

A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF E.M. RAMAILA'S MOLOMATSEBE AND
TAUKOBONG.

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INTRODUCTION

0.1 From the point of view of literary works of art MOLOMATSEBE and TAUkobONG are the first collections of short stories in Northern Sotho. Collections of short stories found in school readers do not belong here. Ramaila is therefore a pioneer in this field; not only in Northern Sotho, but in the South African Bantu Languages as a whole. In the preface to MOLOMATSEBE he explains that this work was in answer to a challenge he had read in a commentary on short stories in which regret was expressed that no suitable example of short stories could be referred to in the Bantu Languages.¹⁾

0.2 In this analysis prominence will be given to some of the striking resemblances and differences between these two works of the same author. MOLOMATSEBE was published in 1951, and TAUkobONG followed in 1953.

THEMES

1.1 The underlying themes of the stories in these two works are revealed by the author in his explanation of the meanings of the titles as given in the preface to TAUkobONG: MOLOMATSEBE means "One who gives a warning" and TAUkobONG means "Unsolvable mysteries of Bantu Life".²⁾ In almost all the stories the reader sees punishment resulting from wrongdoing. This gives us the first point of resemblance between the two works.

1.2 In MOLOMATSEBE there is undisguised didacticism in all the stories: a note of warning is sounded throughout. At the end of each story the author stands in the pulpit to express his opinion and attitude towards the events just described. For instance, at the end of the first story "Tšhelete ya Sepoko" we hear him regret the belief of many people in trifles such as hidden treasures and witch-doctors, and he winds up by giving this good advice regarding the acquisition of wealth through honesty and thrift: "Lehume la makgonthe le le epetšwego, motho o tla le hwetša ge a ithuta go šoma ka potego le go babalela moputso wa gagwe."³⁾ At the end of No. 2 "Ba laotše kobo ya morwedi'agwe" the author gives this advice: "Ge motho a makatšwa ke dilo tše a sa di tsebego, go kaone ge a botšiša ba ba tšwago dikolong."⁴⁾ That is if one is surprised by things that one does not know, it is advisable that one should ask those who come from school, and not witch-doctors. This is at the same time the theme of the story. The last sentence of No. 4 "Tswetši e sego yeno ke nama" is a

quotation/

quotation from the Bible, viz. "Dira go batho ba bangwe se o ratago ge ba ka se dira go wena".⁵⁾ (Do unto others as you would them do unto you.) The same quotation is used to wind off No.20 "Ba bašweu le ba baso ba reng ba sa hlatlolane?" No.8 "Moruti ke moruti kae le kae" ends with these advisory words: "Kae le kae, neng le neng, motho o swanetše go emela therešo".⁶⁾ That is, at all places, and at all times, one must stand for the truth. The last paragraph of No.10 "A timela" contains the words "... sa rena se segolo ke go phakgamela leeto la rena la Bokriste,..."⁷⁾ which mean that the most important thing is care on our Christian journey. No.23 "A renyeng motšhatong" ends with a long quotation from Psalm 37, viz. verses 3,4,5,6,12,13 & 17, which is punctuated with the author's clearly expressed wish for an increase in the number of people like Fortunatus Thakadu, who have a strong belief in prayer. The "warning" against evil-doing is the unmistakable theme of the stories in MOLOMATSEBE.

1.3 In TAUKOBONG the themes are centred around the mysterious, unsolvable and incomprehensible forces which control the lives of men. One would not be erring to say that here Ramaila brings one face to face with the unpredictable Providence. It is the evidence of the supernatural at work. However, these mysteries are unsolvable only to the modern Christian, and not to Ramaila's characters, nor to the preliterate. When I read the stories to a certain old non-Christian Bantu man he had a ready solution to almost all of them: mysterious punishment for incomprehensible evil-doing. That is the underlying theme of the stories in TAUKOBONG. For instance in the case of the consecutive deaths of the widow and Moreku in the first story "Go gola go hlogola, go bona digolo ga go fele" this old man's explanation is that the widow went to a witch-doctor for fortification against witches and wizards like Moreku, and she received the treatment known as go ipušeletša (to retaliate) or gore di bowe le yena (that whoever tries to bewitch must suffer the fate intended for the victim). That is why Moreku, just like the widow, fell ill on a Tuesday, died on a Friday of the same week and was buried on Sunday.

1.4 In all the stories in TAUKOBONG there is mysterious tragedy which comes in the form of punishment for some apparent, though not always verifiable, wrong. For instance, in No.2 "O rerešitše" Maphuthe is displeased by Raditšhweu's intention to marry his (Maphuthe's) widowed sister-in-law, Rebonwe. A dispute between the two men ends with this threat from Maphuthe/

Maphuthe: "Ge o sa ntsebe o tla mpona gabotse"⁸⁾ (If you do not know me I'll show you). Two days thereafter Raditšhweu falls ill and dies. Some few days later Maphuthe also falls ill and dies. In No. 3 "Lehu la masetlapelo" Maphušu is angered by a rumour which associates him with the birth of a child by Segodi's wife. He tries to sue Segodi for libel but loses the case. After some time Segodi and the child are killed by lightning. A year thereafter Maphušu also dies.... as if he is being punished for the death of Segodi and the child! In No. 6 "Phakamaseme" the parents of Mmathebe are angered by Phakamaseme's decision to marry Ntina instead of their daughter whom he has been courting for so long. Mmathebe's parents publicly vow that Ntina, the bride-to-be, will not wear the wedding-dress: "Lešira le diaparo tša lenyalo Ntina a ka se ke a di apara, di tla swela ka ngwakong di sešo tša fihla mmeleng wa motho."⁹⁾ The night before the wedding-feast is a very stormy one, and the house in which Ntina's wedding-dress should have been is burned down by lightning! In No. 7 "Tlalo la motho ga le bapolelwe fase" one of the four murderers of the son of Rampane is arrested and sent to jail for a year. The other three fall ill and die one after the other. Is the punishment not quite clear? In "Di sa tsebanego di a welana" Dire, in his wrath, threatens that all the livestock of the thief will die: "..... tše a di ruilego ka moka di tla hwa."¹⁰⁾ Thereafter three oxen belonging to Obi (the suspected thief) die mysteriously one after the other. The fourth, and last, ox is slaughtered for the funeral of Obi's only child. In the last story, "Ga bo a bona", a teacher named Tsogwane strikes a scholar, Sethanthana, in the eye. Sethanthana loses the eye. The parents become furious. Later on Tsogwane becomes totally blind!

1.5 One sees that at the root of these mysteries there is still that belief which Ramaila condemns in MOLOMATSEBE. Herein lies a shade of resemblance between the themes in the two works. However, the moral lesson in TAUkobong is not as predominant as in MOLOMATSEBE; instead, it is so ingeniously blended with the story that it is never exposed. This is the difference between the two works. In TAUkobong the minister of religion in Ramaila disappears altogether in almost all the stories; he appears in only one story, viz. No. 7 "Tlalo la motho ga le bapolelwe fase" where he comes forward to point out the evil in the loose practice of the urbanites who refuse to come forward to give evidence even in cases where they were eye-witnesses: "Ke bjona bokgopo bjo bogolo bja batho ba Makgoweng bjoo. Ba ka bona motho a bolawa, ba ema ba bogela/

bogela, eupya ge molato o sekišwa, ba tšhaba go ba dihlatse." ¹¹⁾
This isolated case in TAUkobong reminds us of the didacticism which is so rampant in MOLOMATSEBE.

SOURCES

2.1 There is a great similarity in the sources from which Ramalla draws the materials for the stories in the two collections. In both cases he draws from a variety of phases in the lives of the Bantu of his time. There is only one story "Mojatshweswane yabo mothe o lefa ka noni yabo" in MOLOMATSEBE which tells of olden days. Both collections cover the life of the Bantu in the rural, urban and peri-urban areas. Something also very striking is that materials for the majority of his stories in both books are drawn from more than one source; each story covering at least two phases. This is particularly common in MOLOMATSEBE in which materials for twenty-three out of thirty stories are drawn from more than one source. These are Nos. 1, 2, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 22, 24, 25, 27, 28, 29 and 30. For instance, in No. 1, "Tšhelete ya Sepoko" there is something about a rural teacher and a sub-chief, a holiday by the sea-side, and ghost-money in Johannesburg. In "Ba laotše kobo ya morwedi'agwe" we hear of modern dress fashions in the cities and then of the simple rural life with its witch-doctors. No. 5 deals with a rural mission station and life in town. In No. 13 we are told of Potchefstroom, Sekhukhuniland and Botlokwa. Nos. 14 and 15 "Lešoka mphe batho" I & II treat school life in a teacher training college, life in a town hotel, in the mines, post office and in a rural primary school. In No. 22 "A re yeng motšhatong" the urban and peri-urban areas are mentioned. The inclination to draw materials for one story from different sources is less in TAUkobong: this occurs in only three stories out of twelve, viz. Nos. 8, 9 and 11. In No. 8 "Foko la mehu ga le tshelwe" the contents deal with life in an urban location, Nancefield, and in the homeland. In No. 9 "Mošemane moroga monna, sešego o loga hlwela" we hear of the rural area, the white man's farm, and jail. No. 11 touches on Thekwini (Durban), Gauteng and the homeland:

2.2 The proportion of the stories for which materials are drawn from a single source is higher in TAUkobong than in MOLOMATSEBE, viz. three-quarters and less than a quarter respectively. Something striking is that out of the remaining seven stories in MOLOMATSEBE only one, viz. No. 3 "Mahodu a tla

fahlwa/

5/...

which/

6/...

fahlwa ke barui e se ka boomo", deals with rural life while the other six, Nos. 4, 7, 8, 21, 23 and 26, deal with life in the urban areas. This order is reversed in TAUkobong: eight of them, viz. Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 10 and 12, deal with the enigmatic rural life while only one, No. 7 "Tlalo la mothe ga le bapolelwe fase", relates of life in an urban location.

EVENTS

3.1 The events described in both works have been carefully selected so as to suit the themes which are basically similar, viz. to show that wrong-doing (whether intentional or inadvertent) cannot go unpunished. All the events move towards the same climax, punishment. The warning which Ramaila mentions in the preface is driven home by means of punishment.

3.2 The main difference between the type of events in MOLOMATSEBE and TAUkobong is that there is more tragedy in the latter book than in the former. In MOLOMATSEBE there is more revelation of folly which is mendable; and the reader can afford to laugh or shake his head in sympathetic despire at such foolish actions. In TAUkobong there is no allowance for repentance, instead there is the gnashing of teeth, and the reader is only too grateful that he is but a reader and not a participant in these dramas which are laden with tragedy: the reader's deep sympathy is successfully won, so that there is no room left for contempt. To illustrate this point examples will be taken from the first three stories in each book, beginning with MOLOMATSEBE.

3.3 In the first story "Tšhelete ya sepoko" the events lead us to the ghost and witch-doctor who successfully deceive the credulous easy-money seekers who pay the witch-doctor who claims he has the power to keep the ghost away. The eye-opening climax is reached when the brave man from Mamabole faces, attacks and overpowers the ghost, and the hidden box is found to contain roofing washers! Who cannot laugh at the folly of these groups of men who pay monies to a witch-doctor, spend nights digging, and then run away from a ghost-like figure covered in white sheets, and when the treasure is found it is mere washers? The ghost also deserves to be laughed at for the beating which he gets. This is the warning punishment. The moral lesson cannot be missed. The second story "Ba laotše kobo ya morwedi'agwe" tells of a Bantu lady from the homelands. She works in a city. Like all other ladies she buys a fashionable overcoat which has a detachable fur decoration in the form of a life-size animal which/

which resembles a living one. One week-end she goes home and leaves this fur accessory in her kist. One day her mother discovers it, and she feels quite certain that it is a living creature which has been "sent" by some adversary to bring harm. She thereupon summons a witch-doctor. The witch-doctor throws the bones and scares her the more by confirming her original fears. She calls her youngest daughter to send her to report the matter to her uncle. The little girl dumbfounds her mother and the witch-doctor by laughingly saying: "Ke lepetu la jase ya Ousi, . . ." ¹²⁾ The climax is in this revelation of folly. There is nothing to stop the reader from joining the little one in laughing. There is nothing tragic. In the third one "Mahodu a tla fahlwa ke barui, e se ka boomo" we hear of a well-known resident who goes to steal a fowl from a co-resident's run in the night. The owner returns home while the thief is still in the yard. The thief lies down to hide among blocks of wood which had been off-loaded by boys during the day. As the owner proceeds towards his house, unaware of the presence of the thief, he stumbles over a block of wood. He angrily picks it up and throws it on to the pile. This block hits and hurts the hiding thief who can therefore no longer conceal his presence: he cries out in pain. That is the climax. The owner is pleasantly astounded. The reader laughs and involuntarily whispers swine! (you deserved it!), and the thief has learned a lesson he'll never forget. This is real humour. The author's skill in producing this spontaneous laughter from his readers is unquestionable and unmistakable.

3.4 In the first story "Go gola go hlogola, go bona digolo ga go fele" we are told of a wound on a boy's leg. The wound is caused by Job Moreku who uses an unknown object when he fights with Lazarus Kgadimane. The wound becomes unhealable, and the boy's leg is amputated. Lazarus's widowed mother becomes furious. Rumours begin to circulate that the Morekus have bewitched Lazarus. The widow then goes to the Church elders to plead that Moreku be excommunicated. When the elders ignore her request she physically prevents Moreku from partaking of Holy Communion in the presence of the whole congregation. The Church council meets on the following Sunday and decides to excommunicate the widow. Before they tell her she falls ill on Tuesday, dies on the Friday of the same week, and is buried on Sunday. As though this is not enough tragedy, Moreku himself falls ill on the Tuesday following the widow's burial, dies on the Friday of the same week, and is buried on Sunday. Another

tragedy/

7/...

tragedy. Both arise from and in mysterious circumstances. The cause is not clear. But, as I said earlier, those who believe in witch-craft attribute all these to witch-craft, and they see in it a "warning" to those who practise this craft, namely that they cannot be left unpunished for their mal-practices. The events here show ingenious planning. They are packed with tension, and they are very thought-provoking. This is not mere common-place coincidence: it is realism. The same is found in the second story "O rerešitše". At the end of the dispute between Maphuthe and Raditšhweu, over the latter's intention to marry the former's widowed sister-in-law, Maphuthe "warns" Raditšhweu with these words: "Ge o sa ntsebe o tla mpona gabotse!"¹³⁾ which mean: If you do not know me, you'll see me well—I'll show you! Two days hereafter Raditšhweu falls ill and dies a few days after that. A few days thereafter Maphuthe also falls ill and dies. This tragedy marks the climax of the climax. Those who believe in witch-craft contend that Maphuthe bewitched Raditšhweu, and then Raditšhweu's sons avenged their father's death in a similar manner. To those who do not believe witch-craft the truth is that Ramaila is keeping to his words that TAUkobong means unsolvable mysteries. Many a reader will come forward with what they consider to be the solution, but none of the solutions can ever be universally accepted. The events in the third story "Lehu la masetlapelo" are also so arranged that the unsolvable mystery looms large with the recurrence of the double tragedy.

3.5 Another difference between the events in these two works is the degree of tension in them. There is less tension in MOLOMATSEBE than in TAUkobong. Our curiosity about the outcome of the development of events is less aroused in the former book than in the latter, because we are to a great extent able to see the direction in which the wind blows in the very early stages of the narrations in MOLOMATSEBE, while in TAUkobong the resolution is not so easy to discern in the beginning. I'll use the same first three stories in either book to illustrate this point.

3.6 In "Tšhelete ya sepoko" the folly of the groups of men who fall easy prey to the whims of the "witch-doctor" is evident from the very beginning; and so is the meanness of the witch-doctor who advertises himself. When the man at the coast relates the story with so much thoroughness it is immediately clear that he was an active participant in this drama./

drama. It is therefore no longer necessary for the author to impose his judgement on the reader. An event which can be said to be packed with real tension is the fight between the brave man from Mamabolo and the ghost. In "Ba laotše kobo ya morwedi'agwe" the naive folly of the old mother, who mistakes the fur ornament for a living creature, is quite clear from the beginning. There would have been more tension, I am sure, if the reader had not been introduced to the fur accessory before it was discovered in the kist. In "Mahodu a tla fahlwa ke barui e se ka boomo" the events are too mathematically logical to create real tension. For instance, every thief (armed robbers excluded) will hide on hearing someone's approaching footsteps if there is no opening for escape. The only event with an element of surprise is the accidental uncovering of the thief. In each of these stories the events follow one upon the other in the same order as the rising and the setting of the sun.

3.7 The position is different regarding the events in TAUKOBOG. In the first story "Go gola go hlogola, go bona digole ga go fele" it is difficult, if not simply impossible, to predict the outcome, and so the reader's curiosity is aroused and kept burning up to the last full-stop. Who could have foreseen the death of the widow who humiliated Moreku during the Communion service? Even more mysterious is the death of Moreku himself. Of course this does not mean that the events here do not follow each other logically. The hatred and suspicious feelings of the widow arise from the incomprehensible injury and subsequent amputation of her son's leg. The protest she makes to the Church Council about Moreku, and her un-Christian behaviour in church flow from the foregoing events. The decision of the church council to excommunicate her is equally logical. Tension mounts while the reader waits to see what Moreku will do about the humiliation suffered at the hands of this unscrupulous widow. Is it surprising or illogical then that readers who believe in impersonal supernaturalism and magic attribute the death of the widow to Moreku's witch-craft? In "O rerešitše" the wrath of Maphuthe at the news of the imminent re-marriage of his sister-in-law to Raditšhweu may be understandable, but the sudden death of Raditšhweu, after the dispute and the threat, is incomprehensible although it should bring satisfaction to Maphuthe. The next surprise is the similar death of Maphuthe which, one can rightly say, gives satisfaction to the sons of Raditšhweu/

Raditšhweu. Similar tension and logical sequence are maintained in No.3 "Lehu la masetlapelo". Tension begins with the libel case. Maphušu loses the case against Segodi, and the reader looks forward to the next step. Maphušu approaches the priest with the aim of obtaining more evidence, but he fails. He then migrates to a far-off land with a sore heart, naturally. This, to the reader, would appear to be the end, but, no. Lightning removes Segodi and the child who is the source of the scandal; as if to give Maphušu a feeling of triumph (that is if he did indeed "send" the lightning). But another surprise is waiting for the reader: Maphušu himself dies. Some readers believe that Maphušu trekked so as to minimise, in the eyes of the people, his association with the death of Segodi, but Segodi's gods would not let him get away with it.

3.8 Evidently there is more art in TAUKOBONG than in MOLOMATSEBE in as far as the planning or arrangement of the events is concerned. The thought of the reader is more provoked in the former. Although both types are true and convincing, there is greater depth in TAUKOBONG because of the apt application of the effective device of the unexpected element, surprise, and because the author has avoided explaining everything.

CHARACTERS

4.1 With respect to character portrayal these two works reveal to us two Ramailas. In MOLOMATSEBE we see Ramaila the Minister of Religion, the dogmatist who "paints a world of black and white, a world in which right and wrong, truth and falsehood, are clear with statutory distinctness, a world of villain and hero."¹⁴⁾ In TAUKOBONG we see Ramaila the artist who "paints a world in which there is, in the beginning, neither black nor white, neither right nor wrong which can be defined with absolute certainty. The certainty can only come in terms of the process, and must be earned, as it were, through the process."¹⁵⁾

4.2 In MOLOMATSEBE the world of villain and hero is very glaring. It is always quite evident who the wrong-doer is. It is otherwise in TAUKOBONG because the reader arrives at "certainty" only at the end. I shall quote from a few stories in either book to support this statement, beginning with MOLOMATSEBE.

4.3 In No.2 it is not surprising that the old lady who does not/

does not know about western fashions should be so scared and suspicious when she discovers the fur ornament which resembles a living creature in her daughter's kist; nor is it surprising that she summons a witch-doctor. In No. 3 the villain (the chicken thief) is pointed out to us from the very onset. It is the same in No. 4 where "Seepamabitla" (the grave-digger) stands out clear and large as the weakest character who takes delight in the deaths of his neighbours because it means money to him. In No. 7 the title itself "Mofori" (the deceiver) prepares the reader to look out for this villain, and it is not difficult to see that it is Dikudumelane who cheats the poor evangelist, Meester Hosea Mogale. Which reader cannot see the virtue in the priest in No. 8 "Moruti ke moruti kae le kae", and the vice in his co-passengers who all conspire to hide the culprit responsible for the fire in the coach? The title of No. 9 "Mona" (Jealousy) is just as suggestive as that of No. 7, and true enough the jealousy of Ramelamo, who sets a trap to catch a neighbour's well-built hunting dog, is not hidden at all. In No. 16 the weakness of the school principal, Lentswê, who readily succumbs to gambling, is also very glaring.

4.4 Now to TAUkobong. In the first story it is difficult to point a finger at Moreku and label him as a wizard. It is only when the widow dies mysteriously that some readers may dare to attribute even the boy's injury to Moreku's witchcraft. But, when the supposed wizard also dies in a manner similar to that of the supposed victim, whom shall we regard as the hero or the villain? The same uncertainty about who the hero is and who the underdog is faces the reader in No. 2 where, to begin with, Maphuthe, a good family-minded man, goes to Raditshweu's home to quarrel with him for desiring to marry his widowed sister-in-law. Raditshweu dies after this quarrel; but so does Maphuthe also. In No. 4 when Mogapi's son is killed by lightning the whole village says it is Ditshego who "sent" the lightning. But what must the village say when Ditshego's own son is struck and killed by lightning? In the last story in the book the reader may be tempted to blame Tsogwane, the assistant teacher who hits Sethanthana in the eye. Tsogwane is then labelled as the villain. The wrath of Sethanthana's parents (and of her brother in particular) is understandable. But when Tsogwane becomes, thereafter, also blind in both eyes there are now doubts as to whether he is still as black as we painted him: who is now, rightly, to be called the villain, and who the hero?

4.5 In MOLOMATSEBE most of the characters, even the chief characters, do not have names. It is mostly a matter of "a certain man" (just like in many a sermon). For instance, in the first four stories only two out of thirteen characters have names. The first name is found in No. 2, viz. Salome, the youngest daughter of the old lady. In "Mahodu a tla fahlwa ke barui e se ka boomo", No. 3, we are told of a certain well-known man (monna yo mongwe wa motsebaledi) as the thief, and the name of the owner of the fowls is given as Rasebešo. In No. 4 the name of the main character is in fact not a name but a nickname "Seepamabitla" (one who digs graves—and that was his work.) An example of a story in which all the characters have no names is the first. Here the author just writes about "a certain teacher" (morutabana), "a certain sub-chief" (kgošana), "a certain witch-doctor", a certain brave man from Mamabolo, and many groups of fortune-seekers. In contrast to this we find that in TAUkobong the characters in all the stories, except No. 7 "Tlalo la motho ga le bapolelwe fase", have been given names.

4.6 Instead of an attempt at vivid character sketching Ramaila makes very apt use of suggestive naming of his characters. The names are appropriately given so as to suit the actions. This appropriate naming is found in both works, that is where names are given. For instance, in No. 3 of MOLOMATSEBE the name Rasebešo befits a well-to-do man from whose yard many a thief would be tempted to steal a fowl. In No. 6 an ugly name "Satsope" is given to an ugly lady who is eventually forced to shed spinsterhood by getting married to a widower. In No. 9 we meet Ramelamo (one who wields sticks) as a man who has no friends in the whole village. In No. 13 we appreciate the robbery committed by the Masemola man named "Leihlo" (The Eye) because it is this organ which sees and leads to temptation. In Nos. 14 & 15 it is a man named "Mmonadibe" (one who sees/experiences evils) who undergoes a series of unpleasantnesses. In No. 30 we are not surprised by the boastfulness and ultimate downfall of a man named "Legukubu" (The Crow)—it recalls to mind the story of the Crow and the Jackal! Suggestive names in TAUkobong are found in the following stories: No. 2 where the widow's name is "Rebonwe" (we have been seen) and indeed the widower Raditšhweu "sees" her and proposes marriage. In the same story "Maphuthe" (the gatherer) acts accordingly by caring for his deceased brother's family. In No. 3 the actions of "Maphušu" (The breaker— from phušula) are in

accordance/

accordance with his name, for he did break up Segodi's family. It does not surprise the reader to find that in No.9 the pseudo-butcher and stock-thief is named Radinama (father or lover of meat). The name Mmapekwe (mother of hawk) befits the young lady who runs off with the belongings of her supposed fiancé in No.11. In No.12 the reader encounters a young assistant teacher named Tsogwane (The Arm) whom the principal often asks to administer corporal punishment. There is therefore a great measure of resemblance between the two works in so far as the christianizing of the characters is concerned.

4.7 Another point of resemblance between the two works is that Ramaila's characters are all real; they are "lewende wesens, mense met die harteklop van die lewe, wat oortuigend reageer op die botsende magte in en om hul." ¹⁶⁾ Their actions follow logically according to their natures and the circumstances obtaining. There is none of them who can be regarded as artificial, even the nameless ones. They are types that existed in the days of Ramaila and they still exist; they are universal. For instance, easy-money-seekers as described in "Tšhelete ya sepoko" are still to be found. The same applies to mean impostors who profess to know the art of handling ghosts. Chicken thieves of the type in "Mahodu a tla fahlwa ke barui e se ka boomo" are often described and reported in the newspapers. Honest men, who will stand for the truth even when their lives are threatened, as described in "Moruti ke moruti kae le kae", are not legendary. In "Ke mo go thata go raga letsolwana" there is the tax-dodger who also resists arrest when discovered, but is overpowered in the end. Highway robbers of the type of Leihlo in "Mojatshweswane yabo mothe o lefa ka noni yabo" did commit assault with intent to rob in the past, and they still do. There are still many Bantu who will laugh at a European whose bag has been grabbed by a bag-snatcher and who will say to that distressed White: "O go laile" ¹⁷⁾ just like the passengers in Ramaila's Payneville bus when a tsotsi grabbed the bag from the white bus-driver in "Ba bašweu le ba baso ba reng ba sa hlatlolane?" Teachers of the type of Tsogwane, whose sticks bring disability to the poor young scholars are still being charged before school boards and magistrates. Even in the mystery-packed TAUkobong jealous men like Maphuthe are real. Handsome and haughty Don Juans as depicted in "Phakamaseme" still dash the hopes of young gullible ladies who cherish high hopes for marriage, and when the Don Juan ultimately marries someone else the

ladies/

ladies do not excel Ramaila's Mmathebe in their wrath (some actually sue him for breach of promise). With respect to believers in witch-doctors and witch-craft, as found in Lazarus Kgadimane's mother, the sons of Raditšhweu, the villagers who lived with Ditshego, and the relatives of Obi Ntholase, it is found that even among staunch church-goers in mission stations they have their parallels.

4.8 Ramaila's characters speak very rarely in both works. There is very little conversation. In the twelve stories in TAUKOBONG there is only one in which true dialogue occurs, viz. No. 2. It is between Maphuthe and Raditšhweu's sons where there is question and answer. In the rest of the stories the reader comes across what are, rightly speaking, exclamations. Even where the writer hints at a confrontation between characters he refuses to give the reader the inevitable dialogue, instead he leaves it to the imagination of the reader. For instance, even in No. 2 Ramaila refrains from telling the reader what Maphuthe actually said in his wrath at the remarks passed by Raditšhweu's sons—the writer merely says: "..... a omana, a omana, a omana, a be a kgebiša pelo."¹⁸ In No. 7 also he just refers to ".... dikomano tša batho ba"¹⁹ without giving the reader a taste thereof. However, when his characters do speak they are made to speak much as they would speak in real life. They have a diction which is suitable to their characters, education, environment and personal preoccupations. Their speech convinces as real since it discloses their manner or condition. For instance Ngakane's fury at the news of the spoilation of his crops by Ditšhabe's goats could not have been more vividly depicted other than by means of his own words. (No. 5 in TAUKOBONG). In No. 9, TAUKOBONG, Sonyabela's furious words which end up in his swearing by two great Ndebele chiefs (Somtshatshana and Mabhogo) are very realistic and illuminating: "Ngitšhile ngoSomtšhatšhana noMabhogo".

TRUTH

5.1 The type of events and characters in these two books determine the degree of truth in the stories. In both there is real truth. There is the verifiable and the psychological truth. (I use verifiable in the sense that it is an embodiment of our experiences in life: there are parallels to it.) In both books there is consistency and comprehensibility of character as well as credibility of action in the events. The only difference between the two works is that the truth

in MOLOMATSEBE is the type I would describe as verifiable, ofcourse not in the scientific sense, whereas in TAUkobong it is deeper psychological truth which is common to the world of fiction: it is the type which convinces us because we cannot disprove the events, we cannot refute the "logical compulsion in the characters and circumstances which lead to a specific outcome."²⁰) This is so because in TAUkobong there is the constant intervention of the illogical forces which, although ordinarily incomprehensible, control the lives of the characters, and invariably bring tragedy.²¹) This shade of difference is, primarily, due to the events. The events in MOLOMATSEBE have common parallels in our lives, and we therefore never stop to question the truth in them. On the other hand the events in TAUkobong are shrouded in that incomprehensible mystery which, in the beginning, blurs certainty; certainty must be earned. It is, therefore, essentially a question of the depth at which the truth is found in either book: I re-iterate that it is deeper in TAUkobong than in MOLOMATSEBE. Two examples from either book will be used to illustrate this point.

5.2 I choose Nos. 2 and 3 in MOLOMATSEBE. In both there is psychological correctness in each step. In No. 2 the buying of the fur ornament for the overcoat by the working lady; leaving it in her kist during the weekend visit; the discovery thereof and the astonishment of the unsophisticated mother; all are logical steps. The calling in of the witch-doctor who confirms the fears of the mother, and the sending of the youngest daughter to call her uncle, are just as logical. Equally logical is the laughter of Salome who knows about the article. (The overcoat was bought because the place was cold—it was in the cities in the southern parts of th Transvaal. The fur ornament was bought because it was the current fashion. The mother called in the witch-doctor because she was convinced that what she saw was a living creature that must have been sent by one of her adversaries, and witch-doctors are the only people who can handle such situations. She was in a real predicament. As a woman, a widow for that matter, she had to consult a male relative; that is why she tried to send for her brother.) The truth is quite clear here. In No. 3 the intended poultry theft was logically, though not intentionally, thwarted. Both the thief and the owner of the fowls acted naturally: the thief hid himself properly when he heard the approaching footsteps and the singing of the owner who had no suspicion

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that there might be an intruder; the owner acted logically when he picked up the block of wood over which he had almost stumbled, and in anger threw it onto the other blocks to remove it out of the way. That he threw it, and not put it down gently, is quite logical; and that when it hit the hiding thief it hurt him is also understandable. The reluctance, on the part of the owner, to divulge the name of the thief is not surprising for it is said that this thief was a well-known man in that village. The reason why the thief exposed himself is not obscure; the pain made him forget everything. Here, too, there is plain common truth that glares at the reader.

5.3 This is the type of truth which I qualified earlier as verifiable and superficial, in MOLOMATSEBE. The events here are not without parallels; there is no illogical action. The reader cannot refute the author's claim that all these stories are real happenings which he himself saw or was told of: "Le ge go le bjalo, tšona ka moka ke papetšo ya tše ke di boditšwego le tše ke di bonego." ²²⁾ These are the closing words of his preface.

5.4 In TAUKOBONG I shall refer to Nos. 2 and 11. In both stories there is logical and comprehensible action up to a point which I regard as a warning or threat. After this point follows a mysterious materialization or execution of the threat: herein lies the greater depth of the incomprehensible truth referred to above. In No. 2 Maphuthe cares very well for the family of his deceased brother; he feeds the children and ploughs his sister-in-law's fields in good time. He continues to do so even when the children are bread-earners. Now, Raditšhweu, a widower living in the same village, appears. He wishes to marry the widow Rebonwe. This news angers Maphuthe, not unnaturally. He thereupon goes to Raditšhweu to dissuade him from taking this step. A dispute ensues. Very angrily Maphuthe points a finger at Raditšhweu and shouts: "Ge o sa ntsebe, o tla mpona gabotse!" This is the threat or warning I mentioned above. Now follows the irrefutable materialization. Two days after this threat Raditšhweu falls ill and dies. After the burial Raditšhweu's sons confront Maphuthe and say with suggestive sarcasm: "O rerešitše." Can the reader help agreeing with these words? Whether the reader interpretes this as mere coincidence, or whether he attributes it to the witch-craft of Maphuthe, the fact is that this is a case of "the intervention of illogical forces which are incomprehensible" ²³⁾, and yet these forces do not detract from the depth

of this "algemeen-menslike waarheid".²⁴⁾ In No.11 a beautiful young lady finds employment in Yeoville. A gentleman from Durban falls in love with her. The two decide to marry. They begin to buy household property which they give to her aunt for safe-keeping. He expresses the wish to visit her home. But she is not keen and she gives false excuses until her suitor realizes that she is not quite keen and sincere. He feels dejected. On his return from a two-week holiday in Durban he tells her in the face: "Ge e sa nyalwe ke nna, o ka se ke wa nyalwa ke mothe." (If I do not marry you, nobody will.) This is the warning, the threat. She overlooks it. She leaves Yeoville for home without saying good-bye. The young man discovers, to his chagrin, that he has not only lost his fiancée, but he has also lost the property. Now follows the materialization or execution of the threat. It comes in the form of four successive tragedies. Her hopes for marriage are dashed four times: four times she loses a husband-to-be at the proverbial eleventh hour. The age of sixty finds her still a spinster! Can the reader help feeling that the prophecy of the Durbanite has come true? This is another instance of the "intervention of the illogical forces" whose incomprehensible influence produces deep psychological truth which is so characteristic of the stories in **TAUKOBONG**.

EXPOSITION

6.1 "Die skrywer laat van die begin af sy soeklig speel op wat tot die kliemaks moet lei, en vergeet vir geen oomblik wat die kliemaks gaan wees nie. Hy laat hom nie op sy paadjies verlei nie."²⁵⁾ This means that there is no place nor time for "warming up" in a short story. This refers particularly to the exposition. The exposition is that which gives the reader the necessary information concerning the characters and events existing before the action-proper of a story begins. Ramaila has tried to observe this maxim, and he has succeeded in most of the stories. However, greater success has been achieved in **TAUKOBONG** than in **MOLOMATSEBE**.

6.2 In **MOLOMATSEBE** there are some redundant, if not irrelevant, expositions. I say so because they do not make the reader understand where he is, nor do they explain what he is to deal with: the reader would not be the worse off without them. I have in mind story No.2 where most of the things said in the first three paragraphs make a very negligible contribution towards the development to the climax. Here the author

begins/

begins by telling how the Transvaal lies geographically from east to west, beginning at Komatipoort, passing through Belfast and Pretoria, up to Rustenburg and a little further. Then, looking south and north of that line, if one is traveling by aeroplane, one sees forests to the north and grasslands to the south. He goes on to describe the winters in these sections of the Transvaal. He adds to say why it is imperative for the inhabitants of the colder southern portions to wear warm overcoats. He goes further to describe the fashionable fur accessories on such overcoats (especially ladies' coats), pointing out that some of these furs are for ornament and not for warmth. After this long and unnecessary exposition he comes to the story proper: the young lady who buys one such overcoat and leaves the fur accessory at home over a certain weekend; the fright which her mother happens to get when she sees it; the calling of the witch-doctor. The reader cannot help feeling that Ramaila was too long-winded in introducing this article of wear. Why couldn't he just begin by telling the reader of the buying of an overcoat of that description, and perhaps the reasons for buying it; and from there proceed to tell the rest which is essential. Another very unduly long and redundant exposition is found in No. 12 "Ke no go thata go raga letsolwana". In this story the author has written six long paragraphs which have very little to do with the plot or climax. The theme of the story is based on the New Testament warning to Saul on the way to Damascus, viz. It is hard to kick against the pricks. Ramaila applies this to a tax-dodger who also resists arrest and he points out how it does not pay to resist. In the six paragraphs that I complain of the author describes how a certain well-travelled old man of Bopedi, living near Botshabelo, used to begin his story-telling; that he never began to tell his stories before the evening meal. He goes on to say that the story we are about to hear emanates from the good story-telling of this old man's son-in-law. This is then followed by a description of the environs of Rustenburg (naming rivulets and villages in that area). We are next told of how well acquainted with the place this son-in-law was because he was wont to travel in the area while doing some useful (but not defined) job there. After all these then comes the relevant part which explains the events preceding and leading to the encounter with the defiant tax-defaulter who has been arrested. It would surely have sufficed if the exposition had begun with the journey from Tlhabane to Phokeng on that

Sunday night because this is very near the point where the traveller encounters the policeman and the tax-dodger.

6.3 This beating about the bush, or tendency to warm up, is seldom found in TAUkobong. The beginnings of almost all the stories are dynamic. The expositions are hardly, if ever, longer than one paragraph. Most of them already win the interest of the reader in that they make him understand immediately what is to be dealt with. There is no doubt that here the author has observed the maxim that: "Die kortverhaal moet flink begin."²⁶) One example of a story with a short appropriate exposition is "O rerešitše". Here the very opening sentence of this story introduces the widow, Rebonwe, around whom the story is woven. In this first paragraph the reader is introduced to another central figure, the brother-in-law of Rebonwe, viz. Maphuthe. It tells how well Maphuthe cares for Rebonwe and her children. Ramaila does not forget what the climax is going to be. Rebonwe is, as it were, the bone of contention between Maphuthe and the widower Raditšhweu. Another good example is No. 4 "Ditshego" where the first sentence also introduces the central figure, Ditshego. The fact that Ditshego is not a well-liked man in the village, and that he is poor, as well as that the villagers hate him for some sinister reasons, are mentioned in the first paragraph. This prepares the reader for the general outcry in the story which attributes the death of Mogapi's son (through lightning) to Ditshego. Another precise exposition is found in No. 6 "Phakamaseme". The opening sentences tell the reader of a popular young man of Meeding. It is pointed out that he was popular among the members of the fairer sex. In No. 8 "Foko la mohu ga le tshelwe" the reader gets an explanation of this proverb, which is the theme of the story, in the introductory paragraph.

6.4 The comparison of the expositions in the two paragraphs above might create the impression that all the expositions in MOLOMATSEBE are unduly long and that the expositions in TAUkobong are all precise. It is not so. The fact is that most of them are weak in the first book, while most of them are dynamic in the second work. That is the difference between these two works in respect of this aspect of the exposition.

MOTIVATION

7.1 An aspect in which it is difficult to find a difference between the two works is motivation. There is a striking resemblance/

semblance. And it can be added that Ramaila is an artist in this respect because all actions follow one another logically. He has succeeded in attributing motive to all the characters. There is no action which cannot be accounted for; even the mysterious events in TAUKOBONG have a connection with what went on before. Supporting examples shall be quoted at random.

7.2 In the first story in MOLOMATSEBE "Tšhelete ya sepoko" money, as the source of all evil, is the driving force. Here we find the common and natural easy-money seekers who are endowed with little intelligence so that they fall easy prey to other more intelligent easy-money seekers who are able to exploit the former to the fullest. In No. 4 "Tswetšhi e sego yeno ke nama" it is money again. It is just human that the grave-digger should rejoice whenever there is death because he will earn an income on such an occasion. (He was being paid two rand for digging a grave). It is also human that the same grave-digger should feel hurt when asked to rejoice at the imminent death of his own wife. Another story in which action is prompted by financial gains is No. 16 "Ke fahlilwe" where a head-teacher, Lentswê, resorts to gambling on the race-course because he is faced with the task of paying school fees for three of his children in a high school.

7.3 In the first story in TAUKOBONG "Go gola go hlogola,..." a chain of reactions is set off by a quarrel and fight between two boys, Lazarus and Job. Lazarus's mother's anger and suspicions are logical because Job scratched Lazarus with an unnamed object, and the wound would not heal; and then the author suggests that Moreku, Job's father, had something to do with witch-doctors although he himself may not be called one since he is a Christian. (His name, also, is suggestive because moreku means doctor, cf. the proverb: Moreku ga a ithekule which means: A doctor cannot/does not cure himself). Why the mother of Lazarus went to the church elders is also logical: why shouldn't a wizard be excommunicated? Even her rash action of pulling Moreku by the tail-coat in church is motivated, and so is the decision of the church council to excommunicate her. Another example with convincing motivation is No. 6 "Phakamaseme". The young man, Phakamaseme, is not only handsome, but he is also a dandy. That is why he is so popular among the young ladies. He courts a lady by the name of Mmathebe for a fairly long time. A more beautiful lady comes into the scene. Mmathebe loses him to this new-comer. Who can say that Mmathebe's wrath and bitterness at being jilted are unjustifiable under these circumstances? What the

characters want, and why they do what they do, are clear and logical: the motivation is acceptable and quite convincing.

SETTING

8.1 Ramaila has a masterly knowledge of milieu which has enabled him to present each story with an appropriate setting. In each case it is difficult to see where characters and actions are misplaced. The physical and spiritual atmosphere which he creates is always such that the men are seen as part of it. He has also successfully avoided anachronisms in both works. There is therefore no difference between the two in this respect.

8.2 In some stories he takes pains to describe the background, while in others he makes use of apt and striking suggestion. For instance, in "Mahodu a tla fahlwa ke barui, e se ka boomo" the setting is very vividly depicted: in a far-off village in the valley of the Sabie River near the Drakensberg mountains; far from the butcheries (that is why this man, who is craving for meat, resorts to theft). The picture of the sleeping place of the fowls (sethalana) is so clear on this moonlit, but cloudy, night. The home of Rasebešo is very surprisingly hedged (legora la mahlaku). This gives the reason why the thief has no way of escape except through the gate through which Rasebešo is entering his yard. When the thief lies among the blocks of wood Ramaila describes him as being indistinguishable from them: "Aowa bjale le swana le kota ruri ruri mo motho a ka se kego a lemoga."²⁷ Similarly vivid depiction of background is found in "Phakamaseme": three villages in a straight line in a place called Meeding. The river, the road, the mountain and the far-off town receive the author's attention. The month of the wedding is also very carefully selected: it is December. This prepares the reader for the awful night preceding the wedding-day: the darkness, the stormy and rainy weather, and the lightning that strikes and burns down the house belonging to the bride's aunt are not a surprise.

8.3 In some stories Ramaila replaces full description with short apt suggestion. The reader gets a glimpse of the setting through a little stretch of the imagination, certain facts can only be deduced. I take an example from "O rerešitše". That the widow, Rebonwe, is well-cared for by her brother-in-law, Maphuthe, suggests that she must be living quite close to him. That the widower, Raditšhweu, wants to marry Rebonwe suggests that/
that/

that it must be in a mission station or Christian society, because according to traditional Bantu custom a widow is not re-marriageable:levirate is the general practice, and Maphuthe, the younger brother of Rebonwe's deceased husband, is the rightful man. Another implication, if not insinuation, is that Maphuthe was caring for the widow in the fullest sense of the word, and this explains and accounts for his fury at the news that someone else intends to marry her.

CONFLICT

9.1 There is a difference between the two works in respect of the aspect of conflict. Conflict concerns a collision or division of interests and obligations. It gives rise to the intrigue in which motivated action leads to a climax.

Ramaila's success in presenting motivated action has just been described. All these motivated actions are the product of the conflict which he has created, or that which he has experienced. However, the reader encounters two types of conflict in these two works. In MOLOMATSEBE it is a subtle form of conflict which concerns the alignment of judgements and sympathies of the author— it arises from his philosophy of life and attitude towards vice and virtue. The conflict is primarily in the author; it is internal. In TAUkobong the collision of interests is in the characters. It is the characters who clash with one another, and are thus compelled to react; it is external conflict. By way of illustration examples will be taken first from MOLOMATSEBE, and then from TAUkobong.

9.2 In "Tšhelete ya sepoko" it is the foolish and unfounded belief in ghost-monies (hidden treasures) and in witch-doctors which cuts sorely against the grain of the author. The contempt for the belief in witch-doctors also prompted Ramaila to write Nos. 2 and 18 ("Ba laotšhe kobo ya morwedi'agwe" and "Tshokologo ya Joel"). Theft and dishonesty are the eye-sores which caused the conflict which begot No. 3 "Mahodu a tla fahlwa ke barui, e se ka boomo". "Mojatshweswane yabo mothe o lefa ka noni yabo" is also a product of the same conflict. These evils are so chafing that the author fails to find rest before he gives vent to his thoughts about them: the world must be made aware of them. Wilful deceit and unfaithfulness are at the bottom of the conflict which gave the reader the following stories: "Molei ga a na mmala", "Oorlee Outa", "O se bone thola boreledi, teng ga yona go a baba" and "Reratilwe le Ruth wa Springs". In No. 9 "Mona" the evil of

jealousy/

jealousy creates the conflict. The vice of gambling at the race-course "blinds" the author to such an extent that it creates the conflict which gives the reader No.16 "Ke fahlilwe". In "Ba bašweu le ba baso ba reng ba sa hlatlolane" Ramaila cannot comprehend or tolerate the absence of co-operation and sympathy between white and black in this country. In No.22 "A re yeng motšhatong" and in No.30 "O ipolaile" it is the boastfulness and self-praise of men which pinch Ramaila. The evils which the author sees around him do not give him peace of mind. That is why he cannot resist the urge to stand and speak with the voice of "One who gives warning".

9.3 TAUKOBONG: In the first story "Go gola go hlogola,..." there is a conflict between the widow, Lazarus's mother, and the old man Moreku because of the injury to Lazarus by the son of Moreku. This conflict sparks off a chain of reactions which culminate in a tragic climax. In No.2 "O rerešitše" the conflict is between Maphuthe (who lovingly cares for his brother's widow) and Raditšhweu who wants to marry the widow; obviously the clash arises from love for one woman. This also culminates in a tragedy. In No.3 "Lehu la masetlapelo" the conflict is between Segodi and Maphušu because of the alleged adultery between Maphušu and Segodi's wife (Segodi was working and staying at a mill, and he returned home over some weekends). In No.4 "Ga se legadima ke Ditshego" the conflict between Ditshego and Mogapi arises from the brutal treatment of Mogapi's sons by Ditshego's son, and the discharge of the latter; to this should be added the envy for Mogapi's wealth by the destitute Ditshego. In No.6 the conflict between Phakamaseme and Mmathebe and her parents is the result of the conflict in Phakamaseme when he has to choose a wife (he must decide between Mmathebe and Ntina). His preference of Ntina to Mmathebe infuriates the latter and her parents. The collision of interests here is unmistakable. In "Tlalo la motho ga le bapolelwe fase" the clash between the son of Rampane and the four thugs, resulting in the murder of young Rampane, leads to another conflict between the murderers and the Rampanes. In No.8 the conflict begins with the clash between Job Komanyane and his relatives at home. (That is why when he is back in Nancefield he vows never to set his foot at home). This vow leads to the clash between his widow and his brothers when the latter want to bury his remains at home, and not at Nancefield. The corpse is removed by force. That's conflict, throughout. This is the type of conflict

which/

which Ramaila creates in his characters so that there should be a psychological centre for tension in the stories in TAUKOBONG.

ATTITUDE

10.1 The attitudes, which Ramaila wishes the reader to adopt towards the ideas expressed in his works, are accurately indicated. He ably plays upon some emotion to evoke or stir this attitude. It is art which expresses the attitude of man towards the world; it is an evaluation of human experiences. There is, however, a difference between these two works, namely in the manner in which the author's own attitude is expressed, and the emotions upon which he plays to stir similar attitudes in the reader.

10.2 In MOLOMATSEBE the author's undisguised dogmatic beliefs are pertinently presented; it is Ramaila the Minister of Religion who is speaking with the clear aim to warn, advise and convert. In this way no reader is left uncertain of the side which the author takes, and therefore the side which he, the reader, is appealed to to take. Ramaila appeals directly to the sense of good morals and human values to the extent of committing "artistic indecency"²⁸⁾ at the end of each story. This exposure of the moral mars the good work of art that MOLOMATSEBE would have been: "Kuns is nie 'n sedepreek nie".²⁹⁾ I regard these epilogues as a redundant attempt at over-emphasizing what has already been ingeniously interwoven with the story; they give the impression that Ramaila does not respect the intelligence of his readers. It may even be interpreted as a lack of confidence in the effectiveness of the fore-going paragraphs. For instance, in "Tšhelete ya sepoke" who can say that the author has not succeeded in showing the reader the absence of wisdom in the treasure-seekers in the story-proper? Yet, at the end of this good narration Ramaila makes this un-called for addendum: "Manyami ke ge go sa le batho ba ba kgolwago ditaba tša lefela. Ditaba tše tša mahumo a a epetšwego ke bagologolo, le tša dingaka tša ditaola, sebakeng sa go tšweletša setšhaba pele, di se bušetša morago le go diitša ba ba di kgolwago". In "Ba laotše kobo ya morwedi'agwe" no reader can withhold his sympathy with the ignorance of the old lady who is not conversant with western fashions. But, as though the author doubts the ability of the reader to appreciate the situation, he still adds: "Ge motho a makatšwa ke dilo tše a sa di tsebego, go
kaone/

kaone ge a botšiša ba ba tšwago dikelong". After so ingeniously showing the reader what befalls the poultry-thief in "Mahodu a tla fahlwa ke barui, e se ka boomo" must the author still try to point out that men who creep around other men's hedges in the night will get hurt? Ramaila does. A redundant remark to this effect is contained in the closing sentence of this story.

10.3 In **TAUKOBONG** the dogmatic beliefs of the author are hardly evident. In a very subtle and ingenious manner he appeals to the emotion of surprise. He is sympathetic, and he makes the reader undergo the experiences of the participants; he is no longer a reasoner. At the end of the story the reader involuntarily joins him in wondering at these unsolvable mysteries of Bantu life, and that is the attitude which he wants his readers to adopt: they must all say, yes, it is mysterious! For instance, in "Go gola go hlogola, . . ." the unsolvable mystery is in the deaths of the widow and Moreku. Other mysteries are found in the inexplicable manner in which verbal threats materialize without any visible action, as in "O re-rešitše", "Mošemane moroga monna, sešego o lega hlwaela", "Di sa tsebanego di a welana" and "Ge o sa nyalwe ke nna, o ka se ke wa nyalwa ke mothe". Here Ramaila did not write deliberately to teach a moral lesson, neither did he write to expostulate his convictions or life philosophy. No! This is l'art pour l'art: "Taukobong yona e no anega se se dire-gilego, eupya ga e eletše mothe ka sona, le gona ga e leke go hlatholla goba go utulla . . ." ³⁰⁾ This is what I meant by the difference in the manner of expressing the author's own attitude: he does not sum up to expose it.

MEANING

11.1 Meaningfulness abounds in Ramaila's short stories. This he achieves through consistent concentration on the essential. Concentration on the essential involves certain avoidances or exclusions. To achieve this the author must refrain from digressing from the main theme. He must also avoid bringing in sub-motives. The number of characters should be limited. Sub-characters should be given only a single light-ray so that from all angles the light should fall on the chief character. That is, the author should concentrate on the description of that which is essential to create the desired meaning: "Hy gee alleen dié dinge wat sy doel onmidde-lik kan dien". ³¹⁾ This is what Ramaila has done. (Earlier I complained/

complained of lengthy, irrelevant expositions which do not serve a useful purpose in explaining the meaning of the story. These expositions, being irrelevant and therefore not part of the story-proper, do not spoil the meaning-proper, neither do they affect it adversely.

HUMOUR

12.1 The events and characters described in these two works reveal various incongruities in life. These incongruities arouse the reader's sympathy; "a kindly contemplation"³²⁾ is set up. The events are full of humour which is based on truth. There is, however, a difference in the depths at which the humour is found in either book. The depth in either case corresponds to the depth at which the truth and meaning are found. It is deeper in TAUKOBONG than in MOLOMATSEBE. The types of humour encountered are of a high class, namely the humour of situation and the humour of character.

12.2 MOLOMATSEBE has been labelled as didactic. Ramaila achieves his aim of instruction through delightful humour. "Thoughtful laughter"³³⁾ is induced through careful exposure of the undiluted follies of his characters. No reader is left in doubt as to whom to laugh at. For instance, in "Tšhelete ya sepeko" which reader can fail to laugh at the gullible fortune-seekers who pay monies and monies to a witch-doctor who claims to be an exorcist? When the man from Mamabolo confronts the "ghost" and gives it a thorough beating who can repress that spontaneous laughter which is awakened? In "Ba laotše kobo ya morwedi'agwe" the old lady's ignorance has been too crudely exposed to be missed by any reader. Spontaneous sympathy is aroused when she sends her youngest daughter to call the uncle at Rietkhill because they have been invaded by a wizard! Incongruity of character has been aptly depicted in "Mahodu a tla fahlwa ke barui, . . .". The humorous paradox is in the unsuccessful escapade of a so-called well-known resident (monna yo mongwe wa motsebalegi) who goes to steal a hen from an unsuspecting co-resident. The climax of the humour is in the accidental exposure of the well-respected thief who learns an unforgettable lesson; the reader also learns this lesson. Another humour-packed incident is of the gambling experiences of Lentswê, the school principal in "Ke fahlilwe". Here is a relatively learned man who should be intelligent enough, but he is easily misled by a taxi-driver who has dreamt of two numbers which he says are the numbers of the winners/

winners of the double-tote. When Lentswê has lost his month's salary on these two horses he covers his eyes with a handkerchief, cries and tells his friends that some object has got into his eye! At this the reader also takes out his handkerchief to cover his mouth so that objects do not enter it while he laughs heartily at Lentswê. Such is the depth at which humour is placed in MOLOMATSEBE: at a depth which is relatively accessible to the average reader.

12.3 In TAUkobong there is very subtle humour as befits the mysteriousness of the events described. It is such that can be perceived, and therefore appreciated, only by those who have the appropriate cultural background: those who believe in witch-craft and the impersonal supernaturalism. To them there is no unsolvable mystery in these stories. To them the underlying theme of the book is: 'you cannot get away with crime or murder'. To them the death of Moreku in "Go gola go hlogola, go bona digolo ga go fele" can be laughed at: it means that the death of the widow has been avenged. They will show thoughtful and sympathetic appreciation of what they regard as the manliness of Raditšhweu's sons in avenging their father's death at the hands (rather at the magic herbs) of Maphuthe in "O rerešitše". At the end of "Di sa tsebanego di a welana" they enjoy thoughtful laughter at Obi Ntholase who has lost the last of his four oxen in the manner "prophesied" by the embittered bicycle-pump owner. As they laugh they involuntarily interject and say 'swine' (meaning, you deserved it!). They do not hesitate to repeat their swine when they thoughtfully laugh at the sixty-year old spinster, Mmapekwe—didn't her dejected suitor from Durban tell her: "Ge o sa nyalwe ke nna, o ka se ke wa nyalwa ke motho"? The same swine is heard when they wind up "Tsogwane". To them the loss of one eye by the scholar, Sethanthana, has been compensated for by the total blindness of the teacher—you cannot get away with murder.

LANGUAGE

13.1 I shall not delve too deep into the language of the author. There is no room. I need only mention that there is a striking resemblance between the two works. Ramaila is a master of his language. He uses vivid expressions and appropriate figurative language. Commendable is the fact that he uses the figures of speech sparingly, and they are very illuminating. To quote a few: "o be o kgahla le go lapološa

mahlo/

mahlo a ba ba e bonago" refers to a beautiful house in "Go sa boelwego ke teng,maruping go a boelwa"; "e kege a hlapi-lwe ka lebese la kgomo" refers to beautiful eyes;the complexion of Mahlare's daughters is described as "ba mmala wa makhura a lefehlo"(fat/cream extracted from the milk);a pugnacious man in "Moloi ga a na mmala" is referred to as "yo a tlwaelanego le dintwa".

13.2 Originality is not wanting. There abounds an inventiveness of phrase which is not found in commonplace speech. This goes side by side with the unquestionable neologisms which he employs. Here are some illuminating examples: a gogela ka ngwakong (became ill/laid to bed), tša tlala mmago Lazarus dithama instead of the conventional dimpa (dumbfounded), go išana go ba mafatla (to take one another to the bald-headed ones) judges, ka laboraro a bitšwa mohu instead of a bitšwa/a hwa, tladimothwana'a Makgowa for revolver, sekhutšiša basadi go natla for mill-owner.

13.3 Ramaila's long sojourn in the cosmopolitan Rand has not left his Northern Sotho unaffected. There are several borrowings from Tswana and Southern Sotho which I regard as absolutely irregular and unnecessary. I would condone the use of these non-Northern Sotho words if the author had used them as a device for some specific purpose such as indicating the origin of some of the speakers, or increasing the elements of humour. Here are a few examples of the unnecessary borrowings: sebetsa instead of šoma; hlonephiwa instead of hlomphiwa/hlompšha; utlwa instead of kwa;wa ntlha in the place of wa pele/mathomo; go tonya thata instead of kudu; utlweletse instead of theeditše.

13.4 The occurrence of typographical errors in the two works is a feature which detracts attention and exhausts the reader's patience. The misprints consist mainly of omissions and misspellings. In MOLOMATSEBE I have counted twenty-four such errors in fifteen of the thirty stories. In seven of the twelve stories in TAUkobong I noted fourteen such errors. For these errors the publishers are to blame, although the author may not be totally exonerated: he should have called for corrections in the later editions.

CONCLUSION

14.1 Ramaila's attempt at short-story writing has been a success. Although art can not be prescribed for with stern rigidity, it can be rightly said that what are generally

considered to be the basic prerequisites for a short story are not lacking in these two works. Each story radiates that fresh human touch which is the essence of originality; even old and commonplace motives such as hidden treasures, witchcraft, theft and jealousy are lively presented to the reader, and appear in a new form. Truth, "the general human truth which grips our imagination"³⁴) transcends each story because of the psychological correctness of each step, the consistency and comprehensibility of character, and the credibility of action. The embodiment of experiences in real life, which is depicted, tells of realism. Psychological tension, the life-blood of all art, is present in each story; there is always conflict. Each piece is a unity; there is the required intensity of impression and unified action, and only one fundamental quality in life is painted.

14.2 Of the two the greater work of art is **TAUKOBONG**. In **MOLOMATSEBE** the artist was still a learner: Maithuti ga se makgoni, makgoni ke maboeletša is the appropriate proverb to apply. (It means that there is better success with the second/repeated attempt than with the first.) If this first work, **MOLOMATSEBE**, (first of the two) could be shorn of the irrelevant expositions and epilogues referred to earlier, higher concentration on the essential would be achieved. If Ramaila had not allowed the didactic to have ostentatious prominence in **MOLOMATSEBE** he would have produced a better work of art. If these works could be weeded of the numerous typographical errors it would contribute to more pleasant and fluent, as well as intelligible, reading.

3. Ramaila, 1951, p. 10.
4. Ramaila, 1951, p. 12.
5. Ramaila, 1951, p. 17 oooooOooooo
6. Ramaila, 1951, p. 31.
7. Ramaila, 1951, p. 33.
8. Ramaila, 1953, p. 11.
9. Ramaila, 1953, p. 27.
10. Ramaila, 1953, p. 41.
11. Ramaila, 1953, p. 31.
12. Ramaila, 1951, p. 12.
13. Ramaila, 1953, p. 11.
14. Brooks & Warren, 1955, p. xvii.
15. Brooks & Warren, 1955, p. xvii.
16. Walther, 1929, p. 72.
17. Ramaila, 1951, p. 89.

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QUOTATIONS

1. Ramaila, 1951, p. 5.
2. Ramaila, 1953, p. 6.
3. Ramaila, 1951, p. 10.
4. Ramaila, 1951, p. 12.
5. Ramaila, 1951, p. 17.
6. Ramaila, 1951, p. 31.
7. Ramaila, 1951, p. 39.
8. Ramaila, 1953, p. 11.
9. Ramaila, 1953, p. 27.
10. Ramaila, 1953, p. 41.
11. Ramaila, 1953, p. 31.
12. Ramaila, 1951, p. 12.
13. Ramaila, 1953, p. 11.
14. Brooks & Warren, 1959, p. xvii.
15. Brooks & Warren, 1959, p. xvii.
16. Malherbe, 1929, p. 72.
17. Ramaila, 1951, p. 89.

18. Ramaila, 1953, p. 12.
19. Ramaila, 1953, p. 31.
20. Baumbach, 1966, p. 15.
21. Baumbach, 1966, p. 15.
22. Ramaila, 1951, p. 5.
23. Baumbach, op.cit., p. 15.
24. Malherbe, op.cit., p. 4.
25. Malherbe, op.cit., p. 49.
26. Malherbe, op.cit., p. 58.
27. Ramaila, 1951, p. 13.
28. Malherbe, op.cit., p. 26.
29. Malherbe, op.cit., p. 26.
30. Ramaila, 1953, p. 6.
31. Malherbe, op.cit. p. 49.
32. Mokgokong, 1970, p. 47.
33. Mokgokong, op.cit., p. 47.
34. Baumbach, op.cit., p. 15.