




The Onomastic Significance of The Name ‘Mpumlo’ in S.A. Dazela’s Izono Zakho Ziya Kukujikela

Zilibele Mtumane 

African Languages
University of Johannesburg 
Johannesburg, South Africa

Introduction

Siphokazi Angelinah Dazela names some characters in a way that reflects their personality traits and the role they play in Izono Zakho Ziya Kukujikela (1991). However, so far, there is a lack of research conducted which analyses the significance of these names. Mtumane (2023) is so far probably the only scholar who has done so, where he discusses the name of Nomeva. The aim of this study then is to reveal how Dazela designates the person she creates as Mpumlo and the significance of this designation in the novel, as this name indicates the personality traits and role played by this character in the story.

The naming of characters is an important aspect of fiction. It contributes towards making characters real to resemble people in real life. Some fiction writers do not name characters just for the sake of naming them. They often give them labels that will point to their personality and the role they are expected to play in the text. For this reason, these designations assist in the development of the plot. This is the case with the naming of some characters, including the naming of Mpumlo, in the novel under study. The discourse in this chapter will be limited to the origin, meaning and significance of the name Mpumlo in relation to the role played by the character who bears this name and his personality traits.

This chapter examines the name Mpumlo in S.A. Dazela's novel entitled *Izono Zakhosi Ziya Kukulikela* (1991) as it has been indicated above. This label is based on the attitude of, and role played by and the personality traits of the character who bears it in the narrative. The origin and meaning of this designation will be the subject of discussion in this discourse. This designation is chosen as it has a bearing on the personality traits and the role played by the bearer in the novel. Furthermore, it is pertinent in the development of the plot of the novel under study. Also, this character plays a pivotal role in the narrative. Even though there are other names with a bearing on the characters who bear them, names of such characters are not discussed in this discourse due to space limitations. These are labels such as Thandiwe, Nomeva, Mafikizolo and Maqatha. The name of Nomeva is discussed by Mtumane (2023).

Furthermore, the names of other characters who are not considered for this discussion, do not have any significance regarding the personality traits and role played by their bearers in the text. These are names of foil or secondary characters which play minor and supportive roles in the story. A foil character is defined by Mtumane (1995: 108) as "a secondary or minor character which exists primarily to illuminate or bring out some trait or aspect of a major character through contrast or compliment". Nonetheless, some of these personae will be referred to in the discourse as they are associated with the part played by the character whose name is discussed in the study. Before the actual analysis of the name of this character, the concept of onomastics will be defined..

The concept of onomastics

The term 'onomastics' originates from the Greek possessive onomastikos which means 'of or belonging to naming'. In turn, the Greek onomastikos is derived from the Greek root ónoma which means 'name' (Collins English Dictionary 2014: 1). In this sense, onomastics may be regarded as a field that belongs to naming and deals with names.

Onomastics generally refers to the study of names and their origin. It is also considered as the study of the origins and forms of proper names. It underlies the formation and use of these names or terms used in specialised fields (Answers.com 2011: 1). Merriam-Webster (2011: 1) also shares the idea that onomastics is:

the science or study of the origins and forms of words especially as used in a specialized field, the science or study of the origin and forms of proper names of persons and places and the system underlying the formation and use of words especially proper names or of words used in a specialized field.

While the above definitions accommodate “words especially used in specialized fields” as referring to onomastics, this study uses the term to refer to “proper names of persons”.

Onomastics is found in different linguistic fields such as semantics and lexicography, among others. In semantics, it studies the etymology of names, that is; the origins of names and how they have arrived at their current form and meaning (Rooney 1999: 643). In lexicography, it deals with the origin and history of proper names. As this study deals with the name of a character, pertaining to its origin, meaning, personality and the role he plays in the text under study, it will lean more towards semantics than lexicography.

As alluded to earlier in this discussion, onomastics studies proper names of people and places. Where it deals with personal names, it is referred to as “anthroponomastics” (Coates n. d.: 1). On the other hand, where the study of place names is involved, it is called “toponymy” or “toponomastics” (Ibid.). Apart from personal and place names, onomastics also deals with names of other natural and man-made phenomena. This idea is supported by Mtumane (2005: 40) who defines onomastics as “a term that is generally used to refer to the study of names of people, places and other natural and man-made features”. Because this study deals with the name of a character, who is an imaginary person found in Dazela’s narrative, it is engaged in anthroponomastics.

Naming takes place in various circles. There is naming in society, in literature, in the animal kingdom and so on. Literary onomastics, which this scholarly discourse is about, refers specifically to the study of proper names that are found in literary works. These may be names of characters, places, animals, and other phenomena that are found in literature. This idea is supported by Neethling (2003: 35), who views literary onomastics as dealing with “the naming practices of writers of fiction”. Below is a discussion of the name of the character selected for this study.

Analysis

The name Mpumlo is derived from the noun *impumlo* (nose) which refers to the organ of the body that is generally used for smelling and breathing. In isiXhosa there is the idiom that says *ukufaka impumlo yakho kwiindaba zabanye abantu* (sticking your nose in other people’s affairs). This expression is generally used when someone bothers himself/herself with the affairs of other people, which have nothing to do with him/her.

In the text, the character by the name of Mpumlo is earlier presented as a good and responsible friend of a character named Sosiba. Later, this friendship comes to an end. This is caused by Sosiba’s progress in life, something which Mpumlo is jealous of. These allies then part ways and Mpumlo finds new associates. After the cessation of the friendship, Mpumlo, who still pretends to be Sosiba’s accomplice, is presented as a character who likes sticking his nose in the affairs of other characters, especially Sosiba’s. When he asks Sosiba about the details of his marriage with Thandiwe and their decision to improve their education, Sosiba’s response is:

‘Ikude lee kuwe leyo into. Jonga izigcawu zendlu yakho. Lo mntu wathi unguMpumlo wakuphoxa kuba igama lakho ulilandele, impumlo yakho uyifaka gqitha emicimbini yabanye abantu.’

(That is too far from you. Mind your own business. The person who named you Mpumlo embarrassed you because you have

taken after your name, you stick your nose too much in the affairs of other people.)

(Dazela 1991: 33)

This counterblast by Sosiba is a clear illustration that he no longer regards Mpumlo as a friend. He does not want to tell him about the happenings in his (Sosiba's) household anymore. This attitude is made more vivid using the proverb *Jonga izigcawu zendlu yakho* (Mind your own business). This statement literally means that Mpumlo should take care of the spiders in his own house. It then implies that he should not bother about the spiders in other people's houses. Sosiba uses this pronouncement to mean that Mpumlo should not be concerned about other people's affairs but his own. This is how he informs him (Mpumlo) to leave him alone. Sosiba's comment about Mpumlo's name is also worth noting. According to him, it is as a result of his name that Mpumlo is curious about other people's businesses. It is for this reason that Sosiba regards this name as an embarrassment for Mpumlo. Again, all this confirms that there is no longer any friendship between these two characters.

It is interesting that Sosiba uses the spider symbol to tell Mpumlo to mind his own business. The spider is a poisonous insect that endangers its prey when it bites it. Furthermore, it builds a web that makes one's house look clumsy. Because of these reasons people dislike this insect. By using the spider as a symbol in this manner, Sosiba informs Mpumlo that he has his own filthiness to attend to rather than concern himself with the affairs of other people.

The above words by Sosiba are a clear depiction of Mpumlo's nature of interfering in other people's business. More than anything, Mpumlo interferes in Sosiba's business because of jealousy since Sosiba and Thandiwe seem to be more progressive than he is. He even plans to have a love affair with Thandiwe, who is Sosiba's wife, as he is presented thinking earlier in the text:

'UThandiwe akaziqondi ukuba uyinzwakazi yodumo kuba kaloku akafundanga kuyaphi. Indlela aziphoxe

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ngayo ngokutshata nenxila elinguSosiba elimkhohlisa ngokuyeka utywala kuba lisagudisa laa mfungumfungu yomtshato wabo. Andisayi kufa ndingathandananga noThandiwe, yena Sosiba ndiza kumfumana, uza kundazi ukuba andiyompumlwana nje, igama lam ndinguMpumlo. Akazilibali enomhlobo, akazi ukuba ndijonge ukumbetha uduma olungophiyo. Ngenye imini uThandiwe uza kuba ngowam, akukhathaliseki nokuba kusemva kweminyaka elishumi'

(Thandiwe does not realise that she is truly beautiful because she is not very educated. She has embarrassed herself so much by getting married to the drunkard, Sosiba, who misleads her by stopping drinking liquor as he is still softening for that rubbish which is their marriage. I will never die before falling in love with Thandiwe, I will get Sosiba, and he is going to know that I am not just a small nose, my name is Mpumlo. He is sure to have a friend, he does not know that I intend to endanger him. One day Thandiwe will be mine, it does not matter even if after ten years ...)

(Dzela 1991: 21-22)

These thoughts by Mpumlo depict him as a jealous and cruel character who is bent on destroying Sosiba and his marriage. It is interesting that in his meditation, Mpumlo confirms his tendency of sticking his nose in the affairs of Sosiba's household as he cogitates: "... uza kundazi ukuba andiyompumlwana nje, igama lam ndinguMpumlo" (... he is going to know that I am not just a small nose, my name is Mpumlo). The comparison between impumlwana (small nose) and the name Mpumlo in this assertion is of interest. Impumlwana (small nose) is the diminutive of the noun impumlo (nose) from which the name Mpumlo is derived. Impumlo (the nose) is then bigger than impumlwana (small nose). It is a normal-sized nose. It is therefore expected to be more effective than impumlwana, whether in smelling or breathing. Even regarding the figurative function fulfilled using the nose, that is, sticking it in the businesses of other people, impumlo (the nose) should be more useful than impumlwana (small nose).

Mpumlo's affirming that he is not *impumlwana* (a small nose) but *Mpumlo* (implying a normal size nose) suggests that he does not stick a small but a big nose in *Sosiba's* affairs. By ascertaining that he is not a small nose but a normal size one, as his name implies, he demonstrates how serious he is in sticking his nose deep into *Sosiba's* and *Thandiwe's* affairs. All this illustrates how he wants to get deep into the affairs of this couple. He wants to know everything about their life.

This sentence is also significant: *Akazilibali enomhlobo, akazi ukuba ndijonge ukumbetha uduma olungophiyo* (He is sure to have a friend, he does not know that I intend to endanger him). This aversion reflects how deceptive *Mpumlo* is towards *Sosiba*. Theirs is not a genuine companionship. *Mpumlo* pretends to be a close ally of *Sosiba* while he, in fact, is an enemy who wants to harm him by destroying his (*Sosiba's*) marriage. He plans to achieve this by enticing *Thandiwe* away from *Sosiba*.

Mpumlo's plan to harm *Sosiba* is evident in the idiom *ukumbetha uduma olungophiyo*, which literally means to beat and leave him with a head wound that does not bleed. Bleeding is generally a sign that one has a fresh wound. It is from shedding blood that one becomes aware of the danger inflicted on one's body, especially when pain is not felt yet and the injury is in a concealed area of the body. On the other hand, a fresh wound (in an obscured area) that does not bleed would not immediately make the victim aware of the cut. It is only when the soreness of the wound is felt that the injury is realised. In the same manner, the head is the part of the body that cannot be seen by the owner, except with the aid of a mirror or someone else commenting about it. A head wound that does not bleed would also take time to notice. The sufferer would only recognise the harm when he/she feels some discomfort from the injured area. The discomfort may be felt sometime after the infliction. By inflicting *Sosiba* a head wound that does not bleed, *Mpumlo* then presupposes that he will endanger *Sosiba* without him (*Sosiba*) noticing.

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Another explanation of the idiom is that a very deep wound will be caused. Such a wound often does not bleed immediately when the harm is done. Before the cut sheds blood, a white endoderm appears. By *uduma olungophiyo* (a head wound that does not bleed) Mpumlo may also be referring to the depth of the wound he intends to inflict on Sosiba. This then signifies how committed he is to his plan of endangering the other character. This is apparent in his plan to destroy Sosiba's marriage. He wants to inflict irrevocable damage on Sosiba.

It is interesting that Mpumlo considers Sosiba's and Thandiwe's marriage as "rubbish". This reflects how much he does not recognise or respect their marriage. He plans to destroy it by taking Thandiwe away from Sosiba for himself. His determination to destroy this union is evident in his pledge to eventually achieve this wish, even if it may happen only after ten years. This pledge indicates how he obligates to take whatever time to demolish the matrimony of this couple. This idea is also apparent in the statement; *Andisayi kufa ndingathandananga noThandiwe* (I will never die before falling in love with Thandiwe). This statement implies that if he is alive, Mpumlo will do all he can to snatch Thandiwe away from Sosiba for himself. Only death will stop him from pursuing that wish. What is surprising is that Mpumlo, who is serious about taking someone else's wife, has his own spouse, Nowam. This then depicts him as a selfish, cruel, evil, and cheating womaniser.

The extent to which Mpumlo wants to endanger Sosiba also becomes clearer later in the text, where he fabricates a lie about Sosiba to the manager of a furniture shop from which Sosiba has bought a bedroom suit. He says:

'Kwiminyaka elishumi eyadlulayo sasikunye eJohannesburg. Kwangenxa yalaa mabhongo akhe wathenga impahla yegumbi lokulala yewaka leerandi. Wahlawula nje idiphozithi, emva koko wayigodusa loo mpahla. Zaqengqeleka iinyanga umLungu ejonge enkalweni wabe uSosiba engavakali ndawo. Ndasala nogayi kuba ababezise impahla leyo bambuza kum. Zange bafumane nyaniso kuba ndandisazi ukuba kwankqu

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idilesi awabanika yona yayiyeyobuxoki. Yayiyidilesi yaseSoweto, nangoku loo mpahla ikowabo kuba uthi yena akanakutyebisa abeLungu behleli benemali kakade.’

(Ten years ago we were together in Johannesburg. Again, to satisfy his ambitions, he bought a bedroom suite for one thousand rand. He only paid the deposit, and thereafter sent the furniture home. Months went by with the White man expecting something while Sosiba was nowhere to be found. I remained with a problem as the people who brought that furniture asked me about him. They never got any truth for I knew that even the address he gave them was false. It was a Soweto address, the name and surname were false. They rounded Soweto in vain, even now that furniture is at his home as he says he cannot make White people richer than they already are.)

(Dazela 1991: 23)

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

Mpumlo’s cruel intentions against Sosiba are also depicted in his conversation with Sagwityi and Nkwenkwezi. Here he conspires with these friends of his to get Sosiba arrested along with someone who embezzled funds, something Sosiba had not done. In this dialogue Mpumlo says:

‘Ukuba ababanjwanga ndakuba andingoMpumlo. USosiba uza kufumana intlungu eyafunyanwa ndim ngaphambili, ndiyalwazi ugezo lwalaa ntolongo iseHarrismith. Ndimfumene ke khona, ndimbophe izandla neenyawo, buza kuphela ubukrelekrele kusale ubudenge kulaa ngqondo yakhe. Ndandithe ndiza kumtshutshisa ade afe.

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Andiyompumlwana nje kodwa, igama lam ndinguMpumlo ...²

(If they do not get arrested then I will not be Mpumlo. Sosiba will experience the pain that I once experienced before, I know the notoreity of that prison in Harrismith. I have really gotten him, I have tied him hands and feet, his wisdom is going to end and only stupidity will remain in that mind of his. I said I would persecute him until he dies. I am not just a small nose, my name is Mpumlo ...)

(Dazela 1991: 46)

The phrase: ndakuba andingoMpumlo (I will not be Mpumlo) reveals how Mpumlo admits that he sticks his nose in the affairs of Sosiba as he is motivated by the meaning of his name. Even his repetition of the assertion: Andiyompumlwana nje kodwa, igama lam ndinguMpumlo (I am not just a small nose, my name is Mpumlo) points to this attitude. Mpumlo may also be using his name as an excuse for his unpalatable personality.

The sentence: Ndandithe ndiza kumtshutshisa ade afe (I said I would persecute him until he dies) indicates that Mpumlo has all along been planning to harm Sosiba. Note should be taken of how he vows to do everything he can to have Sosiba apprehended for a crime he did not commit. From the above excerpt it is clear that Mpumlo wants Sosiba to experience the pain that was once experienced by him when he was arrested for beating up his wife. He wants him to have this experience although he has not done anything wrong.

Mpumlo is happy that Sosiba will be arrested. This attitude is detected in his use of the expression: Ndimfumene ke khona, ndimbophe izandla neenyawo (I have really gotten him, I have tied him hands and feet). This statement is an illustration of how Mpumlo admits that he is the cause of Sosiba's detention. This idea is enhanced by his use of the first person concord ndi- (I) in the utterance. His use of the idiom; ndimbophe izandla neenyawo (I have tied him hands and feet) further demonstrates how he has put Sosiba in a helpless situation. This pronouncement is generally applied when

someone is in a pessimistic state of affairs, where one can do nothing to save oneself. This is tantamount to inflicting a head wound that does not bleed (ukumbetha uduma olungophiyo) on him, as mentioned earlier in this discussion.

Mpumlo also seems to have a problem with Sosiba's wisdom and wants to destroy it. He acknowledges that Mpumlo is wise and wishes to make him appear foolish before other people. All this proves how much he wants to humiliate Sosiba. It is an indication of his cruelty and jealousy. Mpumlo's repeating the statement that "Andiyompumlwana nje kodwa, igama lam ndinguMpumlo ...' (I am not just a small nose, my name is Mpumlo ...)' also indicates how committed he is to keep on sticking his nose in Sosiba's affairs to fulfill his evil plans of destroying the couple.

Mpumlo's sticking his nose in the affairs of other people, and the results thereof, are further highlighted in a dialogue between Nombali and MamTolo, where the latter expresses her joy over Mpumlo's arrest after beating up his wife. MamTolo describes Mpumlo as:

'Indoda engenazintloni zokuhamba iphixanisa imizi yabantu ihlohla amanye amadoda ukuba mawanganiki mbeko kumakhosikazi awo. Zange ndiphinde ndonwabe oko uNkwenkwezi waqalisayo ukuqhogana noMpumlo.'

(A man who is not ashamed of causing conflict in other people's households, influencing other men not to respect their wives. I have never been happy ever since Nkwenkwezi started associating with Mpumlo.)

(Dazela 1991: 38)

Nkwenkwezi, who is mentioned above, is MamTolo's husband and Nombali is Sagwityi's wife. Both Nkwenkwezi and Sagwityi are Mpumlo's new friends. As MamTolo expresses, Mpumlo has a bad influence on Nkwenkwezi. He is not a good character for others to connect with because of his negative influence, as he is portrayed to be on Nkwenkwezi, as Mamtolo reveals in the above excerpt.

In the foregoing citation MamTolo describes Mpumlo as indoda ehamba iphixanisa imizi yabantu (a man who goes around causing conflict in other people's households). Causing conflict in the households of other people often involves getting oneself into the affairs of these households, without being invited. It also involves gossiping about people. Mpumlo frequently talks negatively about Sosiba to Nkwenkwezi and Sagwityi which confirms that he is also a gossip. Among amaXhosa, men are generally not known to involve themselves in other people's confidential matters. without being requested. They are also not expected to gossip. Mpumlo's creating conflict in other people's households then indicates that he uninvitedly sticks his nose in the affairs of other people. The badness of this habit becomes evident when it creates clashes among people. In the same way that he creates trouble among people, Mpumlo wishes to cause conflict between Sosiba and Thandiwe so that their marriage breaks down.

From MamTolo's words, Mpumlo does not only interfere in Sosiba's family affairs. He does that even with Nkwenkwezi and MamTolo's affairs as a couple. This is what leads MamTolo to further describe him as "that temptation" (esa silingo) (Dazela 1984: 39).

As the foregoing discussion has revealed, Mpumlo, taking after his name, sticks his nose in the people's affairs which have nothing to do with him. He is also a jealous, selfish, evil, and cruel character with a bad influence who is determined to destroy the marriages of other characters, especially Sosiba's and Thandiwe's.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the name of a character who is named Mpumlo in S. A. Dazela's *Izono Zakho Ziya Kujukjela*. The origin and meaning of this designation have been deliberated on. From the discussion, this name is not a name for just a name's sake, as it is a symbol that signifies the personality traits and the role of its bearer in the novel. This makes onomastics relevant to base the study on. Besides, this

name has a bearing on the plot of the novel, as the events the character is involved in have some association with his label. It gives the reader a clue of the direction the plot will take.

The personality traits and role played by the character who bears the name discussed in this discourse, are further made more vivid by the linguistic and literary devices that the author employs. These include copulatives, and nouns that are used as diminutives, idioms, proverbs, symbols, thoughts, and dialogue. All this indicates Dazela's skill in the naming of this character and shows the usefulness of the character's name in her novel.

Since characters often represent people in real life, the naming of Mpumlo in the novel under study is an important phenomenon. This name seems to portray people in real life, as the novel is a miniature world created by the author. For instance, the name discussed in this study resembles the name of some known people. The personality traits this character displays and the role he plays in the text make people with such a name either identify with or dissociate themselves from him.

As authors of literary works often name characters according to the role they are expected to play in the works, there is a need for scholars of literature who have interest in onomastics to analyse names found in other works of fiction. This will reveal the skill of these authors in the practice of naming their characters.

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