounds, characters facial expressions, gesture, movement, make-up, costume and props. All these appear in the didascalies but sometimes in the main text. The link between plot and didascalies can therefore not be separated.

In the next sub-section, I will deal with how didascalies are linked to another structural element, that is, characters.

2.5.4 CHARACTERS AND DIDASCALIES

Characters are agents created by the writer for the purpose of dramatizing human life and its manifestations. This clearly indicates that characters need not necessarily be human beings, but can be replaced by puppets. However, human characters should never be merely puppets manipulated to suit the plot. They should be living characters with a dimension of depth and reality. If this is taken into consideration, the story will make more impact upon the audience. In a play actors are iconic signs for the characters they play.

These actors should only be in a play to do what the play requires of them. In addition, actors should be distinguishable from one another - be it by costume, physical traits, action or dialogue. This information appears in the primary text as well as in the secondary text.

Let us now consider how the playwright goes about building his characters.

2.5.4.1 CHARACTERIZATION

The first technique used by the playwright to reveal his characters is through the description of their appearance, their physical qualities. The dramatist's style of revealing these characters may take different forms. Firstly, a list of the dramatis personae, as part of the didascalies, and the instructions pertaining the characters' actions serve this purpose well. Secondly, the character is revealed through dialogue, both from what other characters say about him/her or what the character in a dialogue, monologue or aside says about himself/herself.

2.5.4.2 NAMING

The act of naming is also a useful tool that enhances the characters with the dramatic action. This process is loaded with meaning and helps the reader/audience to associate characters' behaviour with their names. Furthermore, it attributes personality traits to the characters. Illustrative examples of this effect will be cited in chapter three. According to Carlson (1990:34), characters' names can be classified into the following categories:

2.5.4.2.1 EVOCATIVE NAMES

Some of them may be derived from animal names. For example, in African culture 'mmutla' means 'a hare'. Once it becomes the name of a person, that name ends up with 'e' and no longer with 'a'. The name of that person now becomes "Mmutle".

2.5.4.2.2 NAMES ASSOCIATED WITH THE CHARACTER'S TRADE

These are names suggesting character traits or professions. Most of them may be derived from objects. For example, 'Gadinkgake' cited from Ntsime (1979), is the name of the traditional healer. Literally it means that after throwing the divine bones the traditional healer never goes wrong in interpreting what the ancestors say.

2.5.4.2.3 NAMES SUGGESTING MORALITY FIGURES

Characters with good or evil behaviours are given such names. In most cases such names are either Biblical or historical. 'Tsholofelo' meaning 'Hope' as used in Ntsime (1978) is the name that can be given to characters and events. Other types are:

2.5.4.2.4 GENERIC NAMES

According to Tswana culture, these names indicate the roles played by the characters in a social or family structure. Another example, also cited from Ntsime (1978) is 'MmaItseng', which means Itseng's mother. MmaTibe, the actor in the play to be analyzed, is also an example.

If the act of naming is correctly done, it helps the audience/reader to follow the events with ease. It also supplies a better understanding of what is going on. At the end, the audience/reader will be provided with the power to appreciate the play as a literary work of art.

The role of didascalies in characterization is also very important and cannot be separated from the discussion mentioned above. This role covers a characteristic way of talking, acting, and behaving as indicated by the didascalies in the text. The playwright creates the characters and presents them in the *dramatis personae*. He then distinguishes the characters from each other by assigning specific names to them. Thereafter he provides information about their facial and physical appearances, their age, relationships and the jobs they perform. The didascalies in the text further gives information about how the characters express their feelings and how they get into arguments. This information assists the audience to understand the characters much better.

Another element, which needs to be discussed because of its importance in drama, is setting and didascalies.

2.5.5 SETTING AND DIDASCALIES

According to Abrams (1993:192) setting may be defined as the general locale, historical time and social circumstances in which it (dramatic work) occurs. In other words, the term setting refers to the place, time and social environment that frame the characters and events. These elements reveal the world in which the characters act. The set or decor which forms part of setting has different functions. An obvious one according to Esslin (1987:73) is:

“an informational, iconic one: it ‘pictures’ the environment against which the action of the drama unfolds, and provides much of the basic expositional information for the spectator’s understanding of it by indicating its place and period, the social position of the characters and many other essential aspects of the drama.”

Setting is therefore the physical, geographical or spatial location within which the events take place, the acting time as well as the environment in which actors perform the events.

The information concerning space and time usually appears at the beginning of each scene or act. In drama, setting to a lesser extent may be verbally presented or a concrete visual form may be used. Pfister (1988: 267) refers to verbal localization as ‘word-scenery’ or ‘spoken space’. The characters themselves usually present this type. It covers the description of space and is outlined in the main text.

Some settings have traditional associations that are closely related to the action of the story. The selection of a suitable setting, then, helps to reduce the problems the playwright would encounter if he/she had to write about things he/she is not good at. The non-verbal spatial setting may be in the form of furniture, lighting, and music. The movement of the characters, as part of the setting, is also very important because it makes the action lively.

Everybody is aware of the fact that the events in a dramatic text happen during a certain period of time. This time may be presented as the time of the day for example, in the morning, afternoon or evening, as the date or in the form of a time phrase. Lighting techniques may also be employed. Most importantly, in drama, time is always reflected in the present tense because the actions performed by the characters are happening here and now before the eyes of the spectators.

The information concerning time and space as indicated in the discussion above is very important and shows a link between didascalies and setting. This is revealed by the way setting influences the characters decisions, attitudes, habits and their behaviour in general.

Now that the structural elements have been identified and discussed, it is appropriate to analyze *Matshedis* holistically from the perspective of the importance of didascalies. This will be the topic of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3: AN ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF *MATSHEDISO* FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF DIDASCALIES

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this section is to analyze this play using both the explicit and implicit didascalies found in it. By explicit didascalies we refer to those that are written clearly within parentheses or in italics. The implicit ones refer to those directives, which are not indicated as such on the set/stage, but implied in the dialogue.

In the preceding sections the theoretical information covering didascalies and the structural elements of the play were highlighted. It is therefore necessary to be specific and to start analyzing *Matshedisio* from the perspective of the didascalies. The analysis is going to cover the following aspects: plot, didascalies and characters, didascalies and space and finally, didascalies, props and set. This approach is taken because the focus on the didascalies is going to help in the transposition of the dramatic text to performance.

3.2 DIDASCALIES AND CHARACTERS

In sections 2.3.2.2 and 2.4.3 the theoretical aspects of characters were dealt with. It is now necessary to apply that theory. As the system of characterization is not the only technique used in the building of characters, descriptions such as characters' gestures, facial expressions, movements, emotions, etc. will also be used. The starting point is the role or the function of the list of the dramatis personae in *Matshedisio* as it forms part of the didascalies.

THE LIST OF THE CHARACTERS IN *MATSHEDISO* (SIKWANE, 1990:(VII))

MATHAKA A MOTSHAMEKO

TIBE: (A wild cat) Ralebenkele mo Orlando. Ke monna yo moleele ka magetla a monna a tsholetsa ditshipi. Go le gantsi o a bo a ntse a sosobantse phatla; o bogolo ba dingwaga di le 39.

A businessman in Orlando. He is a 39-year old, tall and stout man, who always looks unfriendly.

MMATIBE: Mmaagwe. A ka nna dingwaga di le 72.
(Mother of a wild cat)

Tibe's mother, who is about 72 years old.

DITSHELE: (Stirrer) Mosadi yo o dirang mo lebenkeleng la ga Tibe. O mosesane, nko e lenono ka ditlhaa tse di bontshang gore ke wa letsopa le le fa le le sa onaleng. O bogolo ba dingwaga tsa ga Tibe.

A lady assistant in Tibe's shop. She is thin and has a sharp-pointed nose. She is 39 years old but looks very young.

MATSHEDISO: Lesea le le belegweng mmaalona a tlhokafetse, ngwana wa
(Consolation) ga Tibe le moswi Gadifele mosadi wa gagwe.

An orphan infant who was delivered after her mother had passed away. She is Tibe's and the late Gadifele's baby.

MOU TLWATSI: Monna wa mo Orlando. Dimpa ke tsa motho a ja a nwa. O
(Newsbreaker) bontsho jwa mmolopita o šwele. O bogolo ba dingwaga di
le 45.

One of the local men in Orlando. He has a pot-belly which
symbolizes his wealth; very dark in complexion and 45
years old.

MOAPEI: (Cook) Tsala ya ga Ditshele. O mokhutshwane, o mokima ka
dipotongwane tse di ka lekanngwang le tlhogo ya lesea.

Ditshele's friend; short and plump, has big protruding
calves, as big as the infant's head.

MOABI: (Provider) Tsala ya ga Tibe. Monna wa dingwaga di le 50.

Tibe's friend; He is 50 years old.

BOITOPPO: (Self-pleader) Mosadi wa gagwe. O bogolo ba dingwaga di le 42.

Moabi's wife. She is about 42 years old.

NGAKA MOSUPI:

LE

MOOKI KGOMOTSO: Baari ba ga Gadifele go mmelegisa Matshediso
kwa bookelong ba Hillbrow.

(Doctor Revealer
and
Nurse Comfort)

Both operated on Gadifele when she
delivered Matshediso at Hillbrow Hospital.

NGAKA SEBI: Ngaka e kgolo mo bookelong ba Hillbrow.

(Doctor Dried dung) Chief medical doctor at Hillbrow Hospital.

MODIRELALOAGO: Modirelaloago mo bookelong ba Hillbrow.

(Social worker) A social worker at Hillbrow Hospital.

MADUMO: (Craver) Modiredi wa ga Tibe, bogolo o dingwaga di le 32.

Tibe's helper; she is 32 years old.

MMANOKO:

LE

MMADIKGANG: Baagisani ba ga Tibe

(Mrs Porcupine

and

Gossipmonger)

Tibe's neighbours.

MORONGWA:

Monna yo mokhutshwane yo o dimpa di matogo

(Messenger)

Morongwa mo bookelong ba Hillbrow.

A short pot-bellied man. A messenger at Hillbrow Hospital.

MANKO: (Miss Nose) Ngwana wa ga Ditshele. O bogolo ba dingwaga di le 14.

Ditshele's daughter, 14 years old.

In the list above, there are 17 characters. Eleven of them are female and 6 are male. Different names and attributes are assigned to them and this serves the purpose of making the characters clearly distinguishable from each other. Carlson (1990:26) asserts that

“the names given to characters potentially provide powerful communicative devices for the dramatist seeking to orient his audience as quickly as possible in his fictive world”.

The names given are also self-explanatory. For example, ‘Matshediso’ means ‘Condolences or Consolation’, which implies ‘the bearer of comfort’. The name is appropriate for condolences wipe away the bereaved’s tears – in this case Tibe’s, since he lost his wife. ‘Morongwa’ is a ‘Messenger’, bringing the meaning of the child’s birth, ‘Kgomotso’ ‘Comfort or Consolation’ and ‘Mmadikgang’ ‘Newscarrier’. In this play, Matshediso is the name of the main character. It is therefore reasonable to have it (Matshediso) as the title of the play.

The names Ditsele and Tibe are also interesting because they fit the personality of these characters. For example, Ditsele, ‘Stirrer’, through what she says she causes trouble between Tibe, MmaTibe and the hospital staff. She made Tibe believe that Matshediso is not his child. Tibe, being influenced by Ditsele, leaves his house and stays at Ditsele’s place. He becomes a real ‘wild cat’ and only returns home after experiencing problems which lead to his arrest.

Gadifele, whose name does not appear in the list of the dramatis personae, means ‘gossip does not stop’ or ‘things-never-come-to-an-end.’ There is a saying that no dead woman can give birth to a living child but this is proved wrong by Dr Mosupi who delivered Matshediso. This name further implies that life does not stop. Gadifele passes away but Matshediso is born.

Morongwa is part of the dramatis personae, but he has a unique role in the play, because he stands apart from the other characters. The author has created him for one purpose, and that is to orientate the audience through his singing. The fact that he is separate from the others may be detected from his behaviour which clearly indicates his attitude towards his fellow characters and towards the audience. Most uniquely, he directs his words at the baby as if she were an adult. He addresses a being who cannot understand him yet and then detaches himself from the rest of the actors.

In the opening (prologue), his song announces the miraculous birth of a child, Matshediso, whose mother was certified dead on arrival at Hillbrow Hospital. But his song indicates that a baby who is something private, unseen or untalked of (khupamarama) has now become public ... and Dr Mosupi made this possible. The lyrics include the following:

Khupamarama gae sa le wena
 Khupamarama ke a go direla
 Bonang Tshedi o belegwe kajeno
 Metlholo ya bookelo ba Hillbrow,
 Metlholo ya ga ngaka Mosupi,
 Supa, supa ba ile,
 Ba ile gae
 Supa, supa ba ile.
 Supa supa ba ile.
 Khupamarama ga e sa le wena,
 Botshelo bo iponaditse gompieno.
 Re tla ja nku meno mono,
 Nku ga e ke e tlhoka ... (ts. 1)

(Secret, you are no more a private matter
 Secret one, look I will work for you
 Look, Tshedi is born today
 The miracles performed at the Hillbrow hospital
 Miracles performed by Doctor Mosupi
 Point out! Point out to them ...
 There they have gone home
 Point out! Point out ... They are gone
 Point out! Point out ...they are gone
 You are no more a private matter
 New life has emerged today.

We are going to start to gossip,
Because good things like sheep are never without ...)

In the song, Morongwa sums up the course of the play by indicating what has now happened (the secret that is revealed, which is the birth of the child, Matshediso) and what will follow thereafter – the question about the child’s paternity. At first it is as if he is pointing at Matshediso saying that she is no longer a secret because through a miracle Dr Mosupi delivered her. He then turns to the women who are on their way to Tibe’s house to report the secret that Dr Mosupi, ‘Revealer’ has uncovered. With the idiomatic expression “re tla ja nku meno” (we will talk and gossip) he already suggests that the birth of Matshediso will be a subject of gossip, as it turns out to be.

Morongwa’s attitude towards his fellow characters further denotes his status as an actor who is placed there to help achieve a particular effect. At the opening, Dr Sebi (p.1) interrupts his singing by asking him whether he executed his duties of delivering letters to a Dr Phillip at Joubert Park. The didascalies “O tswa a sa fetola” (He leaves the stage without answering him) indicates that he was placed there for a dramatic purpose. He disappears from the entire course of the play until he re-appears in the epilogue.

At the point of discovery in the plot (Abrams, 1912:141), the recognition point where Tibe, the protagonist, discovers the importance of Matshediso in his life, Morongwa again expresses the realities that Tibe has ignored through his song. To create a strong line of continuity in the play, he starts off by singing the same words he sang at the opening, but this time repeatedly. (p.63)

“Khupamarama ga e sa le wena,
Khupamarama ke a go direla,”

(Secret, you are no more a private matter,
Secret one, I work for you)

The last piece of music which he sings to and about Matshediso while looking at Tibe (cf. didascalies: “O opela a lebile Tibe.” (p.64), can be interpreted as a form of irony and sarcasm. In the beginning when he (Morongwa) sang the words, that was around the time when Tibe was denying paternity of the baby Matshediso. Now, the same words are sung at the time when Tibe regrets all his follies and accepts the child as his. Morongwa says nothing to him, but sings. It is the ironical manner in which he sings which seems to carry the connotation: ‘I had known all along that Matshediso is your child, and you will come to terms with that! Matshediso is the one to bring comfort and unity to the family.’

“Matshediso, tshedisa bagaeno.

Matshediso ...”

(Matshediso, bring comfort to your family.

Matshediso ...)

The information mentioned above clearly indicates that Morongwa is the playwright’s messenger, who does not align himself with any of the actions surrounding him. His song in Act 1, Scene 1, celebrating Matshediso’s birth, is used as a prologue to the events. In Dr Sebi and Nurse Kgomotso’s discussion Matshediso’s birth is confirmed. This confirmation is also found in the didascalies in Act 1, scene 1 (p.1). Now, it becomes clear to the audience that Gadifele, Tibe’s wife, has passed away as a result of complications related to her pregnancy like pre-eclampsia or high blood pressure. However, through a caesarean section baby Matshediso’s life is saved.

Some names describe the physical appearance of the characters/actors, for example, the name ‘Manko’ refers to a female with a big nose. According to Batswana culture, such names are not just given to actors but are meaningful. As Carlson (1990:27) affirms, “they are selected with a clear signifying function in mind”. Manko, Ditshele’s daughter, is called Miss Nose – a name that confirms the Setswana proverb “Nko ga e dupe” (Nose cannot smell or detect danger). She has a nose which the audience might think should have helped her to smell the poison in Tibe’s food. When her cruel mother sends her to

request Tibe to come straight home before going anywhere else, Manko quickly delivers the message. Meanwhile, evil Ditshele, as revealed by the playwright in the play, poisons Tibe's food. When Manko comes back, she eats the fatal meal without any suspicion. That is how she dies.

Furthermore, the order in which the names appear is also of some significance. In this play, Tibe is also the main character because (as indicated in 2.3.2.2) his name appears at the top of the hierarchically organized list. He is presented as a loving person who is inseparable from his family. This is emphasized by his presence at home on the night when Gadifele is taken to the maternity ward at Hillbrow Hospital and his statement in Act 1, Scene 3, where he tells Ditshele that he is in a hurry because he is accompanying his mother to collect baby Matshediso from the hospital.

The turning point in Tibe's life is his wife's death. Ditshele, who is his shop assistant as stated in the list of the *dramatis personae*, now sees a chance to become Tibe's wife. A poverty-stricken woman, as revealed by the information provided in the stage props and set in pages 29, 36, 43 and 58, she does not necessarily love Tibe; but is just after his money. What makes matters worse is Manko, the child she has out of wedlock. The audience deduces this from Mmadikgang's speech on page 30, where she says that Manko's father is in Carletonville, at Wedela Township.

Ditshele convinces Tibe that Matshediso is not his child. She convinces him that no dead woman can give birth to a baby. Thereafter Ditshele, together with her bosom friend, Moapei, attempts to kill Tibe with poisoned food. The plan is carried out but it does not succeed.

Apart from the information derived from the *dramatis personae*, the dramatist communicates facts about his/her fictional characters through written stage directions ranging from details about physical appearance, facial appearances and expressions, gestures and movements. This information usually appears in the *didascalies* but

sometimes it accompanies the words spoken by the actors. An example that can be cited from page 16, in Act 2, Scene 1 is:

“Tibe: (A mo tsena ganong) Mma wee! Ntswele ka lapa.”

(Tibe: (Interrupting) Lady, leave my home.)

This occurs while the social worker is at Tibe’s place requesting him to sign certain forms indicating that he will soon be collecting Matshediso from the hospital. He furiously interrupts her and then asks her to leave his home. Immediately thereafter, he points to the door. With this action he shows that he rejects the social worker’s request.

Another example, also from page 16, which indicates MmaTibe’s anger when Tibe refuses to accept Matshediso as his daughter, is as follows:

“MmaTibe: Ngwanaka, utlwa nna mmaago!

A o bona tlhogo e tshweu ya me!

(A rola tuku a tlhagisa tlhogo e tshweu.)

(MmaTibe: My child, listen to me, your mother!

Do you see my grey haired head?

(She removes her headscarf to expose
her grey hair.)

Her action of removing her headscarf as shown in the didascalies above, supports her verbal expression. The grey hair on her head is an iconic sign of old age and also suggests wisdom coupled with experience. Furthermore, it indicates that Tibe should respect his mother by doing what she wishes.

In addition, a family name such as MmaTibe, as Carlson (1991:28) states, “may suggest not only social roles but character qualities.” As a mother, she has to show certain responsibilities. That is why she accepts Matshediso when the hospital staff delivers her,

and she starts caring for her and feeding her with soft porridge and milk. The audience understands why she does this. She loves Matshediso. Since she lost her daughter-in-law, Gadifele, she hopes Matshediso will comfort her. Again, MmaTibe as an upright person becomes very angry that Tibe is not interested in collecting Matshediso from hospital.

Finally, an example revealing the importance of the character's movement on stage is provided in the prologue to the events as follows:

“Morongwa: (A tsamayatsamaya mo seraleng
a ingwaya dimpa. (ts.1)

(Morongwa: He walks about on stage scratching
his tummy)

This does not mean that Morongwa has bad manners. He wants to attract the attention of the audience. It is also true to his role as a buffoon. Once he has succeeded in doing this, he will be able to inform them about the miracle that happened - Matshediso's birth. This proves that the character's position and movement on stage is important, because it catches the audience's attention and helps them to understand the events.

In conclusion, the information given above enables the reader/audience to observe the characters' behaviour on stage, study the situation in which they are and then decide what kind of persons they are. Then, they will be able to react appropriately to the events of the play. In addition, this clearly indicates that dialogue without gestures and facial expressions that accompany words in a play are incomplete.

3.3 DIDASCALIES AND SETTING

This sub-section is an analysis of setting as identified by Boshego (1995:89). The first section will cover the spatial location that tells us about the fixed areas in which the

events occur. The second section will deal with time, an important element in a dramatic text. As it is normally done, the writer's instructions pertaining to space are found at the beginning of each act or scene. For example in Act 1, Scene 1:

“Mo sepetleleng sa Hillbrow kwa Gouteng.”(ts.1)
(It is in Johannesburg at Hillbrow Hospital.)

Johannesburg is given as the physical or geographical location where the events take place. The use of specific names like Johannesburg and Hillbrow Hospital gives important information to the reader because through them he/she understands the area in which action takes place. Unless a narrator is used, the audience will encounter problems with this information because the areas mentioned are not seen or heard. If the place is not mentioned in the dialogue, as is the case with Johannesburg, a narrator is necessary or a board with the directions indicating that particular space on the stage should be located in a specific city, etc. Hillbrow Hospital in Johannesburg has been selected to confirm that baby Matshediso was born there. Hillbrow Hospital and Johannesburg are therefore signs of reality that help to create an impression of an actual world.

In this play, nine changes of setting are presented. For example:

Kwa ga Tibe.” (ts.5)
(At Tibe's place.)

This information appears eight times in this play. Tibe's place is therefore significant because it is the main locality where events occur. The action starts at this locale and ends there as well.

- Right from the beginning when Matshediso is born, this place is used by Tibe, his mother and Moabi while waiting for the women who took Gadifele to hospital to come back.

- When Tibe rejects Matshediso, he chases the hospital staff away from this place.
- After some arrangements between Tibe's mother and the hospital staff, Matshediso is brought to this locality.
- The failed attempts to kill MmaTibe and Matshediso take place at this locale.
- And lastly, the re-union of Tibe and his family occurs at this place.

In conclusion, Tibe's residence is a place of comfort, warmth, security and family re-union. This place, then, clearly shows that there is no better place than such a home.

Other information regarding space, which is presented in the same way is:

“Kwa ga Ditshele.”

(At Ditshele's place.)

This information appears in the didascalies four times on pages 29, 36, 45 and 58.

Ditshele's place is just as important as Tibe's because had it not been for her, Tibe would not have involved himself in a conflict between good and evil. As Roberts (1992:52) notes “a conflict may not be the opposition of characters, but rather the contrasts between ideas or opinions”. The following emphasizes the importance of Ditshele's residence:

- Although Ditshele's place is depicted as a poverty-stricken locale, Tibe becomes a refugee at this place. This happens when MmaTibe is trying to convince him to accept Matshediso as his daughter. Instead, his uncontrollable emotion, anger, forces him to leave his house for Ditshele's.

- It is at this place that Ditshele and her friend, Moapei, plan Tibe's death. At first, Ditshele thought of hiring people to kill Tibe but Moapei suggested that they poison his food instead.

It is at this locale that Tibe's food is poisoned and again where Manko meets her sudden death after eating that poisoned food.

- And lastly, it is at this place that Ditshele commits suicide after realizing that she killed Manko and that her intention to kill Tibe has been exposed. Everything done at Ditshele's place is unacceptable because it involves wrongdoing. It is for this reason that Ditshele's place is associated with evil.

The above-mentioned spaces clearly indicate that Tibe and Ditshele differ a lot. Tibe's house as depicted by the didascalies and the characters' dialogue, is that of a rich businessman and Ditshele's that of a poor woman. In addition to that Tibe is associated with good while Ditshele is always associated with evil.

In some instances the spatial shift is indicated as follows:

“Mo mmileng kwa Orlando”

(In Orlando street.)

or

“Mo mmileng.”

(In the street.)

Examples that can be cited are also in the didascalies on pages 8, 20, 34 and 54. This type of information is usually presented at the beginning of a new act or scene when new characters are introduced. Such places are public places where there is no privacy because of other people's free movement.

The place is explicitly stated in the didascalies. It does not state the exact location of the action. This situation is only noticed when the curtain opens. For example, “Mommileng” ‘In the street’ on page 36 appears when Moutlwatsi and Ditshele enter the stage.

Whereas the bedroom is a private place, the street as a setting is a public place where characters can freely move about. They publicly do whatever they like and have no reason to hide anything.

Another spatial shift is introduced by spoken localization as outlined in the main text. For example:

“Mmadikgang: Nnyaa, fela rraagwe ngwana yoo o
kwa Wedela Township mo Carletonville.”
(ts.30)

(Mmadikgang: No! but that child’s father is at
Wedela Township, in Carletonville.)

From the above quotation Manko, Ditshele’s daughter, is the child of a single parent. In the dialogue Mmadikgang indicates that Manko’s biological father is in Carletonville. From this information, space does not necessarily have to be reflected in the didascalies but dialogue can also be employed.

It also gives the action a broader resonance – situates it in real space and time and circumstances such as migrant labour. This technique will benefit both the reader and the audience.

As far as the time factor is concerned a combination of different time icons are selected and used. For example, in Act 1, Scene 1 the time reflection in the didascalies is as follows:

“Mo sepetleleng sa Hillbrow kwa Gouteng.

Nako ke 10h30 bosigo.” (ts.1)

(It is in Johannesburg, at Hillbrow Hospital.

The time is 10:30 p.m.)

From the above quotation, the reader is aware of the fact that the scene takes place at night. As the day has passed it indicates that Gadifele did not escape death. During the actual acting time, a ticking wall clock may be used to communicate this. This is a visual technique of describing the time in which the dramatic events take place.

In Act 1, Scene 3, the change in time is indicated in the didascalies in the following manner:

“Mo mmileng kwa Orlando. **Go maitsoa.**” (ts.8)

(In the street at Orlando. **It is in the late afternoon.**)

At this stage the playwright employs the ‘time words or phrase’ technique. This approach clearly indicates that the text is reader-oriented. This can be staged by a change in lighting, for example, or it may be incorporated in the characters’ dialogue, which is not the case here.

Act 3, Scene 1 begins as follows:

“Serala **se tshubilwe ka dipone** tse di bontshang
gore letsatsi le phirimile, ke dipone tsa mebila ya
Soweto.) (ts.34))

(Lighting on stage represents Soweto street lights
after sunset.)

Here lighting effects can be used to express time in a concrete visual form. This technique indicates the time when light is fading and helps to create an illusion of reality on the stage.

Time as an important element should also be considered. In performance it covers at least two temporal levels, namely, acting time and fictional time. Acting time represents the physical time of representation, and fictional time refers to the time of the events portraying a certain crisis in the life of the main character. Irrespective of the length of the fictional time represented, the standard time for performance is normally two to three hours. Keuris (1996:4) describes time in performance as a series of 'nows' because each representation of an event takes place in the present tense. This reveals the difference that exists between drama and other genres, because in prose the events are portrayed as having been completed. Deictic references also appear in the present tense with personal pronouns such as I, you and we.

The acted time which is the fictional time covers five days and is fully controlled by the acting time. All the evil events take place at night. For example, the poisoning of Tibe's food takes place at night. Tibe, Moutlwatsi and Moapei attack MmaTibe at night and Ditshele also commits suicide at night. All the parties mentioned above want to keep what they do a secret.

The above information concerning time and space were taken from the stage directions provided in the text. The stage directions explain the time and the place in which the actors appear. In addition, they show how setting influences the characters decisions, attitudes, habits and their behaviour in general.

3.4 DIDASCALIES, PROPS AND SET

The didascalies covering props and set in a play just like lighting effects in drama create an impression of an actual world on stage.

Sikwane introduces Act 1, Scene 1 by explicitly giving us the following setting in the didascalies:

“Mo seraleng go na le bolao bo go phuthetsweng
moswi ka laakane e tshweu mo go bona. Tafole
ya ngaka e fa gare ga serala mme go beilwe
mabotlolo a ditlhare mo go yona le magare a
karo.” (ts.1)

(On the stage, there is a bed with a corpse lying
in it and it is covered with a white sheet. The
doctor’s table is in the centre of the stage. There
are bottles of medicine and surgical equipment on it.)

The very first thing seen on the stage is someone’s body lying on a bed or a stretcher. This setting becomes very suggestive to the audience/reader. Someone on the bed has died. Morongwa confirms this in the prologue by mentioning that a miracle happened at Hillbrow Hospital. Dr Mosupi and Nurse Kgomotso’s dialogue also confirms that Gadifele was certified dead on arrival at Hillbrow Hospital, but that baby Matshediso’s life was saved by caesarian section. Later, as the events unfold, it is realized that Tibe has become a widower and Matshediso an orphan. In the Setswana culture, Matshediso was supposed to have been taken to a breast-feeding woman in the family, if any, so that she could be breast-fed until ready to eat solid food, but here it was not the case.

When Dr Sebi enters the same hospital ward and notices the condition of the patient as depicted in the above quoted didascalies, he finds himself within a setting that influences him to behave in the way that he does. He furiously attacks Dr Mosupi and Nurse Kgomotso because the corpse is not supposed to be in the ward, but the mortuary. This is also a way of telling the audience that the person is dead.

Later, when he learns the good news of Matshediso's birth, he congratulates them on work well done.

The above-mentioned space with the said stage properties starts the play and indicates the reality of Gadifele's death and allows the audience to see with their own eyes that Matshediso was brought into life – there can be no doubt about her parentage. This is a modern scene with Western medicine. It already emphasizes, the important theme of death. It also gives a modern explanation for Matshediso's birth in contrast to Ditshele's traditional thinking which says that no life can emerge from death. The events then shift to Tibe's house. The arrangement on the stage is in accordance with the opening didascalies as reflected in Act 1, Scene 2

“Mo seraleng go tlhagisitswe phaposi ya boitapoloso.
Go na le disofa tsa mabono tse dikhibidu, thelebišene,
tafole ya galase e go beilweng dinotsididi mo go yōna
le digalase tse tlhano. Thelebišene e a tshameka mme
Tibe o e bogetse le mmaagwe mmogo le Moabi.” (ts.5)

(The scene is a living room.

There are beautiful, red sofas, a television,
a glass top table with some drinks and five
glasses. The television is on. Tibe, his
mother and Moabi are watching it.)

The physical description of the place is given and from the stage properties mentioned, one can deduce the owner's status that of a middle-class man. The stage properties are fully described to create a complete illusion of a real room within the framework of the stage. The luxurious props as indicated in the opening didascalie in Act 1, Scene 2, proves that Tibe has a lot of money. It is not surprising because in the dramatis personae the reader is provided with the information that he is a businessman. This is the reason why he can afford to employ both Ditshele and Madumo.

As indicated in the stage directions, Tibe, his mother and Moabi are waiting for some people because there are five glasses on the tray. They talk little and seem to be restless because they are not sure of what is going to happen. Are the doctors going to deliver a healthy baby? What about the mother? Will she also be healthy after delivery? These are the questions that need answers. But who is in position to answer them? The fact that MmaTibe uses snuff frequently clearly indicates the tense situation in which they are. Later, when Moapei, Mmanoko, Boitopo, Madumo and Ditshele arrive, the audience realizes that the five glasses mentioned above were set for them. The manner in which these ladies enter the room, quietly, with their heads bowed, is suggestive and disturbs the peaceful or rather anxious atmosphere that prevailed. As tension goes up, the music is stopped. Tibe becomes more restless because he is expecting bad news. Gadifele or the baby might be dead. Eventually Boitopo reports that Gadifele has passed away but that baby Matshediso is alive and well.

In scene 3 the events shift from Tibe's home to a certain street in Orlando. This is a place where we find Ditshele alone so that she can reveal her plan to the audience. She swears that Tibe is not going to marry and leave his money to anybody but herself. She says she is the one who helped him gather the wealth he has. Ditshele influences Tibe not to collect the baby from the hospital as agreed upon by Tibe, his mother and the hospital staff. Tibe is influenced and agrees to do that. He does that because he now realizes that he has been exploiting Ditshele, paying her very little. This is the reason why Ditshele is living in such a dilapidated house. Another reason why Ditshele easily influences Tibe is because he is still in grief for Gadifele's death.

In Act 2 the events take place at Tibe's residence.

“Mo seraleng go tlhagisitswe phaposiboitapoloso.
Go tsena Tibe, Boitopo, Modirediloago, MmaTibe
le Moabi.” (ts.15)

(On stage a living room is depicted. Tibe, Boitopo, a social worker, Tibe's mother and Moabi enter the room.)

The room depicted on stage is the same room that was presented in Act 1, Scene 2. At this point the audience is interested in hearing what Tibe is going to say when he meets the social worker. As he is convinced that Matshediso is not his child (cf. didascalies and characters), he chases everybody away and remains with his mother. Ditshele arrives and when she decides to leave, Tibe follows her and leaves the old woman alone.

The events shift from Tibe's place to a certain street in Orlando. This is in accordance with the didascalies in Act 2, Scene 2.

“Mo seraleng go tlhagisitswe jarata ya ga Moabi ntlo e le kgakajana. Boitopo o eme le Moapei.” (ts. 20).

(On the stage Moabi's yard is depicted with a house at a distance. Boitopo is with Moapei.)

The playwright is not realistic with the setting depicted above. The stage is a very small locality. Therefore, it is going to be difficult to depict Moabi's yard with a house located a distance away on it. To make it stageable, the producer needs to complement it with relevant visual designs.

The events shift back to Tibe's house with the same stage props and set as depicted in the didascalies in Act 1, Scene 2. This time MmaTibe is alone thinking about Matshediso. She wishes that Tibe would change his mind and go and collect the baby. While she is talking to herself, Dr Mosupi and Nurse Kgomotso arrive with Matshediso in Kgomotso's arms. MmaTibe accepts the baby and requests Dr Mosupi to phone Tibe at his shop. Tibe picks up the phone but when he realizes that he is talking to Dr Mosupi he drops it. Tibe's action shows that he does not want to hear anything from the hospital staff.

The events then shift to Ditshele's house. Every time that this happens, the events take place either in her bedroom or in her kitchen cum dining room. For example:

- (i) "Serala se bontsha karolo ya phaposiborobalo ya ga Ditshele. Go na le bolao, seipone se segolo, setulo le otoropo e e letlhekge." (ts.29)

(On the stage there is Ditshele's bedroom. There is a bed, a big mirror, a chair and an old wardrobe.)

- (ii) "Mo seraleng go tlhagisitswe phaposi e nngwe ya tsa ntlo ya ga Ditshele. Go na le ditulo tse di matlhekge le tafole e e robegileng leoto le lengwe." (ts.36)

(On the stage there is one of Ditshele's rooms with some old chairs and a wobbly table with a broken leg.)

- (iii) "Mo seraleng go tlhagisitswe phaposi ya borobalo. Go na le bolao, setulo, otoropo e e onetseng le seipone se kgomareditswe mo leboteng." (ts.43)

(On the stage there is a bedroom. There is a bed, a chair, an old wardrobe and a mirror stuck to the wall.)

Immediately after the didascalies (ii) above, Moapei comments on Ditshele's delapidated furniture. She urges her to do something about it, i.e. throw it away and buy new, modern furniture. As Ditshele's friend, she knows that Ditshele is in love with Tibe; therefore money would not be a problem.

The above-mentioned quotations reflect the kind of dwelling and the type of furniture Ditshele has – her surroundings create the impression of being shabby and dilapidated. The stage props and set reflect her status, that of a poor woman. She cannot afford to buy new or better-looking furniture. The mirror, which is depicted in didascalies (i) and (ii) above, reveals the type of person she is - an ageing woman who still wants to look young and desirable. The mirror in the didascalies is a symbol for this. The bedroom, unlike the dining room, is a private place and Ditshele should use the mirror in it to reflect her life.

As the events unfold, Tibe's kitchen is depicted. It is in accordance with the didascalies in Act 2, scene 6.

“Mo seraleng go tlhagelela MmaTibe a apeile
motogo wa ngwana a mmelege. Raka ya digalase
e fa thoko ga ditulo tse tharo tsa khitshi.” (ts.31)

(On the stage there is Tibe's mother with the baby
on her back. She is busy preparing soft porridge for
the baby. There is a kitchen cupboard with crockery
displayed and next to it three chairs.)

The details given in the above-mentioned stage setting provide the audience/reader with clues about MmaTibe's nature and history. She is alone in this dwelling and has nobody to attend to the baby while she prepares its food.

As an upright and caring character, she has to see to it that the baby gets something to eat. On the other hand, this situation creates a sad atmosphere, which leads the audience to empathize with her.

In Act 3, Scene 3, Boitopo and Moabi's living room is depicted with four chairs, a table, a telephone and a radio. This room belongs to a middle-class family who are true friends and neighbours to MmaTibe. During MmaTibe's difficult times when Tibe wanted to kill

her and Matshediso, Boitopo and Moabi try to bring MmaTibe and Matshediso to their place for safety. MmaTibe refuses and only Matshediso is allowed to go with Moabi's family.

The events then shift to Ditshele's house. We now find her in her kitchen preparing meals. As indicated in the didascalies in Act 4, Scene 1 (p.45), this is the moment when she poisons Tibe's food. She is directly influenced by the state of poverty she finds herself in. She thinks if she manages to kill him, she will be able to inherit all his belongings. This information is revealed in the dialogue between Ditshele and Moapei in Sikwane (1993:37). Ditshele tells Moapei that Tibe promised her his inheritance. She is very stupid to think this way or to believe in this because she is not yet married to Tibe. The decision she makes helps develop the plot to its climax. It intensifies the conflict and generates suspense in the audience.

There is a strong contrast between the spaces on page 31 and page 45 respectively, where MmaTibe is preparing soft porridge for Matshediso and where Ditshele is poisoning Tibe's food. The first mentioned didascalies indicate cooking to give life and the latter cooking to destroy life.

The scene next shifts to Tibe's shop. The arrangement of the stage is according to the didascalies in Act 4, Scene 3.

“Mo seraleng go tlhagisitswe ofisi. Go na le ditulo
tse pedi, thelefono, dibuka mo godimo ga tafole le
motšhini o o tlanyang.” (ts.49)

(On the stage there is an office with two chairs, a telephone,
some books on the table and a typewriter.)

The type of table mentioned in the didascalies above, as indicated by the playwright on the same page, has two drawers - one for the gun and the other one for the three bullets.

The playwright proceeds by using the stage directions to bring about characterization without dialogue but through gestural activities. Tibe takes out the gun, polishes it, then the three bullets, places them on the table and stares at them as if he wants to discuss the killing with them. The telephone is the one which Tibe used at the time when Dr Mosupi was delivering Matshediso at Tibe's place.

The events next shift to Tibe's place. This is the moment when Tibe is going to carry out his plan. His mother is lying in her bed. Before he shoots her, Ditshele is forced to return home because Moapei informs her that she found Manko lying dead at Ditshele's house. This is after eating the poisoned food that was meant for Tibe. According to the stage props and set as depicted in Act 4, Scene 6, the food that killed Manko was in her mother's kitchen.

In Act 4, Scene 6 the events shift to Ditshele's place.

“Kwa ga Ditshele. Mo seraleng go tlhagisitswe
phaposiboapeelo ya ntlo. Go na le setofo, tafole,
raka le ditulo. Ngwana wa ga Ditshele o rapame fale.
Pitsa ya nama le ya bogobe di khuromolotswe mme
sejana se mo godimo ga tafole.” (ts.58)

(At Ditshele's place. There is her kitchen on the stage.
Inside there is a stove, a table, kitchen cupboard and chairs.
Ditshele's child is lying there. Uncovered saucepans for
meat and porridge are on the stove and a dish on top of the
table.)

The description of the place with the stage properties mentioned reveals what led to Manko's death, that is, poisoned meat and porridge. Later, Ditshele kills herself by eating the remaining piece of poisoned meat. Her evil doings separate her from Tibe and this leads to the reunion of Tibe and his family.

The main settings and the events can be summarized as in table 3.4.1

TABLE 3.4.1

A SUMMARY OF THE MAIN SETTINGS AND EVENTS OF *MATSHEDISO*

ACT	SCENE	SETTING	MAIN EVENTS
1	1	Hillbrow Hospital.	Confirmation of Gadifele's death and Matshediso's birth.
	2	Tibe's living room.	Tibe, Moabi and MmaTibe are waiting for the women who took Gadifele to the hospital.
	3	A street in Orlando	(i) Tibe collects Ditshele from this place and drives her home. (ii) Ditshele advises Tibe not to collect baby Matshediso from the hospital. She emphasizes that no dead woman can give birth to a baby.
2	1	Tibe's living room.	Tibe refuses to sign Matshediso's custody forms brought by the social worker and chases her away.
	2	Moabi's yard and his house a distance away.	Boitopo and Moapei are at the gate chatting about Tibe and Ditshele's love.
	3	In the street.	Moutlwatsi, Ditshele and Tibe agree that Ditshele is the right woman to be married to Tibe. When they separate, Boitopo, Mmanoko and Mmadikgang discuss Tibe and Ditshele's marriage. Manko, Ditshele's child out of wedlock, is also part of the discussion.
	4	Tibe's living room.	(i) MmaTibe is alone and bitter because Tibe refuses to accept Matshediso as his daughter. (ii) Dr Mosupi and Nurse Kgomotso bring

			Matshediso home.
	5	Ditshela's bedroom.	Tibe enters and finds Ditshela busy applying cosmetics to her face.
	6	Tibe's kitchen.	MmaTibe prepares soft porridge to feed Matshediso.
3	1	In the street.	Tibe and Ditshela discuss their marriage in front of Moutlwatsi. Tibe promises to marry her.
	2	Ditshela's kitchen cum dining room.	Ditshela tells Moapei about Tibe's intention to kill MmaTibe and Matshediso so as to feel free to marry her.
	3	Moabi's living room	(i) Boitopo and her husband, Moabi, look well after Matshediso. (ii) Moutlwatsi, accompanied by Moapei, informs Moabi's family that Tibe is preparing himself to kill both MmaTibe and Matshediso in the evening.
	4	Ditshela's bedroom.	Ditshela plans to kill Tibe after he has killed his family members.
4	1	Ditshela's kitchen.	Ditshela poisons Tibe's food.
	2	Social worker's office.	(i) The social worker receives a phone call from sergeant reporting Tibe's intention to kill MmaTibe and Matshediso as Moutlwatsi, in Act 3, Scene 3 has indicated. (ii) The social worker is accompanied by her colleagues and two police officers to Tibe's house to save MmaTibe and Matshediso from the killers.
	3	Tibe's office at his shop.	Tibe is busy with the final preparations to kill his mother and Matshediso.

4	Tibe's house and MmaTibe's bedroom.	(i) Moabi and his wife, Boitopo, plead with MmaTibe to relocate her together with Matshediso to their house for safety.
5	In the street near Tibe's house.	(i) It is at night and Tibe, Ditshele, Moutlwatsi and Moapei are on their way to kill MmaTibe and the baby. (ii) Gun shots.
6	Tibe's house	(i) MmaTibe is in a pool of blood, but alive. (ii) Tibe, Moutlwatsi and Moapei got what they wanted. They are hand cuffed.
7	Ditshele's kitchen	(i) Manko lies dead after eating Tibe's poisoned food. (ii) Ditshele commits suicide.
8	MmaTibe's bedroom in Tibe's house.	MmaTibe survives gun shot wounds and is being treated by the hospital staff.
9	Tibe's house.	(i) Morongwa's epilogue. He is scolding Tibe for not accepting Matshediso as his child. (ii) Tibe regrets his wrong doings and accepts Matshediso as his consolation and comfort.

From the above table, meaningful information can be derived. For example, the hospital is a private yet a public space. It is again a space of death and yet of life. One may also argue that there are spaces that are in opposition to others. While Moabi and his wife are concerned with the safety of MmaTibe and the baby, Ditshele, Moapei and Moutlwatsi want them dead. Tibe's kitchen is opposed to Ditshele's kitchen. MmaTibe uses the kitchen to save Matshediso's life and Ditshele uses hers for Tibe's death. Ditshele, who advises Tibe not to collect the baby from the hospital is in opposition with Tibe who at the end accepts Matshediso and rejoices that she brought comfort to his family. In conclusion, it can also be argued that the name Ditshele (One who causes a rift between Tibe and his mother) is in contrast with Matshediso (one who comforts Tibe and MmaTibe).

In the next sub-section the dramatic text, performance and didascalies will be dealt with.

3.5 DRAMATIC TEXT, PERFORMANCE AND DIDASCALIES

Every drama is written with the purpose that it should be performed – be it on stage, radio, television or film. In the case of a stage play, certain elements are necessary to accelerate its transition from a text to performance. The text and the didascalies have to be interpreted by the actors and the technicians under the guidance of the director. Verbal signs have to be translated into a complex sign system of spoken words, costumes, lighting, gestures to assist with the characters' traits and actions on the stage.

It is important to consider space as an important prerequisite for a performance. This space should be common to both the audience and the actors. It should also provide sitting accommodation for the audience, and a stage or the platform for the actors. Selected stage props and set such as furniture, lighting equipment to focus the attention on the stage and acoustics to help the actors to be heard are important. Finally, this space according to Keuris (1996:4) may be referred to as the 'here' because it implies the locality, which is seen right in front of the audience.

In conclusion, the above discussion reveals that when the representation of events takes place in front of the audience, the events will be easily remembered and the audience will gain more knowledge from what they see.

3.6 PRACTICAL CONSTRAINTS ON PERFORMANCE

Firstly, the events have to take place within a certain "frame" that is a hall or an auditorium. As the spatial 'frame' has to accommodate both the actors and spectators, its size has to be considered. The play needs décor during the presentation and as sets are expensive it is advisable to use only a few.

In addition, the erection and the dismantling of each set of décor prescribed for every locality specified are time-consuming and therefore need careful consideration.

The length and the sequence of the events have to be considered. The events have to be stageable, and the sequence is influenced by the time available for staging. As Roberts (1991:52) states, “the use of chronological order is important not because of one thing happening after another, but because it happens because of another.” The time, which is described in visual or auditive manner, should not be longer than two to three hours because the audience cannot remain sitting for a long time.

There is also a limitation to the portrayal of characters. The stage does not have room for too many actors. Therefore the numbers of the characters on stage should be kept to a minimum. The entrances and the exits should clearly announce the commencement or the conclusion of a particular event. It is important for the audience to hear every word spoken by the characters on stage. Visibility is also very important because the audience wants to see each member of the cast on the stage. In conclusion the space and time shifts should be kept to a minimum because time is limited and the audience has to be attentive all the time. They should not be bored.

In the following chapter, suggested guidelines for the performance of *Matshediso* will be provided.

CHAPTER 4: THE PERFORMANCE OF *MATSHEDISO*

This chapter is devoted to two important points mentioned in the analysis of didascalies in *Matshediso* as indicated in the previous sections. These are: Firstly, the question of what makes *Matshediso* a play that can be performed on the stage. The second concerns the guidelines for directing or producing the play on the stage so as to yield an acceptable response from the audience. But before these are dealt with in more detail, it is imperative to give a fully-rounded interpretation of the play as a basis for these guidelines.

4.1 INTEGRATED INTERPRETATION OF THE PLAY

Matshediso, in which the dominant conflict is that of good against evil, can be classified as a satirical play. The author uses humour and ridicule to expose and criticize people's vices. Subjects of ridicule here are Tibe and Ditshele and this is clarified by their acts of stupidity and senseless decisions, which gain them more scorn than pity. The scorn and sarcasm surrounding the events of the whole play are also voiced in Morongwa's songs with which he opens and closes the production. (cf. The role played by Morongwa on pages 38-40 of the present study.)

Tibe is the main character; a middle-class married man who owns a shop, a car, and a comfortable well-furnished house, which he shares with his pregnant wife, Gadifele, and his aged mother, MmaTibe. From the didascalies "Tibe a leba tshupanako ya gagwe;" (ts.12.) (Tibe looks at his wrist watch.)(p.12) and "A ntsha sakatuku mo kgwatlheng a mina;"(ts.12)(He takes out a handkerchief from his pocket to blow his nose.)(p.12) it can be deduced that he also dresses well and neatly. To support him morally are his family friends, Moabi and his wife, Boitopo. They lead a simple, peaceful, conservative life, and they are concerned with the well-being of Tibe's child as well as his mother, MmaTibe.

The play starts in the hospital ward with the body of Gadifele lying on a bed covered with a shroud. Boitopo, a neighbour Mmanoko, has taken her to Hillbrow Hospital; Ditshele, who is a female employee at Tibe's shop, Madumo, Tibe's second employee, and Moapei, Ditshele's best friend. Unfortunately, because of undiagnosed complications related to pregnancy, Gadifele is certified dead on arrival. Before transferring her to the hospital mortuary, the doctor in charge, Dr Mosupi, assisted by Nurse Kgomotso, checks the body. His discovery, namely, that an unborn baby is still alive in the dead woman's body, turns out to be the basis of the conflict of the play, as it shall be revealed later. Dr Mosupi's senior, Dr Sebi, who is shocked to find a body and a surgical equipment in the ward is gratified by Dr Mosupi's report:

“Fa ke mo tlhoma ditshipi, ka utlwa pelo ya
ngwana e santse e thebatheba mo mpeng ya
moswi. Ka pholosa ngwana yoo. Fa o ka ya
kwa Ward 4, o tla fitlhela sefontlha...”(ts. 3)

(As I examined the body, I heard the baby's
heartbeat inside the deceased's tummy. I then
saved that baby. If you go to Ward 4, you
will find a big bouncing baby...)

The baby born is a girl and is named Matshediso, the name meaning “the bearer of comfort” or “symbol of consolation”. She is given this name because her arrival is said to console and comfort the family for the grief of losing Gadifele. Indeed, the news of her birth brings joy to all, including Tibe.

While MmaTibe and the family friends await the arrival of Matshediso from the hospital with open hearts at home, a dramatic change of events occurs. Tibe, misled and convinced by Ditshele's false interpretation of facts, suddenly refuses to accept the baby as his own. She made him believe that a dead woman cannot give birth to a living baby, hence his statement to MmaTibe:

“Mma, fa e le gore ngwana yole ke wa me,
mmaagwe o a tshela. Fa mmaagwe a sa tshela,
ga se wa me.” (p.15)

(Mother, if that baby is really mine, then her mother
is alive. But if its mother is not alive, then it is not
my child.)

Ditshela is not married but has a daughter, Manko. The description of her dwelling place in the didascalies namely: “go na le bolao, seipone se segolo, setulo le otoropo ya letlhekge” (ts.29) (there is a bed, a big mirror, a chair and an old dilapidated wardrobe) and “ ... Go na le ditulo tse di matlhekge le tafole e e robegileng leoto le lengwe”. (ts.36) (There are worn out chairs and an old table without one leg) indicates her state of poverty. She now sees Gadifele’s death as an opportunity for her to escape poverty by getting married to Tibe. Desperate to become Tibe’s only partner and beneficiary, she starts off by eliminating all that she conceives as obstructions to her intended comfort. Firstly, she convinces Tibe that Matshediso is not his child. She claims that Matshediso is an orphan whom the doctors, nurses and the social worker at the hospital would like Tibe to raise because he is rich. This she does so that Matshediso can be abandoned, and for Manko to be the only heir. Secondly, with her rude behaviour, she creates a rift between MmaTibe and her son, Tibe, and encourages Tibe to move out of the house and stay with her. Thirdly, she supports and encourages Tibe who is angered by his mother, to shoot and kill her and the child. She claims that they are obstacles to his happiness and freedom. All these she does with the intention to get him to bequeath everything to herself and her daughter.

The night on which Tibe was to kill MmaTibe and Matshediso, Ditshela, overcome by greed, devises another evil plan, with the help of her closest friend, Moapei, and that is: poisoning Tibe’s food. He was to eat this meal before he commits the two murders so that he dies of food poisoning later. Unfortunately, innocent Manko who was ironically sent by Ditshela to call Tibe for the fatal dinner, ends up being a victim of her mother’s

evil deeds. While Tibe, Ditshele and Moutlwatsi are at the site of the supposed killing, Moapei comes to call Ditshele and informs her about Manko's death. Grieving for her child, Ditshele rushes home and starts eating the same poisoned food that caused Manko's death.

In the meantime, another drama takes place at Tibe's house. Doctors, a nurse, a social worker and police officers were all on guard against anything happening at Tibe's house. The two-faced character Moutlwatsi, who is Tibe's confidant, but also a loyal informer for the good and law-abiding side, has divulged the information about the intended killings. It is for this reason that Moabi and his wife, Boitopo, had taken Matshediso, who has been in Mmatibe's custody, to a safe place. Tibe goes into the house and fires two shots. He rushes out to his accomplices at the meeting spot, a darkly lit street corner rejoicing that he had shot and killed the old lady. The police, who have already arrested Moutlwatsi and Moapei, confront him. As he is being arrested, he repeatedly mentions that he did everything on Ditshele's order.

The events now shift to Ditshele's house where she is to be apprehended. Accompanied by the police, Moapei and Tibe who are already arrested plead with her to open the door but she refuses saying that she is killing herself. She is busy eating the poisoned meat. By the time the police forcefully gain entry to the apartment, Ditshele has already died. At the end of the play, Tibe confesses that Ditshele, now dead, influenced him to do evil. He is relieved that his mother is not dead, but was only wounded in the shoulder. The following statement to his daughter expresses his relief as well as his regrets:

“...kgorogo ya gago mo lefatsheng e dirile
gore ke gobatse mmê! Fela ke ikgomotsa ka
gore ke go amogetse jaaka ngwanake, e bile
mme ga a swa.” (ts.64)

(Your arrival here on earth caused me to injure my mother! But my comfort is that I have accepted you as my child, and that my mother is not dead.)

As mentioned earlier, *Matshediso* undoubtedly contains more elements of humour than seriousness. Most sections of the scenes are really comical and humorous either as a result of the appearance of characters, or because of the utterances they make. Another factor which contributes to humour as Abrams (1988:198) points out, is the characters' mode of behaviour. For example, Morongwa's behaviour and appearance are ridiculous. In both the epilogue and the prologue of the play, he is described as:

“O mokhutshwane, o apere sutu e ntsho le hempe e tshweu. Dimpa tsa gagwe di matogo, O rwele kepele e ntsho e sotlhometse mo tlhogong. A ema a ingwaya dimpa a lebile babogedi.” (ts.63)

(He is short, wearing a black suit with a white shirt. The tummy is abnormally big and protruding. He has a loose fitting black cap which covers all his head and forehead. He keeps on rubbing his tummy while facing the audience.)

This description of Morongwa befits that of a clown. His movement around the stage and his rubbing of his big tummy are already comical actions which elicit laughter from the audience. His behaviour, too, is absurd. In the first scene of the first Act, page 1, his singing is interrupted by the arrival of Dr Sebi who subsequently asks him whether he, Morongwa, completed the errands assigned to him. Instead of responding to Dr Sebi, he does something out of the ordinary as can be seen in the following didascalies.

“Morongwa a tswa a sa mo fetola.” (ts 1)

(Morongwa leaves without responding.)

Another example of a humorous scene is Act 4, scene 6, and pages 58-59 (see below). This is supposed to be a serious and tragic scene where Ditshele is aggrieved by her child's death, and is about to commit suicide herself. But the arrival of the police and the suspects, Tibe, Moutlwatsi and Moapei, turns the action into something more comical than painful.

DITSHELE: (A ntse a lela) O mang!
Ke mo khutsafalong!

(While she is crying) Who are you!
I am in deep sorrow!

SERESANTA: Bula, ke mapodisi!

Open, it is the police!

TIBE: (Ka letshogo) Bu bu ...bu...bula
Ditshele moratiwa.
Mme o sule jaanong ke tshwerwe.

(In shock) O- o- o – open
Ditshele darling.
My mother is dead, and now I have been
arrested.

DITSHELE: (A garoga pelo) Iyoo!
Ke a utlwa!

(A ja nama ya botlhole)
 (Exclaimed with shock) Oh!
 That's news!
 (She eats the poisoned meat)

SERESANTA: (Ka bogale) Bula! Bula!

(Mmino wa tshamekela kwa tlase)

(Angrily) Open! Open!

(Music plays softly.)

DITSHELE: (A hupile nama) Ngwanake o sule,
 O bolailwe ke dijo tse ke di jang.
 Le nna ke a ipolaya!
 Ke ipolaya ka go di ja!

(With a chunk of meat in her mouth)

My child is dead

She was killed by the food I am eating.

I am therefore killing myself!

I am killing myself by eating the same
 food!)

SERESANTA: Bula! Kana o re diile!
 A o batla gore ke thube lebati le?
 Bula!

(Mmino wa tswelela)

Open! You are really wasting our time!
Do you want me to break this door?
Open!

(Music continues)

TIBE:

O se ka wa ipolaya, Ditshele
Nte ke ba neye bopaki o le teng.
O tla ipolaya morago!

Do not kill yourself now Ditshele.
Wait till I give them all the evidence in your
presence, you can kill yourself later.

MOAPEI:

Ditshele, bula tlhe re ngometswe ka ditshipi!

Ditshele please open the door. We are
handcuffed.

DITSHELE

(O ntse a ja) Ga ke le bulele.
Ke ja se se bolaileng ngwanake pele ke bula!
Ke ne ke batla go bolaya Tibe fa a fetsa go
bolaya mmaagwe le Matshediso.
Ngwanake, ngwanake o sule.
Ngwanake o sule,
Tibe loso, loso ...

(Mmino wa ya kwa godimo)

- GARETENE -

(Busy eating)

No, I will not let you in.

I eat what killed my child before I open!

My intention was to kill Tibe

after he murdered his mother and

Matshediso.

Now my child, my child is dead.

Tibe, I see death, death ...

(Music goes up)

- CURTAIN -

In the events preceding this scene, Ditshele is in high spirits thinking that she is about to inherit everything that Tibe owns after everybody (MmaTibe, Matshediso and Tibe) are dead. It becomes humorous to the audience when her hypocrisy about her love for Tibe is exposed by Manko's death. Her own evil doing suddenly shatters her anticipation of good fortune. Again, a person in grief would not announce so loudly and in such an unbecoming manner with food in her mouth if not to evoke laughter from the audience. Tibe, seeing nothing wrong in a person killing herself only if she could do that after giving the needed evidence, is also absurd and ridiculous.

Also prominent in *Matshediso* is the use of music and the beating of drums to support the progression of the play. The different uses as well as the importance of music in *Matshediso* are explained in subsection 4.2.4 – of this study.

The vivid activities of actors portrayed in the interpretation above, clearly indicate that *Matshediso* can be performed on stage, even though the play is not based on the events of an actual story, but represents imagined issues of life created by the author. This is confirmed by Sikwane (1990:v) with the following didascalia in the prefatory section:

“...Ditiragalo le tsona ga se tse di kileng tsa diragalela mongwe

yo mokwadi a mo itseng kgotsa a utlwetseng ka ga gagwe.”

(...The events are also fictitious, and have never happened to anybody known to the author, or heard of by the author.)

The fact that *Matshediso* centres on imagined issues and fictitious events create a great challenge to the producers or directors thereof. The challenge they face is that of giving life to the author’s imagination, that is, a good stage production which will make the play acceptable and convincing to the audience.

Explicit directives, which constantly make the presence of the audience felt, are also indications that *Matshediso* is a play that is meant for the stage. Some examples may be found in the following:

Act 1, Scene 1: “A ethimola a lebile **babogedi.**” (ts.2)
 (She sneezes while looking at the **audience.**)

This refers to Nurse Kgomotso who is speaking to Doctor Sebi next to Gadifele’s corpse.

Act 1, Scene 1: “A bona ba mo furaletse ba lebile **babogedi**” (ts.4)
 (He was facing their backs, as they were looking at the **audience.**)

After Dr Sebi looked closely at the corpse, he is said to have looked at the audience as if to get their opinion.

Act 1, Scene 2: “A bua a supa **babogedi**, a ba supa ka menwana.” (ts.7)
 (She speaks while pointing fingers at the **audience.**)

This refers to Tibe’s mother who was worried about her son not accepting his newly born baby.

Act 1 Scene 3: “A leba **babogedi.**” (ts.13)

(He looks at the **audience**.)

This refers to Tibe when Ditshele convinces him that baby Matshediso may not be his. He is looking at the audience as representatives of the society in general and it is as if to urge them to agree with him.

Act 4 Scene 1: “...A leba **babogedi** e kete o batla go bua...” (ts.45)
 (She looks at the **audience** as though she wanted
 to say something ...)

This is when Ditshele is busy adding poison to the cooked meat with the intention of killing Tibe. She is pointing a finger at the audience as if she is warning them not to tell anyone about her intentions and to involve them in the action.

The function of the above references to the audience is to emphasize the fact that the audience is part of the performance. The audience, therefore, should be stimulated to be attentive and to watch the play with interest. As this occurs, it will help them to understand the play better.

The presence of the audience in this play indicates that *Matshediso* is not only a drama whose performance is limited to play house theatre but may also be staged in any large room or hall where the actors and the audience could sit in a common area.

Although the didascalies in *Matshediso* offer guidelines for the performance of the play, there are those that confirm Shole's (1988: 231) view that they often make the play very difficult to stage because what they demand cannot be depicted on stage. For example:

“mo seraleng go tlhagisitswe jarata ya ga Moabi, ntlo e
 le kgakajana. Boitopo o eme le Moapei [kwa hekeng]”.
 (Act 2, Scene 2) (ts.20)

(On the stage appears Moabi's yard, his house at a
 distance. Boitopo is standing chatting to Moapei

[at the gate].)

In this regard, the performance of the play relies on the producer or the director of the play who will then bring in other visual signs to complement those that cannot be depicted on stage. In doing so, the text of the play as well as the magnetism of the performance will not be diminished.

The questions to be asked now are: How then will *Matshedis* be performed on stage? Can guidelines be formulated for the performance of *Matshedis*? Can *Matshedis* be presented to an audience at a particular place and time? To answer these questions, guidelines for the performance will be suggested in the next section. These guidelines are based on the foregoing analysis of the didascalies.

4.2 GUIDELINES

4.2.1 Stage setting

The importance of didascalies in the setting of the stage for a play cannot be over-emphasized because the actors' movements and their pace as well as the course and the coherence of a play are all keyed to the setting. The style of the play, referring to its mood or spirit, and to what extent it appears real to the audience, depends on the stage designed according to the specifications indicated by the didascalies. In other words, the stage and its shape are of vital importance to the production of the play.

Since a play or stage drama demands 'truthfulness', it is important that realistic visual details such as special decorations, real or specially designed furniture, models and accessories be prepared for the stage. Care must also be exercised that these visual details are light enough to be brought in and cleared off the stage easily and quickly between scenes.

In the production of *Matshedis*, the stage settings designed by the use of the didascalies are hereby suggested for different localities portrayed. A point to be noted, though, is

that the scenes indicated here differ from those that Sikwane has demarcated in *Matshediso*.

Here, each time a curtain is raised and the locality and the actors are changed, I have classified it as a scene. This accounts for the fact that, in some instances, reference will be made to scenes not corresponding to the original text. Therefore there are more scenes referred to here. These are:

(i) Tibe's living room (For Act 1, Scene 2, Act 2, Scenes 1 and 4).

- Red upholstered sofas and small foot mats, seaters to face audience.
- A glass-top coffee table to hold a tray with five glasses and a softdrink bottle.
- Television with interior antenna, on a wooden box.
- Small side table with telephone placed on a thick telephone directory.

The arrangement of the stage is in accordance with the opening directives (p.5) where Tibe's living room is explained in detail.

The following dialogue explains the presence of the telephone and the telephone book in Tibe's house:

“Ngaka Mosupi: (A tsaya mogala). Nomoro ya gagwe ke mang?
Moutlwatsi: Ke dumela gore e teng mo bukeng e e foo
eo.” (ts. 28)

(Dr Mosupi: (Picking the telephone) What is your number?
Moutlwatsi: I believe it can be found in that book.)

This conversation took place in Tibe's house when Dr Mosupi needed to contact him (Tibe) at work.

(ii) MmaTibe's bedroom in Tibe's house. (Act 4, Scenes 4 and 7)

- A bed made up with white sheets and blankets to indicate the comfort of Tibe's place.
- White sheets will be sprinkled with red liquid in readiness for gunshot wounds to conform to the didascalies on page 60.
- Small side table with a handkerchief and a tin of snuff. MmaTibe uses snuff to calm herself (cf. didascalies page 60).
- One chair with a towel and a small rug, which she uses to carry Matshediso on her back. (Introductory didascalies on page 31)
- A washbasin. (cf. didascalies on p.60 where a wash basin and a towel will be needed to clean MmaTibe's gunshot wounds).

(iii) Tibe's kitchen (Act 2, last scene)

The stage here is arranged according to the opening directives (p.31) where MmaTibe, with Matshediso on her back, is cooking soft porridge.

- A small modern electric stove with two pots on it.
- A wooden table with four chairs.
- A long white cupboard with crockery displayed.
- Cooking utensils and an open packet of any brand of maize meal for the soft porridge that is being cooked.
- One feeding bottle with milk just to indicate the presence of the baby in the house.

(iv) Tibe's office at his shop. (Act 4, Scene 3.)

- A small, oak office desk or table with two drawers and two chairs.
- A typewriter on one side of the table and on the other side, a telephone on a thick telephone directory.
- Papers and files on a table.

The setup of the office mentioned above has been explained in detail in Act 4, Scene 3 (p.49). The office desk as mentioned, needs to have two drawers; one will have to contain a 'gun' and the other, a box of 'bullets'.

(v) Hospital ward. (Act1, Scene 1)

- A woman's body lying on a bed and covered with a white sheet.
Again, since Gadifele's body is never uncovered, any of the female actors may assume the role or a doll may be used.
- A table/box covered with a white piece of cloth and operating instruments placed so as to be seen by the audience.
- Two large posters on Pregnancy themes. A movable screen half-way unfolded.
- A wall clock.

The set is in accordance with the didascalies in act 1 Scene 1 (p.1), except for the posters, which are added, to signify that the scene portrayed has to do with childbirth.

(vi) Ditshele's kitchen `cum` dining room. (Act 3, Scene 2, and Act 4, Scenes 1 and 6).

The directives for Ditshele's house give a picture of shabby and dilapidated dwelling place, which can be portrayed by the following:

- Old wobbly table, four chairs, one with one broken leg. (p.36)
- An old cupboard with cups, some without handles. (p.45)
- Saucepans with soot deposits outside to indicate that she has been using an old coal cooking stove. (p.45)

(vii) Ditshele's bedroom. (Act 2, Scene 5 and Act 3, Scene 4.) According to the didascalies on page 29, the bedroom is not neat and attractive:

- A worn-out bed with a bright coloured bedspread and a foot mat.
- An old wardrobe, full of clothes, with doors that do not close properly.
- A big mirror on a cabinet, tilted against the wall.
- A variety of cosmetics, some of which she will have to apply to her face.

(viii) Moabi's living room. (Act 3, Scene 3)

As mentioned earlier, Moabi and his wife, Boitopo, are humble and loving people.

Therefore, their abode described in page 40 reflects those personality traits:

- A good dining table draped with a neat tablecloth and four chairs.
- A small table next to the sofa, on top a small radio and a telephone.

(ix) Social worker's office. (Act 4, Scene 2.)

- Office desk/table with books and files piled on top.
- Three chairs and a wastepaper basket.
- Telephone on the side.
- Posters of Anti-stress and of Anti-child abuse. Although this is not mentioned in any didascalies, its display here will be relevant and effective. It is here in the social worker's office that the resumption of Matshediso's case is discussed.

4.2.2 The characters/actors

For the parts they play, actors should be selected or made up to suit the ages they represent. In general, characters carry the message of the text; therefore they must be carefully selected. To be able to portray *Matshediso*, all must

- (i) have good voices, be able to act and eloquent in speech so as to be heard by the farthest member of the audience;
- (ii) exhibit an ability to interact with other characters and with the audience, that is, they must not be plot devices or a merely mouthpieces of the author. Interaction

may be by way of eye contact or rhetorical questions, and all done for the development of the theme;

- (iii) be highly imaginative, in other words, they must be able to imagine even fictitious situations, which the text and didascalies demand. For example, the role of Moutlwatsi, who supports and encourages Tibe to kill his mother and child, but who, at the same time, is very kind and warns Tibe's mother about Tibe's intentions, needs a highly imaginative actor to play the double character effectively. In regard to Moutlwatsi's behaviour, Portnoy (1991:15) asserts that "on the one hand the character has a proper façade, on the other hand, she obviously has another side to her personality. Like most people in life who are complex, she can act one way one moment and be an entirely different person at another moment";
- (iv) be able to exhibit patterns of behaviour that are not naturally theirs. In other words, they must act in a manner that will convince the audience of the situations and the people they are portraying. For example, the role of Ditshele, an evil and selfish woman, needs an actor who will develop to a state of being hated by the audience; and
- (v) in the case of character 'Morongwa', a good singer who can capture the attention of the audience is needed. Morongwa has been presented as a singing bystander who expresses messages through his songs as seen in the opening scene of Act 1, page 1 and at the conclusion pages 63-64.

4.2.3 Dialogue

Like the actors who are important on stage, dialogue or dramatic speech too is a primary factor in a stage play. Without dialogue, there can be no characterization or plot; and in the second instance dialogue is the vehicle through which the actors can interpret the author's message for the audience. Actors need to be urged to speak fluently, eloquently

and as audible as possible. They should speak at a reasonable tempo and should not interrupt one another unnecessarily because every spoken word contributes to the development of the plot.

Of importance, however, is to note that not all dialogue appearing in the text, has to be uttered in the foreground. For the performance of *Matshediso* some sections of dialogue in the following acts and scenes, must be in the background and not in the foreground:

- Act 2, Scene 4 (p.28-29)
People on the foreground are Dr Mosupi, Nurse Kgomotso, Moutlwatsi and MmaTibe. Therefore the dialogue must only be heard from their perspective. When Dr Mosupi phones Tibe to inform him that they brought baby Matshediso home from the hospital, Tibe and Ditshele must not be heard. What they say should only be inferred from Dr Mosupi's telephonic response.
- Act 4, Scene 6 (p.58-59) portrays Ditshele committing suicide by eating poisoned meat. Focus must be from her angle, on the stage. Therefore 'Seresanta', Tibe and Moapei must be heard only in the background as they are outside the place where the events happen.

4.2.4 **Music and sound.**

Music, whether sung or played, is not only a background embellishment in a performed drama, but it also carries meaning as though it were "a voice" belonging to some character. Among its numerous functions, music and sound may be used to create suspense, to slow or accelerate the dramatic time, to heighten the dramatic effect, to bridge scenes and to cause emotional effects.

For the effective performance of *Matshediso*, the following forms of music will have to be kept ready:

- (a) Recorded instrumental music to be used in the following ways:
- As a theme music which will be played for the prologue and epilogue of the play. (For example, didascalies on pages 1 and 65 respectively).
 - As continuity marking tune while the stage is being prepared for the ensuing acts or scenes.
 - To cue the speaking and the rest of the actor's monologue. (cf. The role of music within MmaTibe's monologues on pages 6-7 and 25 respectively).
 - As a background to Morongwa's lyrical singing.
- (b) The beating of a drum, which will be used to
- create suspense or anticipation of an unpleasant event. For example, in the scenes where Ditshele poisons Tibe's food (p.45); and where Tibe prepares the gun for the intended murder (p.49);
 - mark the passage of time; and
 - move smoothly from one event to the other. For example, MmaTibe's monologue is intercepted by the good news of the arrival of the social worker with the baby.

Just as the importance of music has been outlined above, the use of sound, whether live or recorded, will also be necessary. For example, sounds, which need to be provided, are

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- (i) the sound of a car coming to stop, engine switched off and the car door opening and closing (Scene 3, Act 1) (p.8) when Tibe comes to fetch Ditshele where she was waiting for him. It is clearly indicated that this action is not in the foreground but in the background. But for more effect, the jingling of car keys by Tibe as he approaches and speaks to Ditshele can also be effective;

- (ii) the sound of a baby crying or a doll; for scenes where Matshediso cries. (cf. Didascalies on pages 62 and 64-65); and
- (iii) the sound of an explosive to simulate the two gun shots fired by Tibe on the night he intended to kill his mother and daughter. This is in accordance with the didascalies on page 56.

Lastly, powerful sound equipment for playing back the recorded music and sounds mentioned above must also be provided so as to be audible in the performance hall.

4.2.5 Costume

One other important aspect which needs to be taken into consideration when preparing for the performance of *Matshediso* concerns costume, that is, the type of clothing to be worn by the characters on stage. Make-up may also be used to add to the looks of the actors.

Attire or costume is of utmost importance in theatre or film. “Clothing or costumes are frequently used to reflect characters’ personality, social status, breeding or the lack thereof.” (Nierop e.a 1998:68). This implies that the manner, in which the actors are dressed, reveals their personality traits. Although the statement above refers to film, it is also relevant to the stage. Costume on stage reflects the social status and the personality of actors. In some plays, costume is also used to define the era in which the dramatic events took place. It may also be added that clothes do not only act as an extension of the actor’s stage persona, but their colour too can reflect their moral character.

On the basis of the above, it is therefore advisable for the stage dramatist to mention not only the personality traits of the actors, but also the type of costume to support that. Where costume is not specified, it becomes the responsibility of the director of the play to design his own, using didascalies and his deductions from the dialogue of the characters.

In the case of *Matshediso*, Sikwane did not specify the costume of most of the actors except for Morongwa in his black suit and white shirt, and the hospital staff, i.e. doctors in white coats. The following clothing that emanates from the text (main and subtext) is therefore suggested for this play:

- (i) Morongwa: Black suit to give a detached, cold, empty look of the face that does not align itself with any of the actions surrounding him. He is nobody's friend; a bystander. But in his singing, there is sarcasm and rebuke to the inhuman actions in the play.
- (ii) Ditshele: Needs seductive attire that contrasts with her age and her personality. In other words, she needs the clothes that will reveal some contradiction between her age and personality. She has a grown child, and she should have been married long ago, but she acts against that by trying to make herself young and attractive.
- (iii) Moapei: She needs clothes that will reveal that she is Ditshele's friend, that is, clothes that suggest sexual charm and seductiveness. She agrees with all that Ditshele does, even though it is wicked and immoral. An example of this is how she skilfully helped Ditshele with the fatal plan of poisoning Tibe's food.
- (iv) MmaTibe: Old-fashioned traditional dress with matching headscarf. Make-up that will produce a wrinkled skin to indicate that she is indeed old. This is explained by the following didascalies: "A rola tuku a tllhagisa moriri o mosweu." (ts.16) (She takes off her headscarf to reveal her grey hair.)
- (v) Manko: Will have to be in pure colours like white, soft pink and pale as a symbol of purity and innocence. She does not know what her mother is up to when she sends her to call Tibe for the poisoned

food. Again, she becomes a victim when she eats the fatal meal meant for Tibe.

- (vi) Boitopo: Must be given the appearance of a simple woman who only finds pleasure in her family and fellowmen. She should wear conservative clothes.
- (vii) Moabi: Also conservative type of clothing to match the simple conservative lifestyle he leads with his wife Boitopo.
- (viii) Nurse: Old-fashioned white uniforms should be used, as this drama is not of the modern era.
- (ix) Tibe: Should wear modern tailor-made suits made of expensive fabrics. Wear pure leather shoes matching the colour of the suits. He should always keep a handkerchief in his pocket. An expensive wristwatch should be fully exposed.

From the analysis of *Matshedisio* with emphasis on didascalies as an important literary phenomenon, as well as from guidelines on how *Matshedisio* can be performed, it is hoped that staging this drama will be possible.

In the following and final chapter, prominent points that include my findings in the analysis and guidelines suggested for the staging of *Matshedisio* will be dealt with.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

The previous chapters have highlighted the importance of the didascalies as an aspect of stage drama. Whereas it may not be termed an exhaustive study of didascalies, this work is useful. Firstly, because it foregrounds the critical role played by didascalies in the play, and secondly, because it hopes to alert the scholarly world to other wider investigations into the use of this aspect in plays.

The main research questions which have been asked are: “What does the analysis of the didascalies add to our understanding of *Matshediso*?” and “Can an analysis of the didascalies in *Matshediso* lead to the development of a set of guidelines for performing this play?” Approaching the play, *Matshediso*, from the point of view of didascalies has indeed provided valuable insights into the play, its structure and its meaning. This is clearly indicated by the following:

- Naming practices which can be cited as examples revealing the general outlook or insight of *Matshediso*. Names such as Ditshele and Moutlwatsi create a particular mood of a world inhibited by evil in the eyes of the audience. Ditshele (Stirrer), because of her false interpretation of the events, ends up causing a rift between Tibe and his mother.
- The title, *Matshediso*, which is an example of the aspects covering structure, serves as key to what the play is about. Named after the main character, it reveals the contents of the play. How baby Matshediso was born, rejected by its father because of Ditshele’s traditional way of thinking which says that no dead woman can give birth to a living baby. But at the end, through Morongwa’s help, Tibe accepts her. The division of the play into acts and scenes pointed out the entrances and the exits of the actors during performance. Finally, the use of the “curtain”, demarcating meaningful units, gives the characters time to change their

costumes and to prepare the set and décor for the next scene. This, also, indicates that *Matshediso* is a play.

- The prologue and the epilogue both covered by Morongwa's songs are sections which bring out the meaning of this play. The prologue introduces the conflict of the play to the audience/ readers. The epilogue shows how that conflict ended.

This approach has also demonstrated that *Matshediso* is indeed very suitable for performance. To support this statement here are some reasons:

- (i) The play is interactive, that is, it demands the audience to participate albeit non-verbally. This has been indicated in pages 72-73 of the study that during the play, the actors interact with the audience by direct eye-contact or pointing of fingers. For example, in the didascalies at the beginnings of Act 1, Scene 1; Act 1, Scene 2; Act 1, Scene 3 and Act 4, Scene 1. The playwright's constant mention that the settings for the particular scenes are "mo seraleng" (on stage) is an obvious confirmation of *Matshediso*'s stageability.
- (ii) The characters in *Matshediso* are not puppets but they represent real human beings. This is revealed by the way that they respond to social circumstances. Activities portrayed by them reveal convincing performances because they are consistent in what they are doing. For example, MmaTibe is Tibe's mother in reality. She enjoyed their togetherness during their stay before Gadifele passed away. When Tibe fails to accept *Matshediso* as his baby MmaTibe still regards him as his son. Towards the end of the play when Tibe's plan to kill her fails she still regards him as her only son. In addition, the accurate portrayal of the actors' emotions, for example, MmaTibe's anger at Tibe, is presented as true to life.

- (iii) Setting is presented as an imitation of reality and this means that the contents of the play are a reflection of the realities of life. Again, as this play depicts social problems, it becomes unavoidable that the audience will identify with the actions of the performers because they 'see' their own situations; their own lives there. To quote but one example, the scene reflecting the death of Gadifele and the birth of Matshediso. Viewing this on stage would provide enough stimulus for critical analysis and discussion among the audience.

Sikwane has not just written a play, but he also indicated clearly how it should be performed. The use of the didascalies in *Matshediso* will produce a good performance and this supports what Sikwane has explicitly indicated on page (iii) of his book when he said that *Matshediso* is a Setswana play. This means that it is not a closet drama.

In my opinion this study has achieved the main aims that it set out to do; that is, to analyze and interpret *Matshediso* from the perspective of the didascalies, to determine how the didascalies add meaning to the interpretation of the play, and finally to determine whether the analysis of the didascalies in *Matshediso* can lead to the development of a set of guidelines for performing the play. I therefore recommend that *Matshediso* be staged following the guidelines provided by this study. In conclusion, the present study could not deal with all aspects of performance and didascalies, and it is hoped that there will be further research on the structural-semiotics analysis and an interpretation of *Matshediso* as well as other plays in Setswana.

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