Vilifying apartheid perpetrators through narrative devices

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Mandla Langa's debut novel, *Tenderness of Blood*, received no critical review compared with his later works of fiction. To close this gap, I will provide critical analysis focussing on Langa's use of narrative devices that function to generate meaning focussed on specific issues, themes, and topics vilifying apartheid perpetrators, which has been interpreted as Langa's chosen means of overthrowing apartheid. These devices will be drawn from Gérard Genette's *Narrative Discourse* and *Narrative Discourse Revisited* along with Mikhail Bakhtin's narrative theories of the *Dialogic Imagination*. This entails narrational strategies of the extradiegetic and intradiegetic, respectively, deployed by the anonymous third-person narrator and Mkhonto, the protagonist. These strategies render the text as a multi-voiced polyphonic narrative that aims to accentuate the plight of Mkhonto in his opposition to South Africa's apartheid injustices from two different and complementary narrative perspectives. In addition to the narrational strategies, there is an employment of devices such as times of narration in simultaneous, subsequent, and interpolated narration, which enable the situating of the story in time of its 'presentness' and moments of the action.

Contribution: This article highlights the plight of, and challenges experienced by the characters, and is helpful in generating sympathy for the events, especially for Mkhonto and his people in the struggle to overthrow apartheid.

Keywords: narrational strategies; time(s) of the narration; narrating voice; dialogism; sympathy; Gérard Genette; Mandla Langa; Mikhail Bakhtin; apartheid.

Introduction

Langa's work, such as *Tenderness of Blood* (1987), extensively experiments with narrative devices and contributes to South African literature by focussing on liberation during apartheid, while his other works deal with social justice in a democratic society. With such contributions, he became a distinguished poet and novelist, rewarded by winning numerous prizes. This includes the Commonwealth Writers' Prize for the Best Book in Africa in 2009, South Africa's National Order of Ikhamanga for literary, journalistic, and cultural achievements in 2007, and the Bursary for Creative Writing from the Arts Council of Great Britain in 1991.

Many of Langa's novels received critical review, except for his *Tenderness of Blood* (1987). Mkhize (1995) implies that the condition under which Langa's work is produced, specifically *Tenderness of Blood*, may have prompted state institutions to condemn it. This suppression may be warranted because the novel reflects and exposes governmental institutions engaging in villainous behaviour by enforcing apartheid laws on black characters. This oversight caused the deployed narrative approaches to be overlooked, while these strategies help Langa voice liberation during apartheid by vilifying the perpetrators as a strategy to overthrow the government. There is a significant gap in critical evaluations of Langa's oeuvre, particularly *Tenderness of Blood*, which is the focus of this article. My critical analysis primarily focused on identifying and analysing Langa's use of narrative strategies. This includes concepts of narrational strategies, polyphony, dialogic, and times of narration, along with their subordinate terms that emerge. Mandla focuses on specific issues, themes, and topics to vilify the perpetrators of apartheid that in turn highlight the plight of and challenges encountered by Mkhonto, the protagonist, and his people when they plot to topple a government as this generates sympathy for the characters.

To reveal the narrative devices employed in *Tenderness of Blood*, the discussion is informed by the conceptual theoretical framework drawn from narrative theories of Genette's *Narrative Discourse* (1980) and *Narrative Discourse Revisited* (1988), along with Bakhtin's *Dialogic Imagination* (1981). I will focus on Genette's (1980, 1988) narrative theories of voice, which signify narration and also

include times of narration. On the other hand, Bakhtin's (1981) dialogic theory provides further insight into the voices of the characters as narrators in a multivocal narrative. The performed narratives by these narrators complement one another and serve to justify the struggle for freedom by the oppressed in a narrative where the overthrow of apartheid proves central. It articulates their aim to overthrow the oppressive order and replace it with a free and just society. On the other hand, them alternating narratives demonstrate the polyphonic nature of the text by presenting multi-dimensional views about the characters, events, situations, and living conditions of the characters. It is the combination of these two theories embedded into one another, for example, Bakhtin into Genette, when applied to Langa's fiction, which enables an analysis and discussion of the polyphonic nature of the narrative, as well as the emphasis it places on the personal experiences and plight of the main characters in the text.

The conceptual theoretical framework

Genette's narrative theory of voice (1980, 1988) maintains that, for a narrative to occur, there must be someone who undertakes its narration, be this textual or verbal. Instance of narration produces the narrative text, as this is the case in the chosen novel for this study, and the reader has only the concrete narrative text in which to search for the narrator. When it comes to identifying the narrator of the story, Genette (1980:248) explains 'if in every narrative we define the narrator's status both by its narrative level (extradiegetic- or intradiegetic) and by its relationship to the story (heterodiegetic or homodiegetic), we can represent the four basic types of the narrator's status,' which will be used as a guide to identify the narrators in the text as it will be demonstrated later, namely:

- extradiegetic–heterodiegetic: the narrator at the first level tells a story from which he or she is absent
- extradiegetic–homodiegetic: a character at the first level tells his or her own story
- intradiegetic–heterodiegetic: a character at the second level tells an embedded 'metadiegetic' narrative from within the central events
- intradiegetic–homodiegetic: a character at the second level tells his or her own story.

In addition to the narrating instance, as specified by Genette (1980:258–259), a post-modernist narrator in the text usually exploits the narrative situation. This occurs in the intradiegetic–homodiegetic narrative known as the first-person story. Genette (1980:257) acknowledges that a post-modernist narrator refers to a narrator who performs an extra narrative function that 'addresses to the reader, the organisation of the narrative by means of advance notices and recalls, an indication of source, memory-elicited attestation.' Such a narrator, according to Genette (1980: 258–259), would do so to achieve several effects. One such example is that this is helpful in the story to locate character-

narrators utilising this strategy to recount personal experiences as characters' way of generating meaning that adds to that of main narrator.

More on narration, Genette (1980:229) also identifies several narrative levels with a 'view to accounting for narratives within narratives where a character from one narrative can be a narrator in a second narrative.' This adds to the earlier point about the position of a post-modernist narrator, notably the first-person character speaker in the story told by the anonymous narrator, as this is revealed later in the text. According to Genette (1980), the term 'diegesis' denotes a story or narrative according to which it can be shown: if a narrator occupies a position outside the events of the primary narrative (extradiegetic); if they are involved in the story events (intradiegetic); or if, as an intradiegetic narrator, they report on the events at a deeper level of embedding (metadiegetic). Here, Genette (1980) is at pains to state that the diegetic level refers to the main story, and that the metadiegetic refers to the secondary story narrated by a single character in the narrative. This metadiegetic narrational strategy is a strategy on its own, as explained below.

The term 'diegesis' refers to the narrating of the story. However, Herman, Manfred and Ryan (2005:107) acknowledge that diegesis has two meanings, which originate from ancient Greek for 'a story; and it is the manner of narration; [or the] the telling of the story.'

The metadiegetic narrative, Genette (1980:232) maintains, consists of an action undertaken by a character in the primary narrative, where this character then tells a secondary narrative that is embedded in the primary narrative. This method of narrating goes back to the origins of epic narration. Genette (1980:232) also points out that there is a relationship between the primary and the metadiegetic narration. Genette (1980) states the functions of the relationship between the primary and the metadiegetic narratives and also stipulates that they are crucial in a narrative text. His inputs are applicable in this study since polyphony emerges from these structures as follows:

> The first type of a relationship is direct causality between the events of the metadiegesis and those of the diegesis, conferring on the second narrative an explanatory function. The second type consists of a purely thematic relationship, thereby implying no spatio–temporal continuity between metadiegesis and diegesis. The third type involves no explicit relationship between the two story levels: it is the act of narrating itself that fulfils a function in the diegesis, independently of the metadiegetic content–a function of distraction, for example, and or of obstruction. (p. 232)

In addition to the person narrating, Genette (1980) also discusses the time of narration. For Genette (1980:217–220), the time of the narration is an essential element of it. He maintains that the narrator can very easily narrate a story without specifying where it happens, or by saying whether the place the narrator is telling the story is at a greater or lesser distance from him or her. He states that it is practically

impossible for the narrator not to locate the story in a time prior to his narrating act (Genette 1980:217–220). He asserts that a story must be told in the present, past or future tense, and mentions four types of narrating activity in which the temporal relations between the narrator and the story's events are described (Genette 1980:17–220). These theoretical terms are essential to guide and specify the temporality with which the *Tenderness of Blood* is narrated, for example, in the dominating present moment, as discussed later. This helps to foreground the events of injustices endured by black characters that must be resisted. Doing so necessarily involves exposing and overthrowing the apartheid government by vilifying its perpetrators. The first of these terms is 'subsequent narrating' and it constitutes the classical position of the past-tense narrative that presides over the great majority of the narratives produced to this day. Genette (1980:220) also observes that the use of the past tense is enough to make a narrative subsequent without indicating the interval that 'separates the moment of the narrating from the moment of the story'. With such a narration technique, there is isotopy that occurs, where, according to Herman et al. (2005:263), 'isotopy' constitutes a relationship of balance in the narrative between the story and its narrator. One part of the narration complements the other. The anonymous third-person narrator's narration can fill in the missing parts from the narration of the character-narrator. On the other hand, the character-narrator can fill in the missing parts of the unnamed narrator's narration. This part of narration is applicable in *Tenderness of Blood,* as some characters such as Mkhonto, are given a chance to relate their past experiences. Also, the alternating of a recounting of events between the anonymous narrator and Mkhonto belies polyphony and renders the text dialogic when exposing the injustices of apartheid perpetrators. This highlights the importance of Bakhtinian polyphonic theory in this study, as present moments coincide with the action of the apartheid moment, through the means of narrator's voices.

Prior narrating as the second term according to Genette (1980:219–220), is a predictive narrative that is usually written in the future tense. It has a much 'smaller literary investment than the other types of time narrative because it is difficult to maintain future tense' (Genette 1980:219–220). He also suggests that if predictive narrating occurs at all, it is 'on the second level of narration' (Genette 1980:219–220). In this case, predictive narrating in fiction occurs in the form of prophecy, prediction, dreams, and time-travel, among other devices. It is here that Langa's *Tenderness of Blood* served as a prediction for how apartheid will end, as implied by the aftermath of events. This, given that Mkhonto is trained as a guerrilla and is ready to physically fight against apartheid, which did not ultimately transpire, as revealed in the analysis.

Genette (1980:217–219) explains that simultaneous narrating as the third term is narrative in the 'present contemporaneous with the action'. According to Genette (1980:218–219), this narrative function emphasises the story or the narration discourse and serves to foreground the main issues the text would seek to bring out as discussed later. This narrative function proves that Genette's model of a narrative is useful because it specifies categories that distinguish clearly between story and narration.

Genette (1980:217) maintains that the fourth and last term which is interpolated or inserted narrating constitutes the 'most complex', because the 'story and the narration can become entangled in such a way that the latter has an effect on the former'. The keyword for this structure is embedment. This happens because of the narration being inserted between the moments of the action, where this implies that story events are being told as they occur. One of the reasons that the story and the narration become entangled is the close relationship these have with one another. Genette (1980:217–218) observes that the extreme closeness of the story to the narrating produces a subtle effect of friction between the 'slight temporal displacement of the narrative of events' ('here is what happened to me today') and the complete simultaneousness in the report of thoughts and feelings ('here is what I think about it this evening').

It is crucial at this point to state that the closeness of the story and its narration influences the focalisation. Genette (1980:218) argues that the reason why the closeness of story events and their narration influence focalisation is because 'the narrator is, at one and the same time, still the hero and already someone else: the events of the day are already in the past'.

Aiming to identify the narrative devices, key excerpts from the text are analysed, guided by qualitative and interpretative methods. In this study, the analysis of the passages also underscores an emphasis on theoretical foundations deployed to provide lesser opinions about the text. The logic behind this approach is that the quotes are used to demonstrate the theory and in turn, it reveals the generated meaning, which vilifies the perpetrators by highlighting the plight of the main characters and their struggles under the oppressive and exploitive conditions of apartheid in which the story is set.

Vilifying apartheid perpetrators through narrative devices

Tenderness of Blood, Langa's debut novel, is set in the 1980s South Africa, during the time of political crisis. The narrative retrospectively follows the movement and action of Mkhonto Ngozi. It explores his past experiences at school, while working as a photographer, and later when he becomes a combatant in Umkhonto weSizwe – the military wing of the African National Congress (ANC), from which his first name is derived. With this, through the experiences of Mkhonto at various stages of his life, the story exposes the injustices encountered by black characters at the hands of state institutions perpetrating apartheid laws, notably the police, the justice system presented by the court, and the prison warders, who are being vilified as a way of fighting against them.

The resisting of apartheid by exposing the social conditions of the 1980s, where Mkhonto and his people suffer at

the hands of white characters, conform to South Africa's farm-style literary tradition. In *Tenderness of Blood,* white characters as the 'landed gentry' of apartheid are in a political position that allows them to create laws that marginalise black characters, notably, through a lack of full economic as well as political participation, monitored movement, denial of quality education, a lack of access to land, and enforcement of hard labour. This reveals some of the core conventions of farm-style writing, and chiefly 'South Africa's experience of colonial conflict, white supremacy, gender struggle, and nationalism', as pointed out by Devarenne (2009:627). This ensures that white characters make sure their black counterparts exist in the background as the echoes of these observations (as raised by Coetzee 1986). Based on the findings by Fasselt, Sandwith and Soldati-Kahimbaara (2020:5) on South African stories, chiefly the short story, it is safe to say Langa's novel mirrors and exposes the 'fragmented realities of socio-political' situations of apartheid South Africa, as endured by black characters. In this way, Langa expresses his protest to apartheid in his literature, as many black writers of the time did, as Nkosi (1983:133) points out.

To identify the narrative devices deployed in the text, the third-person anonymous narrator and the influential secondary character narrator are identified in order to show which narrational strategies they use, and the way in which they generate meaning and sympathy for specific characters and events as a means of vilifying apartheid perpetrators. The times of narration of the story are specified as simultaneous, subsequent, and interpolated story, as deployed by these narrators. It should be observed that isolation of the identified narrative devices is performed for analytical purposes as they manifest simultaneously with other approaches, for example, the narrational strategies in this case embed polyphony that emerges from different narrators. Also, these devices covertly reveal polyphony at play in the discussion when events are given by diverse narrators, notably the secondary character-narrators, voicing their experiences. It is here that the benefits of emphasising the theoretical foundations, as well as the narrative theories of Genette (1980, 1988) and Bakhtin (1981), are revealed for their importance in accessing Langa's work to identify and discuss key narrative devices utilised to produce and communicate meaning, such as narrational strategies, polyphony, and times of narration. In light of this, Genette's theory was employed to specify the different types of narrative devices that includes the narrational strategies performed by narrators and their times of narration, while Bakhtin's theory was used to reveal the narrating voices in the novel. Emphasis is given to Genettian theory because it holds the entire narrative structure of the devices used in this study.

By exceeding the conventional limits of traditional narrative modes and establishing a distance between the anonymous narrator and the characters, Langa deploys two narrators that form diverse voices to narrate and speak in the narrative, rendering the novel a polyphonic text. The narrating persons are an anonymous third-person narrator

and Mkhonto as a first-person character-narrator. The former performs the main narration function, as an extradiegetic narrator, situated outside the events; the latter supplements the former narration as an intradiegetic character-narrator located inside of them. These narrators relate differently to the events they recount, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1 serves to present a novel's page and how a story is structured by its narrators; the anonymous narrator is extradiegetic, for example, outside the narrative events and provides primary narration. However, Mkhonto's intradiegetic narrative exists inside the primary events at a metadiegetic level.

The external location of the extradiegetic–heterodiegetic narration is evident in the opening section of the novel, where the anonymous narrator presents a narrative that introduces Mkhonto as a political idealist, who has recently been released from jail (Langa 1987):

> Mkhonto, the newly-freed prisoner, now an honorary member of the human race, knows that what he is feeling, this unnameable joy, is something that dreams are made of. He thinks of a line from a poem, *It is only those who dream/ who know nightmares.* He knows, he has been told so many times, that he is a dreamer. But this world, he knows, is still kind to the dreamers although it has this very forbidding frame of mind. (p. 2)

Mkhonto was detained because of his participation in Umkhonto weSizwe, and he is, therefore, identified as a threat to the apartheid government, with the unambiguous intention to overthrow it.

Mkhonto is a secondary character-narrator inside the anonymous narrative at an intradiegetic level, who narrates meta-diegetically. This is established when he narrates his story in the courtroom when awaiting sentencing that explains his release at the beginning of the story (Langa 1987):
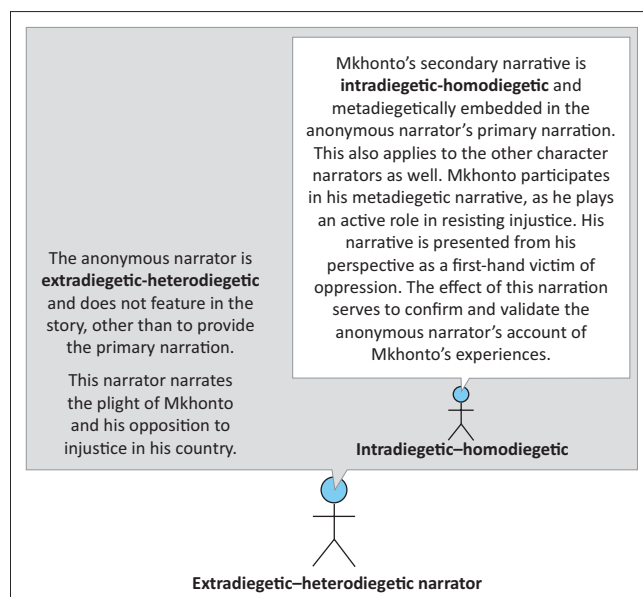

FIGURE 1: *Tenderness of Blood* (1987).

I don't see faces I can recognise in the court-room. At the same time all the faces I see are faces I know. It is so strange to be part of people after all these months from everything. I have lived in a world of blue eyes, cruelly twisted mouths, the touch of hard fists. I have twitched and convulsed at the end of the copper wire …. '– five years'. A Man in a gown speaks these words. (pp. 418; 419)

In the aforementioned passages, Mkhonto discloses his personal experiences and his mistreatment after his arrest, which include torture and humiliation on the part of the police, and later by prison warders in jail cells, by way of exposure. The effect of Mkhonto's narration is to highlight his plight in his struggle to oppose the injustices of apartheid. As a result of the prevailing laws, he is found guilty of treason because of his activities as a combatant in Umkhonto weSizwe. In addition, the passage also complements the earlier discussed passage(s), giving the identity of the anonymous narrator. It is here that polyphony emerges. The earlier main narration introduces Mkhonto's background as a political prisoner. From Mkhonto's character-narrator, narration comes in fragments of his treatment under arrest before being severely sentenced by the Court. The latter narration exposes treatment of black characters in general, as well as those who are political activists. This fills in the gap in information on the part of the primary narrator. The provided narrations become dialogic when they furnish information generating meaning about exposing injustice performed by apartheid institutions to black characters as a way of vilifying them in the text when they talk to each other.

In *Tenderness of Blood*, the anonymous narrator's extradiegetic–heterodiegetic narration occupies fewer pages; it comprises approximately 40 per cent of the narrating time in the text compared to the secondary character-narrators' narration, which takes up as much as 60 per cent, including the narration of Mkhonto. Unlike the third-person narration, Mkhonto's narration provides personal information that the anonymous narrator does not have access to and which functions to register sympathy for the victimised characters. This is achieved when this kind of narration is inserted at a specific moment to supplement the primary narration.

In addition to the strategies employed as outlined here, the narrative techniques relating to temporality in the story – simultaneous, subsequent, and interpolated narration – enable the narrators to situate their narratives in time. These are carefully investigated to determine their functions and effects.

The first of these strategies is simultaneous narration, which according to Genette (1980:217–219), is deployed to emphasise the central concern of the story or the narration. This event can be seen on (p. 18) where the anonymous third-person narrative is presented in the present tense, while the past tense narration coincides with the action when Mkhonto is picked by his comrade, Maxwell Goba, a lawyer by profession notably dealing with the court cases of political activists after being released from detention. Maxwell just

finished showing Mkhonto the area of his stay. This is meant for Mkhonto to familiarise himself with the layout of the area as a guerrilla to plan terrorist attacks aimed at physically resisting apartheid. While on the trip, they learn from the newspaper about Mkhonto's trial, which serves as a reminder of his combat mission that started while he was at school and when he was a photographer, as this is uncovered later.

Another instance of simultaneous narration takes place when Mkhonto provides critical information about his mission as a combatant after being released from prison. He is in dialogue with an old man who happens to be a freedom fighter, and their shared views on the challenges they have brings the polyphonic nature of the text. They are about to embark on military mission of training recruits in armed combat for readiness to physically fight against apartheid, by perhaps destroying their perpetrators. This is evident when the old man asks Langa (1987:425) about a place to train the recruits, where he says: 'I don't know of a right spot where people can shoot without being discovered'. Mkhonto as a respondent assures the old man by saying 'I think we have solved that problem'. They solve the problem of Mkhonto's mission by suggesting places and ways of training the mass near the camps of apartheid soldiers. The terrorists have identified a loophole that they want to take advantage of when Langa (1987:426-427) assures the old man, 'near an army base, there's always a lot of shooting going on, and one company or platoon usually doesn't know what the others are doing'.

The subsequent narration, as the second narrational strategy, is marked using the past tense, as it narrates an event that occurred in the past, without indicating the interval that 'separates the moment of the narrating from the moment of the story' (Genette 1980:220–221). This results in a 'temporal isotopy', which establishes a relation of equivalence between the story and its narrator (Genette 1980). This isotopy is produced through the deployment of the intradiegetic narrational strategy employed by Mkhonto's older 'I' (who relates his previous experiences in such a way that the narration catches up with the presence of his narrating 'I' at the training camp), saying 'I am an engineering instructor. The six months I had in mind was just a dream. I am in my ninth month in this place. I have gone through all the camps'. Mkhonto uses the narrating 'I' to present his metadiegetic story within the extradiegetic narrative. He narrates his personal experiences as an instructor at the Umkhonto weSizwe training camps, where he has found a home away from the oppression and injustice of apartheid. He has mastered military fighting skills that he hopes to utilise against apartheid perpetrators when he returns to South Africa, as hinted at earlier, when he looks for an area to train recruits (Langa 1987:391).

The third narrational strategy related to time is identified by Genette (1980:217) as 'interpolated'. This refers to narrative information inserted between the moments of action in the story. In the narration of the unnamed narrator and Mkhonto (1980:154–155), the narrating process and the story are

embedded in such a way that the latter has an effect on the former, in the sense that they reach a point where narration cannot be differentiated from a story, because these are textually presented, where instead, a story must be abstracted. This can be seen in the events (p. 154–155), in which the anonymous narrator tells the story about Mkhonto's arrest during his school days. The narration of the passage takes place within the past tense and in contemporaneous mode with the action. Caught sleeping at night in a park by the police, Mkhonto is arrested and assaulted. To survive, he co-operates with the police and avoids their brutality, which implies a certain villainy with which they enforce apartheid laws. This event depicts the police putting black people under curfew at night, which is the situation in which Mkhonto finds himself. It also aligns with Mkhonto's play being rehearsed in the school, where he is the main character being abused by the police, as discussed later. This event links with the others that Mkhonto considers, where black characters are being required pass documents that can also be utilised to be in white character's designated areas or to look for employment.

Another instance of interpolated narration between the main story and the action can be observed when Mkhonto (1980:420–421) provides critical background information about his experiences as a political prisoner. The narration is in subsequent form and in contemporaneous mode with the action, when Mkhonto is held in the prison on Robben Island. He recalls his experiences and his treatment by the prison warders, who torture and humiliate him. Mkhonto personally relates his experiences of the rigorous routines in the prison. This entails checks, hard labour, meals, and physical and verbal abuse from the prison warders. The mistreatment Mkhonto and his people receive in jail is meant to break their confidence as guerrillas not to continue with their apartheid resistance. In this way, *Tenderness of Blood* exposes state institutions such as prison warders abusing black political activists, fighting for freedom from colonialism and often encounter systematic piecemeal killings in jail.

The events also reveal the dialogue made by Mkhonto when thinking about past experiences and confirm the polyphonic nature, the multi-voiced discourse, of *The Tenderness of Blood*. While thinking about his past, Mkhonto assumes the role of the narrator as a secondary character narrator. This emerges when the narration by the anonymous narrator incorporates the dialogues of Mkhonto and other characters enter in the narrative and are foregrounded, and this gives characters such as Mkhonto a chance to assume the role of narrating events from a personal perspective to make the narrative multivoiced and dialogical. Bakhtin (1981:335) refers to this as a narrative that 'presents other … characters for whom the role of narration is assumed by them'. This allows the anonymous narrator and Mkhonto to transgress the monological limits of the conventional realist novel, by alternating between first-person character narration and third-person authorial narration. Coupled with Mkhonto's close proximity to the events and what happens to the characters, this subsequently creates the impression that

there is direct access to the characters' thoughts and experiences.

The interchange between the narration of the events at the primary and metadiegetic levels highlights the polyphony of the novel, and reveals the relationship that links these levels. This includes direct causality between the events and the thematic relationships that predominate in the novel. Direct causality occurs when Mkhonto recounts his personal experience of growing up under the apartheid system and his subsequent life as a photographer and a combatant, which results in his arrest. This metadiegetic narration by Mkhonto is linked to that of the anonymous narrator to reveal direct causality between events that further accentuates the polyphonic nature of *The Tenderness of Blood*, as shown in the following extracts narrated by various narrators (Langa 1987):

> The students decided to boycott lectures and go on a demonstration … It was a clear Wednesday when they all saw dust coming from the direction of the university. It was an armed contingent of policemen in their *Khwela-Khwelas* ... (p. 273)
>
> Mkhonto had already loaded the camera. He raised it and focussed on Van Niekerk …Van Niekerk went on, 'this is an illegal gathering, and I'm giving you exactly one minute to disperse' (p. 278).
>
> So when Van Niekerk gave the police the long-awaited order to charge … The police waded into the students with an atavistic joy. Mkhonto watched – click – as Rebecca … was struck by a baton on the head (p. 282).
>
> Then the instructors came and training started. By this time we were all a little fed up with the view of the mountains that surrounded the camp. We all cheered and said *AMANDLA!* when the Commander informed us that we'd start our training on June 1 … The commissar came and addressed us. He told us of our historic mission. The people of South Africa have faith in you, he told us. You're not here to learn about warfare so that you can go home and subvert the Revolution. You are part of a long historic path that was charted by our forebears when they first picked up the weapon against the invaders (p. 400).
>
> After handing his travel document to the border guard, he had been politely ordered to get out of the car (p. 406).
>
> Mkhonto had persisted and said that his document was still valid, okay? It doesn't need forging, so let me get on with what I'm supposed to do. Well, he thought now behind bars (p. 407).
>
> The pain my brothers, is large. It has the shape of a large over-ripe watermelon, it is there in my eyes. At one time I thought I'd been blinded but it was the swollen skin above and below my eyes. I can't see anything beyond the light, so weak, that filters into the cell. Cell D. One of the anonymous interrogators, or maybe it was Andre, the bastard, laughingly referred to the D as standing for death. Somehow I know that death would be welcome (Langa 1987:417). '– five years.' A man in a gown speaks these words. The people hear these words, the reporters hear these words and write them down in their little notebooks (p. 419).

These excerpts show a number of Mkhonto's experiences that take place at different moments in the story under apartheid that must be resisted. The students are protesting

when the police arrive and break up the gathering using their brutal force. This is when Mkhonto establishes himself as a photographer. He takes pictures of the unrest and the brutal repression by the police. His photographs expose the police brutality, as he publishes these in newspapers, which eventually vilifies the police as perpetrators when they fight with defenceless students. Mkhonto leaves the country and joins the ANC in exile. He later returns to the country as a combatant for Umkhonto weSizwe and is arrested and tortured, and then given a severe jail sentence. From the excerpts state institutions emerge to abuse their power to marginalise black characters and behave as villains.

A thematic relationship emerges from Mkhonto's political activities in resistance of apartheid. All the elements of the story, including the narrational strategies, contribute to this central theme. The unnamed narrator provides this thematic relationship by following Mkhonto's movements and supplying the reason why he is fighting to overthrow the apartheid government. This emerges from Mkhonto's experiences, which are reconstructed chronologically. Mkhonto grew up under apartheid. He experienced ill treatment and witnessed the abuse of other people. He goes to university, where he improves his political knowledge and becomes aware of and critical of the injustices in his society. This culminates in him becoming a political activist, when he participates in a theatrical performance that exposes the exploitation and oppression of black people by white state institutions and agents, such as the police. It is this exploitation and oppression of blacks that gives Mkhonto the courage to resist and fight the injustice. Mkhonto (1980:36) exposes the police abuse through a play performed in a school theatre. Mkhonto motivates the actors to participate in a dramatic performance with real-life examples of their daily experiences of exploitation and injustices, which correlate with the central theme of the drama to be performed exposing abuses occurring on South African farms owned by white people. He inspired the actors to derive their performances from their real lives to create a sense of political awareness, where a black person's life is a drama on its own while facing apartheid institutions.

In Mkhonto's (1980:324) subsequent life as a photographer, he takes photographs that depict the exploitation of black people and exposes this using media platforms, such as newspapers and magazines, and these events are depicted in the text as they occur. Mkhonto photographs the burial of black children killed by the police. Growing up under apartheid, they are deprived of access to resources that would help them lead successful lives and build careers. When they raise their grievances through protests at schools and other institutions, the police repress them. The brutal killing of children by the police shows how they are being qualified as villains perpetrating apartheid crimes by eliminating the future generation of black characters, and must be resisted. The only way of achieving this resistance, is to overthrow that apartheid government.

Mkhonto eventually joins Umkhonto weSizwe, the military wing of the ANC, and receives training to become a combatant. This results in his decision to resist and fight the oppression of black people living under the unjust laws of apartheid (Langa 1987):

> You learn shooting. There is always that bewilderment when you are handling a carbine. For the first time you put cartridges into a chamber. Count one, two, hold your breath, the butt in hollow of your shoulder, pull the trigger slowly, your eyes on the target – are both sights aligned? – and there is this terrific kick and a loud report. Result? Target destroyed. (p. 396)

He is trained in the use of firearms. This gives him emotional satisfaction when he improves his skills. This shows progress and a sense of relief that he will soon be able to fight (physically) against the unjust dispensation of his country.

The narrational strategies employed by the anonymous narrator and Mkhonto complement one another and serve to justify the struggle for freedom by the oppressed in the narrative. This articulates their aim to overthrow the oppressive order and replace it with a free and just society. Moreover, in addition to the narrational strategies, the temporality in terms of times of narration deployed in the narrative are thus harnessed to emphasise this struggle and the challenges faced by Mkhonto and his people, entailing the vilifying of the apartheid perpetrators.

Conclusions

Textual analysis of *The Tenderness of Blood* (1987) demonstrates that Langa deploys numerous narrators, the anonymous narrator, the third-person narrator, and the secondary character narrator, Mkhonto. The narrators deploy extradiegetic and intradiegetic strategies, respectively. The main narration is performed by the third-person narrator, while Mkhonto supplements this as a secondary character-narrator inside the main events. The narratives performed by these narrators complement each other and serve to justify the struggle for freedom by the oppressed in the narrative. This articulates their aim to overthrow the oppressive order and replace it with a free and just society. On the other hand, the alternating narratives demonstrates the polyphonic nature of the text by presenting multidimensional views about the characters, events, situations and living conditions of the characters. This approach is a Bakhtinian polyphonic mode aimed at bringing the story's life in the present moments, coinciding with the action of the apartheid present moment. The quality of these polyphonic narratives aligns with Bakhtin's multivoiced dialogical conception of the novel as well as Genette's complex and detailed anatomy of the narrative devices in fictional narratives.

The narration uses simultaneous, subsequent, and interpolated time to showcase Mkhonto and his people's struggle and obstacles. This means vilifying apartheid perpetrators based on their deeds.

The thrust of the argument here is that narrative devices – narrational strategies along with times of narration such as simultaneous, subsequent, and interpolated – are some of the tools used to read a story for its meaning and to enhance its understanding. This approach does not focus on the subject matter, themes, and characters, as was the case in most of Langa's reviews before the application of narrative theories in his texts.

Acknowledgements

Competing interests

The author declares that no financial or personal relationships exist that may have inappropriately influenced the writing this article.

Author's contributions

D.S is the sole author of this research article.

Ethical considerations

An application for full ethical approval was made to the Afrikaans and Theory of Literature Research Ethics Review Committee of the University of South Africa and ethics consent was received on 21 October 2016. The ethics approval number is 2016-CHS-DERC-0003.

Funding information

Data availability

Data sharing is not applicable to this article, as no new data were created or analysed in this study.

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