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Country and City:

A study of autobiographical tropes in
Ncumisa Vapi's novel *Litshona liphume*

by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
INTRODUCTION: THE TITLE OF THE THESIS	4
CHAPTER ONE: AIMS AND SIGNIFICANCE OF RESEARCH, LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY	6
1.1 Introduction	6
1.2 Statement of the problem	7
1.3 Aims of the research	7
1.4 Significance of the study	9
1.5 Literature review.....	10
1.5.1 Themes of Xhosa novels	10
1.5.2 Scholarly works on Xhosa novels	13
1.6 Methodology.....	19
1.7 Delimitations of study area.....	20
1.8 Conclusion.....	22
CHAPTER TWO: BACKGROUND AND AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL TROPES	23
2.1 Introduction	23
2.2 Vapi's historical background.....	23
2.3 Autobiographical features	36
2.3.1 Defining the self through place.....	37
2.3.2 Fatherless households create strong women (in the absence of her father Vapi becomes the head of the family)	44
2.3.3 Reaching selfhood through adversity	46
2.3.4 Leaders are born, not created	57
2.4 Conclusion.....	60

CHAPTER THREE: VAPI AS CREATIVE WRITER OF <i>LITSHONA LIPHUME</i>	61
3.1 Introduction	61
3.2 Language	61
3.2.1 The title of the novel.....	63
3.2.2 Figures of speech	68
3.2.3 Imagery and irony	69
3.2.4 Simile.....	72
3.2.5 Rhetorical questions	74
3.2.6 Hyperbole.....	75
3.2.7 Ideophones	77
3.3 The link between the writer and the community.....	80
3.4 The writer as a non-racist	84
3.5 The writer as a traditionalist.....	86
3.5.1 Traditional healers	86
3.5.2 Wedding ceremonies.....	87
3.6 Names of characters as part of the writer's creativity	90
3.6.1 Names in Xhosa fiction	90
3.6.2 Names in Vapi's novel.....	95
3.7 Conclusion.....	110
CHAPTER FOUR: BELIEFS IN <i>LITSHONA LIPHUME</i>	111
4.1 Introduction	111
4.2 Religion.....	111
4.3 Politics.....	120
4.4 Health	132
4.5 Education	134
4.6 Culture.....	136
4.7 Conclusion.....	142

CHAPTER FIVE: FEMINISM AND <i>UBUNTU</i> IN <i>LITSHONA LIPHUME</i>	143
5.1 Introduction	143
5.2 African feminism	143
5.3 Gender domination in <i>Litshona liphume</i>	144
5.4 Women characters in <i>Litshona liphume</i>	149
5.5 Men in <i>Litshona liphume</i>	156
5.6 <i>Ubuntu</i>	160
5.6.1 <i>Ubuntu</i> at birth	161
5.6.2 <i>Ubuntu</i> at death	161
5.6.3 <i>Ubuntu</i> in race relations	162
5.6.4 <i>Ubuntu</i> in family and community relations	163
5.6.5 <i>Ubuntu</i> and poverty	165
5.7 Conclusion	166
CHAPTER SIX: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION	167
6.1 Summary	167
6.2 Conclusion	168
INTRODUCTION TO INTERVIEWS	171
APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW WITH NCUMISA VAPI – 2006	171
APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW WITH NCUMISA VAPI – 2011	218
BIBLIOGRAPHY	224
LIST OF FIGURES	231

INTRODUCTION

THE TITLE OF THE THESIS

The title of this thesis, *Country and City – Autobiographical tropes in Ncumisa Vapi's Litshona liphume* arises out of a complex understanding of the author's narrative and literary intentions. *Country* refers to the fact that the story is set in a specifically named rural area in the Eastern Cape in the late 1960s and early 1970s. *City* on the other hand does not refer to any particular city, but is rather a symbol of change and challenge, of opportunity and wealth but also of a world view deficient in tradition and spiritual connection with the land and the ancestors.

The autobiographical tropes or themes that I highlight and unpack are ones that I have identified as particularly driving a personal narrative (based on an actual, lived experience) and could be considered as core messages that the author is consciously, or unconsciously, trying to convey to her readers. These tropes underscore much of the text and the commentary and are initially dealt with separately in the thesis, as discrete topics of discussion, but are later also included in the general discussion of the novel.

As one reads *Litshona liphume* one is made aware of the many challenges facing a young, highly intelligent and motivated girl growing up in a rural area in Apartheid South Africa. While her life gains value from its integration with tradition and with the community (*Country*) she also disputes certain interpretations of tradition and becomes a powerful voice for females wanting to forge lives independent of men (*City*). The *City* is also a symbol for the separation of families – it denotes the absence of father figures, it suggests a more sophisticated political and social environment than the *Country* but one that

ultimately renders Black men powerless and disconnected from their families and their land. The Country/City divide is not overtly referred to in my treatment of the text, but it is implicit and informs my understanding of the text. It is hoped that the reader will keep in mind this dichotomy (Country/City) when reading the actual narrative. Critically, it is the sense of place that author is most able to impart to her readers, and not only the wider general rural area, but the specific “home” place. In one sense then Country can stand for the countryside in the main, but also for the tiny village to which people form deep attachments. In an interview with me Vapi refers to this visceral connection with the home village, its attraction and deep influence on the lives of its inhabitants:

Another problem that affects both adults and children is that the people of Ntsaka find it difficult to abandon their birthplace. The workers go to work in the morning, but they come back every afternoon. They do this even though they have houses in urban areas. I can say that they value their rural areas. There is a new school across the river and the children of Ntsaka choose to cross the river every day instead of getting accommodation closer to the school. In short, at Ntsaka we love our birthplace. (Macabela, 2006)

Finally, it is important to make transparent the fact that I consider *Litshona liphume* to be autobiographical fiction, that is a fictional account of Vapi’s own early years. To this end I am extremely grateful to the author for her willingness to answer two sets of interview questions (Appendix A and B) and to provide us with photographs and personal documents. I believed it was important to include her responses and the photographs as the undertaking of the thesis was to interrogate the notion that *Litshona liphume* is an autobiography – thus it seemed appropriate that our interest in the text is enhanced and informed by an interest in, and curiosity about, her life.

CHAPTER ONE

AIMS AND SIGNIFICANCE OF RESEARCH, LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

1.1 Introduction

In this chapter I state that the main hypothesis of this study is that Vapi's *Litshona liphume* is an autobiographical novel. Having made this statement I then go on to explicate the aims and significance of the study – that treating the novel as autobiography allows us to interrogate contradictions and tensions played out by the author as both the writer *of* the text, and the protagonist *in* the text. The literature review that follows locates Vapi's work within its historical context while the methodology proposes that any analysis of an autobiographical text must take into account the life of the author and the way such a life is played out in narrative form in the text. To this end the study uses theories of autobiography and actual interviews with the author. In delimitations of the study area I map out the chapters of the study and their focus areas.

1.2 Statement of the problem

The fundamental hypothesis of this research is that Vapi is a Xhosa writer who has used her life-experience to form the basis of her novel. Vapi's creativity is a complex articulation of the power of individual motivation to overcome poverty. Vapi clearly inserts herself as the hero, suggesting that it is only through her indomitable spirit and religious beliefs that she succeeds. This thesis attempts to unpack the many aspects of Vapi's character that are given creative outlet in the novel, and various tropes are identified as driving the narrative. The research identifies both historical and psychological factors as being important, but it is ultimately the notion of individual agency, combined with religious faith, that is the most prominent.

It would appear that scholarly research on the nature of autobiography in Xhosa fiction is lacking. A number of surveys and treatments on the Xhosa novel do exist but none focuses specifically on autobiography. In this thesis I hope to demonstrate that one can apply theories of autobiography in order to gain a more nuanced view of how Xhosa creative writers link societal forces with individual journeys.

1.3 Aims of the research

The most important aim of this study is to investigate and establish the significance of social setting, since a person is part of the society in which he or she lives. Because her novel is entitled *Litshona liphume* (The sun sets and rises again), it was therefore

imperative that an investigation be undertaken to establish whether Vapi portrays her own experience as well as that of her society in her novel, or whether her individual experiences dominate and that societal incidents play a subaltern role. In this respect we can argue that while Vapi is not critical of a dominant individualistic ideology that professes that everyone can succeed given the will to do so, she nevertheless understands the importance of place and community in the development of selfhood.

Another important aim of this study is to evaluate Vapi's treatment of women's suffering and to establish whether the author offers any feminist alternatives to question the customary role of Xhosa women and how this impacts on suffering within an already unequal society.

Finally the study focuses on the notion of triumph (the ability to overcome hardships) and how it radically reverses the idea of Xhosa women as 'tolerant' and 'long-suffering' and rather sees them as regaining agency and power in a forever changing world.

The study analyses traditional perceptions of *ubuntu* and 'feminism' and how Vapi contests these notions through the narration of her own life story.

It is against this background that the title, *Litshona liphume*, is so significant.

1.4 Significance of the study

This study is significant because it attempts to uncover how the traditional Xhosa worldview, worked together with Western concepts of community strength and individual motivation, are absorbed by Vapi and reworked in the form of a novel. Questions that need to be raised are: has she allowed herself to become a success in the Western sense of the word without questioning the meaning of success within a community context? Alternatively, does Vapi understand the contradictions implicit in valorizing individual achievements in a context in which the success of the community is generally put above that of individuals and how does she write this tension out in her novel?

I shall examine the way in which Vapi's figurative language gives us insights as to how she sees life in a binary mode, for example light vs dark, night vs day, city vs country. It has been necessary to realize why the novel has been written and what impact it has on the community and on the Xhosa literary canon. As already indicated, the primary literary significance of the novel is that it is autobiographical, and the significance of this study is that it analyses the novel as an autobiographical text.

The study also examines the extent to which Vapi's novel can be likened to a self-help book and interrogates this notion, particularly with reference to her religious convictions.

If Vapi's novel is inspirational, are the characters true, are the situations real? To what extent does Vapi's novel reflect her inner life? Is her inner voice given life, or is it suppressed in order to present to the audience the sense of an unmediated consciousness – one that gains success through hard-work rather than self-reflection?

1.5 Literature review

In connection with literature review, a number of Xhosa novels that were written between 1984 and 1994 (similar in time and political context to Vapi's novel) will be discussed and grouped thematically, and academic treatments of the Xhosa novel will be evaluated.

1.5.1 Themes of Xhosa novels

1.5.1.1 Despair, Descent, Reason and Renewal

Three novels: Vapi's *Litshona liphume* (1989), Bongela's *Alitshoni lingenandaba* (1992) and Mtuze's *Alitshoni lingaphumi* (1986), have something in common. Each title has the verb *-tshona* which reflects despair and descent (but at the same time anticipates reason and renewal). In the above three novels, the verb *-tshona* is significant because it is used within a particular context. The three titles are idiomatic expressions because on the one hand the verb *-tshona* denotes the going down of the sun but on the other hand the same verb connotes the disappearance of hope. Paradoxically the verb also depicts reason and renewal because while the people encounter difficulties they also rationalize and meditate

about the future. Figuratively, once something comes to an ending, a new beginning manifests itself.

Bongela's novel focuses on the shady underworld of criminals and ends with some solution; that being the uncovering of the crime. In this novel, the 'tshona' in the title, *Alitshoni lingenandaba* refers more to "things going down, happening" while in Mtuze's and Vapi's novels the verb *-tshona* is contrasted with *-phuma* (come out, go out) – thus terrible political and social circumstances are overcome due to a spirit of solidarity and the instigation of community initiatives. Thus the descent into darkness is followed by a metaphorical rise into light.

Vapi's autobiographical novel was written in 1989. During the years 1984 to 1994 a number of other Xhosa novels were written. As already mentioned, Bongela's *Alitshoni lingenandaba* (1992) focuses on a crime – specifically a murder in an urban area. The murderer is a person who left his rural area and went to the city of East London looking for a job. Someone who holds a senior position in a company is murdered by his colleague who had previously acted in that position. In the novel, township life is almost exclusively portrayed through the tavern and other criminals. When the murderer tries to leave the country with his girlfriend, their car goes out of control and overturns. The police officers find them, the man is arrested but he is dead. What is interesting about Bongela's novel is that it depicts how otherwise extraordinary events (such as murders,

car chases) become everyday events, and how chaos and violence characterise the quotidian in the township.

Mtuze's *Alitshoni lingaphumi* (1986) mainly dwells on forced removal, a social problem during the years of Apartheid. It touches on the separation of the oppressed from their friends and families due to the Group Areas Act. What is more important is the spirit of solidarity, people's struggle and their victory. The title of the novel illustrates that the sun does not set without rising and this sense of renewal, hope and optimism has a direct impact on political, economic and social welfare.

1.5.1.2 Love, betrayal and tragic death

Both Dazela's *Soze kubenje ngakuqala* (1988) and Magadla's *Isazela sidl'umniniso* (1992) deal with love, betrayal and tragic death. Unlike Vapi's story, these novels do not offer solutions but they are classic tragic romances. Dazela's title *Soze kubenje ngakuqala* signifies that life will never be the same again while Magadla's title *Isazela sidl'umniniso* demonstrates that guilt is torture. These two novels comprise an irreversible situation where characters cannot ameliorate their relationship. These novels are essentially pessimistic and fatalistic – they do not provide room for a second chance because what is done is done. In other words a broken relationship between two characters is not mended and as a result they part ways for good. The novels' fatalism suggests that the authors see the world, even the world of emotions, as divided into two

opposing forces – good and evil – and that any nuanced or complex solutions to emotional issues cannot be negotiated.

1.5.2 Scholarly works on Xhosa novels

At this stage we will look at some scholarly works on Xhosa novels and see the manner in which different academics discuss the main themes of Xhosa literature. It is also crucial to mention the Xhosa novels they have selected so that we see where Vapi's *Litshona liphume* fits in the canon.

Kaschula (2003:60) argues that one cannot separate Xhosa literature from politics since Xhosa literary history is connected to political and social change, as well as to altering rural and urban spaces. It is therefore necessary to investigate Vapi's historical background and the way in which it is articulated in her autobiographical novel. It is also important to discuss the extent to which Vapi uses her novel to address political and socio-economic issues which demonstrate the presence of diversity and multiplicity in Xhosa society.

Kaschula (2003:60) further notes the centrality of binary oppositions in Xhosa literature as well as the existence of clashes and variances amongst country peoples:

On the one hand, the country-city divide and how it is constructed in Xhosa literature in terms of character development, binary oppositions, space and context

form part of this discussion. On the other hand, the internal conflicts within the country milieu are also exposed.

In my study of Vapi's autobiographical novel, attempts will be made to determine the presence of internal conflicts and also the role they play in developing character. It is important to investigate both the damage that is caused and the healing process that prevails.

Kaschula (2003:71) highlights the importance of analysing the socio-political backgrounds of Xhosa writers. In Kaschula's study (2003) the following Xhosa novels are selected for scrutiny: Sinxo's *UNomsa* (1922), Jordan's *Ingqumbo yeminyanya* (1940), Peteni's *Kwazidenge* (1980) and Kaschula & Maseko's *Phesheya kweTsitsa* (1998). Educational, religious, love and cultural themes play a major role in these novels while a country-city divide manifests itself through the ongoing conflict. The different periods at which the above novels were published signify their relevance to the political and social transformation.

Dlali (1992:1) argues that one cannot analyse space in isolation from time, plot and character, claiming that they are all structural elements of the novel. By making this point, Dlali highlights the importance of social setting because the characters, whether they live in the country or in the city, do not operate in a vacuum – they are influenced by the times they live in and the spaces they occupy.

To explicate his thesis Dlali (1992:1) selects the following novels for his study: Sinxo's *Umzali wolahleko* (1933), Tamsanqa's *Inzala kaMlungisi* (1954), Mtuze's *Umsinga* (1973) and Jongilanga's *Ukuqhawuka kwembeleko* (1975). These novels were published at different stages of the South African history and as a result, their social setting was influenced by the political and social events of those years.

Dlali (1992:6) writes:

A social novel will require a detailed social setting. An historical novel will require accurate details regarding social setting, geographical setting and historical setting. In both instances the author must have researched and acquired relevant information.

In other words, every author is acquainted with the developments that occur in a particular area.

Dlali (1992:10) also notes the way in which the binary opposites theme insinuates itself into Xhosa novels, and argues that writers tend to depict rural areas positively, while non-rural areas are given a negative treatment. His discussion succinctly summarizes the manner in which Xhosa authors tend to view spaces as either positive or negative, and their impact on society also as affirming or not.

Dlali (1992:12) further declares, “It is clear that fictional space is part of the code which is used by the novelist to transmit his message, that is, to talk about man and his world.” By fictional space, Dlali refers to the social setting that has been chosen by the author in order to demonstrate a particular theme.

Sirayi (1989:55) observes that Xhosa writers draw on the fact that South Africa is multicultural and that different cultures occupy different social settings. He argues that *UNomsa* presents two social settings, one of which gives her a positive dimension of life, the other a negative one. Richmond is the place that represents suffering for Nomsa, as the people there are culturally and socially alien to her.

Sirayi (1989) focusses on the following themes: Educational, Religious, Moral, Political and Clash of Cultural Values. To elucidate the educational theme Sirayi uses Sinxo’s *UNomsa* (1922), Petana’s *UPhumzo* (1933), Tsotsi’s *UNtabaziyaduma* (1952), Swaartbooi’s *UMandisa* (1934), Dazana’s *Ukufika kukaMadodana* (1960) and Bongela’s *Kusa kusihlwa* (1979).

The religious theme consists of Dana’s *Ukufika kukaMadodana* (1960), Ndawo’s *Uhambo lukaGqobhoka* (1909), Sinxo’s *Umfundisi waseMthuqwasi* (1927), Tamsanqa’s *Ithemba liyaphilisa* (1979), Mtuze’s *Indlel’ecand’intlango* (1981), Ndawo’s

UNomathamsanqa noSigebenga (1953) and Tamsanqa's *Nyana wam! Nyana wam!* (1985).

On the moral theme the following novels are selected: Sinxo's *Umzali wolahleko* (1933), Ndawo's *UNolishwa* (1931), Gwashu's *Intombi yolahleko* (1953), Tamsanqa's *Inzala kaMlungisi* (1954), and Mtuze's *UDingezweni* (1960). Other novels which explore the theme of morality and focus on good that triumphs over evil are the following: Malgas's *Umntu lilahle elinothuthu* (1977), Jolobe's *UZagula* (1923), Sinxo's *Isakhono somfazi namanye amabalana* (1932), Futshane's *UJujuju* (1939) and *UMhla Ngenqaba* (1941), Dlova's *Umvuzo wesono* (1954), Bongela's *Umzi Omtsha* (1970), Ngani's *Umqol'uphandle* (1979), Mtuze's *Umsinga* (1972), Gwashu's *Izigigaba zelifa* (1980) and Xametshata's *Ntliziyo Ungumkhohlisi* (1985).

The political theme is composed in the following novels: Mqhayi's *Ityala lamawele* (1914) and *UDon Jadu* (1929), Mtuze's *Alitshoni lingaphumi* (1986), and Siyongwana's *Ubulumko bezinja* (1962).

The clash of cultural values is demonstrated in the following novels: Jordan's *Ingqumbo yeminyanya* (1940), Dyafta's *Ikamva lethu* (1953), Ngani's *Abantwana bethu* (1958), Jongilanga's *Ukuqhawuka kwembeleko* (1960), Tamsanqa's *Ukuba ndandazile* (1967) and Qangule's *Izagweba* (1972).

Sirayi (1989:288-289) declares:

Let it be stressed that both Sinxo's and Dana's novels focus on the importance of acquiring experiential knowledge by African teachers subsequent to their attainment of advanced theoretical school or college education. Other Xhosa novels treat the theme of education differently. They probe into the economic and social problems the African child faces in the process of acquiring education.

All of the themes chosen and explicated by Sirayi are significant and relevant to those employed by Vapi, as they overlap with hers and suggest the preoccupations of Xhosa writers are inextricably linked and bound by notions of success – whether that success is articulated as moral, social or spiritual and all contain an element of didacticism – the authors do not write just to entertain – they want to educate as well.

Researchers such as Dokolwana (2001), Simani (2002), Jafta (1996), Kwetana (2000) and Luwaca (1989) have highlighted other predominant and recurring themes in Xhosa fiction. Dokolwana draws attention to the theme of 'the consequences of apartheid' (which would go under Sirayi's political theme) and also the theme of 'sexual inequality' (also referred to by Simani and Ngcangca), and she also includes the theme of the 'struggle of the individual' and 'unfulfilled hopes.' Kwetana (paying specific attention to Jolobe's writings) brings up the issue of traditional leaders, while Luwaca focuses on 'the power of love.'

My contribution to the academic treatment of Xhosa fiction will be to highlight the close link between autobiography and fictional narrative, suggesting that Vapi exploited the autobiographical genre in order to more freely tell her own story.

1.6 Methodology

The methods used in this study are purely descriptive, investigative, interpretative and analytical, with the specific aim of elucidating the author's ideas, ideals and thoughts. This approach helps bring to light the quality of the author's art, while focusing attention on its dynamic reflective nature. An interview with the author and her relatives has been necessary to support her biographical data and for the purpose of analysis.

The use of theoretical models in the analysis of her works has been applied especially with regard to autobiography. I have consulted the following authors, all of whom have concentrated on autobiography as a literary genre: Benstock (1988), Bruss (1976), Olney (1998), Smith (1992), Gilmore (1994), Vambe (2009), Krog (2005), Stanton (1984) Halpern (1982) and De Man (1979).

Paul Jay's (1987:45) understanding of De Man's thesis (1979) that the "self" is a "metaphorical rather than a referential construction" was critical to my interrogation of Vapi's work as autobiographical fiction. According to Jay both the "meaning and the subject in an autobiographical work are generated rhetorically and tropologically, rather

than historically” (Jay, 1987:44-45). In other words we cannot assume that autobiographical fiction merely represents a life in a particular historical context, but rather we need to consider how the author strives to understand his or her life through the actual process of writing. Constructing identity takes place not “outside and before its composition” but “within the text and during moments of its composition” (Jay, 1987:46). I have found this approach enormously helpful in analysing Vapi’s autobiographical fiction because it has allowed me to examine the way she uses autobiographical tropes to forge an identity for herself and for the reader. Thus it was more important for me to gain insights as to how Vapi constructs an identity for herself within her text rather than to interrogate the truth of her representations against actual fact.

1.7 Delimitations of study area

Following the title page, there is an introduction, a table of contents, a declaration, and the rationale.

In Chapter One, the following topics are covered: statement of the problem; aims of the research; significance of the study; literature review; methodology; and delimitation of the study area.

In Chapter Two, the focus is on Vapi's historical background and autobiographical tropes. Included in this chapter are photographs and documents which relate both to the novel and to Vapi's life.

Chapter Three pertains to the language used in the novel, Vapi's ideas and ideals, her relationship with the community, and names of characters as part of the writer's creativity.

In Chapter Four, I examine the significance and literary realization of religion, politics, health and culture in *Litshona liphume*.

Chapter Five presents a critical analysis of the concepts of feminism and *ubuntu* as dealt with by Vapi in her autobiographical fiction.

In Chapter Six, there is a summary, followed by a conclusion. Finally, the two interviews with Ncumisa Vapi conducted in 2006 and 2011 are included under Appendix A and Appendix B.

The bibliography, in which references used for this research are listed, appears at the end of the study, as does the list of figures.

1.8 Conclusion

In this chapter I have interrogated the notion that Vapi's *Litshona liphume* is an autobiographical novel and have made clear that the significance of the study is that it treats the novel as autobiography – both theoretically with reference to academic works on autobiographical fiction and practically via actual interviews with the author. In the literature review I have shown that we need to view Vapi's novel within the canon of Xhosa literature – understanding its main themes and preoccupations and thus understanding how these have fed into her own fictional interpretation of her life. In delimitations of the study area I have indicated how the study is organized by way of short summaries of each chapter.

CHAPTER TWO

BACKGROUND AND AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL TROPES

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter I link Vapi's life to the life of the protagonist in *Litshona liphume* and highlight how Vapi uses particular episodes in her life to form the autobiographical tropes, or themes, of her novel. I connect Vapi's own version of her life as communicated to me in interviews with her creative expression of this interpretation in the characters and narrative of her novel. In this chapter I will use photographs and maps to demonstrate the direct relationship between Vapi's own lived life with that of her protagonist in her novel.

2.2 Vapi's historical background

Elizabeth Bruss (1976:12) notes that autobiographical writing, "necessitates that some shared identity bind author, narrator and character together, no matter how vague, no matter how great the tension or disparity, the relationship itself is inescapable."

According to the above statement, the autobiographer cannot be separated from the narrator and the character. The relationship between Vapi, the narrator of *Litshona liphume* and her main character, Siphokazi, cannot be separated from each other and there are numerous reasons that prove beyond a reasonable doubt that the two share an identity.

One of the main reasons for assuming that *Litshona liphume* is an autobiography, is that the author does not refer to the protagonist only in the third person, but constantly switches to the first person pronoun (subject concord in Xhosa) I (*ndi-*). For example, Vapi starts Chapter Four in the third person “*USiphokazi sele eneminyaka esibhozo ngoku*” (Siphokazi was already eight years old) but Chapter 5 starts with the first person ‘*Utata uqabuke sele ndikwibanga lesithandathu*’ (It suddenly dawned on my father when I was already in Standard 6).

Apart from the first person narration, the author of *Litshona liphume* and the main character share the same parents namely: Zwelibanzi and MaNgxabane. Under the dedication Vapi writes, “*Le ncwadi ndiyinikela kubazali bam abangasekhoyo ubawo uClifford Zwelibanzi nomama uConstance MaNgxabane Nozityela.*” (I dedicate this novel to my parents who passed away: my father Clifford Zwelibanzi and my mother Constance MaNgxabane Nozityela.) In the novel the main character is Siphokazi and her parents are Zwelibanzi and MaNgxabane.

Although the name of the author is Ncumisa while the name of the main character is Siphokazi, it is appropriate to declare that the author and the main character are the same. They share the same date of birth which is 19 September 1953. In describing the main character's date of birth, Vapi writes:

Umhla yabe ingumhla weshumi elinethoba kwinyanga kaSeptemba ngomnyaka we-1953. (p.2). (The day was the nineteenth day in the month of September in the year of 1953).

The identity document of Vapi shows that she was born on 19 September 1953.

Below is a photograph of Ncumisa Vapi taken in 1979 when she was 26 years old.

Figure 1 (Photograph of Ncumisa Vapi aged 26)

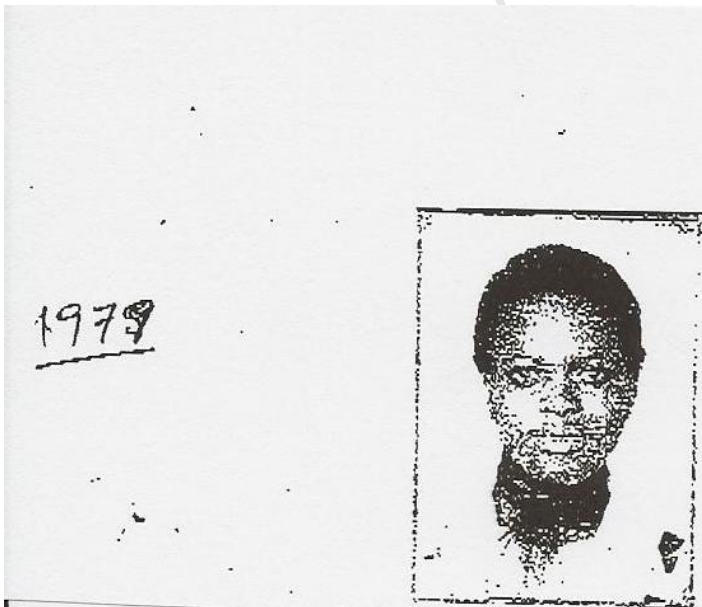
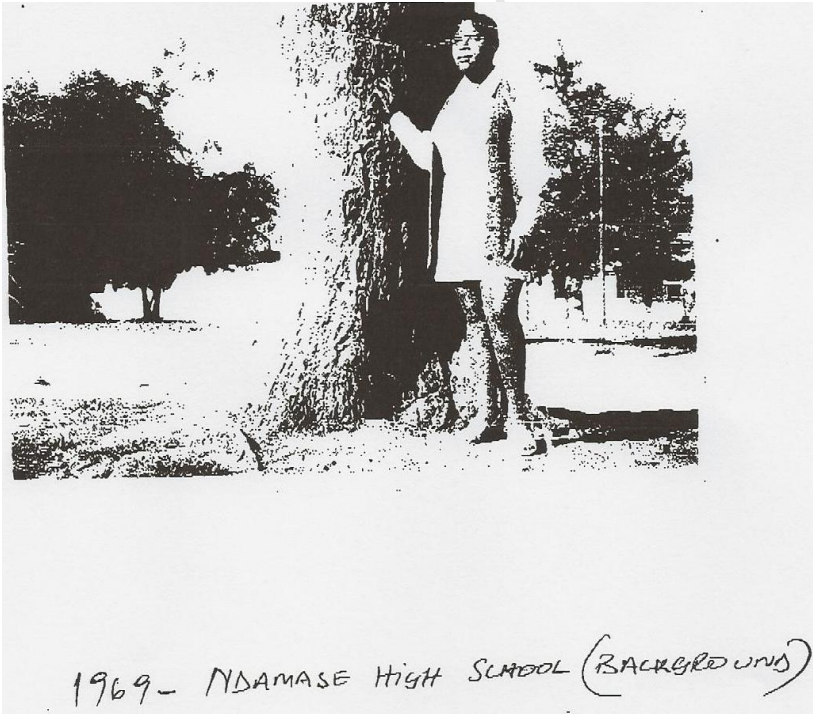


Figure 2 (Map showing Ngqeleni district)



Figure 3 (Photograph of Ncumisa Vapi aged 15)



Ncumisa Vapi and her protagonist, Siphokazi, have the same clan name, 'Xesibe' demonstrating their genealogical inseparability. Vapi writes:

Ze nazi mhlophe MaXesibe amahle ukuba le nto inento eyithethayo. Nditsho kuba kusadlule iyure inye ezelwe lo mntwana. Kodwa ngoku ndibona into entle. (Beautiful people of Xesibe you must know that this incident signifies something. I say this because only one hour has passed since the birth of the child. But now I see a precious thing). (p.6)

MaXesibe amahle, zihlobo zikaNonzaba, zikaMaNtsaka kaNondonga, zihlobo zikaNkwankwini, boomatyeyibheka njengomntwana, oosangcethe somcinga wakwaBhaca, booBhelesi bakaBhimbinyoka, andizukwenza made kuba kakade amade ngawetyala.' (p.9) (Beautiful people of Xesibe, relatives of Nonzaba, of MaNtsaka of Nondonga, relatives of Nkwankwini, Matyeyibheka as a child, Sangcethe somcinga wakwaBhaca, Bhelesi of Bhimbinyoka, I am not going to make a long speech, of course long speeches are made in a lawsuit).

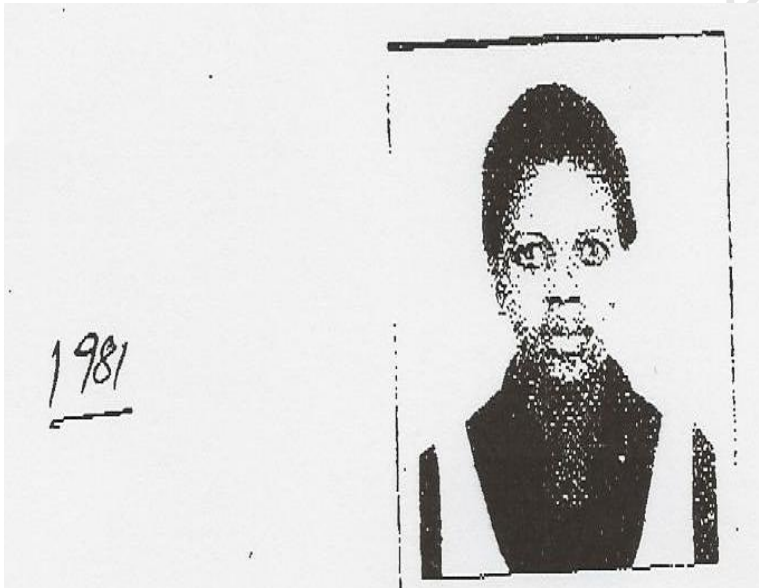
These words are uttered in a social gathering, a week after the main character's birth. It is important to note that the huts of Vapi's home are named after the ancestors of the Xesibe clan. One is called Bhelesi and another hut is called Nondize.

Even when describing her protagonist's looks the author injects into the description a sense of place. In the following description Vapi likens the colour of her heroine's face to that of a dagga seed – a plant well known in that area:

Sekuziinyanga ezintandathu uSiphokazi ekulo mhlaba umagad'ahlabayo ukuthethwa kwala mazwi. Kunjalo nje usisishuqulwana sentombazana enomkhitha, ebuso bumnyama okokhozo lomya baza bahonjiswa macala omabini zizinxonxo. Amehlo wona aziingqakumbana makhulu ngathi ngawesibawu; iinwele zona zizingqaqhuluka ngathi zezikaNoqhakancu.” (p.13) (Six months had elapsed after the birth of Siphokazi when the words were uttered. She was a short handsome girl, her face was as dark as the seed of dagga and her cheeks were decorated with dimples. The eyes were as big as those of the tsetse fly; the hair was rigid like the hair of the Khoisan.)

The big eyes described above are evident in Figure 4 below.

Figure 4 (Ncumisa Vapi aged 28)



Both Vapi's childhood and that of her heroine Siphokazi are difficult and fatherless. In her early childhood Vapi's father did not spend quality time with the family as he was working in Cape Town, far away from home. Like other heads of families who were working in Gauteng and Cape Town, Zwelibanzi used to come home at least once a year. In the novel, when Siphokazi is born, her father is absent, and when she is named, her

father is also not there. At the age of six months, Vapi became very sick, and her father had still not seen her. Her mother (MaNgxabane) struggled day in and day out taking her daughter to different doctors. In the novel Siphokazi falls ill at six months and her mother takes her to traditional healers and medical doctors. Only the black tea remedy succeeds in healing the child. In my interview with Vapi I learnt that she too was taken to many doctors and healers when she was six months old and that only the black tea remedy worked at restoring her health.

Vapi started her schooling at Takata Primary School where she completed two standards in one year (1966). In the novel, Vapi's heroine, Siphokazi, also attends Takata Primary School, and also manages to pass two standards in one year. She completed Standard 5 and 6 in one year. Significantly in her novel, Vapi notes that Siphokazi's father was unaware of her passing Standard 5, just as her own father was ignorant of her success in her studies as he was in Cape Town at the time. In the novel, Siphokazi's father, when his daughter passes Standard 6, complains that this will create a financial burden for him:

Njengokuba iitiki zam ndingekaziqokeleli ngokwaneleyo ndiza kuthini ntombam? Kuya kuthi ukuze kulunge ndivukele phaya kwatitshala omkhulu uphindiselwe kwibanga lesihlanu. (p.26) (Since I have not yet collected enough little cents, what am I going to do now, my daughter? In order to solve the problem I must wake up early and go to your principal and ask him to demote you to standard 5.)

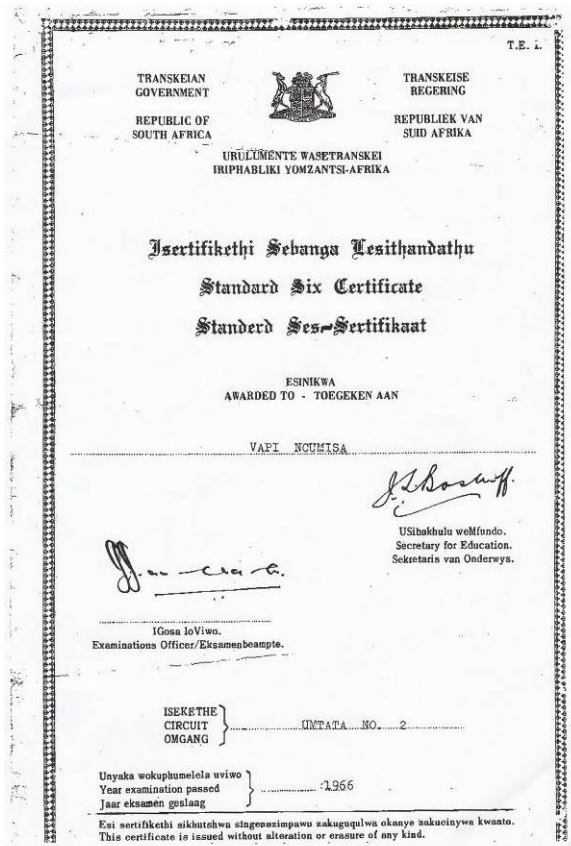
According to Vapi, this is exactly the reaction of her father when she passed Standard 6, but as in the novel, her mother intervenes and she is able to continue her studies. At the end of the same year, Vapi passed and proceeded to Ndamase High School – and this event is mirrored in the novel where Siphokazi also goes on to study at Ndamase High School. While in Grade 10, on Thursday 24 July 1969, Vapi’s mother passed away. In her novel, Siphokazi’s mother passes away while she is in Grade 10 (p.42).

Figure 5 (Ndamase Secondary School)



<http://ace-foundation.blogspot.com/2009/11/hills-road-sixth-form-college-south.html>

Figure 6 (Vapi's Std 6 Certificate)

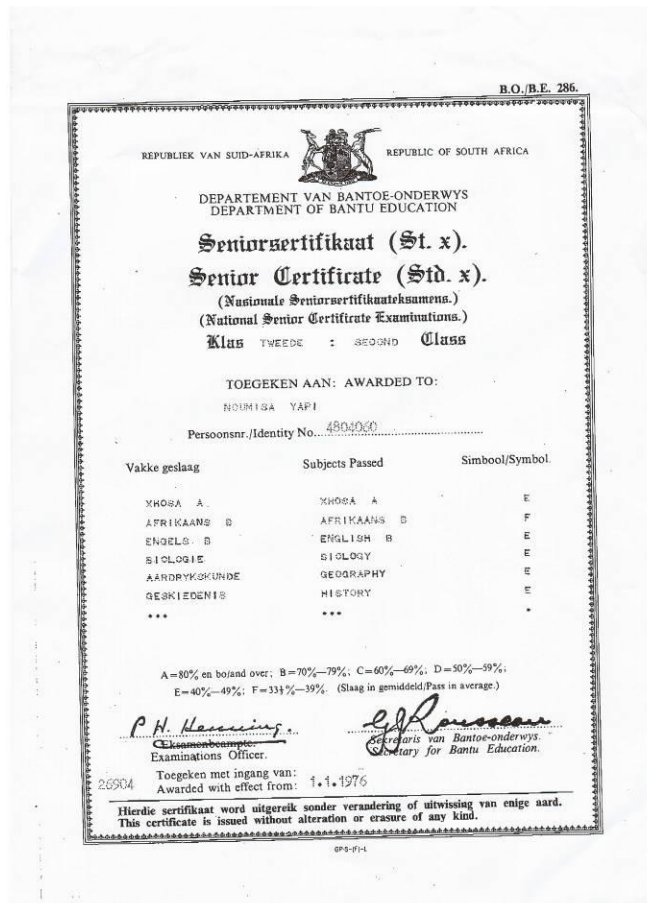


The loss of her mother came as a surprise because she had not been ill. Vapi was only fifteen years old and the bereavement affected her performance at school and as a result, she failed four subjects in Grade 12 in 1972. This sad turn of events is reflected in the novel where Siphokazi also fails four subjects (p.45). What is not said in the novel, but is revealed in the interview with her (Macabela, 2011) is that Vapi fell pregnant in Grade 12. Her initial manuscript gave an account of this pregnancy, but she was forced to remove it. She describes how initially, the novel started off as a short story and then became a novel, but the pregnancy section was removed:

ULitshona liphume uzalwa libali elifutshane elithi, “Ungalahli ithemba.” Ndandingenele ukhuphiswano lwamabali amafutshane olwaluququzelelwa nguProsperity Insurance Company, Mthatha ngo1981/1982. Eli bali laphuma phambili kuGROUP A. Ndaye ndacetyiswa nguMphathi wam wakwaExamination Section, Department of Education, MTHATHA, utat’uMagazi oligqwetha ngoku emva kokuba elifundile ukuba ndilandise ndibhale inoveli. Kodwa ngenxa yamahla ndinyuka eyawafumanayo le ncwadi phantsi kweBhodi yaseTranskei eyayijonga/ ihlela iiManyuskripthi ngelo xesha, kudliwano-ndlebe olwaluphakathi kwam nomnye waloo malungu, (1) wahlaba Isahluko esasingokukhulelwa kukaSiphokazi esafunda uForm V. Kwanyanzeleka ke ukuba siguzulwe eso sahluko nanjengoko wacacisayo ukuba iincwadi ezithetha ngokukhulelwa azifunwa nokubonwa liSebe lezeMfundo. (Macabela, 2011) (Litshona liphume was first created as a short story, “Don’t lose hope.” I participated in a competition of short stories that was organized by the Prosperity Insurance Company at Mthatha in 1981/1982. My short story was number one. My supervisor in the Examination Section, Department of Education, Mthatha, Mr. Magazi who is now a lawyer, after reading the short story, advised me to write a novel. Due to the ups and downs of this novel under the Board of Transkei that was scrutinizing/editing the manuscript at that time, in the interview between me and one of the members, the chapter pertaining to Siphokazi’s pregnancy while she was doing standard Ten was taken out because the Department of Education did not want to see books that were speaking about pregnancy.)

Vapi, a generally excellent student, struggled to obtain a first class pass in matric because of her pregnancy and family bereavements (see Figure 7).

Figure 7 (Vapi's Matric Certificate)



At the beginning of 1973, Vapi registered as a private candidate, and in March 1973, she wrote two subjects. In the novel, Siphokazi says “*Ndawa kwizifundo ezine zonke ndagqiba ekubeni ndizibhale ngasese*” (p.45). (I failed four subjects and I decided to enrol as a private candidate.) At the age of nineteen, in March 1973, Vapi experienced two losses: both her grandfather and her father passed away. Her father passed away in a road accident a week after her grandfather’s funeral. Exactly the same events are related in the novel – Siphokazi’s grandfather passes away (p.45) and her father also dies in a road accident coming back from the grandfather’s funeral (p.46).

As the eldest child in her family, the burden of looking after her three brothers and two sisters fell on Vapi's shoulders. Her stepmother, who had married her father in 1971, left the home during her pregnancy. Later, she gave birth to Vapi's stepbrother. In the novel we read that Siphokazi's stepmother leaves before giving birth to her stepbrother and that she has to take on full responsibility for her siblings "*Ndaqonda ngaloo mnyaka ukuba iliwa libhek'umoya kwicala elinam, kufuneka ndidlale indima yam ebomini* (p.48)" (I realized in that year that the odds were against us, I had to play my role in life).

From 1976 to 1982, Vapi worked for the Department of Education (Transkei government) as a records clerk and a grade two clerk at the Tsolo circuit inspector's office. She also worked as a grade two clerk and a grade one clerk at Mthatha head office in the accounts, examinations, and post and filing sections. In the novel (p.103) Siphokazi receives a telegram from the Department of Education in Umtata and as a result is employed as a clerk in the circuit office.

In the novel, we read of no further developments regarding Siphokazi's education or employment whereas in her life, Vapi had further career changes - from 1982 to 1983 she worked as a senior clerk at K.D. Matanzima Airport, Mthatha, in the transport department of the Transkei government and on 1 January 1984, she joined the University of Transkei, and, at the time of writing, is still employed there, where she lectures in the African languages department. Vapi continued to study and in 2007 was awarded a doctorate in African Languages at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University.

The life of Vapi the individual, while a great source of interest, is nevertheless rendered more meaningful by the way in which the backdrop of apartheid South Africa highlights the sufferings undergone by the character of Siphokazi. The writer's story is thus not confined to her or to her particular social setting but becomes applicable to the 'larger context' of South Africa at that time – and in this sense her autobiographical novel is entirely appropriate – there was no other genre that would have told her story as well - “at times the path inward (as in autobiographical writing) may appear to be the only one to take.” (Krog 2005:101).

According to the above statement, the autobiographer interacts with society through his or her writing that is informed by sourcing an inner strength, a personal path. One of the advantages of autobiography is that the reader may consult the author or his/her relatives in order to verify the facts, unlike in fiction where imaginary characters are used. The interview that was conducted at Vapi's home is an example of the verification of facts.

Krog (2005:104) writes, “This is where autobiography comes in. It allows the narrator to tell a story that is both general and exceptional. Autobiography serves a dual function.”

The hardships that are encountered by the main character (Siphokazi) and Vapi's own real-life trials are inseparable, as are the general sufferings encountered by most rural

women of the time. In this way Krog's 'general' and the 'exceptional' are skilfully articulated in Vapi's autobiographical novel, in which the author's personal experiences and those experienced by other children of the time are given voice in the character of Siphokazi.

2.3 Autobiographical features

Before discussing the dominant autobiographical themes, or tropes in Vapi's novel, it is important to understand that Vapi presents a version of herself that is mediated through cultural and social understandings. We cannot assume that everything in *Litshona liphume* is entirely autobiographical, but what we can know is that through the character of Siphokazi, Vapi creates a self for us to view, a self which I would argue, she would like us to perceive as being sensitive to tradition but at the same time a self able to negotiate the meanings of tradition. Ultimately, through Siphokazi, Vapi creates a self able to forge an independent identity, one operating outside the confines of tradition. As Daymond (1995) argues:

Even a singly authored life story which presents itself as mimetic realism is shaped by a social and a literary discourse which has considerable power to determine what the writer will present and what the reader will receive as real experience. Similarly for the expressive view of writing: the individual autobiographer is not an autonomous consciousness whose text can express untrammelled what he or she did, thought and felt, and this is because the cultural codes of the day shape subjectivity itself. Thus while direct access to the author's self, and to his/her encounters with the actual world and people, may be the promise of the distinctive pact between the writer and reader of autobiography,⁶ and while the writer's honesty and sincerity of

purpose are therefore drawn into the criteria which form our responses to autobiography,⁷ it simultaneously has to be recognised that in the act of writing the autobiographer is creating a self from within the current possibilities of discourse. (Daymond, 1995:564)

The following autobiographical tropes that shape Vapi's literary discourse are:

- Defining the self through place
- Fatherless households create strong women
- Reaching selfhood through adversity
- Leaders are born, not created.

2.3.1 Defining the self through place

Benstock (1991:13) cogently argues that the notion of "self" like the notion of "autobiography", cannot be easily defined and that is inextricably linked to culture.

Like autobiography, which slips in and out of genre definitions, self is both culturally constituted and composed of all that culture would erase – rather like a fishnet, composed both of string and empty spaces between the fibers. Or a skein of tangled yarn that cannot successfully be untangled – where knots and frayed elements remain." (Benstock 1991:5)

I would argue, that when talking about culture in South Africa, we cannot avoid talking about place. South African writers, particularly those writing in African languages, are defined by the places they live in, the languages they speak – they are part of the "tangled yarn" that Benstock speaks of, but they are also part of the "empty spaces" created by a political history that denied African people a critical voice.

A line can be drawn between autobiography and fiction because in fiction the author chooses the place, whereas in autobiography the author is born into a place and, in his/her early years, has little power to change his/her situation. It is writers such as Vapi who attempt to define the self honestly, by telling their own personal stories, allowing the “knots and frayed elements” of culture and, by association, place, to remain.

Vapi’s novel begins with a wedding that takes place at Ntsaka village under the Ngqeleni district. In the novel she writes, “*Le ngxikela yesihikahika somtshato wawukwenye yeelali zaseNgqeleni kwilalana ebizwa ngokuba kukwaNtsaka*” (p.1). (This huge, extraordinary wedding was held in one of Ngqeleni’s villages, a small village called Ntsaka.)

In order to illustrate that Ntsaka village has been, and is still Vapi’s social setting, an interview with the writer was held at her home (Ntsaka village) on 27 August 2006. Her parents’ home is also in the same village – pointing to the fact that Vapi directly lifts detail from her own life in order to contextualize her narrative within her own lived experience. Thus her fictional space is less fictional than autobiographical.

Even the surrounding areas mentioned in her narrative are real. In the novel she writes:

Le lali imelene neyaseMaNdlovini yaza yahlulwa kwilali yaseQokolweni neyaseJixini ngumlambo uMthatha yaza yaphinda yahlulwa kwidlelo lemfuyo

ngumfula ondonga zibomvu” (p.2). (This village is adjacent to MaNdlovini village. Mthatha River separates it from Qokolweni and Jixini villages while the river with red banks separates it from the grazing land.)

The above statement expresses the real places that are known to the author of the novel. While I was interviewing the author, I could see the livestock grazing at a distance, across the river with red river banks. Prior to the interview, I passed MaNdlovini village in order to reach Vapi’s home.

Nyamende (1993:175) commenting on the dichotomy of country and city life as represented in South African fiction argues that while city life is influential, village people, even when in the town, “keep their own section of town where they practise uncoordinated traditional systems of order.”

Vapi is also of the opinion that country and city values are able to co-exist and it is not necessary that their differences undermine human values. Responding to the question related to country life and city life in an interview, Vapi says:

Mna ndiphume ekhaya ndiwakhile umzi wabazali bam ukuze ndikwazi ukuzakhela lo mzi ndinawo. Ndiye ndazixelela ukuba ndizalwa nguZwelibanzi noMaNgxabane ngaphezulu bandizalela kule lali. Indlu yasedolophini yeyempangelo kanti apha yindawo endiza kungwatyelwa kuyo. Kukuzithemba ke oko. (Macabela, 2006)
(Before I built my new home, I started out in my parents’ home. I told myself that I was born in this village from Zwelibanzi and MaNgxabane. The house that I have

at Mthatha is just a residence while I am working; but the home that I have at Ntsaka is the place where my body will be buried. That is self-esteem.)

By using the words, '*Ndiye ndazixelela*,' (I told myself) Vapi emphasizes that she has not forgotten her identity and she also stresses that a person does not depend on what other people say about him or her. A prefix, '*Ndi*,' demonstrates how determined and dedicated she is in upholding and cherishing the qualities of selfhood. She does not speak through a second or a third person where she would have used the prefix, '*Uye wazixelela*,' (You told yourself, He or she told himself/ herself). The prefix she has chosen helps us to detect the author's autobiographical writing. In addition to this, Vapi affirms that she has a house in the city (Mthatha) and a home in the country (Ntsaka Village: Ngqeleni). She further states that when she passes away, she would love to be laid to rest at Ntsaka village instead of being buried in the city. According to her, the house she possesses in the city accommodates her while she is working but her rural home is her permanent (spiritual) dwelling place. At the end of her statement she articulates the following words, '*Kukuzithemba ke oko*' (That is self-esteem). Both selfhood and self-esteem link Vapi to her social setting, where her relatives and country people live and also where the graves of her ancestors are situated. The confidence she has about her social identity exhibits an autobiographer who is not ashamed of her historical background – in fact her background give her agency and a sense of belonging.

From the above statements we can deduce that Vapi views a person's identity as being inextricably linked to the place s/he calls home. The author sees self-confidence and self-

value as deriving from a connection with one's place of birth. Vapi then goes on to equate a Xhosa person's birthplace with the rural areas. Thus, when she is asked about the value of the birth place, she states:

Ukuba akuyixabisanga indawo ohlala kuyo kunzima ukuba uzithembe. Xabisa indawo ozalelwe kuyo. Ukungayixabisi indawo ozalelwe kuyo kwenza uhlale ungazithembanga phakathi kwabantu ohleli nabo, ube ngumntu ophila yedwa njengokuba ubona phaya edolophini ukuba umntu wenza izinto zakhe, akayihoyanga into eyenziwa ngummelwane wakhe. Apha ezilalini sinobubele saye sinazo neentlanti esigcina kuzo imfuyo yethu. (Macabela, 2006) (It is very difficult to have self-esteem if you do not value your birth place. If people do not value their birth places, there will be no self-esteem among them, and they will remain isolated, just as you observe that nobody cares about other people in the urban areas. On the contrary, people from rural communities are kind and possess kraals for their livestock.)

The dichotomy between country life and city life in Vapi's mind is one of opposing values – the country is equal to communal living and kindness, while the city represents isolation and loneliness. Personal identity, according to Vapi, can only, (paradoxically) be achieved through communal living. Vapi's undermining of urban communities is countered by Gaylard (1993:186) who writes of ghetto areas, "In spite of poverty and deprivation they have succeeded in creating a human community with its own values and norms, its own forms of recreation, its own ways of coping with the exigencies of everyday life in the ghetto."

The above statement confirms Nyamende's thesis that people take their sense of place with them wherever they are. Nyamende talks about village people who, even in the city, try by all means to preserve their traditional values so as to preserve their social identity. It is through this social identity that the people of Doornfontein, according to Nyamende's *'Martha has no land'* (1993), attend the Marabi dance. Gaylard's statement does, however, corroborate Vapi's interpretation of social identity because the people of Ntsaka village do not tell themselves that they are deprived but instead cultivate their soil and they possess their livestock. Even in the novel the characters are seen cultivating the soil and they also look after their livestock. City life, in contrast, denies productive life as rural people know it – there is no cultivation of the land, and there is no livestock.

Nyamende (1993:175) writes of the female protagonist in the *Marabi Dance*, "The rural life offers her a chance to possess land and stock, but to give up her present identity as an urban child; the urban life secures her true identity as she sees it, but offers her no security of a place of abode, no living space to call her own."

Vapi corroborates this notion of the rural area giving people a space to call their own, by highlighting the attachment of country people to their land and livestock noting that those who work in the urban areas return frequently to their rural homes. In an interview held with the author at Ntsaka village, Vapi stresses the value people place on their rural homes:

Nabaphangeli bavuka kusasa baye emsebenzini kodwa babuyela kwilali yabo rhoqo. Le nto yenzeka sele benemizi edolophini. Ndingayibeka ndithi kukuthanda ilali yakho. (Macabela, 2006) (The workers go to work in the morning, but they come back frequently. They do this even though they have houses in urban areas. I can say that they value their rural areas.)

From the beginning to the end of *Litshona liphume*, Vapi portrays a fascinating social setting that speaks to the pride a rural person feels with reference to traditional practices that reinforce a sense of belonging. In her novel, Vapi describes a rural scene thus:

Sele egqibe iintsuku ezisixhenxe umntwana kaMaNgxabane elalamile ilanga. Namhlanje kungamaxhashixhashi, kulixhaphetshu kuyaququzelwa ngababhinqa izikhaka nabahesha ngondyilo. UMaNgxabane uvuke kwangonyezi wasinda le ndlu ebefukamele kuyo. (p.9) (Seven days have lapsed after MaNgxabane's child has seen the sun. Today women wearing animal skins and men who are half-naked are busy like ants near the kraal. At dawn, MaNgxabane has smeared the hut she has been living in with cow dung).

According to Xhosa tradition, a goat is slaughtered and the African beer (*umqombothi*) is brewed in order to celebrate the birth of the child, this being done a week after the child is born. Family members and the neighbours including the local community celebrate together. It is through these traditional practices such as social gatherings that a country person, no matter where he or she is, strives to preserve his or her social identity.

2.3.2 Fatherless households create strong women (in the absence of her father Vapi becomes the head of the family)¹

Both the author and the main character, Siphokazi, in *Litshona liphume*, were born in the absence of their father. It is stated in the novel that Zwelibanzi was working in Cape Town. In the novel (p.45), Vapi narrates a very similar series of events to those that happened in her own life:

Emva kweeveki ezimbini umama engcwatyawe ndabuyela esikolweni, utata yena waphindela eKapa. Abantwana bona basala begcinwa ngumama uMaMiya. (Two weeks after my mother's funeral I returned to school, my father returned to Cape Town. My siblings remained with MaMiya). The same information is also revealed under Vapi's historical background.

Vapi demonstrates both her identity as an individual and also her role in the Xhosa community at a particular time in South Africa's history – rural men during this time went to towns to find work. Women stayed at home and looked after the fields and children. The fatherless home, rather than being viewed completely negatively and as harmful to a child's development, is rather seen as, to some extent, encouraging independence, self-reliance, fortitude, courage and even critical thinking. At the same time, however, on reading *Litshona liphume*, the reader rationalizes about the implementation of some traditional practices and the manner in which they undermine the freedom and the identity of women. Criticizing some traditional practices Vapi (p.49) writes:

¹ According to Carol S. Camlin, Victoria Hosegood, Marie-Louise Newell, Nuala McGrath, Till Bärnighausen, Rachel C. Snow (Gender, Migration and HIV in Rural KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, July 2010, Vol.5, Issue 7, p.2)
“In South Africa, women tend to migrate shorter distances to informal settlement areas and regional towns, and retain ties to rural homes, while men tend to migrate longer distances to urban areas, and are less likely to return to households of origin.”

Zathi zisiya kutshonela ezo ndwendwe wabe uXakekile ezibetha isifuba esithi, ebengayoleli, uza kulitya kuthi nco intliziyo yakhe ilifa lomkhuluwa wakhe. Enye into utata wayeshiye imfumba yeegusha, iinkomo, amahashe kunye neebhokhwe. Ndaqonda nje kakuhle ukuba unyanisile asisayi kukhotha naphantsi. (As soon as the visitors had left, uncle Xakekile was so ambitious saying that he was not going to stick to the promises he had made, instead he wanted to devour the inheritance that had been left by his brother. As a matter of fact my father had left behind a flock of sheep, a herd of cattle, horses and goats. I realized that my uncle was not joking, we were not going to get even a single item of our father's inheritance.)

This quote exemplifies the fact that many African men in positions of parental authority in fact deprive their nieces and nephews of their legitimate right to inheritance. Although Xakekile had promised the visitors that he was going to take care of his brother's children, he did not keep his word because he regarded himself as the only heir - undermining Siphokazi purely on account of her gender.

As we read *Litshona liphume*, we can sense that Vapi creates a strong 'female space' articulated and negotiated through suffering inflicted by males. Through Siphokazi, Vapi writes of her suffering as being extremely difficult to bear:

Iziquhamo zokusweleka kukatata ziye zangaginyisi mathe konke. Impatho endayifumana kwelo xhwili linguXakekile kunye nomkakhe uNomhlayifani, yayiqaqambisa intliziyo. (p.53). (The consequences of losing my father were too unbearable. The ill-treatment that I received from my greedy uncle, Xakekile and his wife, Nomhlayifani, was breaking my heart.)

With regard to social changes, Vapi mentions the absence of the heads of families due to their commitment to industries in the city. These changes affect both women and children in various ways. In the novel, Zwelibanzi cannot be with his wife during and after her pregnancy because he works in Cape Town far from his home. Vapi (p.5) writes wistfully of her (Siphokazi's) birth, wondering how father would react at the news of his new daughter, '*Azi uyise omabhongo uya kuthini na akuva ezi ndaba zimyoli, njengokuba ese wangumceph'ucandiwe nje.*' (I wonder what her ambitious father will say when he hears this good news especially since the daughter resembles his father so much).

A week after the birth of the main character, Zwelibanzi is still in Cape Town and the duty of naming the child is done by his brother who comes from Port Elizabeth (Thozamile). Vapi (p.12) writes, '*Ngalinye mzi wamaXesibe, nguSiphokazi igama lakhe.*' (Without beating about the bush, House of Xesibe, her name is Siphokazi).

2.3.3 Reaching selfhood through adversity (personal and political struggles)

Bruss (1976:13) writes:

Another point of focus for readers of autobiography is the arrangement and the process of narration in the text. Of course, any sophisticated act of reading will involve some attention to these aspects of the work, but in autobiography the structural display of the text is stipulated to be a demonstration of certain of the capacities and habits of the man about whom we are reading.

In line with the above expression, Vapi expresses her life through the main character. The text she embarks on demonstrates her own social and individual identity. In the novel (p.15) the author reveals, ‘*Yathi iphela loo veiki wabe uSiphokazi egulela ibhokisi emnyama, esitsho ngentla nangezantsi.*’ (At the end of that week Siphokazi was extremely sick, vomiting and having diarrhoea). According to Vapi’s historical background, there was a stage at which she became sick to such an extent that she nearly died hence the black coffin - *ibhokisi emnyama* is mentioned. This autobiographical trope illustrating a cycle of personal suffering and triumph is central to Vapi’s novel - through Siphokazi’s life and struggles we see Vapi’s life and struggles - the novel depicts a real story and it is for that reason that we view it as autobiography.

Gilmore (1994:89) observes that in autobiographical writing we need to, “substitute protagonist for author in order to grasp the real self in history” while Benstock (1988:1) argues that theories of selfhood are central to autobiographical writings although it is difficult to concretize, “how selfhood and in this case, female responsibility is defined.”

With regard to Vapi’s novel it can be argued that identity is closely linked to the struggling self – Vapi’s struggle depicted via the struggles of her fictional character, Siphokazi. Thus the autobiographical trope of reaching selfhood through adversity is further underscored by the attainment of identity through suffering femininity. But because the suffering female in Vapi’s novel is triumphant, Siphokazi is not just a

character, but a representation of female achievement and accomplishment. Siphokazi is, in fact, Vapi, setting a real example in a real world.

Critical to Siphokazi's (and hence Vapi's) personal struggle, is the actual political struggle that contextualized the author's life. Vambe and Chennells (2009:2) state:

In Southern Africa the preoccupation with context is more pronounced perhaps than in most parts of the world. Only the young, if they are very fortunate, have had no experience of a Southern Africa that encouraged us to exist in our own minds and in the minds of others as products of region, race and ethnicity.

Both text and context of *Litshona liphume* reflect Vapi's personal experience because what she writes goes hand in hand with her historical background. What is interesting is that Vapi is not critical of Whites, indeed in the novel, being seen in the company of Whites is seen as creating jealousy and suspicion amongst the villagers. One villager on seeing the wife of the shopkeeper visit Siphokazi's home remarks:

“Hayi bafazi, kukho amaqaba anethamsanqa. Umlungukazi axolele ukuthi fuxa kusoze, sikho thina bantu baneesofa emizini yethu?” (p.14). (“No women, some illiterate people are lucky. A white woman must tolerate sitting on a mud bench, while we are here, having sofas in our houses.”)

The author does not critically scrutinize the link between illiteracy and poverty, but the fact that Siphokazi creates relationships outside of her expected social group (i.e. with Whites), means that she is creating a personal experience that subverts expected capitalist relationships in which social class is equated with the material possessions and western notions of literacy. Vapi's heroine refuses to be locked into predetermined patterns of

adversity and expected behaviours of the powerless. She creates a personal experience that overcomes these restrictions.

One of the personal struggles suffered by rural women such as Vapi was the change in their demography as a result of social changes in South Africa. Mackenzie (1993:167) argues that social changes began to be reflected in the narrative styles of South African writers:

The demographic and social changes triggered by the discovery of diamonds and gold in the last part of the nineteenth century inevitably came to be reflected in the texture and narrative style of the short story in South Africa.

By demography, Mackenzie refers to the changing numbers of births and deaths in a population as a result of diseases and social and economic changes over a period of time. The autobiographical author not only has the background knowledge of her time to weave into her narrative, but also can accurately convey emotional and social responses as her story is part of the history. When Vapi narrates about the birth of the child she also mentions the role of the traditional midwives comparing their duty to that of the nurses at hospital. In a sense, just surviving birth in a rural area at that time was an indication of a sturdy personhood, a strong will to live. Vapi's knowledge of traditional midwifery, the challenges faced by the newly born baby and the steps taken by the community in order to protect the baby also expose the presence of the dichotomy between country life and city life.

Ezi mpelesi zazingafuni nonkqonkqonkqo otsho kwezo mbambo zenja kuba zisithi abantu baza kungena nemimoya emdaka. Ndisakhumbula nangoku kukhonkothainja yasekhapha, uSibonengezi, zagxalathelana iimazi ezinkulu, zidwanguzelisa imibhaco zikroba lowo ulixhoba laloo nja. (p.4) (These traditional midwives did not want to hear the words, ‘Knock, knock, knock,’ while they were busy taking care of the mother and the baby, they believed people were going to bring evil spirits. I still remember when the dog, Sibonengezi, was barking, the old women, brandishing their traditional attire, looked out in order to figure out who was the victim of that dog.)

Vapi’s personal experience embraces the social issues which are intertwined with religious, economic and political events in her life. In her historical background Vapi states that her mother passed away in 1969 and at that time she was only fifteen years old. Likewise in the novel it is stated that Siphokazi was only fifteen years old when her mother passed away. In the extract relating to her mother’s death we can see how religious belief is able to grant the bereaved child a certain comfort – but even in death the deeply religious Vapi is able to sound optimistic – her mother does not die, rather “the heavenly chariot ... took away our loving mother.”

Ngoku sele ingumnyaka we-1969 ndisitya amazimba. Ndenza ibanga lika Form III kwakule sinala yaseNdamase. Kuthe ngeeholide zobusika yafika inqwelo yakulo Moses ngesiquphe yemka nayo loo nzwakazi isithanda kunene umama. (p.42). (I have been eating sorghum up to the year 1969. I was doing Grade Ten at Ndamase High School. During the midyear vacation the Heavenly chariot that is associated to Moses came unexpectedly and took away our loving mother.)

Vapi also appears surprised by the suddenness of the death, “*Kunani khona ukuba ibikhe yabika ihlaba yatya necephe leyeza*” (p.42). (It is alarming that she did not complain about any shooting pain and as a result she did not receive any medication prior her death.)

Ncumisa Vapi was an excellent scholar, but her mother’s death severely affected her studies (see Figure 7 for her poorer than expected matric results), and later (although this event was expunged from the published version) her pregnancy and giving birth to her first daughter, also impacted negatively on her scholastic achievements. In the following passage she describes her educational trajectory (note how the pregnancy is not mentioned):

Ndalenza ibanga likaForm V ngomnyaka we-1972 kuba ndahamba ndiqhwalela emva kokupasa kwam uForm III phofu nakulo ndabuya nembande yesikhova ekupheleni komnyaka. Ndawa kwizifundo ezine zonke ndagqiba ekubeni ndizibhale ngasese. Ndalenza elo linge ngeyoKwindla kunyaka we-1973 ndabhala zazibini. (p.45) (I did Form V [Grade 12] in 1972 because I struggled after passing Form III [Grade 10] – but I failed at the end of the year. I failed four subjects, and decided to become a private candidate. I made that attempt of writing two subjects in March 1973)

The words, ‘*Ndabuya nembande yesikhova,*’ literally mean, ‘I came back with a leg of the owl’ but at the same time these words imply that her results were valueless. According to the author, bereavement affected her so much that she could not focus and

concentrate on her books as she did before. As a result, her progress report was not what she was expecting.

The word, '*ndiqhwalela*,' literally means, 'I was not able to walk/ crippled' but in the above extract this word connotes both the fragility and vulnerability that is caused by bereavement. In the novel the main character that has been doing well in her studies, performs badly after losing her mother through illness. If we compare the main character to an injured athlete, we see a similarity because it is difficult to finish the race on time as a result of the injury. In the same way Vapi's years of studying were prolonged by, *inter alia*, bereavement hence she ended up registering as a private candidate.

The statements about her studies that are made through the main character tally with the statement that is made by the author in an interview with her, and this strengthens our belief that Siphokazi is indeed Ncumisa Vapi.

Bereavement reoccurs when Siphokazi loses her grandfather and father in one year. Vapi likens the death of her grandfather to that of a big tree falling:

Kuthe kanye ngayo loo nyanga yoKwindla savakala isithonga sokuwa komthi omkhulu utatomkhulu. (p.45). (In March 1973, the sound of the big tree falling was heard, it was my grandfather.)

In addition to this loss, the writer experienced the death of her own father shortly after the funeral of her grandfather. In the novel she writes:

Njengoko utata besimpheleke ngezolo, ngengomso xa liya kunina safumana ukuba itshoba lilele umbethe ngengozi yemoto. (p.46). (A week after the funeral of my grandfather, we accompanied our father to the station. On the following day, when the sun was going down, we received the sad news that he had passed away in a car accident.)

The metaphor, '*Itshoba lilele umbethe*' (The tail of the cow is covered with dew) connotes that a person has passed away because a cow that is still alive keeps on shaking its tail to ward off flies but if it is dead there is no movement. This metaphor demonstrates how Vapi translates the grim realities of her life into a lyrical narrative of suffering and grief.

Vapi carefully chooses the words, '*Savakala isithonga sokuwa komthi omkhulu utatomkhulu*' in order to portray the passing away of her grandfather. Basically these words denote a big sound that is heard when a big tree is falling. On the contrary, the big tree connotes a senior citizen whose passing away cannot be likened to that of the child. If a comparison is made between the funerals of infants and adults, a big difference can be seen because very few people attend the funeral of the former while the multitude attends the funeral of the latter. On the one hand infants are not well known but on the

other hand elderly people are famous because of what they have already done in their families and communities. Once again Vapi is able to translate her personal experience of the loss of an important person into a creative narrative by using Xhosa metaphor that immediately elevates fact to fiction.

The bereavement of the grandfather and the father is exactly expressed under Vapi's historical background meaning that *Litshona liphume* is a true story. The details connected to the departure of the stepmother confirm that this is autobiography.

Through the main character Vapi says:

Sasala kwelo khaya lilusizi sizezo ntsana zikhedamileyo zisibalekile izihlobo nezalamane. Nomama wethu omtsha owaye enonyaka omnye kuphela sihlala naye kwathi kwakuba nje wakhetha ukuwubopha ube mncinane owakhe walingana ikhwapha, waphel'emehlweni wasala ezintliziyweni. (p.48). (We were left alone, as young as we were in that sad home and our relatives had deserted us. Even our stepmother who had been staying with us for a year decided to pack her things and go. We could not see her anymore except through remembrance.)

In describing her historical background and the personal problems she has gone through, Vapi also mentions her stepmother's departure. The stepmother of the main character (Siphokazi) and the stepmother of the author (Vapi) are inseparable - Vapi writes out her loss by describing it in her fiction. In her own life, Vapi has also highlighted the fact that

her stepmother was pregnant at the time of leaving and later on she gave birth to their stepbrother.

The departure of the stepmother cannot be regarded as negligence but it can be explained under economic dependence because Zwelibanzi was the only breadwinner in that family. To a woman who had been married for one year, it was going to be difficult to live without the husband especially since there were other stepchildren. Since Zwelibanzi was the sole source of income, the stepmother realized that after her husband's death, leaving was the only option suitable for her. At the beginning, Vapi declares that she dedicates her novel to her father, Zwelibanzi and her mother, MaNgxabane. In the novel Vapi writes, '*Isidima sakho wasilahla mhla bashiywa nguyise uZwelibanzi*' (p.68). (You lost your dignity on the day her father, Zwelibanzi, passed away.) Zwelibanzi is not only the father of the author but he is also Siphokazi's father in the novel.

As a result of the dichotomy between country life and city life, difficult decisions like the one taken by Vapi's stepmother, can be taken because people want to survive. The breadwinner had gone to the city of Cape Town in order to work for his rural family. Now that he has passed away, the family members depending on him encounter a situation that they have not foreseen. Unlike the stepmother who has an alternative family to turn to, Vapi and her siblings have only the one home - they have nowhere else they can run to. It is at this stage that the fictionalized Vapi, in the person of Siphokazi, becomes the head of her family. In the novel she states:

Ndaqonda ngaloo mnyaka ukuba iliwa libhek'umoya kwicala elinam, kufuneka ndidlale indima yam ebomini. (p.48). (From that year I realized that the world had conspired against me and that I had to play a major role in order to move on.)

This statement is central to the novel's autobiographical trope of reaching selfhood through adversity. Vapi recognizes that forces have "conspired against her" and in order to change the course of her life she has to assume agency, she can no longer be a victim, but has to be the central actor in her life.

In *Litshona liphume* Vapi demonstrates how life can be both corrupt and violent because from her own experience one can observe the pains she has gone through due to bereavement. By narrating her story she empowers other people who are also the victims of the dichotomy between the country life and city life.

By stating that she had to "play a major role" Vapi asserts her feminist agenda clearly – she is not going to wait for some man to tell her what to do or even to make her happy. By this act of private self-reflection she creates for herself a separate space, one that promises a life moulded by personal choices and private effort. This she partly achieves through her own career path and her religious faith, and partly through her autobiographical writing. Benstock (1988:1) acknowledges that this separate space is a place at the limits of the masculine/feminine divide:

The private suggests a scene of writing that invites the female, a separate space at the very limits of the generic divide between the masculine and the feminine.

2.3.4 Leaders are born, not created

Nyamende (1993:178), writing about the tragedy of identity in the Marabi dance, argues that the protagonist, “is not a leader, but looks to the oncoming generation to have the people’s leaders within it.”

Responding to the interview question on leadership, Vapi observes that children can be observed taking on their roles in life at an early age:

Emakhwenkweni nasemantombazaneni iyenzeka le nto. Omnye umbone etitsha abantwana besikolo kwaphaya emadlweni. Ubabone phaya emadlweni ukuba lo uza kuba ngumfundisi-ntsapho, omnye uza kuba ngunontlalontle njalo njalo. (Macabela, 2006) (It happens among boys and girls. One may pretend that he or she is teaching the learners. You observe them in the pastures and you begin to realize that one will be an educator while another will be a social worker etc.)

This clear sense of destiny revealed by Vapi in the interview is further echoed in her autobiographical novel, in which people live out their lives in ways in which she seems to believe are predetermined.

Vapi's response demonstrates that leadership qualities are not confined to her as the autobiographer but they are also extended to the young generation. In the novel (p.104) it is stated:

Apho kwezo ofisi zabahloli ndafikela emaxhegweni abahloli anobubele. Ndenzelwa isidlo nje esincinane sokwamkelwa kwam. Bathetha bathi isizathu sokuba benze esi sidlo sesokuba ndilinenekazi lokuqala ukuza kungena kule 'Post' yokuba ngu 'District Clerk,' okoko ibisoloko ibanjwa ngamanene. (At the District offices of the Department of Education, the officials were so generous. A small banquet was organized in order to welcome me. In their speeches they revealed that I was the first lady to occupy the post of the District Clerk, all along it had been occupied by gentlemen).

Mtuze (1986:1) in the introduction to his novel, '*Alitshoni lingaphumi*,' writes:

Apha ke size nomzekelo owaziwayo wenovelana yentlalo okanye engentlalo yabantu. Kolu didi ke kugxininiswa kwiimeko eziphathelele entlalweni yabantu jikelele. Ezo meko ke zingaba zezoqoqosho, ezonqulo okanye ezobupolitika, zizodwa okanye zidibene. (Here, we bring forward an example of a novel that focuses on social matters. Under this category the emphasis is on events pertaining to social conditions. Those events may trigger economic, religious or political issues separately or combined.)

It is important to note here that Vapi had first chosen the same title as Mtuze (*Alitshoni lingaphumi*) for her novel, not being aware of the other book with the identical title. Her publishers asked her to change the title to *Litshona liphume*. What is significant is that the two writers penned their novels at a very similar time in South Africa's history (Mtuze's novel was published in 1986, Vapi's in 1989). Although Mtuze and Vapi are not the same age (Mtuze was born in 1941 and Vapi in 1953) and although they grew up in different areas (Mtuze in Middelburg and Cradock, Vapi in Ngqeleni district of the

Eastern Cape) both experienced Apartheid and poverty and both rose above their circumstances to become successful academics and personalities.

Vambe and Chennells (2009:1) note the tension that exists between writing about heroic lives and writing about heroic peoples, movements and communities:

The record of a person possessed of exceptional qualities may once have justified life stories but in a discipline that was becoming preoccupied with the movements of classes, races and nations.

In a skilful way Vapi narrates a story of her life and this story includes the movement of migrant labourers because they intend supporting their families back at home. In this way Vapi does not just narrate an individual's life, but allows us insights into the preoccupations of ordinary South Africans making up classes and races. At the same time however, because she has her protagonist's personal successes as central to the story, we can deduce that Vapi's understanding is that leaders are born, not created. Political movements and social realities can inflict hardships and challenges on people, but those who are born to lead will lead, and those who need to follow do just that.

Vambe and Chennells (2009:1) argue that we need to locate individual heroism in a particular social context, "The individual, however outstanding, was interesting only in his or her typicality of some larger collective." I would argue that the character of Siphokazi is both typical of Vapi the individual, but also of the larger collective of South

African rural women's lives and it is Vapi's skill as a writer that stops us being indifferent to the way in which those lives have been inscribed by the larger contexts in which they are lived (Vambe and Chennells 2009:2).

2.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I have linked Vapi's life to the life of the protagonist in *Litshona Liphume* and have highlighted how Vapi used particular episodes in her life to form the autobiographical tropes, or themes, of her novel. I connect Vapi's own interpretations of her life as communicated to me in interviews with her creative expression of this understanding in the characters and narrative of her novel. In this chapter I also used photographs and maps to demonstrate the direct relationship between Vapi's own lived life with that of her novel's protagonist.

CHAPTER THREE

VAPI AS CREATIVE WRITER OF *LITSHONA LIPHUME*

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I look at the way in which Vapi uses the Xhosa language to give creative expression to her actual lived experience. The title of the novel, figures of speech, imagery, irony, rhetorical questions, hyperbole and ideophones are all analysed as devices Vapi uses to give successful literary expression to the narrative of her life's events. This chapter also examines the link between the writer and her community and positions her as a firm believer in non-racialism and progressive thought though still with her identity rooted in a traditionalist world view.

3.2 Language

Gilmore (1994:35) observes the essential link between the autobiographical writer, her language and her life. She asks and answers the question "What is an autobiographer?", referring to the "artifice of fiction" which the autobiographical writer eschews:

What is an autobiographer? The person who writes an autobiography. For autobiography has been interpreted as the arena in which the self speaks itself without the artifice of fiction, where language is in some non-mysterious way a pure mirror of the writer's life.

Vapi's language, although literary, is as Gilmore suggests "a pure mirror" of her life. Thus while Vapi has made an extensive contribution to Xhosa literary language, ranging from her figurative language, for example, the title of her novel, *Litshona liphume* (The sun sets and rises again), to the themes (autobiographical tropes) of her messages – she nevertheless allows her "self" to "speak itself" because the narrative is non-mysterious – it "mirrors" her life. It is her figurative language that allows her to work out her anger, pain and frustrations as well as her motivations and optimism.

The figurative language that Vapi uses helps not only herself, but Xhosa speakers generally, find meaning and thereby to recover their identity. This kind of language is characterised by idiomatic expression, hyperbole, metaphor, simile and euphemism.

Literal and figurative language usages are two sides of the same coin because they enrich the language that is spoken; however, they do so at different levels. I would argue that for Vapi figurative writing allows her to articulate her feminine distress, her human anguish and her inner-life in a way that the simple, literal narration of her life events cannot do justice to. Pearsall (2001: 828) defines the word 'literal' as, "Taking words in their usual or most basic sense without metaphor or allegory." This explains that words

taken literally are understood as they are without any kind of imagination or reflection. Pearsall (2001:528) further defines the word figurative as, “Departing from a literal use of words i.e. metaphorical.” In this way the focus is entirely on the secondary meaning of the word rather than on the primary meaning.

In the few chapters that are going to be chosen from Vapi’s novel for the purpose of this study, it will be explained how she has used her creativity with regard to figurative language, for it is in figurative language that the message is hidden, and it is through metaphor that the author is most capable of allowing us insights into her inner feelings and self-reflections.

3.2.1 The title of the novel

The title of the novel, *Litshona liphume* (The sun sets and rises again), is used figuratively causing readers to search for possible meanings, in the process transporting them into the world of imagination and of meaning. Abrams (1988: 82) says, “Most commonly in current usage, imagery signifies figurative language, especially the vehicles of metaphors and similes.”

The title of Vapi’s novel – *Litshona liphume* - denotes the big star that sets in the evening and rises in the morning. The title is also an example of Vapi’s use of the autobiographical trope of reaching selfhood through adversity – the adversity here is

represented by *Litshone*, while the reaching of selfhood is realised by *liphume*. Thus the denotation does not reveal the whole message of the narrative because the novel is not about sunset or sunrise. The setting of the sun connotes the loss of life, faith and hope, and the rising of the sun refers to the recovery of life, faith and hope. By employing such a title, Vapi uses figurative language to prevent readers from taking the words at face value, opening a door to concealed meanings, which will be understood as the novel unfolds.

To Vapi, the sun has supreme significance in the universe because it is the source of light to the planet, light without which people, animals and plants cannot live. In the same way, a parent, whether a father or a mother, is the source of life without which a child cannot happily live. In the absence of the sun, lives are threatened by roaming predators that attack innocent creatures. What Vapi is stating is that, once a child loses his or her parents, there are opportunists and situations that arise, making the child's life miserable.

At sunrise, people, animals and plants regain their safety because the sun warms them and takes away night predators, fear and frost. The title of Vapi's novel does not imply that if a parent has passed away, he or she will come back, but it does suggest that, to all children who have lost their parents, God will take over as provider. At the end of the novel, Vapi acknowledges this spiritual intervention through what I would term a poem-prayer:

Kwathi kuba Wena
Umntu awumdalelanga
Ukuba axikixwe axexebulwe,
Axovulwe axuzulwe
Ade axubayele naphakade.
Wandisindisa (p.119).
(As a result of Your Grace
You never created a person
In order to be punished repeatedly,
To be oppressed severely
Until he or she is enslaved forever.
You came to my rescue).

The title, alone, captures the minds of readers because it encourages them to think imaginatively even before they read the first chapter. Boulton (1974:133) argues that images are employed because of their affective potency rather than their appeal to the intellect, “The images affect us long before we have grasped the intellectual meaning.”

Mthintsilana (1992:45) expands on this ability of the image to create pictures, to conjure up smells and textures , “*Imifanekiso-ngqondweni isetyenziselwa ukuba uyive, uvakalelwe, uyibone ngengqikelelo le nto kuthethwa ngayo.*” (Images are used in such a way that you may hear, feel, and see through the mind’s eye what is being discussed).

In light of Boulton’s explication, Vapi’s title, *Litshona liphume*, penetrates the hearts and minds of Xhosa speakers, because they are affected either directly or indirectly, the phrase itself conveying as it does a multiplicity of images and emotions.

Some people are directly affected in the sense that they remember how things became dark in their lives, especially as a result of bereavement. Other people are indirectly affected because they know friends or neighbours who have experienced dark days in their lives. As people begin to read the novel, they already have some expectations, whether good or bad, based on what they or their friends have gone through. The title *Litshona liphume* is also reminiscent of the Xhosa condolence offered to a grieving relative after a bereavement *Akuhlanga lungehlanga* (What happens always happens). Note the juxtaposition of two words, closely related, balancing each other both syllabically and philosophically. In *Litshona liphume* we have a three syllable word followed by a contrasting three syllable word – both in the affirmative. In *Akuhlanga lungehlanga* we have a four syllable word followed by a four syllable word – both in the negative. This natural balance, this sense of conflicting but stabilizing opposites suggesting an almost fatalistic acceptance of life is found in many Xhosa aphorisms in which two words appear in juxtaposition – often with the second word in the subjunctive mood as in the title *Litshona liphume*. Some illustrative sayings are *ukudada uwele* (literally: to swim and cross/figuratively: to reach your goal), *ukukhala zome* (literally: to cry out until they dry up/figuratively: to cry out in vain), *ukuvuka uyibambe* (literally: to wake up and catch it/figuratively: to get up and go).

The Xhosa philosophy of accepting suffering and death with grace and humanity is however, given a new interpretation in Vapi's novel. Thus while the author accepts the

binaries of death and life, suffering and comfort, rich and poor, she challenges them as an individual, she takes control of her life and by so doing, suggests to the reader that individual agency is key to negotiating a more meaningful life.

With regard to Mthintsilana's preceding explanation, Vapi employs the key words, 'sunset' and 'sunrise' to help to evoke the five senses, namely hearing, touch, sight, taste and smell. While reading, one imagines that one sees the sun when it is setting and also when it is rising. At the same time, one uses imaginary ears to hear the sounds of birds, animals and insects. Imaginary hands touch the cold after sunset and the warmth after sunrise. Readers also use imaginary tongues to taste bitterness after sunset and sweetness after sunrise. In addition, an imaginary nose is used for the purpose of inhaling the cold air in the evening and the warm air in the morning. The above five senses are not confined only to sunset and sunrise, but are also associated with the real experiences of human beings.

Knowing that Vapi suffered parental loss, the title gains added meaning for the reader, but it could also suggest the daily sense of loss a small child experiences when his or her mother must leave. In apartheid South Africa (and indeed even now) black children often had to be left behind when their parents went to find work in the cities and it was only at the end of the year that they would return for Christmas celebrations – again a sense of loss and rejection followed by one of celebration, return and reconnection.

Vapi writes of the actual physical loss of her parents, “*Inene ukukhula kukubona izimanga, yaza yandenza indaba yokushiya kwam ngabazali*” (p.59). (Really growing up is seeing surprises, the passing away of my parents brought misery to me.) This sense of plunging into despair (*-tshona*) is brought out in the following passage:

Ndathetha ndedwa ecaleni kwelo goqo ndawuva unkcenkeza loo mthombo, wenze umjelo ukunqumla izidlele sel’umana ukukhongozelwa sisifuba selokhwe endandiyinxibile izandla zixhase ibunzi. (p.60). (I spoke to myself near a pack of wood and I felt tears running like a fountain, crossing my cheeks falling into the chest of the dress that I was wearing and my hands were supporting my forehead.)

Although the words of the above extracts were uttered by Siphokazi (the main character in Vapi’s novel), they reflect exactly Vapi’s personal experience because both of them are the victims of bereavement. It is also through the image of the suffering child that Vapi introduces her trope of fatherless households creating strong women. Using highly emotive language the author sinks us into the child’s despair, but already we see that it is Siphokazi’s own hands that are offering her support (*izandla zixhase ibunzi*) – the beginning of the strength we are to see later realized fully in the novel.

3.2.2 Figures of speech

Figures of speech play a major role in Vapi’s novel and emphasise her not only her creativity but her vast knowledge of the Xhosa language with all its idiomatic expressions, words of wisdom and aphorisms. The images used by Vapi also firmly

identify her as a Xhosa writer who has been steeped in tradition, a writer who knows the particular context from which the similes and metaphors emerge. the second chapter, Vapi says, “*KwakungumMbo nomXesibe ngaloo mini abantu banyakazela ngathi ziimpethu*” (p.1). (On that day there were many people and they were moving like maggots).

The idiomatic expression, ‘*Mbo nomXesibe*’ denotes two groups of people belonging to different clans. This idiomatic expression connotes a multitude. At a wedding ceremony the bride and the bridegroom are accompanied by their families, because marriage is a social contract that brings two families together. The simile, ‘moving like maggots’ denotes the movement of legless larvae that eat decaying matter. This simile connotes the movement of numerous people who were attending the wedding. Thus in one sentence Vapi demonstrates not only her knowledge of the language, but her knowledge of her social (the traditional wedding) and natural (the maggots) environment. Thus the autobiographical trope of defining the self through place is even realized through Vapi’s choice of figurative language.

3.2.3 Imagery and irony

Vapi employs imagery and irony when she anthropomorphises the thorny bushes ‘beckoning’ people:

Yibone wena loo mithi yemiqokolo iyokozela isindwa ziziqhamo zayo ezikhoba umhambi ekude angalibali naye abantu bale lali bekhuthele belime imithi yeepesika. Udano lwakhe akubona ukuba asimithi yapesika le. (p.2). (Take a look at those thorny bushes that are full of fruits beckoning a distant passer-by, and consequently he is astounded by the local people who cultivate peach trees diligently. What a disappointment when he finds out these are not peach trees.)

The above imagery is used to portray the beauty of the land in September, and is employed by the author to establish a sense of the self being defined through place. This trope is further realized through Vapi's vivid description of the lushness and loveliness of the land, "*Oophopho beenkabi zamahashe babekhumathele begrumza loo qaqaza uluhlaza yaka ulitsho ilizwe layintombazana.*" (p.2) (The strong geldings stuck to the ground grazing on the soft green grass, the one that made the land beautiful.)

Through this metaphor, Vapi associates the beauty of the land with the beauty of a girl, because in society, a girl is regarded as a flower that decorates the whole nation. On the contrary, winter is associated with a boy because it is full of dust. Once again Vapi skilfully inserts the trope of defining the self through place by actually comparing the beauty of the countryside with that of a young girl '*ilizwe layintombazana*' – literally translates as 'the country was a young girl.' The author is indirectly allowing us to see in the beauty of the land, the potential beauty (both physical and spiritual) of her heroine.

The irony contained in the statement, 'What a disappointment when he finds out these are not peach trees,' encourages the reader to see both sides of a situation. Taylor (1981: 182)

says, “A verbal irony is a contrast between what is said and the fact of the situation.” Frye et al. (1983: 97) note that irony produces an opposition to what is anticipated, “Situational irony occurs when something that happens is opposite to what was intended or normally expected.”

The above irony expresses Vapi’s creativity in portraying human experience, for instance, a passer-by changes his direction, thinking that he is going to find something delicious, but in the end he is disappointed because he has not found what he was hoping for. This is a metaphor for life that Vapi is able to introduce into her narrative, and it echoes the autobiographical trope of reaching selfhood through adversity – we may get disappointed in life, but that disappointment should lead us to a more vigorous search for the ‘fruit’ that will truly nourish us.

Satyo (1981:131) explains, “*Isigqebelo sisoloko sinento esiyihlalutyayo okanye esiyihluzayo, wofika sihluza ezobuvuvu kwezokwenene.*” (An irony always analyses or sifts something, it separates falsehood from the truth.) According to this explanation, Vapi’s writing demonstrates irony by encompassing both the bad and the good days. In so doing, she suggests that people should refrain from being lulled into believing that there will be only good times and no bad times.

Mthintsilana and Sirayi (1992:49) evaluate different kinds of irony, namely, “*Isigqebelo esisentethweni, isigqebelo esingummiselo, isigqebelo somdlalo.*” (A verbal irony, a situational irony, a dramatic irony.) In Vapi’s novel, *Litshona liphume*, a situational irony manifests itself because the protagonist is unexpectedly exposed to a situation that was not predicted. Despite this fact, Vapi maintains that the sun sets and rises again, that life will improve. This improvement is, however, dependent on her protagonist’s ability to motivate herself, to take control of her life and to shape it into something positive. The author uses her own life to demonstrate the role of individual agency in changing one’s circumstances and uses the autobiographical trope of realizing the self through adversity in order to emphasize the power of character, the strength of personal drive.

3.2.4 Simile

Another figure of speech that is used extensively in Vapi’s novel is the simile. Vapi writes, “*Andisathethi ke ngomlisela nomthinjana. Wawuyokozela ngathi yimithi yeKrisimesi, umbejembeje ngathi ngumnyama*” (p.2). (I am not even talking about the teenage boys and the teenage girls. They were beautiful like Christmas trees, colourful like the rainbow.) The reason Vapi likens the youth to Christmas trees and the rainbow is that they are smartly dressed, and their attire attracts the eye. The Christmas tree illustrates a significant event which occurs once a year. The rainbow appears in the clouds during a rainy season. These two phenomena are very beautiful, and people look at them with deep appreciation. The presence of the teenagers at the wedding connotes a significant event which does not occur every day. At the wedding two groups compete as

they sing for the bride and the bridegroom respectively. It is an event that is not forgotten because it is discussed for a long time.

Another simile is utilised by Vapi when she describes how certain people view a baby who is born in a hospital:

Ke kaloku inkolo yabo yeyokuba umntwana ozalelwa esibhedlele, waza waphathwa zizandla zezo ntshatha zabeLungu akabi nangqondo, uba lihesheheshe nje, lento ehla inyuka ixela amanzi olwandle. (p.4). (According to their belief a baby who is delivered in hospital, in the hands of the white doctors, does not grow well mentally, as he or she becomes a good-for-nothing person moving up and down like the sea waters.)

In the above simile, Vapi likens a child to the sea waters because they consist of waves that move up and down. The implication of this simile is that a wandering child will not attain a stable position and as a result he or she will be unreliable. The children born in these circumstances are inclined to wander. Vapi, in her writing, reveals how illiterate people criticise hospitals. In this way she demonstrates a clash between two cultures (that of the country and that of the city). On the one hand, country people do not always take pregnant mothers to hospitals, but on the other hand, city people have always predominantly relied on hospitals. By using this simile Vapi's trope of defining the self through place is given a further dimension – hospitals are not meaningful places for rural people, home is what defines a rural person, from birth to death.

3.2.5 Rhetorical questions

Echoing this autobiographical trope of defining the self through place, is the rhetorical question, “*Andithi kaloku nenkaba le yakhe kufuneka yaziwe ukuba iphi? Xa ke ngoku aza kuzalelwa esibhedlele uza kulandwa kanjani?*” (p.4). (Is it not appropriate to know where his or her umbilical cord is? If the baby is born in hospital what background does he or she have?)

Pahl (1984:241) observes that rhetorical questions are essentially used to stress an idea and do not require an answer:

Izithethi nababhali bakhe bayigxininise into ngokubuza umbuzo angawuphenduliyo lo yena uwubuzayo, koko ewuyekela kubaphulaphuli okanye kumfundi ukuba aziphendulele. Kanti xa athandayo unokuwuphendula ngokwakhe. (Sometimes both speakers and authors emphasise an idea through a rhetorical question so that listeners or readers can answer on their own. If a speaker or an author wishes, he or she may answer.)

Abrams (1988:161) observes that a rhetorical question, “ is a question asked, not to evoke an actual reply, but to achieve an emphasis stronger than a direct statement, by inviting the auditor to supply an answer which the speaker presumes to be the obvious one.”

Vapi rhetorically poses the question of the origin of the umbilical cord, suggesting a divide that separates the reasoning of country and city people, especially in matters relating to the births of babies. This is a divide that demonstrates diversity within a

culture and foregrounds the trope of defining the self through place. By using a rhetorical question, Vapi encourages readers themselves to think in order to understand the role of each culture.

3.2.6 Hyperbole

In the novel *Litshona liphume*, hyperbole is also used in order to demonstrate a particular idea. To describe Siphokazi's mother's heavy pregnant walk, Vapi writes, hyperbolically (I say hyperbolically because MaNgxabane would not have literally put one foot on top of the other):

Yabeka unyawo phezu kolunye le ntokazi kucaca mhlophe ukuba ifunyenwe yinto eyifumeneyo.(p.3). (That lady put a foot on top of another foot and it was clear that she was suffering from something.)

The image however, is powerful, because the slow, deliberate gait of a pregnant woman is conjured up perfectly by the exaggeration.

Jackson (1916:257) concludes that hyperbole is primarily used for effect, "Hyperbole is an expression in which an exaggeration is made, not with the intention of deceiving anyone but for the purpose of effect."

Luwaca and Qamata (1996:137) note that it is also employed intentionally to achieve a particular end result, “*Ugqithiso okanye ubabazo kulapho kusetyenziswa ubaxo ukugxininisa imeko ethile.*” (Hyperbole is characterised by exaggeration which emphasises a particular goal.)

Speaking through her protagonist, Vapi uses hyperbole again when she writes of her reaction to bad news:

Sahlukana netshomi yam yangulowo wasinga kwemkhokelela kowabo. Ndandixheleke umphefumlo zezanamhlanje, zazyikrazule phakathi intliziyo yam yasala ilijaja ligazi ulijacu kananjalo umphefumlo wam. (p.30)(My friend and I parted, each going to her separate home. The news of that day had attacked my soul. My heart had been torn apart and left bleeding, while my soul was very depressed.)

The above hyperbole helps the reader to understand the extent of the damage; and that it is not just the primary meaning, but the secondary meaning that counts too. Significantly the hyperbole also allows the author to reintroduce her trope of reaching selfhood through adversity – but here we are plunged more deeply, through the figurative language, into the author’s sense of despair, with no hope yet being intimated at.

3.2.7 Ideophones

Ideophones exemplify the creativity of the author because they highlight the point she is presenting, without requiring repetition or excessive description. Vapi describes the interior of a hut:

Kwelinye icala lendlu, kuthe zikiva usoze (isitulo sodaka), kanti phaya entla kuthiwe nca amanqwanqwa odaka, itsho ke leyo ibe yikhabhathi. (p.3). (On the other side of the hut, a mud bench was fixed to the wall and the floor; at the upper side, the mud shelves adhered to the wall forming a cupboard.) [my emphasis]

The ideophones, *zikiva* and *nca* elucidate the manner in which the mud bench and the mud shelves are fixed or adhered to the hut. As a result of this, readers are encouraged to use their imagination. Once again the autobiographical trope of defining the self through place is inserted – the description of the humble dwelling is the description of a humble life, a life defined through practical simplicity – like the simple mud shelves in a hut.

Pahl (1984:196) argues however that ideophones do not speak of place so much as of actions, sounds and the situation:

La magama azizifanekisozwi alatha izenzo, izandi nobume. Aziziqu kuphela ezingenakuhlonyelwa zimaphambili nezimamva, kwaye azikhe zalathe

ndawo naxesha. (Ideophones demonstrate actions, sounds and the situation. They are the stems to which prefixes and suffixes cannot be attached and they do not demonstrate the place and the time.)

Ziervogel et al. (1985:196) explain that ideophones are often found together with an auxiliary verb, “The ideophone is used alone without further formatives but more often it is preceded by the verb ‘*thi*’ with its concords and tense forms.”

According to the above explanation, Vapi’s ideophones (*zikiva* and *nca*) are preceded by the verb ‘*thi*’. Vapi writes:

Athsuthsuza amaxhegwazana ebasa amalongo kwelo nqugwala lineefestile ezingangenqindi lomntu, zaza zaphinda zavalwa mba kwatsho akwabikho nosebesebe lo womoya ongenayo. (p.3). (The old women struggled to breathe making fire with the dry cow dung in that small hut that consisted of windows that were equal to a human fist. They were shut tightly to such an extent that there was no air that was coming in.) [my emphasis]

Nabe et al. (1981:83) elucidate on the particular ideophone ‘*mba*’ suggesting that the word brings to life not just the motion of the door, but the particular sound it makes:

Uvala ngamandla akawuzobi ngokuthe cace umfanekiso wokwaphuka kocango. Umba uwuzoba ucace, unge uyambona lowo uluvalayo ude uve nesithonga salo. (The breaking of the door is not explained by the words *shut forcefully*. (The word ‘bang’ gives a full explanation and as a result, you imagine both the person who is doing the closing and the sound of the door.)

In Vapi’s sentence, what is so skilful, is that the sound represented by the ‘*mba*’ is not happening in the present moment, rather it had happened before – there was a banging, a slamming, and now we have the window shut so tightly as a result of that action.

In an interview I conducted with Vapi at her home (Macabela, 2006) the cramped living conditions return as a theme – the author describes the huts as follows:

Besihlala nje kumanqgwala angangeni moya ngokwaneleyo, ifestile ingangena inqindi lomntu okanye intloko yomntwana. We used to live in rondavels that didn't have enough air, the window being the size of a human fist or the head of an infant.

Interestingly, in her spoken interview, Vapi does not use an ideophone, but a simile. Satyo et al. (1996:14-15) give a further explanation of the use of ideophones by Xhosa writers:

Ababalisi ngabantu abathanda ukuzoba imifanekiso-ngqondweni nokulinganisa. Izifanekisozwi zibanceda kakhulu ke apha, kuba kaloku zona ngamagama akwaziyo ukulinganisa izandi nokuqaqambisa inkcazo. (Narrators are the people who like using imagery. Ideophones help them because they are words that demonstrate sounds in order to give more explanation.)

Clearly Vapi, in her novel, uses literary devices such as ideophones to create accurate pictures of the rural homes she knew. She takes us into this world of rural smells, colours, sights and sounds through a perfect choice of imagery and Xhosa ideophones. It is as if she is saying “Take my hand. Look. This was my home. Smell. Feel. This was my world. The windows were so small, there was very little air.” But she is also saying, through her figurative language and powers of description “That lack of air meant a lack of opportunity. But look at what I did, I did not let that cramped and dusty space define me, I broke out and found the air. But I never forgot where I came from.”

3.3 The link between the writer and the community

The novel, *Litshona liphume*, reflects the experiences of real communities, because the challenges facing the characters and the challenges that are encountered by real communities are inseparable. These challenges are presented in such a way as to underscore the autobiographical trope of reaching selfhood through adversity through education. Vapi identifies education as a precious phenomenon without which the community cannot succeed. Speaking through Zwelibanzi (Siphokazi's father), Vapi says:

Ixesha esiya kulo lifuna iingqondi zemveli ize loo ngqondo yemvelo ithiwe wambu lucwambu lwengqondo yokhanyo, imfundo khon'ukuze nikwazi ukubhinqa omfutshane nihlangule isizwe esintsundu kwiingcinezelo neembandezelo zeentshutshiso zabamhlophe abasidobelela eludakeni. (p.26) (Our lifetime demands indigenous thinkers so that their indigenous knowledge can be reinforced by contemporary knowledge, which is education. In this way you will be capable of rescuing the African nation from the oppression, hardships and persecution of the Whites who led us to the quagmire.)

In her M.A. Dissertation, Vapi (1998:43) further writes, "The poem, *Ingxoxo enkulu ngemfundo* (Great discussion on education), attempts to educate readers about the effects of colonialism on Africans, the confiscation of Africans' land by the colonisers ..."

This statement refers to the historical background of the Xhosa community which is mentioned by Siphokazi's father in *Litshona liphume*. Although Zwelibanzi speaks to

Siphokazi as an individual, he touches on the painful experience that the Xhosa community has encountered and as a result, Siphokazi is empowered for the future. Vapi skilfully allows Siphokazi the individual to stand for all Xhosa speakers – her journey towards selfhood is a metaphor for the Xhosa people’s voyage towards political and cultural self-realization.

In her dissertation, Vapi (1998:32-33) gives some background to Nongqawuse and the fated cattle killing. In her explanation of how the prophecy came to naught, Vapi uses the very words she chose as a title for her novel ‘the sun rose and set’ but with the order changed. In this way we can say that Vapi is profoundly antagonistic to prophecies that are not rooted in individual endeavour and individual agency. Vapi is religious, but her religion is not one that assumes that God or the ancestors can make things right, she is acutely aware that people’s fortunes are related to the way in which they interpret their realities sensibly and with intelligence. She writes:

Nongqawuse was Mhlakaza’s daughter who claimed that she met the ancestors by the river. She told people that the ancestors ordered that they should destroy all their livestock and food granaries and not till their land. She continued to say, ‘People must dig new big granaries and these will be filled with fresh food and their livestock will be doubled. They must also build new houses and stay inside until the eighth day. On the eighth day, the sun will rise with a red colour and set in the middle of the sky. The dead will come and live with them. All those who disobey will belong to Satan and those who act according to their ancestors’ instructions will see the Kingdom of *Naphakade* (The Everlasting One).’ But on the eighth day, the sun rose and set as usual. The people died of hunger and disease in large numbers. Thus it was said thereafter that whenever a person said an unbelievable thing, those who heard him said, you are telling a Nongqawuse tale. (Vapi, 1998:32-33).

The above extract also reveals the historical background which must be narrated to each generation because if people are not educated about how they have fallen, they will not know how to rise up hence the novel is entitled, *Litshona liphume*. Like other writers, Vapi takes on the responsibility of expressing evil and goodness through character and narrative events but as a motivational autobiographer her main aim is to show the community that goodness will always prevail no matter what.

The novel *Litshona liphume* expresses different attitudes towards White people. Some people appreciate the White shopkeeper's generosity towards illiterate people, while others detest the involvement of the White shopkeeper in matters relating to Black families. This diversity helps the reader to realise different attitudes towards different cultures, and it is on this account that people are taught to accept one another. Vapi reveals that some people have a positive attitude towards others, while some show a negative attitude as a result of the past. In this way, Vapi's autobiographical trope of reaching the self through adversity is skilfully woven into her narrative. Because she is drawing on her own life, she promotes attitudes that worked for her. The attitude of accepting, and even liking White people was one that Vapi was able to use in her own life, even though she recognized that White people had been the cause of much of the suffering of the Xhosa people.

The ability of literary texts to gain 'knowledge and insight that reach beyond the inflexible human sciences' has been noted by Zulu (2011:212) who argues that the novel

Iziboshwa zothando by M.J. Mngadi (2003) promotes cultural transformation and seeks to ‘transform past identities’. I would suggest that Vapi’s autobiographical novel, like Mngadi’s fiction, by presenting some White people in a sympathetic light, also strives to change the way in which we view the ‘other’, and thus implicitly criticizes notions of ‘common enemy’ and ‘collective victimhood’ (Zulu, 2011:216).

In her M.A. Dissertation, Vapi (1998:46) further writes:

Ze nixele emakhaya
Masithande amagwangqa
Amabandla aphesheya.
(Go and report at homes
Let’s love the Whites
Communities from overseas.)

The above extract illustrates that Vapi’s message to the community is peaceful because she does not want people to bear grudges against one another. This message tallies with the title of the novel because there can be healing after a pained past, thus allowing the sun to rise on strained relations between people. In her autobiographical novel Vapi describes education as a tool that can help the community to rise up to the challenges of the present. It is a tool that encourages the community to move forward instead of dwelling in the past. According to Vapi’s message, education helps people to tolerate each other to such an extent that they live together harmoniously.

3.4 The writer as a non-racist

In her novel, *Litshona liphume*, Vapi demonstrates the coexistence of White and Black people in a remote rural area of Ntsaka village (Ngqeleni district). According to this example, skin colour does not stop different people from sharing what they possess. In another sense Vapi is telling her readership that because Whites and Blacks inhabit the same space, they are defined by this space, and are therefore more similar than dissimilar.

Vapi describes a scene in which a White woman behaves with kindness towards the infant Siphokazi:

Wawungafika unkosikazi lo emfunqulele phezulu uSiphokazi embuka emncoma nokondleka kwakhe kakuhle ecebisa nokuba asiwe rhoqo ekliniki, into ke leyo eyayingaxatyiswanga ngabantu bakwaNtsaka. Le mvano phakathi kwesi sibini yantshula, yakhula yada yomelela, inkcenkcetshehwa bobo bubele bungenambaliso balo mfazi unguMaNgxabane. UMabhuduza yena wayemana ukuboleka amahashe apha kuloSiphokazi phofu esenzela nje ukonwabisa abantwana bakhe. (p.14). (You would find the White woman lifting Siphokazi, admiring her big body and advising that she should be taken to the clinic regularly, something that was not valued by the people of Ntsaka. That relationship developed and became strong, it was encouraged by the generosity of MaNgxabane. The White man used to borrow horses for the purpose of entertaining his children.)

With the above explanation, Vapi demonstrates that human support is normally reciprocal because people of different cultures need each other. She also seems to be saying that generosity does not have limits. What is also important to note is that Vapi appears to be suggesting that Xhosa speaking people can allow themselves to grow positively by associating with people and places outside their normal cultural milieu – the “White”

clinic is seen as a place that can help Black people – while the “Black” horses can be used to entertain White children.

Gordimer (1988:28) explains:

It’s hard to sit quietly when you think you can tell how a problem may be solved or a goal accomplished, but it may be even harder to give help without recriminations or, worse, smugness when it is sought.

In line with this statement, Vapi expatiates through her characters that the co-existence of different cultures has protagonists and antagonists and that all characters, Black and White are nuanced and complex. This is highlighted by the way in which she weaves into her narrative the jealousy that is expressed by other citizens of Ntsaka.

Gordimer (1988:30) argues that in South Africa the best people do not define themselves through colour, but through place, “If one will always have to feel White first, and African second, it would be better not to stay on in Africa.” Aligning with this view, Vapi portrays the White shopkeeper as a humble person whose husband is affectionately referred to by the locals through a nickname *Mabhuduza* (because *-bhuduza* means to do something in a quick, hasty way – this would allude to the shopkeeper’s busyness):

Unina kaSiphokazi wayethandwa kakhulu nguNovenkilekazi waseMaNdlovini Store, omyeni wakhe wayesaziwa ngegama elinguMabhuduza. Le ke yivenkile ekuthenga kuyo amaNtsaka naMaNdlovu. (p.13). (Siphokazi’s mother was adored

so much by the shopkeeper of MaNdlovini Store, her husband was called Mabhuduza. This is the shop where the people of Ntsaka and eMaNdlovini purchase their groceries.)

The shop that she is running is situated at MaNdlovini, not far from Ntsaka, and the customers are Black people who live in rural areas. Thus in this passage the autobiographical trope of defining the self through place is realized through a commercial space (the shop) which is transformed from being a space of White commercial domination to one of friendly cohabitation through the power of the name – the Xhosa name. By giving the White people Xhosa names the Xhosa community made them true inhabitants of their village – the Xhosa name integrates them into the Xhosa place – it gives them a sense of belonging.

3.5 The writer as a traditionalist

3.5.1 Traditional healers

The space occupied by the traditional healer in Xhosa society is one that is valorised by Vapi who has Siphokazi being healed by a traditional doctor after medical doctors are unable to help. Many people regard traditional doctors as instigators of trouble because they are able to identify particular people as perpetrators of witchcraft by exposing and bringing to the surface secret jealousies and personal grudges. By allowing her protagonist to be healed by black tea prescribed by the traditional doctor Vapi suggests that more often than not, these traditional healers are able to restore sick people to health. Once again the autobiographical trope of defining the self through space is realized –

Vapi does not reject the space occupied by traditional healers in her community, rather she acknowledges their wisdom and indigenous knowledge.

Opland and Mtuze (1994:17) elaborate on how suspicious portents and signs are reified by certain aspects of traditional Xhosa culture:

Ke ababeneemfene babezifihla kunene koovimba, nezinye iindawo ezikholisa ukuyiwa ngabo bodwa, ebese Kumane kurhanwa ngokubonwa uthupha lwemfene kwakusa, kwanenkqu yayo ebusuku ngasezintlanti, isanya iinkomo zabanye abantu. (The witches used to put their baboons in their hidden places, but other people would see the footprints and sometimes they would see the baboon sucking from the cow's udder.)

There is a myth that witches possess snakes and wizards possess baboons. Sometimes the baboon enters the kraal with the purpose of sucking from the cow's udder. In the morning the people may see the footprints on the ground while the nipples are left with scars. Vapi, in her novel, demonstrates her own view of suspicious behaviour, by describing the villagers as not being satisfied when a traditional healer prescribes a herbal remedy rather than pointing out a "witch" (p.19).

3.5.2 Wedding ceremonies

The wedding ceremony is also cited as an example of tradition because it is recognised and respected by society. Vapi begins her novel with a wedding ceremony where people are celebrating. Vapi writes, "*Nguwo! Nguwo! Ngumtshato! Nguban' obesazi ukuba le*

min' ingad' ifike?" (p.1). (It is it! It is it! It is the wedding! Who knew that this day would eventually come?) Once again the autobiographical trope of defining the self through place is realized by introducing a ceremony that would only occur in a particular place – a rural Xhosa village. The excitement at an event such as a wedding is even more realized in this context as everyone will go to it, it will be a communal celebration.

Many Xhosa writers include descriptions of traditional Xhosa weddings in their fiction. In his drama, *Buzani kubawo (Ask my father)*, Tamsanqa (1954/1991:5) alludes to a wedding ceremony as he explains why a particular character is alone:

KwaZwilakhe intombi enguNozipho ihleli yodwa kwindlu enomsi, abantu abakho basemtshatweni kwaNgoqo kwilali engaphesheya kwale yaseZazulwana apho ibali lethu lisusela khona. (At Zwilakhe's home, Nozipho – his daughter – is alone because the elders have gone to a wedding ceremony at kwaNgoqo Location opposite Zazulwana Location, where this story is based.)

The same author, in his novel, *Ukuba ndandazile*, has the narrator talking about a wedding ceremony. Tamsanqa (1967/1983:188) writes:

Kwakunyakazela, ingumntu, ilihashi, iyimoto, kuba njengentokazi eyaziwayo iititshala zaziphume ngendlu yazo. Wamana ukuvakala edanduluka uNomaza udade boNomazizi omkhulu esithi: Namhla kutshata iqhawekazi. (The crowd was all over the place – people, horses, cars; because of Nomazizi's fame there were many teachers. Nomaza, the bride's eldest sister, shouted: A heroine is getting married today).

Opland and Mtuze (1994:147) expand on the critical importance of weddings in the Xhosa cultural calendar:

Ixabiso lomtshato emaXhoseni likhulu kakhulu. Kungade kube kukho namakhazi esiXhoseni, kodwa inye yona inyaniso, le yokuba inkonzo yomtshato ingaphezulu kwezo nto zonke. (The value of marriage in Xhosa society is beyond expression. We may have the bride-price but there is one thing that must be understood: nothing is bigger than a wedding.)

Vapi, astute writer that she is, is keenly aware of the seminal position held by weddings in her culture and therefore to insert a wedding into her narrative is not only appropriate in terms of dramatic effect, but also as a way of showing that for every young woman in Xhosa culture the wedding is a fundamental goal. Vapi the social commentator, however, does not feel that marriage should be viewed as a girl's only option in life. In my interview with her she indicated the opposite in fact:

Ziimpembelelo ezikhoyo ezo ukuthi ikamva lentombi lisekwendeni. Eneneni yinto yakudala leyo. Xa unokujonga kwixesha langoku ungaphawula ukuba maninzi amantombazana afundileyo atsho azakhela nemizi yawo. Amanye aphuma kwibanga leshumi nelesibhozo kodwa akwazile ukuzakhela imizi yawo. Mna ndikhule embalwa amantombazana afunda esikolweni. (Macabela, 2006) (It is a misleading influence to say the future of the girl is in marriage. In reality, that is an outdated idea. Nowadays many girls are educated and have built their own houses. Some have studied up to Grade 10 and Grade 12 and they are successful. In my childhood, few girls had access to education.)

In a later interview she states:

Ewe, ndinazo iitshomi zam ezafunda nje uStd VI, zipasile zingapasanga zendiswa kangangokuba enye yazo eyayizothwalwa yabaleka yaziphosa esizibeni noxa ingazange iyincede nganto loo nto isekuloo mzi nanamhlanje. (Macabela, 2006) (Yes, I have friends who, after studying Standard Six, whether they had passed or failed, were forced to marry, by the way, the one who was going to be abducted according to the tradition, ran away throwing herself into the river but that did not help and even today she is married to the man who abducted her.)

3.6 Names of characters as part of the writer's creativity

3.6.1 Names in Xhosa fiction

This section will include a general discussion of the role and function of names in Xhosa literature. Specific texts in which names are particularly significant to the narrative will be referred to and clarified with regard to their literary significance. This exegesis will lead into a discussion on names in Vapi's *Litshona liphume*.

Xhosa writers provide their characters with names that are relevant to their behaviour. In his thesis Nyamende (1991:56) says, "*Gcinizibele* (Patron of compassion) possesses such a name because he shows compassion for the dying child, *Zwelinzima*, and agrees to adopt him." He further says:

Vukuzumbethe (Walk through the dew) functions in sacrifice, as he dies in an attempt to save *Zwelinzima*'s family from drowning. *Zululiyazongoma* (Thunder is rumbling) stands for a solitary warning of impending danger. (Nyamende, 1991:56).

In Jordan's novel, *Ingqumbo yeminyanya* (The wrath of the ancestors), the names of the characters are related to their actions. Nyamende (1991:53) suggests, "The name *Zwelinzima* (Life is hard) suits him well. Dingindawo's name points to his attempt to usurp his brother's position of chieftaincy."

Nyamende (1991:54) demonstrates how Jordan's use of names are central to suggesting a turn of events and even drive the narrative:

Thembeke (The trustworthy one) is the ideal faithful woman who never turns back in her love for *Zwelinzima*. The name *Nobantu* (Mother of the people), which she is given by her husband's people, corresponds with *Langaliyakhanya* in reflecting the popularity of the couple in the eyes of their people. *Mphuthumi* (Someone sent to fetch) plays his role in finding *Zwelinzima* and fetching him from Sheshegu and school to the land of the Mpondomise.

Nyamende (1991:55) elaborates:

Just as his name suggests, *Mthunzini* (In the shade) becomes the shady character of the novel. The name *Ngubengwe* (Tiger's skin) suggests royalty. The name *Jongilanga* (Face the sun) suggests this character's stubborn nature as well as his courage and outspokenness.

African writers have something in common in the sense that they use specific names in order to reveal the roles of their characters. Neethling (2004:2) declares:

A child, in growing up, may respect his parents' wishes and expectations or, by some stroke of luck, may naturally exhibit that characteristic. When this happens, the Xhosa are fond of saying: *Ulilandele igama lakhe* (He follows his name).

Neethling (2004:2) highlights the following examples, “**Thembeke** (to be reliable), **Nomonde** (patience), **Lukhanyo** (light), **Mncedisi** (helper), **Mkhululi** (saviour), **Nompumelelo** (success), **Thandeka** (to be lovable), **Ndileka** (to be dignified) and **Thanduxolo** (*thanda*-love + *uxolo* peace = peace lover).

Nyamende (1991:52) explains that names in fiction tell us about the characters’ narrative responsibilities:

Jordan neither uses the names of his characters to enhance satire nor singularly to promote humour. Instead the names of his characters are intended mainly to reflect the serious roles played by the characters themselves in the story.

The above extract confirms that the characters are the carriers of the writer’s message, and their names directly connect them to their actions.

Nyamende (1991:87) further elaborates that the names a writer chooses will reflect his own and his audience’s social class:

A writer is directly influenced by the audience he writes for and the social class with which he identifies himself. The difference from writer to writer is mainly dependant on how much of his own control over the work he surrenders to this influence as well as the dexterity of his writing skills.

Names are significant and meaningful because, in some instances, they explain the kinds of societies characters live in. In this instance, they distinguish between the city and the country depending on the roles played by characters from the former and the latter.

MaGaba is one of Tamsanqa's characters in *Buzani kubawo (Ask my father)* (Thamsanqa:1954/1991). The name is derived from the Xhosa noun *igaba* meaning 'hoe'. Traditionally, African societies use a hoe to eradicate weeds. Each person who works with crops such as maize, beans, potatoes and others, carries a hoe for removing weeds.

The name *Magaba*, however, can also be used to refer to the figurative "weeding" that people do – sometimes pulling out the good plants with the weeds. Macabela (1990:26) refers to *Magaba*'s role in this particular work of literature:

MaGaba and *Zwilakhe* are discussing Gugulethu's future. It is *MaGaba* who starts the discussion. In doing this, she is furthering her ideas about her future daughter-in-law. Thobeka is admired by *MaGaba*, and because of this *Zwilakhe* yields to his wife.

It is important to understand that the rain helps both crops and weeds to grow, but it is more important to know that in the process of hoeing, a great deal of damage may be caused, especially if those using the hoes are not watching what they are doing. If a carrier of a hoe is negligent, some crops may be damaged to such an extent that they cannot be planted again. The name *MaGaba* (hoes) is linked to what she does in *Buzani*

kubawo because she is discussing her son's future with her husband, *Zwilakhe*, without knowing that she is alienating her son for good.

Another area of significance in giving names in fiction is demonstrated by the choice of clan names. Some of the clan names are associated with beliefs.

Tyatyeka (1995:1) elaborates on the Xhosa name *Majola*:

UMajola lo sisilo samaMpondomise, yinyoka ehlonitshwayo esisinyanya. Ukuvela kwayo kwimicimbi yamaMpondomise kuzisa ithamsanqa. (Majola belongs to Mpondomise people; it is a revered snake that is also regarded as an ancestor. The appearance of this snake at Mpondomise feasts brings good luck.)

African authors realise that when they write about African societies, they need to ensure that African traditions are included in their writing.

Neethling (2004:5) explains how clan names link the living with their ancestors:

Xhosa speakers, through their clan names (*iziduko*), are linked to a common ancestor. The following are examples of such names, incorporating or referring to a clan (listed in brackets): **Mahlubi/ Nomahlubi** (Hlubi), **NomaWushe** (Wushe), **NomaBhele/ Bhelekazi** (Bhele), **NomaTshawe** (Tshawe).

Neethling (2004:5) demonstrates how even clan names can have meaningful lexical items:

Occasionally the clan name is linked to another phrase, often suggesting an increase in numbers through the use of the verb *-anda*, or an exhortation to look after the affairs of the clan: **Mahlubandile** (*amaHlubi* ‘the Hlubi people’ + *andile* ‘have increased’ =The Hlubi clan has increased), **Jongamabhele** (*jonga* ‘look at/after’ + *amaBhele* ‘the Bhele people’ = Look after the Bhele clan).

Tyatyeka (1995:1) expatiates:

Ngenxa yokuba iziduko zithatyathwa kumagama ookhokho zilikhonkco elidibanisa sonke eso sizwana. Zikwayindlela yokunqanda ukungenana kubantu abaminombo isondeleleneyo. (Since the clan names derive from the names of our ancestors, they are a link that unites a specific clan. They also prohibit related people from marrying each other.)

Neethling (2004:5) observes how Xhosa speakers often do not give their first names on a first meeting, but rather offer their clan names, “Should Xhosa speakers meet for the first time, they will usually ask about clan affiliation: *Ngubani isiduko sakho?* (What is your clan name?) In that way they are trying to establish clan relationship.

3.6.2 Names in Vapi’s novel

In Vapi’s novel the clan names are the actual clan names of her family, and so too are her parents and siblings’ names. With other characters the names are fictional. In the following discussion I will look at the names Vapi uses in her autobiographical novel –

whether they are the actual names or fictional ones. Critical to the discussion is the fact that names in Xhosa culture have significance and meaning.

3.6.2.1 Main character's first name

Vapi illustrates the courage and distinctive personality of her main character (herself) by naming her Siphokazi (Enormous Gift). Despite the hardships she goes through in her life, she remains optimistic and as a result, she becomes an asset, not only to her nuclear and extended family, but also to the entire community. The name 'Siphokazi' is significant to Vapi's trope of leaders being born, not created, and it is noteworthy that Vapi chooses a name for herself that gives us insights into her own self-regard. She, Vapi, looking back on her life, a life beset with hardships and struggles, is pleased with what she became, and sees that her life, and her making of her life, was an 'enormous gift'.

In her novel, however, the name Siphokazi is not bestowed upon the child by the author, but by the family. In the novel, there is a stage at which the people come up with names for the main character. The baby is seven days old but they do not know what to call her because her father has not come back from Cape Town.

Vapi states through her characters:

“Mna ke ndithi nguNomini, kuba wazalwa emini.” “Hayi Ngwanya, mna ndithi nguNomtshato. Kaloku lo mntwana uvele ngesaa sihikahika somtshato wakwaRhadebe. Khumbula kaloku, mna noMaMiya lo zange siwuve thina loo mtshato ngenxa yokulunywa kukanina lo.” (p.11). (“As for me, this child is *Nomini* [mother of the day] because she was born in broad daylight.: “ No Ngwanya, I say, this is *Nomtshato* (mother of the wedding). By the way, this child was born while there was a big wedding at Rhadebe’s home. Remember that MaMiya and I did not enjoy that wedding because her mother was suffering from the pangs of birth.”)

The above exchange shows how naming in Xhosa culture is linked to events, emotions, ancestors as well as hopes and fears and are not just labels as they are in Western culture.

3.6.2.2 Minor characters’ first names

Minor characters in the novel, *Litshona liphume*, have names such as Zwelibanzi (The world is wide), Thozamile (Humble), Xakekile (Busy), Themba (Hope), Ncebakazi (The enormous grace) and Mxolisi (The peace maker). In a sense, Vapi the author, has sweet revenge on the significant people in her life – she gets to name them with names more appropriate than their actual ones. Thus, through naming them, she is able to tell us more about their characters than if she were to present us with the names they had in real life. Thus we have Zwelibanzi (The world is wide) – a name that signifies that each man must leave his home in order to work for his family. He is the father of Siphokazi and he works in Cape Town while his family is left at Ntsaka, Ngqeleni. This symbolises the need to travel if necessary to ensure the survival of family members at home in the country.

Thozamile (Humble) refers to a person who respects other people. He is the uncle of Siphokazi and when he is asked to name the child he does not hesitate to call her Siphokazi. Instead of expressing excuses that he is not the father of the child, Thozamile listens to the elderly people, and taking everything humbly into account, calls her Siphokazi. Siphokazi is born in the absence of her father and seven days pass before she is given a name. When her uncle arrives seven days after she has been born, he lifts her up and looks at her before he calls her Siphokazi.

Xakekile (Busy) indicates how busy a distant relative can be when parents have passed away. Instead of handling the orphaned children with great care, he takes away their livestock and forces them to live with him at his home. He does not have sympathy or empathy and cares only about himself. At the beginning, Xakekile pretends that he is going to look after the needs of the parentless children, but as time goes by, the community observes that he is after their inheritance.

With regard to her siblings Vapi uses names that echo the autobiographical trope of reaching selfhood through adversity. Themba (Hope) symbolises a living hope which can be grabbed by both hands, and this is Vapi's way of expressing optimism despite horrible circumstances. Although Siphokazi's parents have passed away, there is hope that things will be normalised one day. Ncebakazi (Enormous Grace) reflects the author's belief in God's presence in an unpromising situation. Mxolisi (Peace maker) highlights the spirit

of reconciliation. Themba and Mxolisi are Siphokazi's brothers, while Ncebakazi is her sister. Vapi lapses into full autobiographical mode when she writes:

Ndibhala nje ngoku mlesi uThemba ngoku yiPlumber evunyiweyo phaya kwiSebeleZamandla neMisebenzi, apha eMthatha, kwinkampu yakwaDalindyebo. UNcebakazi yena nanko ehlohla kwisikolo iMaganise Higher Primary, kwisithili saseNgqeleni, kwesikaNkosi uMhlabunzima Ntaphane. Kwathi kwakuthi xibilili loo mithwalo mibini emagxeni am, ndabhalela uMxolisi owayesele exelenga kumgodi wamalahlle eRhawutini ukuba abuye aze kuqala apho wayeyeke khona esikolweni.(p.106). (As I write now reader Themba is a recognized plumber in the Department of Works and Energy at Mthatha in Dalindyebo's camp. Ncebakazi teaches at Maganise Higher Primary at Ngqeleni District in the land of Chief Mhlabunzima Ntaphane. When those two responsibilities had been removed from my shoulders, I wrote to Mxolisi who was working in the coal mine in Johannesburg, telling him to return in order to further his studies.)

In Vapi's novel, the names Malihambe (Let it [the word] go) and Malingemingam (It [the word] must not stop on my account) elucidate a particular message. Both of them are Siphokazi's distant uncles who are asked by Xakekile to take part in the bride-price negotiations. Siphokazi does not love the man they want her to marry, but this is the arrangement that is made by her uncle, Xakekile (Busy). This name implies that the uncle is busy, but not always with innocent occupations – he is busy trying to manipulate people for his own good. In fact, in a recent interview with the author I ascertained that Xakekile stands for the interfering nature of many men:

Ngamanye amazwi umlinganiswa uXakekile umele indawo yabantu ngabantu abathi benze izinto ezimbi kwabanye abantu kuba befuna ukutyhuthula izinto ezingelolungelo kubo ngeenjongo zokuzityebisa ngazo batsho basale besebugxwayibeni abo banelungelo kwilifa labazali babo. (Macabela, 2011) (Xakekile represents different people who do evil things to other people simply because they want to confiscate what does not belong to them, their aims are to acquire the wealth while the legitimate people are left poor.)

In addition, by choosing to call her uncle Xakekile, Vapi expresses the pain that is inflicted by elders onto their children. Both Malihambe and Malingemingam know that what Xakekile has initiated is wrong, but they do not have the courage to stand up to him. The decision of Xakekile is that Siphokazi must be the wife of a man she does not love. He says this because he is interested in the bride-price. Malihambe does not oppose Xakekile and as a result, he becomes part of the bride-price negotiations. He does this even though he is aware that Siphokazi does not approve. Malingemingam follows the instructions of Xakekile, despite the fact that it is wrong to do so.

The autobiographical trope of defining the self through place is further articulated through the plot of the forced marriage – a practice associated with rural, traditional culture. In Vapi's novel, Xakekile's attempt to force Siphokazi to marry a man she has never seen is emphasised by his possessing a name suggesting intense involvement or business, and at the same time it gives Vapi an opportunity to express her opposition to such practices. She is defined through the place she was born in and by the people she is born to, but she is nevertheless able to change her position from one of victim to one of victor.

3.6.2.3 Main character's clan names

Clan names are important in the African society because they maintain solidarity among families. Members of the extended families are never discriminated especially in the country. One week after the birth of the main character (Siphokazi), relatives and neighbours gather at her home in order to celebrate. Vapi writes (using the actual praises of her own clan):

Walwaphula ubawo uRhadebe olo cwangco lwaluzalise eso sibaya wenjenje, 'MaXesibe amahle, zihlobo zikaNondzaba, zikaMaNtsaka kaNondonga, zihlobo zikaNkwankwini, boomatyeyibheka njengomntwana oosangcethe somcinga wakwaBhaca, booBhelesi bakaBhimbinyoka, andizukwenza made kuba kakade amade ngawetyala.' (pp. 9 & 10). (Rhadebe broke the silence that was in that kraal by speaking: "Beautiful people of Xesibe, relatives of Nondzaba, of MaNtsaka the child of Nondonga, relatives of Nkwankwini, you Matyeyibheka njengomntwana, you Sangcethe somcinga wakwaBhaca, you Bhelesi of Bhimbinyoka, I'm not going to make a long speech of course long speeches are made in a lawsuit.)

Clan names derive from the names of the fore-fathers and they are used to identify the present generation. Vapi says:

"Ze nazi mhlophe maXesibe amahle ukuba le nto inento eyithethayo. Nditsho kuba kusadlule iyure inye ezelwe lo mntwana. Kodwa ngoku ndibona into entle. Nanku ngoku ufukanywe yinyoka yakulonina" (p.6). ("Understand Xesibe people, my beautiful people, that this thing signifies something. Only one hour has elapsed after the birth of this child. But now, I see a precious thing. At this moment she is covered by the snake of her mother's people.")

The autobiographical trope of defining the self through place is given added emphasis by the inclusion in the novel of clan names. These names clearly identify a person with a particular group of people who would be linked to a particular area in the Eastern Cape.

Both Jordan and Vapi write about a yellowish-brown snake (*Majola*). The reason is that Mpondomise regard Majola as their ancestor. In Jordan's *The wrath of the ancestors* (1980), the characters belong to the Mpondomise clan. In Vapi's novel, the main character, Siphokazi is born by MaNgxabane, a daughter of Mpondomise. It is against this background that the yellowish-brown snake visits the newborn baby. In real life both MaNgxabane and MaNgwanya are of the Mpondomise clan.

In Vapi's novel, the main character, Siphokazi, is the daughter of Zwelibanzi who belongs to the Xesibe clan, and her mother, MaNgxabane, comes from the Majola clan. This demonstrates that people of the same clan do not marry each other; otherwise they would be committing incest, which is taboo in African society. When Siphokazi's uncle, Xakekile, tries to force his niece to get married, he does so by choosing a bridegroom who comes from the Dlomo clan. The Dlomo clan is not related to the Xesibe clan and, therefore, a marriage between these unrelated people is possible. The importance of keeping proper relationships between different clan members is crucial to rural Xhosa speakers, thus Vapi clearly identifies herself as being predominantly informed by traditional rural customs by including extensive reference to clan names.

Unlike country people, city people do not pay attention to their clan names for a number of reasons, some might even think it is primitive to do so. In the city, when young people meet, they identify themselves through their names and surnames, but do not always

reveal their clan names. Many young people fall in love, and sometimes they get married, without knowing that they share the same clan name. Their actions may be described as being ignorant of their traditions as they do not see the importance of their clan names. Young people in the cities are also influenced by peer pressure, because when young people talk about their clan names, the opposite sex might laugh at them. As a result of this, most people decide not to be too traditional, simply because they do not want to be laughed at.

3.6.2.4 Minor characters' clan names

The clan name of MamBhele, one of the midwives in the novel, is, '*Langalokulunga*' (The sun of goodness), illustrates that indigenous knowledge plays a significant role among Africans. Vapi speaking through MaMiya, says, "*Hayi Langalokunga thoba uvalo ndiyayiqonda nam le nto uyithethayo.*" (p.6) (No, Sun of goodness, calm down; I understand exactly what you are saying.) The fact that MaMiya knows MamBhele's clan name is evidence of her indigenous knowledge.

The sun of goodness symbolises the beginning of wisdom which a nation cannot do without. When the Bhele clan is being praised, people usually say, "*Bhele, Langalokulunga, ungekathi: Langalokulunga sukuba ungekathandazi.*" (Bhele, Sun of goodness, if you have not said 'sun of goodness', you have not started praying.)

Broadly speaking, the sun is the source of light, and in the same way, people who recognise the presence of God refer to Him as, 'Sun of goodness' because they believe that He is the source of knowledge, including indigenous knowledge.

In Vapi's novel, Siphokazi's mother is called Nozityela, but once she is married to Zwelibanzi, she is called MaNgxabane, demonstrating that she represents the Mpondomise clan in the Xesibe clan. In describing Siphakazi's mother, Vapi writes:

Abazukulwana bakaNomngongo, ooNgxabane, amaMpondomise omthonyama, kaNgwanya, kaMajola, ooMphankomo, amathol'oMthwakazi. (p.6). (The descendants of Nomngongo, Ngxabane, the real great grand children of Mpondomise, Ngwanya of Majola, descendants of Mphankomo, offsprings of Mthwakazi.)

These clan praises are woven into Vapi's novel and become part of the autobiographical trope of identifying the self through place. The clan names link the author to her descendants, and through those descendants to a history and to a particular place (both literal and metaphorical) in history.

The fact that a married woman is called by her clan name signifies the importance of the social contract between two families. It is against this background that the behaviour, whether good or bad, of a married woman is traced back to her family.

When MaMiya intervenes in the dispute between Siphokazi and Xakekile, Vapi, through Malihambe, says, “*Hayi Sibewu, Gcwanini, yenza kuhle kaloku mntomkhulu.*” (p.68). (No Sibewu, Gcwanini, calm down elderly person.) Both Sibewu and Gcwanini are the clan names of the minor character, MaMiya and they explain her original background.

3.6.2.5 Names of places and rivers

Vapi takes great care to map out for us, her readers, the precise locations at which significant events take place. These are real names of actual places in the Eastern Cape. They would not be known to anyone living in the city, unless they actually came from the specific area, but Vapi takes great pride in naming them, in locating them, down to the smallest most insignificant village. In this way Vapi not only identifies herself as rural, but as a rural person who takes enormous pride in her home area, who gives us the names of tiny villages as if she were pointing out the stars in the galaxy. In her narrative she almost creates a poem of names, of Xhosa names. She seems to be saying to the reader “These are my places. Listen to their names. They are as important to me as New York or London because in these places the drama of my life was played out.”

At the beginning of the novel, the bride’s place of birth is mentioned when it is said, “*Kwakuza kumanywa ababini ngeqhina lomtshato, intombi yakwaChunu, ezalwa kwilali yaseMantanjeni nonyana omkhulu wakwaRhadebe.*” (p.1). (The knot of the wedding was going to be tied between two people, the daughter of Chunu who was born at Mantanjeni location and the eldest son of Rhadebe.)

In providing the social setting of the novel, the name of the location is explained and the author introduces the autobiographical trope of identifying the self through place. Vapi writes, “*Le ngxikela yesihikahika somtshato wawukwenye yeelali zaseNgqeleni kwilalana ebizwa ngokuba kukwaNtsaka*” (p.1). (This extra-ordinary wedding was held in one of Ngqeleni’s locations, in a small village called Ntsaka.)

Geographically, rivers play a major role because they separate different locations. In other words they are a form of demarcation. Vapi explains, “*Le lali imelene neyaseMaNdlovini yaza yahlulwa kwilali yaseQokolweni neyaseJixini ngumlambo uMthatha yaza yaphinda yahlulwa kwidlelo lemfuyo ngumfula ondonga zibomvu*” (p.2). (This location is adjacent to MaNdlovini location, it is separated from Qokolweni location and Jixini location by the Mthatha River, and it is further separated from the grazing land by the river that has red banks.)

The movement of the people from one place to another helps in identifying an ongoing inter-action between the country and the city. In describing Siphokazi’s uncle, Vapi provides the exact place of his employment, “*Lo ke ufikayo nohlolwa ngemibuzo engekabulisi nokubulisa uza emqolo kuZwelibanzi. Yena uxelenga eBhayi*” (p.11). (The arriving person who is interrogated before he could even greet, was born after Zwelibanzi. He is working in Port Elizabeth.)

In the novel there is a stage at which Zwelibanzi confides in Siphokazi and subsequently, he reveals his mother's place of origin. Through Zwelibanzi, Vapi writes, "*Mhla umama uMaGqwarhu intombi yaseMarhubeni yalishiya eli phakade kumhla yaqala inkathazo.*" (p.23) (The day on which my mother, MaGqwarhu the daughter of Marhubeni location, passed away, was the beginning of trouble.)

The names of public institutions that crop up in the novel are real. Vapi says, "*Ndafika esinaleni eNdamase xa libantu bahle*" (p.36). (I arrived at Ndamase High School when the sun was going down.) Ndamase High School is situated at Ngqeleni and it is one of the oldest public institutions in the district.

Another district which neighbours Mthatha is mentioned through the main character. Vapi says, "*Lo ke undenza iphelo lakowabo ngusisi Nokuzola Mlozi wakuTsolo.*" (p.37) (The one who is treating me as her family's last born is Nokuzola Mlozi of Tsolo.) Tsolo is a district in which the Mpondomise clan live.

Urban areas play a crucial role in the novel because many breadwinners work there. Speaking through the main character Vapi says, "*Emva kweeveki ezimbini umama engcwatyiwe ndabuyela esikolweni, utata yena waphindela eKapa.*" (p.45) (Two weeks after my mother's funeral I returned to school and my father returned to Cape Town.)

Elaborating on the main character's siblings, Vapi identifies the places in which they study. She writes:

UThemba noNcebakazi babeqhuba kakuhle nabo ezifundweni zabo. Nanko yena uThemba kwiJunior Secondary School yaseNtaphane kwisithili saseNgqeleni esenza ibanga lesixhenxe. Umathunjana onguNcebakazi yena wenza ibanga lesithandathu kwesi sikule lali yakuthi isikolo iTakata Junior Secondary School. (p.97) (Themba and Ncebakazi were also doing well in their studies. Here we have Themba doing standard seven at the Junior Secondary School of Ntaphane in the district of Ngqeleni. Ncebakazi did standard six in our village at Takata Junior Secondary School.)

Not all places identified in the novel belong to Ngqeleni district because there are places that are found outside Ngqeleni. However, the relationship of these other places with Ngqeleni, Ntsaka village in particular, shows beyond a reasonable doubt that societies are interdependent. Sometimes a learner leaves his or her location in order to further his or her studies where there are secondary or tertiary institutions.

When it comes to education Vapi is her most explicitly autobiographical. Through the character, Themba, Vapi writes, “*Sisi ndamkelwe eNgqungqushe Vocational School eLusikisiki. Ndiza kufundela iPlumbing kulo nyaka uzayo.*” (p.99) (Sister my application has been accepted at Ngqungqushe Vocational School at Lusikisiki. I intend studying plumbing next year.)

Under difficult circumstances, especially in the rural areas, people often decide to leave school in order to work in the urban areas. The main character's brother, Mxolisi, goes to Grabouw with the intention of supporting his siblings. Vapi writes, "*Kaloku imalana eyayisamkelwa ngumkhuluwa wakhe, uMxolisi, kwelo laseGrabouw yayingenakuzifeza nje mpela-mpela imfuneko zesinala.*" (p.100) (By the way, the wages that were earned by his elder brother, Mxolisi, at Grabouw could not cater for all the needs of the high school.)

The names of different places are utilized by Vapi with the intention of highlighting different opportunities. Pertaining to the main character's younger sister, Ncebakazi, she writes, "*UNcebakazi yena uye wafundela ukuhlohla kwisikolo soqeqesho-titshala iSigcawu kwisithili saseSiphaqeni.*" (p.106) (Ncebakazi eventually studied teaching at Sigcawu College of Education in the district of Flagstaff.)

Through this deliberate naming of schools, places, villages and towns in South Africa we hear Vapi's pragmatic, non-literary voice. She seems to be talking to the reader in conversational mode, mapping out the landscape, locating the places, drawing the reader into her world, suggesting that this is a world that although small to some, is big in possibilities and opportunities. And what is more, it is a real world, a knowable world. There is no particular narrative that precedes these 'announcements' of her siblings' educational careers, and this is because while their lives are important to her, they are not

the central character. It is Siphokazi whose feelings we hear of most, through figurative language and descriptive passages.

This lapse into naming actual educational achievements and specific places begs the question – what is the genre of *Litshona liphume*? I have argued that it is autobiographical fiction but sometimes the author seems to be departing from the fictional mode altogether. As De Man argues:

Autobiography seems to depend on actual and potentially verifiable events in a less ambivalent way than fiction does. It seems to belong to a simpler mode of referentiality, of representation, and of diegesis. It may contain a lot of phantasms and dreams, but these deviations from reality remain rooted in a single subject whose identity is defined by the uncontested readability of his proper name. (De Man, 1979:920)

3.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I have demonstrated that while many of the places and characters that appear in Vapi's novel are based on actual locations and people in her own life she nevertheless is a true creative artist and not just a chronicler of facts. This I argue by showing the way in which she uses the Xhosa language in a stylish, literary way through rich figures of speech, imagery, irony, rhetorical questions and hyperbole. This chapter also examined the link between the writer and her community and argued that although Vapi has a deep sense of place and tradition she also offers a refreshingly progressive, complex and sophisticated outlook on Xhosa customs and indigenous knowledge systems.

CHAPTER FOUR

BELIEFS IN *LITSHONA LIPHUME*

4. 1 Introduction

In this chapter I examine the influence of religion and politics on Vapi as a creative writer and demonstrate that *Litshona liphume* is fundamentally informed by a writer who professes to be profoundly influenced by Christian teachings. While politics plays a secondary role to religion in the novel it is important to note that Vapi experienced her young adulthood at the height of Apartheid and that she subtly refers to South Africa's unjust social system in various passages – skillfully allowing the politics to be absorbed into the natural and quotidian dramas of her narrative.

This chapter also includes sections on the central roles played by health, education and culture in the novel and how carefully Vapi avoids an absolute valorisation of western approaches to these systems – rather she skillfully illuminates the positive and the negative aspects of both western and traditional knowledge systems.

4.2 Religion

In order to fully understand Vapi's text as autobiographical fiction, we need to understand how profoundly influenced she is by her religion and the complex role faith plays in her narrative. In a recent interview with the author (Macabela 2011), she revealed the following to me about the role of religion in her life:

Inkolo yobuKrestu ibe negalelo elingummangaliso kubomi bam nasekubhaleni incwadi yam uLitshona liphume. Nanjengoko ndaswelekelwa ngabazali ndisemncinci kwaye indim omdala ekhaya kwintshutshiso nezilingo endazifumanayo ngelo xesha ukuba ubomi bam bebungenafuthe lezobuKrestu ngendandibashiye bodwa abantakwethu ndiye apho ndizakuhlala kamnandi ngokwenza izinto ezingamkelekanga phambi kobuso bukaThixo. Kungoko ndithe ndazisebenzisa impembelelo zobuKrestu kule noveli ukubonisa abafundi ukuba xa ubani esezimbandezelweni ukuthetha noThixo kuyakhulula. Umzekelo, uMama wam uMaNgxabane, ndandiye ndimmamele xa ethandaza ebika iintlungu anazo kuThixo umdali wethu sonke nakuYesu umsindisi wethu, naxa ebulela kuThixo ngokuphendula imithandazo yakhe yemihla ngemihla. Kangangokuba wayede axhele inkukhu ethi wenza umbulelo kuba izicelo zakhe ziphendulwe. Ndithe ke ndakuswelekelwa ngabazali nabantwana abathathu abeza emva kwam, zathi zakundembatha izilingo neentshutshiso zobubomi ndabona ukuba mandisebenzise le mfundiso ndayirhabula kuMama wam njengesixhobo esindikhupha kula maxhala obu bumi. Ngolu hlobo ke uMdali wam noYesu ongumsindisi wam bakuva ukukhala kwam. Neculo lamaWesile liyatsho nalo ukuthi, "Ndiyakhala kuWe Nkosi" (Christian religion has had a great impact in my life and in the writing of *Litshona liphume*. Since my parents passed away in my childhood and I being the eldest child at home, with regard to the persecution and temptations that I encountered at that time, if my life had no Christian influence I would have abandoned my siblings in order to live comfortably doing unacceptable things in the eyes of the Lord. That is why I have utilized the Christian influence in this novel to demonstrate to the readers that when a person is in trouble, speaking to God is relieving. For example, I used to listen to my mother, MaNgxabane, when she was praying reporting her pains to God our Creator and to Jesus our Saviour, and also when she was thanking God for answering her daily prayers. Sometimes she would slaughter a fowl saying she was expressing her gratitude because her prayers had been answered. After losing my parents and three siblings that were born after me, having experienced the temptations and persecutions of life, I decided to use the guidance that I received from my mother as a weapon for eradicating all fears of life. In this way my Creator and my Saviour, Jesus, heard my crying. Even the Methodist Hymn says, "I cry to you God.")

It is important to note from the above that Vapi's mother, MaNgxabane, demonstrated elements of both Christian and traditional Xhosa religion in her life – she prays to a Christian God but she also observes Xhosa tradition by slaughtering a fowl to give thanks for prayers answered.

If we turn to the novel itself, we see in Chapter One Vapi describing the beauty of a small village and its surroundings, explaining that Ntsaka is adjacent to MaNdlovini village. Important to her description is the position of the Mthatha River, which separates Ntsaka from the Qokolweni Village and Jixini Villages. She further states:

Yaza yaphinda yahlulwa kwidlelo lemfuyo ngumfula ondonga zibomvu. Ilali le yona ihonjiswe yimithi yemiqokolo eluhlaza yaka ngawo onke amaxesha omnyaka.(p.2)
(It is again separated from the livestock pasture by a river that has red banks. The village is decorated by thorny bushes that remain green in all seasons of the year.)

The picture that is portrayed by Vapi in the above extract is reminiscent of the biblical description of the Garden of Eden in Genesis. There are definite areas of similarity particularly if one notes the centrality of the river to the place and the dominance of the colour green:

Nezinto zonke eziphilileyo zomhlaba, neentaka zonke zezulu, nezinambuzane zonke ezisemhlabeni, ezinomphefumlo ophilileyo, ndizinike yonke imifuno eluhlaza ukuba ibe kukudla. Kwaba njalo.(And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the air and every living thing moving on the face of the earth I have given every green plant for food: and it was so.) (The Bible, Genesis, v.1.30)

Kwaphuma umlambo e-Eden wokuwunyakamisa umyezo; wahluka apho, waba ziimbaxa ezine. (And a river went out of Eden giving water to the garden; and from there it was parted and became four streams.) (The Bible, Genesis, v.2.10)

As the author of Genesis uses the colour green to illustrate the lush fertility of the environment, so too does Vapi. In Genesis there is a river to separate the two areas, so does Vapi, in her passage, point out that a river separates the two areas.

Later in the novel Vapi appears to be drawing inspiration from Lamentations 3, 58: "You came to my rescue, Lord, and saved my life. Judge in my favor; you know the wrongs done against me."

In her final triumphal prayer which concludes the narrative of *Litshona liphume*, Vapi also refers to female oppression and subjugation:

*Kwathi kuba Wena
Umntu awumdalelanga
Ukuba axikixwe axexebulwe,
Axovulwe axuzulwe
Ade axubayele naphakade.
Wandisindisa (p.119).*
(As a result of Your Grace
You never created a person
In order to be punished repeatedly,
To be oppressed severely
Until he or she is enslaved forever.
You came to my rescue).

Numerous references to praying, the soul and God, the Bible, hymns and church in *Litshona liphume* all reveal Vapi's intense religiosity.

After the birth of Siphokazi, MaNgwanya encourages the midwives to pray:

"Buya nocango olo mntwanam sithandaze, silale." (p.8) ("Close that door my child so that we pray and sleep.")

When her friend, Nokusasa, is disallowed from attending high school by her father, we hear Siphokazi comforting her, referring to the soul and God. Her speech also demonstrates a religious faith that believes that there is a divine order and that God is all knowing, and that, in some sense, our lives are predetermined (*uThixo unezinye iinjongo ngawe apha ebomini* – God has other plans for you in life):

“Tshomi, musa ukuziduba umphefumlo ngale nto yokuphoswa yinto uyilangazelela. Kusenokwenzeka ukuba uThixo unezinye iinjongo ngawe apha ebomini. Kaloku kuthiwa nguye kuphela owaziyo ikwanguye nolawulayo.” (p.32)
(“My friend, don’t trouble your soul by missing something you wanted so much. It is possible that God has other plans for you in life. By the way it is said He is the only one who knows all and it is also Him who controls everything.”)

Before Siphokazi starts high school her father, a complex character in the novel – one who uses physical discipline with his children, refers to the injunction in the Holy Bible that children should honour their parents. It would appear that, for some people, such as Zwelibanzi, passages from the Bible can be manipulated in order to support a particular individually held world-view (such as parental authority):

Ungazilibali iziyalo zeziBhalo ezingcwele ezithi, ‘Beka uyihlo nonyoko ukuze yolulwe imihla yakho emhlabeni.’ (pp.34-35) (Never forget the warnings of the Bible that say, ‘Respect your father and mother so that your days on earth are increased.’)

At high school, the author narrates that the morning devotions were preceded by a specific Methodist hymn:

Umthandazo wakusasa wakhokelwa ngeculo lamaWesile kaDyan elithi, ‘Mandithwale iziqhamo’ kwenziwa umthandazo omfutshane yinqununu. (p.38)

(The morning devotions were preceded by the Hymn of the Methodist Church of John Wesley, 'Let me bear the fruits' after that a short prayer was delivered by the principal.)

After the death of her mother, Vapi relates how the church members came to visit Siphokazi's family:

Ayengayekanga namakholwa ukumana esivelela esomeleza ngemithandazo emva kwesi siganeko sokuwelwa kwethu lilifu elimnyama.(p.45) (The members of the congregation visited us tirelessly, encouraging us with prayers after the incident of losing our mother hence the dark cloud had fallen on us.)

Again, after the death of her father, there is the same coming together of the congregation to comfort her family and here Vapi uses the metaphor of 'soldiers of the cross' to refer to the members of the Methodist church:

Kuloo mithandazo yayisenziwa ngamajoni omnqamlezo ndabamba la mazwi: Bantwana bakamfi yamkeleni intando kaThixo. Xolani. Mkhululeni uyihlo aye kuphumla ecaleni kukamama wenu. (p.47) (Among the prayers that were delivered by the soldiers of the Cross, I grasped these words: Children of the deceased accept the will of God. Be peaceful. Let your father rest in peace next to your mother.)

Adopting the autobiographical first person, Vapi remembers a sermon delivered by the Reverend Sithonga at her father's funeral:

Ndisayikhumbula nanamhla oku intshumayelo kamfundisi uSithonga owayephethe inkonzo yokugqibela katata ethi, 'Abo behlelwe leli lifu limnyama kuba ke kambe lise lazinga kweli khaya, mabathule bathi cwaka.' (p.47) (I still remember even today the sermon of Reverend Sithonga who was ministering at my father's funeral, 'Those who have encountered a dark cloud, by the way it comes to this home repeatedly, must be quiet.')

After her destitute uncle (Xakekile) comes to Siphokazi to ask her for forgiveness, Siphokazi prays alone:

Sikelela Bawo, umthandazo wenkedama ngaye uYesu Kristu, iNkosi yethu owasifela emnqamlezweni ukuze kusindiswe izono zethu. Amen. (p.73) (Heavenly Father, bless the prayer of the orphan in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us on the Cross so that we are saved from our sins. Amen.)

Towards the end of the novel, Vapi has Siphokazi talking to her brother about the connection between their success and God. Her words are intended to be inspirational and to encourage her brother to work hard and not to lose hope:

Masiyihombele siyinyamezele intlupheko esiphantsi kwayo. UMdali weento zonke ukubukele ekubona ngelo liso lakhe libanzi ukuzama kwethu; nathi uya kusenza siphumelele ngenye imini apha ebomini. (p.81) (Let us humble ourselves and tolerate the hardship we are living under. The Creator of everything is looking on and His sharp eye sees our efforts; one day He will make us successful in life.)

Before their uncle comes to ask for forgiveness, Mamiya encourages Siphokazi not to bear a grudge and suggests that her uncles are mentally disturbed.

“Siphokazi mntwanam ungabaxhibi ooyihlomncinci. Noko ndiyakrokra ingathi baneqabaza abanalo apha entloko. UBawo wethu sonke uyazibona ezi zinto zigwenxa bakwenza zona yaye nezi ntetho zabo zirhabaxa uziphulaphule. Zakosulwa iinyembezi zakho ngenye imini, kwaye ngekhe zawela phantsi.” (p.89) (“Siphokazi my child don’t bear a grudge to your uncles. I suspect that they are mentally disturbed. Heavenly Father sees all the bad things they do to you and He hears their harsh words. One day your tears will be wiped away and as a result they will not fall down.”)

In Chapter 14 Vapi allows us insights into Siphokazi's internal struggle relating to her uncle and his wife. Even when engaged in such private, personal turmoil, Siphokazi remains religious in her outlook:

Yathi yakuba krakra njengencindi yekhala intlalo phakathi kwam notatomncinci kunye nowakwakhe, uNomhlayifani, ndaguqa ngedolo ndacela kuSomandla ukuba andivelisele icebo endinokuthi ndenze ngalo ukuba singafi yindlala. (p.90) (When the social relationship between my uncle, his wife Nomhlayifani and me was bitter like the juice of the aloe, I knelt down and asked the Almighty God to devise a plan that was going to save us from hunger.)

In Chapter 17 Siphokazi speaks to her siblings about their accomplishments, but here she refers both to God and herself as the reason for their success:

“Akwaba uThixo angayandisa imihla yokudla kwenu ubomi apha emhlabeni ukuze simdumise sonke uBawo wethu oseMazulwini. Ndithetha nje ngoku akukho nomnye ongasebenziyo kwabo ndandibakhulisa ndibaphethe ngamazinyo.”(p.107) (“May God increase the days of your lives on earth so that we all glorify our Heavenly Father. While I speak, there is not a single person who is not working among my siblings that I helped to grow up under challenging circumstances.”)

In Chapter 18 Vapi describes Siphokazi's uncle Xakekile as humbling himself and alludes to the Biblical story (Luke 16:24) of Lazarus:

Ngeli xesha ashwaqayo uXakekile abantu babebangqongile bephulaphule isityebi uDivasi sizithoba kuLazaro. USiphokazi kunye nabantakwabo babematshekile ngulo mbono nangala mazwi kaXakekile base bema bee bhuxe banga babethwe ngumbane. (p.111) (While Xakekile was uttering many words, the people were surrounding them listening to a rich person (Divas) humbling himself before a poor person (Lazarus). Siphokazi and her siblings were astonished because of what they saw and what they heard from Xakekile, they stood still as if they had been struck by the lightning.)

In Chapter 19 (the final chapter in the novel) Vapi speaks in the first person through the character of Siphokazi, after the visit to her home by members of the congregation, saying she has been helped by *zezo ntombi zomthandazo* (those girls of prayer):

Salala ubuthongo obumnandi ngobo busuku engayekanga ukukhenkceza amazwi ebesifunzwa ngawo zezo ntombi zomthandazo. (p.118) (On that night we had a beautiful sleep, the words delivered by the girls of prayer did not stop ringing [in my head]).

Here Vapi demonstrates the profound affect religion and religious rituals have on Siphokazi's sense of well-being. She is able to sleep well because of the prayers and it is as if the words of the prayers are both lulling her to sleep and giving her inspiration.

Also in Chapter 19 Vapi includes a long poem which includes many religious references, metaphors and allusions. This religious poem acts as a summary of all that has taken place in the novel, but it is also a prayer because she speaks directly to God "*wena Thixo*" (stanza 2, line 9) (You, God); "*Yhini na Somandla/Uthi mandithini na*" (stanza 3, line 3) (Oh Almighty/What do you say I must do); "*Wena umntu awumdalelanga/ukuba axikixwe axexebulwe*" (stanza 4, line 2-3) (You did not create a person/that s/he should suffer for ever). Interestingly the poem then shifts from a Western religious outlook to one in which her ancestors are invoked, showing that Vapi is able to syncretize her religious and spiritual beliefs. In the ensuing stanzas the poem shifts from reference to ancestors and relatives back to God and her ancestors:

*Nincede nisilungiselele' indawo
Kwelo labaNgcwele,*

Sithi sifika sithi thekence,
Phakathi kwaloo miphefumlo yenu.
Khon' ukuze simdumise sonke,
UBawo wethu oseMazulwini.
Ngemisebenzi yakhe emihle,
Athe wasenzela yona.
Noxa umlingi engaphezi.
Liphumil' ilanga. (p.121)
 (Please prepare a place for us
 In the [place] of the Holy ones,
 So that when we arrive we fit in,
 Among your spirits.
 So that we can all praise him together,
 Our Father who art in Heaven.
 For His beautiful Works,
 That he has done for us.
 Although the one who tempts does not stop.
 The sun has come out.

The final line of this poem-prayer, is in fact, the final line of the novel and refers to the title of the novel *Litshona liphume*. It is as if Vapi has declared, in religious triumph, her personal success and her commitment to seeing the world as directed by God. The poem refers both to her life and her people in this world, as well as in the next. In so doing she makes reference to her ancestors (a world view deeply rooted in African religion) and to a notion of divinity that she has received through the Methodist church. In terms of her literary influences, it is striking how religion (either traditional or Western), has shaped her consciousness and given her a voice with which to negotiate and forge meaning.

4.3 Politics

We need to situate Vapi's utopian description of the rural areas of the Eastern Cape against a backdrop of political strife and the destabilization of rural communities through apartheid policies. To understand Vapi's own political views at the time of writing the

novel, I asked her “ When you wrote *Litshona liphume* was there any kind of political message to convey to us readers, and if so, what was the message?” (Macabela: 2011). Her reply shows that in her young life Vapi was directly affected by Apartheid laws – she refers to her grandfather’s political activities in the PAC (Pan Africanist Congress) and how he was hounded by the state. In addition to the reference to her mother’s pain at the hands of the state, there is also criticism of the way in which her own people seemed to abandon her at her greatest time of need.

Vapi’s imagination is one mediated by an honest view of *ubuntu* - it can only work when people in authority (whether traditional or governmental) use their power in humane ways. It is critical to note that Vapi refers to her political commentary having to be removed from the manuscript due to the censorship laws of the time. At one stage in a recent interview (Macabela, 2011), while talking about the removal of a section in her original manuscript dealing with Siphokazi’s pregnancy, she says that “*Kwakhona nezinye iindawo ezazixoxa banzi ngezepolitiki kwanyanzeleka ziguzuliwe.*” (Other portions that were giving a detailed account on politics were taken out.”) In the following extract from the interview we get detailed reference to her family and their political involvement and how profoundly State oppression affected them, both personally and publically:

Ewe, umyalezo ongezepolitiki ukho kule noveli noxa ungagqamanga ngenxa yokuphantshwa kwemiba ethile eyayikwimanyuskriphthi yale ncwadi eyayiyicacisa gca imeko yezepolitiki endikhulele phantsi kwayo. Ngokomzekelo ekukhuleni kwam sasisoloko silala siguqe ngamadolo nanjengoko iveni zamapolisa (iinayiloni/ okhwela sowubhatele ngokwalapha kwinoveli yam) babebetha bebuyelela ekhaya kufunwa utatomkhulu wam uNzingi igama, into kaMbalela nanjengoko

wayengomnye wamalungu kaPoqo (PAC) waze wabanjwa wayokuvalelwa eRobben Island ngo1963 waphuma 1966 xa ndifunda uStd 6, kwakunye notatomncinci wam uThozamile (owayeteketiswa kuthiwe Thozi xa ebizwa) yena etyholwa ngokushishina ngengca yasemaMpondweni noxa ke engazange ade abanjwe. Ukudlakatheliswa kwam ndimncinci ndinjalo nempathombi eyayixhanyulwa nguMama wam kwezo zandla zombuso welo xesha yayinganyamezeleki. uMama wam uyakuwutsho ke umthandazo oshushu bakumka abathuthumbisi belo khaya ewuthumela kuSonininanini ukuba asihlangule kule mpatho imbi kangaka. Bathe bakusweleka abazali bam yathi intlalo ebishushu siyihleli phantsi kothando lwabo yaguquka ngomzuzwana yangamalahle abomvu omnga. Ndithe ke ndakuyithelekisa le ntlungu yentlalo endiyiphilayo naleyo sasiyifumana kumbuso welo xesha ndafumanisa ukuba njengokuba sikhala ngokuba amaBhulu ayesicinezela, nathi thina bantu baMnyama siyacinezelana kwasodwa kuba naku ngoku kungekho zalamane zisincedayo koko ngulowo unga uyayikhotha kanti uyayixathula. Andithi kaloku abantu babezityhuthulela ngeendlela ezohlukeneyo kwizinto ezazishiywe ngabazali bam? Umyalezo uthi, xa ubani esemagunyeni makabaphathe kakuhle abantu, abalungiselele ngokufanayo nangokulinganayo, angarhwaphilizi. Kaloku noThixo osidalileyo wenza ngenceba kumntu wonke akakhethe hlwempu nasityebi. (Macabela, 2011) (Yes, there is a political message in this novel although it is not extensively demonstrated due to the censorship of some items of the manuscript that demonstrated the political situation I grew up under. For example, in my childhood we used to sleep kneeling because the police vehicles, referred to as nylons/get in you have already paid as they appear in my novel) used to come often at home looking for my grandfather, Nzingi, son of Mbalela, a member of the PAC (Pan Africanist Congress) who was arrested in 1963 and incarcerated in Robben Island until he was released in 1966 when I was doing Standard Six. In addition my uncle, Thozamile (nicknamed: Thozi) was also accused of selling dagga (Pondo grass) although he was never arrested. My harassment, being young at that stage, and the brutality that was experienced by my mother at the hands of the state, was intolerable. My mother used to pray to God asking for His rescue after the police had left. After losing my parents the parental love and comfort was replaced by the red ashes within a minute. I compared my pain to the Apartheid Regime because on the one hand we were complaining that the Boers were oppressing us and on the other hand we were oppressing one another with no one caring about his/her relatives. By the way the people were taking what my parents had left. My message is that the person who is in authority must treat people fairly and equally instead of being corrupt. Our God who created us is merciful to all people and He does not discriminate between the rich and poor.)

In the light of the above, it is important to outline the historical context of Vapi's childhood. Vapi was born in 1953 – the year in which two draconian apartheid laws were passed – the Native Labour (Settlement of Disputes) Act – an act which prohibited

strike action by black workers – and the Reservation of Separate Amenities Act (an act which prohibited blacks from using public amenities designated for whites only). She grew up in some of apartheid's worst days and, at age 23, would have witnessed the 1976 Soweto student uprising.

Also important to note is that at the time Vapi was a young adult, there were increasing measures to set aside land in the Eastern Cape for black farmers. Phiri (2009) puts this policy in perspective, showing that there had been a history of 'setting aside' poor farming land for Blacks:

In the 1970s the South African Development Trust (SADT) bought several large blocks of farms in the Eastern Cape from their white owners. The immediate motive was the consolidation of the Ciskei and Transkei in preparation for their independence (Beinart, 1998). It was however a continuation of the policy of setting aside reserved land for blacks which had begun in the Eastern Cape during the middle of the nineteenth century, finding concrete expression in the Village Acts, the Glen Grey Act of 1894 and the Land Acts of 1913 and 1936 ... The reserved land had poor climatic conditions and poor soils that made viable farming practically impossible. (Phiri, 2009:28)

This expropriation of land from Black farmers is referred to explicitly by Vapi who comments, through the person of Zwelibanzi, Siphokazi's father:

“Khangela nangoku sixelengela abeLungu babe bona bexhamla amanqatha kwimihlaba yookhokho bethu batsho ngoobhazabhaza befama.” (p.26) (“Look, nowadays we are the servants of the White people, while they benefit from the wealthy fields that belonged to our ancestors. These Whites have big farms.”)

It is also critical to examine the political context during which Vapi's novel was written and published. *Litshona liphume* was published in 1989 – the year in which P.W. the

Botha, the then State President, met the imprisoned Nelson Mandela for the first time and the same year in which F.W. de Klerk took over as Prime Minister.

In my assessment of the novel, I asked the following questions: How much impact did apartheid and these political events have on Vapi the writer? To what extent does Vapi comment on political issues and how far does she allow her writing to criticise apartheid as an ideology?

On a close reading of the novel, one gets the sense of an outwardly calm and beautiful rustic life that is constantly being undermined and challenged by social and economic forces. Thus, contrary to the beauty of nature, man-made constructs such as political policies threaten the well-being of Vapi's rural universe. Ribane (2006:11) argues that taking away Africans' land was akin to taking away their identity, "Africans were robbed of their land, dignity, identity and self-worth. In the eyes of the invaders, African culture was good for nothing." Ribane's utopian view of precolonial Africa is also reflected in the following comment, "Until the coming of the White colonists, Africans had lived in harmony with nature."

Having created a visual picture of spiritual harmony realized through the beauty of nature Vapi skilfully inserts criticism of political conditions by commenting on the lack of resources and infrastructure in rural areas. Thus her previously described rural idyll is contradicted by the paradox of the ugliness of living in poverty in an outwardly beautiful

place. Even in her description of the interior of a hut we can sense that the word ‘*udaka*’ (mud) is being employed to underscore the extreme poverty of the village dweller:

Kwelinye icala lendlu, kuthe zikiva usoze (isitulo sodaka), kanti phaya entla kuthiwe nca amanqwanqwa odaka, itsho ke leyo ibe yikhabhathi. (p.3) (On the other side of the hut, a mud bench was fixed to the wall and the floor; at the upper side, the mud shelves adhered to the wall forming a cupboard.)

After the birth of Siphokazi, the midwife MaNgwanya sees the light of a car in the distance. MaNgwanya, when she asks MaMiya to go and have a look, reveals how afraid she is of the South African police of the time:

“Noko wena mntwanam bekungekho nto ityhulu phaya ekhaya. Awu! Kutheni ingathi kukho ilitha lemoto nje apha phandle nezinja zaxokozela? Khanikrobe MaMiya singavingcelwa ngala maqakamba. Kaloku aba khwela-sowubhatele siyaboyika thina.” (pp.7-8) (“Anyway my child there was nothing important at home. Oh! Why it seems like there is a light of a car outside and the dogs are making a noise? Please just go and have a look so that we are not surrounded by those white police. By the way we are afraid of these “get-in-you-have-already-paid.”)

In the above quotation the words ‘*maqakamba*’ and ‘*khwela-sowubhatele*’ both refer to the police of the time. ‘*Amaqakamba*’ specifically indexes the White police and the ‘*khwela-sowubhatele*’ phrase refers to the fact that during that time in South Africa’s history, there was no explanation given to one at the time of one’s arrest – you just had to *khwela* (get in) – it was as if *sowubhatele* (you have already paid) – you deserved to be arrested.

The police are again referred to when one of the villagers who is at Siphokazi's home for a name-giving ritual, refers to the nickname given to police cars driven by White policemen 'iinayiloni' (p.11). The reason why these police cars were referred to as *iinayiloni* is that the word also referred to the plastic that was put by harvesters on themselves to protect themselves and their clothes from thorns. By association, the police were able to arrest anyone, anywhere, without fear of recrimination, and in that way they were protected as if they were metaphorically wearing nylon sheeting.

The most important aspect of the villager's musing is realized in the words '*ube ungazi nesizathu obanjelwa sona*' (not knowing the reason for the arrest). Vapi is surely drawing from personal experience growing up in Apartheid South Africa when Black people could just be arrested for being in the wrong place at the wrong time, having committed no crime.

"Azi yimoto yantoni na le itshoyo, Nkosi yam! Kaloku zisoloko ziphezulu izibilini zethu zezi nayiloni. Ungafika la maqakamba esithi, 'Khwela sowubhatele,' ube ungazi nesizathu obanjelwa sona." (p.11) ("What car is making this noise, my God! By the way they are always in our deepest anxieties these police cars. You can arrive, the White police saying, 'Get in, you have already paid', **and you don't even know the reason for your arrest.**") (My emphasis.)

In addition to describing the beauty of their surroundings (in the opening scenes), Vapi also explains how her family members were separated because of commercial and political realities. When Siphokazi is born, her father is in Cape Town where he serves as a migrant worker. This situation is a man-made predicament because, at that time, government policies caused industries to be built in big cities such as Cape Town,

Johannesburg and Durban, while small villages such as Ngqeleni were left underdeveloped. The areas that were highly developed were the big cities because, amongst other factors, White people were living there, and were the economically advantaged race and class. Although Black migrant workers contributed substantially to the development of the cities, their own areas remained poor because there were no intervention programmes designed by the government to ameliorate social conditions in the homelands.

Vapi describes Siphokazi's birthplace as a *ityotyombe* which in this context would refer not so much to a shack, but a very dilapidated, small dwelling, thus referring to the poor living conditions that some people endured in the rural areas. There is reference later in the novel to her parents being rich (p.14) but one must bear in mind that wealth in those days in rural areas was evident in a person's livestock and fields and not so much in his or her accommodation.

Ndisayikhumbula kakuhle indlu awazalelwa kuyo lo mntwana. Yaye ilityotyombe elimnyango walo uziimbambo zenja, ubukhulu beefestile bungangenqindi lomntu. (p.3) (I still remember the house where this child was born. It was a dilapidated place with a door as narrow as the ribs of a dog, the window the size of a human fist.)

In my interview with her (Macabela, 2006) Vapi does not hide the fact that she supports the present government's grant scheme, although now she seems to be referring indirectly to new challenges (such as HIV/Aids) when she speaks of children being left without their parents:

Noxa sizama, akhona amakhaya ekunzima nyhani kuwo apho kulalwa kungatyiwanga kube nzima nokunxibisa abantwana. Abanye baswelekelwa ngabazali bashiyeke bodwa. Konke oku kuyintlungu kodwa umntu ufane axole kuba uRhulumente ethe wangenelela ukuze abantwana abangenabazali bafumane imali. Naba banabazali kukho abazali abayimilwelwe. Sikwimeko elolo hlobo ke. (We are trying but there are many families that suffer, to such an extent that that hunger is the order of the day. It is difficult even to provide the children with clothes. Some children have become orphans as a result of losing their parents. We feel consoled because the government has intervened through the child support grant. Children whose parents are either sick or unemployed benefit from this grant. That is the situation we are in.)

Asante (1987:3) argues that Africa needs to become the subject (controller) of its destiny and not the object (controlled) of more powerful economic forces:

It is about taking the globe and turning it over so that we see all the possibilities of a world where Africa, for example, is subject and not object.

This statement signifies that African citizens must be allowed to play an active role in shaping their future instead of being manipulated by the colonizers. While in her novel *Vapi* valorizes powerful individuals who take charge of their lives, in this interview she refers to the passivity of people having been created by the former political dispensation:

Sacotha sifuna ukubona ukuba lo Rhulumente uzokwenza njani. Sibukele kwaba sebeqalisile njengaseBuntingville ukuba le nto iza kwenzeka njani singafane sigxuphuleke sifikelwe ngamaxwebhu athi sityala uRhulumente. (Macabela, 2006) (Today we drag our feet because due to our bad experiences with the involvement of the previous government; we are therefore observing the present government. We are onlookers, even in projects that are taking place at Buntingville because we want to avoid the problems of receiving papers informing us about our debts to the government.)

Under normal circumstances, the development of towns and cities within a country needs to be balanced and equitable, so that both country and city benefit. The problem is that once people leave the rural life to dwell in the city, they are tempted to stay there and not to bother returning. Some stay in the city for many years without remitting money to their families that are left behind. Others wait until they get sick, and by the time they return to their families, all the money they earned while working has been exhausted.

This is why there are homes in the rural areas that are not well built, despite the existence of a family member working in the city. The fact that Vapi's heroine, Siphokazi, is born in a hut, even though her father is working in the Cape Town, bears testimony to human negligence; however, the government is also to blame because of not improving the living conditions of its citizens, especially in the rural areas. Only when city people recognise rural people as partners, rather than slaves, will living conditions improve.

Asante (1987:126) refers to the need to 'unmask experience' as a way of tapping 'Afrocentric possibilities':

The Europeanisation of human consciousness masquerades as a universal will. Even in our reach for Afrocentric possibilities in analysis and interpretation we often find ourselves having to unmask experience in order to see more clearly the transformations of our history.

Vapi attempts to 'unmask' experience as an autobiographical writer in order to suggest these 'Afrocentric possibilities'. For example, she combines both criticism and sympathy in her portrayal of Siphokazi's absent father, Zwelibanzi. She recognizes poor living conditions as a reason for Zwelibanzi not going home every month, but there is also

veiled criticism of him being an absent, sometimes, uninvolved father as is evident in the following passage, when Siphokazi's mother informs her husband of their daughter's success, something he was obviously oblivious of:

Elo banga lesihlanu ulilisela ngalo ulifunde nje iinyanga ezintathu utitshala omkhulu wamnyusela ngelithi, ingaba uyamlibazisa kuba isiLungu ukwazi ukusithetha nokusibhala ugqwesa nabo baphinda ibanga lesithandathu. (p.26) (The standard five that you are crying about she completed in just three months. The principal promoted her saying that he would be delaying her because she could speak and write English, she outperformed those who were repeating standard six.)

In one way, Zwelibanzi is personally responsible for his lack of knowledge about his daughter's success, but in another way, because of political circumstances, he had been forcefully removed from the family domain. His role of father had been undermined by his needing to work in the city, and he was thus marginalized not only politically (denied the vote) but also on the domestic front – marginalized as an authority in his own home.

Habib and Bentley (2008:11) explain that this situation of extreme poverty is historically situated:

In South Africa's case, for instance, Black people, and the African majority in particular, have for over 350 years been subjected to the most humiliating forms of oppression and exploitation. They have been deliberately marginalised.

In her novel, by her meticulous naming of small villages, schools, shops, clinics and hospitals Vapi attempts to reverse this marginalisation of African people in literary form. Underlying her literal mapping of her area of the Eastern Cape (thereby foregrounding these places as meaningful and as having agency), is her figurative charting of a course of positive action. Siphokazi, through her own faith and strength of character redefines

herself as a powerful, black woman who can transform her negative situation into a positive one and construct for herself an alternative reality, one entirely different to that experienced by many rural women during the Apartheid years, and indeed, even now.

Siphokazi's success in life happens in the context of rural South Africa, but Vapi does not fall into the trap of suggesting that traditional, rural life is entirely without tension and conflict, although in her interview with me she does tend to valorize the notion of *ubuntu*, stating that in her village:

Siyasebenzisana. Nokuba umntu akanazinkomo okanye umyeni wakhe akaphangeli uyakwazi ukumbonelela ukuze naye alale etyile nabantwana bakhe. (Macabela, 2006) (We support each other. People take care of a person who does not have livestock or whose husband is unemployed and, as a result, her children also benefit.)

In her novel, however, Vapi shows that village life is not always a fact of 'working together'. Siphokazi's uncle, Xakekile, is greedy, lazy and unsupportive of his niece, and manages to manipulate her other uncles. The villagers display jealousy at various times, particularly when the White shop owners visit Siphokazi's home (pp.14-15). By describing these negative traits in village characters Vapi demonstrates that not all people work together, there will always be characters that are self-seeking and mean-spirited, whether the context is urban or rural.

The fact that African societies may not have been perfect utopias before the arrival of the colonialists is seldom interrogated by writers, as idealized versions of the past enable them to avoid constructing idealized versions of the future. Nevertheless, it is important

for African writers to search for meaning in historical realities. Vapi, through her autobiographical novel, seems to suggest a more nuanced and complex understanding of rural life, and in so doing, is able to both criticize it and to offer solutions.

4.4 Health

In *Litshona liphume* Vapi underscores the importance of traditional systems of healing and nurturing while at the same time is at pains not to undermine the importance of Western traditional medicine. Vapi also seems to highlight the importance of following one's own instincts and common sense with regard to health issues, and this is borne out when, after taking Siphokazi to different medical and traditional doctors with no success, her mother asks MaNgwanya whether she could give her black tea. MaNgwanya answers "*Khawufane wenze mntwan'am.*" (p.17) ("Just try it my child.")

Later, having tried this remedy, MaNgwanya is reported as saying "*Ndiyancoma noko ngoku, oko ethe wancancisa le ti emnyama uthe nqam.*" (p.17) ("I give the black tea credit because since she has been feeding off it, she has stopped being sick.")

When the baby Siphokazi gets sick yet again, her mother takes her to a traditional healer with a group of people to find out who is behind the illness (p.17). By including this incident Vapi is showing how traditional beliefs of bewitchment causing illness were rife in her community. Vapi describes in great detail the entire ritual of presenting a problem to a healer (pp.17-19) and finally we hear the traditional healer say "*Ath' amakhosi makatyiswe le ti imnyama!*" ("The ancestors say let her be fed this black tea!")

Vapi describes the disappointment and lack of satisfaction of the villagers who wanted the traditional healer to sniff out someone who was bewitching Siphokazi. They all pronounce “*Siyavuma!*” (p.19) (We agree!) but their “*Siyavuma!*” was reluctant and Vapi writes that *Batsho kodwa beyekelele, kucaca ukuba kukho ukunganeliseki* (p.19). (They said it, but they were not convinced, it was clear there was dissatisfaction.)

Vapi shows her approval of the healer’s common-sense by relating how the baby did improve after continuing with the tea remedy (p.19).

The pregnant mother in Vapi’s story, MaNgxabane, is not admitted to a maternity ward; she goes home in order to deliver her baby. In spite of the absence of adequate health facilities, country people maintain their solidarity, and this is demonstrated through the practice of traditional midwifery. Vapi expresses this through her inclusion of MamBhele and MaMiya in the first chapter of *Litshona liphume*.

The traditional midwives, MamBhele and MaMiya, are used by Vapi to show the generous service to one another that is rendered by the country people under difficult circumstances. In other words, they feel the pain that is felt by MaNgxabane, and as a result, they stop whatever they are doing to support the pregnant mother.

In her novel Vapi shows that capable health providers such as the midwives MamBhele and MaMiya, are not entirely supportive of the hospital and its White staff.

Kaloko inkolo yabo yeyokuba umntwana ozalelwe esibhedlele, waza waphathwa zizandla zezo ntshatha zabeLungu akabi nangqondo uba lihesheheshe nje lento ehla inyuka ixela manzi olwandle. (p.4) (Kaloko inkolo yabo yeyokuba umntwana ozalelwe esibhedlele, waza waphathwa zizandla zezo ntshatha zabeLungu akabi nangqondo uba lihesheheshe nje lento ehla inyuka ixela manzi olwandle. (p.4) (By the way their belief is that a child who is born at hospital and is held by White nurses lacks intelligence and becomes uncontrollable, moving up and down like the sea waters.)

We do not know Vapi's personal feelings on the matter, but it is clear from the above that she would have been exposed to such attitudes from some villagers as she grew up. Possibly Vapi is presenting to us a nuanced view of health, suggesting that if at all possible, children should be born at home because not only would the mother be supported physically by people who knew her (and not strange White nurses) but also that a home birth would be spiritually and culturally more appropriate for the Xhosa to whom place is so significant.

4.5 Education

In her novel, Vapi demonstrates that there is nothing that can stop a country child from going to school. Speaking through the main character (Siphokazi), she demonstrates the importance of education to rural people - learners are prepared to walk for long distances in order to achieve their goal. Siphokazi comments on her father's desire to have his child educated:

Noxa ndandiwenza loo msebenzi wasemasimini utata wayesixabise ngokungazenzisiyo isikolo. Sasizikhulula kwangoko iinkabi phaya emasimini, ukuhlangabezana nokuba ndifike ngexesha esikolweni.” (p.23) (Although I was

doing the field chores my father valued education so much. We used to release the oxen early in order to make sure that I arrived at school on time.)

Zwelibanzi's passion to educate his daughter demonstrates that rural areas are capable of producing talented learners who, at the end of the day, play a major role in shaping the future of the nation. At the same time Vapi would be seeming to suggest, both in her novel and in her interview with me, that traditional knowledge systems should be preserved and have enormous value for the health and cultural well-being of the Xhosa people.

In Vapi's novel, the road to success, as far as education is concerned, is not an easy one, but due to her optimism, Siphokazi is successful. The fact that she comes from Ntsaka village, a remote area in the Eastern Cape, does not discourage her, and as a result, she competes with learners who come from wealthy families, especially when she is studying at Ndamase High School.

In an interview with me (Macabela 2006) Vapi speaks of the long distances that learners still have to walk in order to get to school:

Isinala esinaso apha yiNdamase eBuntingville. Abantwana baya ngeenyawo kuba zinqabile izithuthi zokubathwala. Bahamba ngeenyawo nokuba izulu linjani. (Our high school is Ndamase in Buntingville. Learners have to walk because public transport is lacking. They walk for long distances, even when the weather is bad.)

Vapi discloses that being a farm girl does not mean your future is bleak, even when other people remind you that your future is in your marriage. In this way, Vapi inserts a notion of a future utopia into her text, a future in which men and women are equal, a future in

which Blacks and Whites have identical opportunities via access to the same educational and economic resources.

4.6 Culture

While Vapi confronts tradition in various ways, she also demonstrates a visceral connection with what Daymond (1995) refers to as 'ethnic culture'. Like Sindiwe Magona who writes of her deep connection with her extended family, so too does Vapi show her connection with her greater community through her description of communal celebrations. Daymond reference to the 'evoked matrix' from which Sindiwe Magona 'chooses to speak' in her autobiographical works, and I would argue that this matrix is similar to that employed by Ncumisa Vapi:

'Ethnic culture' is more appropriate for the consciously evoked matrix from which Magona chooses to speak. For example, as she explains, the social system of her childhood made both her paternal and maternal grandparents' 'homesteads ... home to me'. Magona uses the cadences, word order and repetitions of her prose to support her claims for this culture: 'In such a people-world, filled with a real, immediate, and tangible sense of belongingness, did I spend the earliest years of my life. I was not only wanted, I was loved. I was cherished'. (Daymond, 1995:562)

In her novel Vapi brings to life the rich cultural life of the 'people-world' the Xhosa whose traditions, celebrations and customs are robustly observed through the slaughtering of livestock and by much music and dance. As does Magona, Vapi employs 'cadences, word order and repetitions' in order to recreate this vibrant sense of belonging.

Litshona liphume begins with noise being made by women at a wedding ceremony. The people who are attending the wedding ceremony are not all invited guests, but these uninvited guests are never chased away; instead they are treated the same as everyone else.

Vapi emphasises the bigness of the wedding with carefully chosen words “*isihikahika*” demonstrating the ‘repetition’ (here in syllabic format) referred to by Daymond.

Le ngxikela yesihikahika somtshato wawukwenye yeelali zaseNgqeleni kwilalana ebizwa ngokuba kukwaNtsaka. (p.1). (This huge, extraordinary wedding was held in one of Ngqeleni’s villages, a small village called Ntsaka.)

Ribane (2006:21) highlights the role rural life plays in forging a distinctive ethnic character, because when separated entirely from it, urban Blacks sometimes undergo identity crises “The interesting thing is that many urban Black people still suffer from an identity crisis. It is a cultural confusion of sorts, born of the old apartheid mentality.” What Vapi and Magona succeed in doing is highlighting the importance of tradition for a sense of belonging, no matter where you are.

Although Vapi is an educationalist, she does not undermine the importance of having and celebrating indigenous knowledge systems. After the birth of Siphokazi, MaNgwanya comforts the midwives who witnessed a snake with the baby:

“Bambalwa abantwana abazalwa ziintombi zakwaNgxabane abathi bandwendwelwe ngulo mntu ndifike ndambona ekhapha. Ze nazi mhlophe

MaXesibe amahle ukuba le nto inento eyithethayo. Nditsho kuba ke kusadlule iyure inye ezelwe lo mntwana. Kodwa ngoku ndibona into entle. Nanku ngoku ufukanywe yinyoka yakulonina.” (p.6) (“The special guest that I have just seen has visited only a few babies that are born by the Ngxabane daughters. To you beautiful people of the Xesibe clan, this visit signifies something. I stress this because only one hour has elapsed after the birth of this child. But now I see something beautiful. Here she is nursed by a snake of her mother’s people.”)

In traditional Xhosa culture indigenous knowledge is transmitted orally so that the present generation understands how things happen culturally as well as giving them respect for their symbolic and spiritual meanings. The little brown snake (*uMajola*) is revered by Black people, especially the Mpondomise, because they regard it as an ancestor. Vapi has MaNgwanya, who is a member of the Majola clan, explain to the other two midwives (who are not of that clan) what the significance of the snake at a birth is. The name *Majola* plays a significant role because it is a clan name and connects a person to his or her ancestors. That is why one person may identify himself or herself with many names relating to the clan. Thus for the Mpondomise you might hear someone refer to themselves as *Majola*, *Mphankomo*, *Ngwanya*, *Ngxabane*, uttering a list of clan names, all of which are important in establish the self as a ‘belonging’ entity.

The importance of the clan to the Xhosa is further demonstrated by the following wedding scene. Here Vapi women shouting out:

“Hlamban’amehlo nize kubona amanzandonge! Nditsho mna intombi yakwaChunu, kwaChakazi, kwaMathethazingene, ooTshaka bakwaHlazo.” (p.1) (“Wipe your eyes so that you see nature’s beauty! I talk about the daughter of *Chunu*, *Chakazi*, *Mathethazingene*, and *Tshaka* of *Hlazo*.”)

“Niqhel’amagwala! Akutshiwo kuthi sisiva kuthi thina booBhungane, ooMthimkhulu, ooNdlebentle zombini, ooMashwabada bashwabadela inkomo

neempondo zayo! Vulcan'amehlo nize kubon'uzwathi lofafa, lwechebetyu, lochwenene lomfana wakwaRhadebe." (p.1) ("You are used to meeting cowards! You don't stand a chance with us; we are *Bhungane, Mthimkhulu, Ndlebentle zombini*, and *Mashwabada*, the one who devoured the cow and its horns! Open your eyes and see the all smooth gentleman of *Rhadebe*.")

By using these exclamations, Vapi indicates that each family is proud of its identity. This identity is preserved orally and it is conveyed from one generation to another. Clan names help the families to stick together because they are aware of their cultural identity – what makes them unique and what makes them belong. If there is a ceremony that is going to take place, relatives are consulted first, even if they are far away. Many people leave the city in order to attend a particular ceremony; this is the power of cultural identity and one that Vapi valorizes in her novel.

Another cultural tradition that Vapi displays particular pride in is *Hlonipha* (the Xhosa women's language of respect). In this language, there are certain words that are not uttered in the presence of certain people (usually a wife's male relatives); rather, alternative words are articulated as a sign of respect for these people. At the birth of Siphokazi, MaNgwanya says, "*Lityubuka lini na bethu?*" (p.5) (To what sex does the baby belong?). She uses the word, *lityubuka* to avoid pronouncing the syllables in the normal words for child – *umntwana* – or baby – *usana*. Vapi, through the character of MaNgwanya, is skilfully able to employ an effective synonym for *umntwana*, that being *ityubuka*. This word denotes something that is soft and fragile and it also connotes the newly-born baby because he or she depends on other people's hands. MaNgwanya also says:

"Owu! Bantyu bakwaNgwanya, ukuzala kukuzolula xa ngoku ndinomzukulwana oliqobokazana. Azi uyise omabhongo uya kuthini na akuya ezi ndaba zimyoli." (p.5) ("Oh! People of Ngwanya, giving birth is a gain, especially now that I have a granddaughter. I wonder how her father will respond when he hears this entertaining news.")

MaNgwanya uses *Bantyu* instead of *Bantu* (people), *oliqobokazana* (young lady) instead of *oyintombazana* (a girl), and *zimyoli* (entertaining) instead of *zinnandi* (wonderful). The presence of the *Hlonipha* words makes the language richer and the cultural identity more valuable.

Sometimes a traditional person uses *Hlonipha* words like *ikhanka* instead of *inja* (a dog), *umnyatheli* instead of *umhambi* (a passer-by), and *izamkelo* instead of *izandla* (hands). Traditional people are proud of their language and this is what Vapi is expressing in her novel.

African culture also tells people what is acceptable and what is considered taboo. At the birth of Siphokazi, the midwives (MamBhele and MaMiya) play a role, but men do not take part.

According to African tradition, men are not allowed to observe when a child is born. In the second chapter Vapi says, “UMaNgxabane uvuke kwangonyezi wasinda le ndlu ebefukame kuyo.” (p.9) (MaNgxabane woke up at dawn in order to smear the floor with cow dung.) This incident takes place seven days after Siphokazi’s birth. The smearing of the floor is done because other people are going to see the child for the first time.

Mandela (1994:13) elaborates on gender distinctions amongst the Xhosa:

Without being told, I soon assimilated the elaborate rules that governed the relations between men and women. I discovered that a man may not enter a house where a woman has recently given birth, and that a newly-married woman would not enter the kraal of her own home without an elaborate ceremony.

The ceremony discussed in the second chapter of Vapi’s novel confirms what Mandela says in the above extract. The brewing of *umqombothi* (African beer) and the slaughtering of the goat demonstrate the significance of the ceremony.

The fact that cultural traditions are portrayed so positively by Vapi would suggest that she falls into the canon of Xhosa literature as writer who tends to pair culture with the ‘good things’ of rural life. This tendency of Xhosa writers to contrast good and rural with bad and urban, is put into its historical context by Owomoyela who acknowledges that tradition and cultural practices were not always portrayed favourably:

Even from early times the traditional life was often a draw to the Xhosa writer. For some it was merely the convenient target of editorial moralizing, ending with the lauding of the coming of new Christian ways. Yet there was also the recognition of positive elements of Xhosa culture, and those elements would eventually be paired with the good things of rural life in thematic contrast to the evils and perils of the city. (Owomoyela, 1993:292)

What Vapi does in *Litshona liphume* is highlight the beauty of tradition when it is properly employed and its dangers when misinterpreted or manipulated by people unwilling to take personal responsibility for their lives and fortunes. The author therefore does not so much pair the good things of rural with the perils of the city, but the good things of rural life with the ‘perils’ of rural life and rural traditions.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter examined the way in which Vapi’s religious beliefs were given creative expression in *Litshona liphume*. This chapter also explored the fact that Vapi’s life and writing were profoundly affected by the politics of the time (Apartheid) and I have used both the text and the interviews to demonstrate this.

This chapter also included an analysis on the central roles played by health, education and culture in the novel and I have argued that Vapi promotes a sophisticated and nuanced view of both traditionalist and modernist approaches to these systems.

CHAPTER FIVE

FEMINISM AND UBUNTU IN *LITSHONA LIPHUME*

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will examine some central philosophical issues that underscore and inform the themes in *Litshona liphume*. I hope to demonstrate that far from adopting a fundamentalist position on issues such as feminism or *ubuntu*, Vapi reveals a nuanced and complex understanding of these concepts for rural society - the way they inform its survival mechanisms and the conflicts that arise due to simplistic and unmediated understandings of tradition. Through the challenges that are faced and surmounted by her heroine, Vapi seems to be suggesting that we cannot understand tradition as an unchanging, reified concept, but rather we need to see its value in the way it gives meaning to lives affected by political, social and economic transformations.

5.2 African feminism

Frank problematizes the issue of feminism in Africa:

Feminism, by definition, is a profoundly individualistic philosophy: it values personal growth and individual fulfillment over any larger communal needs or goods. African society, of course, even in its most westernized modern forms, places the values of the

group over those of the individual with the result that the notion of an African feminism almost seems a contradiction in terms. (Frank, 1984: 45)

Andrade, however disputes this reading of Africa as containing a monolithic culture and argues that Frank is guilty of characterizing:

Communalism in all African societies as patriarchal and all feminism as European and individualistic. In so doing, she upholds the logic of the argument implied above: that of an irreconcilable difference between feminist criticism (which must be Eurocentric) and cultural criticism (which must be masculinist). (Andrade, 1990:93)

In this chapter I shall attempt to demonstrate that feminism in *Litshona liphume* reveals itself as a powerful force for cultural, social and individual transformation. I will demonstrate how through her portrayal of her heroine and other strong females in the novel, as contrasted with her largely negative portrayal of men in *Litshona liphume*, Vapi reveals her feminism and valorizes the power of the female voice. Vapi does not explicitly refer to feminism as such but she is clearly antagonistic to systems and personalities that situate women as inferior in any way to men.

5.3 Gender domination in *Litshona liphume*

Guzana (2000) observes how traditionally Xhosa women were barred from speaking about civic matters in public forums:

Patriarchal definitions of women exist alongside and often in contradiction to women's attempts to define themselves. For centuries women have sought various strategies to voice their ideas and concerns and to overcome social and traditional obstructions. Xhosa women were traditionally prohibited from speaking in public. (Guzana, 2011:77)

Vapi's character, Siphokazi, spends much of her young life trying to overcome these traditional obstructions at an attempt at defining herself – finally, at the end of the novel, she finds her voice

in a moving and rhetorical poem prayer (pp.118-121) in which she invokes her ancestors and praises God. The length of the poem, and the fact that it is uttered entirely by Siphokazi, suggests that Vapi's heroine has not only found her voice, but located her true, spiritual self.

Siphokazi is, however, victimised because of her gender from her early childhood. Her father used to beat her with a whip if she exhibited any kind of farming ignorance, and the little girl had no time to play with her dolls. This violence against the Siphokazi was done in public - her father was not arrested or punished for child abuse.

Ikude injani ke mlesi intsimi yasekhaya. Ndanga ndingathi vuleka mhlaba ndingene xa ngoku ndiza kwahlukana nokudlala oonopopi bam. Ndalala ndiguqe ngamadolo ngobo busuku yaye mlesi wayebetha utata wayengatyholwa. Wayenesabhokhwe sakhe awayesithi nguThwitsha xa esibiza. Heyi! Kumhla ndiza kuzala imivumbo. (p.21) (How far, reader, was our home's field. I wished for the earth to open and swallow me when I had to stop playing with my dolls. I slept kneeling that night, and by the way reader, my father used to hit and was not accused [it was open knowledge].)

She is further victimized for being a girl because her uncle wants to inherit the property of her late father.

In *Litshona liphume*, Siphokazi is psychologically hurt because her uncle is so cruel. For this reason, Xakekile (her uncle) represents an institution of men whose intention is to make females suffer. It is an institution that does not recognise equality between men and women and as a result, a girl is not allowed to inherit her parent's property as boys do.

Davis and Snyman (2005:9-10) argue that the victim has to assume agency in order to change a cycle of abuse, "Even if people outside the relationship recognise the abuse for what it is, it is necessary for the injured person to realise the fact that he or she is being unjustly harmed."

According to this statement there are steps that need to be taken by the victim because if he or she is silent, other people will find it difficult to assist him or her. Crying out, as Siphokazi does in Vapi's novel, attracts the attention of the neighbours but it is only when a woman, MaMiya, arrives that Xakekile stops his violence:

"Xakekile khawuyeke umntwana lo. Akwazi na ukuba kakade induku ayinamzi? Uyakha nokuba uyachitha?" (p.65) ("Xakekile, please leave this child. Don't you know that a stick has no home [figuratively: physical violence is not a solution]? By building, you are wasting [figuratively: you are destroying the very thing you are trying to create i.e. respect]?")

Davis and Snyman (2005:10) also highlight the fact that the abused person has to reach out for help:

This person looks outside him - or herself towards significant others, helping organisations or the criminal justice system for recognition of the fact that he or she has become a victim.

This illustrates that a victim turns to a person he or she can trust because some people may condone the actions of the perpetrator. They do this because they prefer the culture to the victim and as a result, they do not intervene when a woman is abused by a man. MaMiya shows that she is brave when she confronts the perpetrator (Xakekile).

Davis and Snyman (2005:10) comment on the powerlessness of rural women:

Victims in rural areas often have difficulty in obtaining the support and help they need to reconstruct their world as they know and prefer it.

Likewise, it is not easy for Siphokazi to go to the tribal authority because this institution regards women as subjects of men. Neither the headman nor the chief stops Xakekile from taking away

the property of Siphokazi's deceased father. Gender domination in the society makes life hard for Siphokazi because she is a girl.

Mulemfo (2000:72) elaborates on why rural women are so much more vulnerable:

Traditionally, African societies believed that women were inferior to men and that the primary goal of the existence of women was to bear children.

As a result of this myth, women are not recognised by men as people capable of playing a major role in the development of the nation. In order to demonstrate the harshness of masculine domination in rural areas, Vapi utilises characters such as the teacher who tells his daughter not to proceed to a high school simply because she (Nokusasa) is female. Although this teacher is an enlightened person, he believes in the tradition that the future of the girl is in marriage. Vapi, through the character of Nokusasa, understands but is highly critical of the kind of logic that views educating a female as a waste of time:

“Akangekhe afundisele abanye abantu yena kuba ndiza kuthi ndigqiba ukufunda ndibe ndibonwa lisoka. Yena into ayaziyo kukuba ingcwaba lentombi lisemzini.” (p.30) (“He will never educate a child for other people because when I finish, a suitor will see me and take me away. As far as he knows, the girl is destined for her husband.”)

In the novel, Nokusasa, Siphokazi's friend, ultimately yields to the authority of her father, and as a result, she does not go to high school.

The misconception that men perpetuate is that they can do whatever they like because they provide women with food, clothing and accommodation. This misconception also misleads women to suppress their inner desires and robs them of a sense of self. Ingrid Palmary, quoted in a paper by Shefer (2006:34) confirms this:

The reason for women's unique victimisation is expressed as being a result of her position within the family (as mothers, or as members without family protection).

According to this extract, married women feel compelled to stay even if conditions are no longer conducive to their marriage. They do this because they think of worse things that will happen to their children if they leave.

This kind of unmediated traditionalist view of gender roles is steadily but surely being eroded as women (including those living in the country) are beginning to speak out. Satyo (2001:447) points out that Xhosa women are, in fact, not weak, and are often well aware of their rights:

Nevertheless, in Xhosa cultural life women are strong; they are generally not submissive and they stand up for their rights. The well-known saying '*Wathint'abafazi wathint'imbokodo*' (You hit a woman, you hit a rock) signifies their strength.

In her novel Vapi demonstrates that traditionalist views of marriage, power and gender can be confronted and renegotiated through female solidarity and commonality. The trope of fatherless households creating strong women can be redefined as strong women create stronger households, with or without fathers, with or without husbands.

5.4 Women characters in *Litshona liphume*

Siphokazi

Vapi writes, “*Noxa eyintombazana nje kodwa uya kuba yintsika yeli khaya.*” (p.12) (Although she is a girl, she will be the pillar of this home.) This prophecy is realized in the narrative of *Litshona liphume* and also in Vapi’s own life.

Siphokazi starts off life as a weak child but she is strong because she survives due, mainly, to the intervention of intelligent women. The black tea helps her gain strength (p.19) and by the age eight she is treated like a boy by her father (p.21) – “*Ndanxiba buphuthuphuthu ndazamla ndisiya kubophisa utata iinkabi*” (I put on my clothes quickly and went to the kraal yawning in order to assist my father in in-spanning the oxen.)

Siphokazi also demonstrates huge intelligence by passing two standards in one year (p.26) and as a young woman speaks up for herself when she is cornered by her uncle (Xakekile) who wants Siphokazi and her siblings to move to his home. Vapi uses the beautiful Xhosa image of ‘sucking the thumb in disagreement’ to illustrate her heroine’s stubbornness:

Wasiyalela ukuba masithathe konke okwethu siye kuhlala kwakhe, ndamunca iintupha kwaya ngam. (p.50) (He instructed us to take all our belongings and stay with him, I sucked my thumbs in disagreement and he could not force me.)

Siphokazi is also portrayed as a caring and capable sibling as she is forced to look after her siblings after the death of her parents. It is Siphokazi, and not her uncle, who has the final say in the novel, and it is she who has the authority to forgive him:

“Ayavakala amazwi enu tatomncinci. Akukho nto ndiza kuyithetha ngaphandle kokuba ndingase ndithi nje siyalwamkela uxolo lwakho.” (p.113) (“Your words are heard, uncle. There is nothing that I can say except that we accept your apology.”)

Siphokazi, refuses to enter into an arranged marriage (p.65) and stands up to her greedy, self-serving uncle but, ultimately she forgives him for his ways, demonstrating a particularly African understanding of feminism. Frank (1984:45) refers to ‘antagonistic identities’ displayed by the contemporary African fictional heroine:

The fundamental problem that seems to face the contemporary African fictional heroine is that she is torn between two antagonistic identities: her communally-bred sense of herself as an African, and her feminist aspirations for autonomy and self-realization as a woman.

Siphokazi’s stubbornness and faith in the law is beautifully captured in the following exchange in which she refuses to be manipulated into a forced marriage by her uncle:

“Zikhupheni ezo nkomo bezingeziswanga ndim nje!”
“Le mfundo yakho iyakugezisa. Yindlela ofundiswe ngayo ukubphendula ooyihlo le? Ndakukubetha ungabhadlanga nje.” “Nokuba undibethile, kodwa wona umthetho uya kukubetha ngaphezulu.” (p.65) (“Take out the cows that were not brought by me!” This education of yours is making you naughty. Have you been taught to reply to your uncles like this? I will beat you if you are so stupid.” “Even if you beat me, the law is going to beat you more.”)

Siphokazi is a good and supportive friend, and is able to give comfort to Nokusasa when her father denies her an education. In this instance however, Vapi’s feminism is somewhat betrayed because while she sympathizes with her friend, she is unable to influence Nokusasa’s father’s decision (p.30).

Even when challenged to fetch water with a needle as an initiation rite at her new school, Siphokazi complies, even though she has no idea how she is going to accomplish this ridiculous task. Her willingness and readiness to take on a clearly insurmountable problem, endears her to

her schoolmates, who then call her an angel: “*Maqela yingelosi le masiyiyeke.*” (p.37) (“Girls, this is an angel, let us leave her alone.”)

On a deeper level, this incident is a metaphor that shows the willingness of Siphokazi not to reject any task that is asked of her in good faith, no matter how difficult. In the case of the marriage she is able to reject the request, because it was not made in good faith, but with her school mates, she sees it as a symbol of enthusiasm to please a group of equals, and she no doubt was also aware of the intended humour in the demand.

MaNgxabane

MaNgxabane, Siphokazi’s mother, is a strong woman who can tolerate difficult physical and emotional situations. At the beginning of the novel she does not reveal to other people that she is experiencing birth pangs and also, at the time of her death, Vapi suggests that her mother has kept her illness quiet for a long time:

Kwaba njalo ukushiywa kwethu yiloo ntombi yakwaNgxabane ingagulanga, kunani khona ukuba ibikhe yabika ihlaba yatya necephe leyeza. (p.42) (That is how the daughter of Ngxabane passed away, without being sick, never having spoken of any pain or taken any medication.)

An unemployed mother, MaNgxabane, manages to send her daughter to school and by doing that, she is saving her child from future persecution. All along, men have been discouraging their daughters so that they drop out of school. MaNgxabane’s daughter, Siphokazi, overcomes many obstacles just because she is a learned person.

Ncebakazi

Siphokazi's younger sister, is a hardworking, intelligent yet humble girl who does not give her sister any problems. She becomes a teacher despite financial difficulties:

UNcebakazi yena uye wafundela ukuhlohla kwisikolo soqeqesho-titshala iSigcawu kwisithili saseSiphaqeni. Ugqibezele apho ngomnyaka we-1980. (p.106) (Ncebakazi studied teaching at the teacher's training college called Sigcawu in the district of Flagstaff. She finished here in 1980.)

Nomhlayifani

Nomhlayifani is the wife of Xakekile, Siphokazi's uncle. She is a selfish woman, who nevertheless does not force her own daughter into an unwanted marriage. Her selfishness is entirely directed at Siphokazi. She is not a strong symbol of feminism because she does not support women outside of her immediate family and also she appears just to follow her husband's wishes.

“Kaloku, ntombam sinoyihlomncinci, uyise kaNomalike njengabazali bakho abakhoyo ngoku kufuneka sihlafunile ngawe xa ungasebenzi nokusebenza kuba ke besimelwe kukuba sixhaphe imilomo yeyamandla akho imali. Ke ntombi, ndize kukuxelela ukuba siza kukwendisa.” (pp.55-56). (“By the way, my child, your uncle and I need to benefit from you, especially now that we are your present parents. For that reason, my child, I have come to tell you that we are organising your marriage.”)

Nomalike

Nomalike is an underachiever. She falls pregnant out of wedlock. Although her father wants to force her cousin Siphokazi into a marriage, it would appear he does not enforce the same principles on his own daughter. Through Siphokazi's voice, Vapi criticizes families that allow their daughters to have illegitimate children, but the author does not really interrogate the reasons for Nomalike's behaviour, except possibly to suggest that her parents' focus on Siphokazi, alienates her and drives her to seek love and affection in premarital sex.

One of the reasons why this section of the novel might appear to lack depth is explained by an answer given by Vapi in a recent interview (Macabela, 2011) in which she alludes to the fact that in her initial manuscript, even the main character, Siphokazi, falls pregnant in matric:

Kodwa ngenxa yamahla ndinyuka eyawafumanayo le ncwadi phantsi kweBhodi yaseTranskei eyayijonga/ ihlela iiManyuskripthi ngelo xesha, kudliwano-ndlebe olwaluphakathi kwam nomnye waloo malungu, (1) wahlaba Isahluko esasingokukhulelwa kukaSiphokazi esafunda uForm V. Kwanyanzeleka ke ukuba siguzulwe eso sahluko nanjengoko wacacisayo ukuba iincwadi ezithetha ngokukhulelwa azifunwa nokubonwa liSebe lezeMfundo. Noxa ke ndacacisayo ukuba iinjongo zesi sahluko kukufundisa ulutsha ukuba malungazibandakanyi nezesondo lusafunda, into ebalulekileyo yimfundo kuqala. (Due to the ups and downs of this novel under the Board of Transkei that was scrutinizing/editing the manuscript at that time, in the interview between me and one of the members, the chapter pertaining to Siphokazi's pregnancy while she was doing standard Ten was taken out because the Department of Education did not want to see books that were speaking about pregnancy. Nevertheless, I explained that the aims of this chapter were to educate the youth not to engage in sexual activities while studying because education comes first.)

Nokusasa

By including a character such as Nokusasa (Siphokazi's friend) who is a victim of her father's bigotry (he does not allow her to continue her schooling as he feels she is destined for marriage), Vapi allows us to see how difficult it is for many women in rural areas to overcome traditions that marginalize them. Because of her father, Nokusasa is denied a voice and has to subjugate her ambitions. Nokusasa compares Siphokazi's parents to her own:

"Owu! Akwaba nowam utata ubenazo ezi njongo ziphakamileyo njengabazali bakho." (p.32)
(“Oh how I wish my dad also aimed high like your parents.”)

It is also important to note that Vapi seems to suggest that the character of Nokusasa is included in the novel in order to illustrate the very real challenges that faced (and still) face young rural women hoping to continue their studies. In a recent interview (Macabela, 2011) the author articulates how difficult it was to avoid marriage as many fathers were intent on enriching themselves through the bride price. It is important to note the centrality of religion in the author's life – she escapes this predicament through the intervention of the school principal and through prayers.

Umba wokungafundiswa kwabantwana abangamantombazana ndikhule usagquba abantu abangootata bejonge ukuba intombi yende kuze kungena iinkomo. Nam ndasinda ngemithandazo. Nto eyandisindisayo kukuphumelela uStd VI ndisemncinci. Utitshala omkhulu wadlala indima ebalulekileyo ebomini bam esithi angeke ndiyekiswe isikolo ndisemncinci ngolu hlobo mandisiwe esinaleni, naleyo yaphumelela ngemithandazo. Kangangokuba ndasiwa esinaleni eNdamase ukuvulwa kwezikolo kungakhange kwenziwe kwasicelo eso sokufunda kwam apho, ndamkelwa ke ngobungakanani bam. Ewe, ndinazo iitshomi zam ezafunda nje uStd VI, zipasile zingapasanga zendiswa kangangokuba enye yazo eyayizothwalwa yabaleka yaziphosa esizibeni noxa ingazange iyincede nganto loo nto isekuloo mzi nanamhlanje. (Macabela, 2011) (The challenge of not sending girls to higher institutions dominated in my childhood because fathers were expecting their daughters to get married so that they could receive the bride price. As for me, I narrowly escaped because of prayers. What saved me was my pass in Standard Six at a very young age. The principal played a crucial role in my life saying I could not be taken out of school

at my youthful age instead I had to be sent to a high school, even that was done through prayers. As a result I was sent to Ndamase High School without making a prior application and I was admitted because I was so young. Yes, I have friends who, after studying Standard Six, whether they had passed or failed, were forced to marry, by the way, the one who was going to be abducted according to the tradition, ran away throwing herself into the river but that did not help and even today she is married to the man who abducted her.)

MaNgwanya

MaNgwanya is a traditionalist, a strong and opinionated woman, who has extensive knowledge of indigenous practices and beliefs. In the novel she exhibits no weakness or bad judgement and clearly her wisdom and understanding are respected, just as she respects her ancestors. In the following passage she drops to her knees on seeing the ancestral snake:

Waziphendula ngokunqwala nje intloko umntu omkhulu, wabalathisa entla kwentloko yosana. Wathi guqaqa ngamadolo wanqula iminyanya yakowabo. (p.5) (The old woman answered them by nodding, she pointed in the direction of the baby's head. She knelt praising her ancestors.)

MaMiya

Mamiya is a bold, forthright woman who stands for what is true and right. When Siphokazi's father, Xakekile, is trying to force his daughter into marriage, Mamiya comes to the rescue. (p.65).

MaMbhele

MaMbhele is a flexible woman, who although a traditionalist, is able to make judgement calls as to when to put an individual's needs above cultural protocols:

“Yho-o! Bantu bakwaLanga! Uthetha ukuba uyalunywa? Ungatsho nje? Nceda wethu phakama sihambe.” Wakhuzo eqhwaba izandla uMamBhele. “Noko MaNgxabane lo mtshato awubalulekanga ngaphezu kwalo mntu mtsha uzayo. Yiba usithi chu mna ndiza kukhe ndikrwece uMaMiya.” (p.3) (“Oh! People of kwaLanga! Do you mean you are suffering from the pangs of birth? Why don't you say so? Please rise and let's go.” MamBhele exclaimed clapping her hands. “Anyway MaNgxabane, the wedding is not more important than the new person who is on the way. Proceed gently while I'm consulting MaMiya.”)

Nokuzola

Nokuzola is a school friend of Siphokazi's at high school. When Siphokazi is a newcomer Nokuzola goes out of her way to be friendly and welcoming to the new girl. She is generous and affectionate towards her friend: *Lo ke undenza iphelo lakowabo ngusisi Nokuzola Mlozi wakuTsolo.* (p.37) (Nokuzola Mlozi from Tsolo made me like her little sister.)

5.5 Men in *Litshona liphume*

I would argue that *Litshona liphume* is a feminist novel because all the positive events are driven by women. Men appear as obstructionists – characters presented to women as challenges. I will discuss the three most important men in the novel and the role they play in the narrative and as secondary characters in a largely feminist story of endurance, survival and ultimate triumph.

Zwelibanzi

Zwelibanzi is Siphokazi's largely absent father. He is nevertheless a powerful influence on Siphokazi's life because he advocates education, but other than that he can be cruel and insensitive, especially when Siphokazi is still a young girl.

In one passage, Siphokazi falls to the ground because of his violence. Her only crime being that she lost a lamb – her father whips her as she runs away from him, the whip entangles her legs and pulls her down:

Ndaqabuka kuloo ndawo ndandiwele kuyo sekuthe xhonkxosholo abantu ndimanzi ubuso, waye engashwabuli umama izandla ezithwele entloko. (p.24) (By the time I regained consciousness where I had fallen, the people stood astounded while my face was wet; my mother was cursing putting her hands on her head.)

Zwelibanzi is a victim of the Apartheid regime of the time – people in rural areas were forced to find work in the cities and so lost their families and their sense of authority and being mere 'boys' to their White bosses. Zwelibanzi dies in a car crash on the way to Cape Town after burying his own father – another reminder of how migrant labour split families apart and caused untold suffering for both women and men.

Thozamile

Thozamile is Siphokazi's uncle who is employed in Port Elizabeth. He is the one who gives Siphokazi her name. This giving of a name by a male character underscores the traditional belief that it should be the males in the family who bestow upon a child his or her name. Vapi does not appear to argue with this non-feminist aspect of tradition – in fact, throughout the novel it is not tradition that she seems to pit herself against so much as genderized attitudes that subvert women and subvert their chances of self-fulfilment.

Xakekile

In my recent interview with Vapi I asked the question, “Is the character of Xakekile exactly the same as your actual uncle?” Vapi's reply is profoundly insightful. According to her, Xakekile represents many men who she has known – he is the vehicle through which Vapi can articulate a complex matrix of sexist and obstructionist masculinities. She also refers to the fact that one male character asked that her novel be burnt after reading it, fearing that people would recognize him.

Yingxaki lo mlinganiswa unguXakekile! Awunakukholelwa xa ndithi abantu abaninzi abangamadoda, ngulowo uzibona enguXakekile kubomi bam. Ndingatsho ndithi lo mlinganiswa unguXakekile undincede kakhulu kuba abanye ootata baziveza ngokunokwabo okokuba banesandla kwintlupheko endiyiphilileyo emva kokusweleka kwabazali bam. Omnye kuthiwa wathi akugqiba ukuyifunda mayitshiswe le ncwadi khona ukuze ingabisabonwa ngabanye abantu kuba esithi ndibhale ngaye. Ngamanye amazwi umlinganiswa uXakekile umele indawo yabantu ngabantu abathi benze izinto ezimbi kwabanye abantu kuba befuna ukutyhuthula izinto ezingelolungelo kubo ngeenjongo zokuzityebisa ngazo batsho basale besebugxwayibeni abo banelungelo kwilifa labazali babo. Ngelishwa andikwazi ukumchaza utatomncinci wam ukuba ungumntu onjani na nanjengoko ndiye ndazikhethela ukungaxhomekeki mntwini ngenxa yeembandezelo nentshutshiso ebezivela macala onke obomi bam. (Macabela 2011)

(The character, Xakekile is problematic. You may not believe it when I say many men regard themselves as Xakekile in my life. I may say that Xakekile has helped me a lot

because some men reveal on their own that they played a role in my suffering especially after losing my parents. One, after reading this novel, said that it must be burnt so that other people do not see it alleging that I had written about him. In other words Xakekile represents different people who do evil things to other people simply because they want to confiscate what does not belong to them, their aims are to acquire the wealth while the legitimate people are left poor. Unfortunately I cannot describe the kind of person my uncle is especially since I have chosen not to depend on other people due to the persecutions that came from all angles affecting my life.)

In *Litshona liphume*, Xakekile is Siphokazi's cruel, selfish and greedy uncle who displays the worst kind of gender discrimination by taking her inheritance (livestock) and by trying to force her into a marriage. Because of Siphokazi's bold, feminist stance, he is unable to force her or her siblings to live with him.

Malihambe and Malingemingam

Malihambe and Malingemingam are Siphokazi's distant uncles who are easily manipulated by Xakekile – she draws the delightful picture of them trailing blindly behind Xakekile like chicks after the mother hen:

Ndambona loo Jinoyi ungutatomncinci esinga apho bahleli khona abakhozi bakhe ootata ababini baseMantanjeni berhorhozela emva kwakhe okwamantshontsho enkukhu elandela emva kwesikhukukazi. (p.62) (I saw that 'jackal' who is my uncle going in the direction of the visitors, the two uncles of Mantanjeni were following after him like chickens following the hen.)

Themba and Mxolisi

Themba and Mxolisi are Siphokazi's brothers. They are hard working and reliable but do not drive the narrative in the novel. They feature more towards the end of the novel – when Xakekile comes asking for forgiveness, they agree and forgive him.

5.6 Ubuntu

Gaylard, in his article on *ubuntu* in African literature, speaks of the ‘resilience’ of the concept and attempts to give a reason for its continued popularity as a philosophy and in African literature:

In South Africa, where apartheid constituted a systematic and deliberate denial of the humanity of black South Africans, moral, intellectual and political opposition to that system was based in part on an affirmation of the humanity of black South Africans. The hope of constructing a democratic and caring society in South Africa depends in part on a belief in a common or shared humanity to which one can appeal. The very concept of human rights implies that human beings (by virtue of being human) have dignity and value and (flowing from this) certain inalienable rights which need to be protected from arbitrary authority or tyranny. (Gaylard, 1993:267)

In a recent interview, Vapi articulates the fact that while *ubuntu* is something to be aspired to, it is not always followed, even in rural villages where one would expect it, and gives as an example the way in which people took her parents’ property after their death:

Ndithi ke ndakuyithelekisa le ntlungu yentlalo endiyiphilayo naleyo sasiyifumana kumbuso welo xesha ndafumanisa ukuba njengokuba sikhala ngokuba amaBhulu ayesicinezela, nathi thina bantu baMnyama siyacinezelana kwasodwa kuba naku ngoku kungekho zalamane zisincedayo koko ngulowo unga uyayikhotha kanti uyayixathula. Andithi kaloku abantu babezityhuthulela ngeendlela ezohlukeneyo kwizinto ezazishiywe ngabazali bam? (Macabela, 2011) (I compared my pain to the Apartheid Regime because on the one hand we were complaining that the Boers were oppressing us and on the other hand we were oppressing one another with no one caring about his/her relatives. A person would be hypocritical, pretending that he was comforting you but was actually abusing you. By the way, isn’t it so that people, in different ways, were taking what my parents had left?)

In the novel, however, there are many instances in which Vapi illustrates the *ubuntu* that is common in rural areas when village people undergo the normal vicissitudes and challenges of life. I will highlight five areas in the novel in which *ubuntu* is particularly obvious – at birth, at death, in race relations, family and community relations and in poverty.

5.6.1 *Ubuntu* at birth

When Siphokazi's mother is about to give birth, the midwives MaMiya and Mambhele abandon their plans to attend a wedding and go to help their friend. After Siphokazi is born MaNgwanya, MaMiya and MamBhele spend the night with MaNgxabane – showing their care and concern for their friend and displaying true selflessness as they do not go back to their homes but rather offer comfort and support to their friend in her home. When MaNgxabane asks MaNgwanya whether she would spend the night with her after the birth of her child, the older woman replies with a characteristically throw away comment that is nevertheless steeped in kindness “*Noko wena mntwanam bekungekho nto ityhulu phaya ekhaya.*” (p.7) (“Of course my child, anyway there was nothing of interest at home.”)

5.6.2 *Ubuntu* at death

Ncumisa Vapi speaking through MaMiya, declares:

“Unina mhla itshoba lalala umbethe kuye wacinywa ndim lo amehlo. Uyise mhla aphindela emsebenzini khon’ukuze afumane ingozi yemoto asishiye wabayaleza apha kum aba bantwana. Sekufana ke ngoku nokuba waye eyolela. Namhlanje ndingwevu intloko le yonke, nithi ndingafi nje ndakugqiba ukwaluphala ndilinde ntoni? Ndaluse ezi mveku ke.” (p.67) (“When her mother passed away, I closed her eyes. Her father asked me to look after these children before he died in an accident on his way to work. Now I take his words as a will. Today my hair is grey all over my head, what do you think I’m waiting for at my age? My responsibility is to take care of these children.”)

In saying these words, the character, MaMiya is confirming that there are responsibilities that are taken by African people when there is bereavement. When the act of *Ubuntu* is carried out, the words that are usually uttered, *Akukho nkedama kwindlu kaNtu* (There is no orphan in the

African family), become real. The main character in Vapi's novel has lost both parents, but MaMiya, who was present at her birth, is there for her.

The attendance of country people compared to city people when there is a funeral is not the same. In the country many people attend, while in the city only family and a few friends attend the service.

Ncumisa Vapi, speaking through Siphokazi, describes how after the death of her father, his fellow workers from Cape Town contribute money to the family:

Emva kokungcwatywa kukatata kwathi gaxa amadoda awayesebenza notata eKapa. Babezise isityhwentywe semali engamakhulu amathathu eerandi.” (p.49) (After the funeral of my father, the men who worked with him in Cape Town arrived. They had brought a huge amount of money which was three hundred rand.)

If one considers the enormous sacrifice it must have taken to contribute so much money at that particular juncture in a Black South African's economic history, this gesture shows extraordinary kindness and compassion.

5.6.3 Ubuntu in race relations

Vapi does not suggest that *ubuntu* can only be displayed by Black people, in fact she specifically includes in her novel scenes in which White people demonstrate kindness and concern for others. In her narrative a White shopkeeper who lives at EmaNdlovini near Ntsaka socialises with the parents of Siphokazi to such an extent that together with his wife they visit Siphokazi's home. The shop keeper's wife is described as showing immense tenderness towards the baby Siphokazi but Vapi also illustrates how the friendship was mutual – and not paternalistic and one

way – the shopkeeper’s wife would offer friendship and advice and MaNgxabane would offer friendship and produce from her garden:

Wawungafika uNkosikazi lo emfunqulele phezulu uSiphokazi embuka encoma nokondleka kwakhe kakuhle ecebisa nokuba asiwe rhoqo ekliniki, into ke leyo eyayingaxatyiswanga ngabantu bakwaNtsaka. Le mvano phakathi kwesi sibini yantshula, yakhula, yada yomelela, inkcenkceshelwa bobo bubele bungenambaliso balo mfazi unguMaNgxabane. (p.14) (You would find that woman lifting Siphokazi up, admiring her, praising her gorgeous plumpness advising that she should be taken regularly to the clinic, something that was not valued by the people of Ntsaka. This relationship between the two [the shopkeeper’s wife and MaNgxabane] progressed and strengthened and encouraged by this kindness of MaNgxabane.)

5.6.4 Ubuntu in family and community relations

Vapi expresses the value of *ubuntu* when she refers to her parents’ generosity:

Noxa abazali bakaSiphokazi yayingabantu ababomvu, babengathumani manzi ngobundlezana, bengahlalwa mpukane, yaye befumile. (p.13) (Although Siphokazi’s parents were illiterate, both of them were so generous, neat and rich.)

Despite the fact that Siphokazi’s parents were not educated, their traditional and cultural knowledge encouraged them to manifest charity and open-handedness towards their community.

Later in the novel, we are again given evidence of Siphokazi and her family’s generosity, but this time on a spiritual as well as on a pragmatic level - Nomhlayifani exhorts her husband, Xakekile, to return to Mxolisi, Siphokazi’s brother, to ask for help:

“Yise kaNomalike endaweni yokuba sife yindlala masiye kucela uncedo kuMxolisi.” (p.108) (“Father of Nomalike, instead of dying as a result of hunger, let’s go to Mxolisi to seek help.”)

Xakekile does go to Mxolisi and indeed he is helped. For many people, particularly urban dwellers, this kind of family dependency would not be tolerated, but as Vapi demonstrates, in rural areas much of survival relies on people manifesting this spirit of *ubuntu*.

Ubuntu in female solidarity is succinctly illustrated in *Litshona liphume* by MaMiya's unwavering support of Siphokazi who wishes to defy her uncle and refuse to be forced into marriage. The female coalition also touches men such as Malihambe and Malingemingam, who are swayed and give in to Siphokazi. MaMiya's voice is stridently feminist and supportive of Siphokazi and Vapi shows the men weakening and being rendered speechless by the power of the female voice:

"Kutheni na uSiphokazi wagxwalisa amehlo, nimenze ntoni?" Kwathi cwaka endlwini akwabikho mntu uphendulayo ngaphandle nje konkonkonko owavela ngesiqophe phakathi kweso sithathu." (p.65) ("Why are Siphokazi's eyes full of tears? What have you done to her?" There was silence in the house, no-one wanted to answer, there was a sudden coughing coming from the three men.)

Siphokazi and MaMiya form a feminist alliance that is more powerful than their individual identities. Evans (1994:351) says, in relation to female coalitions:

To pursue coalition politics, feminists have to learn that our allies are best chosen on the basis of their political commitments, not their identities. We could apply a similar criterion to strategy, perhaps while remembering that personal experience was first recruited to the feminist cause not as a measure of personal moral worth or as a way to determine political safety but as a means to our liberation.

Another way in which Vapi underscores the principle of *ubuntu* in her novel is through her portrayal of MaMiya and MamBhele listening to their elder, MaNgwanya, as she guides them in their midwifery. MaNgwanya in *Litshona liphume* is depicted as a very old woman who is full of traditional wisdom. The birth of Siphokazi is a success because of MaNgwanya's wise

instructions. Dowden (2009: 21) states, “Grey hairs are respected and obeyed in Africa. The elderly are not pushed aside as they are in Western countries.”

5.6.5 *Ubuntu* and poverty

Although many of the references to poverty in *Litshona liphume* would suggest an outside agency (such as the State) being responsible (see for example p.26) Vapi does not avoid mentioning that poverty can be self-induced and often occurs when the principle of *ubuntu* is ignored. This is best illustrated by the passage in which Xakekile finds himself in financial trouble for which he himself is to blame: he has plunged himself into a deep quagmire by confiscating Zwelibanzi’s (his late brother) livestock. After he has slaughtered all the farm animals without considering the welfare of the children of his late brother, Xakekile remains poor. Speaking through Xakekile, Vapi further attributes Xakekile’s poverty directly to his own doings:

“Mntwanam, mntwana womkhuluwa wam ungabisaphanda dlaka. Ndibekwa apha kuwe liphango. Yaye ndicela uxolo ngezinto ezimdaka endathi ndaningcungcuthekisa ngazo. Nondzaba siyatshabalala yindlala nentsapho yam. (p.111) (“My child, child of my brother, don’t open the wounds. I have come here because of hunger. Forgive me for all the dirty things that I put you through. Nondzaba; hunger is destroying my family.”)

One of the reasons that make Vapi’s main character (Siphokazi) refuse to marry a man of her uncle’s choice is that she wants to further her education, get a job and support her brothers and sisters. She wants to avoid poverty and dependency at all costs. She understands that her forced husband will never allow her to carry out these duties because of the tradition. In this way most country husbands use the bride price as a pretext to control their wives because once they have made the payment they regard their wives as their property rather than partners. This

misconception contradicts the intension of the bride price because the bridegroom does not buy the bride but a social contract is formed between two families.

5.7 Conclusion

In this chapter I scrutinized Vapi's understanding of feminism and *ubuntu* and how she gave these creative expression in *Litshona liphume*.

By a close analysis of the text I argued that through the challenges that are faced and surmounted by her heroine, Vapi seems to be suggesting that we cannot understand tradition as an unchanging, reified concept, but rather we need to see its value in the way it gives meaning to lives affected by political, social and economic transformations.

It would appear, through a close reading of Vapi's text, that the author has a particularly nuanced understanding of both *ubuntu* and feminism. In an interview with her she condenses her understanding in one extremely significant reflection:

Umyalezo uthi, xa ubani esemagunyeni makabaphathe kakuhle abantu, abalungiselele ngokufanayo nangokulinganayo, angarhwaphilizi. (Macabela, 2011) (My message is that the person who is in authority must treat people fairly and equally instead of being corrupt.)

My analysis in this chapter demonstrates that in *Litshona liphume* Vapi exposes the difficulties and challenges faced by rural women and suggests that these can be mitigated by group solidarity (*feminism*) and human kindness (*ubuntu*).

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

6.1 Summary

In Chapter One, I hypothesised that Vapi is a Xhosa writer who has used her life-experience to form the basis of her novel. Various tropes were identified as driving the narrative. The notion of triumph (the ability to overcome hardships) and how it relies on an idea of Xhosa women as ‘tolerant’ and ‘long-suffering’ was highlighted. Chapter One also includes a literature review – in this review I have grouped Xhosa novels written in the same era as Vapi’s *Litshona liphume* under two separate thematic headings – those characterized by despair, descent, reason and renewal and those dealing with love, betrayal and tragic death. Scholarly works on Xhosa novels have been reviewed. Under methodology several authors of autobiography have been identified. The way in which chapters of the research are organised is mentioned under the delimitation of study area.

Vapi’s biographical data and autobiographical features (tropes) are dealt with in Chapter Two.

A literary analysis of the language used in *Litshona liphume* is covered in Chapter Three, as is the link between the writer and the community, and the significance of names in Vapi’s novel.

In Chapter Four, the following aspects have been discussed in relation to *Litshona liphume*: religion, politics, health, education and culture.

Chapter Five focuses on the concept of *ubuntu* and the way in which feminism is articulated in the novel.

6.2 Conclusion

One of the aims of this study was to investigate and establish the significance of social setting in *Litshona liphume*. Throughout the thesis it has been shown that the Eastern Cape, its towns, villages, rivers and schools, has played a central role in Vapi's narrative. Vapi does not fictionalize these locations – they are the actual places where she grew up, the exact schools where she was educated. In addition, my research has shown that the social setting that Vapi creates pertains directly to her own community in Ngqeleni. Her protagonist, Siphokazi, interfaces with this community not in a passive way, but by reclaiming agency for herself. While she exhibits a deep knowledge and appreciation of Xhosa traditions and customs Vapi does not shy away from interrogating the more negative aspects of her community – including their suspicions, self-indulgences, greed and sexism. In fact, the two areas of the book that exhibit the most weakness in terms of social setting are those referring to pregnancy out of marriage and the politics of the time, but, in an interview with the author I discovered that this was a result of censorship:

ULitshona liphume uzalwa libali elifutshane elithi, “Ungalahli ithemba.” Ndandingenele ukhuphiswano lwamabali amafutshane olwaluququzelelwa nguProsperity Insurance Company, Mthatha ngo1981/1982. Eli bali laphuma phambili kuGroup A. Ndaye ndacetyiswa nguMphathi wam wakwaExamination Section, Department of Education, Mthatha, utat'uMagazi oligqwetha ngoku emva

kokuba elifundile ukuba ndilandise ndibhale inoveli. Kodwa ngenxa yamahla ndinyuka eyawafumanayo le ncwadi phantsi kweBhodi yaseTranskei eyayijonga ihlela iiManyuskriphthi ngelo xesha, kudliwano-ndlebe olwaluphakathi kwam nomnye waloo malungu, wahlaba Isahluko esasingokukhulelwa kukaSiphokazi esafunda uForm V. Kwanyanzeleka ke ukuba siguzulwe eso sahluko nanjengoko wacacisayo ukuba iincwadi ezithetha ngokukhulelwa azifunwa nokubonwa liSebe lezeMfundo. Noxa ke ndacacisayo ukuba iinjongo zesi sahluko kukufundisa ulutsha ulutsha malungazibandakanyi nezesondo lusafunda, into ebalulekileyo yimfundo kuqala. Kwakhona nezinye iindawo ezazixoxa banzi ngezepolitiki kwanyanzeleka ziguzuliwe. (Macabela, 2011) (Litshona liphume started off life as a short story, “Don’t lose hope.” I participated in a competition of short stories that was organized by the Prosperity Insurance Company at Mthatha in 1981/1982. My short story was number one. My supervisor in the Examination Section, Department of Education, Mthatha, Mr. Magazi who is now a lawyer, after reading the short story, advised me to write a novel. Due to the ups and downs of this novel under the Board of Transkei that was scrutinizing/editing the manuscript at that time, in the interview between me and one of the members, the chapter pertaining to Siphokazi’s pregnancy while she was doing Standard Ten was taken out because the Department of Education did not want to see books that were speaking about pregnancy. Nevertheless, I explained that the aims of this chapter were to educate the youth not to engage in sexual activities while studying because education comes first. Other portions that gave a detailed account of politics were taken out.)

Vapi’s own experiences are most vividly portrayed in the novel (her birth, the death of her parents, her education, her conflicts with her uncles) but always against the backdrop of a particular place, Ntsaka village, in a particular district, Ngqeleni, with its cast of characters well drawn and remembered. However, I would argue that Vapi’s own individual experiences dominate and that societal, community incidents play a somewhat subaltern role. Vapi is not critical of a dominant individualistic ideology that professes that everyone can succeed given the will to do so, but she nevertheless understands the importance of place and community in the development of selfhood.

Another aim of this study was to establish whether Vapi’s treatment of women in the novel offers any feminist alternatives to question the customary role of Xhosa women and how this impacts on suffering within an already unequal society. My research has revealed that while Vapi does not explicitly denounce the male dominated Xhosa traditional hierarchy, she

nevertheless, through many of her female characters actions and utterances, contests interpretations of tradition that undermine, weaken or persecute women.

The final aim of the study was to focus on the notion of triumph and the regaining of agency by Xhosa women. I would argue that Vapi, in her novel, has the character of Siphokazi reaching a point of spiritual, emotional and educational victory, despite the fact that she was born into a country dominated by massive political inequalities and a tradition favouring male hegemony. Siphokazi's (and thus Vapi's) triumph is firmly rooted in religious notions of triumph after suffering, but I would argue that Vapi also draws on a folktale tradition in which didactic messages of good coming to those who deserve it is also valorised. The author herself acknowledges this fact:

Imfundiso endiyiphakule kwiintsomi namabali akwaNtu indakhile kakhulu kwaye ndafumanisa ukuba iyahambelana nemfundiso ephakulwa kwincwadi yezakwaLizwi. (Macabela, 2011) (The lesson that I learned from folktales and African stories strengthened me greatly and I also realized that it related to the Book of the Word [Bible].)

INTRODUCTION TO INTERVIEWS

These interviews offer insights into many aspects of the author's life and thinking. A number of her answers relate directly to opinions and views expressed in the novel, further demonstrating the autobiographical nature of her narrative. The first interview (Appendix A: Macabela, 2006) reveals the way in which Vapi views the Country/City divide, while the second one (Appendix B: Macabela, 2011) offers us an understanding of the actual writing of the novel – what her influences were and how these are realized in the text.

APPENDIX A: MACABELA, 2006

On Sunday 27 August 2006 I visited Ncumisa Vapi's home at Ntsaka village in the district of Ngqeleni. The author's home consists of five separate rooms: *eBisho*, *kwaBhelesi*, *kwaNondize*, *kwaSinama* and *kwaNkwankwini*, but the name of the home is '*eMandleni kaSomandla*' (At the Power of the Almighty). *Bisho* is the great house and it is likened to the Eastern Cape provincial capital. Others are named after ancestors and they are used as clan names. Inside, the sitting room is decorated with works of art, including grass mats and a portrait of an African person with beads around the neck.

**BESIHLALA NJE KUMANQUGWALA ANGANGENI MOYA
NGOKWANELEYO, IFESTILE INGENGENA INQINDI LOMNTU OKANYE INTLOKO
YOMNTWANA**

**WE USED TO LIVE IN RONDAVELS THAT DIDN'T HAVE ENOUGH AIR, THE WINDOW BEING
THE SIZE OF A HUMAN FIST OR THE HEAD OF AN INFANT**

Macabela: *MamXesibe, sibamba ngazibini ngexesha lakho ngokuthi*

*usivumele sisizwe ukuba siphakule kulo vimba unguwe malunga
nokubhale kwinoveli ethi, **Litshona liphume**. Ndicela ukubuza
kuqala ukuba apha kwaNtsaka ungacacisa uthini ngokuphathelene
nendlela abantu abaphila ngayo neendawo abahlala kuzo?*

Macabela: MamXesibe, we sincerely thank you for your time and also for allowing the nation to benefit from you as a source of knowledge with regard to your novel, *Litshona liphume*. Allow me first to ask the question: How do you explain the way people of Ntsaka village live and the conditions under which they live?

Vapi: *Enkosi, nam mandibulele eli thuba lokuba uzixhamle usuke kwelokuzalwa eBizana uze apha kumbhali wencwadi ethi, **Litshona liphume**, ukwangumfundi kwiYunivesithi yaseKapa. Ndiza kuqala apha ekukhuleni kwam. Nawe ngoku uyabona ukuba ilali yahlukile sekungathi ubona idolophu xa uyibona. Ekukhuleni kwam, intsokolo ibinkulu kakhulu sihlala phantsi kobugxwayiba singabantu bale lali. Okokuqala amanzi esiwaselayo nanamhlanje asakhiwa emlanjeni, kungamanzi angacocekanga kuba kusela*

namahashe babe abanye abantu behlamba iimpahla logama abanye behlamba imizimba yabo abe eza kuselwa kuphekwe ngawo. Kodwa ke ngoku sekumbiwe imisele kuba uRhulumente ejonge ukusifakela amanzi oompompi sitsho sifumane amanzi acocekileyo, sisuke kula ntlalo yokuba sikhe amanzi angacocekanga ude ubone kukho intlenga phaya e-emereni. Neendawo zokuhlala ibizindawo nje ezingahlukanga kumatyotyombe ngokwentetho yabantu abahlala ezidolophini. Besihlala nje kumanqugwala angangeni moya ngokwaneleyo, ifestile ingangena inqindi lomntu okanye intloko yomntwana. Siphile phantsi kwezo meko kodwa sakhula sangaba bantu singabo. Into ekuthiwa zizindlu zangasese yeyona nto sikhule ingekho singazinto ngendlu yangasese uzinceda kuloo ndawo ongachopha kuyo ekudana nemizi. Kodwa ke ngoku zigqabazile, gqaba-gqaba noxa ke ngoku phantsi kwalo Rhulumente likhona ithemba lokufakelwa izindlu zangasese.

Vapi: Thank you, let me also express my deep gratitude for your time, having left the the place of your birth, Bizana, in order to interview the author of the novel, *Litshona liphume*, as a PhD student at UCT. I'm going to start with my early childhood. Now you can see that the village is different because it looks like an urban area. When I grew up there was a lot of hardship as we were living in horrible conditions. Firstly, we are still relying on water fetched from the river. The river water is not clean because horses drink there; some people do their washing, while others wash their bodies, and don't forget that the same water is used for drinking and cooking. Today the trenches are being dug because the present government is installing water taps so that we get clean water. This is a way of rescuing us from using water so dirty that you see frogspawn in the bucket. Previously, the living conditions were no different from life in shacks in the townships. We used to live in rondavels that didn't have

enough air, the window being the size of a human fist or the head of an infant. We lived under such conditions but we survived. There were no toilets at all and we could relieve ourselves anywhere, as long as one squatted away from the huts. Today there are very few toilets but there is hope that the present government is going to provide them.

Macabela: *MamXesibe, kuyabonakala ukuba nyhani kumbiwe, kukho imibhobho yamanzi efakwayo. Xa ujongwa kwixesha elingaphambili, kwiminyaka engaphezu kwamashumi amahlanu agqithileyo, imeko mhlawumbe ibifana nangoku nokuba kukhona umahluko okhona? Khawusibuyisele kweliya xesha lakuqala kwilali yakwaNtsaka.*

Macabela: MamXesibe, it is evident that trenches have been dug and there are water pipes being installed. When you look back more than fifty years, would you say there is a difference, or have things remained the same? Bring us back to the old Ntsaka village.

Vapi: *Kweliya xesha lakuqala sikhule kabuhlungu bengekho nooduladula kangangokuba bendisuka apha kwaNtsaka ngeenyawo ndiye edolophini. Njengokuba isikolo semfundo ephakamileyo kuyiNdamase, bendisuka ngeenyawo ukuya khona kungekho cebo limbi. Sinyamezele loo mgama ungako noxa ke mna ndikhe ndaxhamla ukuhlala ngaphakathi ukuqala ku-Form I ukuya ku-Form V ngelishwa kwabe kusweleka umzali wam wokugqibela ongutata. Kwanyanzeleka ukuba ndihambe ngeenyawo ukuya esinaleni, ndihamba ndodwa bengekho abantwana abafunda eNdamase ngelo xesha kuba babehlala kwimizi yezihlobo ezikufutshane neNdamase. Ewe nam ndandingayifumana indawo kwimizi ekufutshane kodwa kwakunyanzelekile*

*ukuba ndifunde ndihlala ekhaya kuba ndingoyena mntwana umdala nabazali
bengasekho ukuze ndikwazi ukuhoya aba beza emva kwam.*

Vapi: In those days there was a lack of transport, and I suffered because I had to walk from Ntsaka village to the town. I had no other option because Ndamase High School was the only institution I could attend. I patiently endured the distance until I was given accommodation between Form I and Form V. Most of the learners were staying with relatives living close to the institution, and so it was also possible for me to find a place to stay. When my father passed away though, I was compelled to walk from home to high school alone because, as the eldest child, I had the responsibility of looking after my siblings.

Macabela: *Enkosi sisi. Xa nisiya phaya emfuleni, kuyenzeka, uthethe ngentlenga,
ukuba amanzi aba nentlenga, ingaba yintoni le ufika isemanzini yona
iluhlaza? Nanisenza njani ukuba xa nisikha amanzi nizame ukuyiphepha?*

Macabela: Thank you, sister. You spoke about frogspawn when you went to the river to find water. What methods did you use to avoid this when fetching water?

Vapi: *Kwakungekho ukuphepha kuba la manzi akhiwa kumlambo obalekayo.
Sasigcwalisa i-emere sibeke entloko, wakufika ekhaya, le ntlenga ibisihla ihlale
ezantsi. Nangoku sisekulo meko.*

Vapi: There was no alternative. We would fill our buckets with water and put them on our heads. By the time we arrived home, the frogspawn had settled at the bottom of the bucket. Even today, the story is the same.

Macabela: *Ayikabikho imibhobho ekukhiwa kuyo?*

Macabela: Are there any water taps?

Vapi: *Ayikabikho, yile uRhulumente asazama ukuyifaka. Kodwa ke, bakhona*

*abanamatanki, kwakuphela imvula ayoma kuba itanki ikunceda okwalo
mzuzu kusekho imvula.*

Vapi: There are no water taps except the ones that are being installed by the government. However, some people have water tanks. When the rain is over, the water tanks become empty. The water tanks only help while it is raining.

Macabela: *Okokugqibela kulo mba, amanzi akhiwa ngoobani kule ndawo? Akhiwa
ngamakhwenkwe okanye ngamantombazana phaya emlanjeni?*

Macabela: Lastly, on this issue, who fetches water in this area? Is it the boys or the girls?

Vapi: *Ngexesha lokukhula kwethu amanzi ebekhiwa ngamantombazana ewathwala
ngeentloko. Umlambo ukude nangoku siphuma endlwini sinyuse induli kodwa
abantwana banendlela yokuzenzela imali kuba baqhuba iikiliva baye
kukukhelela baze bafune iiRandi ezintlanu ngembombozi nganye. Yindlela
ke abathi bazenzele ngayo imali ukuze bakwazi nokuzithengela iipensile
nezinye izinto ezifuneka esikolweni.*

Vapi: In my childhood it was the duty of the girls to fetch water. The river is far away and we had to ascend a hill; but nowadays the children use wheelbarrows, and they charge R5 per 25 litre container. This is how they make money to buy pens and other things that are needed at school.

Macabela: *Nangona umlambo ukude, nifuna amanzi acwengileyo, niqinisekisa njani ukuba amanzi mahle acwengile xa kanti iinkomo ziyawadunga? Niwakha njani amanzi acwengileyo ekude enjalo?*

Macabela: Although the river is far away, you need clean water. How do you make sure that you get clean water when the livestock drink from the same river? How do you get clean water in such conditions?

Vapi: *Akukho kuwacezela la manzi. Sele kufe ihashe nokuba yinja ngasentla, akukho kuwacezela, uyakha sinyamezele loo ntlungu.*

Vapi: There is no alternative. It does not matter whether a horse or a dog has died there, we cannot run away; we must get used to that pain.

Macabela: *Umbuzo olandelayo uthi, apha kwicala lokutya kutyiwa ukutya okunjani kuba kuselalini abantu bengenazo izinto ezifumaneka ezidolophini kodwa kukutya kuni abakutyayo?*

Macabela: What kind of food do people eat, especially since rural people do not have the same food choices as in urban areas?

Vapi: *Kule lali ndikhule singabalimi. Akhona amasimi, besilima loo masimi kuvunwe umbona athathwe ngeenkabi ukuza emakhaya nasezigadini sityala imifuno sikwazi ukutya isipinatshi nekhaphetshu. Kwakhona umama wakomkhulu ekwakusithiwa nguMaNxasana, waqamba umbutho onguVukuzenzele, wakhuthaza oomama ukuba balime ecaleni komlambo ebafundisa nendlela yokupheka imifuno, kwenziwe neekeyiki ezazisenziwa ngembiza enemilenze emithathu kungekho zitovu zokuzenza kodwa kutyiwa ukutya okumnandi.*

Kule lali singabafuyi, sifuye iinkomo, iigusha, iihagu, iinkuku. Simana sixhela sifumane inyama entsha sitye sabelane umzekelo xa kuxhelwe igusha iza kutyiwa nabantu belali. Yindlela ke esikhule ngayo leyo. Kuthe ekuhambeni kwexesha, wasweleka umam'uNxasana. Oomama abayekanga ukusebenza ezigadini baye babambebele kwimfundiso kamam'uNxasana. Kuzothi ke ngoku, kulo Rhulumente mtsha, naye wabona ukuba abantu bale lali benza into entle. Weza ne-projekthi yokulima ngokwala maxesha akhoyo, wababiyela ngocingo wabafakela imibhobho yokunkcencetshela ezo zityalo zabo. Basaqhubeka nokulima noxa ke ngoku bethe babetheka kuba amanzi ebetsalwa ngombane. Umbane ubadla imali kuba ayingobantu abasebenzayo aba.

Vapi: I grew up realising that we were farmers. In the maize fields we used to cultivate and reap the harvest, which was taken to our homes by a span of oxen. In the garden we used to sow seeds of vegetables such as spinach, cabbage, etc. At the great place, a woman MaNxasana started an organisation called *Vukuzenzele* (Wake up and do it yourself). She organised other women, showing them how to cultivate near the river. She also trained them how to cook vegetables and how to bake cakes. In all those efforts, three-legged pots were used instead of stoves; however, the food that was cooked was delicious. In this village we also own livestock such as cattle, sheep, pigs, poultry, etc. When we slaughter, we get fresh meat. We believe in sharing; for example, a sheep that is slaughtered is shared by the entire village. That is how we grew up. When MaNxasana passed away, other women continued with her project. The government is now involved in the agricultural project using modern methods such as fencing and sprinkler irrigation. People are involved, although they cannot all afford their payment towards the generator. They are not all employed.

Macabela: *Sisajongile njalo, phaya ezidolophini kuyiwa evenkileni nokuba kufunwa into encinane. Apha ezilalini ingaba abantu bexesha langoku basakuxabisile ukulima nokuba sebengenwe ngulo mkhwa wokuba yonke into abayenzayo bathenga evenkileni?*

Macabela: When we observe urban life, we see that people go to shops to purchase what they need. In rural areas, do you see the present community as people who value cultivating the soil, or as people who rely on shops?

Vapi: *Kweli xesha kunzima. Amasimi alala akasalinywa. Kuthi nakulo athe walima, imfuyo ingahoywa. Akukho mntu walusayo, imfuyo ingena ibhuqe entsimini iyishiye ingumhlaba. Sixhathise ngeegadi. Akutsho ukuthi uRhulumente khange abe nacebo. Thina apha kwaNtsaka, into sifuna ukuyiqonda kakuhle phambi kokuba siyenze. Sikhe sabetheka ngaphambili, wafika uRhulumente welo xesha esithi uzosilimela uzosinika isichumiso mahala, sawalima amasimi, wathi unyaka ungaphelanga kwafika amaxwebhu echaza ukuba utyala uRhulumente imali enga... ungazi ukuba uza kuyithatha phi le mali ungaphangeli nje. Sacotha sifuna ukubona ukuba lo Rhulumente uzokwenza njani. Sibukele kwaba sebeqalisile njengaseBuntingville ukuba le nto iza kwenzeka njani singafane sigxuphuleke sifikelwe ngamaxwebhu athi sityala uRhulumente.*

Vapi: At present it is very difficult. The maize fields are no longer cultivated.

People do not control their livestock, which invade maize fields leaving them without a crop. The only thing that we rely on is the garden. The government has tried to intervene through the agricultural project, but the problem is that we drag our feet instead of getting involved at once. There was a stage during which

we were victims. The previous government promised to cultivate for us and provide us with fertilizer. Before the end of the year we received some papers indicating how much we owed the government, and we did not know where to get the money because we were unemployed. Today we drag our feet because due to our bad experiences with the involvement of the previous government; we are therefore observing the present government. We are onlookers, even in projects that are taking place at Buntingville because we want to avoid the problems of receiving papers informing us about our debts to the government.

Macabela: *Ndicela ukubuza ukuba kwicala lempahla ethi inxitywe apha kwaNtsaka, ingaba uluntu olu lunazo ngokwaneleyo iimpahla?*

Macabela: With regard to clothes, do the people of this village have enough clothing?

IHLUPHEKILE LE LALI

THIS VILLAGE IS POOR

Vapi: *Uchaphazela umba owenza intliziyo ebuhlungu kuba ihluphekile le lali. Nawe uyazibuza ukuba kwakutheni ukuba abantu baze kulahlwa emaqaqasini. Noxa sizama, akhona amakhaya ekunzima nyhani kuwo apho kulalwa kungatyiwanga kube nzima nokunxibisa abantwana. Abanye baswelekelwa ngabazali bashiyeke bodwa. Konke oku kuyintlungu kodwa umntu ufane axole kuba uRhulumente ethe wangenelela ukuze abantwana abangenabazali bafumane imali. Naba banabazali kukho abazali abayimilwelwe. Sikwimeko elolo hlobo ke.*

Vapi: You are touching a painful issue because the people of this village are poor.

You may also wonder why people were placed in inadequate conditions. As we

strive for success, there are many families that suffer, to such an extent that hunger is the order of the day. It is difficult even to provide the children with clothes. Some children have become orphans as a result of losing their parents. We feel consoled because the government has intervened through the child support grant. Children whose parents are either sick or unemployed benefit from this grant. We live under these terrible conditions.

Macabela: *Masithi ke sisi apha ekhaya mnye umntu ophangelayo okanye babini bathathu, usapho lona lukhulu babe aba bancinci bengenazo iimpahla. Kukho amakhwenkwe anxiba iihempe kuphela. Bazifumana njani iibhulukhwe okanye cebo lini elithi lenziwe ukuze bazifumane iimpahla?*

Macabela: Let's say the home has one breadwinner, yet the family is too large to live off this single income, so the young ones don't have clothes. There are boys who wear only shirts. How do they get trousers; or what strategy does the family use to make sure they have something to wear?

Vapi: *Indlela esihlalisene ngayo kule lali, yindlela yokwabelana. Uthi xa ubona ukuba kukho ukuhleleleka okuthile, uthathe iimpahla esezigugile, ebezinxitywa ngabantwana bakho uhambe uyoqoshelisa kula mzi. Siphila ngolo hlobo ke kodwa nooNontlalontle kuyayiwa kubo ukuze basekele.*

Vapi: We believe in sharing. When you discover that there are people who need clothes, you take second hand clothes to the people who need them. In addition, we also consult social workers so that they may assist.

Macabela: *Ingaba ooNontlalontle bayakwazi ukungena apha ezilalini? Isantya abahamba ngaso siyafana nesaphaya ezidolophini?*

Macabela: Do social workers come to rural areas? Do they visit as often as they do in urban areas?

Vapi: *Isantya sooNontlalontle sesolovane, bavela ngelo xesha bathe bayogqogqwa. Akwenzeki ukuba bafike inyanga nenyanga kodwa andibagxeki kuba bambalwa. Iilali zaseNgqeleni zininzi.*

Vapi: Their pace is that of a chameleon, and we have to ask them many times before they come. It is not possible for them to visit monthly, but I do not blame them because they are few. Ngqeleni district consists of many rural areas.

Macabela: *Ingaba bonke abantu banalo uphahla, banayo nje indawo yokuzimela apha ezilalini ngakumbi apha kwaNtsaka? Izindlu abahlala kuzo zanele okanye zikumgangatho ebekufanele ukuba zikuwo?*

Macabela: Do all the people of Ntsaka have a roof over their heads? Is there enough housing, and are their houses of a good standard?

Vapi: *Bambalwa abantu abanezindlu ezisemgangathweni. Ukuba uRhulumente uyayenza le nto yokufaka izindlu ezisezilalini phantsi kwe-inshorensi, ngesenza njalo ukuze loo mizi iphinde ikwazi ukuvuswa xa ithe yavelelwa yingozi. Amakhaya amaninzi asafuna ukubekwa emgangathweni. Yena uRhulumente umana ethembisa ngokwakhela abantu izindlu kodwa asikaziboni. Bona abantu bayafuna ukuhlangatyezwa kuba abaninzi abaphangeli. Njengokuba ubona*

imisele, kulungiselelwa imibhobho yamanzi, abantu bafumane amathuba okusebenza noxa kuyimisebenzi yethutyana kodwa ke akufani.

Vapi: Only few people have suitable houses. It would be better if the government could insure these houses so that they could be rebuilt if there was a disaster. Many houses need to be built (according to a required standard), and the government has been promising to build houses; but so far, nothing has been done. There is a need for a speedy housing programme because most of our people are unemployed. The trenches that are being dug for water pipes create job opportunities. Although they are temporary jobs, they make a difference in people's lives.

Macabela: *Ndicela Nonzaba undityebisele, undinike umfanekiso wezindlu apha kwaNtsaka kuba ndiqinisekile ukuba azinakufana ngokupheleleyo nezasedolophini ukuba uphahla lolwantoni, udonga, indlela ezakhiwe ngayo. Sibone ukuba intlalo yabo ilolu hlobo.*

Macabela: Nonzaba, would you elaborate on the structure of these houses? I believe that they are different from urban houses. Explain what the roof is made of, and the walls, and the way in which these houses are built.

Vapi: *Indlela esakha ngayo ayifani. Kukho izindlu zezitena zodaka kanti abanye bayakwazi ukwenza izitena zodaka baze basebenzise udaka lwesamente. Kanti aba bakhe ngodaka bayatyabeka. Kukho olunye udidi esakha ngalo ekuthiwa ngu-TATU, ukudibanisa umhlaba nesamente. Abanye bayazithenga, abanye baqeshe umntu onomatshini. Kwicala lophahla, kukho abafulela ngamacangci. Njengokuba singabantu besintu kuthi nokuba umzi wakhiwe*

kakuhle kubekho indlu yengca kuba ngokwenkolo yakwaNtu, kulapho abantu abangasekhoyo bamkelwa khona.

Vapi: We do not build in the same way as those in the urban areas do. We use mud bricks, and some people join the mud bricks with cement instead of mud. The people who use mud between the mud bricks plaster the walls with mud. There is another way called *tatu*, a method in which soil is mixed with cement in order to make bricks. Some people buy bricks while others hire a machine from a machine owner. With regard to the roof, some people use grass while others use iron sheets. People build one hut whose roof is made of grass. According to the traditional belief, this is where the ancestors are welcomed.

Macabela: *Lilonke abantu abeza nale ngca ngabantu abanjani? Ngabantu abangootata okanye ngoomama abathi bayirhele?*

Macabela: Who brings this grass? Is it the men or the women who cut this grass?

Vapi: *Ingca irhelwa ngoomama kodwa asinayo apha elalini. Siye siphume siye kwindawo enjengeMaNgwaneni apho uye ucele umntu ukuba akurhelele uqeshe ilori iyizise. Kungenjalo siyayeba kwiindawo ezinengca yokufulela, kufuneka uvuke ngoqhiza okanye uye kumnikazi ntsimi ufike uzithobe usithi ucela ukurhela. Ukutena ndikhule kusenziwa ngoomama besenza amalima kuze nabantu abangootata batene.*

Vapi: The grass is cut by women; but it is scarce in this village. We rely on the neighbouring villages such as emaNgwaneni, where we hire a person to cut the grass. After that we hire a truck to deliver it; but sometimes we steal the grass where it is in abundance. We have to wake up at dawn or appeal to the

field owner to grant us permission to cut the grass. In my childhood, the women used to make mud bricks but the men were invited to assist.

Macabela: *Kule ndawo yamaphulo akhona amaphulo enithi nibe nawo okulwa nokungcoliseka komoya njengokuba kukho imililo yamadlelo? Apha kwaNtsaka nenza ntoni ukulwa nezinto ezinjezo?*

Macabela: Do you have awareness campaigns in order to fight air pollution since there are so many veld fires? As the community of Ntsaka, what do you do about this issue?

Vapi: *Amaphulo anqabile. Wona umlilo wedobo wenzeka ngemasi. Umntu obetshaya ezihambela abe sele elahla umcinga unwenwe ngolo hlobo kodwa abantu bayazi ukuba sinemfuyo, ngenxa yoko akakho umntu onokutshisa ngabom. Xa sinokwenza loo nto singaba sizibulala kwathina.*

Vapi: Such campaigns are scarce. The veld fires occur by mistake. A smoker may drop a burning stick of matches resulting in a veld fire, but people know that we have livestock, and it is against this background that there is no one who would start a fire intentionally. Such a thing would be suicide.

Macabela: *Ikhona nenkolelo yokuba xa umntu ehamba ebusuku engenguye umntu waloo ndawo oyike ukuhamba ebumnyameni, alumeke ngabom ukuze ahambe kukhanya loo nto inibeke egedukeni. Phulo lini eninalo ukunqanda lo mkhwa?*

Macabela: There is a conception that a stranger who is afraid of walking at night may

kindle a fire so that he or she walks in the light, leaving the local community in a vulnerable situation. What preventive methods do you apply to avoid this habit?

Vapi: *Ngelishwa ke noxa abahambi benganqabanga kule lali akuzange kubekho mntu wenza loo ntlondi, ukuba yayikhe yakhona ingaba yenzeka kwakanye. Asinawo amaphulo okunqanda ukutshiswa kwamadlelo.*

Vapi: Unfortunately, this has not occurred at Ntsaka, or it may have occurred only once. Presently we do not have an awareness campaign to curb veld fires.

Macabela: *Ikhona mhlawumbi indawo eniye nifake kuyo amaphepha atshiswe apha elalini kwaNtsaka njengokuba siqhele ukubona phaya ezidolophini?*

Macabela: Is there any pit where the rubbish is dumped and burned, as we usually see in urban areas?

Vapi: *Asinayo indawo ekutshiswa kuyo amaphepha qha umzi uyazilungiselela. Ukukhula kwam bekuye kuthi saa iiplastikhi kuyo yonke indawo. URhulumente welo xesha wayeye acele amaxhegokazi ukuba achole ezo plastikhi kuba zizifa iinkomo xa zidle iiplastikhi. Loo maxhegokazi ebeye afumane imadlana ngokwenza loo msebenzi, kodwa ngoku imizi iyaziqokelelela itshise amaphepha. Nakufutshane nomzi wakho uyawachola ukuze imfuyo ingafi.*

Vapi: There is no pit but each home makes its own arrangement. In the past the government would ask the older women to collect the scattered plastic bags in order to save the cattle from being harmed. The old women would then be

rewarded for their contribution. Today it is the responsibility of each home to maintain a clean environment; and the livestock survives as a result.

Macabela: *Phofu imigqomo yenkunkuma niyayinikwa nguRhulumente ukuze nikwazi ukulahla amaphepha umzi nomzi nokuba niyazenzela ngokwenu?*

Macabela: By the way, does the local government provide you with dustbins or are you on your own in this regard?

Vapi: *Hayi akukho ncedo silunikwa nguRhulumente, siyazenzela nje.*

Vapi: No, there are no municipal services; we are on our own.

Macabela: *Ndikhe ndibone phaya edolophini iinqwelo zikaMasipala ziwola inkunkuma emigqonyeni zihambe nayo. Ingaba ikhona ejikeleza apha kwaNtsaka?*

Macabela: I have observed that in urban areas municipal trucks empty the dustbins. Do these come to Ntsaka village?

Vapi: *Hayi ayikho, ndingazange ndive namarhe okuba ingaze ibekho. Mhlawumbe ekuhambeni kwexesha iya kuze ibekho. Siyazenzela nje yonke into.*

Vapi: There are no municipal trucks, and I have not heard of such a service coming to Ntsaka village. Maybe, in the course of the time, it will come. At the moment we rely on ourselves.

Macabela: *Lilonke yinkuthalo efuneka ebantwini ukuba bagcine amakhaya abo ecocekile?*

Macabela: Does that mean the people need to be diligent in order to keep their homes clean?

OKOKUQALA KUFUNEKA UZIXABISE

THE FIRST THING IS TO VALUE YOURSELF

Vapi: *Okokuqala kufuneka uzixabise, uzaazi ukuba ungubani, utsho ngendawo ecocekileyo.*

Vapi: The first thing is to value yourself and know who you are so that you maintain a clean environment.

Macabela: *Ndicela siye phaya kumcimbi wokhuseleko. Abantu benza njani ukuba bagcine indawo yabo ikhuselekile? Umntu xa ehleli elalini azazi ukuba ukhuselekile. Umzekelo edolophini kukho isikhululo samapolisa.*

Macabela: Let us focus on security. How do the people maintain a safe environment? Each person needs peace of mind wherever he or she is. In urban areas, for example, there are police stations.

Vapi: *Asikho isikhululo samapolisa apha kodwa siyasebenzisana kakhulu namapolisa. Umzekelo sinazo izirhoxo apho bathi abantu benzakalisane. Utsala umnxeba uchaze ingxaki. Azipheli iiyure ezimbini engafikanga. Naxa ufuna inqwelo yabaguli kukho umntu ogulayo okanye ofuna ukubeleka, uncedo luyakhawuleza kunakuqala. Ngaphambili bezingekho ezi nqwelo zabaguli,*

namapolisa ebefika emva kwenyanga athathe ingxelo kungasekho nalo mntu.

Kukho unxibelelwano phakathi kwethu, amapolisa neSebe lezeMpilo.

Vapi: There is no police station here but we co-operate with the police. When people get drunk in the shebeens, they hurt each other and we call the police. They arrive within two hours. When there is a sick or injured person, we phone for an ambulance and they respond. In the past there were no ambulances and the police would arrive a month after an incident, by which time the criminal would be nowhere to be seen. Today there is constant co-operation between us, the police, and the Department of Health.

Macabela: *Ngamanye amazwi uRhulumente uyasondela ebantwini akusafani nakuqala?*

Macabela: In other words the government is more accessible than before?

Vapi: *Ewe uyasondela kunjalonje ukuba ikhe yaphela iyure waphinda watsala umnxeba bathi, 'Sisendleleni.' Amapolisa ayakwazi ukucela inambala yemfonomfono ukuze anxibelelane nalo mntu uwatsalele umnxeba.*

Vapi: Yes; for instance, if an hour elapses after you have called the police, you phone again and they confirm that they are on their way. They also ask for the phone number of the caller so that they can keep in touch.

Macabela: *Ngamanye amazwi amapolisa akanakusebenza odwa, adinga uluntu?*

Macabela: In other words, the police cannot function alone; they need the community?

Vapi: *Kufuneka kube luluntu oluphakamayo luye emapoliseni. Thina siluluntu sitsalela kwa-10111 aze aphendule.*

Vapi: It is the responsibility of the community to join forces with the police. As a community we dial 10111, and they do not hesitate in their response.

Macabela: *Nonzaba ndikhe ndiphawule ukuba ezidolophini ezinkulu, izikhululo zamapolisa zininzi kodwa ezilalini zibe zingekho. Sele kunjalo kulawula ucwangco. Ingaba phaya ezilalini zeziphi izinto ezikhona ezenza kulawule umthetho, abantu bahloniphane? Ngoobani abasebenzisana nabantu phaya ezilalini?*

Macabela: Nonzaba, I have noticed that in big towns and cities there are numerous police stations, but in rural areas they are scarce. Despite this fact, there is order in rural areas. What makes rural people obey the law and respect one another? Who upholds the law in rural areas?

Vapi: *Apha kwaNtsaka siluluntu sinenkosi yethu. Kwakubakho ingxaki kubalekelwa kuyo Komkhulu. Le nkosi ayisebenzi yodwa ineBhodi yayo. Abaphaya ezantsi banoSibonda wabo ngokunjalo nabalapha entla. Wakubika ingxaki kwaSibonda yena wazisa iKomkhulu. Ingxaki ibikwa nakumadoda nakoomama abadala kanti nathi silulutsha sinenxaxheba esiyidlalayo. Siyakhuthazana ukuba masihlale ngoxolo. Andithi iimpazamo azibikho kodwa inkuthazo ekule lali yeyokuba kuhlaliwe ngoxolo.*

Vapi: At Ntsaka village we are the subjects of our chief. Whenever there is trouble we run to the Great Place. The chief operates with a board of councillors and the village is divided into units; each unit is under the jurisdiction of a

sub-headman. Problems are reported to the sub-headman, who further reports to the Great Place. The experienced men and women are consulted, and the youth also play a role. We always preach peace among the community members. I am not saying there are no errors but people are encouraged to live in peace and harmony.

Macabela: *Sisekule ndawo yokhuseleko, ndikhe ndibone phaya ezidolophini abantu besondelelene, bahlukaniswe lucingo kodwa xa omnye enengxaki angakwazi ukuncedwa ngummelwane. Ezilalini abantu bayakwazi ukuphakama xa omnye esentlungwini? Yahluka njani le nto? Ndicela uthelekise nje into eyenziwayo engenziwayo edolophini, le nto bayenze ngempumelelo. Into ongasoze uyifumane edolophini.*

Macabela: Still on security matters, I have observed that in urban areas people are so close to one another that they are separated only by a fence, but when a person is in trouble, the neighbour does not help him or her. Does a person take action when another person is in trouble in the rural areas? How do these things differ? Could you compare what is done in rural areas with what is not done in urban areas: something that is so successful but cannot be experienced in urban areas?

Vapi: *Okokuqalq apha kule lali, njengokuba usiva ukuba kukwaNtsaka, sesinye seziduko zethu eso kuba singooNonzaba, ooXesibe, ooMaNtsaka. Singabantwana bomntu omnye. Bakhona ooTolo , ooRhadebe njalo-njalo, nabo bayafana ukuba bangamaXesibe. Ukuba umntu unengxaki, akukhethwa buso bamntu umzekelo ukuba kukho umzi onomngcwabo, singoomama bale lali*

sikhupha i R10 sixhasa ikhaya elo. Asimbukeli umntu osengxakini. Sele kungumtshato, umgidi siyazikhupha izinto nonendlela yokutheza iinkuni wenjenjalo. Zininzi nezinye izinto umzekelo ukuba sibabini sifuna ukucoca umzi wakho, siyakwazi ukucela ilima ukuze kucakwe ngekalika. Yindlela esisebenzisana ngayo leyo.

Vapi: Firstly, this village is called Ntsaka, which is one of our clan names as we call ourselves Nonzaba, Xesibe, Ntsaka, etc. We belong to one family. Among us there are other people like Rhadebe, Tolo, etc. We do not discriminate against them; we treat them like members of the Xesibe clan, because most people belong to the Xesibe clan. If a person needs help, we do not discriminate against him or her; for example, if a particular home is bereaved, it is the duty of the women to contribute money (R10 per head). We do not act as bystanders when a person is in trouble. At happy times such as a wedding ceremony, boys' passage to manhood, or girls' passage to womanhood, we contribute in many ways, including gathering firewood from the forest. There are so many ways in which we help each other; for example, two women may decide to clean somebody's home and many women may be invited to use the lime wash to coat their walls. This is how we support each other.

Macabela: *Abalindi kuhlawulwa le nto bayenza ngomoya wobuntu?*

Macabela: Do they expect payment for this? Or do they do this for the sake of humanity?

Vapi: *Bayenza ngobuntu. Ukubanika imali kukuwe, usenokubanika imali okanye usile utywala, uxhele wenze ukutya. Nezi zinto akusazidli naba bantu*

ububacelile, sekubuya ilali yonke kuzoncandazwa kuba abantu abafikayo kuthiwa ziincanda. Kuba mnandi abanye bekungxolisa, 'Kutheni ungasixeleli ukuba unomsebenzi, ukhetha abatheni siselalini enye?' Sihleli ngolo hlobo ke.

Vapi: They do this in the name of humanity. If you feel like giving them money, it is your call. Sometimes you may brew African beer, or slaughter and cook food. Even people who do not participate in the duties join in during eating time; and you cannot chase them away. Some of them may criticise you saying, 'Why did you not inform us about this task? What kind of people do you choose; yet we are in the same village?' This is how life goes in the rural areas.

Macabela: *Sisenzo esincomekayo eso, ndicela sijonge naphaya kwizinto*

zasekuhlaleni nje, iimfuno zokuhlala ucacise ukuba ithini intsingiselo yokuba umntu azive amkelekile phakathi kwabantu, athi nokuba uzibona eyinkedama azibone engeyiyo. Yenzeka njani loo nto apha elalini?

Macabela: It is a remarkable thing indeed. Let us now focus on social needs. Explain the meaning of being accepted as a person among other people. It is said that in rural areas, people who are orphans do not see themselves as such. How does this happen in rural areas?

Vapi: *Abantu bale lali andazi ukuba ndingabanika eliphi igama. Njengokuba kukho*

intetho ethi, 'Intombazana ayinakuba yindlalifa ekhaya,' nam ndiye ndakhutshwa ukuba ndizakhele umzi nangona kundim omdala. Kulapho ndibone Ubuntu endibenzelwe babantu bale lali kuba bendiye ndifike imigqomo izaliswe ngamanzi ukuze ndikwazi ukwakha. Bendinetyotyombe eliphaya

ngasesangweni. Bendithi ndifika libe ligcwele yimifuno enjengekhaphetshu, sipinatshi njalo njalo yonke le nto isenziwa ngaphandle kwemali. Xa usengxakini abantu balapha bayakwazi ukukonyula ungakhange ubacele. Intlungu yakho bayiva apha kubo.

Vapi: I do not know what to call the people of this village. There is a belief that a girl cannot inherit what has been left by her parents. As a result, I was driven out of my home, even though I am the eldest child in my family. The people of Ntsaka assisted me to build my own home by filling up the water drums. I had a shack near the gate of my new home. I used to find it full of vegetables, such as cabbage, spinach, etc. All were gifts from the local community. When you are in trouble, people of this area help you unconditionally. They feel your problem to such an extent that they make it theirs.

Macabela: *Ukongeza, Nonzaba, phaya edolophini ininzi into yokuba abantu bahlekise ngabanye abantu. Apha kwaNtsaka njengokuba abanye benamasimi, benemfuyo, umntu ongenazo ezo zinto kwenziwa ntoni ngaye?*

Macabela: In addition, Nonzaba, in urban areas people like laughing at other people. Since at Ntsaka people own maize fields and livestock, how do they treat those who are not in possession of these things?

Vapi: *Umntu ongenantsimi akawudingi umbona kuba lo unombona uthetha-thethana nongenantsimi athi, 'Ndicela undilimele ndiza kukunika isabelo.' Le*

ntsebenziswano yenza ukuba kungabikho mntu usweleyo.

Vapi: A person who is not in possession of a maize field also benefits because an arrangement is made where the possessor says, 'I ask you to cultivate for me; I am going to give you a share.' This co-operation eradicates poverty.

Macabela: *Ayikho laa nto yokuba kuthiwe umntu uyahlupheka, uzozibonela ukuba uphila eyiphi intlobo?*

Macabela: Don't you have a situation where poor people are marginalised and ignored by the community?

Vapi: *Hayi ayikho apha, siyasebenzisana. Nokuba umntu akanazinkomo okanye umyeni wakhe akaphangeli uyakwazi ukumbonelela ukuze naye alale etyile nabantwana bakhe.*

Vapi: Not at Ntsaka; here we support each other. People take care of a person who does not have livestock or whose husband is unemployed and, as a result, her children also benefit.

Macabela: *Yinto encomekayo MamXesibe. Ndicela sijonge kwiimfuno zomntu ngamnye. Ingaba mhlawumbe kukhona ukuzithemba ebantwini? Sijonge kuwo onke amabakala ukusukela ebantwaneni, kumantombazana, kumakhwenkwe ukuya kubantu abadala.*

Macabela: It is commendable, MamXesibe. Let us now look at 'I' needs. Do we have self-esteem among the people? We need to scrutinise all levels, starting with

young children, then girls and boys up to adults.

UKUZITHEMBA KUKHONA KUNJALONJE KUYINKUTHAZO

THERE IS SELF-ESTEEM AND IT GENERATES A LOT OF COURAGE.

Vapi: *Ukuzithemba kukhona kunjalonje kuyinkuthazo. Le nto yenza nabasakhulayo babone. Umzekelo, abatshakazi bale lali, njengokuba uninzi lwabayeni babo bengasebenzi, banemibutho abayingenayo besenza imigalelo. Ngoku kukho amaxuwa abelwe amantombazana angendanga. Ngenxa yale migalelo bayakwazi ukuthenga izitena zokwakha. Ndiye ndayibona intle le nto kuba ihamba nokuzithemba. Noomama abadala bayangena kule mibutho ukuze xa kuphela unyaka kuthengwe ukutya. Le nto ithetha ukuthi akulunganga ukusonga izandla ulilisela ngokuthi akunandoda.*

Vapi: There is self-esteem and it generates a lot of courage. Through observing, the children are encouraged. As an example, most young wives have unemployed husbands and form fund-raising organisations. There are sites given to single women. With the help of the fund-raising organisations, these single women find it easy to buy building blocks. I see this as remarkable because it goes with self-esteem. Old women also join such organisations so that at the end of the year they can buy groceries. This is a lesson that women must work hard instead of feeling sorry for themselves because they do not have husbands.

Macabela: *Ukhe wachaphazela into yokuba ekhaya uphuma umzi wakho kuba uyintombazana ungenakuba yindlalifa kodwa xa sikhangele baninzi abantu*

abaphumelelayo ebomini bengoomama. Ingaba ukuzithemba kudlala eyiphi indima phaya kubo?

Macabela: You have said that a girl builds her own home because she cannot inherit the legacy of her parents; but we observe that there are many women who are successful in life. What role does self-esteem play in their lives?

Vapi: *Kubalulekile ukuba umama abe nebhongo ngezakhono anazo. Mna ndiphume ekhaya ndiwakhile umzi wabazali bam ukuze ndikwazi ukuzakhela lo mzi ndinawo. Ndiye ndazixelela ukuba ndizalwa nguZwelibanzi noMaNgxabane ngaphezulu bandizalele kule lali. Indlu yasedolophini yeyempangelo kanti apha yindawo endiza kungcwatyelwa kuyo. Kukuzithemba ke oko.*

Vapi: It is crucial that each woman be proud of her skills. Before I built my new home, I started out in my parents' home. I told myself that I was born in this village from Zwelibanzi and MaNgxabane. The house that I have in Mthatha is just a residence while I am working; but the home that I have at Ntsaka is the place where my body will be buried. This is what we call self-esteem.

Macabela: *Ngamanye amazwi ukuzithemba kukuxabisa indawo okuyo ungayinikeli umva? Uyakwazi ukuzixelela ukuba kule ndawo ndikuyo ndiza kuba sisibane ndikhanyisele bonke abantu?*

Macabela: In other words, self-esteem goes together with respect for your birthplace? Instead of leaving your home you tell yourself that you are going to be a shining star where you were born and bred?

Vapi: *Ukuba akuyixabisanga indawo ohlala kuyo kunzima ukuba uzithembe. Xabisa indawo ozalelwe kuyo. Ukungayixabisi indawo ozalelwe kuyo kwenza uhlale ungazithembanga phakathi kwabantu ohleli nabo, ube ngumntu ophila yedwa njengokuba ubona phaya edolophini ukuba umntu wenza izinto zakhe, akayihoyanga into eyenziwa ngummelwane wakhe. Apha ezilalini sinobubele saye sinazo neentlanti esigcina kuzo imfuyo yethu.*

Vapi: It is very difficult to have self-esteem if you do not value your birthplace. If people do not value their birthplaces, there will be no self-esteem among them, and they will remain isolated, just as you observe that nobody cares about other people in the urban areas. On the contrary, people from rural communities are kind and possess kraals for their livestock.

Macabela: *Ndiyarhana mam 'uVapi ukuba le nto yokuzithemba iqala ebuntwaneni. Akunakusizobela umfanekiso wenkwenkwe okanye amakhwenkwe phaya ezindle, ubonisa ukuba bazibona bengootata bengekabi ngabaninimzi. Yenzeka njani le nto phaya emadlelweni?*

Macabela: Mama Vapi, I suspect self-esteem begins in childhood. You have portrayed a picture in which boys see themselves as grown up fathers while they are herding cattle. How does that happen?

Vapi: *Emakhwenkweni nasemantombazaneni iyenzeka le nto. Emantombazaneni ufika edlala imizi apho baba nezindlu abazakhela ngokwabo babe neentsana ezenziwe ngemipha zinxityiswe amalaphu, oonopopi. Kulapho ke kukhula ukuzithemba kuba umntu uzibona engumama ebeka unopopi esifubeni esithi uncancisa usana. Kanti namakhwenkwe njengokuba alusile emadlelweni usenokuthi, 'Ekhaya kukho*

iigusha ezilishumi, mna ndiza kumogqitha utata.' Le nto ibonisa ukuba sele ezibona engumntu ophелеleyo. Omnye umbone etitsha abantwana besikolo kwaphaya emadlelweni. Ubabone phaya emadlelweni ukuba lo uza kuba ngumfundisi-ntsapho, omnye uza kuba ngunontlalontle njalo njalo. Omnye umbona phaya ekhaya eqhuba imoto engekho yo ukuba, tyhini! Lo uya kuba nemoto okanye umqhubi. Uyakwazi ukubahlela ngokwezi zinto bazenzayo.

Vapi: It happens among boys as well as girls. Girls pretend that they own homes and that they have babies. These babies are made out of maize cobs and are covered with pieces of cloth. As a result of such dolls, girls become more confident in the field of motherhood. On the other hand, boys imagine themselves as prosperous owners of livestock. This bears testimony to the fact that they are far-sighted. One boy may pretend he is an educator and another may pose as a social worker. All these talents are demonstrated in the pastures. At home, you may observe a child driving an invisible car and you begin to realise that one day this child may be a driver. It may be possible to describe them according to their actions.

Macabela: *Besengabantwana bedlala bodwa, abakayi nasasesikolweni kodwa ikhona indlela abenza ngayo besenza umsebenzi owenziwa esikolweni. Bayenza njani le nto?*

Macabela: Before they go to school, they have a way of demonstrating what is done at school. How do they do this?

Vapi: *Akukho nto inzima kuba umhlaba nguwo lo phantsi. Ukuba ngumhlaba oyisanti,*

bayakwazi ukubhala ngomnwe, umnwe lo wokukhomba okanye bathathe ukhuni kubhalwe, afundeke loo marhoqololo. Ubone ukuba ngaba ubhala amagama okanye uzoba umzobo othile. Yindlela esenze ngayo nathi, sikhula sibhala phantsi emhlabeni. Andazi nokuba yile nto kuye kuthiwe xa kungcwatywa umntu, 'Umhlaba emhlabeni,' kuba sinxibelelana nomhlaba.

Vapi: It is not difficult because the ground serves as a useful facility. In the sand they use their index fingers or short sticks. They may not be perfect, but you notice they are trying to write words or that something is being drawn. We grew up doing the same thing. I believe there is a constant relationship between the soil and us; for instance, at a person's funeral we say, 'Dust to dust.'

Macabela: *Asinakuyijonga kancinci ilali kuba kukho abantu abaziinkcutshe ekunkxonkxeni, phaya ezindongeni zikhona izinto ezenziwayo ezibonisa ukuba ngeny'imini baza kuba ngabazobi okanye izinto ezithile. Benza ntoni okanye babumba ntoni?*

Macabela: We will be making a mistake if we underestimate the people of the rural areas because they are experts in the field of art. Along the river banks, a lot of work is being done, showing that one day we are going to have artists. What are these people doing?

Vapi: *Basebenzisa udongwe ukuze babumbe iinkomo, amahashe, iingqayi, umyeni nomtshakazi batshatiswe. Ezi zinto zenziwa ngodongwe. Aba bantwana bayakwazi nokusebenzisa umhlaba benze iikomityi. Xa ujonge ufumane ukuba abantu basezilalini bangayenza imveliso bakhuthazwe kutsho kuphele nale nto kuthiwa*

iRandi iyehla. Ayikhe iqwalaselwe le nto nguRhulumente ukuba iilali ziphuhliswe ngolo hlobo. Ewe anditsho ukuba akakho amaphulo, akhona, ndithetha ukuba kwicala lesikolo kugxininiswe nakwinkqubo yokufunda kwaziwe ukuba ezi zinto ziyenziwa ezikolweni. Le nto ingenza ukuba aba bantu bafumane izatifiketi ngomsebenzi abawenzayo.

Vapi: They use clay to make cattle, horses, clay pots, or a bridegroom and bride at a wedding. They are capable of using mud to make cups. This reveals that if rural people can be encouraged, the deteriorating economy can be normalised. It seems as if the government is not paying a great deal of attention to this growing talent. I am not saying there are no campaigns; what I am saying is that schools are not exposing these talents. It would be good if talented people received certificates for their performances.

Macabela: *Siselapho Nonzaba, xa sijonga apha ekuzibonakaliseni komntu ukuba izakhono anazo azisebenzise le nto kuthiwa ngesiLungu yi, Self Actualisation, 'siye sibone ukuba phaya edolophini baye bafunde izinto njengento eseYunivesithi ekuthiwa yi, fine art, apha ezilalini ininzi into eyenziwa ngabantu kodwa thina siluluntu kukhona apho sifeyila khona. Yintoni ekufanele siyenze ukubonisa ukuba laa nto bayenzayo mabanyuke nayo bangayiyeki kuba ayingomdlalo lo bawenzayo?*

Macabela: While we are still there Nonzaba, with regard to self-actualisation, we observe that in the urban areas some people are engaged in fine art. In rural areas, a lot of work is being done, but there is a lack of communal support. What must we do in order to encourage talented people to persevere?

Vapi: *Ootitshala bamabanga asezantsi andinakubagxeka ngekhondo abalilandelayo.*

Ukuba le nto ibinokuqalwa ezantsi bekungaba kuhle ukuze umntwana anyuke nezakhono zakhe athi efika eYunivesithi abe ehamba nezakhono aziqale kumabanga asezantsi. Ilapho ke ingxaki.

Vapi: I cannot blame the foundation phase educators for following their programme.

If art is implemented in the foundation phase, it will be easy for learners to proceed to higher levels. By the time they reach tertiary level, they will have gained all the necessary skills that people require. That is where the problem lies.

Macabela: *Ngamanye amazwi kufuneka sibancedise thina kuba le nto bayenzayo ibalulekile singabatyhafisi?*

Macabela: In other words we have a great deal of responsibility in order to restore their strength?

Vapi: *Ewe kunjalo loo nto iya kubakhuthaza.*

Vapi: Yes, that will give them a lot of courage.

Macabela: *Nonzaba kwesi sigaba ndicela sijonge kwicala lezeMpilo. Zizinto zini eninazo?*

Macabela: Nonzaba, at this moment let us divert our attention to health facilities. What kind of facilities do you have?

Vapi: *Apha kwaNtsaka ikhona iklinikhi ephaya eBuntingville abathi abantu baye kuyo. Ixesha elininzi bekusiyiwa kuyo kodwa ke ngoku iyakwazi ukungena into ekuthiwa yi- mobile clinic. Enye into esiphila ngayo, sinamagqirha.*

Vapi: The people of Ntsaka get their services at Buntingville Clinic. All along they have been going there but now a mobile clinic visits them. Other health matters are attended to by traditional doctors.

Macabela: *Ingaba ukuya eziklinikhi kuyafikeleleka, kuhanjwa ngeenyawo?*

Macabela: Are the clinics accessible or do people walk to get there?

Vapi: *Kuhanjwa ngeenyawo kodwa zikho izithuthi ezisetyenziswayo nangona zihamba ngentlazane. Kweli xesha langoku siyakwazi ukufowunela inqwelo yabaguli. Maxawambi ithatha umguli imse kwisibhedlele esiseMthatha. Zezo ke iindlela esithi sinxibelelane ngazo.*

Vapi: People walk, but we also use public transport. The problem is that it is not always available; if you miss it in the late hours of the morning, it is very hard to get another one. Nowadays we can dial for an ambulance. Sometimes the patient is taken to the Mthatha General Hospital. That is how we utilise health facilities.

Macabela: *Phaya ezidolophini, xa umntu ekhohlela usiwa kugqirha ngoko nangoko. Kwenziwa njani apha ezilalini?*

Macabela: In urban areas, whenever there is a cough, a person is taken to the doctor. How do you treat this in rural areas?

Vapi: *Apha ezilalini kwicala lamagqirha nguloo mntu naloo mntu ozikhethela ukuya kwigqirha. Amagqirha akanyanzeli mntu. Umntu uziyela ngokuthanda kwakhe.*

Vapi: In rural areas an individual makes his or her own choice as far as traditional doctors are concerned. Traditional doctors do not force people to visit them; a person does so according to his or her own will.

Macabela: *Ngaphandle kwamayeza Nonzaba, zinto zini enizenzayo kwaNtsaka ukuze kungabi kuninzi ukugula mhlawumbi izinto ezityiwayo zitsho zinqabe izifo?*

Macabela: Apart from herbs, *Nonzaba*, what other options do you have in order to curb diseases?

Vapi: *Bendikhe ndachaphazela iphulo lokulima. Kulinywa unyaka wonke phaya phezu komlambo. Abantu bavelisa imifuno kanti nabantu abanamasimi bayakwazi ukupha abangalimanga izinto ezifana namathanga ukuze batye ukutya okutsha.*

Vapi: I have mentioned the agricultural project. There is no season during which we do not plough, especially along the river. People produce vegetables and the owners of the gardens are generous, to the extent that they give pumpkins to those who do not have gardens. In this way they also get fresh food.

Macabela: *Kuyabonakala Nonzaba ukuba phaya ezidolophini ezinye izifo zenziwa kukutya okutyiwayo njengohlobo lwamafutha asetyenziswayo. Apha ezilalini ingaba niphaka ukutya okunjani okwenza ukuba ingenzeki laa nto*

yenzeka ezidolophini?

Macabela: Nonzaba, in urban areas, some diseases are caused by the kinds of food being eaten, such as too much fat. How do you avoid this in rural areas?

Vapi: *Sipheka imifuno kodwa idolophu ingene apha elalini. Abantu bakuxabisile ukuthenga izinto ezifumaneka edolophini kanti ngaphambili bebexhomekeke kumasimi abawalimayo.*

Vapi: We cook vegetables but are influenced by urban culture. People like buying from shops, whereas in the past they relied on their maize fields.

Macabela: *Ke ngoku Bhelesi, abantwana bayayamkela into yokutya ukutya kwamandulo, njengesigwampa, umqa nokuba baxabise oku kwasedolophini?*

Macabela: Bhelesi, do children today enjoy traditional food or do they prefer modern food?

Vapi: *Kusetyenziswa kakhulu ukutya kwasezilalini umzekelo: umqa, iinkobe njalo njalo. Kona ukutya kwasedolophini abantu abaninzi basemadolwanzima ukuba bakusebenzise. Kwicala labantwana kuxhomekeka kwindlela abakhuliswe ngayo loo nto ithethe ukuba asingabo bonke abaxabise ukutya kwedolophu.*

Vapi: Most people cook traditional food. For many people, modern food is not their choice. With regard to children, it depends on how they are brought up; in other words, not all children prefer modern food.

Macabela: *Ikhona le ngxaki yokuba abantwana bathande ukugcada amaqanda endaweni yokuwabilisa, mhlawumbe ikhona indima eningayidlala nina nibadala ukubabonisa ukuba mabawapheke njani?*

Macabela: We have a problem with children who prefer fried to boiled eggs. Do you as adults maybe play any role in guiding children?

Vapi: *Ewe uyabaxelela kodwa kukho le nto kuthiwa ngamalungelo abo. Xa ubanqanda kuba ngathi uphazamisa amalungelo abo. Siyababonisa kodwa kufuneka sibuye nganeno.*

Vapi: We guide them but at the same time we do not want to contravene their rights. We need to make sure that we do not violate their freedom of choice.

Macabela: *Siselapha kwimicimbi yezempilo, xa kuzalwa umntwana siyabona edolophini zikhona izibhedlele, iiklinikhi njalo njalo, apha ezilalini njengalapha kwaNtsaka, kumiswa njani kwicala lokuzalisa njengokuba zingekho izibhedlele?*

Macabela: While we are dealing with health matters, we see that in urban areas, hospitals and clinics play a major role when babies are born. How does midwifery play a role since there are no hospitals in rural areas?

Vapi: *Apha kwaNtsaka kunqabile ukubizwa kwenqwelo yabaguli kuba bakho oomama abathi bazalise umntu okhulelweyo. Uthi engayanga sibhedlele bamncedise ukuze azale ngoku alapha ekhaya.*

Vapi: In Ntsaka, ambulances are not usually called, because some women are traditional midwives. A pregnant woman gives birth at home with the assistance of

traditional midwives.

Macabela: *Xa sijonga apha ezilalini siphawula ukuba abazalisikazi ngabantu abangoomama. Phaya ezidolophini ingathi sebekhona nabantu abangamadoda abadlala indima yokubelekisa. Ingaba loo nto ayikhabani nentlalo yakwaNtu?*

Macabela: In rural areas, midwives are women. In urban areas there are also male nurses who practise midwifery. Don't you think this is a violation of African tradition?

Vapi: *Imfundo ekhona kaRhulumente ayikwazi ukuba ingangaqhubeki ngohlobo eyenziwa ngalo. Thina ezilalini asikwazi kuxoka, xa kubelekwa kuba ngabantu abangoomhakhulu bona ootata abangeni ekubelekiseni njengokuba noomama bengangeni esuthwini.*

Vapi: The educational process controlled by the government cannot be stopped. In rural areas it is the elderly women who participate in midwifery. Men are prohibited from being there, just as women are not allowed to take part in the circumcision of boys.

Macabela: *Masiye phaya kumba wemfundo, ukuba imfundo le ithetha ukuthini kubantu basezilalini njengalapha kwaNtsaka. Yintoni eyenzayo apha ebantwini?*

Macabela: What impact does education have on rural people such as those in Ntsaka? What role does it play in people's lives?

IMFUNDO IXATYISWE KAKHULU KWILALI YAKWANSAKA

THE PEOPLE OF NTSAKA VILLAGE VALUE EDUCATION

Vapi: *Imfundo ixatyiswe kakhulu kwilali yakwaNtsaka, nam ndingomnye wabantwana balapha abathe bakhuthazwa ndaya nasesinaleni. Bakhona abangafikiyo esinaleni abathi baphume phakathi. Abanye bathi befundiswa bazikhethela ukusiyeka isikolo kuye kula ntetho ithi, 'Uyalithatha ihashe ulise emfuleni kodwa ngekhe ulinyanzele ukuba lisele.'* Kule lali ulutsha luyakwazi ukucebisa abantu abadala ngezinto ezifana namanzi nombane itsho ikomiti iphakamise iinyawo ngenxa yeempembelelo zolutsha.

Vapi: The people of Ntsaka village value education and I am one of the rural children who was encouraged up to high school level. There are other children who dropped out before reaching high school. Some children choose to drop out – as the idiomatic expression says, 'You may take the horse to the river but you cannot force it to drink.' In this village the youth are capable of advising elderly people about water and electricity, and this accelerates the function of the ward committee.

Macabela: *Nonzaba ndikhe ndibone imiqodi yabantwana besikolo besiya ezikolweni. Bambi basuka kumakhaya akude bawele imilambo nokuba izulu linjani. Le nto ithetha ukuthini apha kubo kambe bafumene imfundiso ethini kubazali babo ukuba bahambe imigama emide kangako izulu lilibi baye esikolweni?*

Macabela: Nonzaba, I have seen many groups of school children going to school. Some of them come from far away, and they cross rivers regardless of

bad weather. What does that reveal of their minds, and what kind of training have they received from their parents?

Vapi: *Ndingathi kukunxanelwa imfundo, ayikho enye indlela. Isinala esinaso apha yiNdamase eBuntingville. Abantwana baya ngeenyawo kuba zinqabile izithuthi zokubathwala. Bahamba ngeenyawo nokuba izulu linjani. Enye ingxaki echaphazela abadala nabancinci, yeyokuba abantu bale ndawo abakwazi kuyishiya indawo yabo. Nabaphangeli bavuka kusasa baye emsebenzini kodwa babuyela kwilali yabo rhoqo. Le nto yenzeka sele benemizi edolophini. Ndingayibeka ndithi kukuthanda ilali yakho. Ngokunjalo nabantwana balapha, kunesikolo esitsha phesheya komlambo, baxolela ukunqumla umlambo besiya bebuya kunokuba bafune indawo yokuhlala kwimizi engaphesheya. Ndingaphinda ndithi le nto yenziwa kukuthanda indawo yakho. Sinjalo ke kule lali.*

Vapi: I can say they are thirsty for education. Our high school is Ndamase in Buntingville. Learners have to walk because public transport is lacking. They walk for long distances, even when the weather is bad. Another problem that affects both adults and children is that the people of Ntsaka find it difficult to abandon their birthplace. The workers go to work in the morning, but they come back every afternoon. They do this even though they have houses in urban areas. I can say that they value their rural areas. There is a new school across the river and the children of Ntsaka choose to cross the river every day instead of getting accommodation closer to the school. In short, at Ntsaka we love our birthplace.

Macabela: *Lilonke imfundo ayijiki abantu ibenze bangayifuni indawo abazalelwa kuyo, bahlala bezixabisile?*

Macabela: In other words, education does not turn people against their birthplace;
they continue to value it?

INTO YOKUFUNDA KWETHU AYISIJIKI UKUBA SINGAYIXABISI INDAWO YETHU
EDUCATION DOES NOT MAKE US DETEST OUR BIRTHPLACE

Vapi: *Hayi abale lali. Kukho isithuthi esigqiba kugqitha. Umniniso uphangela
kwaMasipala kodwa zonke iintsuku ulala kule lali. Unayo indlu edolophini
njengokuba nam ndinayo kodwa ndivuka apha zonke iintsuku. Into yokufunda
kwethu ayisijiki ukuba singayixabisi indawo yethu. Ingathi xa singekho ilali iza
kushiyeke iyintlango.*

Vapi: No, not those of this village. I commend the people of Ntsaka. The car that you hear passing belongs to a municipal employee, but every day he sleeps at this village. He owns a house in an urban area, just as I do, but we both wake here every day. Education does not make us detest our birthplace. It seems to us that our village will become a desert if we leave it.

Macabela: *Ngamany'amazwi xa besiya esikolweni bayothatha isibane sokukhanyisela
isizwe sonke. Ingaba myalezo mni onokuwuthumela kulutsha lwanamhlanje
oluthi xa lufundile lukhetha ukuba luhambe lushiye amakhaya luye kwiindawo
ezikude okanye ezibhetele kunezi basuka kuzo?*

Macabela: It occurs to me that when children go to school they fetch a lamp that is going to bring light to the nation. What message can you convey to the youth of today, who, after receiving education, choose to abandon their homes to find places that are better than their original houses?

Vapi: *Ulutsha, ndingathi maluqonde ukuba le nto intle uyoyenza kwenye indawo, yenze kanye kule lali yakho. Isibane masikhanyiswe kwindawo osuka kuyo kuqala ukuze abantu babone ukuba uthe wakuba ufundisiwe wanento oyenzela ilali yakho kuba kwindawo entsha ofikela kuyo uya kusoloko uthathwa njengomhambi.*

Vapi: The youth must realise that charity begins at home. Once you are educated, play an important role in your own area so that people can see the results of education, because in your new environment you will always be regarded as a newcomer.

Macabela: *Ndicela sigqithe siye phaya ekulinganeni kwabantu bengootata bengoomama, amakhwenkwe namantombazana. Ingaba yintoni edla ngokuthethwa apha elalini malunga nemfundo? Kuyafana ukufundisa umntwana oyintombazana nokufundisa umntwana oyinkwenkwe? Okanye zeziphi iintetho ezithethwa ngabantu nokuba ziyakha okanye azakhi.*

Macabela: Let's turn to gender equality, as we all have fathers and mothers, and boys and girls. What do people usually say about education? Are boys and girls encouraged to study in the same way?

ZIIMPEBELELO EZIKHOYO EZO UKUTHI IKAMVA LENTOMBI LISEKWENDENI.

IT IS A MISLEADING INFLUENCE TO SAY THE FUTURE OF THE GIRL IS IN

MARRIAGE

Vapi: *Ziimpembelelo ezikhoyo ezo ukuthi ikamva lentombi lisekwendeni. Eneneni yinto yakudala leyo. Xa unokujonga kwixesha langoku ungaphawula ukuba maninzi amantombazana afundileyo atsho azakhela nemizi yawo. Amanye aphuma kwibanga leshumi nelesibhozo kodwa akwazile ukuzakhela imizi yawo. Mna ndikhule embalwa amantombazana afunda esikolweni.*

Vapi: It is a misleading influence to say the future of the girl is in marriage. In reality, that is an outdated idea. Nowadays many girls are educated and have built their own houses. Some have studied up to Grade 10 and Grade 12 and they are successful. In my childhood, few girls had access to education.

Macabela: *Ngamanye amazwi laa ntetho ithi ikamva lentombazana lisemzini iyaphelelwa?*

Macabela: Does that imply it is inappropriate, at the present moment, to say marriage is the destiny of every girl?

Vapi: *Apha kule lali uninzi lwamantombazana luzalela ekhaya lunikwe amanxuwa. Iilizwi lomzali lithi, 'Kufuneka ube nendawo eyeyakho ukuze ukwazi ukuzikhulisa.' Kulungiselelwa ukuba kungaveli umntu sele engasekho umzali athi unebango kulo mzi.*

Vapi: In Ntsaka, many girls bear babies before marriage and they receive sites. Parents believe that girls can be independent so that they look after their own children. In this way a family feud is averted, especially when parents pass away.

Macabela: *Ixesha elininzi ngaphambili, apha ekhaya, kumakhaya onke elalini, ibingoobani abaphumayo bayosebenza ukuze kulalwe kutyiwe ekhona utata ekhona umama kule nto yokungalingani?*

Macabela: Prior to the present moment, who used to work in order to make ends meet at home? Was it the father or the mother?

NDIKHULE KUPHUMA OOTATA BAYE KWIINDAWO EZINJENGERHAWUTINI

KODWA BANGABUYI

**IN MY CHILDHOOD OUR FATHERS WORKED IN PLACES LIKE JOHANNESBURG,
BUT THEY DIDN'T BOTHER TO COME BACK**

Vapi: *Ndikhule kuphuma ootata baye kwiindawo ezinjengeRhawutini kodwa bangabuyi asukume umntu ongumama ahambe ethengisa iintloko zegusha edolophini. Baninzi oomama abahamba bethengisa kuba abayeni babo bengamatshipha.*

Vapi: In my childhood our fathers worked in places like Johannesburg, but they didn't bother to come back and, as a result, our mothers had to sell sheep heads in the village. Even today, many mothers are hawkers because their husbands don't come back.

Macabela: *Ngamanye amazwi imizi imile nje ikwangoomama abenza kulalwe kutyiwe?*

Macabela: Do you mean to say families are stable because of woman power?

Vapi: *Ikwangoomama kuba umama ebengathi, 'Xa ingabuyi indoda ndiyagoduka.' Bekudibana usapho lubonisane ngomntu otshiphileyo ize inkosikazi ivunyelwe ukuba ibambe izingxungxu.*

Vapi: If the woman had not been strong enough, she would have said, 'I'm going home because my husband has forsaken me.' Instead, the whole family held a discussion and as a result the woman was allowed to take a temporary job.

Macabela: *Kule nto yokudotyelelwa phantsi kwamalungelo oomama, apha elalini ukhona uSibonda ongumama okanye inkosi engumama?*

Macabela: In the light of gender domination, in Ntsaka, is there a sub-headlady or headlady?

Vapi: *Asinayo inkosi engumama, sisagcine isithethe sakudala saye sigcinwe yilali yonke.*

Vapi: We do not have a headlady, we have a headman and we follow old tradition.

Macabela: *Kodwa loo nto ayithethi kuthi oomama abanazo izakhono zokukhokela?*

Macabela: Does that give an impression that women do not have leadership skills?

Vapi: *Banazo izakhono kuba kukho ikomiti eyaba amanxuwa. Bakhona oomama kule komiti. Nasesikolwen bakhona oomama nootata bebhunga elilawula isikolo. Nolutsha lukhona kwezi komiti.*

Vapi: They have leadership skills because they are involved in the ward committees. Women also participate in schools' governing bodies. The youth also play a role.

Macabela: *Kwicala lenkcubeko, zizinto zini ezenziwayo ukuphuhlisa ulonwabo? Zahluke njani kwezaphaya edolophini?*

Vapi: There is nothing much, compared to previous years when there were night dances for boys and girls. People are entertained when there is a boy's initiation. The school also from time to time invites the community in order to observe cultural activities such as traditional dance.

Macabela: Pertaining to culture, which activities are performed in order to promote entertainment? How do these activities differ from the ones performed in urban areas?

Vapi: *Apha elalini akusekho nto ingako njengakuqala, imitshotsho neentlombe.*

Ulonwabo olunjalo lubakho xa kukho imigidi enjengokukhutshwa kwamakhwenkwe.

Isikolo siyakwazi ukumema uluntu ukuba lubonise inkcubeko yakwaNtu njengomxhentso.

Vapi: There is nothing much, compared to previous years when there were night dances for boys and girls. People are entertained when there is a boy's initiation. The school also from time to time invites the community in order to observe cultural activities such as traditional dance.

Macabela: *Phaya ezidolophini kukho iiholo apho bangena ngemali abantu. Apha ezilalini kwenzeka njani xa kukho umtshato okanye loo nto yenziwayo?*

Macabela: In urban areas there are community halls, where people pay to enter. In rural areas do people do the same when there is a wedding or any activity?

Vapi: *Apha elalini akukho mntu ungena ngemali kuphela nje kuba ngulowo nalowo othi enze izinwe zakhe. Abantu bayaziswa ngomcimbi ozokwenziwa kungenwe kumnyango nomnyango, nasecaweni kubhengezwe kuze wonke umntu. Le nto yenza ukuba umntu eze ephethe igalelo lakhe kule nto izokwenziwa. Yindlela esihleli ngayo ke leyo.*

Vapi: In the rural areas people do not pay; instead they bring donations. An

invitation is distributed from door to door, and an announcement is also made in the church hall so that everybody can attend. Each person comes with a contribution. That is how we live in the rural areas.

Macabela: *Nonzaba phaya edolophini xa uza kuba nesiyunguma, uyazikhupha izimemo.*

Xa befika abanye bengamenywanga ibakhona ingxaki bajikwe. Ingaba bayajikwa nalapha ezilalini?

Macabela: *Nonzaba*, in an urban area, invitations are distributed. When people come uninvited, they are turned away. Are they also turned away in rural areas?

AKUKHO UGXOTHWAYO

NO-ONE IS TURNED AWAY

Vapi: *Thina apha simema bonke abantu abanye beza kuba beve ngezihlobo zabo.*

Omenyiweyo umema abakhe. Xa sebefikile akukho ugxothwayo kuba wena unomsebenzi ulindele nosuka phi. Ukungena kwabantu esangweni, kuyintsikelelo. Bazise amathamsanqa kule nto uyenzayo.

Vapi: In rural areas we invite everyone, and others come on account of their relatives. An invited person also invites other people. When they arrive, no one is turned away because the host is expecting people from all walks of life. The presence of people in your yard is a blessing. They bring many blessings to what you are doing.

Macabela: *Lilonke mam'uVapi, asilotyala ukuya emcimbini waselalini ungakhange umenywe njengokuba kulityala phaya edolophini?*

Macabela: All in all, mama Vapi, is it not a crime to attend a ceremony uninvited, as it is in urban areas?

YINTSIKELELO ENKULU UKUNGENA KWABANTU BEZE KUZIMASA ITHEKO LAKHO

IT IS A HUGE BLESSING WHEN PEOPLE SHOW UP AT YOUR CEREMONY

Vapi: *Asilotyala kuthi kodwa yintsikelelo enkulu ukungena kwabantu beze kuzimasa itheko lakho.*

Vapi: It is not a crime to us but a blessing. It is a huge blessing when people show up at your ceremony.

Macabela: *Ungagqithisa owuphi umyalezo wokugqibela, mam'uVapi, ebantwini xa beza kuba nomcimbi elalini benabantu abangabafuniyo ufumanise ukuba baqhuba ngala ndlela yasedolophini?*

Macabela: What final message, mama Vapi, can you convey to rural people who imitate urban people, especially when they discriminate against their uninvited guests?

Vapi: *Ndingathi mabafunde ukubamkela bonke abantu kuba ngokwenjenjalo baya kumnceda naxa esengxakini.*

Vapi: All I can say is that they must learn to accept and love all people because the same people are going to rescue them when they are in trouble.

APPENDIX B: MACABELA, 2011

Macabela: How would you say your religious outlook on life influenced your writing of *Litshona liphume*?

Vapi: *Inkolo yobuKrestu ibe negalelo elingummangaliso kubomi bam nasekubhaleni incwadi yam uLitshona liphume. Nanjengoko ndaswelekelwa ngabazali ndisemncinci kwaye indim omdala ekhaya kwintshutshiso nezilingo endazifumanayo ngelo xesha ukuba ubomi bam bebungenafuthe lezobuKrestu ngendandibashiye bodwa abantakwethu ndiye apho ndizakuhlala kamnandi ngokwenza izinto ezingamkelekanga phambi kobuso bukaThixo. Kungoko ndithe ndazisebenzisa impembelelo zobuKrestu kule noveli ukubonisa abafundi ukuba xa ubani esezimbandezelweni ukuthetha noThixo kuyakhulula. Umzekelo, uMama wam uMaNgxabane, ndandiye ndimmamele xa ethandaza ebika iintlungu anazo kuThixo umdali wethu sonke nakuYesu umsindisi wethu, naxa ebulela kuThixo ngokuphendula imithandazo yakhe yemihla ngemihla. Kangangokuba wayede axhele inkukhu ethi wenza umbulelo kuba izicelo zakhe ziphendulwe. Ndithe ke ndakuswelekelwa ngabazali nabantwana abathathu abeza emva kwam, zathi zakundembatha izilingo neentshutshiso zobubomi ndabona ukuba mandisebenzise le mfundiso ndayirhabula kuMama wam njengesixhobo esindikhupha kula maxhala obu bumi. Ngolu hlobo ke uMdali wam noYesu ongumsindisi wam bakuva ukukhala kwam. Neculo lamaWesile liyatsho nalo ukuthi, “Ndiyakhala kuWe Nkosi*”

(Christian religion has had a great impact in my life and in the writing of *Litshona liphume*. Since my parents passed away in my childhood and I being the eldest child at home, to the persecution and temptations that I encountered at that time, if my life had no Christian influence I would have abandoned my siblings in order to live comfortably doing unacceptable things in the eyes of the Lord. That is why I have utilized the Christian influence in this novel to demonstrate to the readers that when a person is in trouble, speaking to God is relieving. For example, I used to listen to my mother, MaNgxabane, when she was praying reporting her pains to God our Creator and to Jesus our Saviour, and also when she was thanking God for answering her daily prayers. Sometimes she would slaughter a fowl saying she was expressing her gratitude because her prayers had been answered. After losing my parents and three siblings that were born after me, having experienced temptations and persecutions of life, I decided to use the guidance that I received from my mother as a weapon of eradicating all fears of life. In this way my Creator and my Saviour, Jesus, heard my crying. Even the Methodist Hymn says, “Ndiyakhala kuwe Nkosi...” I cry to you God.)

Macabela: In your life, were religious texts such as the Bible, hymns and prayers very important to you as you were growing up? Were these the main things you read as a young girl or did you also read novels, newspapers and other non-fiction?

Vapi: *Kubomi bam njengomntu omtsha iBhayibhile neculo lamaWesile kwakunye nemithandazo indakhe kakhulu ekukhuleni kwam. Nangoku ndisabambebele kwiimfundiso zobuKrestu. Andibambelelanga kwiimfundiso zobuKrestu kuphela inkolo yakwantu endigcine ndihlale ndizazi ukuba ndingubani na ndithe nca kuyo. Ndandingakuthandi ukufunda iincwadi namaphephandaba. Into endandiyithanda ekukhuleni kwam lubaliso lweentsomi nazo zonke izinto ezingenkubeko yam. Imfundiso endiyiphakule kwiintsomi namabali akwaNtu indakhile kakhulu kwaye ndafumanisa ukuba iyahambelana nemfundiso ephakulwa kwincwadi yezakwaLizwi. Umzekelo, zikho iintsomi ezifundisa imbeko, intobeko, intlonipho, ezikhuthaza ukunyamezela, inzondelelo nokungalahlali ithemba, ukwanela kuloo ndawo ubekwe kuyo ziimeko zobomi esibuphilayo kwanezo zahlula okubi kokuhle.*

(In my life as a young person, the Bible, the Methodist Hymn and the prayers strengthened me as I was growing up. Even today I adhere to the Christian teachings. It is not only Christian teachings, I also adhere to the African religion that makes me realize my identity. I did not like reading books and newspapers. What I liked most in my childhood was the narration of folktales and everything that was connected to my culture. The lesson that I learned from folktales and African stories strengthened me greatly and I also realized that it was related to the Biblical lesson. For example, some folktales teach about respect, obedience, tolerance, perseverance, optimism, to be satisfied about life conditions and those that separate good and bad.)

Macabela: When you wrote *Litshona liphume* was there any kind of political message to convey to us readers, and if so, what was the message?

Vapi: *Ewe, umyalezo ongezepolitiki ukho kule noveli noxa ungagqamanga ngenxa yokuphantshwa kwemiba ethile eyayikwimanyuskriphthi yale ncwadi eyayiyicacisa gca imeko yezepolitiki endikhulele phantsi kwayo. Ngokomzekelo ekukhuleni kwam sasisoloko silala siguqe ngamadolo nanjengoko iveni zamapolisa (iinayiloni/ okhwela sowubhatele ngokwalapha kwinoveli yam) babebetha bebuyelela ekhaya kufunwa utatomkhulu wam uNzingi igama, into kaMbalela nanjengoko wayengomnye wamalungu kaPoqo (PAC) waze wabanjwa wayokuvalelwa eRobben Island ngo1963 waphuma 1966 xa ndifunda uStd 6, kwakunye notatomncinci wam uThozamile (owayeteketiswa kuthiwe Thoziz xa ebizwa) yena etyholwa ngokushishina ngengca yasemaMpondweni noxa ke engazange ade abanjwe. Ukudlakatheliswa kwam ndimncinci ndinjalo nempathombi eyayixhanyulwa nguMama wam kwezo zandla zombuso welo xesha yayinganyamezeleki. uMama wam uyakuwutsho ke umthandazo oshushu bakumka abathuthumbisi belo khaya ewuthumela kuSonininanini ukuba asihlangule kule mpatho imbi kangaka. Bathe bakusweleka abazali bam yathi intlalo ebishushu siyihleli phantsi kothando lwabo yaguquka ngomzuzwana yangamalahle abomvu omnga. Ndithe ke ndakuyithelekisa le ntlungu yentlalo endiyiphilayo naleyo sasiyifumana kumbuso welo xesha ndafumanisa ukuba njengokuba sikhala ngokuba amaBhulu ayesicinezela, nathi thina bantu baMnyama siyacinezelana kwasodwa kuba naku ngoku kungekho zalamane zisincedayo koko ngulowo unga uyayikhotha kanti uyayixathula. Andithi kaloku abantu babezityhuthulela ngeendlela*

ezohlukeneyo kwizinto ezazishiywe ngabazali bam? Umyalezo uthi, xa ubani esemagunyeni makabaphathe kakuhle abantu, abalungiselele ngokufanayo nangokulinganayo, angarhwaphilizi. Kaloku noThixo osidalileyo wenza ngenceba kumntu wonke akakhethi hlwempu nasityebi.

(Yes, there is a political message in this novel although it is not extensively demonstrated due to the censorship of some items of the manuscript that demonstrated the political situation I grew up under. For example, in my childhood we used to sleep kneeling because the police vehicles, referred to as nylons/get in you have already paid, used to come often at home looking for my grandfather, Nzingi, son of Mbalela, a member of the PAC (Pan Africanist Congress) who was arrested in 1963 and incarcerated in Robben Island until he was released in 1966 when I was doing Standard Six, in addition my uncle, Thozamile (nicknamed: Thozi) was also accused of selling dagga (Pondo grass) although he was never arrested. My harassment, being young at that stage, and the brutality that was experienced by my mother at the hands of the state, was intolerable. My mother used to pray to God asking for His rescue after the police had left. After losing my parents the parental love and comfort was replaced by the red ashes within a minute. I compared my pain to the Apartheid Regime because on the one hand we were complaining that the Boers were oppressing us and on the other hand we were oppressing one another with no one caring about his/her relatives. By the way the people were taking what my parents had left. My message is that the person who is in authority must treat people fairly and equally instead of being corrupt. Our God who created us is merciful to all people and He does not discriminate between the rich and poor.)

Macabela: Did you write *Litshona liphume* in 1989 or in the years before that e.g. 1987-1989?

Vapi: *ULitshona liphume uzalwa libali elifutshane elithi, "Ungalahli ithemba."* Ndandingenele ukhuphiswano lwamabali amafutshane olwaluququzelelwa nguProsperity Insurance Company, Mthatha ngo1981/1982. Eli bali laphuma phambili kuGROUP A. Ndaye ndacetyiswa nguMphathi wam wakwaExamination Section, Department of Education, MTHATHA, utat'uMagazi oligqwetha ngoku emva kokuba elifundile ukuba ndilandise ndibhale inoveli. Kodwa ngenxa yamahla ndinyuka eyawafumanayo le ncwadi phantsi kweBhodi yaseTranskei eyayijonga/ ihlela iiManyuskripthi ngelo xesha, kudliwano-ndlebe olwaluphakathi kwam nomnye waloo malungu, (1) wahlaba Isahluko esasingokukhulelwa kukaSiphokazi esafunda uForm V. Kwanyanzeleka ke ukuba siguzulwe eso sahluko nanjengoko wacacisayo ukuba iincwadi ezithetha ngokukhulelwa azifunwa nokubonwa liSebe lezeMfundo. Noxa ke ndacacisayo ukuba iinjongo zesi sahluko kukufundisa ulutsha ukuba malungazibandakanyi nezesondo lusafunda, into ebalulekileyo yimfundo kuqala. Kwakhona nezinye iindawo ezazixoxa banzi ngezepolitiki kwanyanzeleka ziguzuliwe. (2) Zithe sezilungisiwe zonke ke ezi zinto zichasiweyo abapapashi bathi manditshintshe intloko yale ncwadi eyayisithi, 'Alitshoni lingaphumi' nanjengoko kwafumaniseka ukuba sele ikhona incwadi epapashiweyo enale ntloko. Kwafuneka ke ukuba ndiphinde ndiyiqale ekuqaleni ndiyilungelelanise neli gama layo litsha, elithi, 'Litshona liphume'. Yiyo ke le nto iFirst Edition kaLitshona liphume ingu1989, kwatsho kwaqalwa kwapapashwa incwadi endiyibhale mva kule, ethi, 'Usiba lukaMamXesibe' yezibongo, nakuyo ndikhuthazwe kwangutat' uMagazi emveni kokuba efunde umbhalo-ngqangi

kaLitshona liphume, etsho esithi, undibona ndinaso isiphiwo sokubonga. (Incwadi ikhe isokole njengomnikazi wayo na?)

(*Litshona liphume* is produced by a short story, “Don’t lose hope.” I participated in a competition of short stories that was organized by the Prosperity Insurance Company at Mthatha in 1981/1982. My short story was number one. My supervisor in the Examination Section, Department of Education, Mthatha, Mr. Magazi who is now a lawyer, after reading the short story, advised me to write a novel. Due to the ups and downs of this novel under the Board of Transkei that was scrutinizing/editing the manuscript at that time, in the interview between me and one of the members, the chapter pertaining to Siphokazi’s pregnancy while she was doing standard Ten was taken out because the Department of Education did not want to see books that were speaking about pregnancy. Nevertheless, I explained that the aims of this chapter were to educate the youth not to engage in sexual activities while studying because education comes first. Other portions that were giving a detailed account on politics were taken out. When the items opposed by the publishers had been corrected, the title, ‘*Alitshoni lingaphumi*’ was changed because it was discovered that there was a book published with that title. As a result I had to start from the beginning writing according to the new title, ‘*Litshona liphume*.’ That is why the first edition of *Litshona liphume* came out in 1989 and as a result a book of poems that I wrote later, ‘*Usiba lukaMamXesibe*’ was the first to be published, again I was encouraged by Mr. Magazi after reading the manuscript of *Litshona liphume*, saying that I have a gift of writing poems. By the way, is it possible for the book to suffer like its author?)

Macabela: How did growing up in apartheid South Africa affect your writing? Or did it have no affect at all?

Vapi: *Ukukhulela phantsi kweApartheid eMzantsi Afrika kundivule amehlo ngemiba eyahlukeneyo echaphazela bonke abantu ingakumbi abantu abaNyama abahlala emaphandleni abathi balityalwe ngulo mbuso ophetheyo ngelo xesha kungabikho zinkonzo ziziswayo eluntwini kodwa beluvotile. Ubugxwayiba abahleli phantsi kwabo abantu basezilalini buyavezwa zizahluko ngezahluko kule ncwadi, umzekelo, ilitye ekudala likhothwa ngamaphela, iimpuku ezithe thu emingxunyeni yazo kodwa kule ndlu kuhleli abantu bexoxa ngoko bakuxoxayo, ukungakhathalelwa kwabantwana abaziinkedama nanjengoko uSiphokazi ubephila ngokuhamba erhela ingca, etheza iinkuni, etyabeka izindlu, etena, ezama imali angazukuyibhatalwa ngabanye abantu.*

(Growing up under the Apartheid Regime in South Africa opened my eyes in different spheres that affect all people especially Black people living in rural areas who are forgotten even by the present government especially where there are no services brought to them despite the fact that they have voted. The horrible conditions under which the rural people live are exposed in different chapters of this novel, for example, the stone that is licked by cockroaches for a long time, the mice that come out of their holes in the hut where people are busy discussing a particular matter, lack of parental care over the orphans since Siphokazi survives by cutting the grass, gathering the wood, smearing the huts, making bricks with mud, trying to get money that she is not going to get from other people.)

Macabela: Do you have a friend whose father stopped her going to high school because he believed she was ‘destined for a husband’?

Vapi: *Umba wokungafundiswa kwabantwana abangamantombazana ndikhule usagquba abantu abangootata bejonge ukuba intombi yende kuze kungena iinkomo. Nam ndasinda ngemithandazo. Nto eyandisindisayo kukuphumelela uStd VI ndisemncinci. Utitshala omkhulu wadlala indima ebalulekileyo ebomini bam esithi angeke ndiyekiswe isikolo ndisemncinci ngolu hlobo mandisiwe esinaleni, naleyo yaphumelela ngemithandazo. Kangangokuba ndasiwa esinaleni eNdamase ukuvulwa kwezikolo kungakhange kwenziwe kwasicelo eso sokufunda kwam apho, ndamkelwa ke ngobungakanani bam. Ewe, ndinazo iitshomi zam ezafunda nje uStd VI, zipasile zingapasanga zendiswa kangangokuba enye yazo eyayizothwalwa yabaleka yaziphosa esizibeni noxa ingazange iyincede nganto loo nto isekuloo mzi nanamhlanje.*

(The challenge of not sending girls to higher institutions dominated in my childhood because fathers were expecting their daughters to get married so that they could receive the bride price. As for me, I narrowly escaped because of prayers. What saved me was my pass in Standard Six at a very young age. The principal played a crucial role in my life saying I could not be taken out of school at my youthful age instead I had to be sent to a high school, even that was done through prayers. As a result I was sent to Ndamase High School without making a prior application and I was admitted because I was so young. Yes, I have friends who, after studying Standard Six, whether they had passed or failed, were forced to marry, by the way, the one who was going to be abducted according to the tradition, ran away throwing herself into the river but that did not help and even today she is married to the man who abducted her.)

Macabela: Is the character of Xakekile exactly the same as your actual uncle?

Vapi: *Yingxaki lo mlinganiswa unguXakekile! Awunakukholelwa xa ndithi abantu abaninzi abangamadoda, ngulowo uzibona unguXakekile kubomi bam. Ndingatsho ndithi lo mlinganiswa unguXakekile undincede kakhulu kuba abanye ootata baziveza ngokunokwabo okokuba banesandla kwintlupheko endiyiphilileyo emva kokusweleka kwabazali bam. Omnye kuthiwa wathi akugqiba ukuyifunda mayitshiswe le ncwadi khona ukuze ingabisabonwa ngabanye abantu kuba esithi ndibhale ngaye. Ngamanye amazwi umlinganiswa uXakekile umele indawo yabantu ngabantu abathi benze izinto ezimbi kwabanye abantu kuba befuna ukutyhuthula izinto ezingelolungelo kubo ngeenjongo zokuzityebisa ngazo batsho basale besebugxwayibeni abo banelungelo kwilifa labazali babo. Ngelishwa andikwazi ukumchaza utatomncinci wam ukuba ungumntu onjani na nanjengoko ndiye ndazikhethela ukungaxhomekeki mntwini ngenxa yeembandezelo nentshutshiso ebezivela macala onke obomi bam.*

(The character, Xakekile is problematic. You may not believe when I say many men regard themselves as Xakekile in my life. I may say that Xakekile has helped me a lot because some men reveal on their own that they played a role in my suffering especially after losing my parents. One, after reading this novel, said that it must be burnt so that other people do not see it alleging that I had written about him. In other words Xakekile represents different people who do evil things to other people simply because they want to confiscate what does not belong to them, their aims are to acquire the wealth while the legitimate people are left poor.

Unfortunately I cannot describe the kind of person my uncle is especially since I have chosen not to depend on other people due to the persecutions that came from all angles affecting my life.)

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List of figures

Figure 1 (Photograph of Ncumisa Vapi aged 26): Source: Ncumisa Vapi

Figure 2 (Map showing Ngqeleni district): Source: <http://www.callupcontact.com/Eastern-Cape-c163021.html>

Figure 3 (Photograph of Ncumisa Vapi aged 15): Source: Ncumisa Vapi

Figure 4 (Ncumisa Vapi aged 28): Source: Ncumisa Vapi

Figure 5 (Ndamase Secondary School): Source: <http://ace-foundation.blogspot.com/2009/11/hills-road-sixth-form-college-south.html>

Figure 6 (Vapi's Std 6 Certificate): Ncumisa Vapi

Figure 7 (Vapi's Matric Certificate): Ncumisa Vapi