

**HISTORY OF SOUTHERN SOTHO LITERATURE
AS SYSTEM, 1930–1960**

by

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DECLARATION

I declare that "HISTORY OF SOUTHERN SOTHO LITERATURE AS SYSTEM, 1930–1960" is my own work, and that all sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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P.R.S. MAPHIKE

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SUMMARY

Distinct from the traditional text analysis whereby little or no attention is paid to factors controlling the emergence and being of a text and their possible input, and studying certain recognised authors and recognised works, the systemic approach, conceived by Youri Tynjanov, devised by Itamar Even-Zohar and simplified by Jose Lambert, seeks to recognise the main structures of literary systems and the main structures in their evolution by taking into cognizance literary phenomena and their general relationships with other literary and artistic systems. According to this hypothesis the usual collection and analysis of data on the basis of their material substance is to be replaced by a functional approach that is based on the analysis of relations. Literary texts are seen against the background of the author, his total background and the total circumstances which led to and controlled their production. These together constitute the system. (Chapter 1)

Since this study reconstructs the period 1930–1960 in Southern Sotho literature, Chapter 2 is a concise review of the period from inception to the late 1920's.

The lull that followed on the Missionary era was broken by D.C.T. Bereng's *Lithothokiso*, a new genre that reflected positive interaction with neighbouring and distant literary norms, values and systems. Mopeli–Paulus, Mocoancoeng, Ntsane, Khaketla, Mokorosi, Mokhomo and Makara participated meaningfully in reshaping the traditional *dithoko* along models acquired through contact with adjacent European systems (Chapter 3).

Drama as sub–system emerged and developed from the total input of Maile, T.M. Mofokeng, the Khaketlas, S.M. Mofokeng, Taoana and others. The nearest to the challenge of the text–performance dichotomy have been the Mofokengs and the Khaketlas, though the challenge of the genre still stands (Chapter 4).

Multifarious in form, divergent in intent and differing in fortune, the most popular genre, the novel, resurrected itself slowly fifteen years after Mofolo's masterpiece, Chaka. Machobane, Majara and, especially Khaketla, all from Lesotho, firmly established the sub–system in this period (Chapter 5).

The essay, a literary sub-system hitherto unknown, became firmly entrenched during this period. The short story, as it is today is traceable to the *tshomo*. Exploration and greater experimentation are evidenced in the structural intersection between the short story and the essay (Chapter 6).

The Conclusion answers a number of questions pertaining to the nature of the Southern Sotho literary system.

ABRIDGED SUMMARY

Distinct from the traditional text analysis whereby little or no attention is paid to factors controlling the emergence and being of a text and their possible input, and studying certain recognised authors and recognised works, the systemic approach conceived by Youri Tynjanov, devised by Itamar Even-Zohar and simplified by Jose Lambert, seeks to recognise the main structures of literary systems and structures in their evolution by taking into cognizance literary phenomena and their general relationships with other literary and artistic systems. This hypothesis replaces the usual collection and analysis of data on the basis of their material substance with a functional approach that is based on the analysis of relations. Literary texts are viewed against the total background of the author and the total circumstances which lead to and controlled their production. These together constitute the system (Chapter 1).

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Bereng's *Lithothokiso*, a new genre that reflects positive interaction with other literary norms, values and systems, broke the post-missionary lull. A number of Basotho authors participated meaningfully in reshaping the traditional *dithoko* along models acquired through contact with adjacent European systems (Chapter 3).

Drama as sub-system emerged and developed from the total input of Maile, the Mofokengs, the Khaketlas, Taoana and others. The nearest to the challenge of the text-performance dichotomy have been the Mofokengs and the Khaketlas, though the challenge of the genre still stands (Chapter 4).

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 AIM OF STUDY

The objective of this study is to advance an historical overview of the development of the Sesotho literature between the years 1930 to 1960 in respect of the norms, models, relationships and structures that obtained during the period.

An attempt will be made by way of introduction to explain the concepts system and systemic approach to literary study, as distinct from the traditional text analysis whereby little or no attention is paid to factors controlling the emergence and being of the text, and their possible input. In recent times literary scholars like Even-Zohar, José Lambert, Albert Gérard and others, have found that text analysis alone cannot give the full picture and is, in fact, very inadequate, the main objection being that it tends to narrow the critic's perspective to the extent of "knowing more and more about less and less" (Gérard, 1983:58).

José Lambert (1985:34) observes that "the way most scholars are presently dealing with literary evolution and with the characteristics of literature (or literary systems) in different languages and cultures seems to be outdated, because it oversimplifies complex relationships". He points out that the method of these scholars is based on ideological presuppositions according to which "literature in a given situation is reduced to literature in one given language (not to mention oral/written literary phenomena), and to canonized authors, works, genres and countries..." (1985:34), taking the non-canonized literary phenomena and general relationships with other literary and artistic systems into casual cognizance, rather than regarding them as the *sine qua non* of the question. He emphasises the importance of relationships, as opposed to "this reductionism", as he calls it, which "prohibits us from recognizing the main structures of literary systems and the main structures in their evolution" (1985:24).

1.2 THE SYSTEMIC APPROACH

Jose Lambert (1985:36) intimates that in 1922 Youri Tynjanov wrote that "literature should not be studied in terms of essences, but in terms of relations." That was the beginning of a new dimension in literary studies. In 1970 Itamar Even-Zohar launched the Polysystem Hypothesis (abbreviated: P.S. hypothesis) based on that idea. According to this hypothesis, the usual collection of literary data and its analysis "on the basis of their material substance" was to be replaced by a functional approach that was based on the analysis of relations. A breakthrough was thus made in the detection of rules that governed the diversity and complexity of phenomena, rather than merely classifying them. Known facts, therefore, previously viewed in isolation from observed data gained more meaning in their relationship with the latter. The idea was inevitably extended to methods and structures. This interrelatedness in structures, methodology and function was, for the first time, regarded as forming a system. The concept system will, perhaps, be better understood when viewed against the polysystem.

Even-Zohar (1980:290) indicates that the purpose of the term polysystem is "to make explicit the conception of the system as dynamic and heterogeneous in opposition to the synchronistic approach", and goes on to declare that there is no property relatable to the polysystem which cannot, as such, be related to the system. He maintains that "if by the term 'system' one is prepared to understand both the idea of a closed net-of-relations, in which the members receive their values through their respective oppositions, and the idea of an open structure consisting of several such concurrent nets-of relations, then the term 'system' is appropriate" (1980:291). So, while a system entails a "set" of related entities, a polysystem entails a set of related systems. In Even-Zohar's words, "the emphasis achieved by the term polysystem is on the multiplicity of intersections" (1980:291).

As to the polysystem theory, Viljoen (1985:2) suggests that "dit gaan daarom dat verskynsels nie meer op hulle self beskou word nie, maar as behorende tot 'n groter geheel, 'n 'sisteem', and quotes the slogan of the

Gestalt Psychology that the whole is more than just the sum of its constituents, as involves their arrangement (i.e. relationship). This is in keeping with Katz and Kahn's view that "the system theory is basically concerned with problems of relationships, structure and interdependence rather than with the constant attributes of objects" (Viljoen, 1981:3). Viljoen (op cit) adds by quoting Kramer and De Smit as defining a system as "a set of interrelated entities of which no subset is unrelated to any other subset". He also distinguishes between a system and an aggregation, declaring that "by 'n aggregaat staan minstens een entiteit of versameling entiteite nie in 'n relasie tot die ander entiteite nie" (1985:3). He explains the term "relasies (relation) as "die wyse waarop twee of meer entiteite saamhang." Two entities are united when, if a change in the properties of one results in a change in the properties of the other.

To illustrate the difference between a system and an aggregation, Viljoen (1985:3) cites a crowd of spectators at a rugby match as an aggregation, as against the team and management (the club system), and goes on to say that the spectators could be part of the club plus supporters system. A good example is FIFA, a polysystem of world soccer consisting of soccer systems of different countries such as South Africa (SASA), Brazil, England, etc. Each of these systems also has its own subsystems. For instance, within SASA there is NSL, NPSL, etc.

In the same fashion there is the world literary polysystem consisting of national literatures (systems), each with its subsystems. Whilst Sesotho literature is a subsystem of the South African literary system, it is a system in its own right with its own subsystems (printing press and specifications, Language Boards – Sesotho Academy, in Lesotho, censorship boards, etc). The same can be said of the literary systems of the other population groups.

1.3 STATE OF SYSTEMS

Kramer and De Smit (Viljoen, 1985:6) state that "the state of a system at a moment of time is the set of relevant properties which that system has at that time". Viljoen (1985:8) distinguishes between "verbygaande toestand" (transient/passing state) which changes in time, and open and close

systems. An open system, he says, "is 'n sisteem wat met sy omgewing in interaksie is, of as in interaksie met sy omgewing beskou word," while a close system is one that is not interacting with its environment, and is regarded as being isolated from its environment. As will be seen in the succeeding chapters, the Sesotho literary system, like all literary systems, is an open system which interacts with all other systems that constitute its environment. For continued existence a system needs what Viljoen (1985:8) calls negative entropy which he explains as "'n natuurwet, en kom daarop neer dat alle soort organisasies neig na disorganisasie en die dood. Fisiese sisteme neig na eenvoudige willekeurige verspreiding van hulle elemente. Lewende organismes gaan dood."

To explain the functional nature of the polysystem hypothesis, as Tynjanov saw it, Even –Zohar presents it as forming concentric strata ranging from the centre to the periphery. The models that occupy the central stratum in any system are said to be canonized, or higher standard, e.g. standard literature, language, behaviour patterns, official culture or custom, etc. The less important the model or property, the more peripheral it is. This is determined by the function of the model in the system. At times peripheral models of adjacent systems within the same polysystem intersect or overlap. When a central model loses its functional effectiveness, a more effective peripheral model may move towards the centre and take its place. This is seen, inter alia, in the Sesotho marriage system in which the dowry cattle have, in time, been replaced by the monetary currency from the adjacent European commercial system. Taking models of similar function, we may cite the coffin that has since replaced the cow-hide with which the corpse used to be wrapped for burial according to the old Sesotho custom. The customary practice of slaughtering a beast for a funeral among the Basotho is a relic of this custom. When peripheral models move between adjacent systems, the transfer processes are called conversions especially when the model takes position in the centre e.g. conversion from the cow hide to the coffin, and from the heap of stones to the tombstone.

In language this happens when a creole from an adjacent linguistic system takes occupation of the central stratum of a system e.g. *botoro*, *hempe*, *heisi*, etc. It may also be evident in the transfer of literary norms such as

rhyme, stanzas (in poetry) and scenes and acts in drama, if not the genre as such, etc. These transfers are, however, subject to PS procedures, i.e. there are polysystem constraints which determine the selection, manipulation, amplification, deletion, etc of the products of the polysystems. These can for example, be compared to the phonological rules which regulate the transfer of lexical items from one language to the other as loan words or adoptives, (vide the above Sesotho creoles).

The Russian Shlovskij (Even–Zohar, 1980:294) has made a valuable addition to the PS hypothesis, viz that in literature the inequality between the various strata is a matter of cultural bias rather than value judgement of the texts concerned, i.e. it is a matter of acceptable and unacceptable, rather than good and bad. The above mentioned intra– and intersystemic transfers and conversions, called dynamic tensions, have a positive role in the maintenance of the systems. They guarantee the evolution of the systems: a sure way of preserving them. In other words, the central or canonized or recognised systems of any polysystem would stagnate or deteriorate if not rivalled by the non–canonized systems. The same applies for the central models as against peripheral ones. What keeps language and literature alive is sensitivity to change, i.e. relating positively to changing or changed circumstances. Thus the change of attitude of the missionaries to secularly inclined writings resulted in a substantial increase in secular publications with religious bias, thereby furthering both Sesotho literary advancement and the missionaries' own religious goals. This will become clear in succeeding chapters.

Even–Zohar (1980:293) explains this functional structure of the polysystem very clearly under "Dynamic stratification and systemic products". A look at his approach will be helpful.

1.4 DYNAMIC STRUCTURE AND SYSTEMIC FUNCTION

Even–Zohar (1980:293) points out that there are structural hierarchies within polysystems, encompassing center–and–periphery relations, or what he calls dynamic stratifications. There is a constant struggle between inner and outer strata of the system. While the outer strata seek to penetrate to

the centre, the central stratum seeks to retain its position. It is this permanent struggle between the various strata that constitutes the synchronic state of the system. When one stratum gains victory over the other the change is said to be on the diachronic axis.

De Saussure, quoted by Viljoen (1985:22), distinguishes between two axis on which all things in science lie, the synchronic and the diachronic, aptly referred to as "die as van gelyktydighede", "wat die verhoudings tussen gelyktydig bestaande dinge raak, waarby enige tussenkoms van die tyd uitgesluit is," en die as van opeenvolgings, "nooit meer as een ding op 'n slag kan oorweeg nie, maar waar al die dinge van die eerste as met hulle veranderings geleë is" (1985:22).

In the above centrifugal vs centripetal motion, movement of phenomena from the centre to the periphery and others from the periphery to the centre is presented. It must be understood that in a polysystem a number of adjacent systems is hypothesised, i.e. a number of centres and peripheries. The intersystemic transfers of properties (or models) usually occurs from the periphery of one system to the periphery of an adjacent system within the same polysystem, and may, in due course, push its way to the centre of the latter. Transfer processes which result in such transpositions are to be called conversions.

Even-Zohar (1980:293) points out that scholars have, traditionally, been faced with the results of such conversions either without being aware of their occurrence or ignoring their source. He postulates that "the relations which obtain within the polysystem do not account only for PS processes, but also for PS procedures" (1980:294). The function of the PS constraints has already been referred to above, and would not be discerned when only "official products (standard language utterances, literary "masterpieces") were treated (1980:294).

1.5 CANONISED AND NON-CANONISED STRATA

In discussing the system and the state of the polysystem, the canonised and non-canonised strata were referred to rather casually. Even-Zohar

(1980:294) recognises the Russian formalists' formulation of the hypothesis on the respective status of the various strata as a major achievement, over and above their general law of stratification. In this respect, Shklovski is singled out as the first to attribute the inequality between the various strata of a system to socio-cultural differences. As indicated earlier, the outer layers in the concentric circle that represents a system are said to be uncanonised or unrecognised or non-official. As they become increasingly recognised, they drift towards the centre. When they are fully recognised or canonised, it is when they occupy the centre. Even-Zohar warns that this canonicity that was suggested by Shklovski in no way suggested the values of the texts located on the various strata of a literary system, for instance. He emphasises that reference to canonised and non-canonised is not a euphemistic way of referring to good and bad literature. He calls the deciding element the "people-in-the-culture" who identify a text or a property, and use the terms to indicate their acceptance of the one and rejection of the other. Acceptance and rejection here reflect on the socio-cultural attitude of the "people-in-the-culture" to a text, rather than its value. This also militates against the imposition of certain foreign judgemental literary norms upon any literary system, though some scholars often do it in their quest for recognition by the "people-in-the-culture" of the culture that is imposed. Shklovski ascribed the process of conversion to the "increasing inability of the canonised properties occupying the center of literature, to fulfil certain functional needs" (Even-Zohar, 1980:295).

Even-Zohar maintains that these tensions (dynamic tensions) "between canonised and non-canonised culture (official/non-official, high/low, standard/non-standard) are universal" (1980:295). He believes that these are present "in every human semiotic system, because a non-stratified human society simply does not exist," (1980:295). As mentioned earlier, "the canonised systems of any polysystem would very likely stagnate after a certain time if not rivaled by a non-canonized system, which threatens to replace it" (Even-Zohar, 1980:296).

1.6 RETENTION AND LOSS OF STATUS

Even-Zohar visualises the centre of a polysystem as being identical with

"the most prestigious canonised system" (1980:296) that has its own periphery. He regards the centre as the group which governs the PS, and which determines the canonicity of a repertory or "store" (of features, items, models). Once the canonicity of properties from the periphery of this group has been determined, the group either adheres to the newly canonised properties thereby giving them control of the PS, or it alters the repertory of canonised properties so as to retain its control of the PS. The former may be compared to the adoption of foreign literary concepts and adjusting them to Sesotho functional values, while the latter is equated to adoption of foreign literary concepts and the displacement of the Sesotho literary values by them. If both these options fail, then "both the group and its canonized repertory are pushed aside by some other group which makes its way to the centre by cononizing a different repertory" (1980:296). The canonised group or the group occupying the centre is referred to as the "people-in-the-culture", while the group on its periphery are referred to as the "epigones".

Even-Zohar argues that canonicity "expresses, by a contiguity of ideas, not only the status already acquired by a particular literary unit (text, model), but also its potential status. That is, it can be applied to literary units either about to gain status or about to lose status" (1980:297). In the former instance, the literary text has newly created options which enhance its potential of moving from the periphery into the centre of the canonised system. The latter, tending to decline in the centre – though its status may still be preserved – is technically known as epigonic in literature, and may be pushed into the non-canonised stratum should they give up certain traits. It is, therefore, evident that canonicity has to do with activity (potency) rather than a condition. It is stability in motion. Within the PS hypothesis, Even-Zohar alludes to the formulation of a general inventory rule in accordance with which a PS (say literature), lacking in certain necessary items, cannot function i.e. it becomes weaker in relations to an adjacent PS that may be possessing them. Under the circumstances, the "weaker" PS will, subject to certain PS constraints, readily borrow the needed item or items. The concept poetic license and such Sesotho terminology as *poloto*, *setaele*, *terama*, etc. exemplify this phenomenon and intersystemic transfers. Such transfers may also occur within the same

literary system (intrasystemic), i.e. among the subsystems (which we call genres) when dramatic devices are employed in a work of prose, and poetic inversions are utilized for effect in a novel, for instance. The possibility is ever present that, once the capacity of the centre of a system to fulfil certain functions becomes weaker, peripheral properties from the same system are likely to penetrate the centre to fulfil such functions (Shlovskij's rule). This phenomenon is best exemplified in post-missionary translations which indicate the fulfilment of a lacking function, e.g. H.H. Lekhethoa's *Tokoloho bokhobeng* (Booker T. Washington's Up from Slavery 1947), the earlier *Leeto la Mokreste* by Rev A. Mabile (John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, 1872/77) etc.

1.7 LITERARY ENVIRONMENT

We have been talking about the state of the system and the effect on it of its environment. Basing his argument on Kramer and De Smit (1977:34), Viljoen (1985:9) distinguishes between total environment and relevant environment, maintaining that the former entails everything that falls outside the system, whilst the latter is described as "that set of entities outside the system, the state of which set is affected by the system or which affects the state of the system itself." Literature, being in constant interaction with its environment, is, therefore, an open system. But literature interacts not with the total environment, but with the relevant environment. Viljoen (1985:33) maintains that, as different cultures are regarded as separate systems, a literary work is first linked with its own culture before being compared with other works in other systems. He quotes theology as an example of a system wherein texts are contextualised i.e. where strong account is taken of the cultural contexts of the texts or communicative situation. He goes further to define contextualisation in a literary sense as "om deeglik reken te hou met die literêre sisteem waarbinne 'n teks voorkom." Thomas Mofolo's Chaka (1925), for instance, must first be linked with the Zulu cultural system in which the story unfolds, before being compared with any other system. His *Pitseng* (1910) is linked with both Sesotho culture and missionary influence with the latter preoccupying the author's mind.

1.8 SYNCHRONIC AND DIACHRONIC LITERARY STUDIES

Jacobson and Tynjanov emphasise the importance of synchronic studies for "it reveals the nature of language (literature) as a system at each individual moment of its existence" (Viljoen, 1985:23), and warn at the same time that pure synchronism is an illusion because every system has a past as well as a future, which are inseparable elements of the system. The significance of synchronic literary study is generally acknowledged as studying the condition of the system as seen at the moment, as is usually the case with text analysis. Viljoen (1985:23), however, warns that such an approach is unreliable as the system is continually undergoing a change as a result of interaction with neighbouring systems. He maintains, thus, that the "literêre sisteem van 'n jaar of selfs 'n paar jaar is makliker om te beskryf as die literêre sisteem soos dit sê op die eerste dag in Junie 1981 daar uitgesien het" (1985:24). A diachronic literary study would compare the literary systems over a predetermined period. It is for the latter reason that De Saussure saw the history of language (literature) as "a succession of synchronic states" (Bynon, 1979:1).

Theoretical research, Lambert maintains, calls for the application of hypotheses to all observed phenomena, rather than to select material from our historical stores to prove our own misconceptions (1985:35). Hypotheses are good only if they help us interpret all the material within a prescribed area. If a theory is found not to work, it must be corrected or modified or completed. Swanepoel (1986:2) quotes Lambert (from a personal interview) as saying, "an attempt is made to reconcile, fundamentally, the study of a given object and the model that is used to describe it, together with the methodology used in the implementation thereof, eventually to correct the model."

Mere accumulation of historical data does not help a literary researcher much to describe literature and literary evolution: he must look for norms, models (genres, style, etc) and relationships. In this way he will grasp the systemic features of the literature under observation. But literature also has synthetic features, i.e. it shows a complex unity of elements in varying relationships. Unconditional objectivity is demanded of the scholar to be

able to observe and explain these features clearly. In other words, he should observe his data from a distance, refraining from identifying himself with it.

It has thus become very clear that the PS hypothesis pivots round relationships. As Swanepoel put it, "relationships, norms and models — these are the fields of interest of the systemic researcher" (1986:2). For such a researcher to attain his goal, Lambert suggests a series of leading questions to be answered, inter alia: since when? where? by whom? why? under what circumstances? where from? what is the influence on tradition?

CF Swanepoel (1985) answered Lambert's questions on the systemic approach to the concept "national literature" and applied them to Sesotho literature. He gives a fairly comprehensive historical overview of the origins and evolution of the literature within and across the borders of the Republic of South Africa in perspective, showing: contact between the traditional African and Western values (intersystemic interaction), as well as the advantages and disadvantages, to Sesotho literature, of the conflicting values; adaptation of imported norms and models to own perspectives according to own skills (conversions); and reaction to interference of outside norms with own norms, which became an incentive to literary evolution (Shlovskij's rule).

1.9 SESOTHO LITERARY SYSTEM

As indicated above, Sesotho literature is an autonomous system within the South African literary polysystem. Swanepoel calls it autonomous and semi-peripheral because,

"Although it has not imported texts on a substantial scale, it has to a large extent imported ideas, genres and technicalities. Internally it behaves as a single system, but externally it also associates with its neighbouring African language literatures. Although it has been dominated by English literature since the days of its inception, and possibly also by the zeal of Afrikaans literature, which, together with English literature, occupied the attention and funds of publishers

since the beginning of the century, it has succeeded in unearthing sufficient vitality to have reached the stage of autonomy despite internal and external disadvantages" (1987:19).

As indicated above, the Sesotho literary system (with its intra- and extrasystemic hierarchical relationships and interactions) has been singled out for study. For an indepth appraisal, the period 1930–60 has been selected, the demarcation of which will become clear in the succeeding chapter. This period follows on the missionary period in the development of Sesotho literature, and is characterised by works with a heavy religious inclination, published by the missionaries themselves and their converts, with later deviations from missionary press restrictions. Whereas the period before 1930 was characterised by an abundance of prose works, the 1930's mark the emergence of modern poetry and drama – genres clearly encouraged by intersystemic interaction. Together with poetry and drama, prose works during this period reflect an increasing dismantling of religious preoccupations, and a portrayal of the realities of the time. With the advent of the 1960's yet another chapter in the history of Sesotho literature would start to unfold. The unfortunate separation of the orthographies between Lesotho and the Union of South Africa caused an intrasystemic confusion which still holds to this day. In the Union and the Republic (since 1961) the mother tongue language policy under the Bantu Education Act of 1953 led to increased literary output and diversification of genres, sub-genres currents and tides. These are but a few aspects which contributed to the distinctness of the period beyond 1960.

Swanepoel (1990:63) states it very simply that, according to the polysystem theory, "literature is viewed as a complex whole or unity of systems which are in a constant process of influencing and affecting one another (hence the term polysystem). The relationship between the systems finds itself in a state of change, depending on, and brought about by the values or norms dominating the literatures(s) in a specific period". He points out that "the theory led to new insights with reference to the description of national literatures and the description of relationships between national literary systems", in the process rendering the traditional distinctions based on political or linguistic boundaries less important. This, therefore, makes

possible the classifying together of "works with similar properties in coinciding systems" (1990:63).

Swanepoel also agrees with Gérard in his support of Lambert's views that "actually, the national literature of the Republic of South Africa is an outstanding instance of what Itamar Even-Zohar has called a 'polysystem.' Even from the superficial linguistic point of view, it comprises eleven distinct sets: Afrikaans, English – divided by apartheid terminology into two sub-sets: "white" and "non-white", – and nine further sets of varying importance, written in the nine officially recognized Bantu languages of the Republic" (1990:64). Each of these sub-sets (or sub-systems) can, under specific circumstances operate as a system in its own right. Hence Swanepoel "concluded that Southern Sotho literature constituted an autonomous literary system with various intersystemic links with surrounding African and European literatures of the subcontinent" (Swanepoel, 1990:65). Swanepoel (1990:65) recognises that the following factors be taken into cognizance for their contribution in the literature's production, distribution and consumption, and also "to its evolution over more than one and a half century both in Lesotho and the RSA: storytellers, reciters, authors, reviewers, publishers, prescribing and screening committees, language boards, departments of education, students, readers and listeners. Since inception its oral and written sub-systems have been involved in an absorbing intrasystemic dialogue". These have, in recent times, been reinforced and extended by what he calls "the literature of the air", referring, of course, to electronic media.

Lambert (1985:39) suggests that the poetics of different national literatures could be "analyzed in terms of other interferences, such as the distribution of literature", and hints that literary import from English into South African literatures since the nineteenth century could be analysed successfully according to the systemic hypothesis. The interferences and the dominant or dominated positions, he feels, "can and should be examined in relation to the whole set of metatexts (e.g. pamphlets, essays, satires, thematic novels, reviews and synthetic articles in periodicals)". Lambert goes further to suggest the interesting paradox that "literatures in South Africa are both unified and separated by their traditions" (1985:39), and

that the shifts within literary history are linked to the shift from one sub-stratum to another (e.g. from Afrikaans to English), for a variety of reasons. He rightly observes, as will be seen in the succeeding chapters, that "most African literatures have been influenced by this (if not in themes and communication techniques, then perhaps in genres or in stylistic procedures)" (1985:39).

It is precisely this, *inter alia*, that will be investigated in this study. An attempt will be made to reconstruct the circumstances that prevailed at the time of publication of the text (the sociopolitical, cultural, economic and religious systems) and the situation in which the writer might have found himself which might have prompted him to write, always keeping in mind the status quo that could have exercised some influence on his viewpoints and attitudes, as well as neighbouring literatures. The totality of all these factors constitutes the Sesotho literary system, and a systemic approach to this literature must necessarily focus on this totality.

Mineke Schipper (1989:50) warns that "one could never write a complete national literary history while dealing exclusively with authors of "masterpieces", with authors belonging to the elite, because in general they represent only partly the national culture". The same could be said of Sesotho literary history. She goes on to say "it may seem trivial, yet warrants special emphasis that the polysystem hypothesis involves a rejection of value judgements as criteria for an a priori selection of the objects of study" (1989:50).

It is for the above reason that all the Sesotho publications released in the years 1930–60 have been studied with the view to detecting, where possible, the "facts of literary life" (Even-Zohar, 1980:297) that made an input in their production. To this end interviews were conducted with the more than thirty authors who "wrote the literary history" of the said period, or with their next of kin. The socio-cultural, socio-economic and socio-political circumstances that prevailed in their respective environs, as well as their respective religious and educational exposures were researched in order to grasp the extent to which they are mirrored in their works.

We propose to furnish the necessary background information by giving an overview of the period immediately preceding the period of study, in Chapter 2, and we propose to call it The Early Literary Period.

As the first signs of creative writing that heralded this period manifested themselves in poetry, this genre will be studied in Chapter 3.

Chapter 4 will be devoted to the study of drama, for the same reason.

Chapter 5 will be assigned to the novel. The short story and the essay will be handled together in Chapter 6.

In Chapter 7, the Conclusion, an attempt will be made to answer pertinent questions pertaining to the Polysystem Hypothesis, flowing from its application to the Sesotho literature as seen in the aforementioned chapters and reflected in the period 1930–1960.

CHAPTER TWO

THE INITIAL LITERARY PERIOD IN SESOTHO, AND ITS EMERGING SYSTEM

2.1 INTRODUCTION

As indicated earlier, the scope of this thesis stretches from 1930 to 1960. However, in order to see this period in its proper perspective, it is necessary to give an overview of the period preceding it. From the earliest stages of organised society (from the family unit to the community), men and women have always had individual and collective ways of entertainment, be they of a sporting nature or of a more social nature. These were aesthetic, didactic and ethical in intent, and included physical activity (e.g. dances, gymnastics, etc) as well as oral art (eg. songs, tales, anecdotes, riddles, music, etc.). The oral artist always had a message to put across in a manner that, in time, became characteristic of his peculiar branch of art. Because these were not put to print, Franz (1930:145) refers to their times as the Pre-Literary Period. To be more precise, we shall call this the Pre-Literate Period.

2.2 THE PRE-LITERATE PERIOD

Finnegan (1970:83) intimates that it was the practice in traditional kingdoms of Africa to keep bards or traditional poets at the royal courts. As these poets were a symbol of status, they were attached to the courts of powerful kings, "to the retinues of nobles or lesser chiefs, and to all those who had pretensions to honour and thus to poetic celebration in their society." She indicates that, among the unlettered communities, the commonly held view of such poets was derived from the rhapsodist or wandering minstrel of the times of the Greek Homer. In contrast, the bard chanted his heroic poetry, handed verbally to posterity, before gathered lords and was rewarded with honour and "rich gifts". His counterpart among the Ashanti was the Kwadwumfo, whose main task was to recount the deeds of past kings whenever a living king made a public appearance. In West Africa, Finnegan (1970:84) has it, there were also free lance,

wandering poets who lived on their wits. Their services extended to the wealthy, and their poetry often ranged from undisguised begging to insinuations and threats towards individual patrons who do not lavish gifts as expected. These were the most feared, and often the richest of poets, for they could wilfully compose the most damaging lines about an ear-marked victim.

Among the South African Zulus and the Basotho, as well as the Hausa of Bornu, the poets or praise-singers glorified the monarchs and their ancestors in lofty language, as well as preserving the history and genealogy of the royalty (Finnegan, 1970:83). Of the Mosotho *seroki* (praise singer), Franz (1930:145) feels that, even if his "chants cannot always be cast in the mould of the European poem", his *lithoko* contains the rhythm that carries the hearer along, whilst "the beautiful intonation supplies the music." Franz almost makes the mistake of the scholars of his time, and some of the missionaries, who sought to impose European norms onto Sesotho culture. But he does express the indebtedness of literary historians to Z.D. Mangoela for his collection and publication of the *lithoko*.

As mentioned above, pre-literate oral art also consisted of folk-tales which were a medium of sending messages and lessons to the community. The Basotho *litšomo* (tales) were "told to children around the fire of an evening, or even narrated at the communal fire of the men" (Franz 1930:145). This left room for subtle variations in delivery as these were passed from generation to generation, and, as will presently be seen, laid the foundation for the early stages as well as later written Basotho literature. For the collection and preservation of these Basotho folk-tales, Sesotho literature owes a great debt to Rev. E. Jacottet for the publication of his *Litšomo tsa Basotho* (The Tales of the Basotho) in two volumes (1909, 1911). The first publications of reading matter in Sesotho heralded the Literate Period in Sesotho, which will be handled hereunder. Scholars like Finnegan, Franz, Gérard, Swanepoel and others, agree that literary art has its roots in oral art, "which, we are entitled to argue, has been with us since the beginning of mankind, since our ancient forbears started to relate to each other their experiences, be it of real life or of the imagination" (Swanepoel, 1989:121). The beginning of oral art or oral lore, however approximate, is more

difficult to establish than its end. Swanepoel (1989:122), however, approximates the origin of oral art amongst Southern African communities by inductive comparison of the plots of variants of the origin of death myth with "the plot that led to the reign of Sonjata, the thirteenth century Emperor of West African Old Somali" (1989:121). He compares the Sesotho myth of *Leobu* (Chameleon), its Nguni version, *Mvelanqangi*, and the *Sonjata* case taken from D.T. Niané (1965:3). This led him to some indication as to "the relative age of our heritage" and to the possibility of its roots being "well beyond the borders of our region", considering that a search may possibly lead to a proto mythology or common core in Africa from where all our distinctive mythologies may have originated (1989:122).

It is also interesting how Swanepoel's analytic eye catches the similarities between the above myths and the circumstances of Chaka's birth in Thomas Mofolo's *Chaka*. In spite of the differences "in detail and consequence", he notices a similarity in plot structure, centering around the consequences of delayed action: the chameleon's delay to inform people that they would not die: the delay by the female messenger in announcing to the Emperor the birth of his first son, leading to Sonjata's birth being announced first; and the delay in announcing to the Zulu regional monarch, Jobe, "The right of succession of the sons that were born shortly after the hero's birth" (Swanepoel, 1989:122).

We shall now discuss the Literate Period in Sesotho literature.

2.3 THE LITERATE PERIOD

This period flows from the above period, the period of the *lithoko* and *litšomo*, which were transmitted to posterity by word of mouth. As G.H. Franz (1930:178) puts it, "The dawn of a new era broke in 1833, when Moshoeshoe invited missionaries to Lesotho." When the missionaries, Eugene Casalis, Thomas Arbousset and Constant Gosselin, arrived in Lesotho, they did missionary work for the Paris Evangelical Mission Society. They arrived in Lesotho during the times of oral lore, when all knowledge and instruction was orally transmitted. In 1841 Casalis

published his *Etudes sur la langue Sechuana*, the first introduction into the grammar of Sesotho (not Setswana), the second half of which contained twelve praise-poems, fifty-six proverbs and three fairly long folk-tales (Swanepoel, 1989:122). This marked the beginning of what Franz (1930:146) calls the Literary Period, which we prefer to call the Literate Period, for it was at this stage that Sesotho oral lore, inter alia, were beginning to appear on print. It was the beginning of literacy in general in Sesotho. In 1857 Casalis published *Les Basoutos*, which appeared in 1861 as *The Basutos*. This book contains many praise-poetry texts on Goloane, Moshoeshoe, and Coucoutle, as well as the tales on Kammaapa and Litaolane, which have never been republished (Swanepoel, 1989:122). This Literate Period can be classified into two: The primary literate period, and the secondary literate period. In the former period attention focuses on the promotion of literacy with the view to the production of literary works of art in Sesotho, whilst in the latter interest is in matters other than Sesotho literature. For purposes of this study, we shall start with the latter.

2.3.1 The secondary Literate Period

As stated earlier, the primary purpose of the missionaries was to evangelise the Basotho. To this end schools were established "to train evangelists who would go out steeped in the Bible and able to teach its truths to their own people" (Mabille, 1939:329). Printing of religious matter was embarked upon. The earliest Sesotho literature was in the form of translated catechisms, extracts from the Bible and, as indicated above, other religious texts written by the missionaries themselves. G.H. Franz (1930:147) simply calls these Christian Literature, classifying them along with all books on church history and Bible history, as well as *Ruthe oa Moabe* by S. DUBY and *Esau le Jakobo* by H. Dieterlen. The themes and style were relevant to their mission. He further regards the translation of the Bible into Sesotho as the finest literary work of the missionaries, and observes that "there is much in the Bantu that is akin to the early Jewish, not only in social laws and customs, but also in picturesqueness." In agreeing with Franz, one can only draw the assumption that by "social laws" and "picturesqueness" reference is being made to the taboos that regulate conduct, and the rich imagery that characterises the men's language in the courts, and the

lithoko. He goes on to say that the kind of Sesotho language used in this translation "is the language of the Basotho people, and must always remain the standard of Sesotho", and that the translators of the Bible were purists, so that the language they used "is exceptionally pure form of Sesotho."

In 1846 a secondary School or seminary was started for the training of "Native catechists and Basotho teachers," and, in 1868 "a regular Teacher Training College, known as *Sekolo sa Thabeng* (The Mountain School) was established in Morija" (Gérard, 1971:103).

By 1863 literacy among the Basotho had spread so much that, Rev. Adolphe Mabilie started the monthly paper, *Leselinyana la Lesotho* (The Little Light of Lesotho). The first contributors to this paper were the missionaries themselves, and their articles included Sesotho customs and folklore. This was the beginning of the primary literate period.

2.3.2 The Primary Literate Period

As indicated above, this period is a by-product of the main aim of christian literacy and formed the foundation for Sesotho creative writing. For the first time views of a more secular and practical nature reached the Basotho readership through regular contributions to *Leselinyana* by prospective Basotho writers. But these articles were on the old hitherto orally told *litšomo* and a variety of customs. It is in this paper where tales like *Moshanyana oa Senkatana* and others, as well as Jacottet's *Litšomo* first appeared in serial form before being published in book form.

Swanepoel (1989:122) draws parallels between the tale of *Kamma* and three versions of *Moshanyana oa Senkatana* – by Hlubi M. Molefe, A. Sekese and E. Jacottet – as found in the *Leselinyana* of July 1889 and 15 August 1892, and then shows the apparent similarity with the Christ story, especially with the Litaolane version by Casalis.

Jacottet's *Litšomo tsa Basotho* (The Tales of the Basotho) included fables, folktales and myths which were before then told to children around the evening fire in beautiful rendition consisting of narratives, refrains and

choruses. To Franz, the great value of these *litšomo* is that "they reveal the minds of the old Basotho to us", and seek to promote the traditional values of the Basotho.

Swanepoel (1989:122), however, does not regard all the Basotho tales as mere moral incentives, but sees beyond that. For instance, he argues that the Senkatana tale (commonly known as a legend) belongs to the realm of myth. He feels that "this does not simply seem to be a story of an extraordinary hero. It is a story of redemption, sacrifice and fundamental justice..." After drawing thematic parallels between a few versions of this story (1989:122), he declares that "while the argument about the significance of the tale may, and must, go on, it appears that the concept of a saviour does not seem to be foreign to the collective African tradition. This also holds for the concept of fundamental justice, which is more fully developed in S.M. Mofokeng's drama, *Senkatana*, which was published 111 years after the first published version by Casalis (1852)".

One feels that the point Swanepoel is making here is that the theme is more lucidly comprehended when the tale is recast into a more modern format than when given in the traditional way. Hence his contention that "the written recording of this tale, and other facets of the oral tradition, thus serve as an indispensable source for the literary artist and the historian of literature alike" (1989:122). Put more plainly, Swanepoel's point is clear: oral lore has served in many ways as basis for later literary art. His references to the various versions in French, English and Sesotho of *Tselane* and *Dimo, Sefofu le Seritsa*, etc more than illustrate his point. Thus the conversion of oral art to the written art and the impact of the former on the latter, generally, constitutes an exceptionally dynamic instance of intrasystemic traffic.

When, in 1889, Chere Monyoloza contributed a series of articles on the Sesotho "art of divination"; the missionaries interrupted the series abruptly as pagan practice, thereby incurring Azariel Sekese's displeasure. He saw Monyoloza's articles as being more intellectual than anything else. The exception taken by Sekese to the missionaries' attitude, however mild, is attributable to the fact that, though a convert himself, he was secretary to

chief Jonathan, and hence deeply involved in Sesotho culture. Sekese was one of the pioneers of secular literary art.

Franz (1930:174) has it that Azariel Sekese was born at Berea in 1849, at the time of Moruti J. Vaitin of Berea. He grew up herding cattle, and could only go to school at the age of nineteen, after Rev. A. Mabile had founded a school for young men at Morija, and when the Boers had seized his father's cattle during the War of Seqiti in 1868. On leaving school, he became a teacher and evangelist at Tlapaneng. During the War of the guns Azariel advised his father to surrender his gun, as required, to the government. Consequently Chief Leshoboro Maraja "ate" (i.e. confiscated) Azariel's cattle, and he fled to the government and became a constable at Tlapaneng, until he was sent to Leribe on a mission with others, under one Captain Stanton. He settled there, and set about writing the history of the Basotho, his underlying thought being to show how old events explained new ones. He became Chief Jonathan's secretary from 1881 to 1894. Thereafter, he became messenger to Chief Jonathan, and then to the Assistant Commissioner. He relinquished his post due to old age and ill health, but continued to write until 1930. Sekese was a regular contributor to *Leselinyana*, writing on Sesotho customs and court procedure, inter alia. Gérard (1971:104) observes that the new newspaper, *Lentsoe la Basotho* (The Voice of the Basotho), established in 1899, was destined to speed up change in missionary attitude to secular literary expression, for, it attacked the editorial policy of *Leselinyana*. With the publication of this newspaper, articles of an increasingly secular nature reached the public. Sekese contributed articles which, in due course, were compiled into a book, *Mekhoa le maele le litšomo* (Customs, Proverbs and Tales) in 1893. This book will be discussed hereunder, under folklore.

2.4 THE LITERARY PERIOD

The literary Period is used here to denote written work that exhibits creativity, originality and imagination to varying degrees, and will be further sub-classified into folkloric, allegorical, short stories and novels. This is the period when written products began to show the above qualities.

2.4.1 Folkloric writings

As could be expected, Sekese's experiences as secretary to the chief gained him immense knowledge in folklore, inter alia. The numerous articles he contributed to *Leselinyana* were gathered and published in book form in 1893, and entitled *Mekhoa ea Basotho le maele le lišomo* (Basotho Customs, Proverbs and Tales) of which Gérard (1971:105) maintains "was the first collection of its kind ever to have been published in book form by an African." This book went through four editions, the title changing slightly each time, as "Sekese kept enriching it with stories, fables and praise poems". (op. cit.)

Another book in this category is Segoete's *Raphepheng*, (1913) wherein a Mosotho traditionalist tells longingly of "Sotho antiquities" (op. cit) in typical Sesotho conversational style. For the author's biographical sketch, Franz expresses his indebtedness to Z.D. Mangoaela. He intimates that Everitt Lechesa Segoete, the second of the sons in his family, was born in 1858, during the "War of Senekal", at Morifi, on the Herschel side of the Caledon River. His name, Lechesa, was derived from the burning of the villages by the Boers. His renegade father settled near the Moruti at Maphutseng, where Lechesa was in-and-out of school. He later went with his parents to Masitisi, whence Rev. D.F. Ellenberger had gone to build a station. He was called back by his grandfather to herd goats when his elder brother, Azariel, was about to go to the "Mountain School" in Morija. In the meantime his father died. "He was a naughty boy who was rarely caught doing mischief" (Franz, 1930:152). He was always in the company of boys who stole and grilled fowls, and stole from the Baruti's gardens. When he later went to the "Mountain School", he proved very receptive to his lessons. He obtained his Teacher's Certificate but, because of his youthful playfulness, he had not changed much spiritually. At one time he undertook a trip to Cape Town with a "boon companion". There, he encountered lots of problems, and escaped death miraculously at the hands of murderers whilst himself on the run from the police and rogues. He only returned to Lesotho on being persuaded by one Moruti's wife. Mangoaela remarks that "if one reads the book *Monono ke moholi ke mouroane*, which was written by him, one soon realises that much of what one reads about Khitšane actually

happened to Segoete in the Cape Colony" (Franz, 1930:152). Segoete later worked at the printing press in Morija, and in Aliwal North, where he met his wife. On his return to Lesotho he was appointed principal of a two-teacher school at Qomoqomong, Masitisi. It is whilst there that he was asked to submit himself for training as minister. "He was a genuine kind of man who won respect, for in him were sincerity, charity, love and faith in full measure" (Franz, 1930:153).

Raphepheng, actually Segoete's second book, published in 1913, exhibits no trace of religious influence. It is a storehouse of all the Sesotho lore, an epitome of Sesotho traditional existence from birth, through life, to death, high-lighting his customs, occupations, values, taboos, foodstuffs, etc. in lively pure Sesotho. What makes this book different from a mere record of Sesotho lore is the fact that Segoete has created the character Raphepheng to discuss everything with him. Franz (1930:157) comments that *Raphepheng* "means Father-of-the-scorpion, and in many cases the sting is bitter. Yet Raphepheng is a loveable old bear, notwithstanding his complaints and bitter criticism of the modern generation".

Of this book, Maphike (1978:9) simply states that, "though the writer engages an old man, Rapheheng, to speak throughout in direct speech, he describes in minutest detail all aspects of traditional Sotho life in formal tone. The titles under which these aspects are handled are typical essay titles".

At almost the same time as Sekese's and Segoete's folkloric writings, Motsamai's and Mangoaela's articles were serialised in *Leselinyana*, to reappear in the form of short story volumes. This genre was preceded, though not immediately, by school literature (Franz's classification), a section often always overlooked by literary scholars. A brief look at this class of writings may help put things in their right perspective.

2.4.2 School Literature

The pioneers in this field, Franz (1930:149) admits "were poorly equipped and were groping in the dark", did appreciable work in publishing the

Paliso (i–iv), which contained information on almost every subject, as well as little stories and extracts from books and tales. On more straight–forward empirical facts, Jacottet's *Histori e ngoletsoeng likolo* (A History Booklet for Schools) could be singled out. Franz (1930:150) admires this booklet as "a sincere attempt to awaken in the children a love for their nation, for their language, and for their national traditions." He is delighted by the regular Sesotho expressions uttered about Moshoeshoe, and also by him, that keep coming up during the course of the discussion of historical facts, thereby adding literary value to the work. The following three examples should suffice:

- a) *Motse ho aha oa morapeli* (It is the man of tact, i.e. a statesman, who builds a state). Translated figuratively: it is the humble man who builds a home.
- b) *Ha u otla ntja e ka tšoha e u loma* (If you strike a dog, it might bite you i.e. if you attack somebody, you might evoke revenge).
- c) *Majoro, nka thipa o sehe naha* (Major, take a knife and cut the country – reference to Major Warden).

The literary value of these images can hardly be missed.

2.4.3 The First Short Stories

The freer publication of oral lore undoubtedly encouraged many a promising writer to try his hand, but emphasis was initially more on empirical matter and reproduction of actual experience. This is glaringly so in E. Motsamai's *Mehla ea malimo* (1912) and Z.D. Mangoaela's *Har'a libatana le linyamatsane* (1913), the only short story volumes published during this period. Motsamai himself expresses this view in the conclusion of his preface:

Re tla leka, bukeng ena, ho qaqisetsa mobadi litabanyana tse ling tsa kgajana, ka moo re ntseng re li phetelwa ke magheku a rona; tse ling ke tse tshabehang, tse ling ke tse tshhehisang, tse ling ke tse nang le thuto e monate.

(Motsamai, 1912:6)

(We shall try, in this book, to narrate to the reader some of the events of long ago, in the manner they have been told to us by our old folks. Some of them are frightening, some amusing, while others contain some good moral.)

As the title indicates, Motsamai's *Mehla ea malimo* (The Times of Cannibals) portrays the famine that resulted from the mass destruction of tribes and their fields during the *difaqane* (Tribal Wars), consequently impelling man to cannibalism, if only to satisfy his hunger.

Franz (1930:162) intimates that Edward Motsamai was born at Masite, in May 1870. He attended school at Morija until he passed the Teacher's Certificate examination with honours in 1888. He then taught at the "Mountain School" and the Bible School from 1889 to 1892 whilst continuing with his studies under one Mrs. Dyke. In 1898, whilst teaching at the Bible school, he prepared himself for the ministry, and was ordained in 1900 at Thabana Morena. He had worked with Moruti A. Casalis in the Book Depot from 1896 to 1899, having lost his voice a while. The synod sent him to the Maloti when he was despairing, and he regained his voice. He is grateful to Moruti Jacottet for his help and encouragement in writing the book. He states that he wrote this book "because I was moved to it by the love of telling others what I found, and of trying to preserve some of the past." (Franz, 1930:162).

Franz (op cit:163) notes that, despite its title, "thirteen of the eighteen stories deal with encounters with cannibals, and the other five speak of encounters with wild beasts, namely the lion and the wolf." He is not greatly impressed with Motsamai's style which "preserves an evenness of tone, a matter-of-factness, which, although it holds the attention of the reader, does not arouse him" (op cit:165); and maintains that what could otherwise have been the most thrilling moments in the story pass by before the reader is aware of them. Right as Franz may be, he seems to lose sight of the fact that Motsamai settled down to narrating the stories *kamoo re ntseng re li pheteloa ke maqheku a rona* (p. 6) (... the way they are being told to us by our old folks). They are a reproduction of already grim circumstances that do not need any metaphor or hyperbole for effect. This

book is only a step away from folklore, the influence of which has a direct bearing on the author's straight-forward style. As Maphike (1978:8) puts it, "all the stories are told in a simple tell-tale fashion, from the very first, *Selinyane le malimo*:

Monna o ne a le teng mane Kolo, ea bitsoang Selinyane...
(There was a man in Kolo, known as Selinyane...)"

Mehla ea malimo was, however, not Motsamai's first contribution to written Sesotho literature. His first booklet, *Majoe a mahlano a molatsoana* (Five Pebbles from a Brook), published in 1907, is completely overlooked by most scholars except Albert Gérard, probably because of its strong religious bias. It is "a collection of five meditations previously published in *Leselinyana*, and composed with the view to warning christian youth against the allurements of paganism" (Gérard 1971:137). Literary scholars are more interested in writings that exhibit some creativity, originality and imagination, rather than presumptuousness. It was only about five years later that Motsamai, encouraged, as he says, by Rev. Jacottet, published his second book. Even in *Mehla ea malimo*, religious bias comes out strongly at the end, where the author uses the stories as illustrations for his concluding "sermon". At the end, in *Qetello* (The End), Motsamai surfaces clearly as the minister he was.

Z.D. Mangoaela followed almost immediately with his volume entitled *Har'a libatana le linyamatsane* (Amidst Beasts and Wild Animals), in 1913. His long autobiographical sketch is published by G.H. Franz (1930:158-59) in fine print. For purposes of this discussion the following main points should do:

Zakea D. Mangoaela was born at Hohobeng (Palmietfontein, Herschel) in 1883. He watched calves during milking at the age of four. He recalls how they used to learn the alphabet by associating letters with objects. At the age of eleven he was in Std. III, and had to go to *Masitisi* to sit for the examination. He was always first in his class, but had to repeat Std IV in 1896 because he was said to be too young to proceed to the next class. In 1899 he proceeded to the "Mountain School" in Morija. After passing the

Second Year Teacher's Course, in 1900, he was kept home for a year for keeping bad company, and completed a year later than the scheduled time. In 1907 he was a teacher at Koeneng, where Everitt Segoete was Moruti, and was filled with great love, awe and respect for him. In 1908 he was asked to work at the Morija Book Depot as a proof-reader. He was filled with great desire to promote Sotho patriotism, so he wrote *Tsoelopele ea Lesotho* (the Progress of Lesotho) in 1911, *Lithoko tsa marena a Basotho* (The Praise-poems of the Basotho chiefs) which was delayed publication until 1921 (probably because the missionaries took unkindly to the eulogising of man), and *Har'a libatana le linyamatsane*.

As said earlier, this latter book was not a product of imagination, but a record of what actually happened, or what is said to have happened. In this book Mangoaela actually depicts the difficult circumstances under which the people lived and travelled in the olden days, occasioned mainly by the freedom with which wild animals roamed the country. "His tales are so vividly alive, because the writer loses himself in the past" (Franz 1930:160). Franz also commends him for his natural, spontaneous manner, and the care with which he reproduces "the words of the original narrators". He then illustrates with a free translation of the following passage from *Hoko le nkoe*:

Ka baka leo Baphuthi ba hanela Hoko ho sala nkoe morao: "Hela Hoko ee, lesa ho etsa joalo bo, u tla leba kae ha e kgutla mothating o mosesane oo? Hoko a hana, a bona eka ba mpa ba mo hanela le phoofolo e se e ntse e le ea hae. Ba itse ka hana, ba hana, ba ba ba mo tela..."

(p. 85)

(For that reason the Baphuthi refused to allow Hoko to pursue the leopard, *Hela Hoko ee*, they said, "don't do that! Where will you go when it turns back by that narrow path? Hoko ignored them, thinking that they were merely trying to deny him an animal that was already as good as his. They refused, and refused, until they gave up...)

This is in keeping with what Maphike (1978:9) calls "informal and conversational language", quoting examples from *Tau e kena ka lapeng*, such as:

U utloisise uena ea balang, ha re re a tlolela holim'a eona,...

(p. 150)

(You should understand, you the reader, when we say he jumped onto it;)

and

Mosali le eena a ema ka bobebe, a etsa ka senna, re ka re ka sesali bo,...

(p. 150)

(This woman also stood up quickly, and got about it in a manly fashion, or shall we say in a womanly fashion...)

The reader can feel that a Mosotho is telling his stories to fellow Basotho, in as natural a manner as would be expected. After quoting many extracts that typify Mangoaela's style, Franz (1930:162) remarks that "it is vivid, picturesque, alive, and, above all, the tale is told with obvious enjoyment." Indeed the clarity of imagery and motion flows from Mangoaela's language throughout everyone of his stories.

Motsamai's and Mangoaela's books joined Jacottet's *Litšomo* in forming the basis for the short story as a genre in Sesotho imaginative writing. Tottering as their first steps may have been, they paved the way for bolder strides by succeeding generations of Sesotho authors.

Up till this point we have been discussing what, in recent times, has come to be known as short art. The forerunners of "long art" in Sesotho were allegorical in nature, and will be discussed next.

2.4.4 Allegorical Writings

Abrams (1981:4) defines an allegory as "a narrative in which the agents and

action, and sometimes the setting as well, are contrived to make coherent sense on the 'literal', or primary level of signification, and also to signify a second, correlated order of agents, concepts and events." The Odhams Dictionary of the English Language defines it in simpler terms as "a figurative or symbolical description or story commenting upon or suggesting some real situation, yet placed in the realm of the imaginary, and in which the words and characters have often another significance in addition to their literal meaning..."

What comes out clearly from these definitions is that the writer communicates his ideas to the reader not directly, but in terms of another subject that exhibits some common characteristics as the real subject of his interest; in a manner analogous to metaphoric usage. This class of written product is highly imaginative and, hence, of great literary value.

The first real literary work of art to appear in Sesotho was Rev. A. Mabile's translation of John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* which was completed in 1872. Swanepoel (1983:61) regards this translation as a transitional text "which was for many blacks a first acquaintance with the novel as a literary genre." The popularity of this translation survived the missionary era, and saw its seventh edition in 1945. In this book life is depicted as a tough journey through temptations, trials and tribulation.

The first allegorical work published by a Mosotho was Azariel Sekese's *Tšomo tsa pitso ea linonyana le tšeko ea Sefofu le Seritsa* (The Stories of the meeting of the Birds, and the lawsuit between The Blindman and the Cripple). As indicated earlier, Sekese was a teacher and evangelist, as well as secretary to Chief Jonathan. As a convert, imbued with a sense of christian justice, he reacted to the injustices seen in the feudal practices of the day by staging the satirical plays of the above title. This he did in collaboration with one Job Moteane in the 1880's. Because of missionary red-tape, the manuscript only appeared in book form in 1928, entitled *Bukana ea litšomo tsa pitso ea linonyana le tseko ea Sefofu le Seritsa* (The Booklet of the Stories of the Meeting of the Birds, and the Lawsuit between the Blindman and the Cripple). This book was so successful that, in 1955, it went through its sixth edition. In the first and major part of this book, the

birds hold a mass meeting under the chairmanship of *Morena Ntsu* (The Eagle). They complain of being brutalized and killed regularly for food by *Phakoe* (Hawk) and his kind, whereupon they were asked how they could face such charges as could be brought up by the kin of the myriad insects and worms they have eaten up and fed their young on. They are, however, advised to repair to the woods where it would be difficult for their preyers to catch up with them – an unacceptable solution to their problem. When *Sephooko* (The Owl) complains of being harassed by the vulture, the hawk, the sparrow–hawk, crow, etc, he is advised to keep up his habit of hunting only at night when his tormentors can be easily eluded.

The glaring miscarriage of justice reflected in the plight of the birds, presented in typical tribal court procedure and vocabulary, exposes very vividly the malpractices of the privileged classes in the feudal system of Sekese's time.

Part two of this book is the now well–known story of the squabble between the cripple and the blindman over the hide of the antelope they had brought to their cave during the *difaqane* (tribal wars). This story seeks to encourage fair play and discourage unscrupulous selfishness, and links up well with the theme of the first part. If anything, this book is an accumulation of the great wealth of knowledge in Basotho court procedure gathered by Sekese during his term of office as secretary to chief Jonathan. The third book in the allegorical category to be published in Sesotho was Thomas Mofolo's *Moeti oa Bochabela* (The Traveller to the East), which saw light in 1907.

Thomas Mokopu Mofolo has for many years been regarded as one of the greatest Black writers in the country, and the greatest novelist in Black South Africa. From his autobiography, published by Franz (1930:168), he was born at Khojane, Mafeteng region, in August 1877. Like his contemporaries and his precursors, the day of his birth is not known. He was baptised by the Rev. H. Dieterlen of the Paris Evangelical Mission Society. He entered the Bible School in 1894; The "Mountain School" at Morija in June 1896, and, in 1897 passed his second year and School Elementary. On account of Rinderpest he lacked money to continue

schooling, but was allowed by one Mr. Dyke to complete his studies on credit. When he completed his Third Year Teacher's Course, in 1898, he was asked by Rev. E. Casalis to help in the Book Depot. At the beginning of 1900 operations ceased as a result of the Boer War. He then went to Leloaleng, where he learnt carpentry and also taught for two years. In 1902 he took up a post in Bensonvale Institution, but was soon recalled to Lesotho by Mr. Dyke, to be appointed at Maseru. After the war he was again engaged at the Book Depot. In 1910 he was drawn to Lealui, Barotseland, Northern Rhodesia, by higher wages, but took ill (probably bitten by the notorious "tsetse fly") and returned. He then took up a temporary job on the Rand. He was sent back to Lesotho by one Mr. Taperer as a labour agent for the Ekstein Group of Mines. In 1922 he became an independent labour agent supplying a number of companies and farmers. He bought a government portable steam engine and milling plant, and operated in Teyateyaneng. He later sold everything, and left the labour agency in 1923.

Gérard (1971:109) quotes Sir Henry Newbolt as saying of Mofolo, that "he had read all the religious and historical books then published"... during his activities at the printing works. The strong resemblance of the symbolism of life as a journey through life's temptations, trials, toil and tribulation, that is reflected in both *Leeto la Mokreste* and *Moeti oa bochabela* cannot be attributed to chance. It confirms Sir Henry Newbolt's assertion, in spite of F.H. Dutton's comment (Gérard, 1971:109) that *Moeti oa Bochabela* "was a new product – not history, but a novel describing native life in ancient days." Whilst it is true that this novel is not history, it is not a mere description of "native life in ancient days". It is also not a wholly new product. Mofolo has translated the dream setting of John Bunyan's, that cannot be easily reconciled with Sesotho realities, into the familiar Lesotho setting, flowing into the "New Jerusalem"¹ concept of the converts of the time.

The novel *Moeti oa Bochabela* (simply classified as an allegory by Franz) is

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1. A picture of some Utopia, painted by the missionaries in the minds of their converts.

the story of a young Mosotho man, Fekisi by name, who is distraught with the terrible life led by all around him. Habitual drunkenness, which leads to unnecessary squabbles, violence and general lawlessness, are the order of the day. In moments of his deep reflections, he is struck by the regularity and flawlessness of function in every natural phenomenon, and marvels at man's simple faith that a seed put into the ground will sprout into a young plant. He cannot reconcile the harmony in the universe with his own people's evil impulsiveness. One night he goes to the cattle kraal, recites a praise-poem to one after the other of his favourite of his father's cattle, and then sets about looking for God in the East (*Ntsoana-tsatsi*) from whence he has often been told man came. Tekateka (1967:10) states that "Fekisi leaves home as a perfect man who led an exemplary life in a godless world, a world of sinners. He can no longer tolerate this world and would very much like to go to the world of eternal good and happiness." The difficulties he encounters on his way are analogous to those encountered by John Bunyan's "Christian" in his Pilgrim's Progress. After an "endless", eventful journey, "through desert and wilderness" (Franz, 1930:173), he reaches the sea extremely exhausted. He wakes up from his deep sleep to find himself aboard a ship, having been picked up by christians of another race "in whose teachings he recognises the fulfilment of his dreams." (Franz, 1930:173). As a convert overseas, the day of his first sacrament dawns. During the ceremony he sees the Saviour in a mist on the altar, and rushes to meet him. In the mist he stands still, to be discovered dead after a long while.

Whilst recognising the influence of Pilgrim's Progress on *Moeti*, Franz (op. cit: 123) observes that the great difference between the two books, however, is that, whereas in Pilgrim's Progress the characters are personifications of virtues and vices, in *Moeti* the characters are real men and women, and exemplify types."

Gérard (1971:109) sees in Fekisi an idealistic young man who is prompted by the moral and intellectual impulses to do what he does. "He is horrified at the evil ways of the village people" and is also pre-occupied with "the mystery of the origins of the universe." Whichever way we view it, the theme in this book is in keeping with missionary goals.

But when the mission society published *Livre d'or de la mission du Lessouto* (The Golden Book of the Lesotho Mission) in 1912, H. Dieterlen and F. Kohler contributed a chapter entitled *Les Bassoutos d'aujourd'hui* (The Basotho Today). Their comments, Gérard maintains, "were devoted to a highly ambiguous, not to say almost offensive discussion of Mofolo's work", and he quotes their reference to him as *un homme qui n'a pas eu de déception et qui, peut-être pour son malheur, est arrivé à produire, pour ses débuts, une sorte de petit chef-d'oeuvre.*" (A man who has no delusions and who, perhaps to his own misfortune, has managed to produce, for his debut, a kind of little masterpiece; 1971:128).

Mofolo being a product of missionary training, it would have been expected that these missionary gentlemen would be proud of his achievement. Such a paradoxical "complement" as "little masterpiece" gives the impression that his initial success was construed by the two reverend gentlemen as a 'threat', rather than an honour to them.

Though the books discussed above have been categorised broadly under allegories, the finer distinction between *Pitso* on the one hand, and *Leeto* and *Moeti* on the other, is clear. The former, being predominantly dialogue, is the forerunner to drama as a literary genre in Sesotho, while the latter two are in effect novels, and could, but for their additional quality of having a primary as well as a secondary level of signification (see p. 14 above), be included in the discussion that follows of the first novels in Sesotho. It is for convenience that they have been discussed separately, to high-light their symbolical or allegorical qualities.

2.4.5 The First Novels in Sesotho

Here our concern is the novel as an original creation of the author, exhibiting no imported traits from any other sub-system, other than subtle thematic correspondences. Two such novels were published in the same year, 1910, viz: Everitt Segoete's *Monono ke moholi ke mouoane* (Wealth is but Mist, Vapour), and Thomas Mofolo's *Pitseng*.

Monono has some bearing on Segoete's own experiences in the Cape. In this book *Khitšane*, The main character, tells Tim, a wealthy, godless neighbour, his own life story. Franz (1930:166–67) gives a concise summary. *Khitšane* loses all his belongings four times. He leaves Lesotho and makes contact with the confusing ways of the whiteman. He consequently gets into trouble with the law – very much reminiscent of the author's own experiences. *Khitšane* then meets one Malebaleba, a scoundrel and trickster, as his name implies – a character comparable to Segoete's "boon companion". He is led into attacking a policeman and, consequently, becoming a lone wolf fleeing from justice. Much later, he meets a changed Malebaleba who has since become an evangelist, and is himself also converted after much ado. He returns home to Lesotho a sickly, wooden-legged cripple who, however, is happy in his own faith. Like himself (Segoete), Tim is not easily moved. The story goes on up to Tim's narrow escape from death (also comparable to the author's own "miraculous escape at the hands of murderers"), his vision and conversion.

The religious–didactic intent of this first novel in Sesotho reflects clearly on Segoete the teacher and pastor. It also reflects on the love he had for others and his goodwill: he does not desire that others experience the hardships he has gone through. This book marks the beginning of imaginative writing within the ambit of the author's socio–religious milieu.

Segoete had pointed the way for other aspirant writers. Franz's comment on this book is very fitting (1930:167):

Judged as a book only, it is a great creation. It is didactic, but not to excess. Secondly, it gives us a vivid picture of Bantu life, not only in Lesotho but amongst Europeans... The picture is painted by a man who is intimately acquainted with this life, and gives it to us in a very convincing manner.

Mofolo's second novel, *Pitseng* (1910), though still retaining the religious flavour of the first, is a more credible reflection of the actual conditions of life among the Basotho of the time. Emphasis is more on realism than the allegorical element imported from John Bunyan. The title is the name of a

village in the North--western regions of Lesotho.

This book is the story of one Mr. Katse, a teacher pastor, who, on his arrival in Pitseng, builds a congregation and a school. Amongst his pupils, who are generally inclined to frivolousness and perverseness, two (Alfred Phakoe and Aria Sebaka) distinguish themselves as being of somewhat sound character. He singles them out to himself as his future helpers. In due course Alfred Phakoe goes to a training institution in the Cape, while Aria Sebaka is appointed Mr. Katse's helper. Whilst in the Cape, Alfred resists all temptations to frivolous love affairs by young girls, an activity that characterised youth life at the institution. During this period Mr. Katse maintains contact between Aria and Alfred by means of letters and subtle insinuations. Alfred ultimately completes his studies and returns home, later to take over the school. The story ends with the culmination of Mr. Katse's plans: the marriage of Alfred Phakoe and Aria Sebaka.

Franz (1930:172) regards this book as highly as *Chaka* (which is discussed hereunder), and makes the distinction that *Chaka* is a historical novel, while *Pitseng* is more of an ethnographical novel. He comments about Mr. Katse's wide sympathies and steadfastness of purpose, which, though he was "initiated into the individualistic aims of christianity", help him remain one with his own people. His active participation in bringing Alfred and Aria together confirms the latter observation, and seems to vindicate the Sesotho custom of choosing spouses for one's children, rather than make him a "shameless matchmaker" with whom Franz would have the reader sympathise. As if in agreement with the above fact, Gérard (1971:113) feels that "the many distinctions in courtship and marriage in the book illustrate the confusion that, in Lesotho as in many parts of Africa, resulted from the intrusion of christian ethics." He then contrasts *Moeti oa Bochabela* — "which was marked by the unquestioning identification of european mores with the christian ideal" — with *Pitseng* — which "strongly emphasises the contrast between this ideal and actual behaviour among christians, both black and white" (1971:114). Mofolo brings out this incongruity through Alfred Phakoe's experiences in the Cape, amongst "native christians... and most white people who put God last in everything."

There is a striking resemblance between Z.D. Mangoaela's description of Everitt L. Segoete's (Mofolo's teacher) characters and Mofolo's portrayal of Mr. Katse. Mangoaela describes Segoete as "a genuine kind of man who won respect, for in him were sincerity, charity, love and faith in full measure" (Franz 1930:153). Describing Mofolo's Mr. Katse, Franz (op. cit.:171) says, "Mr Katse is a man of wide sympathies, humble in mind and simple in his mode of life."

This book, therefore, seems to be a product of the combination of christian values and the impact made on Mofolo by his teacher, (Mr. Segoete), who was an embodiment of these values. It is simultaneously an advocacy of christian virtue and a monument to a true Mosotho christian teacher.

Dieterlen and Kohler's allusions to *Chaka* in *Livre d'or de la mission du Lessouto* are quite revealing: "*Un quatri ème manuscrit, consacré par le même auteur à décrire les moeurs des Zoulous, est en ce moment même entre le mains d'un missionnaire auquel Mofolo a demandé des critiques et des conseils... une telle proŷficité est imprudente.*" (Gérard, 1971:128).

This translates as: A fourth manuscript, by the same author, describing the customs of the Zulus is at this very moment in the hands of a missionary to whom Mofolo applied for criticism and advice... such abundant productiveness is rash.

From the above outflow of disturbed emotion, it is apparent that there was a manuscript submitted by Mofolo before *Chaka*. If truly so, it has been a sad loss to Sesotho literary history.

Gérard (1971:128) takes a subtle swipe at the authors of the above quotation: "What, if anything, they may have thought of Balzac has not been recorded." The New Consolidated Encyclopedia has it that Honore de Balzac "one of the greatest French novelists... produced novels at a rapid rate, including both masterpieces and pot-boilers ... in twenty years he had written over eighty novels."

This disparity in the standards of judgement can only reflect on negativeness of attitude that is inconsistent with expected missionary norms. Consequently, *Chaka*, Thomas Mofolo's third published novel, though completed in 1910, could only be published in 1925.

Unlike the first two of Mofolo's books, *Chaka* is a typically African expression of traditional African life circumstances seen through typically African eyes. It survived severe missionary repression to become the most acclaimed literary work of art then penned by a Black Southern African. The missionaries concerned could not find Mofolo very charming because, as Franz (1930:168) puts it, "the difference between Mofolo and the other authors, except Segoe, is that he does not moralise. He describes, he narrates, he pictures — and leaves it to the reader to draw his own conclusions."

Chaka is the story of a Zulu young man, Chaka, who was born under difficult socio-cultural circumstances: Senzangakhona, a Zulu chief whose two wives have no male children, organises a big feast at which he falls in love with beautiful Nandi. Later Nandi falls pregnant, and they marry haphazardly, but not undetected by the senior wives. Conception out of wedlock is, according to the current Zulu custom, punishable by death. Chaka is born and Jobe, the overlord, is informed that he is heir to the chieftainship. In due course Dingana and Mhlangana are born of the senior wives, and Senzangakhona's troubles begin: he is blackmailed into discarding Nandi and Chaka for fear of being exposed. The discarded Nandi and her unprotected son find life very difficult, with Chaka being made "mmutla-kotlwatsebe" (the butt of everyman's anger and contempt). In spite of this, Chaka shows no fear but nobility of spirit and courage. He has great strength and physical beauty, and, whilst still young, kills a lion whilst men flee, and later rescues a girl from the jaws of a hyena when nobody else dares. Meanwhile Nandi seeks the assistance of an Isanusi to have her son doctored for the chieftainship. His valour elicits praises from the girls, and puts the other men to shame to the extent that Mfokazana assisted by others try to kill him. The casualties of Chaka's spear enrages Senzangakhona to the extent that, with a little goading by his wives, he orders Chaka's instant execution, but Chaka escapes leaving more

casualties behind. After brooding and being hardened in the forest, Chaka is brought up by Dingiswayo (Jobe's successor as King). He grows in the king's favour until he becomes the leader of the impis. On Senzangakhona's death he challenges Mfokazana for the chieftainship and vanquishes him. He later also gains the supreme position of king by treacherous means: by delaying when Dingiswayo needs his help desperately, until he (Dingiswayo) is killed by the enemy. Hence forth he becomes ruthless in his quest for greater power, and is led to kill his betrothed Noliwa and his own mother whilst under the spell of Isanusi. After building his great nation, the iron-handed Chaka is himself killed by his halfbrothers, Dingana and Mhlangana, after years of bloodshed and wastage of life.

Swanepoel (1983:61) handles all three of Mofolo's books together and regards *Moeti* and *Pitseng* as instances of subtle translation of literary norms from John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. He then indicates the diametrical opposition between the life of Bunyan's allegorical "Christian" and "the life and times of the great Zulu king, Shaka", who "represents an alarming clash between good and bad pre-christian mores". Mofolo's first two novels were well received for they were in step with the missionary ideals. *Chaka* was not only controversial, but also aroused so much interest that, to date, it has been translated into five European languages.

Literary giants have commented on the book in various strains. Franz (1930:170), who was more impressed with Mofolo's picturesque style, says of the book: "It is a great work throughout, with moments sublime, that grip even the wildest imagination."

Gérard (1971:124) quotes Victor Ellenberger as saying that *Chaka* is the story of a human passion, ambition, first uncontrolled, then uncontrollable, which fatally grows and develops as if fanned by some implacable Nemesis, and consumes everything until it ruins the moral personality and leads to the inescapable punishment." He then equates this Nemesis or retribution with "the very same immanent logic of criminal punishment which was at work in *Macbeth*."

Most of the critics concern themselves with the characters "Chaka" almost to the utter exclusion of the other aspects of the book. Gérard (op cit:119) believes that "they were struck by the fact that Mofolo's interpretation seemed to turn him not only into a human being with definable and intelligible human motivation, but almost as a victim of his own malignant fate." Hence their overwhelming emphasis on the role of the Isanusi, which almost reduces the hero into a manipulated "puppet". Tekateka (1967:44) declares briefly that "this book is an image of life, not a mere record of experience."

It is noteworthy that Swanepoel (1976:13) sees greater agreement between the books *Chaka* and *Moeti oa Bochabela* than between the former and *Pitseng*. He points out the overlapping references to the myth of the Creation, the supernatural experiences of the characters (viz. the re-incarnation of the gods in both books), and the search for glory by both Chaka and Fekisi; with the exception that the former sought earthly kingdom while the latter sought heavenly glory. He, however, regards the story *Chaka* as "n ontvouing van die tragiek van verkeerde keuses wat afgestem word op die geboorte, lewe, regering en ondergang van die Zuluheerser" (1976:12). Commenting on the style, Swanepoel (1987:99) points out that Mofolo created Chaka "in a stylistic grandeur that even withstood the disadvantages of translation. Here the juxtaposition of historical facts and fictitious-mythological elements are brought in captivating balance." It is a pity that this, to Dieterlen and Kohler, was only a description of Zulu customs. They did not expect, and could not accept, that, after so short a period of literacy among the Basotho, a novel of such "highly organised plot" (Tekateka, 1967:49) could have reached the press. Such originality of approach and refreshingly african social milieu could not be easily comprehended by these missionaries who saw in only one direction.

For the first time, in *Chaka*, Mofolo depicts highly organised social and political life amongst "primitive people." He presents more than the superficial man with whom the readership of the time was till then acquainted. He also presents "the hidden romantic side of man's life, which includes the pure passions such as love, hatred, joys, sorrows, fears,

jealousies, etc." (Tekateka, 1967:67).

This book is simultaneously a reflection of the psychology of the development of character, and a warning against being ruled by impulses. It was the first imaginative work of art every aspect of which was well motivated. Tekateka rounds it off well in his conclusion to his study of Mofolo's works:

When we consider imaginative writing, creative energy, conflict and patient microscopic analysis of motive and passion found in his last work (i.e. *Chaka*), we are compelled to conclude that Mofolo still holds an undisputed, pre-eminent place in Southern Sotho literature."

(Tekateka, 1967:98).

Unfortunately this book marks the end of a period of literary productiveness, and the beginning of a lull. Mofolo, the most promising of Basotho writers, left Lesotho even before this, his last, book was published, turning his back on writing. He left Lesotho a dejected man, "disappointed by the narrowmindedness of the missionaries" (Gérard, 1971:131).

2.5 RESUMÉ

The only common factor between the Biblical stories of the missionaries and the Basotho tales is that they all sought to regulate behaviour and engender awe and respect for God on the one hand, and the ancestors on the other. While the Bible stories were downright didactic, the Sesotho folk-tales were both didactic and entertaining. Sesotho literature owes Jacottet a great debt for having found time to collect and publish the Sesotho folktales in his two volumes of *Litšomo*, over and above his work as a missionary. This was a record of the tales as told by the Basotho of his time. The first attempts at written work by the early Basotho writers were, likewise, a mere record of known events, activities and tales, merely for their preservation:

e.g. Sekese's *Mekhoa le maele*, Segoete's *Raphepheng*, Motsamai's *Mehla* and Mangoaela's *Har'a libatana*.

The prime importance of Mabile's *Leeto la Mokrete* is in the fact that, for the first time, it pricked the imagination of the young would-be authors. While *Raphepheng*, *Mehla* and *Har'a libatana* described real life as known, for its own sake, *Leeto* described life with the view to drawing attention to some christian goal. Sekese and Mofolo later followed Bunyan's allegorical presentation with *Pitso ea linonyana* and *Moeti oa Bochabela*, respectively, whereby they were chiding and exhorting respectively. These were, in spite of subtle external interferences, original and purely imaginative works, and could actually be regarded as marking the beginning of what is referred to above as the Literary Period for reasons already indicated. This dates from about 1910 especially with the publication of *Monono* and *Pitseng* one after the other, in the same year (1910).

In these latter publications it is found that, though the setting is, to a large extent rural and African, the themes were religiously conditioned. However, Mofolo, unlike Segoete, does not at any stage moralise. He narrates his story whilst remaining in the background. In his last novel, *Chaka*, he broke away completely from the general mental dependence on missionary dogma, thereby not only enraging the likes of H. Dieterlen and F. Kohler, but also producing a masterpiece that has stood the test of time.

In all three of Mofolo's novels, there seems to be some kind of recourse to the mysticism that typified oral lore in the pre-literate period. As indicated earlier in this chapter, Swanepoel established a subtle thematic link between the book *Chaka* and the "origin of death" myth. This apparent relapse to pre-missionary outlook (as was thought) seems to have been the major cause of missionary displeasure with Mofolo, and, consequently, his own disillusionment and frustration, and eventual abandonment of literary productivity. A long lull followed on the publication of *Chaka* in 1925, which marked the end of what we may call the missionary era in the development of Sesotho literature.

D.T.C. Bereng's *Lithothokiso tsa Moshoeshoe le tse ling* (Poems on Moeshoeshoe, and others), published in 1931, came like the first shower after a literary drought, and heralded a new era of imaginative writing, more secular inclined with minimum, if any, missionary interference. This was the Post-Missionary Period, a period characterised by greater flexibility and experimentation, allowing greater intersystemic interaction. This period, stretching from 1930-60, is the subject of our discussion in the chapters following hereunder.

CHAPTER THREE

THE DEVELOPMENT OF POETRY IN THE POST-MISSIONARY LITERARY PERIOD

3.0 INTRODUCTION

As indicated in the previous chapter, missionary repression of manuscripts that were on purely secular subjects, especially Mofolo's *Chaka*, dealt a soul-killing blow to enthusiastic aspirant writers and to Mofolo himself. The period between Segoete and Mofolo, called the "golden age" of Sesotho literature by Gérard (1971:141), was followed by what he calls a "decline". He also attributes this decline to some kind of introspection and appraisal of the Mosotho's "real" past and present in comparison with the idealistic christian mores. It is also attributable to lack of available funds due to World War I of 1914–18. Whatever the cause, this is a noticeable transition from the missionary to the post-missionary era in the history of Sesotho literature. It was also a period of reflection and reorganization of purpose — a period of decision-making.

A new period was to follow on this lull, which was characterised by greater freedom of intersystemic movement in subject matter, style and theme. In poetry, a new genre, the *dithothokiso*, was to be born as a result of intersystemic contact, which included both literary and socio-political forces and sources, and the Mosotho poet's growing involvement in the turmoil of the mid-century inside and outside South Africa. As will be seen, the literary contact which included growing exposure to English and Afrikaans, found a way into the creative endeavours of the Mosotho poet, who, on his part, sought a way to accommodate them alongside his own basic traditional experience with the genre.

The new period was heralded by the publication of D.T.C. Bereng's *Lithothokiso tsa Moshoeshoe le tse ling* (1931), a volume of emotional poems. Up till then only oral traditional poetry was known, which was both panegyric and epical in nature. A new concept of poetry was born in

Sesotho, which was typified by a wider variety of subjects both secular and religious, coupled with a peculiar consciousness of form, which was the unavoidable result of putting traditional poetry on print. As Swanepoel (1990:14) puts it, "when an oral poem is reduced to writing, layout becomes important, since it could be viewed as a vehicle of, or substitute for orality." Bereng's work was thus the beginning of the oral-written interface in Sesotho poetry. Though he was not the first Mosotho writer of modern poetry per se¹⁾, his volume was the first of the genre ever to be published, thereby clearly marking the beginning of a new era.

Poetry is one genre which literary scholars find difficult to define exactly, rather than describe it. Some plausible definitions have, however, been attempted by scholars of note:

1. "Poetry is a philosophy, often a substitute for religion, in which man expresses his ideals, hopes and strivings". (Gordon & De Villiers, 1970:xv).
2. "It is a comprehensive term which can be taken to cover any kind of metrical composition" (Cuddon, 1979:520).
3. Wordsworth is quoted as defining poetry as:
 - a) "the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge; the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all science" (Herford, C.H., 1925:1)
 - b) "the imaginative expression of strong feelings, usually rhythmical... the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings recollected in tranquility." (Shaw, 1972:292).

Khaketla (1954:i) defines poetry (which he calls *reneketso*) as "*seaparo sa mehopolo ya rona, mme ka yona re bopa ditshwantsho tse bonwang ka mahlo a moya feela, ka ho sebedisa mantswe a hlwaihweng ka hloko e kgolo...*" (the

1) Swanepoel (1990:22) mentions Everitt Segoete's "*Koli-a'malla*" (Elegy), which appeared in the *Leselinyana* of 8 November 1918.

garment of our imagination, by means of which we create images that are seen by the spiritual eye only, by using words which have been selected with great care...).

This definition of Khaketla's is somewhat closer to Wordsworth's, which seems to cover all the above.

3.1 D.C.T. BERENG – FORERUNNER

The first publication of a poetry volume which was a clear deviation from the known praise poetry, and had clear characteristics of a new outlook, was *Lithothokiso tsa Moshoeshoe le tse ling* (Poems on Moshoeshoe, and others), written by D.C.T. Bereng and published by Morija Sesuto Book Depot in 1931. Though this book was published that early (in book form), it was in many ways typical of the poetry of the period commencing in the 1930's: Bereng's poetic insight was ahead of his contemporaries, as will be seen in due course.

According to Ngcangca (1989:1) David Cranmer Theko Bereng was born of Letsie and Lerato Bereng at Masite, ha Mohlalefi, in 1905. But M.D. Mohapeloa (1950:32) states that he was born at Rothe, ha Bereng, in 1900. Both agree that he was of the Basotho royal descent. He attended the Morija High School, from whence he proceeded to the Lovedale Institute, in the Cape province for a commercial course. He then returned to Rothe, where he became chief before migrating to Qacha's Nek. He was at one time acting on behalf of Chief Theko Makhaola whose secretary he was, and was also a member of the National Assembly of Basutoland. He joined the army during World War II in 1940, and travelled to a number of European countries. He rose to the rank of Sergeant Major. He was widely known as an impartial and disciplined ruler. He died in July 1973. His book, *Lithothokiso tsa Moshoeshoe le tse ling*, is the first poetry volume of its kind in Sesotho, in the sense that it contained not only epical panegyrics, but also lyrics and elegies of modern type poetry. This volume contains eleven poems on different but thematically related subjects.

Swanepoel (1990:27) intimates that these poems were dedicated to Mrs. Mabile, the wife of the Rev. A. Mabile, and were first serialised in the

Leselinyana from as early as 28 April 1922. He indicates that several issues of the journal contained an acknowledging introduction to Bereng's contribution, which commenced with the following words:

Ho uena nkhono Jefreu Mabile! Empa ke lehlohonolo u no u ntlhomelle, ua 'neha thebe ho loanela tumelo...

(*Leselinyana* 1922:3)

(To you, grandmother Mrs. Mabile! But I am fortunate because you have armed me, you gave me a shield to fight for faith...)

Swanepoel then concludes that "from these remarks of Bereng it is clear that he was encouraged to try a new form of poetic expression and to break new grounds..." (1990:27). "Arming" may, however, go beyond mere encouragement to giving the necessary knowledge, i.e. teaching. This may explain the unmistakable overflow of gratitude in the dedicatory acknowledgement. The early age (22 yrs according to Mohapeloa and 17 yrs according to Ngcangca) at which Bereng's poetry came into print is quite remarkable. It is a clear indicator that Mrs Mabile had seen something in him when she set him on the experimental course.

The first poem '*Hlaloso ea lithothokiso ka theneketso*' (An Explanation of Poetry by means of Verse) is not only a decorative explanation of what poetry is, but is also an apt prologue to the volume. The following arouse expectations of "properties of lyricism" (Swanepoel, 1990:27):

bokheleke bo qapuoang (composed eloquence);

ketsetso ea batho ba pelong ("gesture towards people close to your heart" —

Swanepoel, 1990:26).

Mabinabine a khau ea tlakane (thoughts about the chest ornament of the
vulture);

fela tse phetoang ho tšehoa ("songs chanted joyfully" — Swanepoel 1990:26)

hlokofatso ea maikutlo ho tsejoa (expression of hurt feelings); and

polelo ea tab'e tiileng (statement of truth).

This conception of poetry is so close to Wordsworth's, as seen above, that it can justifiably be attributed to "the crossing of cultures and traditions and

a subsequent overlaying of strategies and devices" (Swanepoel, 1990:28) which resulted also from Bereng's formal education at Morija and Lovedale.

In '*Tlhaho ea Moshoeshoe*' (Moshoeshoe's birth) the great king's birth is presented in the manner described in the introductory '*Hlaloso ea lithothokiso ka theneketso*'. Bereng tells of unusual things happening on the day of Moshoeshoe's birth – strange noises, swift movements of women,... the restlessness of beasts and cattle, etc:

Ke la'ng motseng lekutukutu?
Rata le bilietsa'ng liotloaneng?
Ho utloiloe'ng basali ba chalakang le malapa?...
Naha ea hlaka 'mala,
Thaba tsa eona tsa lumaela...
Phoofolo tsa etsa lehlapha–hlapha... etc (p. 3)
 (What strange noises are in the village?
 The noise in the court–yard – what does it portend?
 What has been heard, that women move swiftly to and fro?...
 The veld brightened its colour,
 The mountains, also, resounded...
 The animals scuttle in disarray...) etc.

The expectation aroused by these strange happenings is strengthened by the series of rhetorical questions in the opening lines, and further reinforced by the onomatopoeic words, *lekutukutu* (agitation), *chalaka* (swift movement), *lumaela* (resounding), *lehlapha–hlapha* (hurried movement), etc, together with the spontaneous alliteration.

After these allusions he presents his subject in typical *bokheleke bo qapuoang* (see above):

Ha Libenyana ho mohlankana.
Lesea la hlaha le thebe letsohong.
 (At Libenyana's there is (born) a young man.
 A baby was born shield in hand).

This powerful image foreshadowed what history later recorded about the great King Moshoeshoe I, '*Mokelli oa basotlehi* (the gatherer of the down-trodden; p. 26).

This is a commemoration of the birth of Moshoeshoe, one of the first odes in Sesotho.

This ode is followed by an elegy on the death of Moshoeshoe (the first modern elegy in Sesotho), '*Thothokiso tsa lefu la Morena Moshoeshoe*' (Poetry on the death of King Moshoeshoe). Again Bereng uses natural phenomena as indicators that something unusual has happened:

*Tsatsi la hlaha mereketlo bochabela—naha,
Le hlaha le nyoloha bolepeletsisi.
Khoeli e chaba e ikhohlile ka lithaba;
'Mala oa khoeli o likenkeng,
Esita le oa mookoli o shapa o boea. (p. 5)*

(The dawn came trembling from the east,
Light streaks hanging from the sun.
The rising moon leans on the mountains;
The colour of the moon is multifarious,
Even that of the rainbow comes and goes.)

For his age and limited experience in life (at the time of these compositions), Bereng's style is phenomenal. He uses words and expressions that seem to have the atmosphere of the poem inherent in them for instance, the "trembling" sun; "hanging" rays (indicative of sorrow); the moon "leaning" (as if scared) on the mountains, etc. This unerringly appropriate choice of words spreads throughout the volume.

After all these and other omens, he goes on to say:

*Oho sechaba, Ntate o s'a khalehile!
Ruri Ntate o s'a etile!... (p. 10)*

'Mele o se o tletse lehloa.
Le tidima ha e sa na thuso. (P. 11)

(Oh, nation, our father is already asleep!
 Truly our father has already journeyed!...
 The body is already icy.
 Even the herbal doctor is no longer of any help).

This reference to Moshoeshoe's death in a series of euphemisms is reflective of Sesotho values, while the allusion to the herbal doctor reflects his place in the Basotho socio-cultural system.

In this poem Bereng is lamenting the loss to the nation of a great king. From this elegy, the reader is taken to what is entitled "The epitaph on Moshoeshoe's tomstone", *Billeng la Moshoeshoe*, which combines the qualities of an ode and an epic. It is testimony to greatness, love, justice and wisdom:

Mona ho robetse Moshoeshoe Moshoaila,
Ea bopileng machaba sechaba. (p. 26)
 (Here lies Moshoeshoe, the shaver,
 Who moulded nations into a nation).

This reflects on his greatness and statemanship.

Morena oa toka, e seng Tšobotsi
'Nete, e seng leeme (p. 26)
 (A king of justice rather than appearance,
 Truth rather than partiality.)

This reflects on his sense of justice and equality.

O robetse 'Mokelli oa basotlehi (p. 26)
 (He is asleep, the gatherer of the down-trodden).

This is a reflection of his love.

*Eena 'Musi oa Basotho le Matebele,
Mofani oa limpho tsa borena. (p. 26)*
(He who is the ruler of the Basotho and the Nguni,
The giver of kingly gifts).

This is a reflection of his wisdom and statemanship.

He ends up by calling upon all living creatures to repeat his message; and upon the string of the Sotho musical instrument to hum the words that,

Moshoeshoe o moholo Lesotho' (p. 28)
(Moshoeshoe is a great name in Lesotho).

Talking about Moshoeshoe's greatness does not alleviate Bereng's deep feelings of loss. These feelings overflow into what he calls '*Matšeliso a Moshoeshoe*' (Consolation and condolences on Moshoeshoe). Whilst cursing death, in this poem, he pleads for consolation by way of as good a successor as Moeshoeshoe:

*Molimo, Ntate, 'Mopi oa tsohle,
U ke u le soetse,
U re fe matšeliso ho re busa,
Moren'a re laele sechaba. (p. 29)*
(God, our Father, creator of all things,
If only you could snub it (death),
And give us some consolation to rule us,
A king to rule us, the nation).

Bereng then turns his attention on the now "kingless" Lesotho and her people, in '*Naha ea Moshoeshoe*'. This is an emotional description of the beauty of the country, the people, its freedom and the animals, in his own inimitable statement—response fashion:

Ba mpotsa tsa botle ba Lesotho,
Tsa bodulo ba lona,
Tsa boiketlo ba batho,
Tsa mekhabo ea tsona;
Ba re ke ba qoqele,
Ke ba etsetse pale;
Ke ba phetela ke ba joetsa tsohle—tsohle
Tsa fatše lena la bohle:
"Botle ba lona, bana beso,
Eka ba naleli ea meso;... (p. 31)

(They ask me about the beauty of Lesotho,
 Of the conditions there,
 Of the freedom of the people,
 Of the beautiful plains;
 They say I should explain,
 I should tell them the story;
 I explain and tell them everything
 About this country of everybody:
 "Its beauty, my bretheren,
 Is like the morning star;...)

He goes on in that fashion, and ends up with a nostalgic recollection of the past cum invocation of Divine guidance:

Ba nkopa sefela sa Lesotho,
Sa bodulo ba lona;
Sa dillo tsa Basotho,
Sa boiketlo ba bona;
Ba re ke ba binele,
Ba ke ba se mamele:
"Molim'o boloke Moren'a rona e Moholo,
Joale ka eloa oa boholo!
O mo fe bohla le kelello,
O mo fe matla le mamello,
O loanele sechaba direng tsa sona!..." (37/38).

(They ask of me the song of Lesotho,
 Of the circumstances there;
 Of the woes of the Basotho,
 Of their happiness;
 They say I should sing to them,
 That they may listen to it:
 "May God spare our Great King,
 Just like the one of old!
 Give him wisdom and wit,
 Give him strength and patience,
 Help the nation against its enemies!...)

Bereng employs structure to supplement the simple but effective style that suggests the simplicity of life in Lesotho. Each stanza consists of an indication of a question or request, followed by the appropriate response. The first part, in each instance, pricks the reader's interest, which is satisfied in the second part.

The lyrical element of this poem, viewed against the prevailing literary circumstances, is a lot ahead of Bereng's own times. This can be attributed, inter alia, to the fact that, as a member of the Basotho royalty, he was deeply concerned about the future of a Lesotho without Moshoeshoe. To put it more aptly, he very ably went back in time to be able to feel and express the concerns of the committed Basotho leadership immediately after Moshoeshoe's death.

The difference between this poem and '*Motse oa heso*' (My Home Village) is that the longing is concentrated on his own home in Rothe and her people, animals and vegetation, which he loves as dearly as his country:

Empa hae la ka.
Eka fatše la heso; (p. 40)
 (But my home,
 Is like my country,...)

This is a wholly lyrical poem that has no mixture of any other element.

'*Botsomi*' (Art of Hunting) is a ballad which mirrors the plight of a hunter who is lost in a dark cave from which he is saved by his dogs. The mutual love and trust that exist between the hunter and his dogs seem to be ideals Bereng seeks to advocate between master and servant, ruler and the ruled; and are an allusion to, and subtle longing for, Moshoeshoe's days:

Tsa tla pela hae holim'a sekhetše.
Ntja li oka—oka mong'a tsona,
Tsietsing li hapola mo—li—fepi. (p. 44)

(They came to his side at the top of the hole.
 The dogs nursed and fidgeted with their master,
 In tight situations they remember their feeder).

This poem has the message of "one good turn deserves another."

In '*Mahlomola a motho le boikhothatso ba hae*' (One's Distress and Self-comforting), the persona mourns over being an orphan who is despised and taunted by close friends and family members:

Fatše lea 'nena, kea haulana,
Khutsana ke le tsietsing kea tšehoa
Ke tšehoa ke lona baratua ba me,
Ke tšehoa ke ba pelong ea me. (p. 46).

(The world shuns me, I'm pathetic,
 I, an orphan in a predicament, am derided
 I am ridiculed by you, my beloved,
 I am scorned by the ones closest to my heart.)

This plight is subtly attributed to Moshoeshoe's absence, and the persona directs his attention to the forefathers, where he has gone:

*Khoele, ak'u ikhohle, ke rure,
 Keo bona bo-rare Baimong;
 Teng ke ba phetele tsa koano,
 Ke ba phetele litaba bongata, (p. 47)*

(String, present yourself, that I may soar,
 I should go to our fathers yonder;
 There I should tell about things down here,
 I should tell them many things).

This constant allusion to Moshoeshe, directly or indirectly, links up with the previous poems to form an underlying unity. '*Mahlale a mahlale*' (The greatest of wisdoms) is a lyric extolling the wisdom, power and might of the Creator, that transcend man's understanding:

*Bohlale bo tsoile ho Ea bohlale,
 Kelello ke matla a Ea bohlale,
 Hlokomelo ke ketso ea Ea bohlale... (p. 48)*
 (Wisdom came from the Wise one,
 Intelligence is the strength of the Wise one,
 Care is the deed of the Wise one...)

In the first two stanzas the word *bohlale* appears five times, and the inclusive quantitative *-hle* (as in *bohle*, *tsohle* etc) nine times. This emphasises the limitlessness and the all-embrasive wisdom and care of the Creator. As if in answer to the above lamentations, comes this flood of praise of the Almighty, and reassurances, as in a church ritual, which is an overt indication of missionary influence. Swanepoel (1990:29) observes that "substantial parts of stanza 35 are in praise of God, however, not in the style of the *dithoko*, but in that of old Israel handed down through the psalms of David." A section of this twenty-six page long poem he found to be "reminiscent of Psalm 136.

After the somber atmosphere created in the preceding poems, Bereng comes out clearly in recognition of the fact that,

*Nako le mehla ea tse bohehang
Tsa ho thaba, ho bapala, e teng,
Tsa ho leboha le ho rorisa li teng. (p. 49)*

(There are fine times and fine days
Of happiness and play;
Of thanksgiving and praising.)

This is clearly in keeping with the third chapter of the Book of the Ecclesiastes. Bereng's message, stated briefly, in this very long poem is that "when all is lost, not everything is lost: look upward." This is the crowning emotional experience in the book, and it offers the final consolation.

When all is said and done, Bereng appeals for justice and fair play in '*Sello sa likhutsana*' (The Cry of Orphans). The refrain is intended to create the atmosphere of an elegy, which it unfortunately fails to do. This poem would be better without the last stanza, semantically, though the would-be last stanza (stanza 4) ends in typical African fashion: relegating things to God, in stead of doing something about them. This lamentation over injustice, articulated in the opening couplet, crowns the volume which constitutes the birth, life and death of Moshoeshoe, with the consequences of the latter to the Basotho nation, as seen through the obviously missionary influenced eyes of the author. At the end (omega) of the book, he surrenders or resigns himself to the will of "the Alpha and Omega".

3.2 LEROTHOLI, JANKIE AND MOPELI-PAULUS

There can be no gainsaying of the impact this book has made in the development of this genre in Sesotho. As will be seen shortly, Bereng was more than a decade ahead of his contemporaries. George Lerotholi's *Lithoko tsa Morena e moholo Seeiso Griffith* (Praises of the Senior Chief Seeiso Griffith), published eight years later (1939) by the Morija Sesuto Book Depot, is a small volume of traditional praise poems composed exclusively for Seeiso Griffiths his own brother, the second son of Nathaniel Griffiths Lerotholi who had been named after the then governor Charles Griffiths (Damane 1960:58). As of now not much more is known about either George

or Seeiso except that, at one time, their father had settled at Phamong, a place to which the writer alludes on page 20:

*Phamong koana lerata le qalehe,
La phaka la utloahala Matsieng
Hore monongoaha Seeiso o se a hotse.*
(Out in Phamong noise was heard,
Which quickly spread to Matsieng
The news that this year Seeiso is full grown).

Much like Bereng's volume, this one begins with Seeiso's birth, '*Tsa tlhaho ea hae ea borena*' (On his chieftain birth) wherein unusual excitement is depicted, together with the baby's refusal to breast-feed and his symbolic defiance on the kraal floor:

O tsohile moiteling a raha (p. 5)
(He awoke on the dry dung, kicking in defiance).

This was an indication that he was *mohale ea tsoetsoeng le marumo* (a warrior born spear-in-hand; p. 5).

Though this book is referred to as a volume of praise-poems (see above), it is, unlike the traditional panegyric, a combination of a few devices. The most striking feature is the conscious division of the poems into stanzas, however irregular. The poems are mostly panegyric in style and rhythm as well as the repetition patterns of praise-poems. The last verse of the poem '*Ha a neoa taelo ea ntoa...*' (when he received war instructions) will do to illustrate this:

*Linyane la tau, la Raletšabisa,
Linyane la tau ekare la nkoel
Le bonoa ka masisitlo molaleng,
Ngoana o futsitse mong' a lebitso,
Lebitso la Seeiso, la Rangoane.* (p. 21)

(The cub of a lion, Raletšabisa,
 The cub of a lion is like a leopard's!
 It is seen by the small and thick ears on the neck,
 The child has taken after the owner of the name,
 The name of Seeiso, of his uncle.)

Vertical or initial linking is glaring in the first two lines, and semantic parallelism in the next two, while interlocking enables the penultimate line to flow into the last.

These poems are odic in intent, having titles that indicate their commemoration of different occasions in Seeiso Griffith's life: his early chieftainship, his first battle, his consultation with the High Commissioner in Pretoria, etc. They also exhibit the narrative property of a ballad. This volume, therefore, is not only a break-away from missionary influence, but also from the exclusivity of praise that had dominated poetry in the previous period. George Lerotholi has, however, retained the rich metaphor and eulogues that are characteristic of panegyrics.

A closer look at this volume exhibits some structural similarity with Bereng's. They both have the birth theme in the beginning, followed by themes relating to the subject character of the volume, concluding with a poem whose title has no apparent relationship to the said subject character. In fact, Lerotholi seems to have used Bereng's volume as model for his own.

This seems to be an instance of intrasystemic as well as intertextual interaction.

In the same year as Lerotholi (1939), H.E. Jankie published a booklet entitled *Lithoko tsa Makoloane* (Praise-poems of Boy initiates), released by the Morija Sesuto Book Depot.

Mohapeloa (1950:27) writes that Rev. Henry E. Jankie was born in Masitise in 1876 and, in his schooling days, he was taught by the old Morija teachers of the likes of Joshua Ranthake, Miss H. Cochet, Rev. Dyke, Akim Sello and Mr Goring. He was a teacher for over thirty years at different parts of

Lesotho, and a priest for over twenty years. Whilst at the theological school, he learnt grammar under the Rev. Jacottet. He wrote a manuscript on the Sesotho language which, after Jacottet's death, was entitled "Additions by Jankie" and was incorporated into the latter's Practical Methods to Learn Sesuto. Like many other priests, he recorded Sesotho ways and customs for posterity, and it was in that way that his booklet, *Lithoko tsa Makoloane*, came into being in 1939.

It is interesting to note that, at that time, the missionaries had relented their distaste for the Mosotho's ways. Instead, his peculiar ways had started to interest them, probably so as to fathom him in order to find better ways of converting him. In his introduction to the book he explains the nature of these poems as a medium by means of which the initiates *ba ipolela seo ba leng sona, kamoo ba leng kateng, le tseo ba li entseng* (They tell about what they are, how they are, and what they have done, p. iii). Traditional Sesotho "schools" in a way incorporated what seems to resemble the Mediaeval European Trivium (geometry, logic and rhetoric) which sought to develop the skills of eloquence and oratory in the youth. Among the first things the young initiates did were to adopt a name they fancied, and to compose a praise-poem based on that name. Unlike panegyrics which were epical in nature, the young men, who still had to achieve something, clothed themselves with what they imagined they would achieve, and praised themselves on such basis. In that way they were trained in the skill and eloquence of praise singers (*diroki*). Jankie's following declaration could be taken as the basic principle behind Kunene's (1971:xv) later research and findings:

Boipolelong bona ba bona ba ikapesa ka kobo eo e seng ea bona; ke hore ba ipolela ka diketso tseo ba sa di etsang le ka mohla, le ka sebopeho seo bongata ba se hlokang. (Introduction).

(In this self-praise of theirs, they clothe themselves in a blanket that is not theirs; that is, they tell of deeds they never ever performed, and of qualities most of them do not have).

Initiation eulogues such as *Lefeta* (Surpasser), *Leutla* (Ravisher), *Lenepa* (Marksman), *Hloaisi* (Frightener), *Lentša* (Extractor) are mentioned only

in passing in the introduction, but this whole booklet is a record of Lenepa's series of praise-poems on himself, probably because he surpassed all his contemporaries. It should be noted that, while the theme in panegyrics is praise of chiefs, heroes, cattle and divining bones (the most important things in the life of a traditional Mosotho), in initiation praise-poetry the theme is self-praise based on fancy, and satirising and ridiculing what the young initiate sees to be undesirable and seeks to discourage. The object of his satire may range from his female contemporaries to his parents and the community at large. The first three lines of *Lefeta* already betray his pre-occupation with young damsels:

*Lefeta, khelekhetha u ee tlase,
U e'o bona lotloana meemo,
U e'o bona e metšoana methepa. (p. 5)*
(Lefeta, walk briskly downhill,
Go and inspect the position in the reed hedges,
Go and inspect the dark-skinned beauties).

Lenepa starts the next section by being downright ridiculous just for the fun of it:

*Tholang lerata, ke faola katse;
Ngoan'a katse ha a etsetsoe modidietsane...
Ngoan'a katse a tlola ba sa lemohe, (p. 5)*
(Stop the noise, I am castrating a cat;
The young of a cat needs no ullulation...
The young of a cat broke loose unexpectedly).

He also scoffs at talkative women in a very witty manner:

*Basali bana ha se le ho khathatsa,
Ba 'ne ba re ho rona; Ithokeng!
Mosali ha e le 'malebebere,
Le mo ahele ntlo ka mafikeng,
Enore a bua, lefika le bue. (p. 9)*

(These women are troublesome,
 They keep saying to us, "sing praises!"
 When a woman is a chatter box
 Build her a house among the rocks
 So that, when she speaks, the rock should speak).

This image of a woman talking continuously with the echo of her own words can be no compliment to women. The humour and rich imagery found in this volume is typical of the age and interests of the group. Suffice it to say that this is a very refreshing addition to the then existing literature, which reflected the only platform on which the young Mosotho had some freedom of expression.

A.J. Selane's *Letlotlo la Mosotho* (A Mosotho's Wealth), published in 1942 by Nasionale Pers Beperk, is a volume of eighteen compositions of what should be poetry. At the time of their composition, the author was under the impression that poetry consisted of division into verses or stanzas only. As he, himself, puts it in his preface, *leha libuka tsa Sesotho li se li ba ngata, empa tse ngotsoeng joaleka lithoko kapa ka mokhoa oa litemana, ha tjena, ha li so ka li eba ngata* (though Sesotho books seem to be increasing, but those written in poetic form or in verses, like this one, are not many). So, as can be expected, the whole book contains prose compositions, in verse form, on a variety of subjects, the first five being on natural phenomena: *kameso* (Dawn), *Lea likela* (Sunset), *Mariha* (winter), *Lehlabula* (Summer), *Sefako* (Hail). The themes covered include the socio-cultural (*Khomo ho Mosotho* The importance of a cow to a Mosotho); social phenomena and problems (*Gauteng* – Johannesburg; *Ho moratuo oa ka* – To my lover); technological inventions – (*Sefofane* – The aeroplane); problems of life (*A ile* – Old age), *Ha ke kgaoletsoa ke lefu* – if my days are cut short); etc. The latter does not seem to be free of some kind of influence by John Keat's sonnet, "When I have fears that I may cease to be".

Lenake (1982:9) also observes that Selane presents his subject "in so many words and in such an explicit manner that we have no poetry at all, but simple prose narrative," and goes on to compare it to what Dekker (1947:33) calls "Die Poësie", explaining it as follows:

Ek plaas die woord tussen aanhalingstekens, omdat die grootste gedeelte van die gedigte blote rymelary en die naam van poësie onwaardig is.

In spite of the weaknesses pointed out above, it can be said of Selane that he, like Bereng and Jankie, introduced a new and greater variety of themes. It was now up to other, more schooled, poets to put their shoulder to the wagon.

Three years after Selane (in 1945) A.S. Mopeli—Paulus published a small volume of poems entitled *Ho tsamaea ke ho bona* (Travelling widens one's Scope), through the Morija Sesuto Book Depot. Atwell Sidwell Mopeli—Paulus was born of Sidwell and 'Mathota Mopeli—Paulus, in Qwaqwa, in 1913. He is of the ruling Bakoena lineage of the area. Among the schools he attended are the Stofberg Gedenkskool, Alpha Estate, Edendale Teacher's College and the University of the Witwatersrand. At the latter he studied comparative Bantu Studies after attempting medical studies at the same university. During World War II, he joined the army and was assigned to the Cape Corps with which he travelled to Egypt, Abyssinia and Kenya and was decorated four times for meritorious service. After the war he worked for a legal firm in Johannesburg before taking up a teaching post in Qwaqwa, where he subsequently served for ten years on the Legislative Assembly as member and speaker at different times.

This is a volume of poems that reflect greater insight into modern poetry, though not necessarily of a high standard. The great variety of themes in this book have a bearing on his family background and role, as well as his experiences during the war. The former comes out clearly in '*Batsoali*' (Parents), '*Phofong*' (Mont—Aux—Souces) and '*Haeso*' (My home).

'*Batsoali*' is an ode written in honour of his own parents and his own upbringing. The theme is glaring in the concluding verse:

*Ho masea 'ohle,
Ke hlaba mokhosi:*

Ratang batsoali
Ka lipelo tsohle. (p. 11)
 (To all the "babies",
 I make a plea:
 Love your parents
 With all your hearts).

Phofong is a description, not only of the mountain peak, but of the author's homeland, Qwaqwa, and how he dotes on it. The same sentiment is carried on to *Haeso*, a nostalgic recollection of his own longing when he was away from home during the war:

Esita le mane moo ke toailang,
Ke le hole le naha ea ka ea tsoalo,
Tsa balichaba li nkhanhetsa ka monate;
Ha eso limomonyane li ntlela ke lutse,
Ha e le e mong a ka be a se na ho hloro. (p. 27)
 (Even there, where I wander,
 Far away from the land of my birth,
 foreign pleasures seeking to steal my heart;
 At my home, delights I get with ease,
 Were I someone, homesick would I not be.)

The above verse expresses the longing, not of just a patriot, but also of one who enjoys the comforts *ke dutse* (whilst at ease) of a royal household. In the same breath he denounces the "meddling" of foreigners (the colonialists) that resulted in the loss of lots of such privileges as befitted his birth:

Lerato la ka la 'nete la tlhaho,
Le hojane ke 'nile ka le hanyetsoa,
Le kajeno ho sa ntsane ho le joalo;
Moferefere ke o kenyelitsoe ke balichaba,
Naha ea heso ke thatohatse ho 'na ka mehla. (p. 27)
 (What's dear to me, by birth decreed,
 Tough oft to me denied,
 This day still same witness bearing,

Ill-at-ease still by foreigners made;
My country forever beloved shall be).

This poem is in many ways, but in style, comparable to D.C.T. Bereng's 'Motse oa heso' which was discussed earlier. Perhaps the closeness to their home village and homeland respectively, as seen in these poems, can be attributed to their common social status.

Whilst Bereng showers his village with love and admiration, Mopeli-Paulus blends his love for his homeland with protest against being dispossessed. This sentiment comes out more robustly in his 'Moafrika' (African), and borders on what those in control call incitement. This poem is a blunt and painful reflection of the plight of the Black man in South Africa, even before the much publicised Apartheid regime. He does not "warm up" before getting to the point:

*Ke khotsofetse ke seo ke leng sona,
Le hojane naha ea heso e metse tšehlo;
Maafrika re fetohile likhutsana;
Re fetohile balichaba naheng ea rona;
Naha ea rona e fetotsoe lehaha la masholu. (p. 31)*
(I am content with what I am,
Although our country has grown thorns;
We (Africans) have become orphans,
We have become foreigners in our own country;
Our country has been made a cave for thieves).

Whilst the reader is still shaken by this "straight shooting", he urges him to *tsoha, naha e hapiloe ke balichaba* (wake up! The country has been taken by foreigners). This "fighting" mood betrays the soldier in Mopeli-Paulus. Perhaps, having witnessed bloody battles in defence of countries, he cannot comprehend the Black man's passive submission to being deprived. But later, probably on reflection on the total situation, he realises the virtue of patience and circumspection, and voices it:

*Mohlomong malimabe a 'maleng oa me,
 Oona e leng sesomo ho balichaba;
 'Mala oa ka o tšoana le naha ea ka,
 Afrika ke naha ea mobu oa seloko;
 Monongoaha le eona seli le tla e chabela. (p. 32)*
 (Perhaps the misfortune is in the colour of my skin,
 Which, to the foreigners, is a curse;
 The colour of my skin is like my country,
 Africa is a land of loam soil;
 This year she too will have light shining upon her.)

Mopeli—Paulus's style seems to be matter-of-fact and emotion-conditioned: the lesser the emotion, the milder and subtle; the higher the emotion, the more metaphorical and epigrammatic.

Mopeli—Paulus seeks to achieve a two-fold goal, viz. to conscientise the Black man politically, whilst simultaneously pleading for calm and hope on time. This is easily the best poem in the book, reflecting also exposure to a University of the Witwatersrand that has always been somewhat different. The last few poems in the volume are reflections of the writer's own experiences in World War II, and the very titles tell the story: '*Mahlomola a ntoa*' (The Woes of War) an ode on the war; '*Boliba—bohologo*' (The Great Deep) a description of the fearsome ocean sailed en rout to East Africa; '*Ethiopia*', a description of the country, and Mussolini's attempt at conquering it; '*Mofu Dan Pienaar*' (The Late Dan Pienaar) an elegy on the death of Major-General Daniel Hermanus Pienaar who, according to Encyclopaedia of Southern Africa (1961:393), was renowned "far beyond the limits of Southern Africa" for "his élan and brilliant application of traditional Boer tactics to modern conditions of warfare, particularly after his transfer to the Western Desert in 1942..."; and '*El Alamein*', a vivid description of the fierceness of war:

*Tsatsi la chaba, ea qaqatana e talimane,
 Leholimo le pulufetse ke mosi'a kanono;
 Naha eohle ea thothomela ke ho kirietsa. (p. 43)*

(The sun rose, the pounding was mutual and face-to-face,
The heavens turned grey with canon smoke;
the whole country trembled from the thunder.)

In contrast with the war scenes, the book ends with two Biblically oriented poems '*Naha ea baprofeta*' (The land of the Prophets) a description of a peaceful land of angels, and finally, '*Tšimong ea Edene*' (At the Garden of Eden), a ballad relating the story of the creation and the fall of man, as if to say that all the unpleasantness of the world was caused by Eve. The last verse, which also concludes the volume, goes thus:

*Lefatše lohle le otliloe ka bokhopo ba me,
Ke bile ea soto, ea malimabe har'a basali;
Ka bona kotlo ea ka e boima ho fetisisa;
Kajeno eona noha e tla ntoma serethe,
Re tla ja ka mofufutso oa phatla tsa rona,
Re fetiloe ke boiketlo ba tšimong ea Edene. (p. 47)*

(The whole world has been punished because of me,
I've been the most miserable and unfortunate of women;
I saw my own and most unbearable punishment;
To-day the very snake bites my heel,
We will live by the sweat of our brow,
Having lost the pleasure of the Garden of Eden.)

With this peaceful and solemn lamentation by "Eve", (in the first person mode), after the thunderous war atmosphere, Mopeli-Paulus seems to be saying that if she had not caused the first transgression of the original interdiction, man would never have transgressed each other's basic rights; and the world, perhaps, would never have had an Alexander the Great, a Napoleon, a Mussolini, a Hitler, and, perhaps, a Saddam Hussein.

3.3 K.E. NTSANE – SATIRIST

Kemuel Edward Ntsane was born of a school-teacher on the 4 April 1920, at Kolonyane in the Leribe district. His father, Chaka Ntsane, born in 1892, was still alive at the time of the interview with Ntsane's son in 1987.

Ntsane started schooling at 'Muela in 1925, and obtained his Higher Primary education at Kana in the years 1934–35. He went to the Morija College in 1936, and obtained the Teacher's certificate in 1940. He taught at the Hlotse Controlled School from 1941 to 1942, when he decided to go and work in the mines for experience. He returned to teach at Roma in 1943, and at the Basutoland High School in 1944. He got married in 1945. In 1954 he joined the Homes Trust Insurance Company as an agent. In 1956 he taught at the Mahamba High School, in Swaziland, returned to Roma in 1957 and became catholic in 1958. He then joined the Lerotholi Technical College as an English and mathematics teacher. He then worked for the Lesotho Government from 1960–64, then he went back to Roma (now Christ the King). From 1970 up till his death in 1983, he worked for the Lesotho government as Hanzard Editor.

Ntsane is remembered by his son, Chaka, as a man of jokes and jest, who looked gentle but was, in essence, a hard man hiding behind jokes. He took a hard look at things whilst studying mankind most of the time. He always asked questions about why people did what they did on returning from the mines, and could only get the answer by going there himself. He enjoyed reflecting on his meetings with people and gave others the opportunity to do things to such an extent that he was often mistaken for being afraid of responsibility. When others hastened he took his own time whilst studying them. He is said to have been dearly loved and respected by his three sisters and brothers, who enjoyed his company all the time. His humorous disposition is felt more readily in his essays and poetry.

In his study of Ntsane's poetry, Lenake (1982:19) compares theme to "concepts such as intention, message, purpose, aim and meaning", and regards the question "what does the writer write about?" as the key to the theme of any work. He also refers to tone as an important factor in discerning the theme. It was mentioned earlier that Ntsane was known to have enjoyed looking deeper than the surface of any person he interacted with, often seeing humour even in serious situations. An oversight of tone might, therefore, lead to the loss of a great deal of his hidden genius. His poetry covers a wide variety of themes. Lenake (1982:21) observes that these include places and their inhabitants, animals and nature; love and

marriage; human nature, human folly and weakness, as well as Biblical stories; death; vanity of life and judgement day. If human nature, folly and weakness are grouped together for convenience; as well as Biblical stories and judgement day, Ntsane's first poetry volume, *Mmusapelo* (Heart Restorer, 1946), may be seen to be dealing with the following subject matter:

Lesotho and the Basotho
 Marriage and love
 Historical events
 Animals and inanimate objects
 Biblical themes
 Human nature (Lenake, 1982:21) and
 Natural phenomena (added by present author)

On the country, Lesotho, Ntsane has written '*Haeso*' (My home), '*Mohokare*' (Caledon River), '*Leribe*' and '*Matsieng*'. On the whole, these are all a pouring of love on these places, though they each have a message subtly put across. '*Haeso*' and '*Leribe*' refers to one and the same place, Ntsane's home district. Whilst praising the natural beauty of Leribe, he contrasts his feelings with the praise lavished by the mineworkers on foreign places like '*Gauteng*' (Johannesburg):

Nna ditjhabeng ke a hlora,
Metsaneng ke sitwa ho dula;
Leribe re ditau, re a rora... (p. 31)
 (I, for one, feel nostalgic in distant places,
 In small villages I cannot live;
 In Leribe we are lions, we roar...)

The *metsaneng* is an obvious reference to the compounds or the tiny mining locations of the time. This diminutive reference is contrasted with Leribe where the people are *ditau*, a metaphor which suggests unqualified freedom and power, as opposed to the countless restrictions to which the mine labourers are subjected. Seen against this background, this is a subtle swipe at the Basotho who are often blind to the greatness that surrounds them in their natural habitat, and see greatness where there is none, i.e. in

the returning compound dwellers. It is this attitude that made Ntsane take up employment in the mines for first hand information, as intimated earlier. This same feeling is unmistakable in the following verse from *Haeso*:

*Leha nka ya hole, ditjhabeng,
Ka bona dintso ka mefuta ya tsona.
Pelo e tla nne hopole hae, lapeng,
Moo ho leng tsohle tsa yona. (p. 9)*
(Even if to distant places I may go,
And countless sorts of things behold,
For home the heart will ever hanker,
Where rests its everything.)

The above stanzas are comparable to those found in '*Haeso*' by Mopeli Paulus (see page 61 above). This reflects on the homesickness they each must have felt whilst on long contracts away from home. If anything, both these writers are saying "there is no place like home", whatever the circumstances.

While in *Matsieng*, Ntsane only mouths what should be a real Mosotho's love for, and commitment to his home (for example the royal place of Matsieng), in praise-poetry fashion, '*Mohokare*' is in more calm and composed blank verse. In tracing and describing the river, he also alludes to the eventful history of the Basotho on the one hand, and the Voortrekkers and the Cape colonists on the other:

*Dumela, moraparapa towe, o matswedintsweke,
Wena lewatile la Maburu le Basotho,
Le hoja ba sa buisane hantle pela hao.
Hoba hola Majoro a se o bone,
Makeleketla e ka be le ha 'Mantšebo hantle.
O buile Mosotho'a kgale, modula-kgotla,
A re: "Seja-monna ha se mo qete." (p. 36)*

(Greetings to you, sizeless meandering being!
 You, the sea of the Afrikaners and the Basotho,
 Though they speak not well to each other near you.
 For if the Major had not seen you,
 Winburg would be 'Mantšebo's home by right.
 He said a mouthful, the Mosotho of old, the courtier,
 Who said: "a man's dispossessor doesn't finish him.")

Ntsane's knowledge of the Basotho history acquired, inter alia, in his years in government service (also as Hanzard editor) is reflected in his presentation of the then unfriendly relations between the neighbours on either side of the Caledon river. He attributes the state of affairs to the Basotho's systematic dispossession of their land by Major Warden in the years 1846–49. Major Warden took residence in Bloemfontein as a government agent looking after what was called "the inalienable part of Kok's land" (Fowler & Smit 1954:263). He shifted the western boundary of Lesotho to the east of Winburg by means of what was called the "Warden Line", and, ultimately, further east to the Caledon river.

The last line of the above stanza, translated freely as "all is not lost yet," is a protest which betrays deep-seated dissatisfaction. In the category of the 'Basotho', Ntsane addresses two sub-categories, the socio-historical and the socio-cultural cum socio-economic. In the latter sub-category are '*Basotho*' (The Basotho) and '*Ha re ya Lejueleputswa*' (Going to the Reef). '*Basotho*' is a praise-poem on the Basotho and their founder, in a series of eulogues, as if to show off the pride of a true Mosotho. He ends off by daring anybody to disturb their peace, mistaking them for orphans (i.e. a helpless people), and they will see the fury of their mother, 'Maletšabisa (Queen Victoria):

Hoba mma bona o tshwere kwakwa letsohong. (page 48)
 (For their mother holds a battle axe in her hand).

The kwakwa referred to here is the sceptre. The theme of this poem is also to express appreciation for the protection of the Basotho by the British, especially viewed against the background alluded to in '*Mohokare*'.

'*Ha re ya lejweleputswa*' is classified under the subcategory "their general life" by Lenake (1982:26), because it was (and still is) standard practice for the Mosotho man to go and work for some time. This practice transcended socio-economic considerations in that the returning man enjoyed some status or regard in his community, as one who had travelled and had things to tell. As Lenake puts it, "it is a descriptive-narrative poem on the miners and their mannerisms", tracing their life from the time of recruitment in Lesotho to their destination and reception. This poem falls within what is called poetry of migration, reflecting on the migrant labour system of South Africa. It is an interaction of the literary, socio-economic and socio-political systems.

One agrees with Lenake that this is a comical satire whereby Ntsane ridicules the fumbings of the illiterate recruits who had been looking forward to going to the mines, instead of going to school. It should once more be remembered that it is the returning recruits' vain pride, occasioned by their sense of travel and experience (even acculturation), that made Ntsane go to the mines, educated as he was, to investigate the source. That is why he can rightfully say of the recruit:

Ka ba ka ngola tshuu (q) ke sa e tsebe.

Dikonteraka tsa Makgowa ha se ho phoqa, (page 62)

(I even wrote a q without knowing it.

The whiteman's contracts can distress one!)

The poems on natural phenomena, '*Hwetla*' (Autumn), '*Mantsiboya*' (evening) and '*Boroko*' (Sleep) are really self-explanatory. They are an expression of appreciation for nature, especially sleep, the "nourisher" of tired nerves and brains. Being generally known to have had deep-seated interest in human nature, Ntsane is at his best in the themes on human nature, the related Biblical themes, and marriage and love. In this volume the poems are in two subcategories according to mood. '*Sekgoba*' (Lazy person) and '*Diyabanneng*' (Unavoidable difficulties) are the writer's unhappy observation of the unhappy component of human existence: living not always amongst constructive people and joyous moments. '*Sekgoba*' is an outright expression of dislike for this kind of person:

*Ha o tshoha o bua le sona,
 Se ka o nyekisa dibete;
 Hoba le nnete ha se na yona,
 Botswa ba sona bo hlotse nnete. (p. 13)*

(If you, perchance, talk to him/her,
 He/she can make you nauseous;
 Because he/she is devoid of all truth,
 His/her laziness has dwarfed the truth virtue).

'*Diyabanneng*' is an enumeration of the life factors over which man has no control. Lenake (1982:66) translates this title aptly as "All is in the game of life", and calls it "a pessimistic narration of the difficulties we encounter on earth... we greet the rising sun with great joy, unaware of the unpleasant things accompanying it", and quotes:

*Mafube tlhorong tsa dithaba le ka hodimo,
 A mpa a bolela masisapelo a tsatsi leo (p. 43)*
 (The morning twilight on the mountain tops,
 Merely announces the sorrows of that day).

Each stanza is concluded with the following words, or their variation, which represent the writer's frame of mind:

Ha ho taba, ke tsona di-ya-banneng. (p. 43)
 (It doesn't matter, it's all in the game).

Pessimistic as he may sound, Ntsane seems to be trying to cheer those in possible dejection. A look into his own past reveals that he has had his ups and downs, especially when he had no choice but to discontinue his beloved journalistic study course in Kitwe, Zambia. To put it more succinctly, Ntsane, one feels, is saying to us "disappointments are no reason enough for us to brood."

As with '*Diyabanneng*', the title '*Ho thusang*'? – (What does it help?) of the last poem in this subcategory suggests the theme. Ntsane contrasts a number of situations and people. He contrasts mishaps that often make people moody, with measures of success which tend to make others haughty and arrogant. He also talks about seeing minor faults in others and being blind to our own major flaws, and so on, repeating the rhetorical question after each contrasting situation. Here Ntsane seems to be pre-occupied with the ideal of the ultimate equality of all people despite the present glaring inconsistencies. The theme of this poem seems to be marginal, between seriously chiding untowardness, and satirising it. It also has the flavour of higher religious ideals best expressed in James Shirley's poem "Death, the Leveller":

Sceptre and crown must tumble down,
And in the dust be equal made.

(Boas, 1967:51)

The refrains that conclude every stanza in both the above poems are an imported trait from the French Ballad.

In the second subcategory of human nature are '*Kgowanatshwana*' (Black Whiteman) and '*Dumedisa base*' (Greet the Baas), both robust satires on the presumptuous, acculturated Black man, and the folly of the farm boss. Of the former, Lenake (1982:85) says: "Ntsane lashes out at the proud and selfish people in his society. He chooses as his object of attack an educated and/or privileged Mosotho who tends to look down upon his fellowmen", and points out that "the title itself is highly satirical". Note its paradoxical connotation, i.e. the Black Whiteman. Very apt. Of '*Dumedisa base*' Lenake (1982:90) says it is an attack "on the master–servant relationship as well as social discrimination based on colour." This is more so if the word "base" is translated as "baas" rather than "boss" a word that has a variety of neutral connotations which refer to actual states of affairs i.e. seniority or proprietary in a job situation, headship, etc. The word "baas", on the other hand, is more emotive and reflects Ntsane's protest against the relegation of people to a position of social inferiority by others on racial basis. In one breath he lampoons the racial supremacist whose ego feeds on the reference,

as well as the simpleton who accepts his own inferiority without lifting a finger. The ridicule in the ironical exhortation '*Dumedisa base*' (Greet the baas) is so piercing that it elicits the same emotional reaction as Mopeli-Paulus's *Moafrika, tsoha, naha e hapiloe ke balichaba* (1945:32). Though Ntsane writes about farm conditions which are more familiar to every Mosotho, the source of his revulsion could easily be related to his own experiences at the mines, where White mineworkers habitually refer to adult Blacks as "piccaninnies".

The commencement of all but one stanzas with '*Dumedisa base*' followed by a clause that introduces a new aspect of the farm labourer's life, gives some semblance of intersystemic interaction (i.e. with the French Ballad).

Under the Historical events category, Ntsane has '*Lemo sa 1939*' (The Year 1939), '*Masole a Basotho*' (The Basotho Soldiers) and '*Banna ba bararo*' (The Three Men). The first two are, respectively, a vivid and artistic description of the Second World War, and an account of the participation of the Basotho men in the war on the request of Great Britain under whose rule they were. '*Banna ba bararo*' is "a tribute to the missionaries. It emphasises all the good things which resulted from their coming to Lesotho" (Lenake, 1982:27). All these three poems are a mere reflection on history coupled with admiration for the missionaries and the Basotho soldiers, as against the disgust for German selfishness and avarice:

*E meharo ya phaka, ya nka hangata,
Ya qetella e ngwathile ha dibatana... (p. 5)*

(The greedy one devoured and repeated many times,
And eventually scooped in the smaller animals' area...)

As is characteristic of the writers of this period, Ntsane also makes room for Biblical themes. In this category are, '*Mohla a tlang*' (The Day He Comes), '*Fatsheng lena*' (In This World), '*Bo mo hlakohile borena*' (The Kingship has eluded him), and '*Maswabi*' (Misery).

'*Fatsheng lena*' is something like a sermon in which Ntsane harps on the

temporariness of life in this world, and its tribulations:

Fatsheng lena re baeti, re a feta... (p. 27)

(In this world we are but travellers, we are passing on...)

This opening line strongly resembles hymn No. 148 in '*Lifela tsa Sione le Bojaki. Bo mohlakohile borena*' is a ballad in which the writer portrays the rise and fall of Adam (together with all mankind) in God's favour:

A phela ka kgotso monna pele;

Rena ba hae ba nna ba tiya... (p. 50)

(The lived in peace, the first man;

His reign becoming stronger and stronger)

But, later:

Ke boo bo a mohlakoha kajeno;

O bohakwa ke ntja e le tsa hae... (p. 54)

(There goes his reign to-day;

He is barked at by his own dogs...)

'*Mohla a tlang*' is an imaginary depiction of doomsday. "The poet uses his imagination and draws freely from the Bible by way of anecdotes, inference and allusions", says Lenake (1982:75). Like in '*Bo mohlakohile borena*', Ntsane preaches against sin by frightening the reader:

Sello sa bona koting sa dihele se a tshabeha... (p. 70)

(Their cry in the pit of Hell is dreadful...)

In '*Maswabi*' the author presents the misery or sorrow of someone whose beloved has died, and cannot be easily consoled, but by trusting in God:

Matshediso ha a yo lefatsheng,

Matshediso a hodimo, Moreneng. (p. 72)

(Consolation there cannot be in the world,

Consolation is up yonder, in the Lord).

The above poems reflect Ntsane's strong religious awareness and "complete identification with the Christian faith" (Lenake, 1982:76).

On the marriage and love themes, Ntsane's poems are both didactic and matter-of-fact, as well as frivolous and satirical. For instance both '*Lerato*' (Love) and '*Moratuwa*' (Beloved) have to do with true love. The former is presented in a serious, matter-of-fact tone, often leaning on the Biblical presentation:

*Ho thwe: "Rata wa heno
Jwale ka ha o ithata... (p. 32)
(It is said: "Love thy neighbour
As thyself...)*

On the other hand, '*Moratuwa*' is also a presentation of true love, but in a more frivolous vein:

*Moropa ke wang lapeng ha Tilane?
Moropa ke lerato fubeng sa thope... (p. 75)
(What drums are sounding at Tilane's house?
The drums are of love in the damsel's heart...)*

This tone is maintained throughout the poem, and serves inter alia to scoff at the confused emotions of an infatuated young lover. '*Mmakgutsitse*' (Mother of tranquillity) portrays an ideal daughter-in-law of the title name, who is hard-working and humble before her in-laws:

*Mmakgutsitse enwa ha se setsohaphora;
Sedibeng o ya e sa le ka meso... (p. 30)*

*(This Mmakgutsitse is not a late-riser;
To the fountain early she goes).*

There is implied didacticism in the praise that is lavished on Mmakgutsitse: respectful, well-behaved young ladies make a success of their marriage. In direct contrast with '*Mmakgutsitse*' is '*Matshediso*', a ballad on an

extremely beautiful damsel who, on becoming conscious of her own beauty, amasses boyfriends who soon discover her game and drift away from her in extreme disappointment. Truly, "the moral of this poem is so clear that the reader arrives at a conclusion long before reaching the end of the poem" (Lenake, 1982:58), and "the last stanza sounds like an ordinary sermon..." It is in this last stanza that Matshediso, herself, enunciates the message of the poem:

*Barwetsana, tshabang thetso,
Tshabang ho thetso bahlankana,
Hoba dillo tsa bona di finyella marung. (p. 26)*

(Damsels, avoid cheating,
Avoid cheating young men,
Because their cries reach (beyond) the clouds).

Lenake (1982:184) remarks about the controversy that raged amongst poets and literary scholars since rhyme was first employed by the Xhosa poet Mqhayi, the Zulu poet Vilakazi, etc. Deep in the controversy was the Mosotho Khaketla, though, as will be seen hereunder, he was later to employ the device himself. Justifying this importation of rhyme, and other useful intersystemic transfers, Lenake (1982:185) refers to the views of Vilakazi and Masuku, as quoted by Ntuli:

We subscribe to the view that the artist cannot be limited in the devices he wants to employ. The poet is free to borrow or emulate patterns which are used by other artists in other cultures...

He consequently maintains that "most verse lines in Ntsane's *Lemo sa 1939* are satisfactory, although the tonal pattern of the rhyming couplets is not always similar" (1982:186). Therefore, Lenake is, somehow, in agreement with Swanepoel (1990:266) that "end-rhyme can, therefore, only be complete when the rhyming syllables agree in terms of both segmental and suprasegmental properties."

Though, in his thorough analysis of the above poem by Ntsane, Lenake

(1982:188–203) couples rhyme with the other traditional structural devices in accordance with the argument forwarded also by Vilakazi, Masuku and Ntuli — here we shall concern ourselves only with the hall-mark of traditional Western poetry — rhyme.

Because of the great phonological differences between Sesotho and the Western languages, Lenake (1982:186) points out the difficulty in attaining syllabic symmetry in the rhyming words and "rhythmic segments" (lines). As a result he distinguishes rhyme from half-rhyme or incomplete rhyme, the latter being only the rhyme of the vowels at the end of the rhythmic segment.

The consistency in end-rhyme in 'Lemo sa 1939' is amazing, given the experimental stage at which its deployment was in Sesotho poetry. The first stanza will do as example:

Ha thwasa lemo sa ditsietsi,
Lemo sa ho kgaba ka ditlokotsi;
Lefatshe kaofela la hwasana, la duma,
Matshwafo a batho a phahama, a uba;
Tau tsa hotetsa hlaha mawatleng,
Tsa hloka kutlwano makgotleng.

(Mmusa, p. 5)

(Then began a year of troubles,
 The year full of tragedies;
 The whole world sounded, and roared,
 The people's lungs went up, and sounded;
 The lions started a veld fire on the seas,
 They could not agree in the meetings).

(Lenake, 1982:190)

This aabbcc end-rhyme pattern, in the sestet, are carried flawlessly through the ten stanzas of the poem. While end-rhyme in Western poetry contributes to "The rhythmic flow of the poem" (Lenake, 1982:186), in Sesotho poetry, it, quite often, has stylistic significance in the sense of contributing to the development of the theme. The couplet *ditsietsi* —

ditlokotsi compliment each other, thereby emphasising the tragic element of war with their close semantically relatedness. The couplet *la дума – a uba* also complement each other to focus on related 'sounds': the rumblings of war and the violent pumping of the heart of an uneasy person. The last couplet, *mawatleng – makgotleng* also emphasises the discord amongst nations by contrasting it with the "meeting" places (The fierce seas and the convention halls) which symbolise opposant interests.

Even in the second poem '*Ha eso*' (My Home), Ntsane's use of end-rhyme is consistently abab. The first two stanzas of this ten-stanza poem will do to illustrate our point:

Tholang, ke le jwetse, lona baratuwa,
Botle ba ha eso, botle bo hlollang,
Moo ho phelang mme moratuwa,
Ngeloi la me le mpaballang.

Wena, ngwaneso ha o ntso bua,
O rata hore ke o mamele,
O buelang ka disuwa,
O re tlama hore re o mamele? (p. 8)

(Listen, that I may tell you, beloved,
 The beauty of my home, breath-taking beauty,
 Where lives my beloved mother,
 My guardian angel.

You, my brethren who keeps talking
 Desiring that I may listen,
 Why speak you of discord,
 Imposing upon yourself our audience?)

The mutual complementing of the couplet *baratuwa – moratuwa* is evident. The couplet *bo hlollang – le mpaballang* conveying "unbelievably pleasant"

and "caring" complement each other to emphasise the pleasure of being home.

In the second stanza, the couplet *bua — disuwa* (speak—discord) together elicit the feeling of repulsion to the discord that contrasts sharply with the harmony portrayed in the preceding stanza. This feeling is further accentuated by the repetition of *mamele* (listen) in the subjunctive, in the next couplet, as if imposed — as the persona states. The contrasting atmospheres contained in the two stanzas focus on the pleasure of the persona's peaceful home.

Ntsane employs end-rhyme with equal success and a great measure of consistency also in '*Hwetla*' (Autumn), '*Mantsiboya*' (In the evening), '*Sekgoba*' (A Lazy person), '*Boroko*' (Sleep) and '*Mmakgutsitse*', as well as '*Masole a Basotho*' (Basotho Soldiers), '*Fatsheng lena*' (In this world) and '*Leribe*'.

Though this volume cannot be said to be a masterpiece, it drifted further away from the shackles of missionarism, and shows early seeds of a master satirist, which germinated and blossomed in his second volume, *Mmusapelo II* (1954).

The twenty-seven poems in this volume cover a variety of subjects and themes, which, like in the first volume, cover places, animals, marriage and love, human nature, and religious themes. In this respect Ntsane's work shows striking consistency. But there is an overwhelming swing to satire, with at least eighteen of the poems being satirical. As such, Lenake (1982:83) maintains that, though Ntsane does use "other communicative strategies such as sarcasm, irony, humour, wit and cynicism in order to satirise, attack or ridicule his victims", satire remains his primary communicative strategy.

Lenake (1982:84) points out the two main types of satire, viz. the invective

type, "which uses anger to expose folly on the one hand, and the more didactic and condemnatory type of satire" on the other hand, as well as a third kind, the lighthearted satire, which is attributed to Melamu. The latter kind of satire is one whereby a fault is simultaneously pointed out and laughed off. In this volume the invective type of satire is recognised by Lenake in:

'*Ngwana lona*' (Your child), and
'*Mmangwane*' (Aunt)

Condemnatory satire is recognised in:

'*Majakane*' (Christians)
'*Keiting ya dihele*' (At the gate of Hell)
'*Wena o jwang?*' (How do you think you are?) etc.

The light-hearted satire is felt in:

'*Lerato la dipompong*' (Frivolous love)
'*O lletlang?*' (Why do you cry?)
'*Raleqheka*' (Mr Crafty), etc.

This second volume of Ntsane's reflects him as a more seasoned poet, deeper into the Western side of the Sotho-Western interface. Swanepoel (1990:264) intimates that "interface includes a set of factors of considerable variety. This set emanates from circumstances which are of both literary and extra-literary origin, with abundant interaction between them". And this includes "gradual transition from an oral to a written system as a result of the assimilation of mainly western written culture." (op cit).

In Ntsane's second volume this interface is manifest in his bold imagery and robust satire that, nevertheless, remains within the bounds of Western journalistic conventions. A hard example is '*Keiting ya dihele*' (At the gate of hell), which commences thus:

Ka fumana keiting merabe ka ho fapana,
Ka fumana terese e le mokoloko,
Botsho bosweu ho kopakane,
Barui le dintja ho se ho kgetha,
Ka ba ka tjhethja ho rera ke sa rera,
Ke rata ho tjhethja mpa ke bitsitswe. (p. 58)

(Beside the gate I found the races all,
 The queue, behold, was wondrous long,
 Blackman whiteman together mixed,
 The rich from dogs were not distinct,
 Retreat did I without intent,
 Awed I withdrew though called I was).

The above stanza strongly satirises earthly segregation on racial grounds, portraying, in powerful imagery, Hell as man's common destiny regardless of race. He could have picked on heaven, but it would not be as forceful. The persona's shock at finding even whitemen there, and the reduction to a common denominator of the wealthy and dogs (i.e. poor or beggars) makes the picture even more ludicrous. The former is a robust reflection on the status quo in the country, as he saw it, according to which anything good was associated with whites only.

Much as this is a reaction to the socio-political system, it may also reflect an oral-written interface in theme as message, and is comparable to James Shirley's '*Death the Leveller*':

Sceptre and Crown
 Must tumble down
 And in the dust be equal made,
 With poor crooked scythe and spade. (see page 100–101)

Mmusapelo II also reflects Ntsane's adjustment to the current Western thought that the lengths of lines in poetry need not balance, and that end-rhyme is not an issue, as was the case with traditional Western poetic

structure. But '*Mmusapelo P*' was written at a time when structural balances were still an issue even in the West. It was, thus, on the nearer side of the oral-written interface in respect of structure, and brings out very clearly and boldly Ntsane's experimentation with end rhyme, as indicated above.

3.4 MOCOANCOENG AND INTERSYSTEMIC DIALOGUE

J.G. Mocoancoeng's *Lithothokiso tse ncha*, the second part of his book *Tseleng ea bophelo le lithothokiso tse ncha* (On Life's Course and New Poems, 1947), is an anthology of nineteen poems on a variety of matters, mainly natural phenomena, elegies, and social themes.

According to his sister, '*Makhišane Sesele*, Jac G. Mocoancoeng was born at Bothaville Location, Bothaville, on the 22 August, 1922. He was the fourth child of a family of seven children, born of Gabriel and Lydia, a chef and washerwoman respectively. He obtained his primary school education at the then Bantu United School, Bothaville, where he passed Std VI in 1936. He did Form I and II (then known as the Intermediate Course) at the Stofberg Gedenkskool in the years 1937-8. In the years 1939-40 he did Form III and the Primary Teacher's Certificate concurrently at the Moroka Institution, Thaba Nchu. Whilst a teacher in Bethlehem, Orange Free State, in the years 1941-45 he obtained the Senior Certificate by private study, and enrolled for the B.A. degree with the University of South Africa, which he obtained in 1947. He then proceeded to Roma, Lesotho, where he met and taught with his great friend K.E. Ntsane. He later took up a post in Heilbron, from whence he was appointed principal of a high school in Senekal. On 1st June, 1957, he was appointed sub-inspector of Bantu Education, a post he occupied up till his death on 3 January 1962. His sister, Mrs R.M. Sesele, remembers how he used to encourage his younger brother, Elia, to learn hard "for freedom", often saying "one day we will have equal rights". He loved frightening didactic stories for children, such as the story of two men (one of bones, and the other, of the spirit). He is said to have been so interesting as a teacher, that his colleagues would lean at his classroom door to enjoy hearing him teach.

Mocoancoeng's output includes poems on natural phenomena, elegies, social and socio-political themes, human nature, religious themes and social problems.

The first poem in the anthology, '*Komello*' (Drought), is a vivid description of the veld during a severe drought, in which the poet's style and arrangement of ideas is suggestive of his own exposure to the striking passage, "Drought", in Coetzer and Vivier's *Comprehensive English for Standard IX and X* (1952:24). The poem opens with a powerful use of the litotes in series, blended with an hyperbole in the third line:

*Tsatsi ha le chese lea cha,
Naha ha e mpe ea tšabeha.
Batho ba kolobile ha ba fufula.
Lefatše le omme – a komello!* (p. 37)

(The sun is not hot, it's burning,
The veld is not ugly, it's appalling.
People are drenched, not sweating.
The earth is dry – what drought!)

These four lines bear a striking semantic similarity to these opening words from the above passage:

"The merciless sun scorches down upon the withered plains. Vibrant waves of heat engulf the stricken earth..." (Coetzer & Vivier, 1952:24)

The first two lines of the second stanza run thus:

*Phoofolo ha li fule li hlotha litlhokoa,
Ha li sa le maphako lia shoa.*
(The animals graze not, they paw at dry grass,
They hunger no more, but are doomed to die...)

This idea seems also to have been imported from the following lines of

Coetzer and Vivier's passage on drought:

"The last surviving sheep huddle together under the shade of trees or linger languidly around pawing at the roots of dead grasses, and nibble at the dry stumps...". (Coetzer & Vivier, 1952:24)

The last stanza of this poem starts with the words,

*Empa hole ka Bochabela,
Ho teng lerunyana le letšonyana... (op cit)*

(But far in the east
Is seen a dark cloud...)

The likeness between the above lines and the words, "fleecy clouds on a distant horizon promise no rain" (Coetzer & Vivier, 1952:24) is significant, though Mocoancoeng employs them to signify the positive. These lines are a fine foreboding by the poet of the breakup of the drought.

In 'Noka' (The River) the persona describes the course of the river in first person mode, and has strong likeness to Alfred Tennyson's "The Brook". The first two stanzas of this poem run,

*Ke hlaha Bochabela
Ke matha joalo ho ea Bophirima.
Teng ke tla fihla neng,
Ruri ha ke na tsebo.*

*Ke lelemela joalo
Ke latela liphula,
Ke tšaba lithaba,
Ke tsoafa le meepa. (p. 38)*

(I come from the east
And so to the west must run.
There when will I arrive,

That I do not know.
 That way I flow
 And follow the streams,
 The mountains I fear,
 And steep hills avoid.)

The above exhibit positive influence by the first two stanzas of Tennyson's "The Brook", which read as follows:

I come from haunts of coot and hern,
 I make a sudden sally,
 And sparkle out among the fern,
 To bicker down a valley.

By thirty hills I hurry down,
 Or slip between the ridges,
 By twenty thorps, a little town,
 And half a hundred bridges. (Guy Boas, 1967:341)

The similarity between these two poems is another instance of intertextual influence, and even parasiting, that cannot easily be gainsaid.

'*Ha tsatsi le chaba*' (When the sun rises) and '*Foka, moya, foka!*' (Blow, wind, blow!) are imaginative descriptions of happenings at dawn, and the severity of the winter winds, respectively, in lively metaphor and personification. '*Fu le qoleng ea kobo*' (Death is always near) on the other hand is a reminder to man that he is a temporary sojourner in this world. It has a religious tinge in it:

Bophelo bona ke lefeela,
Ke toro e fetang le bosiu;
Athe rona re taolong
Ea matla a sa bonoeng... (p. 45)

(Life is but vanity,
 A dream that with the night elapses;

while we at the mercy be
Of a power by man unseen...)

In all the poems in the category, Mocoancoeng seems to be highlighting the unavailability of the course of life by comparing it to nature and ending up by focussing on man's own helplessness in the face of fate.

The elegies 'R.U.P.' (R.I.P.), 'Ho Sello' (To Sello) and 'Sello sa ea malimabe' (The Lamentation of an unfortunate one) follow each other in the collection. While 'R.U.P.' (*Robala u phomole*, i.e. Rest in Peace) is merely a condolence message typical of cards on funeral wreaths, the latter two are elegies on a deceased friend and a beloved, respectively. 'Ho Sello' ends with a rhetorical question that emphasises the longing of the persona:

*Mollo oa tuka, o time,
Nama ea phela, e bole,
Empa pelo le moea oa ka
Na li ka u lebala Sello? (p. 47)*

(Fire burns, and wanes,
Flesh lives, and dies,
But can the memory of thee, Sello,
My heart and soul forsake?)

The contrast between the course of events (indicated in the first two lines), and the persona's feelings in the last two lines, brings out clearly the "preciousness" of the deceased to the persona. 'Sello sa ea malimabe' ends with an expression of hope after suffering:

*Joaleka tholoana thotobolong,
Ke tla mela hape ke phele,
Ke tsohe. E, ke nchafetse,
Ke le dijo ho feta mehleng... (p. 48)*

(Like a seed on the refuse dump,
Once more will I grow and live,

And rise. Yes, new life received,
Laden with food than e'er before...)

The underlying message here seems to be, "never despair".

The poems categorised under social themes have a bearing almost exclusively on interpersonal relationships and are lyrical in nature. "Me' (Mother), written in first person mode, is an expression of love for and trust in the mother person, apostrophised throughout by the persona:

*Ha ke khathetse,
Ke tepeletse,
Ke sulafaletsoe,
Ke tšepa uena,
Motsoali oa ka... (p. 40)*

(When I'm weary,
Disheartened,
Dispirited
On you I rely,
Dear parent...)

The poem goes on in this strain up till the last stanza wherein the depth of the persona's gratitude is felt:

*Ke ne ke le ngoana,
Kajeno ke holile,
Ke na le matsoho
Ke tseba ho sebetsa,
Kea u leboha, 'me. (p. 40)*

(A child I was,
To-day am grown.
Hands I have
Wherewith to work,
Thee I thank, mother.)

Old as this poem may be, the brevity of expression found here heralded a new structural pattern in Sesotho poetry, which is analogous to the single-word lines found in the modern poetry of recent years (see first stanza above).

'*Robala, ngoan'a ka, robala*' (Sleep, my child, sleep) is possibly the first written lullaby in Sesotho, in ballad structure, the title (or a variation of it) forming the opening refrain of every stanza.

'*Tsela-tsoeu*' (Bon voyage) is also structurally a ballad. It is a parting greeting to '*motsoalle*' (friend) who is apostrophised in the opening line of every stanza:

*Re bile 'moho, motsoalle,
'Na le wena tseleng ena.
La ka leeto le felile,
U saletsoe ke boholo ba tsela, uena,
Tsela-tsoeu, Mokuena. (p. 53)*

(Together we've been, my friend,
Together on this journey.
For me the journey is ended,
To you the greater is the journey.
Bon voyage, Mokuena.)

The refrain that concludes every stanza also emphasises the reluctance to part. The regularity with which Mocoancoeng employs this structural device also points to a new trend in Sesotho poetry. Unlike in D.C.T. Bereng's '*Sello sa likhutsana*', this refrain flows naturally from, and crowns, what transpired in the preceding lines. This "French Ballad" structure (Pretorius, 1982:49) is a clear result of intersystemic interaction.

In '*Haeso*' (My Home), the nostalgic persona gives vent to his own feelings in the first person mode, in a manner comparable to J.R.L. van Bruggen's Afrikaans "Heimwee". While he opens with a direct reference to his home, Van Bruggen refers to the serenity of the atmosphere. Compare the

following:

*Naha e teng e ratoang ke 'na,
E sa tloheng mehopolong ea ka:
Ke naha ea ha eso —
Ke moo ke tsoaletsoeng. (p. 39)*

(There is a land to me so dear,
That in my memory never fades:
My home that land shall ever be —
My place of birth to me so dear.)

Van Bruggen commences in somewhat similar fashion:

My hart verlang na die stilte
Van die wye wuiwende veld;
Ver van die stadsgeluide,
En die klinkende klank van geld.

(Van Bruggen, 1984:114)

The intertextual interaction between these two poems is evident in their theme as well as structure and steady rhythm that maintains the atmosphere throughout. Taking into cognizance the fact that Mocoancoeng was a school teacher who ended up being an inspector of schools, this can hardly be surprising; the Afrikaans poem could have crossed into his experience either as a teacher or as a student. He was exposed to all literary systems and subsystems, as well as the socio-political, in the course of his work.

The poems on the socio-political themes reflect on the life of the people in relation to their political convictions, commitments or obligations. '*Ba ileng ba ile*' (The Dead are but dead) is an ode to the Africa Corps who fell victim in the conflict in North Africa during the First World War, written in first person mode. It is more commemorative and re-assuring than lamentational:

Setumo e ne e se pheo sa rona;
Likhabiso re ne re sa li natse,
Ho loana e ne e le mosebetsi oa rona,
Re lebaleng le itšebeletse.
Ba ileng ba ile. (p. 42)

(Fame was not our goal;
 Being decorated occupied not our thoughts,
 Our task it was to fight,
 Think not of us; thyself maintain.
 The dead are but dead.)

Mocoancoeng seems to feel that we often make too much of death than the dead would have liked. He concludes by articulating what, to him, matters:

Le se ke la re hlorela;
Phethisang takatso tsa rona;
Le hlole bora malapeng a lona,
Re phomole, le fumane khotso
Eo re e shoetseng. (p. 43)

(Weep not for us,
 Our hearts' desire observe:
 Amidst your kin discord remove,
 That we may rest while peace you gain
 Wherefore our lives we pawned.)

The underlying message here is that, if there be internal strife of any kind, then the Africa Corps died in vain.

'*Exoda*' (Exodus) is an ode to liberation wherein each stanza opens with an imperative apostrophe, spurring the African on to liberative action, viz crossing *lewatile le letšo, le lefifi: ho hloka thuto* (the black, dark sea of unletteredness; p. 49). This is followed by the second part where the symbolic Pharaoh comes in and tries to stop the exodus from ignorance:

*Thibang, thibang lihole tseo,
Li timeng lesele la tsebo.
Joang bo ka itekanya le sefate?
Mehlolo ha e fele! (p. 49)*

(Stop, stop those creatures,
Deny them the light of knowledge.
Can grass with trees compare?
A wonder this must surely be!)

Mocoancoeng then continues in sarcastic tone to prick the African's self-esteem:

*Molimo o re file (a o bokoe!)
Mofuta ona ho re sebeletsa.
Ba thibeng, ba ea kae joale
Makhoba aa a rona? (p. 49)*

(God gave us [may He be praised!]
This kind for us to labour.
Stop them, for whither go they
These our valued slaves?)

While in '*Ba ileng ba ile*', the African is subtly reminded he fought in the war with the hope of gaining peace and freedom (which he was systematically denied), in this poem the poet is aphoristic to the point of pricking the Black reader's self-worth, as can be seen above. In this thematic category Mocoancoeng's earlier dreams of "one day we will have equal rights" (see p. 34) seem to resurface in agitative emotion.

The poem '*Moleleri*' (The wanderer) is the only one in the category human nature, and is comparable, in some aspects, to Mocoancoeng's own essay *Mofeta-ke-tsele* (The Passer-by; 1982:60; originally, 1953). The persona describes, in first person mode, his own irresistible urge to keep moving in spite of all else. It opens in the following manner:

*Tsela ke eane e tatamala,
Ke 'ane e nyolosa moepa.
Moo e eang ha ke tsebe,
Empa ke ratang ho 'a fihla. (p. 40)*

(There, straight ahead, goes the road,
There, up the hill, it goes.
Whither it goes know I not,
But there to be my desire is.)

In the essay he says of the passerby:

*Ha ho moo a tswang empa o ya hole...O supa mahodimong a
maputswa, dihlorong tsa thaba tse hole, ha o mmotsa moo a hlahang
kapa moo a yang. (1982:61)*

(He does not come from anywhere but he is going far away... He points into the grey skies and the distant mountain tops, whenever he is asked where he comes from, or where he is going).

This poem is the same in essence as Alfred Tennyson's *Ulysses*. The following stanza brings out the basic thematic similarity between the two:

*Lumelang, salang ka khotso.
Ha ke tsebe moo ke eang,
Empa tsela e ntse e mpitsa:
Ke sitoa ho hana. Lumelang. (p. 40)*

(Adieu, may peace with you abide,
I know not where I'm going,
To me the road keeps beckoning:
Resist I simply can't. Adieu!)

Tennyson puts it this way:

Death closes all: but something ere the end,
 Some work of noble note, may yet be done,
 for my purpose holds
 To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
 Of all the western stars until I die.

(Guy Boas, 1967:324)

From the above excerpts there seems to be close intertextual interaction between '*Moleleri, Mofeta-ka-tsela*' (both by Mocoancoeng) and Alfred Tennyson's '*Ulysses*'. But in this poem, Mocoancoeng seems to have been greatly influenced by Tennyson, both in theme and style. The theme is simply that one should keep active (in any field or trade) to counter stagnation or retrogression, and is presented in very symbolic fashion. Here, as in '*Ulysses*', the journey symbolises exploration (i.e. learning).

The religious theme is only pursued in one poem, '*Retro me Sathana*' (Aroint, Satan!).

This poem is a direct warning against temptation, and is in second person mode, apostrophising Satan throughout. It recounts all the instances of temptation in the Bible, from Eve to Christ, in simple prosaic language arranged in verse, addressing Satan in a variety of denominatives: *Rakhele* (Father of hell), *Ralefifi* (- Of darkness), *Ramano* (- Of schemes), *Ramaqheka* (- Of tricks), etc.

The category on social problems commences with the poem '*Lenyora le sa timeng*' (The Unquanchable Thirst) which deals with the root cause of many social evils. The persona compares the crave for liquor with other human desires and longings in simple direct statements which negate that this single verse is a poem, rather than prose in verse form:

Matla a lona a feta a tlala,
Takatso tsa lona di feta tsa chelete,
Le tlama ho feta mahlaahlela,... (p. 52)

(Its force exceeds the pangs of hunger,
 Its craving exceeds the desire for money,
 It shackles firmer than a chain,...)

By depicting the strength of the craving for strong drinks, the poet implicitly portrays the helplessness of those in its grasp. Whilst sympathising with the victim, he also tacitly warns the reader against falling prey to possible temptation to drink.

'*Alina*' is an ode to the beautiful lady, in powerful imagery, describing the harm that comes to those who are foolishly consumed by her love as butterflies by a flame. The theme revolves around the deception of beauty:

Ba joaleka lirurubele leboneng —
Lia baleha, li khutle hape,
Li shoele moo li ratileng — (p. 52)
 (Like butterflies around a candle they are —
 They flee, again to return,
 And, where their hearts desire, die —)

From the second stanza to the end, the persona ably combines the second and third person modes as he repeatedly apostrophises Alina, whilst describing her beauty and cruelty.

As seen in this anthology, Mocoancoeng's best performance seems to be in the social and socio-political themes, with his '*Exoda*' bordering on what would, under the now receding South African political system, be regarded as political incitement. His political aspirations and frustrations are clearly borne in this poem. Though '*Haeso*', easily the best poem in the anthology, structurally and stylistically, has been categorised under social themes, it reflects strongly on the socio-economic system of the country and its migratory labour subsystem. In this instance we have intersystemic interaction between the social, economic, political and literary systems.

A small volume, *Mmetlakgola*, written by W.L.N. Tšosane, was published by Via Afrika in 1948. The "poems" in this book cover a variety of subjects,

i.e. places, natural phenomena, people, etc. Unfortunately the writer does not seem to have a clear conception of what poetry is. He writes in faulty prosaic language divided into stanzas. Over-deletion of noun prefixes and essential concords renders most of his utterances meaningless. This writer uses language without caring for the basic meanings of individual words. It is doubtful that the author is a mother-tongue speaker. It is unfortunate that the manuscript reached the press at all, especially after Ntsane's '*Mmusapelo*'. No excerpt can be quoted from this anthology without any crisis in translation.

In 1950 a collection of poems by various authors was published by M.D. Mohapeloa under the title '*Letlole la Lithoko tsa Sesotho*' (An Anthology of Sesotho Poetry.)

Moeketsi Daniel Mohapeloa was born in Mafeteng in 1912. He attended school there and went to Morija for his secondary school education. On completion of his High school education, he went to Natal where he spent most of his life. As a teacher he taught at a number of schools, and was known for his deep love for the Sesotho language.

This anthology ranges from the traditional *dithoko* (panegyrics) of Z.D. Mangoela, through initiation praise-poems, to what Lenake (1982:203) calls transitional forms. These include the poetry of H.E. Jankie, D.C.T. Bereng, A.S. Mopeli-Paulus, J.J. Machobane, K.E. Ntsane and J.G. Mocoancoeng which have already been discussed, as well as B.M. Khaketla's, which will be discussed soon. To this collection Mohapeloa added '*Sello sa sechaba*' (The cry of the Nation) and '*Qetello*' (The End). Both are lamentations on the death of Seeiso Griffith:

*Jo! A re siea Tšoana—Mantata;
Noka tsa re khola, tsa re tlalla. (p. 97)*

(Oh! he left us, Tšoana—Mantata;
The rivers bamboozled us, they overflowed).

The mourning in *Qetello* is blended with a pledge to subject oneself to the rule of his successor:

*U sa phomotse, re tla bona hore ha ua shoa,
Moea oa hao o tla lula ho ea tla tla. (p. 99)*
(You are resting, we shall see that you aren't dead,
Your spirit will dwell in the one who will come).

Indeed, Mohapeloa loved not only the Sesotho language, but also the customs and traditional chieftaincy, as contained in his selection of poems and praise-poems. The influence of the traditional praise-poems persists even in his *Qetello* in the form of eulogues, metaphor and the euphemisms that are found in it – an element of intertextuality. This book is, otherwise, a fair contribution to the development of Sesotho literature.

3.5 MOKOROSI – FIRST FEMALE POET

In 1951 E.S. Mkorosi published her small volume entitled *Bolebadi* (Forgetfulness.)

Emily Selemeng (whose real name is 'Mamosili) Mkorosi was born in Morija, in 1926, of Daniel and Aletta Ramakhula. Her father, a former teacher, was a minister of the P.E.M.S. Church. He disliked laziness, and liked people who worked with their hands. As can be expected, Selemeng grew up in many places where her father pastored. She attended school at Mahlakeng, Morija and Malingoaneng, Tsoelike, Mokhotlong and Qacha's Nek, ultimately qualifying as a teacher. She also got scholarships to the Bath College, Bristol Institute of Education, and the Institute of Domestic Arts in London. She also studied at the National University of Lesotho (then U.B.L.S.). She taught at Mafeteng, Maseru Government Controlled Primary School, and the Lesotho Agricultural College. She has been a devoted community worker and church woman, belonging to, and heading, many women's organizations in Lesotho. Retired as she now is from teaching, she runs a private dressmaking and designing school in Maseru. As a young lady she loved mud-plastering (*ho dila*), home decoration (*ditema*), grass-work (weaving) and pottery.

Mokorosi's only book *Bolebadi* (Forgetfulness) has a bearing on her religious inclination and character, loneliness, and observation of the ways of her peers. Part One of the collection consists of four narrative poems that relate to the royal visit of 1947, and their very titles tell the story: '*Ditokiso*' (Preparations), '*Re tloha mahae*' (We depart from our respective homes), '*Labobedi*' (Tuesday) and '*Laboraro*' (Wednesday). Part Two consists of fourteen lyrical poems of her own creation and imagination, covering almost only nature and human nature, often hinting at the religious. On human nature the most notable are the four on love, viz '*Moya wa me*' (My Soul), '*Bolebadi*' (Forgetfulness), '*Hlolohelo*' (Longing) and '*Lerato la moratuwa*' (The love of the Beloved). '*Bolebadi*' after which the book was entitled, reflects the author's deep-seated fears (as a young lady) for her young fiance. He was a government officer who worked in Mokhotlong, two days' distance on horseback. Owing to the socio-economic circumstances that prevailed, she received mail from him once a month. The very opening stanza conveys all her fears:

*Bolebadi, ngwaneso, kgutla o nkgopole;
Baditjhaba ba se o utswe ka mafufa.
Bolebadi, ngwaneso, moratuwa, o ba hane,
O hopole tshepiso ya hao, moratuwa;... (p. 36)*

(Bolebadi, love, come back — remember me;
Strangers should not steal you because of envy.
Bolebadi, love, beloved, turn them down,
You should remember your promise, my love...)

But the very name of the beloved is foreboding: she later realises what her fears foreboded, as she exclaims:

*Rato la ka la fetoha moya,
Ka le neha ya sa tshepahaleng! (p. 37)*

(There, my love has turned into air,
I gave it to one so untrustworthy!)

These two lines reflect on Mokorosi's observation of the ways of her peers, as stated above, and how heavily it weighed down on her in her loneliness. She then shakes off this nightmarish feeling, in the closing verse, by appealing to her imaginary addressee, as if to say, "This can't happen to me!":

*Boela o bue hape, Balebadi;
Ntshebile o re o swabile.
Tsosa moya wa ka o robetseng,
Lerato la ka o le ntjhafatse. (p. 38)*

(Do speak again, Bolebadi,
whisper to me: say you're sorry.
Arouse my dejected spirit,
My love do renew.)

The spirit of anxiety and fear is borne in the many apostrophes and exhortations that characterise the poet's style in this poem.

The underlying intention of the author here, is clearly to bring home to the unfaithful lovers how torturous their ways are to their faithful, but silent, partners. It is also a somewhat subtle reproach on the migratory labour system.

'*Moya wa me*' strikes the reader differently from '*Bolebadi*' from the outset:

*Moya wa me wa nkwa ke letsuba-peipi,
Ntho ya hlaha e hata sekaako:
E nyabuketsa, e kgaba sepikoko.
Moya wa me wa falla ho nna,
Wa latela sethunamosi sa leqhwele.
Moya wa ka wa nkwa ke letsuba-peipi. (p. 35)*

(My soul was taken up with a pipe-smoker,
The thing appeared walking ostentatiously:
Sauntering and spruce as a peacock.

My soul took leave of me,
 And followed the lanky smoke-blower.
 My soul was taken up with a pipe-smoker).

The rapid rhythm here is indicative of the swiftness with which the persona character was swept off her feet, and the lightness of her character. The sauntering showily like a peacock, and the reference to the subject as pipe-smoker, repeatedly, reflects on negative character traits. The identical opening and closing lines of the stanza ridicule the persona. The same tone is carried through the poem.

While the denominative adverbs *sekaako* and *sepikoko* express with striking vividness what would otherwise have been expressed by similes, they also seem to reflect on the poet's youthful and ridiculous disposition. The compound nouns *letsaba-peipi* and *sethunyamosi* coupled with the descriptive *nyabuketsa* and *leqhwele*, further compound the ridicule. This compactness of style is carried right through the poem with masterly skill.

This satire on light-hearted frivolous love affairs mirrors Mkorosi's religious upbringing, which shaped her disposition to such activities. Though, as she says, she loved nature and religion-free writings, she cannot escape unwittingly sermonising about true love. The same is true of '*Lerato la Moratuwa*', which she concludes with the words:

*...Rato la hae ha le shwe, ha le tsofale:
 Le ntjhafala bosiu le motsheare.
 Lerato la nnete le se nang boiketsiso,
 Lerato le dutseng mothong a le mong,
 Perela le thaka ya leihlo... (p. 47)*

(His love does not die, it does not age;
 It stays fresh day and night.
 True love that is not deceitful,
 Love that dwells on one person,
 A pearl and an apple of the eye...)

Both the above poems exhibit the subtle interferences of a religious system that has pervaded the poet's developmental stages and shaped her worldview.

'*Hlolohelo*', as the title implies, is more like '*Bolebadi*': it is a recollection of the torturous loneliness felt during long separation from one's beloved. The following lines are representative of the deep emotion that pervades the whole poem:

*Pelo ya ka ha e sa sebeta,
Tsohletsohle di bosula ho nna.
Pelo e siile mmele Lesotho,
Moya o feleheditse pelo, di ile; (p. 45)*

(My heart has ceased to function,
Everything to me is tasteless.
(My) heart has left (my) body in Lesotho,
(My) soul has accompanied the heart; they are gone;)

Mokorosi's expression of loneliness is unequalled. This presentation of a body left hollow because of a heart and soul that have left it, and gone in search of a beloved, is very original and touching. Like in the case of '*Bolebadi*', the author is bringing home to us the torture experienced by separated true lovers.

Otherwise most of the other poems are reminiscences: of '*Mehopolo*' (Remembrances): about the bad people and things observed in life, with recourse to Biblical dictates, '*Kgopolo ya bongwana*' (Reminiscences of childhood), which is self-explanatory; '*Motse wa heso ha tsatsi le dikela*' (My home village at sunset), a recollection of the beautiful scenery, and '*Teboho ya batswadi*' (Gratitude to Parents), reminiscing with thankfulness about parental love, upbringing and guidance, with inevitable recourse to praising God for them. All the other poems on nature and socio-cultural themes are designed to uphold social values. these are '*Bahale*' (Heroes), '*Bitso letle*' (A Good Name); '*Lefu*' (Death) a personification of death with a message strongly resembling James Shirley's in his poem "Death the

Leveller":

*O ikakgela hara batho,
A lekanye ngwana le mmae,
Morena le mofutsana ba tshwane. (p. 41)*

(He pounces on people,
And equalises child and mother,
King and commoner are made equal.)

Shirley's lines run thus:

...Death lays his icy hands on kings:
Sceptre and Crown
Must tumble down,
And in the dust be equal made,
With the poor crooked scythe and spade. (Guy Boas, 1967:51)

While Shirley talks about symbols of people's social statuses, Mkorosi makes direct reference to people. But the coincidence in title, theme and the personification of death cannot be attributed to chance, rather than an instance of intertextuality.

Then there is '*Hoja ke nonyane*' (If I were a bird) which also bears some thematic resemblance to John Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale", thereby betraying some kind of intersystemic interaction and intertextuality:

*Ke ne ke tla fofela holehole, hodimo,
Ke eme sebakeng ho boha lefatshe:
Ke bone madibadiba, le botalana ba naha;
Ke fofe ke phatlaladitse mapheo, ke bina... (p. 23)*

(I would fly far away, in the sky,
And pause in space to admire the earth:
And see the oceans, and the green of the veld;
And soar with wide-spread wings, singing...)

This longing for the bird's happiness is hardly distinguishable from John Keats's own longing for what he calls the nightingale's "being too happy in thine happiness." (Guy Boas, 1967:250)

In this anthology Mkorosi does not seem to be obsessed with the traditional poetic structure of the West. Barring a few instances where she retains regular stanzas (i.e. quatrains, sestets, etc) throughout, she writes in blank verse and, in the fashion of praise-poetry, the length of the stanza is determined by the contents. This, in some way, is an instance of what Moleleki (1988:60) calls "conflicting influences", where indigenous and exotic influences are simultaneously at work.

This is a small booklet by Mkorosi, but a notable milestone in the development of Sesotho poetry, especially since she was the first woman to enter the field of creative writing in Sesotho. Notable is her personal and almost devotional commitment to aspects of love, surely a field a woman understands, and in a very personal way.

3.6 B.M. KHAKETLA – SESOTHO RATIONALIST

Another Mosotho poet of note, who seemed to be somewhat versatile in authorship, was B.M. Khaketla.

Bennett Makalo Khaketla was born in 1913 at Makhalong, in the Qacha's Nek district. His parents were traditional Basotho who were initiated according to Sesotho custom, and were uneducated. His father worked in Port Elizabeth, where he learned on his own to read and write, and ended up being a catechist of the Anglican Church. His father was a stone carver for about fifty years, and died when Makalo was only seven years old. He was brought up by his loving mother in a close family. They lived comfortably on the many sheep his father had left them, until the sheep were stolen. He was then helped by his elder brother who was then a teacher. He also had to educate his younger sister who, unfortunately, died at a very early age.

He started schooling in 1924, but passed Std VI in 1929 with high marks.

He then proceeded to the Mariazell College, in Matatiele, for the Teacher's Certificate (LPTC) during 1930–32. Thereafter he studied privately until he obtained the B.A. degree with the University of South Africa in 1942, majoring in Political Science and Southern Sotho. In 1946 he was appointed to the staff of Basutoland High School. In 1949 he joined the British administration in Lesotho because of staff reduction at the high school. After a short period, he left for South Africa to resume teaching. When the Basutoland African Congress was formed in 1952, he returned to Lesotho and took to politics. In 1955 he became the first editor of the B.A.C. sponsored '*Mohlabani*' (The Warrior). He was elected to the Legislative Council, and later appointed as Minister of Health and Education. When dissensions arose within the party, he resigned, and launched the Basutoland Freedom Party together with other former Congress members. In 1963, his party merged with the Marematlou Party, and he became Vice President of the new party (second to Chief Matete). The party, however, split in 1964. He has served as Chairman of the Senate of the university (then University of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland), and a member of King Moshoeshoe II's Privy Council. During the writing of this thesis, he was Minister of Justice in the Interim Military Government of Lesotho.

Whilst working in South Africa, Khaketla, as he says, was struck by the way the Black man was denied all privileges and, whatever he was given, *o ne a sekisetsoa* (he was given stingingly). His greatest desire was to see the Black man being as recognised as anybody else. It is for that reason that he took to politics; to try and help Lesotho avoid falling under white rule.

In 1954 B.M. Khaketla published his *Lipshamathe* (Great Utterances), a volume of poetry on a variety of subjects, prefaced by his own detailed exposition of the poetic genre. In the same preface he traces the history of the genre from the praise-poem and its peculiar socio-political and socio-cultural causes, giving his own appraisal of the subsequent recorded and written poetry, volume by volume, thereby conditioning the reader for his own presentation. This is actually a remarkable introduction with personal insights which still hold for today.

His own compositions start with a presentation of man's love of violence in

'*Ntwa ya Abisinia*' (The War of Abyssinia) and '*Ntwa ya Jeremane*', 1914 (The War of Germany). In the former he describes the brutality of a war caused by Mussolini's (*Ntsukobokobo ya habo Sisare*) avarice:

Ntsukobokobo ya habo Sisare
E tonne mahlo e bopa sa nare,
E fofo hodimo e obole dinala,
E mahlo-matala, a matsho ke tlala. (p. 26)

(The pecking eagle of Caesar's ancestry
 With wide open eyes, sulks like a buffalo,
 It soars high up with bent talons,
 Its green eyes turned black with hunger).

The rhythmic flow occasioned by the skilful deployment of end-rhyme (aabb) in the above stanza cannot be missed, though Khaketla is known to be an outspoken critic of end-rhyme as a *sine qua non* in Sesotho poetry. The rhyming words here, however, do not exhibit the stylistic semantic import discussed earlier.

The bent (half-open) talons here signify readiness to snatch, whilst the eyes that have turned "black with hunger" suggests filled with avarice. The cruelty of the 1914 War between England and Germany referred to as *dipoho* (bulls), is succinctly expressed in the words,

Ho kgonyha ha tsona ho kgwesa maseya,
Lebese le hlanye le le matsweleng. (p. 29)
 (Their bellowing weans babies,
 The mild curdles whilst in the (mother's) breasts).

In concluding this poem he refers to the breach of promises made to his people for participating in the war:

Ho jwang kajeno? E timile hlaha.
Ya tingwa ke eng? Ke madi a Basotho.

Tshepiso di kae tsa bolokolohi?
O tsebe, ngwaneso, setsweng ke hole! (p. 30)

(How are things today? The veld fire's under control.
 What extinguished it? The blood of the Basotho.
 What happened to the promises of freedom?
 Know then, my brother, that can never be done.)

These rhetorical questions for which he, himself, furnishes the answers bring home to the reader the lack of scruples in the colonialist. In both poems, Khaketla brings it home to us the extent to which man can stoop low to satisfy selfish ends.

On didactic themes he has '*Tholwana tsa boikakaso*' (The fruit of arrogance), a straight-forward admonition with Biblical undertones; and '*Thakahadifele*' (The ageless old man), a robust satire on old folk who are fond of young company, especially of the opposite sex:

... *Takatso ya hae ho qala dithota.*
Tsa mohlamonene dithota—boseya.
Pelong ya hae o ana a tiya:
"Boputswa boholo e sa le letshwao,
Ke sa tla fumana le sona serethe. (p. 83)

(... His desire, to start afresh.
 To traverse the olden day fields of childhood.
 In his heart he grows increasingly stronger:
 Grizzled age is but hereditary,
 I will yet secure myself a second wife.)

Khaketla's upbringing in an atmosphere of family solidarity, as well as his christian educational background resulted in his deep distaste for social misconduct which manifested itself in the publication of his plays '*Tholoana tsa Sethepu*' and '*Bulane*' which will be discussed in Chapter 4. This same distaste came to bear even more strongly in the above poem, and is felt throughout its twelve stanzas.

Then comes his 'Dikenkeng' (Mix-ups) an autobiographical ballad, and 'Tsatsi leo!' (That day!), an ode to his own wedding day. These two poems seem to reflect the two brief joyous moments in Khaketla's life, for they are followed by a succession of six elegies, the most emotionally charged being 'Ba ile' (They are gone), an elegy on the death, in quick succession, of his sister:

*Ka lena letsatsi pelo ya me ya hlajwa,
 Wa me kgaitsemi a bitsetswa Hodimo;
 O ila tsamaya a sa ntherisa,
 Ka sala ka esi ke se ke maketse,
 Ke ena potlako ya eto la hae,
 Ha sa sa emele ho pheha mofaho. (p. 51)*

(In this day my heart was pierced,
 My sister was called up yonder,
 She left without notifying me,
 I remained alone, flabbergasted,
 By this suddenness of her departure,
 Not waiting even to prepare provision.)

and his mother:

*Wa fihla mohala: mme o sa faletse,
 O setse mohlala kgaitsemi morao;
 Le yena o ile a sa ntherisa
 Le hona ho nkaka a sa ka nkaka... (p. 52)*

(Then arrived a telegram: Mother is gone,
 She has followed on my sister's trail;
 Even she has gone without notifying me
 Even without merely kissing me...)

He then turns to religion for condolence and re-assurance, as he concludes:

Lefu, leshodu, o se itsokotse!
Le hoja makwala a o bitsa Ramatla,
O mafefohane, sesitahlohwana!
O tlisa boroko bo bokgutshwanyane,
Re tsohe kapele, matsohela—ruri—
Tsenene ya hao e se thithibane! (p. 54)

(Death, thief, be not arrogant!
 Though many call you Strong,
 You are weightless, nightmare!
 You bring but a short spell of sleep,
 We then wake up soon, and forever —
 Your sting being already blunted.)

Khaketla employs very powerful imagery. In the above poem, as in most, his apostrophe and deverbative *Ramatla* reinforce the personification of death.

The other elegies following on '*Sa mmokotsane*' (Elegy) — on the death of his own younger brother, David Sello Mosiuoa Khaketla — are self-explanatory: '*Ba sa kgutlang*' (Those who never came back) an elegy on the 624 Basotho who sank with the HMS *Erinpura* in 1943; '*Lefu la Tshwanamantata*' (An elegy on the death of Seeiso Griffith); '*Lefu la Motlotlehi Morena George VP*' (On the death of King George VI); and '*Thomas Mokopu Mofolo*' (On Thomas Mokopu Mofolo).

It may not be surprising if, after remembering all the above people, who mattered to him in various ways, Khaketla felt in some way like Alexander Selkirk who, according to William Cowper, was marooned all alone on some island. Hence the poem '*Nahathothe*' (Wilderness) of which Moloji (1968:24) says it is "a literal translation of Cowper's SELKIRK. It is as shallow as the original composition — shallow in the quality of the sentiment expressed." Given Selkirk's circumstances, it is surprising that anybody can miss the blending of yearning and helplessness coupled with reluctant resignation in the following lines from "the original composition":

Ye winds that have made me your sport,
 Convey to this desolate shore
 Some cordial endearing report
 Of a land I shall visit no more:
 My friends, do they now and then send
 A wish or a thought after me?
 O tell me I yet have a friend,
 Though a friend I am never to see.

(Guy Boas, 1967:123)

Perhaps Khaketla's translation of this poem, taking the above stanza as example, may be "shallow in the quality of the sentiment expressed", *inter alia*, because of the inexactitude of the author's style. It reads thus:

*Le hoja ekare ke to, ka monwana,
 Mphato o teng – Mohau wa Morena –
 Ke phela le yena le mahlomoleng,
 O thoba pelo a me e ye madulong.* (p. 68)

(Though I seem to be all alone,
 I have a friend – the Grace of God –
 I live with him even in distress,
 He comforts my heart, setting it right).

The yearning that persists for some time after reading the original, is, unfortunately, subdued by Khaketla's religious background, leaving a feeling of consolation in its stead.

Here is an instance of both religio-literary systemic interaction and intertextuality. This recourse to christianity may be blamed for the inhibition of Khaketla's otherwise vivid imagery.

Khaketla maintains a consistent aabb end-rhyme pattern throughout the fourteen stanzas of this poem, be it complete rhyme or "half-rhyme" (Lenake, 1982:202). The rhyme device, even in this poem, does not seem to have any other function outside the rhythmic flow of the lines. The same

rhyme scheme is employed in the fifty-five stanzas of '*Dinako tsa ngwaha*' (The Seasons). Bearing Khaketla's disposition to end-rhyme in mind, this phenomenon is quite significant. The bulk of his collection is, however, in blank verse.

This is followed by '*Moratuwa*' (Beloved), '*Lerato*' (Love) and '*Botjha*' (Youth). These are common love themes which are always alluded to by every Mosotho poet of the early fifties, the last named being characteristically didactic:

*Tlankana, thwetsana, utlwang keletso,
Keletso sebele e tswa ho baholo:
Le filwe ke Mmopi palesa bohlokwa,
E fetang ka botle matlotlo a lefatshe:
Ya lona palesa ke botjha ba lona. (p. 75)*

(Young men, maidens, take heed of advice,
Good advice comes from elders:
You've been given by the Creator a precious flower,
That outstrips in beauty the treasures of the earth:
Your flower is your youth.)

This firm tone against permissiveness is maintained throughout this poem — typical of traditional Sesotho culture. From the youth, Khaketla turns his attention to the socio-political theme in the following poems, which follow each other in quick succession: '*Mmote*' (The highveld clapper lark); '*Morena Marena*' (King of kings).

'*Mmote*' seems to be another instance of the influence of English poetry on Basotho poets, consciously or unconsciously. It resembles in some respects John Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale", except that it is a highly political lyrical ode. The lark has been picked to replace the nightingale probably because of its familiarity. When Keats says,

Away! away! for I will fly to thee,
Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards,

But on the viewless wings of poesy..., (Guy Boas, 1967:250)

Khaketla says,

*Hoja wa nkadima mapheo ka ka ka rura,
Ka rurela hodimo, sekapapakeng, ho Mmopi;
Hoja wa nkadima lentswe ka tsanyaolaka,
Ka bina sa mangeloi kgutlong tsa lehodimo,
Pina ya ba molodi – molodi wa lekodilo. (p. 79)*

(If only you could lend me your wings that I might fly,
That I might fly up into space, towards the Creator,
If only you could lend me your voice to sing sweetly,
To sing as angels in the corners of heaven,
A song that is sweet – the sweet melody of a flute).

Then he goes on to say:

*Ikope o ye hodimo o fete le dinaledi;
O yo kena hekeng ya motse wa Jerusalema,
Teng o kokote o motle o tla buletwa.*

(Mould yourself and go higher, beyond the stars,
Go and enter the gate of Jerusalem
Once there, knock, you are pretty, it will be opened to you.)

This is an instance of the same intertextuality that is exhibited in Mkorosi's '*Hoja ke nonyana*' (See page 101 above).

'*Jerusalema*' in some sects is a colloquial reference to heaven. Here Khaketla introduces the incongruity of discrimination in heaven on the grounds of looks, thereby ridiculing the status quo in South Africa. As he himself said (quoted earlier), he was struck by the way the Black man in South Africa was denied all privileges (see page 103).

The lark is then implored to convey an urgent plea (i.e. prayer to the ancestors):

*Hlahisa selo sa Rantsho ho E moholo,
Se lobe letho, bua feela o phatlalatsa,
O tla mameleha hobane o molomo monate...* (p. 79)

(Convey the woe of the Black man to the Almighty;
Nothing omit, with candour declare,
You'll surely be heard for sweet-mouthed you are...)

There seems to be a pun in the last line, which suggests discrimination based on language. *Molomo-monate* also has some magical connotation imported from the Amazulu belief in a herb said to make people believe or listen to its user, especially in love affairs.

Khaketla's persona now becomes even more robust in his protest by contrasting his own plight with that of the lark:

*O molokolohi, o foja moyeng,
Tsa hao dipina di fihla hodimo;
Ke ntsho-lekgoba, ke hahaba fatshe,
Ke beleswa joko ke Tshweu ya mawattle,
Pina ke selo, ke paka-mahlomola.* (p. 80)

(Free you are, in the sky you fly,
Your songs to "heaven" do reach;
A black slave am I, and here beneath do crawl,
A yoke on me imposed by whiteman of the seas,
My tune a dirge, a sad song ever is).

Every line in this stanza is powerfully charged with meaning. From an earlier allusion to fairer looks, the lark (*Mmote*) seems to symbolise the white "baas" who goes as he pleases, whilst the persona (a Black man) is tied to one place. Hence his reference to himself as a slave, crawling on the ground. There also seems to be a pun in *hodimo* in the second line, which

may mean heaven or the "baas". The sense in the fourth line is in strong agreement with Mopeli–Paulus's being "down–trodden by foreigners" found in his 'Moafrika'. The contrast between *pina ke sello* in the last line, and *pina ke e molodi* of the lark brings out more glaringly the plight of Khaketla's persona as against the lark (whiteman).

This is a very powerful protest against the race discrimination that was glaringly noticeable in Khaketla's times. It is rather strange that Moloi (1968:57) alludes to *Mmote* in passing, and says nothing about the even more robust protest embodied (as will shortly be seen) in 'Morena marena'. As Moloi's dissertation was written years after the Bantu Education system came into force, it can only be inferred that it was caught in the stream of the publications specifications laid down by the said department (see p. 48). This restricted right of publication, and qualified freedom of expression, unfortunately spilled over into certain areas of academic activity.

Though Khaketla was a Lesotho citizen, he also lived and worked in South Africa. This anthology was published as early as 1954, and, therefore, disproves the then commonly held belief, which has persisted to date, that the Sesotho literature is "soft" on protest.

'Morena Marena' is in fact a Biblical–political ode on the crucifixion of Christ, and its significance. It is clearly a sequel to *Mmote*. The very opening stanza comes out strongly for equality of all men in the eyes of the Creator:

*Ba mo kgokgothetse Morena Marena,
Ba mo thakgisitse maoto le matsoho,
A shwa le bohloko fu la sefapano,
A shwela Tshwanyane, a shwela Tshowana,
Bana ba letswele, banyane ba hae,
Le hoja ba fapane ka lebala mahlong. (p. 80)*

(They crucified Him, the King of kings,
They nailed Him feet and hands,
A painful death on the cross He died;

Dying for Whitey, dying for Blackie
 The children of the same breast, His younger brothers,
 Though they differ in the colour of their faces).

Saying "children of the same breast" is, in Sesotho, symbolic of the closest possible relationship i.e. siblings who sucked from the same breast – as Himself (i.e. Christ). This immediately reduces the skin colour differences, referred to afterwards, into non-issues. Khaketla harps on this "non-issue" that is such an issue in South Africa by pairing and contrasting black and white in every stanza, thereby harping on his theme. He then goes on to say:

*A shwa le disenyi a tlontloha,
 A shwa le disenyi a hloka sekodi;
 A kgathwa, a tshwelwa, a hlapaolakwa;
 Le wena Tshwanyane, o kgobe matshwafo,
 Molato ha o yo – sekgobo, lebala,
 O jare sefapano sa hao ka sebeti. (p. 81)*

(Together with miscreants He died and was humiliated,
 Together with miscreants He died, being faultless;
 He was beaten up, spat at, and reviled;
 You too, Blackie, keep calm,
 There's no guilt – stigma, pigmentation,
 Your cross with courage bear.)

Khaketla's formulaic use of death, torture and non-distinction in this poem makes nonsense of White South Africa's pre-occupation with race distinctions.

This parallel of Christ is a very strong expression of the Blackman's undeserved maltreatment. As Christ bore his cross on his way to final victory, the last line reassures the Blackman that things will not always be the same. Khaketla's themes are well structured. He moves from grief and loneliness, through love and chiding, to life and human nature, ending up with fighting on the socio-political arena. He appreciates what is good,

deprecates what is not, and denounces injustice in the strongest terms. His whole outlook has been shaped by his education, especially his other major in the B.A. degree – Political Science. His themes and expression greatly enrich, and contribute towards the development of Southern Sotho literature.

3.7 MOKHOMO – INTERSYSTEMIC INTERACTION

In 1955, '*Sebatso*' (Praiseworthy Thing), an anthology by M.A. Mokhomo made its appearance.

Makhokolotso Albertina Mokhomo was born on 26 February 1929 in Joalaboholo, Ficksburg. Her parents, farm labourers at Driekop in the Marquard district, were uneducated, but very clever. She first attended school at Ha 'Malehloa and was taught by one Mr. Mohapi. When her parents moved to Ladybrand, she was taken to school in Clocolan. On reflection, she marvels at the way she always looked on at wayward children without participating in their waywardness. When she took ill, she was sent to Lesotho where she attended the Intermediate School. She was taught by one Mr. Motsahi, who later became Inspector of Schools in Bethlehem. She liked emulating her teachers, and was never beaten in class. At high school, she was encouraged by her teacher (K.E. Ntsane) to write articles. She was later further guided to maturity by B.M. Khaketla, N.M. Khaketla and M.D. Mohapeloa. From high school she went to the Pretoria General Hospital (now H.F. Verwoerd) to train as a nurse. It is whilst she was there that she completed this manuscript. She has always felt that Blacks lived like slaves under English rule, and that the British paved the way for "Apartheid". She was impressed with a number of A.S. Mopeli–Paulus's writings.

The collection commences with an introductory poem, '*Mopherathethana*' (Badly cooked porridge), wherein Mokhomo seems to be appealing for "help to improve her poor cooking", here probably reflecting her initial feeling of insecurity as a poet:

*Bashanyana ba heso ntoiseng,
Ke phehile mophera—thethana;
Ke tsohile le mahlaseli a letsatsi,
Ka sila khala ka faha pitsa
Metsi a sa hobe le ho hoba,
Ka nka lesokoana ka fuluha. (p. 1)*

(Boys of my village, help me make tasty,
I have cooked tasteless porridge;
I woke up with the rays of the sun (i.e. late),
And ground a little grain to put into the pot
Even before it began to simmer,
And took a stirring stick to stir.)

Here, constructive criticism is invited in such powerful imagery that the very appeal is admired instead: comparing her first contribution to hurriedly cooked porridge, pouring meal into the pot before the time was right, cannot easily be outdone by any other expression. The repetition of the opening two lines in all three stanzas emphasises the desire for helpful criticism.

Mokhomo then continues with three odes on people: '*Pula—maliboho ea thuto*' (The icebreaker in Education); '*Thothokiso ea 'Mota Rasebeane Ntšekhe*' (Ode on "Mota...") and '*Thothokiso ea Bereng Seeiso*' (Ode on Bereng Seeiso).

Whilst the first and third are commemorative of something special about the people referred to, the second is, in fact, a mere praise—poem about '*Mota Rasebeane Ntšekhe*. It is an instance of the persistence of praise—poetry in the face of the new outlook in poetry. Like some of Mkorosi's, the verse structure here exhibits "conflicting influences" (Moleleki, 1988:60).

'*Pula—maliboho ea thuto*' is written to honour Makibinyane Mohapeloa as the first Mosotho to cross the Atlantic and return a graduate in colourful academic regalia:

*O tla a jere lipjemptjete sehlahla,
 O tla a jere palesa khutlo sa thuto,
 Mehalitoe ea naha, maphatsiphatsi;
 Hloohong o roetse kola sa thuto,
 O roetse kola sa mpshe le mohololi,
 Kolung o khanya ka khau ea khauta ea thuto. (p. 3)*

(He comes carrying colourful shrubs,
 He comes carrying the flower of the valley of education,
 The lillies of the veld, glittering things;
 On the head he wears the plume of education,
 He wears the tuft of an ostrich and blue crane
 On his neck glows the golden ornament of education.)

Over and above honouring Mohapeloa, Mokhomo seeks to encourage the youth to follow suit:

*... O tsoile ka mahetla har'a tlhankana,
 Ke lona Holimo la rona ba ha Mokhachane (p. 3)*

(He is head and shoulders above young men,
 That is our Heaven, we the descendents of Mokhachane).

The vertical and slant repetition patterns evident in this poem, together with the rapid rhythm, are indicative of the persistence of praise-poetry. This traditional African poetic style is relevant to the theme of the above poem and could not be avoided without making the poem sound unnatural. Kunene (1971:155) expresses his acknowledgement of this fact, and deep admiration for Mokhomo in the following manner:

Mokhomo is free, as a poet should be; she allows no rhyme or rhythm to weigh her down like a millstone. The result is that when she writes in praise of a person she admires, she abandons herself to a tradition that comes most naturally to her, and heroic poetic features abound in her poetry.

Indeed she is so flexible, she allows her theme and mood to determine her style.

'*Thothokiso ea Bereng Seeiso*' is somewhat a biographical sketch presenting him as he was, and still is – a catholic. The poem ends with contrasting the evil practice of ritual killings with the good Bereng, requesting his intercession with God:

*Ha u qetella thapelo, uena Ntate, Bereng,
U re laeletse ho Maria le mangeloi
U re ba re rapelle liritlo li fele Lesotho,
U qetelle ka ho re "Amen" sehalalelong,
Thapelo ea molibe e kene hae. ..(p. 37)*

(When you conclude your prayer, you Father, Bereng,
Remember us to Mary and the angels,
Pray that ritual killings in Lesotho might cease,
Conclude by saying "Amen" at the altar,
That a sinner's prayer home might reach.)

With this contrast, Mokhomo seeks to appeal to the ritual killers' conscience, if they have any. The clash between christianity and traditional beliefs is also evident here, whilst catholic influence is in the forefront.

The theme that seems to occupy more of Mokhomo's thoughts is lamentation. She has the following elegies in this volume: '*Tshisinyeho ea maikutlo a me*' (My Touched Feelings); '*Sello sa Basotho*' (The Cry of the Basotho); '*Seoa sa Lesotho*' (The Epidemic in Lesotho); '*Bolibeng ba mahlomola*' (In the Depth of Sorrow); '*Khopotso ea Mofolo, "Mongoli"*'. (In memory of Mofolo "the Author").

Like many literary terms, the term *elegy* has the stereotyped notion of a poem that mourns the death of someone, and nothing more. This narrow conception of the term limits its semantic area to a single connotation. All the sources consulted do not confirm this stereotype. To quote but two readily accessible ones, *The Odham's Dictionary of the English Language*

defines elegy as "a poem or song expressive of sorrow or lamentation, a dirge". Abrams (1981:47) states that in Greek and Roman literature, the term *elegy* was used to denote any poem written in elegiac meter (alternating hexameter and pentameter lines), and also to denote the subjects and moods frequently expressed in that verse form, especially complaints about love. He goes on to say that "sometimes the term is more broadly used for somber meditation... which deal generally with the passing of men and the things they value." So that the term refers primarily to the mood, and not so much to its cause. '*Sello sa Basotho*' and '*Seoa sa Lesotho*' are more readily recognisable as elegies. In the former, the death of Bereng and Gabasheane is lamented as being wasteful, for they had been sentenced to death for ritual killings. The feeling is aptly expressed in the repetition of the words:

Ba ile, ba ile, ba ile, ba ile (p. 14)

(They're gone, they're gone, they're gone, they're gone...)

Mokhomo then resorts to comparing their plight to Christ's for consolation, and hope that their death would bring some change in Lesotho:

Ba shoetse liritlo bana ba Mokhachane,

Ba lefile bosoto, batho re tla phela,

Mali a borena a re hlatsoisitse sesila –

A ekaba kajeno Lesotho le tla iketla? (p. 14)

(They've died for ritual killings the children of Mokhachane,

They have paid for the misery, we shall live,

The kingly blood has cleansed us of ill-luck—

Now, will Lesotho find peace to-day?)

But the scepticism in the last line cannot be missed. The cry of the Basotho referred to here is a double cry: crying along with the families whose loved ones have been killed, and for the country that must now do without its chiefs. This poem bears a very subtle warning against the continuance of this practice.

'*Seoa sa Lesotho*' is a sequel to the arrest and sentence of Bereng and Gabasheane, which was followed by more arrests. The writer views the rife ritual killings in Lesotho as an epidemic. She protests against this by charging the nation to hold tight because the cause of its plight is within itself. The two-line refrain at the end of each stanza harps on this fact unmercifully:

*Ngaparela lefika, ngwan'a Tšoana-Mantata,
'Muso-moholo oa Seeiso o qhaliloe ke ho retlana!* (p. 51)

(Hold tightly, son of Tšoana-Mantata,
The mighty reign of Seeiso has dissipated due to ritual killings).

In the powerful imagery she has so mastered, Mokhomo describes Bereng's plight succinctly in the following manner:

*Bereng, koena ea sechelo-a-ke-maliba,
Bereng, tlhapi ea se-omeloa-ke-leraha.* (p. 16)

(Bereng, the crocodile of the dried-up deep,
Bereng, the fish of the waterless mud.)

The next three poems are not the usual death-related lamentations. In *Tšisinyeho ea maikutlo a me* Mokhomo laments the loss of christian values and self-esteem by all the people:

*Jo, le ferekane jwang lefatshel
Ngoana o tsohetse rr'ae 'moi,
Chaba li tsoelane lipelo sephoofolo...* (p. 7)

(How disorderly the world is!
A child has turned against his own father,
Nations look daggers at one another...)

Mokhomo's exposure to the Setswana and Afrikaans linguistic systems is evident in the coinage *rr'ae 'moi* from Setswana *rra* (father) and Afrikaans

mooi (precisely/hantle).

She then chides man directly, in accordance with the voice of her religion:

*Khutlelang ho Jehova, bahloki,
Bophelo le bo alimiloe, maoatla;
Sekeletsang meea e seng nama... (p. 8)*

(Come back to Jehova, you needy,
You have been lent this life, fools;
Choose the spirit, not the flesh...)

In 'Bolibeng ba mahlomola' Mokhomo's persona laments her own sorry plight, being maltreated far from home:

*Kajeno re fetohile makhoba,
Re sotlehile naheng ea Leburu;
Re sotloa ke a matšo Makhooa!... (p. 21)*

(Today have we become slaves,
Maltreated we are on the Boer's land;
Maltreated we are by Black Europeans...)

The maltreatment is obviously at the hands of Boss boys. This feeling is strengthened by the sight of the freeness of the birds hovering over their heads in the direction of Lesotho:

*A ke le bone nonyana tsa heso ho rateha!
Makabelane ana a fofela ka Lesotho, hae,
A rura a potlakela mofuthu oa loti,
A hopotse hae ha habo khotso le nala,
Moo nong e jang e ikoka boketa... (p 23)*

(Oh, see how beautiful our birds are!
These rock-martins are flying home to Lesotho,
They hurry to the warmth of the mountain range,

Hurrying to the home of peace and plentiful,
Where the vulture devours to nurse its own thinness..)

With this blending of regret and nostalgia, the writer seems to be wanting to convey the feeling that "home is best." 'Khopotso ea Mofolo, Mongoli' is more an expression of self pity on the loss of an author to lean on. The refrain brings it all out unmistakably at the end of each stanza:

*Ho phomola batho e seng litaaso,
Ho tutubala lihoqhobela lefatšeng,
Ho robala likhosi ho sale mami,
Ho tsamaea likoankoetla tsa banna —
Ao! Ao! Ao! A rona bale! (p. 38)*

(Real people, rather than dwarfs, die,
Real men in this world close their eyes ,
Chiefs go to sleep, leaving the unworthy,
He—men, men of men, go —
Oh! Oh! Oh! dear us!)

On the theme of places, Mokhomo has written 'Mophato o phahameng oa Lesotho', a description of the Basutoland High School, and 'Maseru'. In the latter she depicts the place as a haven that presents great opportunities for all:

*Ha u hlora tloo Maseru, uena papatlele tooe!
Re tla u alla qibi le masolanka. (p. 33)*

(If you are unhappy, the wanderer that you are,
We will with fur blankets¹⁾ prepare you bedding.)

Mokhomo has also written one poem on historical occasions, love matters and biographical sketches, the latter two reflecting on her own personal

1) Qibi (otter): reference to the fur of its skin.

experiences, i.e. her first meeting with her own beloved (*'Moratuwa—Lerato la me'*) and *'Bophelo ba ka sekolong'* (My life at school) which is self-explanatory.

'Ketelo ea Motlotlehi Lesotho' (The King's visit to Lesotho) on the Royal Family's visit in 1947, resembles Mokorosi's in many respects but detail.

Makhokolotso Mokhomo's writings, as seen above, have been greatly influenced by the socio-cultural and religious circumstances that were prevalent in Lesotho in her time. She protests, whilst mourning, against the brutalities of ritual practice whilst lauding good achievements. Odes on people and elegies occupy most of the space in her collection. Seemingly Mokhomo seeks to prick our sober judgement by contrasting the good and the bad in the community. Her collection is a noteworthy contribution to the development of Sesotho poetry, especially since she was only the second woman to brave a field populated by male poets.

3.8 RATAU – INTRA– AND INTERSYSTEMIC FORCES AND SOURCES

In 1955 J.K. Ratau published *Khirimpana* on the subject of the migrant labour system.

Rev. Jacob Khathatso Ratau was born at Nyakoaneng, Ha Molapo, in the Butha–Buthe district, on 2 February 1909. He attended the Qalo Primary school in the same district, after which he proceeded to Morija Teacher's College for the Third Year Teacher's Course. He then taught at the Qalo Primary School for two years. In 1937 he resigned his post at Qalo and went to the University College of Fort Hare to do the Diploma in Theological Studies. He completed his theological studies at Morija in 1943. He then pastored at Seforong, Ha Nkai from 1943, and then in Sehonghong in 1945. He left ministry for a short while to work in the mines, later to be assigned as minister to the Village Main parish in Johannesburg. He also served in Springs (1952); Kolo, Ha Ntsie (1962); Mohalinyane, Mohaleshoek (1964) and Butha–Buthe parish (1975–87). Whilst in Springs in 1958, he was sent to Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia) to research the life of Eleazar Marathane, who then lived in Barotseland. He died on 11 June 1987 and

was survived by his wife, Elsinä 'Ma—Joshua Ratau (nee Rachaka) three sons and a daughter (my informant).

Coplan (1987:414) has it that the settlement of the Free State wars in 1869 gained the Basotho British colonial protection whilst simultaneously depriving them of two—thirds of their arable land, thereby forcing them into dependence on white employment for their own upkeep. By 1879 about 15,000 Basotho were in employment in South Africa, 5000 of whom worked at the newly opened diamond diggings in Kimberley. Young Basotho walked up to 200 miles in groups to their places of employment in the face of the elements and violent farmers for whom they would not work. It is on these journeys that the young Basotho created the new genre known as *Difela tsa ditsamaya—naha le diparola—thota* (songs of the veld traversers), translated freely by Coplan (op cit:414) as 'Songs of the invertebrate travellers' — a poetry wrought in the melting pot of migration. This genre thus originates as an oral genre. Soon, however, the literary poet took some interest in it. Thus Ntsane's '*Ha re ya Lejweleputswa*' (when we went to the Witwatersrand), from *Mmusapelo* (1946) is an early manifestation of the poetry of migration in literary poetry.

Ratau's *Khirimpana* is unique in the sense that it represents the story of a *setsamaya—naha* consisting of seventy—two pages of continuous narration of the migrant's travels to, and occupation in, the gold mines of Johannesburg and the diamond mines in Kimberley, in *difela* fashion, reflecting the Sesotho socio—cultural norms in the process.

Migrancy, together with the variety of its accompanying moods, is an important component of the theme in this poem, and Ratau presents it in compact imagery and metaphor, but in brilliant everyday Sesotho. The actual departure of *Khirimpana* from home is portrayed in the following lines:

Molamu o jere thoto:

Pholo ha e khaoloe linaka. (1955:9)

(The stick carries the luggage;
An ox's horns are never cut, i.e. never unarmed).

This is highly figurative usage in straight-forward language. The first line of the couplet suggests that the stick is actually carrying the luggage when the implication is that the luggage is tucked onto the stick Khirimpana is carrying. In the second line he is compared to a bull, a symbol of strength, courage and masculine power (verility). His stick is its weapon, the horn. The luggage he is carrying may also symbolise the burden a Mosotho has to bear under the prevailing socio-political circumstances, finding himself between the mythological Scylla and Charybdis, i.e. not recognised in South Africa, despite his input in the country's monetary power (mines), and looked down upon as *dikwata* (mine ruffians) in Lesotho by the bureaucratic business class. Ratau goes on to say:

*Mohahlaula eitse ha o tloha hae,
ha o rolela nta'ta oona khaebane,
o nea 'm'a oona le khaitsele sehlanu,
bohle ba liha lifahleho. (op cit:11)*

(When the wanderer left home,
when he doffed his hat to his father,
giving his mother and sister five, i.e. a handshake,
all 'dropped' their faces, i.e. looked down.)

The doffing of the hat symbolises both respect and acceptance of the challenge. The figurative use of 'five' cannot be missed. The strong feeling of uncertainty is expressed powerfully in the imagery of 'dropping' their faces – a depiction of utter gloom. The socio-economic needs that impelled Khirimpana to leave his home are presented in the following fashion:

*Ke utloile ka hlokoana la tsela
le ka lekhoaba,
hore koana mose ho Lekoa,
likhomo li hlahile ka linaka,
ka linaka le ka matsoele:*

eaba ke re ho 'me:

'Me nkhalikele ke ee. (op cit: 11)

(I heard from a blade of grass i.e. rumour,
and from a cape raven, i.e. secret informer,
that yonder side of the Vaal river,
can be seen by their horns, cattle,
by their horns and the udders:
so I said to my mother:
Mother roast for me that I may go.)

This rich metaphor and symbolism is what Coplan alludes to by 'transforming experience into aesthetic communication through the affective development of cultural knowledge' (1987:417). The orality of the text is felt very strongly in this excerpt. It takes knowledge of Basotho historical culture and shared experience to understand the relevant connotations of 'reed of the road', 'cape raven,' 'across the Vaal river' (Johannesburg), cattle seen by the horns' (symbolising money or wealth to be earned). The last line ('Mother roast for me that I may go') is particularly culturally charged. A long journey is implied in the 'roasting', which in its turn implies powdered roasted mealies, *dipabi*, the Basotho traditional provision for very long journeys. It should also be added that the cattle referred to above also symbolise bride wealth or dowry which was traditionally paid in live cattle. To the unaccustomed ear both *dithoko* and *difela* sound like chanting, though the Basotho insist that the *dithoko* are declaimed while *difela* are chanted, usually against a concertina background by modern migrants. The orality of *difela* is easily discerned in the following lines:

*Lona lithaba le maralla,
hoja le batho,
ekab'eba kea le laetsa;
ke le laetsa ho batsoali ba me;
ke le laetsa ho kgaitsele le ho baena;
ke re ho lona le ba joetse le re:*

*Khirimpana o fetile mona,
o fetile e entse sehou. (p. 14)*

(Ye mountains and hills,
if people you were,
to you a message I would give;
a message to my parents dear;
a message to my sister and my brothers;
tell them would I say,
that Khirimpana here did pass,
with wondrous song so loud and clear.)

Apostrophising the mountains and hills in the first line brings home to the hearer the loneliness of the journey, while the last line brings out the fact of the only other sound being the music. In the outposts of Lesotho, as in the mine compounds, migrants' *difela* competitions are often organised, and account is taken of the 'length of uninterrupted extemporization', inter alia (Coplan, 1987:417). The modulation of the voice and accompanying concertina are also regulated according to breath lengths, or lengths of utterance units: the shorter the utterance, the lower the pitch and vice versa. These units may vary from three-word lines to in excess of ten lines. Ratau makes good use of punctuation (combination of the full stop and the capital letter) to indicate the pauses. For instance, the following 13 line stanza, depicting Khirimpana's loneliness on his way to the recruiting camp in Butha-Buthe, has only three utterance units:

- 1... *Nakong ena o mong ka mono.*
- 2... *Ha a khelekenya lifela tsa hae,
ha ho ea utloang
le ea mo lumelang.*
- 3... *O lumeloa ke mahaha le maralla,
o lumeloa ke linonyana tsa meru,
o lumeloa ke lihahabi, bo-lempetje,
ka bo-mokholutsoane*

le bo-mosenene;
o lumeloa ke liphoofotoana
tse nyenyane, bo-mochalla,
ka bo-mutlanyana oa ma-tlola-tsethe;
ba ea lumela. (1955:12)

(At this moment he is all alone.

When he sings his *lifela*
 there's nobody to hear them
 and respond.

The response comes from the caves and the hills,
 from the birds in the bushes,
 from the creepers, the chameleon and others,
 as well as the lizards
 and the cobra;
 from smaller animals
 such as the pole-cat,
 and the jumping hare;
 all respond.)

Khirimpana exhibits both internal structure, which is interwoven with style, as well as external or physical structure. As indicated earlier, the subject matter in migrant poetry is travel. This work consists of one continuous narrative, tracing Khirimpana's departure for Johannesburg via Butha-Buthe, and later for Kimberley and back, having amassed enough *dikgomo* (dowry) for his bride. The persona commences Khirimpana's tale in the third person mode throughout. The gaps pertaining to his childhood and early boyhood are filled by a series of flash-backs in the first person mode. Like in the *dithoko* the lengths of the stanzas depend on the contents and each stanza pertaining to an incident in the flash-back is introduced by *ke hopola...* (I remember...).

This repetition of apparent longing for the past — e.g. *Ke hopola mohla ke*

fetohang motjoli oa sebele (I remember the day I became a champion shepherd; p. 18) – whilst on the way to the future, intensifies the feeling of wild anticipation, whilst maintaining the tone of closeness of the author to his character, who to him, symbolises the Basotho people.

Ratau has divided his *sefela* into sections, for convenience, that indicate the different phases of his migrant's travels and occupation. These are:

1. *Sebata se leetong* (The 'Beast' undertakes a journey).
2. *Nkoe ea hlaka la Hololo e fihla Butha-Buthe* (The 'Leopard' of the Hololo reed arrives in Butha-Buthe.)
3. *Likhomo li chekoa majoeng* ('The cattle are mined in rocks' – reference to gold): arrival in Johannesburg and life at the mines.
4. *Letlotlo ka linaka le ka matsoele* (Wealth by horns and udders): home with lots of money (and experience) – end of first contract, etc.

The very titles given to the sections of the poem have a eulogistic tone thereby betraying Ratau's strong identification with Khirimpana's cause, i.e. the Basotho cause. In fact this *sefela* is to some extent autobiographical, bearing in mind that Ratau – the teacher and pastor that he was – interrupted his calling to work in the mines for experience in 1952, three years before the publication of the work. After a spell in the mines, he was assigned to a parish in Village Main, a mining area in Johannesburg. The reference to gold in terms of *likhomo* symbolises the Mosotho's wealth, his pride. The same commitment to the Basotho cause comes out clearly in the last section '*Matla-selo o se fumane* (The seeker after a thing has found it); and reflects a feeling of 'mission accomplished'.

The internal and external structural divisions discussed above do not detract from the thematic coherence of the poem. They stand in definable relationship one to the other, and are thus subsystems of the whole – the poem. The *difela* are in their own right a subsystem (or sub-genre) of the Sesotho traditional literary system. All literature is a system with its subsystems, each linked to reality. The *difela* are linked to the reality of the migratory labour system, which Coplan (1987:421) refers to as the tragedy of forced migration. Contrary to the often held belief that traditional poetry

belongs to the archives, the *difela* are a living art of oral self-expression of the Basotho working class.

This, undoubtedly, is a major contribution to the development of poetry in Sesotho literature, and an indication of how economic circumstances could be directed in the creative sense of those blessed with the gift of the art.

3.9 MAKARA – PATRIOTISM

In 1955 Azael Makara published his *Lipshamathe* (Pleasant Utterances), a collection of epical panegyrics on Basotho and English kings and Catholic bishops; odes on the countries and the Caledon and Zambesi rivers, and a praise-poem on teachers, '*Litichere*'. The most striking feature of this collection is the ease with which Makara switches from first, second and third person modes of narration between stanzas, thereby creating a feeling of inter-stanza dialogue. For instance, in '*Lithoko tsa Afrika*' (The Praise-poem on Africa), the second stanza runs thus:

Ke 'M'a Faro,
Ke 'M'a Moroa,
Ke 'M'a Mokhothu,
Le 'M'a Mosotho. (p. 21)

(I'm the mother of Pharaoh,
 I'm the mother of the Bushman.
 I'm the mother of the Hottentot,
 And of the Mosotho).

This personification of Africa presents a powerful image of a mighty woman who nurtures all the inhabitants of Africa. The third stanza runs in this fashion:

U mosali, u Limakatso,
U metse matsoele ke mokoloko,
U tšoana le kolobe kharebe,
Ua rapalla tsa anya kaofela.

(You're a woman, you're Limakatso i.e. wonderful,
 You've grown breasts for siblings,
 You're like mother pig, lady,
 You lie down, they all suck).

This inter-stanza dialogue is extended to Africa–Europe dialogue in powerful imagery.

The most impressive and memorable poem in this collection is clearly the elegiac '*Na 'm'a lona ke utloa bohloko*' (I, your mother, am grieved). In his own unique way, Makara personifies Lesotho, making her complain of being deserted by all her children who prefer the company of the 'loose' women of the Republic (then, Union).

The sadness of a deserted mother's lamentation is felt from the very opening lines:

Bahlankana linatla, bana ba me!
Bashanyana ba tsoetsoeng ka bohloko,
Ba balehile ba ntšiea thoteng;...
'Na ke tsoaletse Maburu, kea hlomoha!... (p. 103).

(Young men, strong men, my children!
 Boys born with pain to bear,
 Away they've scuttled, leaving me forlorn;...
 That I the boys for the Boer did bear, I mourn!...).

Every line in this poem is emotionally charged, and the images raised are very vivid. The misery the country is plunged into in the absence of all the able-bodied young men is glaring in the following lines:

'Na ha ke lemelo kea sotleha!
Temo e setse le bana masea,
Ba khoaritsaka feela, ba tlohela
Peo e lutse holim'a sekaka,
Ha ho mele letho masimong;... (p. 103).

(None remains to plough for me, I starve!
 With children, babies, the fields remain,
 They only scratch, and the seeds they leave
 On the surface bare,
 And nothing in the fields does grow...)

This feeling of utter dejection is carried through the eleven stanzas of this poem. In the end Makara declares clearly that there can never be progress in Lesotho with the continued exodus to the Republic, leaving the country in the hands of foreigners, because:

*Namane—ea—kanyesetsa ha e hole,
 Ngoana o phela ka lapa la 'mae... (p. 107).*

(A calf that sucks from a foreign cow never grows,
 A child thrives in his mother's home...).

With this poem, the only clearly modern in theme, structure and style in the collection, Makara is appealing to the Basotho who stream out of the country in pursuit of greener pastures to "cast the bucket where they are". He feels that there are resources in the country but there is nobody to tap them.

The sad message of this poem is conveyed in the refrain '*Na 'M'a lona ke utloa bohloko*' (I, your mother, am grieved) at the end of every stanza. This is a clear instance of interaction with European poetry. It is only a pity that this powerful French ballad in Sesotho is the only one in this collection.

3.10 LESORO AND THE NURSERY RHYME

In 1960 a completely new phenomenon in this genre in Sesotho, and a direct import from the Western literary system, the nursery rhyme, emerged and manifested itself in Lesoro's *Reneketso tsa bana* (Children's Poems).

Ephraim Alfred Shadrack Lesoro was born at Platkopie in the Ficksburg district of the Orange Free State. On completing his primary education at the Ficksburg Community School in 1943, he proceeded to the Kroonstad High School where he completed The Junior Certificate in 1946. He then went to Lovedale in the Cape for the HPTC course, which he completed in 1948. Whilst a teacher, he studied privately for the Matriculation Certificate and, much later, for the B.A. degree with the University of South Africa, and graduated in 1979.

In 1950 he was appointed principal at the Groot Constantia farm school, in the Viljoenskroon district, later to move to the Waterfall farm school, Ficksburg. In 1968 he took up a post as announcer in Sesotho at the SABC. In 1973 he was appointed Language Instructor in Sesotho at the Rhodes University, where he was later promoted to Professional Assistant. On his attainment of the B.A. Honours degree (Rhodes) in 1984, he was promoted to the rank of Lecturer, the first Blackman ever to occupy that position. In 1989 he obtained the M.A. degree with the University of the O.F.S., with the dissertation entitled: *End rhyme as a device in poetry: a comparative enquiry*. This earned him the Thomas Altys Award in June 1990, sponsored by the Rhodes University. At this moment, he is still lecturer.

When Lesoro was appointed to the Waterfall farm school, he found himself having to teach all classes, all by himself, including two Sub A classes for which he dearly needed nursery rhymes in Sesotho. Having been impressed by this kind of poetry in English, and the Afrikaans "Kleuterrympies", he tried his hand at Sesotho rhymes, more out of need than adventure. By his own admission, this whole book is in a way an instance of intertextuality.

For the first time rhyme took precedence over all other considerations for its melodic import. Coupled with rhythm (however irregular) it excited the young minds with the experience of the repetition of like-sounding words. He himself acknowledges the intertextuality fact of the book, even as implied in its original title — "*Liraeme tsa bana*" (Children's Rhyme) — and also help given by the late Doctors W.W.M. Eiselen and H.J. van Zyl in the compilation of the manuscript.

Dr. Henry Steele Commager (1953:xv) remarks that "almost anyone, one is tempted to say, can write a book for adults — and almost everyone does; but it requires a felicitous combination of qualities, intellectual and moral, to write a good book for children." Meigs et al. (1953:407) also intimate that poetry is inherently a thing of mood and emotion, of response to emotion, and go on to say that these are of no interest for children "who have not lived long enough to know the wistful longing for things once possessed and lost, and who feel intensely, but never analyse their feelings." The writer of children's poetry, therefore, should write "as a child would express himself were he articulate enough to voice his feelings about wind and rain, about brooks and river and sea, about his dreams and fancies" (1953:408). Good *direneketso tsa bana* should therefore, "evidence a certain facility in the construction of nonsensical idea and language which, however, falls short of that solemn, inevitable rightness which marks superb nonsense" (1953:411). This is well illustrated by the following examples from Boyce and Bartlett (1950):

1. Pitty, Patty, Polt,
 Shoe the wild colt;
 Here a nail,
 There a nail,
 Pitty, Patty, Polt. (p. 13)

2. "Inty, tinty, tethery, methery,
 Bank for over, Dover ding." (p. 15)

As they (Boyce and Bartlett) put it, "the seven— and eight—year olds usually prefer the mystery of strange words" (1950:15). Even before we look into Lesoro's book we are aware that the task he has set for himself — i.e. "to see all things through a child's eyes, with the child's sense of wonder and a child's imagination" (Meigs et al, 1953:593) — is not as easy as is usually taken for granted.

In typical childlike disorientatedness his rhymes are in no particular thematic order. He writes about a cow, then a fruit hawker, then a hen, etc. each bearing no relationship to the other, barring the rhyme.

Lesoro's '*Muu, 'muu, sephatšoana seso*' ('Muu, 'muu, our feminine Black—and white) runs thus:

*'Muu, 'muu, sephatšoana seso,
Na u ka fepa bana bana beso?
E, nka ba fepa ka pelo e tšoeu,
Ka khamelo tse peli tsa bese le lesoeu!* (p. 1)

('Muu, 'muu, our feminine Black—and—white,
can you these our children feed?
Yes, I can with my heart so white,
With two pales full of milk rich and white).

"White" in the third line signifies gladness, whilst in the last it is the usual symbol of purity. Thus Lesoro links gladness with purity, not necessarily that the children understand it, but that with constant repetition and explanation, that will be the end result. The additional significance of this verse is to draw to the attention of the children the good in the cow. Emphasis is, however, on end-rhyme for the melody of like-sounding words.

The second verse, '*Joalane le morekisi*' (Joalane and the hawker), runs in this fashion:

*Joalane ha a bona morekisi
A roetse tse ngata liperekisi
Takatso ea lutlisa mathe a hae
A botsa ka mosa: ka peni li kae?... (p. 2)*

(When Joalane the hawker espied,
Burdened with the peaches she carried,
Driven she was by desire;
How many per penny she enquired?..)

Though emphasis on end-rhyme is also conspicuous in this verse, it also relates to the expected everyday experiences of childhood. An additional

dimension here is the element of commercial transaction that is within the scope of both rural and urban life. It may be regarded as an introduction of the child to the realities of life – the give and take of life, and so on.

This is immediately followed by *Kaa!kaa! Kaa!* (Cluck! Cluck! Cluck!), the cackle of a hen, which runs thus:

*Kaa! Kaa! Kaa! Khohoanyane ea ka
E behela mahe a kang a khaka;
Setha e behela holim' a lithaka
Kaa! kaa! kaa! Khohoanyane ea ka. (p. 3)*

(Cluck! cluck! cluck! my little fowl,
Her eggs she lays like a guinea fowl's;
Heap'd they lay on a leafy pile.
Cluck! cluck! cluck! my little fowl.)

In this verse Lesoro managed an effective combination of rhyme (horizontal, vertical and end-rhyme) with assonance (the "a" and "e" repetitions) and alliteration (the "k" and "kh" repetitions), whilst maintaining a balanced rhythm throughout. This is a good children's verse, bearing in mind that Sesotho poetry cannot normally be arranged in iambic metrical pattern because of the inherent tone pattern of the language, and the syllabic potential of the sonorant consonants. This verse relates to the rural child's earliest experiences, whilst simultaneously a lesson to the urban child on the relationship between the hen and the egg.

The nearest verse to Meigs et al's "nonsense rhyme" is '*Bara ba Masobela le Rasephali*' (The sons of Masobela and Rasephali), which runs as follows:

*Mor'a Masobela
O rata ho bala;
Mor'a Rasephali
O rata papali;
Kats'e mo ngoapile
A ba a tsoa mali. (p. 11)*

(The son of Masobela
 He likes to read;
 The son of Rasephali
 He likes to play;
 The cat scratched him
 And he bled.)

This verse is, however, not nonsense rhyme; it only has words like *Masobela* and *Rasephali* which have been glaringly deliberately coined to rhyme with *bala* and *papali*, respectively; The latter also with *mali*. It comprises a pleasurable lesson to children as to the harm that is likely to come to children who like playing, in contrast to those who like reading, and is therefore, an indirect encouragement to learn to read.

'*Tekenyana ea ka*' (My Tickey) and '*Lipalo ho fihlela leshome*' (One to ten) are rhymes designed to introduce the child to the smallest unit of the currency then in use, and to the counting skill. The latter, which falls just short of a translation of Augusta Baker's (1973:71) "One Two Buckle my shoe", goes thus:

'*Ngoe, peli,*
Ipapalle Tseli!

(One, two,
 Play well, Tseli)

Tharo, 'ne,
Sutha ke khanne!
 (Three four,
 Let me drive!)

Hlano, tšelela,
Ke feta Mojela!
 (Five, six,
 I surpass, Mojela!)

Supa, robeli,
Ke bona Mofeli!
 (Seven, eight,
 I behold Mofeli!)

Robong, leshome,
Ke ngolla malome!
 (Nine, ten
 I write to my uncle!) (p. 41)

The structure and rhythm of this poem are in all respects the same as in Baker's poem. This is a perfect example of intertextuality. The vowels are introduced in similar fashion in *Litlhaku II* (Vowels II), while *Litlhaku I* is more prosaic, and lacks any rhythm. The former has a rhythm and structure that are also analogous to Baker's poem:

A, A, a!
Esele ea lla.
 (A, a, a!
 The ass's bray.)

E, e, e!
Mollo o tukile
 (E, e, e!
 The fire is red.)

I, i, i!
Ke bona lemati
 (I, i, i!
 Watch the door.)

O, o, o!
Re hloka libeso.
 (O, o, o!
 We need some fuel.)

U, u, u!
Re ja lehapu.
 (U, u, u!
 We eat a melon) (p. 46)

Interest here is on rhyme, and the introductory vowel in every verse focuses on the sound that must rhyme with it. As is the case with Baker's poem, above, each verse, though bearing no semantic relationship to any other, is a self-contained sense unit. This poem, therefore, cannot be classified under Meigs et al's "superb nonsense".

From pages 47 to the end, comparative structural and semantic maturity can be felt, the last poem, '*Nonyana tse leshome*' (Ten Birds), being at the pinnacle. This points to conscious grading of the poems by Lesoro. This last poem is a ten verse light ballad in which one bird is eliminated per stanza, thereby strongly resembling the popular Boy Scout song, "One man went to mow."

There is no doubt of this being another instance of intertextuality. This book is a notable milestone in the development of poetry in Sesotho. It seeks to develop the child's artistic appreciation from an early age. Lesoro should be commended for successfully reverting to childhood, mentally, and seeing things "through a child's eyes, ... and a child's imagination." (Meigs, et al, 1953: 593).

The uniqueness of this book also marks the dawn of a new era of wider thematic scope, greater experimentation and intersystemic interaction. With the greater acceptance of the latter, a more marked frequency and variety of instances of intertextuality is to be expected. With Lesoro this book on "nursary rhyme" has had its influence felt in his later attempt at poetry writing, i.e. his mind being fixated on rhyme and stanza formation as sole determinants of poetry. Evidence to this fact is to be seen in his *Mmitsa* (1962), which falls under the next period in the development of Sesotho literature.

3.11 RESUMÉ

The impact made by Bereng's *Lithothokiso* as a distinct generation of poetry from the *lithoko* had far-reaching results for the sub-system. The influence, encouragement and teachings of Mrs Mabile are clearly manifest in Bereng's new approach, even to poems on Moshoeshoe's birth, death, grave, etc. For the first time structural and thematic intertextuality were found teeming in Sesotho poetry. The epitaph concept in '*Bitleng la Moshoeshoe*', the elegiac element and personification of death in '*Matšeliso a Moshoeshoe*', the refrain in '*Sello sa likhutsana*', are but a few examples, let alone the extolling of the Creator (a christian deity) in '*Mahlale a mahlale*', surface clearly as products of intersystemic interaction. His young age and receptive mind, probably coupled with youthful experimentalism and nobility of birth, gave him the temerity and gumption that saw him more than a decade ahead of his contemporaries. Needless to say that, in this volume, Bereng concerns himself with the history of Lesotho and the Basotho as embodied in the life and death of Moshoeshoe, and its aftermath.

Much like Bereng, his predecessor, George Lerotholi, in his *Lithoko tsa Morena e moholo Seeiso Griffith*, concerns himself with Seeiso's life from birth, flowing into themes relating to him, and ending with a poem that has no thematic relationship to the rest, just as Bereng did with '*Sello sa likhutsana*'. The internal structure of this collection is almost a carbon copy of Bereng's, the difference being that, while Bereng's poems and themes are products of his own creative imagination, Lerotholi's seem to be odes commemorating actual events in Seeiso Griffith's life remoulded by Lerotholi's own creative genius, but using Bereng's format as model – an intrasystemic transfer.

Unlike Lerotholi, his contemporary, H.E. Jankie, a minister of religion, sought to preserve for posterity the compositions of and by the Basotho boy initiates in the face of custom-eroding missionarism. These poems, '*Lithoko tsa Makoloane*', were the first medium whereby the now eligible young men could exercise their freedom of expression within the bounds of custom. The structure of these poems is also apparently inherited or adopted from

Bereng in that they are in almost regular stanza division, then a feature of the Western poetry system. But, regardless of the physical structure, the rendition of these praise-songs was in individual lines — characterised by a long pause at the end of each line. This was a clear recourse to traditional poetry, rather an alignment by Jankie with his contemporaries — also an intrasystemic phenomenon.

Like Jankie and Bereng, Selane, limited as his knowledge of poetry was, introduced a new and greater variety of themes to the genre, drifting further away from the limitations of the *dithoko*. His *Letlotlo la Mosotho*, in which attention is paid exclusively to stanzas, is also another milestone in the expression of new conceptions regarding this genre. His successor, A.S. Mopeli–Paulus, like Bereng, expresses a variety of emotions based on personal experience. Like Bereng he had served in the army during World War II and was of royal descent. Having both been exposed to military discipline, they had greater insight into the concepts honour, loyalty and patriotism. Whilst Bereng reflects on these in typical Sotho setting, Mopeli–Paulus ranges from recounting the hazards of war and the supreme sacrifices paid in the name of patriotism and honour, to protest against being dispossessed after pawning his own life for the hope of a better deal. Both reflect deep-seated nostalgia in their ‘*Motse oa heso*’ (Bereng) and ‘*Haeso*’ (Mopeli–Paulus) which were conceived thousands of miles away. While both seek to arouse a spirit of patriotism, inter alia, in the Blackman, Mopeli–Paulus also seeks to conscientise him politically. This is an instance of intersystemic transfer of the virtues of honour, obligation and rights.

Ntsane’s *Mmusapelo* (1946) covered the widest thematic range that far, possibly because he had himself gone through almost all walks of life for he desired personal contact with people and situations. Whilst alluding to love for one’s country and its history in ‘*Haeso*’ and ‘*Mohokare*’, he, unlike all his predecessors, satirises every situation. While Mopeli–Paulus tends to be directly instigating in ‘*Moafrika*’ and ‘*Haeso*’, Ntsane prefers shaking the Mosotho into his senses by ridiculing the things he does in ‘*Dumedisa base*’, ‘*Kgowanatshwana*’, ‘*Matshediso*’, etc. The sarcastic tone that pervades the whole collection, often coupled with ludicrous images, clearly distinguishes

Ntsane's style from Mopeli—Paulus's matter-of-factness, and from the sombre tone of Bereng's.

Mocoancoeng, Ntsane's friend and contemporary, also covers as wide a range of themes as Ntsane, in his *Lithothokiso tse ncha* (1947). Unlike Ntsane, his poetry reflects a variety of moods ranging from nostalgia ('*Haeso*'), through concern about social problems ('*Lenyora le sa timeng*'), to political activism ('*Exoda*'). His tone changes according to subject and mood, as opposed to Ntsane's underlying sarcasm that is detectable throughout. Like Ntsane, he reflects strongly on the socio-economic system of South Africa and its migratory labour system. It is significant that Bereng, Mopeli—Paulus, Ntsane and Mocoancoeng have all written about their homes, the latter three retaining the title '*Haeso*', reflecting the same longing for different "homes". The ease with which Mocoancoeng's poetry exhibits instances of intertextuality also suggests the extent of his exposure to other literary systems. One just has to compare, as stated above, his '*Moleleri*' with Tennyson's '*Ulysses*', and his '*Exoda*' with the Biblical exodus, or his '*Haeso*' with van Bruggen's *Heimwee*.

Mohapeloa's collection *Letlole la lithoko tsa Sesotho* (1950) ends with his own contribution of two poems '*Sello sa sechaba*' and '*Qetello*', both elegies which seem to give the collection the structural format of Bereng's and Mocoancoeng's anthologies. This perhaps, was an attempt to bridge the gap after Mocoancoeng's work, Tšosane's '*Metlakhola* (1948) having been a non-contribution. The only thing new about this book is that it is a compilation of selected poems by different authors who have already been discussed.

Mokorosi's *Bolebadi* (1951) was like a fresh breeze on a hot summer day, especially Part Two of the book. Unlike her predecessors, she has written mainly about nature and human nature, protesting against the frivolousness of youth in entreating apostrophes and interjective sentences. Hers is a characteristic woman's earnest tone, often blending anxiety with helplessness. While Ntsane is more direct and robust on the subject (cf. '*Matshediso*'), '*Mokorosi*' sermonises subtly in her '*Lerato la moratawa*', reflecting the Sotho cultural norms that reserve audacity for men. Her vivid

imagery and emotive use of words are unparalleled. Like Mocoancoeng, she also makes use of imported images: for instance, her '*Lefu*', as pointed out earlier, is comparable to James Shirley's "Death the Leveller", whilst her '*Hoja ke nonyane*' has traits of John Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale". She, however, does not follow Western regular stanzas slavishly at the expense of her matter. Her poetry is more in line with her successor, Khaketla's conception of poetry. It should, therefore, not be surprising that the poetry of both is characterised by rich imagery and metaphor. Like Mkorosi, Khaketla was of christian upbringing and had received sound education. Unlike Mkorosi, he was a panafricanist politician. As a politician he deplors the avarice of world powers (cf. '*Ntwa ya Abyssinia*'). As a christian moralist, he seeks to focus on and discourage moral degeneration (cf. '*Thakahadifele*', etc). This latter theme he handles, like Ntsane, more resolutely than Mkorosi. He then turns his attention to elegies, the greatest number to be found in any single volume, without leaning on religious norms. It should be noted that, with the exception of '*Mahlale a mahlale*' in Bereng's '*Lithothokiso*'; '*Bo mo hlakohile*', '*Mohla a tlang*', '*Fatsheng lena*' and '*Maswabi*' in Ntsane's '*Mmusapelo*', and '*Morena Marena*' in Khaketla's '*Lipshamathe*', all these poets' works show a considerable shift from religion as a subject. Any allusion to religion is an analogy with socio-cultural intent. In this sense, Mkorosi and Khaketla broke almost completely free from religious subjects. Khaketla and Mkorosi employ, with great success, the power of imagery and metaphor, and make no pretensions to the western structural device of rhyme. This comes out clearly in Khaketla's '*Mmote*' and '*Morena Marena*'.

Mokhomo, like Mkorosi, wrote about the visit of the Royal family to Lesotho in 1947 and love matters, inter alia, the former resembling Mkorosi's in many respects. While Mkorosi has written on human nature on the whole (protesting against youth frivolousness), Mokhomo protests against the brutalities of ritual killings that were rife in Lesotho in her times. At the same time she praises good achievement. Hence her collection, *Sebatso*, contains mainly odes on people and elegies.

Like Mkorosi and her mentor, Khaketla, she is free, as a poet should be: she allows no rhyme or rhythm to "weigh her down like a millstone"

(Kunene, 1971:55). Consequently, though having adopted the Western mode of writing (stanzas, etc), her style is determined by her mood. It is for this reason that "heroic poetic features abound in her poetry" (Kunene, 1971:58). Mokhomo's most potent instrument is imagery and metaphor, as well as contrast.

Ratau, though a minister of religion, drifted farthest from religion with his *Khirimpana*. His subject matter is travel and the Basotho socio-economic circumstances, but reflects strongly on the Basotho cultural expression in the face of foreign cultures. This unique kind of poetry cannot be said to be traditional because it depicts the here-and-now of the Basotho working class, yet its rendition has the traditional touch of being declaimed in semi-melodious strain and deliberate rhythm. It is oral in its spontaneity and extemporaneousness, but having no moral didactic goal other than relating the persona's experiences and asserting himself as a Mosotho, if nothing else. This brand of poetry seems to be a continuum of Basotho existence, a fusion of past, present and projected future. It may well be, for it is shaped by the interaction between the socio-economic and political systems of Lesotho and South Africa. Hitherto, poetry had been characterised mainly by protest, inter alia, direct or indirect – protest against helplessness in the face of fate, and against complacency by Bereng; protest against being dispossessed and discriminated against by Mopeli-Paulus, Ntsane, Khaketla and Mocoancoeng; protest against vanity and social evils by Ntsane, Mokorosi and Mokhomo. Ratau brought in a new dimension of self-assertion.

Lesoro's *Reneketso tsa Bana* (1960) brought in yet a new dimension in Sesotho poetry – writing for need. It ushered in a period in which the reader was the prime concern of the poet. He had to adjust himself to what he hoped was the reader's interest and level of development. He was unique from all his predecessors in the sense that he neither protested nor asserted himself, but had to be directed by his envisaged readers' peculiar needs. The scope of Sesotho readership was thus now open, not only to a wider range of adult needs, but also to toddlers. Thus poetry, *dithothokiso*, as a sub-system of the literature took an almost full course from *dithotho* (praise-poetry) to *direneketsa* (children's poems), as a clear indication of

how the creative mind endeavoured to cope with the pressures from outside and from within.

Even-Zohar (1979:288) maintains that "in order for the PS hypothesis to cope more adequately with the complex phenomena it hopes to explain, its major notions require continued reformulation and re-evaluation, and new formulations must be suggested". This is in keeping with the changing nature of, and changing views, concerning poetry from oral to literary models. Poetry as a sub-system of the totality of Sesotho literature is, together with drama, novel, essay and short story, a component of the system; "rather than conglomerates of disparate elements" (Even-Zohar, 1979:288), i.e. they are functional elements of literature that bear a definite relationship to one another functionally, structurally and stylistically. As the function of the entity broadens, its relationship to other entities (i.e. neighbouring systems and sub-systems) changes and is redefined.

The dynamic diversity of views regarding poetry (e.g. rhyme) in Sesotho reflects on poetry as a system of developing insights from oral to literary, characterised by transfers of models, and transfers and conversions of items from neighbouring systems (e.g. English, Afrikaans, etc) and sub-systems (e.g. from essays, short stories, etc) as seen above. These intersystemic and intrasystemic influences are felt in all the sub-systems of literature (genres), and transcend the literary sphere, entering the socio-cultural, religious and socio-political factors determining the attitudes and policies of the publishers. This was seen during the missionary era and will continue to be seen in the succeeding chapters.

CHAPTER FOUR

DRAMA AS SUBSYSTEM

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The first Sesotho drama to appear in book form in 1928 was Sekese's *Tšomo tsa pitso ea linonyana le tšeko ea sefofu le seritsa* (The Stories of the meeting of the birds, and the lawsuit between the Blindman and the Cripple), an allegorical dramatisation of the malpractices of the privileged classes in the feudal system of his time. This drama reflects the historical-political reality of the miscarriage of justice under the said system.

Swanepoel (1987:64) points out that "the concept drama implies a dichotomy: of text and presentation, script and performance; of verbal material in print and visual performance in theatre, arena or television room...". He goes on to indicate that this dichotomy always implies "two distinct types of codes: verbal codes, derived from the speech acts underlying consecutive turns of the dramatis personae; and the non-verbal codes, derived from enactment, decor, costume and the like... (1987:64).

The concept "performance" also implies performability or, more commonly, stageability. We therefore envisage stageable texts and unstageable texts – the theatrical texts and dramatic texts, respectively. But even the latter can, by imagination, be rendered performable. The "verbal codes embodied in the text give rise to endless possibilities on non-verbal encoding and decoding on the part of the imaginative reader. This reader is virtually staging a performance in his own mind" (Swanepoel, 1987:64).

For our purposes we shall regard the reading of drama in Swanepoel's terms as "the theatre of the mind" in order to create a common basis for the two components of the dichotomy "and render fruitful the literary experience thereof alongside the theatrical experience" (1987:64).

After Sekese's allegory, the first conscious attempt at producing a Sesotho

drama was made by M.L. Maile with his *Ramasoabi le Potso*, published by the Morija Sesuto Book Depot in 1932.

4.2 Maile's intension with *Ramasoabi le Potso* is put plainly in the preface:

Ha se Bibeleng feela re ka fumanang likhothatso, esita le libukeng tsa batho ba bohlaale likhothatso li ka fumanoa. (1932:1)

(It is not only in the Bible where we can find exhortations, even in the books of wise people we can find exhortations).

Ngcangca (1989:60) intimates that Mallane Libakeng Maile was born of Libakeng and Seeng Selina Maile on 31 July 1895, in Hermone, in the Mafeteng district of Lesotho. He obtained his primary education in Mafeteng before proceeding to Morija for Teacher training, which he completed in 1916. His first teaching post was at the Thabana Morena Practising School. In 1919 he took up a post in Khotla, Matelile. In 1925 he went to work at the mines, but was requested to return to Matelile by chief Moholobela, which he did in 1927. He prepared himself for the ministry of the N.G. kerk from 1928, and, in 1932, he was sent to the Stofberg Gedenkskool for training as minister. He pastored Schweizer–Reneke (1936–37), Bothaville (1938–72) and was retired on 29 April 1972. Whilst a minister, he did J.C. and Matric by private study, and later proceeded to the Central School of Religion in Indiana, U.S.A., for the Bachelor of Theology degree. In 1955 he obtained a doctorate in theology with the thesis "A Comparison and contrast between African Religion, Customs, Ceremonies and Spiritual Writings".

True to his calling, Maile's book contains sermonlike advice to the young who are on the threshold of marriage. In the above book, Potso, an overgrown bachelor, intends marrying but is scared of the problems he has observed in marriages. By means of a series of episodes depicting problems personally experienced (backed by biblical texts and hymns), Ramasoabi, an elderly man, exhorts him to endure life's suffering in order to reap everlasting happiness later and hereafter.

Structurally, this book does not conform to any definition of a drama, nor does it meet the general characteristics of a drama. It is a mere narration of own endured marital displeasures by the persona, interrupted time and again by Potso's questions. More appropriately put, it is a dialogue that consists of a series of mini sermons structured to constitute a sermon on marriage.

The exposition is a plain description by the author, and is in the form of some preamble in prose. The turning point is in the form of a dream that warns that man must change for the better. The denouement ends in a prayer that summarises Ramasoabi's present state and disposition, i.e. his total submission to biblical commands:

Morena ke lekile ho ruta, nka re, ke lekile ho jala; uena u melise peo ngoaneng enoa oa ka. Le bakeng sa batho bohle, Morena, ke re, oho! ere ka ha ho ntse ho rutoa hohle, tlatsa matsoho a jalang, 'me re ke re bone phetoho. Amen! (page 35)

(Lord, I have tried to teach, or perhaps, to sow; make the seed grow in this my child. Even of all man, O Lord, I beseech thee, as there is teaching going on everywhere, complement the hands that sow, that we may see change. Amen!)

This excerpt, like many others throughout the book, shows the socio-religious interplay of the concepts *-ruta* (teach) and *-jala* (sow) in Maile's style.

This book is in conversational tone, but exhibits glaring religio-literary intertextuality. Much as it may not have risen to expectation as a drama, it did draw the attention of later Sesotho writers to drama as a literary genre.

4.2 T.M. MOFOKENG

In 1939, seven years after Maile had broken the ice, T. Mofokeng's *Sekhona sa joala* (The Beer Gourd) saw light.

Twentyman Mofokeng was born in 1898 at Tsoaing in Maseru. His mother

died when he was only three years old, and he was brought up by an aunt under very difficult conditions. He attended primary school at Tsoaing whilst a herdboyc. Thereafter he went to Morija to study for the Lower Primary Teacher's Certificate. He then taught for four years before taking to ministry, for which he studied at Stofberg in the Orange Free State. He had just wedded Joseph Mohapelo's daughter, Molelekeng (his own aunt — rakgadi), the *shoeshoe ea Bataung* about whom her brother, Pulumo, had composed a song. On entry into ministry he entered a drama writing competition sponsored by Dr and Mrs Mumford of London and *Sekhona sa joala* obtained the first prize — the May Esther Bedford prize. He was always preoccupied with *borapedi* (prayerfulness). He always spoke about his mother, whom he knew very vaguely: he had been told by his father and two elder sisters how she loved him. He marvelled at the drunkenness that was so rife, and the thirst for liquor which exceeded by far any other kind of thirst, though it brought disharmony to family life in many ways. He was struck by the refusal of its drinkers to see any wrong in it. Twentyman was also a composer of choral music: he composed gospel music for the church of which he was a minister, "The Lord's New church which is New Jerusalem". He was helped by his wife in the composition of the above drama. Evidence to this fact is the reference in the book to Adam and Eve (*Adama le Mpata*). This was his wife's and friend's motto at school in Thabana Morena. She was just as close to him.

This play, published in 1939, is the first of this genre proper, and is a shift from the highly religious intent that was characteristic of the time. It is based wholly on real life and Sesotho custom as seen by the writer, and is the expression of his own feelings, without recourse to the Bible. It, therefore, heralds a new generation of books, both in form, content and intent.

It is a story of a young man, Phephei, who works in the white areas. His father, Seobi, comes to terms with Lefaisa that Phephei marries his daughter, Keneuoe. The two have never met, and do not know each other, except on photos. Though Lefaisa and Seobi are bossom friends, the former has occasionally been expressing disapproval of the latter's bigamy. When Seobi is about to drink beer given to him by his younger wife, Morongoe,

Lefaisa slaps the beer gourd out of his hands, and this embitters the relations between them. Phephei comes home to find his father having changed his mind about him marrying Lefaisa's daughter. Having met her at the fountain, and loved her, Phephei demands an explanation. A bitter quarrel ensues, and Phephei leaves home in disgust, ostensibly for Johannesburg. He returns disguised as a diviner, and lodges at Lefaru's (a relative of Lefaisa's), from where he conducts his own investigation unsuspected, and gets to know Keneuoe more closely. In the meantime he writes two manuscripts which Keneuoe asks to peruse, but she sends them to the publishers without his knowledge. After establishing important leads, Phephei pressurises Morongoe into confession. He then arranges a meeting with both the Seobi and the Lefaisa families, where, to everybody's astoundment, it comes to light that Lefaisa had known that the gourd contained poisoned beer, but did not want to harm family relations by spilling the beans. The occasion turns out to be a happy family reunion when Phephei reappears undisguised.

Of the theme of this book Gérard (1971:158) says "the approach is no longer religious but secular,... It is between behaviour inspired by irrational customs and superstitions, and the rational conduct of the educated young." Lenake (1968:78) states it merely as "a clash between the traditional and modern ways of life among the Sotho". As in the case of Khaketla's *Meokho ea thabo*, Gérard (1971: 159) also observes that "whereas family authority seems to be challenged at the beginning of the story, it is usually vindicated at the end, when the young heroes, who have been married without even being consulted, finally fall in love with each other..."

Mofokeng's main preoccupation, the priest that he is, is drunkenness. Not only does he seem to condone the above custom, but he strongly condemns parental meddling occasioned by drunkenness, and couples it with the equally loathsome *sethepu* custom. This play, therefore, has more than one theme. From the point of view of general text analysis, Lenake and Gérard are right. But from the point of view of the interaction of the writer's personal and other circumstances which prevailed, this play is a warning against polygamy and drunkenness, and their attendant ills.

The main characters in this play, Phephei, Seobi and Lefaisa portray themselves clearly. Seobi, a die-hard Mosotho traditionalist, is an autocrat whose word dare not be gainsaid by a woman – worse still by a child. The same could be said of Lefaisa, but for the religious influence that has softened him a little. Phephei's town influence has made him headstrong, and his education has made him resourceful, while his love for Keneuoe makes him bold and resolute. All these occur within the confines of Sesotho culture and values. The actions and dialogue of the characters unfold the story vividly and credibly, with the persona saying next to nothing. This is the main characteristic of a drama.

The sixteen scenes flow from one to the other in logical sequence without any complication of imposed acts. This, indeed, may be regarded as the first one-act play in Sesotho. The plot is cleverly structured to start with a powerful motorial moment (the evidently unprovoked slapping of the beer gourd from Seobi's hands), maintaining heightened suspense and reader interest up till the end (climax) – the unravelling of the mystery, i.e. the exposure of the poisoning of the beer.

It is indeed, a great contribution to the development of this genre in Sesotho, considering especially the early stage of its publication. Mofokeng had gone a long way further than Maile in drama writing, probably because he had not been handicapped by too much regard for religious considerations. The fact that his acquired religious values were subtly brought to bear draped in the garment of Sesotho values, and personified in Lefaisa, made him better able to counter the Sesotho values personified in Seobi. This fact – that the theme is not glaringly religious – enhances the literary value of this drama. We also see a subtle instance of intertextuality in this drama.

4.3 J.G. MOCOANCOENG

Mofokeng had shown the way to dramatic text writing. Some eight years later (in 1947) he was to be followed by J.G. Mocoancoeng with his *Tseleng ea bophelo* (On Life's Course). Mocoancoeng published the above play in 1947. Part two of this book consists of nineteen poems on a variety of

themes, which were discussed earlier (vide p. 82). This play is, in effect, the story of a young couple, Limakatso and Mahlomola, an aspiring author, who fall in love on the occasion of the former's twenty-first birthday. They get married and live together happily until Mahlomola's manuscripts are rejected by the publisher on the grounds that they are unsuitable for school use. Mahlomola, a teacher by profession, is so frustrated that he resorts to strong drinks for solace. He degenerates into a drunkard who spends most of his time at 'Malebitso's shebeen, thereby shirking all his family responsibilities. Meanwhile Limakatso is tempted into a hot friendship with Nteo, a court interpreter who keeps her informed about her husband's secret intentions to divorce her. At this stage Mahlomola is hit by a car and is in a deep sleep for seven days after treatment. He recovers on the anniversary of their wedding. Whilst he is in a fix as to what he would do, penniless as he is, Limakatso breaks the good news that his manuscripts have now been approved by the publisher, and a hundred and fifty pounds (R300) paid for them. He then asks for forgiveness for his negligence and weakness, while she asks for forgiveness for the temptation she nearly got into. His writing interest is rekindled, and he is set on never looking back again.

Like Mofokeng, the priest, Mocoancoeng, the teacher, disapproves of drunkenness. Whilst the former shows how liquor can blunt one's judgement, the latter shows how it destroys all sense of self-worth, and makes the imbiber wallow in the mud with pigs without being aware. Both are agreed that liquor weakens family ties before destroying them. The other instance of similarity between these plays is the publication of manuscripts without the author characters' knowledge, but at very convenient times. This should be seen more as intertextuality, than to be attributed to chance.

It is quite striking, at this stage, that the format or plot of the first successful manuscript is adopted by its writer's immediate successor as model for his own. This was first noticed in the poetry of D.C.T. Bereng's and George Lerotholi's poetry collections.

Liquor, in this play, is, however, not the issue it is in Mofokeng's *Sekhona*

sa joala. It is, rather, a defence mechanism behind which Mahlomola seeks to hide his frustration. The theme has direct reference to the missionary goals that swayed the interest of the publishers towards the school market, thereby inhibiting many a budding author, in the same fashion that the earlier missionary publishers had done. With this play, therefore, Mocoancoeng seems to warn against over-reaction to the frustrations of publication and life in general. Simple as this play may be, it was only the second of its type, and, therefore, a noteworthy contribution to the literature of Sesotho.

Though the characters in this book are not well motivated, thereby being more of types or ploys used by the dramatist to bring out his message, the story is unfolded by their actions and dialogue. This befits a drama. The dramatic text is divided into *likhaolo* and *likarolo* in a manner analogous to the acts and scenes found in Western dramas: a clear indication of imported norms, albeit not consistent as in the exporter system. Act one, comprising four scenes, depicts the love and marriage of the principal characters, Mahlomola and Limakatso. Act two, of three scenes, depicts the teacher and budding author in the first two scenes, the third presenting a chronicler who recites four stanzas of poetry signifying the passage of time and change. Act three consists of five scenes. The first scene is introduced by a sad song which flows from the chronicler's elegy in the preceding act, and signifies the sad days which followed on the good days:

Thapelo ea ba soabileng
Ha a ka ke a e lahla.
Bitso la hae le tla rokoa
Ke meloko e sa baloeng. (page 16)
 (The prayer of the distressed
 He never will shun.
 His name shall ever be praised
 By generations numberless.)

The fifth scene (the turning point) is an accident. The fourth and last act, containing three scenes, depicts Mahlomola's convalescence at home and an admixture of promises and reminiscences of the exciting past, together with

the recollection and singing of old songs that convey the theme of mutual love and respect. It is actually the denouement that concludes with the song that creates the atmosphere of happiness:

Mephoko, liphula li khabile
Ka mehalalitoe, lishoeshoe
Athe he bophelo ba rona bona
Bo khabile ka bocha
Bocha ke palesa... (page 34)
 (Rivulets, streams with lilies
 And flora are clad.
 Our life in contrast,
 Of youth is clad.
 Youth, the flower...)

Both Maile and Mocoancoeng, unlike Mofokeng, resort to some deus ex machina for the turning points in their plays (dream and accident, respectively) a weakness which, nevertheless, should not detract from the fact of the noteworthiness of the contributions in the then very young genre. In spite of the weakness of often lengthy introductory descriptions by the narrator—persona at the beginning of each scene, Mocoancoeng went a little further than Mofokeng with the evident intersystemic transfers of structural norms i.e. dividing the play into *dikhaolo* (acts) and *dikarolo* (scenes) in the fashion of English drama. Like Maile who over-indulges in religious excerpts, Mocoancoeng over-uses songs for effect.

4.4 B.M. KHAKETLA

In the same year B.M. Khaketla published his *Moshoeshoe le baruti* (Moshoeshoe and the missionaries), dramatising the arrival of the French missionaries (Eugene Casalis, Constant Gosselin and Thomas Arbousset) in Lesotho, on King Moshoeshoe's own invitation.

The story starts with a meeting at the tribal court (*kgotla*), where Moshoeshoe remarks about the dry, hot weather, and the poor condition of the fields and the livestock. He expresses wonder as to the apparent

displeasure of the ancestors, and the men blame it on the inactivity of the warriors and boredom. But Moshoeshoe longs for permanent peace, so that he could pay attention to more constructive and progressive matters. At this stage Adam Krotz, a Griqua hunter, and his men stray into Lesotho and are sent for. During their interrogation, it comes to light that they come from Philippolis, where absolute peace reigns because of missionary presence and influence. With the exception of one or two sceptics, Moshoeshoe and the people are convinced that the missionaries may be the answer. Krotz and his men are sent for them with a hundred head of cattle. On the way, the cattle are snatched by marauding Hottentots, but Krotz conveys Moshoeshoe's message to his master, the Rev. Kolbe of the London Missionary Society. In the meantime the three French missionaries find their destination in the interior in ruins after a fierce battle, and return to Philippolis. They gladly accept Moshoeshoe's invitation and inform their headquarters in France.

Of this book, Lenake (1968:78) says "The theme is again a clash between the traditional and christian ways of life among the Sotho." Khaketla himself, the ardent reader of Shakespeare's dramas that he was, says "*Ka bukana ena ke leka ho kutla tselana eo ba e tsamaileng, eo ka eona ho ka thijoang sekheo sena...*" (With this book I am trying to walk the path they have walked, by means of which this gap can be filled; p. vi). He is here referring to Azariel Sekese's and Twentyman Mofokeng's efforts at drama writing. Like most enlightened Basotho writers of his days, the success of a dramatist was measured by the extent to which Shakespeare's format could be imposed on his works. None of the writers before him had attempted that, hence "*sekheo sena*". This, however, seems to be the sub-theme of his work. Theme as "the central idea" in this work is Moshoeshoe's wisdom and foresight. As Khaketla himself puts it, "*...ho rata, ho tlotlisa, ho boulela, le ho ikhantša ka lebitso la monna oa sebele...*" (... to love, to honour, to regard jealously, and to be proud of the very name of the man amongst men; p. 1947:vi).

From this latter remark it is clear that the writing of this book was also prompted, inter alia, by socio-political considerations. He sought to engender a spirit of patriotism and self-worth among the Basotho, and

counter the slave mentality that was so prevalent, that attached importance only to things associated with the whiteman or colonial master.

In filling *sekheo sena* Khaketla went another mile further than Mocoancoeng by importing, not only the Shakespearean format, but also introducing into Sesotho drama the counterpart of Shakespeare's "Fool" in the person of Rampai, a half-wit diviner. He uses action, dialogue and the naming technique exceptionally well for motivating his characters, e.g. Sebata, Mohale, Mohau etc.

The play consists of five acts of five scenes each, with the exception of acts III and IV, which comprise seven and three scenes respectively. The division is not arbitrary: each act depicts a phase in the development of the plot, in the following order:

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| Act I (5 scenes) | Exposition — a peaceful lull coupled with concern about the possibility of being attacked. |
| Act II (5 scenes) | Motorial moment — the arrival of Krotz and his men, sparking off the desire and action to import the "albinos". |
| Act III (7 scenes) | Complication and crisis — Tribal war ravages, annexation of accumulated cattle, decision of the three to accept Moshoeshoe's invitation. |
| Act IV (3 scenes) | Crisis (overlap) — Travel to Lesotho (missionaries) |
| Act V (5 scenes) | Climax — arrival of missionaries and their reception. |

The play ends with a monologue (in blank verse) by Moshoeshoe, signifying "at last!":

*... kajeno karabelo re e utloile,
Le ka mahlo re bile rea e bona;
Le neng le nyamela lekosiea
Joale le fetohile litloebelele;*

*Kananelo ea ka, ke hona, e kholo,
 Ke e ke keng ea b'a qapolisoa!* (page 95)
 (... Today the answer we've heard,
 With our eyes have we seen it;
 The cloud that seemed to vanish
 Now into a downpour has changed;
 Our gratitude, therefore, is great,
 Words we lack to express it.)

Cohen (1973:193) talks about narratives that "may be relatively plotless because little action seems to occur." This, however, does not apply to this play because, though the action here cannot be said to be "exciting", a strong element of causality pervades the whole story.

Maile's ending of his "play" with a prayer seemed, up till this stage, to have set some precedence. The plays that followed ended with either a song or monologue articulating the theme. Here profound satisfaction is expressed, whatever the theme, which can only be associated with the feeling of "mission accomplished".

In 1954, two years after S.M. Mofokeng came up with his *Senkatana*, Khaketla followed up with *Tholoana tsa sethepu* (The Fruits of Polygamy). This is a story of an old chief, Matete, who has two wives, Lireko and Mosele, by whom he has two sons, Bulane and Mohapi respectively. His headman, Malokobe, desires a secret affair with the senior wife, Lireko, but she turns him down emphatically. To punish her, he tells Matete that Bulane is, in fact, not his own son. Matete becomes so furious that he picks on Mohapi as his successor in the place of Bulane, in spite of all protestations by Thankha and the not-so-foolish half-wit, Mafafa. He sends for his uncle, chief Majara, to come and make public his decision, but, owing to ill-health, Majara cannot turn up. In due course Matete becomes impatient, and sends the two boys to Majara to be duly informed, sending Mafafa ahead of them to convey his decision. Majara decides on Bulane, contrary to Matete's wish, and Mohapi (who has been tipped beforehand) is bitterly disappointed.

Thankha and Mafafa are on standby with a large contingent of warriors to defend Bulane's right, if need be. Meanwhile Matete becomes seriously ill, and Mosele connives with Phepheng (the traditional doctor) not to help him recover. On his death-bed she tricks him into declaring Mohapi his successor. But at night the whole truth is revealed to him in a nightmarish dream. In his last bid to save the situation, he sends for Lireko and Bulane, but Malokobe dilly-dallies until it is too late. When they are eventually called, Matete cannot speak, but they promise him their forgiveness. With his last breath, he only mutters his half-expressed gratitude, and dies.

Referring to this play and *Bulane* (1958) which will be discussed presently, Gérard (1979:171) states that "While he was turning to politics, Khaketla wrote two further works, both of which were printed in 1954." He was turning to the sophisticated western type of politics, but in both his books he depicts the often dictatorial traditional political sub-system, that is intimately interwoven with the cultural sub-system. Khaketla creates a situation where these two components clash, and carries the conflict right through the two books. He ends *Tholoana tsa sethepu* (The Fruit of Polygamy) with tension between two once-loving brothers due to unresolved conflict which stems from their father's polygamy, thereby focusing on the title of the play as his theme.

Relations deteriorate further in *Bulane*, as the two brothers, each with his friends, form into two opposant camps. *Bulane* starts with the assembly of men at the Kgotla, at the call of chief Majara, to witness the installation of Matete's successor. Majara makes known Matete's wishes in that regard, which conflicted with tradition and with his own decision, and opens the matter for discussion. With the exception of Malokobe and the intimidated Tladi, everybody else agrees with him, and Bulane is installed as the new chief. Bulane decides to complete the succession exercise by taking over his late father's youngest wife, Pulane, also in spite of all protestations by his converted wife and his mother. Before his death, Matete had commended her to Mohapi. Mohapi reacts by conspiring with Malokobe, Tladi and Marora to kill Bulane. Pulane, being grossly neglected by Bulane, is easily tricked into teaming up with them. Once in the conspiracy, she is intimidated by Malokobe into staying in. She is given a highly toxic poison

to put into Mohapi's food during Moshoeshoe Day celebrations. She prepares two chickens, one for Bulane and the other for Mohapi, with the poison applied accordingly. On the said day the two groups come to Pulane's house in the spirit of the occasion, and are entertained to strong drink. Thereafter, they partake of the chicken that is served, Mohapi's group carefully avoiding Bulane's dish. Shortly after, Mohapi, Malokobe, Tladi and Marora die one after the other.

This "very interesting and powerful climax" (Gérard 1971:171), albeit focusing on unnecessary and tragic loss of life, brings to the fore with greater impact the theme that pervades both books with crystal clarity, viz. the fruit of polygamy. Khaketla contrasts his own family circumstances which, in spite of his own father's untimely death, were very congenial, with polygamous families in which the children become victims of circumstances which are not of their own making. This, coupled with the *kenela* custom which borders on incest, were in direct conflict with his religious upbringing. Together with the above theme, Khaketla seems to be appealing that children be not subjected to undue stress and suffering. He wrote these two plays when he entered into politics. He could not subject himself to anybody's whims. Probably that is why he resigned from the Basutoland Congress Party at the close of 1960 because "He was later to claim that he had done so because the party sought 'to interfere with my religious freedom and dictate how I should worship'" (Gérard 1971:173). This much cherished freedom is never to be enjoyed by children of polygamous families as individuals, unbound by one form or other of customary shackle. Lenake (1973:94) simply states that "Hy skets vir ons die euwels van veelwywery op baie geslaagde wyse."

In both *Tholoana* and *Bulane* Khaketla seems to have relented his tenacious cling to almost regular multi-scene acts, but the scenes in each act constitute a coherent unity in subject matter. *Tholoana*, for instance, is structured in the following fashion:

| | |
|------------------|---|
| Act 1 (2 scenes) | Matete's misinformation by Malokobe, and his decision to disinherit Bulane – motorial moment. |
|------------------|---|

- Act 2 (2 scenes) Planning and speculation by opposant sides (i.e. Bulane and Mohapi, and their friends)
- Act 3 (3 scenes) Matete's ailment, and dispatching of message concerning succession to Majara; Matete's confiding in Mohapi while Bulane only becomes suspicious and prepares for the worst — complication.
- Act 4 (2 scenes) Differences of opinion in the Matete—Malokobe ranks, with Thankha dissenting — critical moment.
- Act 5 (4 scenes)
1. Majara's symbolic declaration of succession — climax
 2. Matete's revelation and repentance, and polarisation between Bulane and Mohapi denouement.

Bulane, on the other hand, consists of five single—scene acts, which flow one from the other in like fashion to Twentyman Mofokeng's *Sekhona sa joala* (1939), except that Mofokeng sees no need for retaining the word act. These five acts comprise the following:

- Act 1: Arguments at the *pitso* (assembly), and the installation of Bulane as chief. — Exposition.
- Act 2: Friction between Bulane on the one hand, and Mookho (his wife), Mosesi (advisor), Direko (his mother) and Mafafa, on the other, over his intention to take (kenela) Pulane.
- Act 3: Mohapi, his mother, his wife and his friends brew discontentment over Bulane's intention to 'deprive' him of Pulane, who had been promised to him by Matete — motorial moment.
- Act 4: Bulane's neglect of Pulane, leading to her temptation by Mohapi and her being manipulated by Malokobe to poison him — complication.

Act 5: Moshoeshoe Day celebration and the inadvertent switching of dishes, leading to the death of Mohapi, Malokobe and friends – crisis.

The climax of this play is a dramatic monologue by Bulane, reflecting on the tragedy:

*... Ka mehla ho ngwana – mahanaajwetswa
Ho bonwa phororo tsa madi ho rotha... (1958:51)*

(... A self-willed child always is seen
By streams of blood that flow...)

This is an appropriate reference to the repeated warnings to Mohapi and the *kgotla* at different times.

Both these books merge smoothly into a coherent whole in plot and theme. The exposition in *Tholoana* is brought up by a flashback in the dialogue between Malokobe and Tlali,

Malokobe: Ngoaholakola ke ne ke bue le khomohali eno hore e be "motsoalle" oa ka, eaba o nketsetsa moferefere o mobe haholo... Le hoja eena a ile a nkhauhela, ke ile ka mo jara ka pelo ho tloha hona mohlang oo,... (1954:23)

(Malokobe: Two years ago I spoke to that woman (i.e. Lireko) to become my "friend", and she raised a storm... Though she pardoned me, I begrudged her from that day...)

Khaketla also makes good use of foreshadowing as a technique to channel the reader's mind. When word goes round that Majara has been summoned, Lireko remarks that *Rangoane a ke ke a bitsoa feela-feela ho se letho. Matsatsing ana ke bona sefahleho sa Matete se hlile se sa khanye khotso...* (Uncle cannot just be summoned without cause. These days there is no peace evident in Matete's face...; p. 20)

Bulane is also bothered by some strange uneasiness for which he cannot account:

Ke utloa bophelo bo hlile bo ntšulafaleitse matsatsing ana. Ekaba ke tla hlaheloa ke eng?... (op cit:21).

(I feel strangely listless these days. What does this portend for me?...)

Good use is also made of dramatic irony where Mohapi, expecting to be declared to the chieftaincy according to his father's promise, agrees with Majara on the irrevocability of Sesotho customary law:

Mohapi: Ke 'nete; molao ke molao, 'me ha baholo ba o boletse eba ba o boletse, ha ho kamoo o ka fetoloang kateng, esita leha ho ka oa khoeli le linaledi. (op cit: 54)

(It is true; the law is the law, and, when our elders have pronounced it, there is no way it can be changed, even if moon and stars may fall.)

Majara: Ke thabela tsebo ena ea hao ea matla a molao... (op cit:54).

(I am happy with your knowledge of the might of the law...)

Later, when Mohapi was unhappy with the old man's decision in favour of Bulane, he was to be told, *Uena, Mohapi, u se u ile ua bolela hore u hlomphe molao, 'me se builoeng ke e moholo ua se mamela...* (You, Mohapi, have already said that you respect the law, and that you accept what is pronounced by your elders...; p. 56).

Khaketla also makes use of insinuation to express unuttered secret intentions. For instance, when Majara orders Bulane and Mohapi to hurry back home to their ailing father, Tlali quickly answers, *Che, morena, kea kholoa Bulane a ka tsoe a sa setse, hobane ha a hlokehe ka letho; ho batloa Morena Mohapi feela.* (No, your highness, Bulane could stay a while because he is not really needed; only chief Mohapi is wanted; p. 57).

This does not only betray the fact that something is cooking, but also that Tlali is party to it.

These three plays by Khaketla are a fine contribution to the Sesotho dramatic art that was rekindled by Twentyman Mofokeng, and have gone a fair distance towards sealing *sekheo se seholo libukeng tsa Sesotho*.

4.5 N.M. KHAKETLA

N.M. Khaketla's *Mosali eo u 'neileng eena* (The wife you gave me), appeared in 1954. *Ntšeliseng 'Masechele Khaketla* (Wife of B. Makalo Khaketla) was born of Luka and 'Mannini Lesenyeho in January 1918, at Ha Majara, in Berea. Her father was a teacher, while her mother was a typical Mosotho housewife. She was one of eight children who were brought up with many cousins at home (i.e. orphans, etc). As a child, she was very quiet, but influential amongst her peers: she could always have them do what she wanted, without any pressure. She had desired to be a nurse though her mother was against it, maintaining that nursing was for naughty girls. Her brother encouraged her to do J.C. in stead of the teachers' course. She kept missing her nursing opportunity because of the overlapping three-year scholarships she was awarded, until she was a teacher in possession of the Matric certificate and the B.A. degree. She attended primary school at Liphiring (which ended with Std IV), and proceeded to the Intermediate school at Siloe for Stds V and VI. In 1933 she went to Morija for JC and Matric. Thereafter, she proceeded to the South African Native College (now the University of Fort Hare), where she studied for the B.A. degree.

She wrote a number of books, but our concern here is her very first one, *Mosali eo u 'neileng eena*. According to her, this title was taken from the Bible, where Adam, on being reprimanded for having done what he had been warned not to do, blamed it on *mosali eo u 'neileng eena* (The woman you gave to me). In her own words, *ke tenwa ke hore banna, mehla ena, ha ba etsa diphoso, o utlwe ba ntse ba re ke basadi ba ba dihetseng*. She was fed up with the men's general inclination of blaming their own mistakes on their wives. She then thought of creating a situation where a man will

repeat the same words in gratitude to his wife. She dislikes all forms of sexist discrimination – social, occupational, professional, cultural, etc.

Simplified, the story of this drama is as follows:

Ntjakoebela's sister, Mojabeng, has a ruffian husband who beats her up regularly, with the result that she keeps fleeing to her home for protection. During one such incident she gives birth to a baby girl, the central character in this play, who is consequently named Tseleng (on the road). When Mojabeng is poisoned by a loathsome neighbour, the baby is brought up by her maternal uncle in accordance with Sesotho custom. Tseleng grows up under very difficult conditions, being hated by her aunt, 'Malitaba, and worked by her like a slave. She stomachs her illtreatment because of her sympathy with her quiet, gentlemanly uncle. She derives courage from her friendship with Thato, and the sympathy of her family. Tseleng is kind to everybody, including the dumb, amnesiac village shepherd, Sootho, whose origin is unknown. Out of malice, 'Malitaba remunerates Sootho with Tseleng for services rendered, much to everybody's shock and disgust. But Tseleng accepts without any complaint. The village chieftainess, who had adopted Sootho, however, pays Ntjakoebela a handsome dowry. Thato gives Tseleng a Bible as wedding present. In the Bible she forgets a photo of three pastor trainees; one of whom an erstwhile admirer, who had sent her the photo. Tseleng and Sootho live in a big modern rondavel secretly built for them in Tlapaneng by Ntjakoebela. In due course Sootho stumbles across the photo. His eyes are fixed on it, and his memory set in motion. Tseleng and Sootho disappear for two years without trace before Thato receives an urgent call from her in Pietersburg. Sootho turns out to be a Rev. Sootho Moletje (one of the three on the photo) and has fully recovered from the dumbness and amnesia that had been caused by an explosion during the war. Thato witnesses the baptism of their first child who is named after 'Mathato.

Gérard (1971:160) quotes S.M. Mofokeng's view that this book has "literary parallels" in James Hilton's Random Harvest and William Faulkner's Soldier's Pay, implying his own agreement with the view that N.M. Khaketla could have "had access" to them. If so, she could have been influenced as strongly by these books as Thomas Mofolo was by John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress in his own book, *Moeti oa Bochabela* (Traveller to the East). But, like in the case of Mofolo, the characters, the milieu, the plot, the style, are so completely Sotho that nothing detracts from the laudability of her effort.

Throughout her life, Mrs Khaketla always held her own, without being aggressive. She never played second fiddle, and could not reconcile herself with the second place to which women were always relegated by society. This book is an expression of revulsion against the "Eve" image attributed to women. Indeed, the central character, Tseleng, seems to represent the author herself. With her humility and forbearance she "moves" everybody. True as it may be, that "throughout the book the reader – or audience – learns of the leading characters from the conversation between Thato... and her mother" (Gérard 1971:160), this is a powerful appeal for women to be appreciated for what they are, rather than for what they are generally taken for, i.e. when viewed against the socio-religious and socio-cultural factors that impelled the author to write the play. Viewed on the surface, the theme is "The victims of tradition".

Presented in three three-scene acts and a final single-scene act, this drama portrays the following highlights:

- Act 1: 'Malitaba's maltreatment of cheerful, obedient Tseleng, Moeketsi's (Ntjakoebela) niece, and a casual introduction of Sootho.
- Act 2: Tseleng's cheerful, but touching, acceptance of being given away as remuneration to Sootho in a manner analogous to the christ archetype.
- Act 3: i) The jovial dialogue between Thato and her mother, relaxing the reader's or audience's concentration in a manner which is typical of the Shakespearean porter

scene (vide Macbeth).

- ii) Sootho and Tseleng's mysterious disappearance from Tlapaneng.

Act 4: Thato's reflections on her visit to Mphahlele and flashback to causes of Sootho's dumbness and his recovery which led to the present situation – the climax flowing into the denouement.

The active characters are all female, and the dialogue and tone are typically feminine, from the *mathe-leleme* (saliva-tongue) code language of the young girls to the self-portraying adult language of the contrasting 'Malitaba and 'Mathato. Mrs Khaketla makes extensive use of contrast to focus the reader's attention on the good:

| | |
|--------------------------|--|
| Tseleng vs Lipuo | (diligence and respect vs laziness and rudeness) |
| 'Mathato vs 'Malitaba | (loving mother and respectful wife vs callous woman and rude wife) |
| 'Malitaba vs Ntjakoebela | (noisy and showy vs secretive and purposeful), etc. |

Apart from the above instances of intertextuality (vide structure), apt reference is made to the Caesar-Brutus friendship where 'Mathato warns her daughter never to forsake Tseleng as Brutus did Caesar (1954:31).

This play is, indeed, a laudable contribution to the development of Sesotho drama.

4.6 MOFOKENG, S.M.: *Senkatana* (1952)

Sophonia Machabe Mofokeng was born on 1st April 1923 in the Fouriesburg district of the Orange Free State. He was the second of four children (three sons and a daughter) born of Mmone and Mmadisele Mofokeng. He obtained his primary education at the N.G. Kerk school in Fouriesburg. He then proceeded to the Stofberg Gedenkskool in Viljoensdrift for J.C. in

which he obtained a First Class pass. He then went to the Adams College in Natal for Matric, which he also passed in the first class (with distinctions in Sesotho and Botany) at the age of sixteen, in 1939. In the years 1940–42 he studied at the University of Fort Hare, and obtained the B.A. degree (with distinction in Sesotho) and the Diploma in Education. He then took up a teaching post at the Johannesburg Bantu High School, Western Native Township, Johannesburg. Whilst there, he enrolled for the B.A. (Hons) degree in History at the University of the Witwatersrand. In 1944 he was appointed part-time assistant in African Languages at the University of the Witwatersrand, and, in the same year, became the first Black to obtain an Honours degree in History at that university. On being appointed full-time Junior Language Assistant in African Languages at the same university, in 1945, he enrolled for Honours in African Languages, and completed it in 1947. He was then promoted to Language Assistant. Later that year he was admitted to hospital, where he spent twelve months. He obtained the M.A. degrees in 1951 and in 1955 the Ph. D. degree, both in African Literature. He was in and out of hospital until his early death on 6 June 1957. He wrote *Senkatana* (1952), *Leetong* (On a Journey) in 1954, and *Pelong ya ka* (In my heart), released in 1962.

Senkatana originally is a Sesotho legend, named after the hero, which has been remoulded into a drama by Mofokeng. It is the story of a young man, who finds himself alone with his mother in the whole world. He feels lonely and sad in the face of the beauty of the world around him. He is moved with unbearable pity for his fellowmen who are trapped in the dark belly of the dragon (*kgodumodumo*), and declares his own freedom valueless. He decides to risk his own life to rescue the rest, in spite of his mother's attempts to dissuade him from doing so. He wakes up, one morning, to find his late father's shield and spears next to his pillow, and proceeds with his intent. He kills the dragon and frees everybody. The grateful people elect him chief. In due course, envy is born of his kind judgements, and jealousy grows and spreads. Bulane and friends conspire to kill Senkatana. He comes to know, but refuses to act against them maintaining that he cannot repay wrong with wrong. Bulane's wife (Mmadiepetsane) who is bent on hurting Mmaditaolane (Senkatana's mother), is impatient to see the plot effected soon. Mmaditaolane alerts Senkatana, but advises him to heed his own

conscience, and dies. Bulane tricks his friends into the conspiracy by lying about ancestral visions. After killing Senkatana, he hurries home to drink poisoned beer. His wife is apprehended but, on Maswabi's advice, is left to suffer a guilty conscience for the rest of her life.

This book was published five years after Mofokeng's long stay in hospital. The striking similarity between the circumstances of the legendary Senkatana and Christ struck him with greater impact than any man, probably because of the nature of his own ailment. He had accepted the inevitable, and was resolved on spending his remaining life as best he could in the service of mankind. By recasting the old legend into a play, he could bring out the similarities between Senkatana and Christ more clearly, and put into the mouths of the leading character and the chroniclers (Seboni and Moberi) the words of Christ, albeit in typically Mofokeng fashion. The words uttered by Senkatana as he resolves to challenge the *kgodumodumo*, bring to the reader's mind the Biblical question, "Whom shall I send":

Nka mpa ka ngongoreha, ka hloro moyeng, ka totisa bomadimabe boo ke leng hara bona, ka ikenya mahlomoleng, ho ena le hore ke thabe, ke kgotsofale ba heso ba le tlokotsing! (Page 11)

(I would rather be disgruntled and dejected, and aggravate my own misery and plunge into disaster, than be content whilst my people are in such calamity).

Mofokeng had a brilliant scholastic career, as seen above, but ill health denied him the hope of using his talent to the extent he would have liked. But he would not let fear of the end lessen his gratitude for the privilege of living, however short it was. In spite of his physical frailty (in his last years) he had unparalleled mental and spiritual strength. The time within which, and during which, his great works were produced testify to this fact. His attitude seems to have been that the value of one's life should be measured, not in terms of longevity, but in terms of quality. There are parallels in the end results of the lives of Senkatana, Christ and Mofokeng. In his short life, Christ shook the world with his teachings; in his short life span (about the same as Christ's), Mofokeng, as will be seen in due course,

shook the Sesotho literary world. Senkatana is the Sesotho parallel of Christ.

The theme, as subject in *Senkatana* is man's transient gratitude or appreciation firmly rooted in a supreme sense of justice. As the underlying message, the theme is that justice as principle never changes with changing circumstances:

O tla hopokwa hohle ha batho ba sa phela. (p. 117)

(He will be remembered everywhere whilst man lives)

This is one of the best contributions to the development of Southern Sotho literature, in which a variety of structural and stylistic devices are employed purposefully with great success, as will presently be seen.

Physically this drama can be divided into five three—scene acts. Each act (*karolo*) is preceded by chroniclers *moboni* and *seboni* who introduce a phase in the progression of the story in philosophical reflection. This is a unique phenomenon in Sesotho playwriting.

In Act I, the chroniclers present past, present and future as one continuous flow of time, thereby linking our times with the legendary past that is dramatised. This is followed by a presentation of Senkatana's lack of emotional peace and his ultimate decision to tackle the dragon:

Bohle re bopetswe tokoloho, ke tokoloho ya bona;

Bohle ba bopetswe ho phela le ba bang... (page 6).

(We all were created to be free, freedom is theirs;

All were created to live with others...)

Mofokeng puts into the hero's mouth words that reflect strongly on his own deep—seated yearning for non—discrimination, as he (the hero) reflects on the plight of the many:

Bongata bo ka mpeng ya sebata,

Bongata bo lefifing le tshabehang... (page 5)

(Most are in the belly of the dragon,
Most are in frightening darkness...)

Though being trapped in the belly of the mythical *kgodumodumo* is generally taken to symbolise utter ignorance (or paganism, by post-missionary converts), Mofokeng uses this image to allude also to the many discriminatory practices and lack of basic freedom suffered by the Blackman – firstly as he saw it in the small Eastern Free State town (Fouriesburg) where he was born, and then in later life as an academic: his brother and widow intimate how unhappy he was when, after he and another Black colleague had obtained the M.A degree before their white senior colleague, the same university decided, on the latter's presentation, that the same degree be awarded from thence forth with distinction, thereby immediately gaining him higher regard. The above reference to *tokoloho* is repeated in identical circumstances in a short story *Mona pela tsela* in a later publication *Leetong* (1954), which will be discussed later. At this stage it can only be said that Mofokeng seems to be overtly obsessed with the desire for real freedom.

The chroniclers in Act two foreshadow the conspiracy that was to follow:

*Ho madimabe ya phelelang ba bang,
Ya ba sebeletsang, ya ba lopollang matshwenyehong;
Ke yena ya tla jara mathata a bona,
Mathata ao a ba lopolotseng ho ona. (page 17)*
(Unhappy is he who lives for others,
Who toils for them, who saves them from woe;
It is he who will bear their grief,
The grief from which he saved them.)

Putting such words into the mouth of a character seems to have biblical import.

As expected, Senkatana's installation is followed by seeds of conspiracy that are evident in Bulane's envious outbursts:

Ke se ke tenehile nna ke taba ena ya kgodumodumo, Ke re ka re ke hlaha ka mona e ntse e le: "Senkatana le kgodumodumo"; ka mona: "kgodumodumo le Senkatana;" ... (page 24)

(I'm sick and tired of this *kgodumodumo* business. Wherever one goes it's just "Senkatana and the *Kgodumodumo*"; you take a turn and it's still "The *Kgodumodumo* and Senkatana...").

In Act three the conspiracy develops, and Bulane and others hold onto Senkatana's just and merciful trials as a pretext for overthrowing him. This is well foreshadowed by the chroniclers at the beginning:

*Wena ya ikgethetseng ho sebeletsa toka,
Tsela e a nyolosa, e nyolosa Thaba;
Oho, ngwaneso, hangata o tla lla,
Hangata o tla lakatsa ho dula fatshe,
Hangata o tla lakatsa ho phomola,
E, esita le hona ho kgutla, ho Theosa. (p. 45)*

(You who has chosen to work for justice,
The way is steep, very steep;
O! my brother, more often you will cry,
Very often you will feel like resting,
Yes, even like turning back, like going downhill).

At the beginning of Act four, the chroniclers intimate that increasing difficulties are a test for steadfastness. In this act the conspiracy takes shape, and the now changing Bulane is coerced by his wife, in the fashion of Shakespeare's Lady Macbeth. As such action is very unafrikan, this is a possible instance of foreign influence. It is in this act that Senkatana makes a critical decision, articulated in powerful syntactic parallelisms:

Ha ke ba bolaya ke tla be ke shwele; ke tla be ke bolaile moya wa ka, ke tla be ke fedisitse matla ho lwantsha bobu; ke tla be ke bolaile toka, ke ipolaile! (page 89)

(If I kill them I will be dead; I will be killing my own soul, I will be destroying the power to fight evil; I will be killing justice, killing myself!)

This kind of repetition and formulaic usage are used throughout the book to depict deep thought.

Act five commences with the chroniclers insinuating that what has always been taken for granted will not always be there:

Di rute ho aloha, di rute ho oroaha,
Di rute tsohle tse hlokahalang,
Di tle di hopole dithuto tsa hao
Hosasa di tla ikalosa.
Hosasa o tla be o le siyo... (page 89)
 (Train them to go grazing, train them to return home,
 Train them in all that is wanting,
 That they may remember your teachings,
 Tomorrow they will herd themselves.
 Tomorrow you will be away...)

The above lines also suggest man's helplessness in the face of fate, and can easily be linked to Mofokeng's awareness of his own health situation. Viewed only on the surface, these lines suggest strongly that the hero's fate is sealed. In the scenes that follow, Senkatana is assassinated, but after spells of premonition and deep reflection on life and the hereafter:

Ntweng ya leeto la bophelo
Re ntse re fetoha ka mehla,
Ka mehla re ntse re ithuta;
Mohla phetoho e felang
Ke mohla hae re fihlang,
Ke mohla leeto le felang. (page 103)
 (In the struggle of the journey of life
 We for ever keep changing,
 We are for ever learning,
 The day all change we cease
 Is the day we home arrive –
 The day the journey ends.)

He goes on to say:

Dintho tsohle di bopilwe
Dintho tsohle di leetong.
Di leetong, di leba ho Mmopi,
Ho Mmopi wa tsona, phethahalong. (page 106)
 (All things are created,
 All things are on passage,
 On a journey to the Creator,
 To their Creator, to perfection.)

These moments of deep reflection seem to be times when Mofokeng and his Senkatana merged into one, and reflect his own moments of meditation. The above conception of the ultimate end of life (a journey) being the changelessness (perfection) that is attained in oneness with the Creator is also to be found in Mofokeng's volume of essays, *Pelong ya ka* (1962).

The drama ends with the chroniclers' exhortation that a good goal, once perceived, should be pursued at all costs.

4.7 M.M. MOHAPI

Two years after Mofokeng's *Senkatana*, in the same year as N.M. Khaketla's *Mosali eo u 'neileng eena*, M.M. Mohapi's *O jeloe ke makhala* (He has been mutilated by crabs) was published by the Afrikaanse Pers Beperk. Like Ntšala's novel, *Sekhukhuni se bonoa ke sebatlali*, which will be discussed later, this drama marks the beginnings of detective thrillers in Sesotho.

Michael Molelekoa Mohapi was born on 23 June 1926 at Ha Mohalenyane in the Thaba Bosiu district. His parents were Ephraim Selai and Annah Mmamosolotsane Mohapi. His father died when he was only seven years old. He attended the St. John's Primary School in Mafeteng, being sponsored by Bishop Hains, and proceeded to the Basutoland High School (now Lesotho High School) where he studied up till Matric. When Bishop Hain died, earlier, he was helped through Matric by one Mr. Steward (the

Bishop's friend). Owing to family difficulties, he had to discontinue schooling, and work. He worked at the Native Affairs Department in Pretoria for many years as typist and translator in the information section.

His widow, Mmaselai Florence Mohapi, remembers his hankering for economic independence, which impelled him to start a business undertaking in Mafeteng (which, however, was unsuccessful); and his distaste for the ritual murders, which were very rife in Lesotho. He was a keen soccerite, tennis player and ruggerite. He died in 1973, on the anniversary of his own birthday.

O jelo ke makhala, is a drama of Sotho chieftaincy. Lehloenya and his people settle within the geographical area traditionally belonging to Matlakeng, without prior consultation with Chief Tlake. Tlake, offended by Lehloenya's arrogance, decides to punish him. In the battle that ensues, Lehloenya is killed. To save Tlake from prosecution by the supreme government, his loyal and devoted headmen, Moiloa and Sejai, undertake to bear the blame for the attack on the Mahloenya tribe. Moiloa goes further to advise Tlake to get a good medicine man to fortify his chieftaincy. In due course, Moiloa comes across one Lebetsa a medicine man who claims to come from Maroka, and introduces him to Tlake. Lebetsa prescribes the ritual killing of a man whose body parts are essential for a good medicine. The reluctant Tlake gives in after tremendous pressure from Moiloa; and the liquor and women-loving 'Malekhere is earmarked for the purpose. On the occasion of Sejai's daughter's wedding, Tseleng is used to lure 'Malekhere to his death. His mutilated body is later dumped into a pool. It is discovered by herdboys amongst whom is his own son. Hurried funeral arrangements are made in spite of police instructions to stall the proceedings. Moramang's and Lenkoe's failure to convey the police directive arouses suspicion, and both are detained. Later the rest are arrested. Tlake, Qobolo and Lenkoe are sentenced to death, other's to five years' imprisonment, whilst Tseleng is cautioned and discharged. Lebetsa turns out to be a Lehloenya medicineman. Tlake's son, Tladi, dies of heart failure, and his wife dies a day later.

The theme is clearly the tragedy of ritual killings. The theme as embedded message has a sub-theme and main theme. The sub-theme is high-lighted by Lebetsa's mysterious appearance "at the right time", and the conflicting advice of Tlake's wife as against the rest, as well as the result of the chief's simplistic credulousness. The sub-theme seems to be, look before you leap.

The main theme relate subtly to Mohapi's own hard, but honest, upbringing and entire life. When the philanthropic helping hand could no longer see him continue schooling, he honestly shouldered his family responsibility, and worked for the N.A.D. for long years without seeking a short-cut to success. He obviously had access to many civil cases and their outcome – evidence to this fact comes out glaringly during the trial of Tlake and his co-accused. Mohapi's own convictions contrast sharply with Tlake's. Tlake is a chief, but he allows himself to be goaded into wanting more, even by foul means. In the end he loses all: his chieftaincy, his life, his family. The main theme of this play is, therefore, a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush. The structural divisions into acts and scenes is, however, not as purposeful as in Mofokeng's *Senkakana*. The five acts of three, four, four, five and four scenes respectively, with the exception of the last act, deal with planning for war on both sides. The last act is distinct in that it entails police intervention and the judicial processes, leading to the climax (the death sentences) and, unfortunately, the denouement (the revelation of Lebetsa's real identity, attempted escape, the deaths of Tlake's wife and son, etc). The Sesotho atmosphere is created by the "raw" Sesotho utterances like:

1. Sejaki: *Ke fumana cena a iphulisetsa likhomonyana tsane tsabo, joaleka ha eka ke tsimong ea 'mae.* (page 11)
(I found him carefree, letting his lousy cattle graze there like it was his mother's field.)
2. Tlake: *U kalla joang, ekang u kalla le 'mao na, Letebele tooe?*
(page 24)
(You fight like you are fighting against your own mother, you Letebele!)

There are also a few instances of dramatic irony, that seek to show how Tlake is "blinded" by ambition, such as:

1. Whilst discussing chieftaincy problems with his wife, she remarks that... "*Marena a rona a tsoalo a tsoile tseleng, a sebelisa lingaka ho nšetsa mosebetsi o nyonyehang pele; a iphetotse malimo sechabeng se nyoretsoeng tsoelopele.*" (p. 15).

(Those who are our chiefs by birth are wayward, they use medicinemen to do their despicable work; they have turned into cannibals in a people thirsting for advancement.)

2. Moiloa, sensing some hesitance in Tlake's agreeing to the services of the medicineman, advises:

Morena, ha u ka nyatsa taba ena, ke tla tseba hore ha u batle borena. (page. 32)

(Chief, if you can turn this idea down, I will know that you do not want the chieftaincy.)

Well, Tlake took heed of the advice – and lost even the little he had. In this way Mohapi brought out his main theme very well. This is a fair contribution to this tottering genre of Sesotho literature.

4.8 F.M. SEGWE

Three years after *O jeloe ke makhala*, another play, *Sebabetsane* (1957) by F.M. Segwe, was published.

Francis More Segwe was born on 26 December 1922, of Marcus Sebopelo and Maria Mmoniemang Segwe, in Kroonstad, Orange Free State. He attended at the then Kroonstad Bantu United School, from the first year up to Junior Certificate. Being a Motswana, he had to do Sesotho due to the unavailability of a Setswana teacher, but was, however, inspired by his teacher at high school and developed great love for Sesotho. He completed J.C. in 1941 and proceeded to Adam's College, Natal, for the Higher Primary Teacher's certificate in 1942–43. When he started teaching in

1944, he also enrolled for the Senior Certificate by private study. He passed Senior Certificate obtaining a distinction in Sesotho. He then enrolled for the B.A. degree with the University of South Africa, and majored in Sesotho and Anthropology. In 1951 he was appointed principal at the Icoseng Primary School, Odendaalsrus, and, in 1971, principal of the Phehello Secondary School. In 1975 he took up a post as Education Officer in Bophuthatswana, and was stationed in Thaba Nchu. In 1978 he became Circuit Education Officer in charge of the Thaba Nchu Circuit, up till his retirement in 1987. He was asked to serve an additional year in Taung Circuit in 1988. He was prompted by his brilliant educational career, especially in Sesotho, to try his hand at writing. As a member of the Boys Scouts movement from youth to date, he liked drafting sketches for the Boy Scouts' evening entertainment at the bonfires. He likes jokes and performing tricks and, in his own words, "I have very little room for dislikes."

Sebabetsane is the story of young love, portraying young people in the Free State town of Kroonstad. Beautiful Matlakala arrives in the town from Sharpeville, Vereeniging. Seabetsane and Leepo meet them with her cousin, Sanka, and try to talk to her, but she is difficult. Seabetsane vows to attain her. As is customary for the local young people, Sanka takes her cousin to a local diviner, Maharaj, to have her 'fortune' read. Matlakala is upset on being told that she should never get married. She remembers the equally upset Lehlana, who had been warned to stop drinking lest he dies, and brushes the divination off as nonsense. In the meantime the local pastor, Palama, of the Anglican church invites Lehlana to his house and tells him all about his past including his real identity (*Mpho Theko*), whereupon Lehlana is shocked, and passes out. He comes round to find himself tended by young Baile, The daughter he had abandoned as a baby, and is moved to tears. Matlakala, on the other hand, loses her mother through sudden illness. She leaves her a pot which had been left by her late father, with strict instructions that it be opened only by the man who marries her. Matlakala disregards the injunction much to the shock of her cousin. She later falls in love with Mosiuoa, and they are engaged to get married, but Seabetsane shoots her dead before the marriage could take place and injures her fiance extensively.

Though this play is entitled *Sebabetsane* (A bitter prickly plant — *Mesembryanthemum*), the two characters who feature prominently are Matlakala and Lehlena. There is, however, no relationship or connection between the two. Lehlena seems to play no vital role in the story, except as a foil against which to see Matlakala. He is a shabby, run-down and dehumanised drunkard while she is a paragon of beauty, intelligence and morality. In the end Lehlena takes Palama's advice and is completely converted. But Matlakala takes nobody's advice, not even Sanka's. When she advises her to accept Mosiuoa's proposal, she retorts "*Tholang! hase lona le ka nthutang kapa la nkhetlang. Kea tseba. Mphe pampiri...*" (Keep quiet! It is not you who must teach me or choose for me. I know. Give me paper...; p. 34), and writes a letter of acceptance to Mosiuoa, which she reads to Sanka and Baile. She is too proud to admit acceptance of their advice. She does her own will all the time, regardless of even her own parents' death-bed wishes. Consequently, though apparently by chance, she never attains her goal in life.

This play seems to have two parallel plots: the story of Matlakala and the story of Tshepo Theko, alias Lehlena. Though these could have been two books, their themes seem to be complementary. In the former, Segwe seems to be illustrating and perpetuating the Sesotho proverb: "*Lentswe la mofu le hahelwa lesaka*" (The deceased's last wishes must be observed), coupling this with the biblical dictum "Pride cometh before a fall." As corollary to this, the Lehlena story seems to convey to the reader "confess your sins and be saved" — a clear instance of intertextuality.

The character *Sebabetsane* appears only in the opening scene and disappears, to reappear in Act 3 (scene II) intercepting Matlakala's letter by pretenses and seeking love potions from Wolowolo. True to the implication of his name, he is a villain who is up to no good. The writer makes good use of the flash-back technique to fill the gaps in Lehlena's and Palama's past. The climax (the court scene) is brought up without prior details of arrest and charges, thereby arresting the reader's interest with great force, though the earlier physical divisions into acts and scenes are rather arbitrary.

Segwe's tone in this play varies from light-hearted to serious and sombre according to the situation portrayed. The language of the young people reflects a lot of intertextuality. For instance, Leepo (page 12) talks about the eve of the reopening of schools as "...lona letsatsi la bo-moshanyana se llele sekolo" (... the very day of boy cry not for schooling), thereby reflecting on Sir J.P. Mohapeloa's song *Ha moea o hlaha Boroa*. This simultaneously mirrors the play own jolly disposition, together with a number of utterances like the following (inter alia):

1. Lehlana: ... *U ngoan'a sekolo empa ke bona hantle-ntle hore litichere tsa hao ha lia ruteha... ke tsena tsa kajeno, tse balileng "nala o na le none."* (page 8)
(... You are a pupil, but I can see clearly that your teachers are not educated... they are today's type that have read "nala o na le none", i.e. they are at the first stages of literacy).
2. Lehlana: ... *Balang evangeling ea Genese ho Ba-Roma* (p. 8)
(... Read from the gospel of Genesis in the book of the Romans)
3. Lehlana: ... *U bua hampe ka nna pela Molimo! U re ke nku e lahlehileng?* (p. 17)
(You speak ill of me in the presence of God! You say I am a lost sheep?)

Apart from the intertextual influences phenomenon that pervades the whole play, there is political activism that is found ostensibly in a newspaper (Leselinyana):

... *Nako e fihlile, Ma-Afrika, ea ho ipopa, ho sututsa, ho leleka, le ho ripitla bokhoba bo ileng ba tsoara bont'a rona mehleng ea lefifi le letso-letso...* (p. 27)

(... The time has come, Africans, to unite, to push, to drive away and crush the slavery that gripped our fathers in yonder days of great darkness...)

This play, a product of extensive intersystemic interaction and intertextuality, is a fair contribution to this genre in Sesotho literature.

4.9 B.K. TAOANA

In the same year (1957) B.K. Taoana's *Obe* (A Mythical Creature) was published.

Bernard Kokolia Taoana was born of Dydimus and Matilda Taoana on 22 June 1911, in Thaba-Bosiu. His father, a farmer and creative handiman, was very intolerant towards any wrong. Bernard was brought up by his uncle, a minister of religion on the Malutis, and only rejoined his parents as a grown boy doing Std VI. He started schooling at a very young age, and, when he passed Std IV at Thaba-Bosiu, he went to Morija for J.C. But, after one year, he left school to work to accumulate funds. He then went to complete his JC at Morija, and proceeded to Adam's College, Natal, for Matric. Thereafter, he worked as a private teacher at Mohalenyane's in Thaba-Bosiu, and at Masianokeng. He then went to Fort Hare for the B.A. degree, which he also interrupted briefly by teaching at the Lesotho High School, to raise funds. During that break, in 1942, he got married to Sophia Matšelisio Au. In 1943-44 he returned to Fort Hare to complete his degree. He then went to Cape Town to study law. On experiencing financial problems, he was secured a job in Johannesburg by one Prof. Ashley, but his wife declined going to live in Orlando. He went back to teaching, later to resign his post and try business in Mapoteng and at 'Makhoroana. According to his widow, he always dreamt of being independent, and not being employed. He loved J.P. Mohapeloa's song "Obe", which was based on a known folk-tale, and decided to reproduce it in drama form. He died on 12 July 1984.

This is the story of a young lady, Seipati, who gets married to one Mokoena. Late one night, Mmamokoena, her mother-in-law, calls her out of bed to share some women's secret with her. To her surprise, her stark naked mother-in-law places a heavy grain basket on her head, telling her that she wants to give her (Seipati) her rich inheritance as her only daughter-in-law. Mmamokoena then leads her to a reed valley, where the

village witches and wizards rendezvous. There Seipati is introduced as a willing recruit. She is then taught the basics of wizardry, i.e. the use of two sticks (a black one, and a white one), for sending potential victims to sleep, and for wakening them, respectively. In the course of the lesson, she sends them all to sleep, and runs home to report. The village people hurry to the scene, and are shocked to see so many well known people stark naked and fast asleep. On the chief's instructions and insistence, they are wakened, strongly reprimanded, and sent home. But Mmamokoena is bent on having her revenge. Each night she sends her "Obe" to fetch Seipati from her parents' home to be flogged, thereafter taking her back. One diviner after the other fails to help, until Makgephola's help is sought. The "Obe" is captured and killed, and this deals Mmamokoena a final devastating blow.

The original "Obe", like any other folk-tale, has both aesthetic and didactic value. In Mohapeloa's song, the aesthetic is so overwhelming that it eclipses the didactic. In this drama, Taoana has very successfully brought out both with strong impact. The theme, as subject, is traditional beliefs, and, as underlying message, retribution is inescapable.

The arrangement into acts and scenes is most arbitrary and difficult to stage in that many scenes consist, in fact, of more than one scenes. The very first scene, for instance, consists of *Sedibeng* (at the fountain) and *Hae ha Shwahle* (at Shwahle's home). In some scenes (e.g. *pono ya IV*) names of characters are just stated with no indication as to the place. Whatever his intention, Taoana repeatedly names two far-apart places in the same scene and leaves the rest to the reader's imagination e.g. *Mohlakeng Lapeng ha Tanki* (At the Marsh Home at Tanki's) (pages 26, 28, 32). It is, therefore, clear that this play is not intended to be a theatrical text. There is also no indication of entry or exit of the performers anywhere. This makes of the text a closet drama.

Taoana, however, successfully maintains the eerie atmosphere throughout by means of the naming technique, and matching the names with the dialogue and deeds. The following examples bring this out clearly:

- Maswetsa (*Tormentor*): *Helele moifo o pelo e tshehla, ke le amohela ka thabo, mme ke tshepa le tla nthabisa ka ho beha ho nna ketso tsa lona tse sehloho...* (page 10)
 (Hail, covetous subjects! I greet you with pleasure, hoping you will gladden my heart with reports of your truculent deeds...)
- Matshikgola: (One who emits a gush)... *Ho ne ho ena le moikgantshinyana wa manoni moo,... a hloma e se e le morena hobane feela a ena le dikgomo tse ngata. Ke fihlile teng ka re ke sa tla mo swetsa ka ngwana hae ya to ka monwana. Yaba ke mo kgaola letheka...* (op cit:10)
 (... There was a proud rich one there, ... who imagined he was a king just because he had many cattle. I got there and felt I should torment him through his only child. I then severed the child's waist...)
- Maqhefetsa: (*merciless crusher*): *Morena ke tswa sotha mosadi wa Lebese molala...* (op cit:10)
 (Chief, I have just wrung Lebese's wife's neck...)

Other associated names are *Sekgomotho* (Spiderperson), *Matshetshetha* (Mincer) and *Mafophisa* (Wringer). The weirdness created by the frightful suggestions in the names, coupled with their ghastly reports, is intensified by the Obe's hideous self-description each time it goes for Seipati:

*Obe! Obe! Obe! Ngwanana batho Obe!
 O tla re o boneng obe! Tsebe di eme,
 Obe! Obe! Obe!... (Op cit:28)
 (Obe! Obe! Obe! Poor little girl, Obe!
 What will you say you've seen, Obe!
 The ears being upright, Obe! Obe! Obe!...)*

The Obe's arrival at Seipati's home is made even more horrific:

*Obe! Obe! Obe! Hi! Ao! Ao! Ao!
 Hi! Ao! Ao! Ao! Ngwana batho bo!*

Hi! Ao! Ao! Ao! O tla re o boneng?
Hi! Ao! Ao! Ao! Tsebe di eme;
Hi! Ao! Ao! Obe! Obe! Obe! (Op cit: 43)

In the heightened atmosphere of horror the reader has been made to identify with the victimised Seipati, and hopes for salvation in the mystery that shrouds Makgephola's series of negative utterances:

Makgephola: (One who breaks off pieces): *Ke bonang? Ke bona ngwana lona ke eo wa morwetsana. Tjhe, heng o se a nyetswe ebile ke ngwetsi e ntjhantjha. Ha ngala a pshatlile nkgo, ha otlwa ke monna, o phaphathehile...* (op cit: 37)
 (What do I see? I see your child there, a girl. No, is she not married, newly married! She has not deserted having broken a pot, she has not been beaten by her husband, she has fled...)

This reflects strongly on Taoana's knowledge of Sesotho traditional belief and custom, not as an onlooker but a participant. The horror he so ably reproduces could only have been experienced by one who grew up in a christian home, seeing it or hearing about it in the community around him. Without such knowledge and experience it is difficult to perceive how he could recast a folk-tale and a song into this form. This unique choice of subject for a drama, depicting the evil in man, is a refreshing and thought provoking addition to Sesotho dramatic expression.

4.10 RESUMÉ

As indicated earlier, the earliest attempt at drama writing was made by M.L. Maile with his *Ramasoabi le Potso*. Typical of a minister of religion, he wrote not "literature that walks and talks before our eyes" (Boulton, 1983:3), but literature that talked in one direction only: a series of biblical quotations and their application to the problems of the marriage institution, as in a sermon.

Twentyman Mofokeng, though himself a minister, differs from his predecessor in that his approach is "no longer religious but secular... it is between behaviour inspired by irrational customs and superstitions, and the rational conduct of the educated young" (Lenake, 1968:78). His *Sekhona sa joala* was the first dramatic text that was also theatrical in structure and style. The latter can also be said of all the subsequent texts, except *Obe* and *Moshoeshoe* which are not theatrical.

Twentyman Mofokeng and B.M. Khaketla (in his last two dramas, *Tholoana tsa sethepu* and *Bulane*) express disapproval for polygamy, a practice that is telling on the children of such families. Perhaps it is because both lost a mother and a father, respectively, at a very tender age. They can understand the additional hardships they would have suffered if they had been born into polygamous families. T. Mofokeng and Mocoancoeng also lash out against drunkenness, both for the way they have seen it erode community self-respect and self-worth. To the latter, drunkenness is a serious handicap to the attainment, one day, of the freedom he always dreams about. Khaketla is also imbued with the spirit of national pride, as evidenced in his *Moshoeshoe le baruti*, which, to him, is a monument to the great Moshoeshoe's wisdom and foresight. To some extent, Segwe also joins in unleashing against drunkenness whilst, as an ardent scoutmaster, he simultaneously hits out at unscrupulousness, haughtiness and general delinquency, in his *Sebabetsane*. Like Segwe, Taoana hits at the callousness that is rooted in superstition. Both, however, seem to have been influenced by their predecessors' division of plays into acts and scenes without being convinced as to the function of such divisions. Mohapi and Taoana seek to discourage ill-advised, irrational practices and beliefs by high-lighting the tragedy of ritual killings with their self-destructive results in *O jeloe ke makhala* and *Obe*, respectively.

Ntšeliseng Khaketla, strong willed and rational from childhood, seeks to spotlight discrimination on grounds other than merit, and lack of unbiased appreciation of women. In a more serious vein, S.M. Mofokeng seeks to prick man's conscience by laying bare his ingratitude and lack of commitment. When the pain subsides he forgets his vow.

The common element that pervades all these works of drama is protest. Each of these writers protests against one form or other of community misdemeanour. This

could be directly attributed to the missionary educational system through which all of them (a minister of religion, teachers and a civil servant) have gone. Taken together, these writers did their fair share, under the prevailing circumstances, in attempting to close "*sekheo se seholo libukeng tsa Sesotho, se tšoanetseng hore se thijoe*". (The big gap that must be filled in Sesotho books; B.M. Khaketla, 1954:vii).

The origin of drama as an emerging sub-system, bearing on the Basotho cultural and socio-political realities was its initial, albeit subtle, usage by Sekese as a protest medium with his *Pitso ea linonyana*. Credit should be given to the missionary system of evangelising and enlightenment, aided by the printing of the *Leselinyana* in which this drama first appeared in serial form as early as the 1880's. With greater interaction with western socio-religious and political norms there was to be seen drastic changes in structure and outlook in drama. Maile's *Ramasoabi* manifests deep penetration of Western religious norms into the Basotho behavioural model. It is a glaringly religious communication medium though, structurally, still the traditional Sesotho dialogue model with minimum action.

T. Mofokeng's *Sekhona*, "the first full-blooded drama in Southern Sotho" (Swanepoel, 1987:66), exhibited the fully dichotomous nature of drama, i.e. text-performance dichotomy, after Western concepts, differing only in structure. It's relevance to the Sesotho social system was more robustly protest than in Sekese's work.

The Western education system led to the emergence of a new generation of dramatists of the likes of B.M. Khaketla and S.M. Mofokeng, imbued with the Western textual structure as the most significant mark of a drama. This taken evidently after the Shakespearean model. Khaketla's *Moshoeshoe* and Mofokeng's *Senkatana* are in this regard instances of structural intertextuality, with the retention of varying degrees of social protest.

Succeeding generations of playwrights did not adhere very closely to the Western act-scene dramatic structure, but had apparently got accustomed to drama rather merely as a mode of literary communication. They seemed to have been concerned firstly with the reader and then audience only as a secondary concern. This is particularly clear when one studies the text-performance dichotomy. The ills of society (social or political) were now encoded less and less subtly in the text by

playwrights like N.M. Khaketla (*Mosali eo u neileng...*), M.M. Mohapi (*O jelo...*), F.M. Segwe (*Sebabetsane*), and B.K. Taoana (*Obe*). To these dramatists, theme took precedence to structure which seemed to be increasingly relegated to the arbitrary level.

Drama as a sub-system of the total Sesotho literary system showed prospects of an effective means of chiding, advising, and informing socially and politically. Whilst, to the same end, the novelist and essayist used prose, the poet employed verse, the dramatist used dialogue and performance. All three are concerned with the same literary system that has to do with the totality of human experience.

CHAPTER 5

THE NOVEL – A DYNAMIC SUB–SYSTEM

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The novel is the most popular Sesotho literary sub–system of this period. Perhaps it is because it is the closest related to the traditional pastime of recounting the day's experiences and encounters with wild animals, snakes, ghosts, etc. in the fashion of Motsamai's *Mehla ea Malimo* and Mangoela's *Har'a libatana le linyamatsane*, whenever men had come together in the "Kgotla" in the absence of disputes. As seen in the second chapter, from actual experiences men became creative and started writing about imaginative adventures and other fictitious incidents. The Odhams Dictionary of the English Language defines a novel as "a narrative in prose dealing with stories of character and incident representing and reflecting the social scene, romance, allegory, fantasy, etc." A novel, like all other imaginative works, falls within the realm of fiction. Fiction, Brooks et al (1975:5) maintain, "basically represents the writer's ideas and feelings about life and its meaning – in short, what we may call his vision of life." They go on to say that "this vision, we must insist, as vitally penetrates and informs the "telling" as it does the "told". (op cit).

Indeed, as the writer's outlook is determined by a variety of extraliterary factors, the manner or style of narration and the substance must of necessity reflect on such factors as will be seen hereunder. This mirrors strongly Even–Zohar's Polysystem theory.

Brooks, et al, also regard fiction as a simulation or re–enactment of life situations or roles. In it, they argue, "we find, in imagination, not only the pleasure of recognizing the world we have known and of reliving the past, but also the pleasure of entering worlds we do not know and of experimenting with experiences which we deeply crave but which the limitations of life, the fear of consequences or the severity of our principles forbid to us... In fiction we escape limitations and penalties." (1975:3)

Rimmon-Kenan (1983:2) regards fiction as "the narration of fictional events" and narrative fiction as representing a succession of such events. The structuralist that she is, she feels that the term 'narration' suggests a communication process in which the narrative message is transmitted to the addressee, and the verbal nature of the medium used to transmit the message. She further classifies narrative fiction into what she calls the following basic aspects: the events, their verbal representation, and the act of telling or writing, and refers to these as the story, the text and narration respectively. Hereafter, she declares openly that story "designates the narrated events, abstracted from their disposition in the text and reconstructed in their chronological order, together with the participants in these events" (1975:3). The story as such, she maintains, is part of a larger construct, the reconstructed or represented world, i.e. the fictional reality in which the characters of the story are supposed to be living and in which its events are supposed to take place (1975:7).

Abrams's definition of fiction (1981:61) is very close to Shipley's definition of the novel, and includes novel. While the latter (1979:215) defines novel as "an extended fictional narrative in prose", Abrams concedes that the term fiction is "often used inclusively for any literary narrative, whether in prose or verse, which is feigned or invented, and does not purport to be historical truth. In most present-day discussion, however, fiction denotes primarily prose narratives (the novel and the short story), and is sometimes used as a synonym for the novel."

It is, thus, clear that the novel is fiction, though the inverse does not necessarily imply novel. As such, the novel is subject to all the requirements and constrictions of fiction.

We shall, presently, proceed to discuss mainly the themes in the novels that were published in this period. Structure and style will be discussed in passing and as vehicles of theme. Dietrich et al (1967:47) very aptly defines plot (i.e. structure) as "an agent of theme", and goes on to say it "may be defined, very generally, as the arrangement of events and actions in a story to convey a theme."

After the long lull that followed on the publication of Mofolo's Chaka in 1925, the first novel, Mokhosi wa Fora (The Call of France) by the Rev. H. Ernest Mabile saw the light in 1940.

5.2 MABILLE, H.E.: *Mokhosi oa Fora* (The Call of France)

Rev. H. Ernest Mabile, whose ancestry dates back to Eugene Casalis – one of the first three French missionaries to be invited to Lesotho by King Moshoeshe I – was born in an anteroom of a church in Morija on 1st January 1861, because the parsonage had not been built yet. His ancestry includes no fewer than thirty missionaries, teachers and doctors, who worked in Lesotho, to date. His parents, Adolphe and Adele (daughter of Eugene Casalis) were everything in handiwork. They lived in two twenty-foot high rooms that had no ceiling. These were cold in winter and hot in summer, and "it rained in the room almost as much as outside" (Smith, 1939:101). They were so dedicated to their work that they laughed it away as comical rather than a tragic situation. Adolphe was an incessant worker who maintained that being tired was no reason to stop working. He also objected on religious grounds to any increment he was offered by the church. Ernest's mother was his first teacher. He sat with Basotho boys on the benches of the Morija schools, and was particularly loved by one Penelope Liengoane, a Mosotho woman who had no children of her own, and treated him like he was her own child. When he departed to Yverdan in France for his further schooling she bought him a watch, and gave his parents large sums of money for him. When he got married she bought him a bed. In 1886 he completed his training and apprenticeship in St. Louis, Senegal and returned to Lesotho. He was then called to Makeneng by Lerotholi. He (Lerotholi) felt that Moshoeshe had had Casalis, his father (Letsie) had had Adolphe Mabile, so he had to have the grandson, Ernest.

From Leribe, Ernest repaired to Johannesburg, where he started evangelising among the Basotho at the mine compounds. He had witnessed his own father's refusal to issue Sir Gordon Sprigg's proclamation order from the mission, and the stand he took with the Basotho against the policy of the Cape Colony, i.e. that they surrender their guns unconditionally.

During the First World War (1914–1918), Ernest Mabile accompanied the Basotho recruits to England and France. On his return to Lesotho, he managed the Thabeng Boys School in Morija until his retirement in 1931. He died a year later, leaving a manuscript behind entitled *Mokhosi oa Fora*. The manuscript was strongly recommended for publication by his nephew, the Rev. George Mabile, and was published in 1940.

This book is a detailed account of four hundred Basotho men who joined France's and Britain's forces on their call for assistance, much against the Boers' call to them not to respond. On the one hand, this book depicts the simplicity with which the young Mosotho offers himself for recruitment to the army, with high hopes, and the suffering he endures on the battlefield, aggravated by inclement weather. On the other hand, it portrays his more pleasurable meetings with church leaders in Paris and his happy return home in 1918.

Rev. Mabile was brought up in a deeply religious family atmosphere, where christianity was not a philosophy but a way of life. The hardships his parents endured, shunning all physical comforts, and his father's daring physical danger by aligning himself with the Basotho stance in the *Ntoa ea lithunya* (The Gun War; 1880–1881), must have made an indelible impression on his young mind. He witnessed christianity in practice: man looking upon man as fellow creature under all circumstances, and the truth of the words, "In life ye shall have tribulation..." (John 16:33). Having grown up against that background, in a blended religious and Sotho sociocultural environment, it is not surprising that he was the first missionary to write on a totally secular subject. This fact also accounts for the lapse of time before the book was eventually published. The theme in this book is, however, subtly socio-religious. The Basotho, having been made one family with the missionaries by their new religious outlook, had to be mindful of their patriotic sensitivities. No amount of dissuasion by the Free State Boers could drill a wedge between them. Though the book is written in plain down-to-earth Sesotho, reflecting on practical socio-economic reasons that impelled some of the young Basotho to respond to the call, the author wants it put down on record that the Basotho were one in spirit with them. As his nephew, George Mabile, put

it (in a private correspondence with this writer),

Buka ea Mokhosi oa Fora ke hlaloso tsa mathata ao ntate Ernest a ileng a a kopanela le Basotho ba heso

(The book Mokhosi oa Fora is an account of the hardships my father, Ernest, endured together with our fellow Basotho.)

Mabille does not want the reader to overlook the basis of this relationship:

Labone letsatsi ke leo ba lebeletsoeng tlung ea baruti, ho lula tafoleng le bo-ntat'a bona, batsamaisi ba mosebetsi oa Molimo lichabeng.

(p. 143)

(On the fourth day they were expected at the parsonage, to have lunch with their fathers, the directors of God's work abroad).

Whether viewed from the christian point of view, or from the western or Sesotho socio-cultural point of view, Mabille is subtly saying that one good turn deserves another.

The events in this book are arranged in simple chronological order, each chapter flowing into the other in logical succession. Each chapter has a heading that suggests its contents in a manner analogous to short story titles, as will be seen later. Each of the chapter headings is reinforced with an appropriate quotation from the Bible, as if to sanction every move throughout the progression of the story. The first chapter aptly titled "*Sekgoeng re tswile*" (We leave our Parents' Village) is suggestive of the first step taken by a young man who has come of age. In this chapter young men converge at the recruiting point from all over the country, leaving their loved ones and young wives, because "*monna o fela a e-shoa se-nku*" (a man dies in sheep-like silence i.e. he faces danger or pain dauntlessly; p. 4). Many a young man also leaving his wife with minimal instructions because "*hape mosali oa hae ke monna ka sebele, o tla sala a bona le moo a lebetseng*" (His wife is now a man in all but name. She will keep deciding as circumstances crop up; p. 5). The down-to-earth Sesotho captures the

simple faith and simple life circumstances of the Basotho, and the atmosphere and tone of the book. This, as observed above, is reinforced by a quotation from St. Matthew 24:6 — "*le tla utloa lintoa le melumo ea lintoa*" (You are going to hear the noise of battles close by and the news of battles far away; but do not be troubled).

The second chapter, titled *Malala—a-laotsoe* (The Ready for Action), is also complemented by *Ea eang ntoeng ha a itšitise ka tsa bophelo bona*" (a soldier on active service wants to please his commanding officer and so does not get mixed up in the affairs of civilian life) (II Timothy 2:4). This quotation seems to be double-edged: whilst designed to focus the attention of the young Basotho men on honour in battle, it can also be construed to be a swipe at those who sought to discourage them from responding to the "call", maintaining:

Na re batla hore bana ba rona ba eo shoela Makhooa, re tle re rue'ng, re kotule'ng ka ho etsa joalo? Na 'ona Makhooa a ka hla a lumela ho re shoela rona ba Batšo? (p. 10)

(Do we want our children to go and die for the Whiteman, so as to gain what and reap what by doing so? Can they, the white men, agree to die for us Black people?)

This structure is maintained up to the end (the climax) which is a song composed to honour the returning "heroes", which flows into a heroic praise poem in honour of their Sergeant, Josiah S. Makhonofane, of the 4th Battalion 13th Company S.A.N.L.C.

Though this book can be regarded as Mabile's monument to the Basotho—missionary co—operation at the time, it also reflects fairly on their conflicting socio—political interests, as well as the Black—White racial animosity that stemmed from the Voortrekker escapades. The writer's tone as a missionary pervades the whole book. Even where battle scenes are depicted little excitement and quickening pulse are detected. All the main

actions in the book are of secular consequence, but the style and tempo are missionary conditioned. The gist of the story is fact, but the details "something made rather than given, built out of belief, not fact" (Weinstein, 1988:3). The book is, therefore, a blending of fact and fiction, but, nevertheless, a fair contribution to the development of this subsystem in the Sesotho literary system.

In 1942 *Morena Moshoeshoe mor'a Mokhatshane* by E.M. Leoatle was published by Morija Sesotho Book Depot. This was supposed to be a historical novel depicting Moshoeshoe's growth, bravery and diplomacy, and the whiteman's cunning to undermine his chieftaincy, and the promotion of a white-for-white disposition by the Cape governors, except Sir George Grey. This book seems to be a mere recollection of historical events and lacks the basic element of fiction i.e. "to give pleasure by gratifying the love of the uncommon in human experience" (Allott, 1980:3), or "the narration of a succession of fictional events" (Rimmon-Kenan 1983:2). As this book also does not seem to have any theme as message, except white man boss, it cannot really be said to be any notable contribution to the development of this genre. Even the style lacks the lustre of fiction.

5.3 A. NQHEKU AND SOCIAL CONFLICT

The next novelette published during this period was A. Nqheku's *Arola naheng ea Maburu* (Arola in the Land of the Afrikaners), published by Mazenod Printing Works in the same year (1942).

Albert Nqheku was born at Shoepane on 1 July 1902 of loving parents, Liau Francis and Lieketso Nqheku. As was customary, he was brought from the Maluti (mountains) down to Morija by the Canadian-French missionaries for evangelistic upbringing, later to be sent to school. He obtained his earlier primary education at Ha-Mohale, in the Marakabei district, and then proceeded to St. Josephs (Roma, to-day) where he was educated by the Marist brothers. At the latter college he did standards V and VI, and the Primary Teacher's Certificate (PTC). His former schoolmate, Mr. Letšolakobo Lephoto, remembers him as "a man of peace, who loved

people", and, though a senior student, was non-discriminatory in his dealings with all his fellow students.

He started teaching at the Jordan School in the Marakabei district. Gérard (1971:147) states that "he has been a teacher and catechist for over thirty years." His daughter, Johanna Mofolo (Mrs), remembers him as a staunch Catholic who insisted that they recite the ritual "Ahe Maria" (Hail Mary) thrice daily, and was so strict as to forbid their participation in the Lesokwana game and other mixed and girls' games that might make them stray any distance from home. She also remembers the stories he used to relate of his encounters with strange beings at night on his way home from school, a long distance away. He also used to tell them of the hard life led by uneducated Blacks who worked on the Free State farms and in Johannesburg, where a labourer could be punished for getting tired in the middle of a task. Owing to defective communication, the labourer was always under constant fear of being flogged, while there was nowhere to hide or to appeal. All such suffering was due to lack of education.

The above book, published in 1942, is an adventure novel of a young man who leaves his well-off home in Lesotho to fend for himself and, like other young men, know the outside world and return home well-dressed. His adventures on white farms in the Free State reflect on negative racist attitudes of White against Black, and Arola's own reciprocated negative attitude and unrealistically sharp wit and ruthlessness. He proceeds to some unnamed town where, after some ups-and-downs, he decides to go back home, and arrives home empty handed.

The theme of the above book is another instance of the Makgoweng motif which, as Gérard puts it, "reflects the very acute problem of migrant labour" (1971:160). Lenake (1968:77) only comments that "in the hands of people with an unbalanced mind, this book may easily cause strained relationships between these two racial groups". Gildenhuys (1973:61) starts off by declaring that this book is "t.o.v. beide tema en intrige nie besonder hoog nie en derhalwe ook nie van veel belang nie" except in the regard of the Roman Catholic Press at the time. He goes on to say that "in sy geheel

sprek Nqheku se werk van geen insig in die rasseprobleme van ons land nie, is sy benadering eensydig en word hierdie delikate tema geensins versigtig en met oorleg hanteer nie" (1973:62). Unfortunately, Gildenhuys does not enunciate the theme, nor does he suggest a more balanced presentation.

Swanepoel (1987:101) however, acknowledges that "although Arola and the farmers with whom he clashes represent stereotyped extremes of their respective peoples, the work's link with reality cannot be denied." However exaggerated the attitudes and actions of Nqheku's fictional characters may be, they reflected basic truths pertaining to race relations at the time, as will be seen hereunder.

Moloi (1973:104) seems to be nearest to Nqheku as he observes that "although Lenake is of the opinion that Nqheku's *Arola naheng ea Maburu* is dangerous for racial harmony in South Africa, one should bear in mind that by choosing extreme examples among Basotho and Afrikaners, Nqheku intended to point out clearly the suspicions, anxiety, fear, perhaps hatred and meanness given expression or suppressed by many people of this part of the world." To understand Nqheku's theme in this book, it is all important to reconstruct the socio-economic and socio-political conditions that obtained in those days. That mammoth task will be attempted here, and an attempt also made to show how the social, economic and political systems interacted in the production of this work.

Though Nqheku was brought up in a comparatively more comfortable home than his less fortunate contemporaries and elders, he was abreast of the times in respect of the experiences of his fellow Basotho across the Caledon river. His Catholic upbringing determined his outlook to life and his fellowmen, as evidenced in the stories he told his children (see above). To him, the physical punishment of labourers for being tired must have been singularly repulsive. Perhaps such maltreatment of Black labourers was politically based, and could be traced back to the Rustenburg Grondwet of 1858 in accordance with which "it was specially stated in the constitution that there was to be no equality between blacks and white, not even in the administration of justice" (Fowler, 1950:270). For many years, life for

Black people, at different parts of the country was typefied by the spirit of the above clause.

In the Rand Daily Mail of Wednesday 18 January 1950 (p. 7) there appears the headlines "Police inquire into Farm Native's Death", and thereunder:

An allegation has been made that a farmer of the Bethal district assaulted four Native labourers. A Native died 14 days later...

The Rand Daily Mail of Wednesday, 8 February 1950 (p. 10), has "Native Workers say they Ran Away But Were Caught", and thereunder:

Bethal, Tuesday: — Evidence that they tried to run away, but were rounded by a man on horseback and others on foot, was given by the Herero Natives at the Bethal Magistrate's Court to-day when the preparatory examination of Max Hirschowitz, a farmer, and Albert Thomas Olckers, a farm foreman, on three charges of serious assault with intent to do grievous bodily harm, was resumed."

The Rand Daily Mail of Friday 7 April, 1950, has "Station worker Gaoled for Wounding Native." In this report, a twenty-four year old railway worker of Afrikaskop station shot a "Native". A charge of assault with intent to murder was reduced to common assault by a Justice C.M. de Beer in the Bethlehem Circuit Court, on the grounds that "the crown had not proved intent."

Perhaps the most interesting and relevant, is the report in the Rand Daily Mail of Saturday 27 May 1950 with the headlines, "Farmer Fined for Assault on Native Worker", and thereunder:

"Judge Warns Highveld Against Sjambok Rule".

The above reports, coupled with Nqheku's religious convictions, should make his readers at least understand the lack of subtlety in his approach. He is not apologetic for what he says. He is bent on depicting the life of the Mosotho young man in those days as he sees it. He seems to feel that white

aggression can only be checked by Black aggression, hence his creation of the extreme characters on the opposite sides of the colour line. This is somewhat in agreement with Moloi's views.

The theme in this book seems to be manifold, and has lots of religious flavour. Whilst it seeks to vindicate the traditional lifelong subservience of sons to their fathers, it is also another variation of the prodigal son archetype. It also smirchs of the influence of the parable of the Lost Sheep. Arola's return home empty handed and happy is analogous to the Biblical return home with no earthly possession, especially after his conversion. After his vehement protestation, Nqheku seems to settle down to the christian norm that God's grace is greater than man's brutality.

Nqheku makes free use of adoptives like *basekiti* (basket) *keine* (cane), *envelope*; *o berekile* (worked) *para* (pair) etc, even where he could easily have used Sesotho words. This creates the easy atmosphere and an informal tone that are in keeping with his happy-go-lucky main character to whom dangerous situations are like sport. The very narrative tone throughout the book ranges from witty, through sarcastic to puerile. It is, for instance, not always expected that one can describe an angrily charging "leburu" in the following manner, by the very subject of his anger:

La hlaha, ntate oa ka! La hlaha, mokan'a ka! La hlaha heising mane, la hlaha le hlantšitse meriri, le menne lihemphe; la hlaha le retetse le re tlere. (p. 19)

(He appeared, dear father! He appeared, friend! He appeared from there at the farm house, he appeared with bristled hair and folded shirt sleeves; he appeared being blood red.)

This syntactic parallelism conveys simultaneously the farmer's fury and what Nqheku would have the reader feel is Arola's nonchalance. The very tone gives away the emotional battle the writer is engaged in.

The events that constitute the plot are in logical sequence, with occasional flash-backs. For instance, the flash-back means of Arola's ghostly experiences to insinuate the death of the cruel farmer. Wittingly or unwittingly Nqheku, by means of this incident, has condemned the farmer to Hell. Arola's fierce fight against Amazulu thugs, armed with the skull of a goat, is clearly a variation of the Biblical Samson's battle against the Philistines armed with the jaw-bone of an ass. As education was in those days in the hands of the missionaries, such transfers from the religious system are understandable.

Controversial as it may perhaps be, this book is a commendable, bold contribution to the development of narrative fiction in Sesotho.

Two years later, Nqheku published another book, *Lilahloane* (Outcast) in 1944.

The book seems to be a progression of Nqheku's change of heart evidenced at the end of the controversial *Arola naheng ea Maburu*. It is a story of the yearning of a young girl, from a typically traditional Sotho family, not only to become christian, but to become catholic. Nqheku is true to his catholic upbringing and catholic conviction. Lilahloane is a girl born of a couple after all hopes of begetting a child are given up. She is consequently dearly beloved of her parents. She spends a few years at her grandmother's (Maria-Louisa's) place. Maria-Louisa is a devout catholic who acquaints her with catholic ways and sends her to a catholic school. Her devotion to catholicism, right up to her peaceful death, makes so strong an impression on her that nothing can ever change her again – neither forced initiation, nor her own father's treacherous connivance at her abduction by a heathen young man. She cannot believe in any church other than "*eo Modimo Jesu a e hlomileng, e busoang ke morena Papa...*" (that which the Lord Jesus has established, which is overseered by the pope; p. 55).

The climax in this book is Lilahloane's triumph, which is the triumph of catholicism over protestantism. Lilahloane's capacity to endure suffering and the tenacity with which she clings to her catholic dogma – through

forced initiation and marriage into a protestant family – so moved her die-hard traditionalist father and protestant parents-in-law that they turned catholic. Her last moments are strangely identical to those of her precursor and mentor, Maria-Louisa.

This is glaringly a catholic propaganda means, designed to win more members for the church. Unlike in his first book (*Arola*), where Nqheku gives vent to his personal likes and dislikes, stemming from experience – personal and impersonal – here his catholic family influences are mirrored. His father, possibly impressed with his son's writings, wrote *Tsielala* in 1959, named after the main character whose experiences with catholicism resembled those of Lilahloane in many ways. Literary scholars (Moloi, Gérard and Gildenhuis) are all agreed on the propagandist intent of *Lilahloane*, with Gerard openly declaring that, "so zealous is Nqheku's polemic intent that he even goes out of his way to throw a few insults at the communists of Mapoteng who call themselves Lekhotla la Bafu" (1971:147). Both *Lilahloane* and *Tsielala* reflect on the rivalry between the Roman Catholic Church and the Paris Evangelical Mission Church in Lesotho.

Unlike in the case of *Arola*, the tone in *Lilahloane* is greatly subdued, and the dialogue between the girl and her grandmother interspersed with religious and catholic jargon. Catholic hymns and behavioural ritual are used excessively to propel the plot in the desired direction. The only conflict in this book is between traditional religion (Lilahloane's parents) and Catholicism (Lilahloane and her grandmother). If there be any theme as message in this book, it is that catholicism is a better or truer course to follow than traditional religion.

5.4 MATLOSA AND THE VALUES OF HIS TIME

In 1946 S. Matlosa published his novelette, *Molahlehi* (The Lost One). Sebolai Matlosa was born of Matebi and 'Malisebo Matlosa on the 25 December 1915, in Mafeteng. His father was a self-employed traditional Mosotho herdsman. He had two elder sisters and a brother. He tells that he was naughty like any other child, and liked teasing his sisters. His father

died while he was still very young. When his elder brother also dies on the Maluti, his mother left him under the care of his uncle (her brother) and her own younger sister, with whom she left provision for him. In his own words, "they squandered all, and starved me. I had hard times; but I forgave them". He always yearned to have a house of his own, and his own "fine family."

He lived under the English who, he maintains, were very poorly disposed to the Basotho. His drama, *Katiba*, written many years later, is a reflection of the high-mindedness and self-centeredness of the Basotho chiefs, each wanting to be above the rest. He also intimates that, as will be seen later, his second novel, *Mopheme* (The Silver Fox), was inspired by his own life's circumstances.

Matlosa obtained all his education at Healdtown, i.e. Std VI, NTL (3rd Year), Junior Certificate, and Matriculation. He taught for many years at the Masitise Secondary School, in Quthing.

Matlosa's novel, *Molahlehi* (The Lost One), starts by relating somewhat ludicrous encounters of the leading character's traditional Mosotho father in strange western circumstances, whence he had gone to seek employment. Moloi (1973:108), however, feels that the author "digressed and missed his original intention", but does not state the "intention". The story is about a young man, Molahlehi, who is sent to school by his struggling parents, with words of encouragement and strong warning to keep out of trouble. No sooner does he arrive there than he is taken up with the ways of the Johannesburg "bright boys." They get into trouble with school authorities for poor performance in class and persistent fraternising with girls. When they are expelled together, Molahlehi proceeds with them to Johannesburg, where he gets into all kinds of trouble with women and the law. He ultimately finds a "Miss Right" in the person of Sainyaka, his friend's cousin. They get legally married, and he is bent on making amends by formalising the marriage with his parents. Before he can do so, he is struck on the head with some missile by any angry White man, who mistakes him for a thief who stole his fowl.

With this book, Matlosa advocates subservience to parental control and advice. He himself, had stomached untold misery as a child, but had survived to be a man. The Masene episode has been created to give credibility to his advice to Molahlehi, as he says:

... Empa eitse ha ke fihla hara matswete (Makgowa) ka fumana hantle hore bonatla ba ka ha bo na thuso, ka baka la ho hloka tsebo ena eo le nang le yona le mmao, ya ho buisana le dipampiri"... (p. 6)

(... But when I got amongst the White men, I discovered clearly that my strength meant nothing, because I lacked this knowledge which you and your mother have: the knowledge of talking with papers...)

The violation of this well-meant advice, and parental interdiction, denied Molahlehi even the privilege of going back home like a prodigal son, as he had intended. This is articulated by Sainyaka in her advice to him as she observes,

Ke bona ho leng molemo e le ho ya hae, hoba ke fumana hore o na le sesila se seholo. (p. 41)

(I think it is best for you to go home, because I notice that you are engulfed in ill-luck).

Much as Molahlehi remains otherwise perfect, he has to suffer the consequence of the violation of this basic Sotho social code. It is because of his goodness that the reader sympathises with him. He restrains himself from changing for worse, even where he clearly comes to the crossroads:

Yare ha a hopola bolotsana boo Lekula le nkileng tjhelete ya hae ka bona, a bona hore taba e molemo, e tla thabisa batho bohle, ke ho phela ka masene... (p. 47)

(When he thought about the despicable manner in which an Indian robbed him of his money, he realised that the only way, that pleases everybody, is to live on one's wits...)

It is because he does not change for the worse that he, ironically, "becomes a failure in society" (Lenake 1968:77). Gérard (1971:161) maintains that "the purpose of this book is clearly to emphasize the importance of formal education and the dangers of city life...". This book is true to the many-sided theme indicated in the preface, especially the first point, which pervades the whole book.

The plot that is conspicuous revolves round the conflict between Molahlehi and the variety of Johannesburg women. This, however, seems to be the sub-plot, the main plot centering around the conflict between values i.e. defiance as against subservience to parental control. When Molahlehi emerges victor in the sub-plot, thereby dramatising the norm that virtue must triumph, he sets about preparing for the ultimate: honour your parents. But Matlosa denies him the chance, if only to make the point pertaining to Sesotho values – that a tear that rolls down a parent's cheek has far-reaching repercussions.

Matlosa's second novel *Mopheme* (The Silver Fox) was published many years later, in 1965, five years into the modern era in Sesotho literary development, the period of "eventual diversification, with considerable zeal on the part of authors in the RSA" (Swanepoel, 1987:101).

As the writer himself says, it reflects greatly on his own upbringing by his maternal uncle and aunt. It is the story of a boy whose mother, the elder wife in a bigamous union, dies under mysterious circumstances. An ambush is set for him and his wealthy father by the second wife who connives with his father's bosom-friend. He escapes on his fast horse, Tobaka, and is brought up by an aptly named poor man, Mothusi, and his wife. In his late teens, after secretly learning all the secrets of nature, animals, plants and man, he sets about retrieving his rightful wealth (livestock) and avenging his father's death. Disguised as a witchdoctor, he effects the expulsion of his father's killers, Baratang and Mokopu, from the village, thereby setting the stage for his revenge. They take refuge in another chief's (Phefumoloha's) village. *Tshitso* (the leading character), disguised as *Metsi* (a lunatic) learns all he needs to learn for each of his various moves. When he has retrieved all his livestock, under various disguises, he marries his "hunter's" daughter

Tlholohelo. He then comes into the open and forgives Baratang and Mokopu, who symbolise his maternal aunt and uncle.

The setting in this novel is Lesotho from beginning to end, but there are incidents and episodes that are strikingly analogous to some in Alexandre Dumas's "The Count of Monte Cristo" and Baroness Orozy's "The Scarlet Pimpernel", especially the latter. All Moloi (1973:112) has to say about this book, unfortunately, is that it is "well bound together, but the contents are shallow and almost ridiculous." But Gildenhuis observes differently that "weens sy styl, interessante stof en beter ontplooiing van die tema in die intrige, blyk hierdie werk van beter gehalte as Matlosa se eerste werk te wees." (1973:146). The theme in this book (and, indeed the plot) is glaringly different from *Molahlehi*. He transcends local social codes, and goes to the universal concept, Justice. The idea of punishment for crime, and reward for bringing a criminal to justice, are given prominence with no recourse whatsoever to biblical moralisation. This is one of the distinctive characteristics of the publications of the post 1960 period. Viewed from another angle, the theme is the denunciation of polygamy.

In both books Matlosa captures and holds the reader's interest by means of his masterly handling of the limited omniscience perspective. The suspense is heightened at every step as the reader makes fresh discoveries simultaneously with the characters. In the more recent *Mopheme*, Matlosa uses dramatic rhythm more glaringly as a stylistic technique. The repeated escape of Mopheme is made more rhythmic by the note that is left behind every time. Though this phenomenon is also noticeable in the desertion of Molahlehi by one woman after the other, under similar circumstances, it is more striking in *Mopheme*, and it is designed to arrest the interest of the reader. This seems to be peculiar to Matlosa.

The plot in *Mopheme* seems to be at least threefold, i.e. a sub-plot (Lesokolla vs wives) at the beginning and another (Tshitso vs Tholohelo) at the end, both supporting the main plot which centers around the conflict between Tshitso and Sekgwahla. Like Matlosa, his character (Tshitso), forgave his adversaries. Both are an impressive contribution to Sesotho fiction.

In the same year of the publication of *Molahlehi* (1946), J.J. Machobane's *Mahaheng a matšo* (In Dark Caves) was published by the Morija Sesuto Book Depot.

5.5 J.J. MACHOBANE: RECREATING THE PAST

James Jacob ka Nduka ka Matshobani, named after his own father, was born in the Frankfort district of the Orange Free State on 3 May 1914. His father who had been involved in the Anglo-Boer War, on the side of the English, took to farming on the "Derdedeel basis in Frankfort when the war ended. When the scheme was terminated in 1924, he returned to Lesotho. Both his father and mother, Nozinja (daughter of Mbovula), had never attended school, but his father learned on his own to read and write isiZulu. He attended school whilst a herdboyc. At seventeen, he concentrated on schooling. He attended primary school at Matlakeng, in the Butha-Buthe district, where he was taught by one Elisha Maphike a well-known teacher. He then went to Qalo where he obtained a First class pass in Std VI. Thereafter, he proceeded to the Morija Training College, then known as "Sekolo sa Thabeng", for Junior Certificate. He then enrolled for Matriculation by private study. He had, at that stage, started writing a book entitled *Semelo sa 'Manchuping*, the manuscript of which puzzled reviewers. After six years he wrote a letter whereby he demanded it back, stating that "for a group of experts to attend a book for six years is not only amazing, but sad." He is still keeping the letter, and the manuscript. He wrote twenty-five books which have not been published. Among them is *Lesotho la kajeno*, about which it was said he was too young and inexperienced to write about Lesotho. About *Likoaratla tsa Lesotho*, it was said that he could not write about people who were still alive, they might become proud and arrogant. He speaks very touchingly of *Sealolo sa bolo*, a very touching manuscript on the sporting greats of the time, and points to the tragedy of having only two publishers that made it very difficult for anything that had no religious inclination to be published.

The book *Mahaheng a matšo* (1946) was written after hearing cannibal stories of the Difaqane times from his grandmother. This is the story of a young man, Mokopela, who leaves home with his father in search for food.

They steal from the Matebele, but are caught by Ramajoe's cannibals. His father is killed and eaten, while he is kept for his swiftness. He ultimately escapes after playing sick. His escape causes disharmony and resultant disaster among the cannibals.

As the author himself puts it, this book was prompted by the realization of the "consequences of hunger and poverty on people. People lose all sense of self-respect." With this book, Machobane is attempting to advocate the retention of self-respect under all circumstances. He brings the cannibals to a meeting, where, through one of them, he brings up the hideousness of their way of life. They get mad and worked up into a frenzy, and kill one another almost to a man. In short, the theme is simply that the wages of killing is death.

Machobane's descriptive style, in this book, is characterised by repetition: "... *matša a maholo, matša a tšabehang, matša a methoto...Matša ao e ne e ka a tloa...*" (... big lakes, dreadful lakes, lakes of sedges... proud lakes...; p. 1). It also coupled repetition with contrast. For instance, the following references to the lakes:

"a ne a rateha; empa leihlo la motho le tšaba ho a bohela ruri.

A ne a khanya khotso, empa a tšabeha ka baka la lehlaka...

♀

(They were attractive; but one could not admire them too long.

They were peaceful, but dreadful on account of the reeds...)

This latter example impresses both on their weird silence and customary belief in their mythical serpent inhabitants.

By the nature of the book, his narrative style showed traces of folk-tale telling, for example:

"Ra ea, ra ea, ra ea; ntate a mpoella hore re lule fatse..." (p. 5)

(We went on, and on, and on; my father then said we should sit down...) and:

"*Ra ea, ra ea, ra ea; eare ha re le joale ka moo, ra paqana fatše ka limpa ra thola hape ra re tuu!*" (p. 6)

(We went on, and on, and on; and when we had gone a little distance, we lay down again on our bellies, quietly.)

Repetition is Machobane's best used stylistic technique in this work. To emphasise the urgency of the cannibals' catch (i.e. Mokopela), he couples syntactic inversion with the repetition of "Phirimaneng eo" and "Bosiung boo..." at the beginning of six successive paragraphs, thus:

Phirimaneng eo, malimo a ne a lapile ka mokgwa wa mohlolo. (p. 23)

(That evening the cannibals were inexplicably hungry...)

Phirimaneng eo mala a malimo a ne a lla metsi... (op cit)

(That evening the cannibals' bowels echoed with water...)

Phirimaneng eo malimo a hloka khotso... (op cit).

(That evening the cannibals were ill at ease...)

Bosiung boo ho ne ho bata... (op cit)

(That night, it was cold...)

Bosiung boo basali le bona ba etsa mehlolo... (op cit)

(That night the women also behaved extraordinarily...) (op cit)

Bosiung boo banna ba robala ba khumame... (p. 24)

(That night the men slept kneeling...) etc.

These repetitions (syntactic parallelisms) progressively create an eerie atmosphere – and the anticipation of the disaster that was to follow. Otherwise, the headings of the chapters were suggestive of the story and the events which constituted the smooth flow of the plot.

In the very following year (1947), Machobane published his *Mphatlalatsane* (The Morning Star), a "most characteristic product of Sotho imagination" (Moloi, 1973:122).

This is an animal novel with a bull, Maphatšoe, a much desired animal, as the main character. Its proud owner, Chief Tau keeps and admires it against the advice and early warning by a diviner, Moholo. Because every other tribe desired the bull, an inevitable devastating war befalls Kgapung.

The chief, being the sole survivor, observes, "*Efela ke jele kgomo ya molatelle, botle ba lefatshe...*" (Indeed, I have on my own brought trouble unto myself; worldly beauty!; p. 61). And the author observes "*a bona, a bontshisa mesebetsi le ditholwana tsa boo botle*" (he saw and understood the works and consequences of that kind of beauty; p. 67).

As in *Mahaheng a matšo*, Machobane gives his message in symbolic fashion, which pricks the reader's imagination. While Moloji (1973:117) declares that this book "is a symbolic rather than a realistic plausibility," and dismisses it in the words of Richard Chase (1957:108) as being, like Moby Dick, "a moral fable... a book about the alienation from life that results from excessive or neurotic self-dependence," Gildenhuys (1973:50) feels that the setting "dra by tot die uitbouing van sy intriges en die skepping van 'n atmosfeer wat daarby aanpas."

The symbolism in this book cannot be gainsaid. The author himself points out that the book is actually about himself. It reflects on his own struggles for a place somewhere in life, in the face of countless frustrations. He placed himself in a position of pursuing something, like a bull that lives by fighting. The fights of the bull symbolised his own problems in the socio-educational and religious systems which prevailed: "*ya tshela noka e botshelo bo thata, Mosefobo*" (It crossed the river that was difficult to cross, the Mosefobo) — his own words. The river symbolised problems to overcome, problems with publishers and reviewers. The persistent fighting of Maphatšoe, symbolised his own determination to survive in spite of his resignation from his job as clerk and book proof-reader at the Morija Book Depot in 1943. The work also symbolises the other side of Machobane: his present disposition. He tells of his younger days when he constantly had a strange sensation of wanting to kill somebody and the many group fights he was involved in. He could not understand himself. The change came one day, when he saw poor people arrested for brewing beer which was said to promote moral degeneration. He experienced the feeling of pity for the first time, and underwent a strange transformation. He states that he felt like "going beyond himself" with the work *Mphatlalatsane*. He felt from thence forth that all good and beauty should be extended to all humanity to share. In his own words, he was, in the end, trying to say "if you share with

others, they will like you and protect you." This could not be said more forcefully than by the catastrophe that befell the selfish chief, who would not give his bull even for mating.

The plot of this book is well structured. The exposition pertaining to Kgapung and the times is presented in Machobane's characteristic repetitions that focus the reader's mind and interest on the times:

Mehleng ya kgale... (In the olden days) (page 1)

Mehleng ena ... (In these days) (op cit)

Mehleng eo... (In those days) (op cit)

The birth of Maphatšoe is also presented by flash-back during Tau's conversation with the wise Moholo, whose arrival at Kgapung Machobane portrays with ominous repetitions like *a fihla monna ya bohale ... a fihla moreneng... A fihla e sa le bahale feela kgotla* (page 4). (He arrived, the wise man... he arrived at the chief's court... He arrived whilst only the warriors were at the court.) Like *Mahaheng a matšo*, the chapters are aptly titled to indicate the events that constitute the plot. The motorial moment (The heavy traffic of offers to "buy" Maphatšoe) flows logically into the complication (the injury and killing of some warriors from the North, i.e. Makatla and his men). The critical moment (the outbreak of war) flows into the next phase, *Tshenyeho ya Kgapung* (The Destruction of Kgapung), which is the climax. Tau is the sole survivor.

Earlier Machobane employed some dramatic irony during Tau's conversation with Moholo:

Ho nna ho bonolo ho tela tsohle ha feela nka nna ka tseba ho rua kgomo ena (page 5)

(To me it is easier to give up everything, if only to possess this ox)

In the end he sees things differently:

Sekgutlong sena e ne e le kgotsong, motse hammoho le naha ena dī kganyeditswe ke bottle ba kgomo ya setsoto, Maphatšoe... Empa kajeno

ke bofifi, tshenyeho le timelo... (page 67)

(This valley was peaceful, the village and the land busking in the beauty of the desirable ox, Maphatšoe... But today there's only death, destruction and disaster...),

and feels differently:

Tau, morena wa sekgutlo, ha a bona mme a fela a hopola tsena tsohle, a tlakwa ke pelo; ntho ya mo mathela pelong, a kwaleha moya, a akgeha. (page 68)

(Tau, the chief of the valley, on seeing and remembering all these things, became angry; something rushed into his heart, he suffocated, and fainted).

The contrast between the past and present status quos (as portrayed in the first excerpt above), followed immediately by the second (with the series of semantic parallelisms), heightens the paralysing sorrow that has enveloped the chief.

Though Machobane, as he says, sought to depict himself in this story, it is interesting how the unrelenting desire of the neighbouring chiefs for Maphatšoe coincides with the desire of the Free State Boers then for Lesotho. In that light, this novel can also be taken to be symbolic of Lesotho. The series of wars caused, basically, by the desire for Lesotho were, fortunately, contained by the intervention of Queen Victoria of Britain.

These two works of narrative fiction by Machobane, especially *Mphatlalatsane*, have great literary value and are a laudable contribution to the development of this subsystem in Sesotho. Though Moloji (1973:118) compares the latter to Melville's *Moby Dick* in general thematic import, there can be no question of intertextuality here, especially given the socio-cultural factors that "informed" the text.

As seen earlier, Machobane had great interest in the history of Lesotho and her leaders. Of the few manuscripts he wrote on the historical subject,

Senate Shoeshoe 'a Moshoeshoe (Senate the Lily of Moshoeshoe) left the press in 1954.

This is a historical novel of succession in Lesotho. To write the work Machobane researched the history of Lesotho from chief Lelingoane (Jonathan's son and former secretary), Masopha (Motšoene's brother), Khotso, Mochekoane and others. Though the story is based on Moshoeshoe's grand-daughter, Senate, it has a complex plot that involves many other characters. It begins with a visit to Moshoeshoe by some emissary from his ancestors (in the form of a dream) whose mission is to remind him to prepare for his own succession. He decides that Senate shall succeed her father, Letsie. Senate is, unfortunately, led into temptation by her guard, Mokakailane, and gets impregnated by her cousin, Lefojane. Moshoeshoe then decides that she must bear another child who should take her place in the succession, and that the child be fathered by Josefa, Molapo's eldest son. In this way Motšoene is born. After Moshoeshoe's and Letsie's death, inevitable battles of succession follow, and Motšoene loses against his uncle, Jonathan. In the end Griffiths Lerotholi, the ruling Paramount chief, rules that Motšoene shall succeed Jonathan as chief. Motšoene finally loses the Paramount chieftaincy, apparently because he refused to accept Moshoeshoe's bracelet and special stone, not knowing what to do with them.

The story and theme are very original. Machobane shows how Senate, though lured into it, violates a standing Sotho custom by having an affair with Lefojane, thereby losing her paramount chieftaincy. She, however, carries out her instruction of handing over Moshoeshoe's bracelet and stone to Motšoene. The latter declines them. By doing so he defies Moshoeshoe's instruction, and, eventually loses the paramount chieftaincy. Machobane seems to be vindicating Sotho customs and the age old proverb: "*Ntswe la morena le hahelwa lesaka*" (The command of the chief/king is always carried out). Whether intentionally or not, the theme also has some Biblical connotation of "visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children", and reflects on the interaction of the social and religious systems already prevalent in Lesotho.

Machobane makes effective use of repetition in his characteristic way to read suggestions into his character's behaviour, and to create the desired atmosphere. Unexpressed mutual love is suggested strongly in the following sentence:

Senate a qetela puo ea hae a se a shebile ka mahlo a sekileng menyepetsi, a talimile Josefa ka har'a thaka tsa mahlo; 'me ka bobeli ba bona, bana ba Bakoena, ba khutsa, ba thola ka nako e telele, ba re tu! (p. 17)

(Senate completed her talk glassy-eyed, looking directly into Joseph's eyes; and both these children of the Bakwena kept quiet, they kept silent a long while, they were speechless).

The powerful insinuation in the three closing parallelisms cannot be missed. In similar employment of the repetition technique, he creates the relevant atmosphere to envelope the two:

Joale ka har'a litsebe tsa bona ha qala ho lla litšepe tsa makalo; ha lla litšepe tsa botle ba naha, ha lla litšepe tsa mahalima... ha lla litšepe tsa botle... etc. (op cit)

(Now, in their ears, bells started to ring, the bells of perplexedness; bells of the beauty of the veld, the bells of lightning flashes rang... bells of the beauty... etc)

Machobane creates some poetry interlude after every significant event in the plot, an interlude that is analogous to the tension-relieving porter scene in Shakespearean plays, viz:

- (a) After Senate and Josefa's disappearance and their being found in a secluded rocky bush, the angry Moshoeshoe summons Senate at once. But, on his way out, Ntipase (the messenger) sings praise-poetry about the beautiful picture the two together were (i.e. Senate and Josefa):

*Lona lishoeshoe tsa naha le khabisitseng lefatshe,
Lona mehalalitoe le apesitseng naha,
Hana le hlokomela botle ba Ramokhachane?
Hana le bohile ka hloko lishoeshoe
Tsa borena, Josefa le Senate?... etc (p. 27)*

(You the flowers of the veld, that decorate the word,
You the lilies that have clothed the veld,
Do you take note of the beauty of Ramokhachane?
Do you observe with admiration the flowers
Of kingship, Josefa and Senate? ... etc (page 27)

Ironically, what drives the old king mad is an object of admiration to his faithful messenger. This admiration is intensified by the coupling of the parallelisms with the personification of the flowers.

- (b) After Senate had been sworn in by Moshoeshe as future chieftainess of the Basotho, tearfully amidst ullulations and war songs, Ntipase sings praise poetry to every sector of the Basotho community – to the warriors, the youth, the king, the country, the women and, again, to the warriors, concluding with the following lines:

*"Litsoili tsa bahale ha li utloa melilietsane lia tiea oee!
Marao a bona hase libono ke maralla,
Hee! mahlo a tsoepeha linameng ke melilietsane,
Ahee! molilietsane'a soothoana, Khama tsa Basotho!" (p. 44)*

(How the loin garments of the warriors tighten when they hear the ululation!

Their behinds are not buttocks but hills,
Oh! how fierce the eyes at the sound of the ululation!
Lo, the ululation of the brown female, Khamas of the Basotho).

This allusion to women as the force behind the ferocity of the warriors is brought in on a very appropriate occasion.

- (c) The day Senate led the warriors towards Bloemfontein on her restless white horse, Thabure, Ntipase (Mokakailane) sang praise—poetry to her:

*Sethala sa Khosatsana, tšoeu 'abo Senate,
Shoeshoe'a ntate, lula u tiise;
Ho 'na ho palangoa marath 'a lipitsi,
Kajeno u palame naleli,
Thabure e tšoea—tšoea, lekeleketla!... etc (p. 44)*

(Frolicker of the chieftainess, white one of Senate's
Flower of my father, hold tight;
Usually discarded horses are ridden,
Today you are riding a star,
White Thabure, the trickler... etc)

This riding of a restless horse, in contrast with the discarded tame ones, may also be suggestive of what she is up against as a chieftainess.

- (d) When the mentally depressed Josefa is summoned by king Moshoeshoe to meet his beloved Senate with the purpose of raising a future heir to the Lesotho throne; his overflowing emotions interrupt the story for six pages, like most of the above poems:

*Ho 'na ke mohlolo rure;
Mohlolo oo ke sitoang ho o lebala, Senate!
A bottle bo hole ho ntšoenya hlooho;
Ke senyehile ke ho tsetselela Shoeshoe'a Moshoeshoe,
Ke senyehetse ntho e ntle, rato la ka, Senate... etc (p. 79)*

(To me it is a miracle indeed,
A miracle I am unable to forget, Senate!
O! how distant beauty oppressed my head;
I got depressed yearning for the lily of Moshoeshoe,

I got dispirited because of something beautiful, my love, Senate...
etc)

- (e) And, on Josefa's arrival in Thaba-Bosiu, he is welcomed with the recital of a praise-poem that spells out the expectations of the nation:

*Khanya eohle e hlaha Bochabela,
Khanya eohle e laoloa ke 'Mopi a 'noosi,
Khanya eohle e boloka melao,
Khanya eohle e boloka litaelo,
Hoba e, e mamela Ntsoe-leng;
Khanya, le kajeno boloka litaelo –
Ho ke ho be joalo... etc (p. 86)*

(All the light shines from the east,
All the light is ordered by the Creator alone,
All the light keeps the laws,
All the light keeps the commands,
For, yes, it obeys one Voice;
O Light, even this day keep the commands –
So let it be! ... etc)

This syntactic parallelism in the opening four lines, often overlapping into semantic parallelism, and flowing into the biblically flavoured refrain, is consistent throughout the four and half pages of this poem. It is an expression of hope, while Josefa is a symbol of redemption of the chieftaincy. This is the climax of Moshoeshoe's plans. Unfortunately, as indicated earlier, there was a denouement (Motšoene's accession to the throne, and his rejection of Moshoeshoe's bracelet and special stone), and the anticlimax (Motšoene's loss of the throne).

Machobane's highly emotive repetitions and images in this latter poem (an invocation of the divine) gives away his personal emotional involvement in

the story. However, his mode of narration still remains objective and unintrusive.

5.6 H.H. LEKHETHOA: IMPORTS AN AMERICAN PARALLEL

In 1947 Herbert H. Lekhethoa published *Tokoloho Bokhobeng* (Freedom from Slavery) a translation of Booker T. Washington's Up From Slavery. This was a direct importation of a literary model from the American into the Sesotho literary system, to fill a functional vacuum in the latter. It is an autobiography of an emancipated slave child who struggled in life – working for a fussy Mrs. Ruffner, a meticulous Miss Mary F. Mackie (Hampton school principal) etc – and learned thoroughness which saw him rise to great heights in later life. He started the Tuskegee College where the dignity of labour, cleanliness, thrift and priorities were emphasised. He became outstanding and respectable, not only as a leader and fighter for the recognition and the rights of his people, but also against the vanity of his own people (viz. the elite). His practical and down-to-earth view of life is well portrayed in his own words:

Ho molemo ha makhetlo a leshome ho bona ntlo e ntle e ahiloeng ke motho e motšo, ho ena le hore ho tlatsoe maqephe a libuka ka ntlo eo a tšoanetseng ho e aha, kapa eo a nang le tsebo le matla a ho e aha.
(page 73–4)

(It is ten times better to see a house built by a Black man than to fill pages describing the kind of house he is able to build).

In his public addresses, as quoted by the Times–Herald, he always made his point in a vivid and picturesque manner:

A tšoantša ka mokhoa o hlomolang pelo kamoo batho ba batšo ba neng ba hlokomela 'me ba sireletsa malapa a beng ba bona ba Makhooa, ha 'ona Makhooa a ile ntoeng ho ea loanela hore bona batho ba batšo ba se ke ba lokolloa bokhobeng. (p. 102)

(He described, in a touching manner, how the Black people kept and protected the Whitemen's homes, whilst they (the whitemen) had

gone to war to fight for the continued enslavement of the Black people.)

The portrayal of such ironical situations can easily be misunderstood for incitement. But Booker T. Washington sought to shake his own people out of the complacency of being free, and focusing attention on educatedness as being able to recognise the need to work harder for self-preservation. Lekhethoa, however, seeks to use Washington's life, experiences and ideals to arouse some spirit of community consciousness among the Basotho. He is in a way protesting against the generally lackadaisical disposition of the Basotho, who have never tasted slavery – and can never visualise it.

The first person mode of narration enhances the authenticity of the story, and enables the reader to share in the narrator's every emotional experience. This book, published sixty-five years after Mabile's translation of Pilgrim's Progress, was a worthwhile reorientation to Western narrative style.

5.7 DAMANE AND THE BAPHUTHI HISTORY

M. Damane's Moorosi Morena oa Baphuthi (Moorosi Chief of the Baphuthi) published in 1948, shows no really literary qualities of narrative fiction or style. It is a historical novel, in typically historical objectivity of tone, tracing the origin of the Baphuthi from the coming together of and the intermarriage between the Dlamini and the Baphuthing clans, including the birth, reign, wars, triumphs and fall of their "legendary" king, Moorosi who to this day has been to the Baphuthing what Moshoeshoe was to the Basotho.

It can only be surmised that, by highlighting great qualities of the chiefs, he is trying to say to the Baphuthing, and the Basotho in general, "Be proud of your own." Though, a teacher of long standing and meritorious achievement (vide Ngcanga 1989:7–8), Damane was a Mosotho historian rather than a novelist. His style exhibits great religious influence, and is interspersed with quotations from the Bible. What should be the climax is a quotation from Psalm 72 at the end of the book:

Lebitso la hae le ke ke la feela, letsatsi ha le sa ntse le khanya... (p. 60)

(His name will not perish, whilst the sun still shines....)

5.8 D. MATSELETSELE – ON THE FOOTSTEPS OF BUNYAN

In 1949 D. Matseletsele also published his *Litaba tsa Taoana* (The Story of Taoana). This is a novel starting with traditional Sesotho life and customs, proceeding through to high christian values and a christlike departure from earth of an erstwhile "black" sinner. Tawana starts as an ill-mannered child who has no respect for the elderly. Then he becomes self-willed and a heartless killer, with or without cause. After three frightening experiences and an attack of fever, he dreams of heaven and changes radically. The style in this novelette ranges from boyishly artificial to religiously conditioned.

Describing the fleeing of antelopes in the following manner can only be said to be puerile:

Mokgwa wa matsa ke hore ha a tsebe ho matha a tsitsitse motsitseng, a tsitsa a tsitsitse matsatseng. (p. 22)

(The habit of antelopes is not to run straight on a level plain, but to stretch out to the mountain crest.)

The alliteration here has no notable semantic import. Otherwise a number of hymns and Biblical excerpts are worked into Matseletsele's sentence structure. The following are glaring examples of such intertextuality:

(a) *A hola jwalo a holela lefifing le letsholetsho, le mofuteng wa ba kgopo*
(p. 6)

(He grew up that way in total darkness, amidst crooked types)

This is comparable to hymn 327 in *Lifela tsa Sione*:

*Lefifing le letšoletšo,
Le mofuteng o khopo,
Ikhetheng lona ba Jesu... etc*

- (b) *ba neng ba o thusa ba sireletse* (p. 16).
(Those who used to help you are gone)

This is comparable to hymn 222 in *Lifela tsa Sione*:

*Lala ho 'na shoalane e oele,
Ba neng ba nthusa ba tsamaile... etc.*

- (c) *O tshwanetse ho sebeletsa morena Modimo wa hao ka pelo ya hao yohle... etc* (p. 16)
(You should work for the Lord your God with all your heart... etc)

This Biblical commandment is known even to Sunday school children.

Another glaring instance of borrowing from Everitt Segote's *Monono* is the following:

Ngwanaka, re a hola re a eletsa, rona ba bang re se re le kgaba le ileng. (p. 27)
(My son, we grow old, we advise, for our best days are behind our backs.)

On the whole, this book is nothing more than a sermon in affected Sesotho. As the writer himself says in the preface:

... e na le molemo o moholo wa ho natefisa puo ya Sesotho ka botebo... Hape e ba thusa ka hore ba lemohe hore motho ka mong ya phelang lefatsheng lena o tla falla, mme lefatshe leo a tlang ho ya ho lona, baahi ba lona ba ke ke ba mo dumella ka tjako ho lona ha a se na mangolo a matle a pakang tsa bophelo ba hae...
(... it is designed to make language nice by being deep... Furthermore, it helps them (the readers) by making them aware

that every person living in this world will pass away, and the inhabitants of the new world he'll go to will deny him admission if he lacks good testimonials...)

5.9 LEBONE, MOPHELI-PAULUS, TLADI & CHAANE

E.P. Lebone's booklet, *Senyamo* (Who do you like?) published in 1950, is the story of a young orphaned girl, Morongoenyane, who returns from Rev. George Schmidt's in Holland, to live with the 'Mutsoes. She learns of the great love of Christ from her granny, and weaves her own love for Him into a traditional Sotho maidens' game, *senyamo*. In this way she wears off all attempts by young lads to win her affection by asking them *senyamo* to the name of Jesus. She remains uncompromisingly committed to Him, to the extent of leaving the comforts of the *Mutsoes* place, where she was pressurised to marry their son. She also leaves Qhibilisang's village after being kidnapped by his son, Khotleng, with the aim of making her mother of the village. She then lands in the hands of a kind priest, Jonas, who baptises her and christens her Tabitha Dorokase 'Mamohau. After nursing the priest's family who die in an epidemic, she dies smilingly, saying *senyamo* to the name of Christ.

There is a striking resemblance between this book and the earlier *Lilahloane* by A. Nqheku. Morongoenyane, like *Lilahloane*, has the seed of the christian religion planted in her heart by her granny. In both there is conflict between their religious conviction and some external force. While with *Lilahloane* the force is traditional Sotho religion exemplified by her parents, Morongoenyane has to contend only with the unceasing frivolous advances by young men. The complication in both books is brought about by the abduction of the leading characters, which leads in both instances to the critical decision of quitting home. In both books the climax, i.e. getting home to christ, is not followed by a denouement. This is a well structured "sermon", designed to bring out the theme: viz. that the only true happiness is happiness in Christ, and that christianity allows no half-measures. Whilst Nqheku, in *Lilahloane*, sought to propagate catholicism specifically, Lebone preaches christianity in general. *Senyamo* is a clear instance of intertextuality with *Lilahloane*.

Unlike Matseletse, Lebone makes his point telling his story plainly, with no sign of being swayed by his own eloquence. Lebone conveys his message in a more subtle way.

A.S. Mopeli—Paulus's *Lilahloane oa batho* (Poor Lilahloane), also published in 1950, is a typical folk—tale and can, therefore, not be discussed under this sub—system. It can only be pointed out that it is a folk—tale with a difference i.e. with modern innovations like matches and tin of petrol. Like all other folk—tales, it contains the moral of "evil must always be punished."

S.S. Tladi's *Mehla ea bohoholo* (The Olden Days), also published in 1950, is similar to Everitt Segoe's *Raphepheng* (1915), and is, believably, an instance of intertextuality. Tladi, however, presents a slightly wider range of Sesotho culture traits. The only other difference is that, whereas Segoe creates the character Raphepheng to describe Sesotho culture, Tladi leaves everything to his persona. As this is also not a novel, it will rather be discussed under essays.

In 1951 J.D. Chaane published his *Pitso ea makhulo* (The Call of the Plains). This is an account of imaginary travels on foot through beautiful plains, walking on and on, lured by their beauty, until the persona meets shepherds with whom he goes home. After spending some time at their home, he marries one of their sisters. This is some fantasy in the First person mode of narration, strewn all over with quotations from the Bible and allusions to biblical content. In his imagination Chaane lacks verisimilitude: the setting he depicts is rural and olden days, and when the stranger (his persona) marries a local girl from the blue, the Mosotho reader wonders what custom that exhibits, and where the dowry (bridal cattle) came from.

This story lacks both conflict and plot to facilitate the grasping of the theme, if there be any. Gildenhuys (1973:102) aptly observes that "die uitbeelding van situasies verdien geen vermelding nie en die skrywer se styl is eenvoudig, terwyl swak konstruksies soms voorkom." This is not a book for any serious—minded reader.

In the same year (1951) B.T.N. Gugushe's *Naleli ea meso* (The Morning Star) saw the light. If anything this book only reflects on the Basotho ideals of the time. An educated person, highly regarded, was either a teacher or a clerk at some office, or a minister of religion. Gugushe's main character, born and bred in humble Tšitsong, experiences all the financial difficulties pertaining to schooling which characterised the times, and goes through his teacher training on a sponsorship. On completion of his training he returns home as a teacher and becomes the shining star in the community, which is what the title of the book alludes to.

This novel, unfortunately, has no discernible conflict and consequently no interest generating power in the reader, i.e. no suspense. It is just as difficult to talk about a climax, except in the sense of the attainment of a goal i.e. becoming a teacher. The style and tone do not even compensate for the poor plot and characterisation. There isn't much, therefore, to discuss about this book. The theme, if any, is 'it pays to have a goal in life'.

5.10 B.M. KHAKETLA – REALIST

The same year saw a refreshing contribution to Sesotho novels with the publication of B.M. Khaketla's *Meokho ea thabo* (Tears of Joy). This is a novel centering around a young man, Moeketsi Thatho, who has been brought up by his uncle, Motale, in strict accordance with Sesotho custom. He won't marry the young lady chosen for him by his uncle. He, consequently, leaves home for Durban. Meanwhile, Thakane, the girl of his own choice, gives in to her parents' pressure to marry someone of their own choice. A young girl, Fumane, also refuses to bow to her parents' choice of spouse for her and goes to Durban on holiday, to cool off. There she meets Moeketsi, and falls in love with him. Back home she is under tremendous pressure and writes to Moeketsi for advice, whereupon he advises her to come over so that they can get married on their own. Fumane, like Thakane, is averse to such unilateral decisions. She advises Moeketsi to go home and try again to talk to his 'parents'. Moeketsi is under emotional stress and the turning point comes in the form of a dream. He also gives in to Motale's demand. The chosen bride turns out to be Fumane.

Gérard (1971:171) regards the love factor as "a new aspect of acculturation which had been neglected by Sotho authors, although Jordan and others had handled it in Xhosa", and alludes to Miss Beuchat's observation that "having love as a side line to the main theme is a new feature and not yet exploited in any Southern Sotho novel". This is a noteworthy contribution by Khaketla, and reflects on the exposure he has had to the Western social norms, outside religion. Gildenhuis (1973:73) is in agreement with Moloji (1973:141) that "the book was intended to portray a clash between traditional values and Western norms." Moloji goes further to say, of Moeketsi and Fumane, "their education does not seem to be of benefit to them because, whenever problems confront them, they turn their backs without trying to resolve them" (p. 142). This latter statement is rather unfortunate, because it disregards the deeply ingrained traditional upbringing that cannot be easily eradicated by a few years' exposure to a Western-type educational system. It also overlooks the power of the informal education that never grinds to a halt in the family set-up. Khaketla, himself an educationist by Western standards, was brought up by traditionalist parents who were initiated at the tribal 'mephato'. He knew the effect of custom on family solidarity. The very upbringing of his leading character illustrates such solidarity and its significance in the extended family. One would be inclined to feel that Khaketla, whose own upbringing is similar to Moeketsi's, seeks to advocate the traditional virtue of obedience to one's elders by vindicating the practice of choosing a spouse for one's child. This is spelt out clearly in Thakane's letter to Moeketsi:

"Feela — e, ke re feela! — feela ha ke tsebe na ba baholo bona ba tla re'ng, hobane kea kholoa hore hoa tsoanela hore le bona ba lumellane joalokaha le rona re lumellane". (p. 46)

(But — yes, I say but! — but I do not know what my elders will say, because I believe that it is proper that they come to terms, as we, also, have come to terms).

Fumane later also puts it in the same way to him:

"U utloisise, moratua, hore rona basali hase ntho e bobebe ho ithera, hobane ha re tsebe moo re eang hore na ho joang..." (p. 167)

(My love, you should understand that, with us women, it is not that easy to decide on our own, because we do not know how it will be where we are going).

This makes it clear that, much as the enlightened youth would like to decide on their own affairs, it should not be done at the expense of family solidarity. In short, Khaketla is saying that personal desires should not be placed above social values, where the two cannot be reconciled.

Khaketla attends to minute detail and captures the spirit of the time with his characters' letters rather than explaining. He is sensitive to the difference between children's speech and adult speech. Compare, for instance, Moeketsi's reaction to being told that the long haired man in the picture is the one who took his father:

Ha ke sa mo rata joale. Eena o n'a kukela'ng ntate oa ka? Hosasane ha u ile masimong, Lineo a ile sekolong, ke tla sala le mang ha a kukile ntate oa ka tjee? (p. 4)

(I no longer like him. Why did he have to take my father? Tomorrow, when you have gone to the fields, and Lineo to school, who will I remain with now that he has taken my father?)

As against the more adult language of the narrator:

Moeketsi a thola--thola, a boela a nka setšoantšo hape...

(Moeketsi kept silent a while, and then took the picture again...)

Kuka as against its adult variant *nka*, and the possessive construction *ntate oa ka* as against the head noun *ntate* only, make a clear adult--juvenile distinction.

Khaketla also uses the neutro--passive verbal form in his own idiomatic way, cf:

i) *Ha ba se ba di fumane, ba tšeleha tseleng.* (p. 18)

(When they had found them, they "got poured onto the road" i.e. They departed)

- ii) *Ba ba tšolohela ka masoai, mesaga, literata...* (p. 21)
 (They spilled on them – i.e. attacked them – with canes, sticks, wires...)

He also uses subtly alliterative expressions with subtle emotive reinforcement, cf:

- i) *...a mo re kou ka mokouloana holim'a hloho.* (p. 21)
 (He hit him with a missile on the head)

The repeated *kou* sound seems to reinforce the "funniness" of the situation in which the "green" pupils are being welcomed.

- ii) *Moeketsi a phakisa a kholoa hore efela litšiba tsena lia mo tseba...* (p. 22)
 (Moeketsi soon believed that these *litšiba*, i.e. feathers, knew him...)

Over and above the "tš", "ts" and "b" rhythmic effect, the literal application of "feathers" (*litšiba*) makes the situation somewhat ludicrous. To these, inter alia, is added the onomatopoeic description of the locomotive engine sound in folk-etymology, viz:

Ptje—e—e! chu! chu! chu! chu! Ke tsoa Kapa
Ke khathetse, ke laetse matekatse! Ke tsoa Kapa
ke khathetse, ke laetse ke laetse matekatse! (p. 143)
 (Whe—e—e! choo! choo! choo! choo! I come from the Cape and am tired, I am carrying harlots...)

Not only are the sound, movement and rhythm of the train captured here, but also the fun the Basotho derive from merely looking at it and listening.

The characters are well portrayed through their actions, dialogue (which includes pedantic English expressions) and, especially the letters they write to each other. Khaketla depicts some of the city young men in a comical way at their favourite restaurants:

Ke hona mona moo u ka utloang ha Senyesemane se thakhisoa ka tsoalo le Thotseng (p. 145)

(It is here where one hears the English language crucified with a clear conscience.)

He then goes on to quote one saying, "Scuse me ledy: me wants some cup—a—tea; me vely hungly." (op cit).

Though the chance factor plays a decisive role in this novel, it is well structured. It has several sub-plots characterised by the conflicts between Moeketsi and his uncle, Thakane and her parents, and Fumane and her parents; the main plot being centred around Moeketsi vs the Sesotho custom and values. The limited omniscience perspective is employed so skilfully as to maintain the suspense and reader interest up till the end. A clear instance of intertextuality with Shakespeare's Julius Caesar is to be seen where Moeketsi is undecided as to whether or not he should make advances to Fumane, and the narrator remarks that,

"Metsotso e teng bophelong ba rona, eo e reng ha re ka ra feta har'a eona ka sebetse, e re tlisetse thabo e sa feleng; empa eo e reng ha re ka ra e tlohela ea feta, me ra sitoa ho utloisisa molaetsa oo e re tlisetsang eona, ebe re lahlehetsoe ke thabo le boiketlo... (p. 157)

The semantic import of this excerpt is similar to the following argument by Brutus:

There is a tide in the affairs of men, which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune:

Omitted, all the voyage of their life Is bound in shallows and in miseries. (Act IV, Scene III)

This similarity between the two excerpts is not surprising, for Khaketla himself, as indicated earlier, admits having admired and having been encouraged by Shakespeare's works to try his hand in writing. This work of narrative fiction exhibits a combination of Sesotho and Western cultural, linguistic and literary systems but, unlike his immediate precursors — whose

works showed a relapse to missionaryism — dealt with practical life problems the solutions of which were in man's own hands.

Khaketla's second novel, *Mosali a nkholo!* (What Calamity she has brought upon me!) appeared almost a decade later. This book was written in 1958 and published in 1960, at a time when the Nationalistic movement had gained momentum in Lesotho. It is about one chief Lekaota who, on realising the imminent clash in outlook between traditional chieftaincy and Western ways, sends his son, Mosito, to school to ensure enlightened leadership for his people after his own death. After his death, the matriculated Mosito takes over and is always advised by his former schoolmates, Khosi and Pekane, much to the disgust of his late father's former advisors, Maime, Khati and Sebotsa. He is married to an unenlightened and superstitious but beautiful, Sebolelo, whom he chose against his friends' advice. Even the uneducated Lekaota had his own reservations about his son's choice of a spouse:

"Ho khetha mosali ho boima haholo, 'me ho lokela hore motho a imamelle hona hantle. Haeba u fela u utloa hore Sebolelo ke eena, ke eena, 'na ke re ho lokile. Haeba u bona hore leha le sa lekane ka thuto le tla 'ne le phele hantle ba babeli, ke re ho lokile..." (p. 13)

(Choosing a wife is very difficult, and needs to be looked into very carefully. If you really feel that Sebolelo is your choice, let it be. If you feel that you can live together despite the discrepancy in your educational standards, let it be.)

When the British rulers of Lesotho clamp down on the number of chiefs in the country, and Mosito is affected, Maime, Khati and Sebotsa find their way through the uninformed Sebolelo. The services of a witch-doctor, Selone, are sought to "strengthen" Mosito's position, and, ironically, that is his downfall. By sanctioning Tledima's ritual murder, on his wife's insistence, Mosito unwittingly signed his own death warrant. It is too late when he realises that *mosali a nkholo!*

Like in *Meokho ea thabo*, the theme in this book is basically the clash between the traditional and the Western ways. Khaketla seems to be

further vindicating the traditional Sotho social values, according to which it is a father's prerogative to give guidance or decide on behalf of his inexperienced child. The uneducated Lekaota had the foresight to send Mosito to school. The educated Mosito could not pick on the right spouse without the wisdom of age personified in his non-interfering father, whose words were quite ominous to a discerning mind:

Haeba u bona hore leha le sa lekane ka thuto le tla 'ne le phele hantle ba babeli, ke re ho lokile... (see translation above)

While Khaketla is hitting at the superstitious practices, especially ritual killings, that were rife at the time, he also makes it clear that, according to the Sotho social system, a child can never be an absolutely independent decision maker whilst his parents are alive — however educated he may be by Western standards.

Khaketla uses highly figurative language whilst retaining a down-to-earth tone throughout. For instance, in encouraging his son to rely on education, the old chief Lekaota warns that,

Mehla e fetohile; bontat'a rona moholo ba ne ba busa lifofu, 'me ere kaha har'a lifofu moihloe e le morena, ba 'nile ba tseba ho tsamaisa sechaba... (p. 2)

(Times have changed; our grandfathers used to rule the blind, and, as the one-eyed one among the blind was the chief, they were, somehow, able to lead the people...)

He further puts it this way, that, when the chief arranged a feast, *batho bohle ba sa nang le maoto ba phuthehela kaofela ho tlotlisa mokete oa moren'a bona*. (All the people who still had legs, i.e. who could walk, assembled to honour their chief's feast; p. 3).

Khaketla purposefully emphasises the importance of the kind of woman a man marries, by saying of Mosito's wife:

...le mohla monnamoholo a iphallelang, ha se na ho lahleha, hobane ke mona Mosito o nyetse motho, ngoan'a motho... (p. 14)

(... even the day the old man 'departs' it (the tribe) will not feel lost, because, as it is, Mosito has married a 'person', a child of a 'person'...)

This sounds ironical and ominous, and raises the reader's expectation, especially after old Lekaota had warned Mosito that, *Ho khetha mosali ho boima haholo, 'me ho lokela hore motho a imamelle hona hantle*. (Choosing a wife is very difficult, and needs very careful consideration; p. 13). Suspense is also built up by a series of dramatic ironies, such as Tlelima's following response to his wife's warning:

Ua bolela, mosali oa khomo tsa ntate; feela che, ha ke e-na le bana ba babeli, ha ho letho le ka re thetsang..." (p. 118)

(You are telling the truth, bride of my father's cattle; but, oh no, when I am with these two, nothing can touch us...)

The two being referred to here are the very two who have been commissioned, together with others, to mutilate him alive. In a self-delineatory fashion, Mosito's wife goads him on to murder, in a manner comparable to Shakespeare's Lady Macbeth:

Ke sebopeho sa ka seo he. Esita le lithaba ha li ka kena pakeng tsa ka le morero oa ka nka li thuakanya. Haeba 'na, mosali, ntho e tenang mose, nka ba le sebetse se sekaalo, ekaba uena, monna, u ka sitoa ke'ng ho ba le sebetse se fetang seo sa ka hasekete? (p. 105)

(That is how I am, then. Even the mountains; if they can stand between me and my goal, I can smash them. If I, a woman, one who wears a dress, can have such courage, what can stop you, a man, to show such courage a thousand fold?)

In Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, Lady Macbeth taunts her hesitant husband in the following manner:

...I have given suck, and know
 How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me:
 I would, while it was smiling in my face,
 Have pluck'd my nipple from its boneless gums,
 And dash'd the brains out, had I so sworn as you
 Have done to this. (Act I, Scene VII)

A powerful contrast portrays Mosito and 'Mathabo vividly as he replies to her taunting challenge thus:

Morena ke mohlanka oa Molimo, ea isang sechaba bottleng. Boikarabelo boo a bo jarisitsoeng ke lebitso la "Morena" bo boholo ho feta kutloisiso ea motho... (p. 105)

(A chief is a servant of God, who leads his people to goodness. The responsibility placed on him by the designation "chief" transcends man's understanding...)

Khaketla also makes use of commonplace examples to ridicule the evangelising approach of the missionaries:

Chesehong ea bona hore ba fumane balumeli ... ba ile ba tšosa batho ka bo ba bolella ka lihele le mollo oa sebahole o sa timeng... (p. 190).

(In their eagerness to gain members... they frightened people by telling them about Hell and the ever burning fire of sulphur...)

He goes on to say that, instead of teaching that God is all-merciful, patient and magnanimous, "ba ile ba mo apesa tšobotsi e tšosang, ba mo etsa motho ea lonya, ea chesakang ba hanang ho lumela ho eena." (They caricatured Him, and presented Him as a cruel person who burns up those who won't believe in Him; p. 191).

The novel teems with instances of religious consequence, especially towards the end, and ends with a prayer, an admission of man's helplessness in the face of worldly influences.

The plot is very well structured, from the exposition (Lekaota's awareness of the changing times), the motorial moment (sending Mosito to college), complication (the reduction of chiefs and chiefs' powers by the central government), the crisis (the murder of Tlelima), the climax (the apprehension, trial and sentence of the murderers), up to the denouement (the reflection on the effectiveness, or otherwise, of the missionaries in Lesotho). It also has sub-plots characterised by the conflicts between: Mosito vs unenlightened advisors, Mosito vs his wife, Mosito vs enlightened advisors; with the main plot being Mosito vs central government, where Mosito loses.

This is indeed, an outstanding contribution to the development of Sesotho narrative fiction, and one that still stands its own today.

In 1952 Edward Motsamai Leoatle published his booklet, *Morena Moshoeshoe, mor'a Mokhachane* (King Moshoeshoe, son of Mokhachane), wherein is depicted Moshoeshoe's growth, bravery and diplomacy, and the Whiteman's cunning to undermine his chieftaincy and to instil a spirit of discrimination in favour of Whites. Like Damane's *Moorosi, moren'a Baphuthi*, this is more a recounting of historical events as seen by the author, than a fictional work of art, and can, therefore, not be discussed under the novel.

5.11 K.E. NTSANE – REALIST

In the same year K.E. Ntsane published his first novelette, *Masoabi, ngoan'a Mosotho oa kajeno* (Masoabi, the modern Mosotho Child). This novel is about a young boy of the title name, who is sent to boarding school after completing his primary education at a local primary school. As is expected, he comes into contact with kinds of characters from all over, and is swayed by their ways until he gets into trouble with girls who injure each other over him, back home. He appears in court and is acquitted, and this marks his turning point. He completes his teacher training and takes up a post near his home town. He is an approachable, open and generally helpful teacher who is beloved by his pupils and their parents, much to the disgust of the principal Rapatsi, who would rather have him stiff and unfriendly.

Having learnt his lesson as a student, he wears the storm of temptation and enticement by girls, to marry Lineo Lenong after joining another school on her advice. Together they become very successful as a couple and as teachers. They build a big house and have a lovely son.

This novel reveals life at boarding schools and boyish pranks, probably of Ntsane's own generation. It is a subtle protest against youth's disregard for the age old norms, occasioned by Western acculturation:

"bana ba kajeno ha ba tshwane le ba mehleng ya kgale. Lefereho kajeno e se e le papadi" (p. 40)

(Today's children are different from those of the past. Today love has become a play thing.)

Ntsane, however, shows that *monna ha a bone habedi* (p. 49) – once bitten twice shy – and that mistakes, once made, should not be repeated, i.e. over-enthusiasm in the white man's ways can land one into trouble. He also alludes to administrative irregularities and prejudices that also obtained in those days, which are comparable to those described in Thakhisi's *Tsha ha se mele poya*, as will be seen later. This novel is not regarded by many critics as being of particularly great merit, but, regarding its relevance to adolescent problems and realism, it is a noteworthy contribution to the development of the Sesotho novel.

It is not surprising that, like in Khaketla's *Meokho ea thabo* (though to a lesser extent), Ntsane's language is interspersed with English colloquialisms that characterise the "enlightenedness" spirit of the high school youth of the time. Education having been conducted in mission schools, religious influence was also inescapable. We need only refer to Masoabi's baptism and the moral discipline demanded by the *baruti* who administered the school.

Like Khaketla, Ntsane makes good use of letters to portray their writers. Masoabi's aunt's letter to his father, on his departure to school, for instance, speaks volumes about her:

... *Kamoo a neng a se a ntenne kateng ngoana eno, ke ne ke sa khloe hore leha a ka hloloa ho feta, nka hlola ke mo amohela mona lapeng ha ka. Ha ke eso bone moleko o kang ono. Ke 'na 'Manonyana.* (p. 28)

(... The way I had already had enough of that child, I do not believe that, had he been unsuccessful (i.e. in the examination), I could ever accommodate him again here in my house. I have never seen such a terrible child. Yours 'Manonyana.)

This novel is, however, very mediocre. The plot structure is not convincing. There is no apparent reason for 'Manonyana's dislike for Mosoabi. Even the conflict between Mosoabi and the headmaster (*moruti*), and Mosoabi and the law, is very mild and does not create the suspense it is intended for. The only conflict that seems to spark off interest, albeit for a brief moment, is the conflict between Mosoabi the teacher and Rapatsi the principal. But the manner in which this conflict is resolved brings nobody any good, i.e. it changes nothing. Like Gugushe's *Naleli ea meso*, alluded to above, this novelette only highlights the importance of a teacher in any Basotho community in those days.

5.12 S.N. MAJARA – REALIST AND MORALIST

Still in 1952, another novel, *'Makotulo*, by S.N. Majara, made its appearance.

Simon Nthako Majara was born in 1924 in Thaba-Bosiu, Maseru, Lesotho, of Daniel Thabo Majara and Ernestina Ntswaki Majara (nee Mpo). His father, a soft spoken, hardworking farm labourer worked for many years in the Free State and was affectionately called Jaapbroek by the farmers, which was pronounced "Shampruk" by the Basotho. He had attended no school though he was self-taught to read and write, and was wealthy in livestock. His mother, on the other hand, was a very harsh woman. S.N. Majara was an only child who grew up as a quiet boy who could shock anybody with swearing when provoked, and was a champion stick fighter. These he had learned in the meadows as a young herdbooy. He loved animals dearly, and later, education. His father, though, was against education

beyond Standard VI. He hated drunkenness and noise, though not the people who drank. He neither ever drank nor smoked. Because of his promising schooling career, he was liked by his teachers who organised him bursaries, and sent him to St. Monica in Leribe, away from his father. He was, however, and still is, not ill-disposed towards his father for believing that he might get mad if he proceeded with learning behind Std VI. Amongst his first books are *Lebitso lebe ke seromo* (A bad name influences character) and *Bafokeng ba patsi* (The wood Bafokeng), which have not been published to date. In his books he depicts situations that disturbed him in his life, and uses fictitious names for his characters.

The novel '*Makotulo* is a story of a once very beautiful woman of the title name. She is now an old woman who is caused countless headaches by the behaviour of her teenage grand-daughter who won't desist from her apparent reckless conduct that reminds her of her own past. She decides to speak strongly to her and to lay bare her own past, and the misery she went through as a result of her own despicably loose behaviour: she had taken marriage very lightly, and had deserted her husband in Durban, leaving a three year old daughter home in Lesotho. She went to the Reef, where she lived at different places changing from one man to another. The men fought fiercely over her, often killing one another. When she became pregnant her current male companion deserted her. She subsequently killed her new born baby and served a hard prison term. She then went to Natal where she got a job as a child minder, but had to flee to Matatiele with one Vulathelo when the child she looked after got lost. Finding herself unacceptable to young Vulathelo's family, she clubbed up with Ntalime, a vagabond with whom she was mutually helpful, until they were separated by road-robbers and she escaped miraculously. By chance, she reached Qacha's Nek hospital a dying woman after wandering long days and nights. After a long nightmare-plagued illness, she recovered and resumed her journey home to Mapoteng in severe wintery weather. When she could not live peacefully with her sister-in-law, her brother dragged her home to her husband, Ralipholo. She found him married to another woman. She became that woman's slave until she assaulted her and took to hiding. After the woman's death, much later, her husband fetched her, and, for the first time she found rest and happiness. But she was already middle-aged and sickly.

This novel has direct bearing on Majara's experience, and is a variation of the known archetype: the townward ho! of Basotho men. As a mine clerk in Johannesburg (when Mayfair was the only big railway station), he saw a Leribe man deny his beautiful young wife who had come to visit him, and was taken up by an extraordinarily beautiful *letekatse* (harlot) over whom men fought regularly. He called himself Mautla (Satan) whilst still champion. But he soon met his Waterloo, and lost his beautiful "rubbish", and became forgotten.

This book is a reaction to the morally erosive and socially disruptive effects of the migrant labour system on the Black communities. He makes the direct and indirect victims change places, and exposes 'Makotulo to the corruptive forces with which men usually find themselves faced. He seems to appeal to the women as our only hope for moral survival by showing how pathetic it is for a woman, the customary custos mores of any community, to sink morally. This he does by letting "misfortune follow(s) her wherever she goes, and she is always on the run for her life..." (Moloi, 1973:126).

Majara has a lively style that is occasioned by the free flow of vivid images in his narration. Only one who has absolute command of the Sesotho language could refer to departure from Matatiele in the following manner:

A boela a eteloa ke toro eane e bohloko e neng e mo kothole Matatiele..(p. 8)

(He again had that bad dream that once "dislodged" him from Matatiele).

His use of personification is also unique. For instance, he says of 'Makotulo:

O hahlautse ka litsiu a ntse a tsamaea a lumelisana le mathata le litsietsi ho fihlela ha habo, Mapoteng. Ke hona mona a kileng a kula haholo 'me bothata ba mo tjamela ha ho lokela hore ho lokiso e tsa tsela ea leholimo. (p. 9)

(She wandered for days being greeted by difficulties and troubles until she arrived home in Mapoteng. It is there where she once took

seriously ill, difficulties looking her in the face when preparations were to be made for her journey to heaven.)

Majara's use of repetition ranges from single words in a sentence to more than one sentences with equal effect. For example, when 'Makotulo reprimands her wayward grand-daughter:

Lenyalong u ea malapeng a batho ba bang basele, 'me u tla nyalana le motho osele, ea holisitsoeng ka kholiso esele, ea ke keng a lumellana le bokaako bona ba hao. (p. 13)

(In marriage you will land in different homes amongst different people, being married to a different person who won't tolerate your madness).

Of herself she says, "*ke ne ke le nku e balehang pe'a Molisa e Motle. Kajeno ke nku e mamelang la hae le monate*" (I was a sheep that ran away from the good Shepherd. Today I am a sheep that listens to His sweet voice; p. 33).

This latter contextual transfer from the Bible is also self-delineatory and is repeated five times between pages 25 and 33. Emphasis here is on the possibility of change. Perhaps the most striking stylistic characteristic of Majara's is the lack of euphemism where reference is made to what is, to him, particularly revulsive. He states quite bluntly that "*Makotulo o ile a fihla Gaudeng, moo a ileng a fetoha letekatse 'me a nyaloa hosasa le mantsiboea...* (She arrived in Johannesburg, where she turned into a harlot, getting married day in day out...; p. 7)

The word *letekatse* or *botekatse* is repeated twelve times from pages 7 to 29, and nine times on pages 28 and 29 only. Otherwise this novel does not have a satisfactory plot structure. It is just an old woman, a repented "woman of the world", giving her grand-daughter a lesson on the realities of life, by recounting her own adventures.

Majara's next novel, published during this period is *O sentse linako* (He has wasted the Time).

Published by Mazenod in 1956, Majara in this novel presents a young brilliant Abel Makgekatau who, in spite of his parents' sacrifice to send him to boarding school, absconds and goes to Johannesburg. He works in the mines where life becomes unbearable for him. He then joins bad company and becomes a drunkard, and changes from job to job. He ultimately goes to Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) from Pretoria. Once there, he realises the value of educational documents for promotion. Out of frustration, he becomes insubordinate, and is fired. He then joins the Barotse Tribal Administration as secretary. He falls in love with Ndinino Galelo, but tribal demands for consent to marry are too high a price. They plan to elope, with disastrous results. He then lands amongst barbaric killers in the bush, and becomes one of them for acceptance and survival. He escapes and goes from one farm to another as labourer, each time running for dear life after doing harm to his employer in one way or another, until he takes up his last peaceful job in Harrismith. After fifteen years' absence, he arrives back home in Thaba-Bosiu with nothing, and finds his parents aged, and his contemporaries progressive. A last attempt by him to obtain at least the lowest teacher's certificate is unsuccessful.

This is another version of the Makgoweng motif novel. It has a home-is-best theme which is a combination of the prodigal son with Matlosa's Molahlehi and Nqheku's Arola naheng ea Maburu.

The relationship between this book and Majara's early socio-cultural environment is clear: whilst his father's socio-cultural convictions made it difficult for him to proceed with schooling, his own teacher's son showed no interest in spite of his parents' interest and his own ability. Majara has depicted a true life situation that contrasted sharply with his own circumstances, and, with it, the irony of life: man does not appreciate time whilst he has it.

As already indicated the plot structure in this novel, like in 'Makotulo is not satisfactory. It is a narration of adventures that do not necessarily have any causal relationship with one another. Each adventure has its own conflict and tricky situation from which the leading character, Abel, escapes at the end, and may well be a short story. The tone, however, is

light-hearted and entertaining throughout. The narrator creates easy rapport with the reader, and sounds like the reader is acquainted with the experiences that are being related.

Majara's characteristic imagery and repetition are evident. For instance, referring to the youth at school, he talks about:

Letlobo le letle la ho tlokoma ha lekhaba le letšo ha leo utloa lefafatsane la pula, la fela la tlokoma,... tlobo lena ha le utloa lefafatsane leo e neng e le thuto. (p. 19)

(The beautiful young shoot of the black ear that should grow rapidly on feeling the drizzle, indeed it grows rapidly... this shoot, when it feels the drizzle of education)

The style is, however, also teeming with religious-moral didacticism, and ends with a quotation from the Bible, Proverbs 25:12.

The literary value of both *'Makotulo* and *O sentse linako* lies mainly in the theme and the author's mastery of the idiom of the language.

Majara's four other novels, published at incredibly short intervals, are: *Morena oa thaba* (The mountain king) – 1962; *Mafolofela le Mohau* (Impetuous and Merciful) –1963; *Liate oa Mafika–Lisiu* (Liate of Granite Granaries) – 1964; and *Moroetsan'a Moshate* (The Royal Damsel) 1964. With the exception of the last named, these books are still typical of Majara's earlier works and bear no mark of post-1960 Sesotho literature. This may, probably, be due to delayed publication of manuscripts. *Morena oa thaba* is a historical account of the times of Moshoeshoe I. It cannot be said to be a biography of Moshoeshoe because of the detailed descriptions before him and even more, after his times. It cannot be said to be a novel because of lack of characterisation, and poor plot structure.

Mafolofela le Mohau and *Liate oa Mafika–Lisiu* are sermons in sequel to *'Makotulo*. The former is, believably, a modified reappearance of *Lebitsolebe ke seromo*, which could not be published earlier. True to his name, *Mafolofela* was impulsive and impetuous, and, consequently, he got into a

lot of trouble, his father getting involved all the time. In due course, Mohau is born, and becomes a completely different person. He grows up to be a generous and religiously inclined man. After a brief happy married life with Utloang, he is shot dead by accident. The manner in which his widow rejoins him in eternity, can, however, only be credible to religious fanatics. True to life or not, as the story may be, Majara only seeks to vindicate the Sesotho proverb *Lebitso—lebe ke seromo* (A name influences character).

In *Liate oa Mafika—Lisiu*, Liate, the main character, contrasts sharply, at an early age, from 'Makotulo. She appreciates what is good by idolising Ntsoaki and adopting neatness and uprightness as her way of life. Even later in life, when she learns of her husband's possible death in a sunken ship, she turns down all offers of marriage. Because of her delayed decision to reconsider remarrying, she is happily reunited with her husband, Sera, a month later. This book is a sermon for all ages, that good conduct pays dividends.

Moroetsan'a Moshate typifies more the post (1960) of Sotho literature and is easily Majara's best novel.

It is a symbolic presentation of Lesotho's survival of the wars of Chaka, the Cape Colony, the difaqane and the Free State Boers. King Moshoeshoe I is presented as chief Kelello (reference to his known sympathy and wisdom). Chiefs of the neighbouring tribes show interest in his daughter, and all marriage offers are turned down by Kelello. Kelello's daughter is believably Lesotho, and the marriage contract is likened to the conquest or annexation of the country. This becomes clear when splinter groups fleeing from Nodumehlezi are welcomed by Kelello in the same way as the refugees fleeing Chaka's wrath. Kelello is engaged in battles, and defeats the chiefs who forcefully want his daughter's hand in marriage, and, as was typical of Moshoeshoe I, gives them cattle for provision on their way back home. In due course Ramosoeru (Boers) also takes interest in Kelello's daughter and fierce battles follow. Whilst Ramosoeru's forces prepare to regroup, 'Makhotso, a mighty queen, gets Kelello's approval for her son's marriage with his daughter. This is symbolic of Queen Victoria's treaty with Moshoeshoe. Morusu, son of Kopano (Union of S.A.), finally has his

intentions nipped in the bud. In this symbolic presentation Majara also interprets political relationships in terms of Sotho socio-cultural relationships.

The characters in this novel are very well portrayed by their actions and the naming technique. Reference to Moshoeshoe as *Kelello* (Intelligence), Chaka as *Nodumehlezi* (One whose fame spreads whilst he is sitting), and Queen Victoria as *'Makhotso* (Mother of Peace) have both fictional and historical aptness.

The plot in this novel is well structured and exhibits striking causal relationship between all its elements. It is very much like the plot in Machobane's *Mphatlalatsane* where beauty – and the desire to possess it, triggers off a series of incidents, the only difference being the aversion of disaster by the combination of Kelello's wisdom and 'Makhotso's impartiality.

5.13 G.C. MANYELI – INTERTEXTUALITY

In 1953 G.C. Manyeli published his *Liapole tsa Gauta* (The Golden Apples).

G.C. Manyeli's background story as related by his son, Rev. Thomas Manyeli, a lecturer in the Catholic Theological Seminary, Roma, Lesotho, is as follows:

He was born in Mafeteng of Bataung parents of the Ramokhele clan. His father, a typical Mosotho, had three families, i.e. three wives. He was the second child of a close family of four, born of the third wife. His father was later to be a convert of the LEC (later known as the PEMS). When, at one time, he was attacked by Boers at Berseba, on his way to church, he migrated to Roma (then known as Tloutle) where he had heard of other missionaries. Manyeli attended school at Tloutle as a full time student up to Matric and PTC, sponsored by the famous Marist Brothers of Lesotho. He then attempted the B.A. degree by private study, but was unsuccessful. In 1939 the Marist Brothers left him with the then St. James School in Tloutle, and proceeded to Bloemfontein, where they had obtained a bigger

site for a school. He qualified as a teacher at an early age, and, at the age of 20, he was part-time interpreter for white travellers, and travelled extensively throughout Lesotho, during school holidays. As a young boy he loved music and was the best actor at his school. Every young man was encouraged by the Marist Brothers to strive towards leadership in the Catholic church. His son remembers him often telling the story of *Liapole tsa gauta*, which later appeared in book form published in 1953 by Mazenod.

This is a novel based obviously on some European folktale. Sotho names are used for the characters but the values and culture traits seem to be Indo-European. It originates in the distant past when impossibilities were possible.

It is the story of an unnamed king who has three sons, Mpampa, Masapo and Tsoto, and a tree bearing golden apples. A luminous-feathered bird comes nightly to pick on an apple, and the king sees it, and desires to own it. He sends his sons to hunt it, with rich promises for the one who succeeds. His elder sons go out more for selfish reasons, while Tsoto does so out of the desire to see his brooding father happy. This is confirmed by their experiences on the way, and their total disregard for the safety of their youngest brother: they pick the easier routes and force him to take the most dangerous. Eventually Tsoto succeeds, not only in bringing the bird in its silver cage, but also a white golden-maned stallion and a lovely bride, Thakane. This he does with the help of her brother, Phallo, who had been turned into a grey hyena. The brothers kill Tsoto, but he is revived by Phallo.

This obviously non-Sotho story can be attributed to Gabriel Manyeli's close association with the European travellers with whom he travelled throughout Lesotho. It is difficult to understand how Gérard (1971:155) got the impression that it is "a novel dealing with the tribal wars of the past." This story advocates honesty of purpose and has a striking thematic resemblance to the Sesotho proverb, *Lefura la ngwana ke ho rongwa* (A child's pleasure is in being sent – by his elders). This also has the religious flavour of doing "the will of Him that sent me and to finish His work" (John 4:34) and reflects on his catholic upbringing. In his own words, *Ke*

taelo e kholo eo, 'me e nang le moputso o moholo, e reng bana ba mamele batsoali ba bona linthong tsohle tse lokileng. (That is a great commandment and its reward is great – that states that children should listen to their parents in all things that are good; p. 71).

This is a good example of intercultural influence. Manyeli's allegorical presentation is reminiscent of John Bunyan's in his *Pilgrim's Progress*. The unnamed king's three sons, Mpampa (Big Belly), Masapo (Bony) and Tsoto (Admiration) symbolise worldly comfort, grumble and self-sacrifice, respectively; with the information boards at the diversion point the road symbolising man's consciousness of the things he does (pp. 34–35). The obstacle of the terrible *Motaboli* (Tearer) like in *Pilgrim's Progress*, symbolises one of the many struggles of life on the way to glory, whilst *Tlapa-le-tso* (Tallow Rock) symbolises compound danger of the likes of "Scylla and Charybdis" in Homer's *The Odyssey*. There is an element of intertextuality in the above.

Tsoto as symbolising Christ, becomes clear in his determination to forge ahead in the face of what seems to be insurmountable obstacles:

"... *empa eare ha a hopola ho loanela khotso le bolokolohi ba batho, a utloa a matlafala ...* " (p. 44)

(... but when he thought of fighting for the peace and freedom of the people, he felt strengthened...)

This notion is also strengthened by the fact that he was on the way *e tla ea ho mo fumantša seo pelo ea ntat'ae e se labalabelang, Nonyana ea Leseli*" (which would enable him to obtain what his father's heart desires, the Bird of Light; p. 45).

In Tsoto's prayer there is also a subtle allusion to Christ's predetermined mission on earth:

"... *Uena ea melisitseng lifate tsena. Uena ea ratileng hore ke tsamaee tsela ena e bohloko...*" (p. 69)

(... you who has made these trees grow. You who willed that I travel this woeful course...)

Back home, after trials and tribulations, the triumphant Tsoto's reward is crowned with the words, "... *khumama ke u nehe hlohonolofatso ea ka.*" (...Kneel down that I may give you my blessings; p. 138), which mark the climax of the novel.

Otherwise, the plot in this novel consists of a series of challenging and dangerous obstacles on the way to the attainment of a goal, which is typical of the christian view of life. These, like in *Pilgrim's Progress*, do not necessarily have any causal relationship to one another.

Dietrich et al (1967:11) argues that "if a story sets up as its chief aim the creation of a vivid character, the reader is unfair if he criticizes it for lack of plot or idea. So, too, a story that deliberately emphasizes plot should not be criticized for lack of characterization or idea, nor should a thesis story be condemned for its lack of characterization or plot."

So this novel, as well as Majara's and Nqheku's inter alia, should be appreciated for their powerful symbolism and theme, be it religious or socio-cultural.

Arguing for intertextuality, Moloi (1973:131) calls this novel "a mixture of fable and legends of the West and the Basotho", and observes, rightfully, that "it is a worthwhile contribution to Sotho literature in that a Mosotho could – and rightfully so – look outside his culture for inspiration."

5.14 M. NTŠALA – THE FIRST THRILLER

In the same year, 1954, M. Ntšala's *Sekhukhuni se bonoa ke sebatlali* (The Creeper is espied by one concealed), saw the light.

According to his third son, Tšeliso, a roving magistrate in Lesotho, Mackenzie Ntšala's real names were Setabele Richardson Ntšala. He was born in Likhoele, Mafeteng district, of Rasetabele Rikare and 'Masetable

Junia Ntšala. Rasetabele was a very successful grain and pastoral farmer. Mackenzie was a trained teacher, and obtained his education in Morija, from the beginning up till the then popular Primary Teacher's Certificate. In 1914, after getting married, he enlisted as a recruit for World War I. After the war, he worked in Nigel and Springs (in the Transvaal) as a clerk in the mines. From there he took up a teaching post in Steynsrus, then in Durban, and then in Bloemfontein. He was then appointed principal at the Hermone Intermediate School (now L.E.C. School) in Likhoele, Mafeteng, in January, 1931 a post he occupied until his retirement in December 1960. As his mother was a staunch christian, he grew up to be a church leader, averse to wayward Sesotho customs. Evidence of this fact is seen in his book, which will be discussed below. He was a strict family disciplinarian who believed in order everywhere, all the time, and got all the support from his wife, a hard worker who was especially inclined to handwork. She was herself a teacher and dressmaker who had been educated at the Thabana Morena School. Mackenzie had six sons and two daughters. All were teachers, with the exception of two – a policeman and a magistrate. He is said to have enjoyed good health, and died peacefully on 7 January 1971 after a minor complaint, and still enjoying his favourite Gold Dollar cigarettes.

Mackenzie Ntšala's total family background strikes one with the impression of enlightenment and order. The conflict between his family background (patterned by the influence of the missionary institutions they attended) and the socio-cultural practices that prevailed at the chiefs' quarters is clearly evident in his novel, *Sekhukhuni se bonoa ke sebatalali*. The very title of this book is significant. This is the first Sesotho detective thriller that contrasts modern crime detection methods with the traditional divining methods which are more open to corruption. The story is about Khabeli who comes home very early in the morning from his uncle's place, with the intention of starting ploughing before everybody else. He hears a heart-rending cry in the morning silence and the name Pitsa in a brief moment – and dismisses it as a "slip of the ear". Later it is learned that Ramafa has been murdered and his body unearthed in the bush. A withdoctor, Rankokoto, whose help has been sought by the chief, points out Khabeli as the killer in accordance with a conspiracy between himself

and the real murderers. Koto, Khabeli's cousin who had overheard a secret conversation between the murderers, arrives with policemen from Petronsburg, just when chief Leraha is about to give the people leeway to "deal with the murderer." An intensive police search unearths Pitsa's hidden axe (the murder weapon) in his kraal, and exposes the treachery of Rankokoto, Pitsa and Senare, as well as Khabeli's innocence.

Of the theme of this novel, Moloji (1973:130-31) observes, "it appears that Ntšala wanted to poke fun at tribal justice which relied on the witchdoctor's evidence. It is the Whiteman's organisation of justice which saves Khabele from execution". Gildenhuys (1973:158) goes further to say that "dit is ironies dat die moordenaars alleenlik deur eie toedoen aan die kaak gestel word deurdad hui in oorgerustheid belangrike leidrade nalaat. Sodoende bewys Ntšala die waarheid van die spreekwoord wat as titel van sy werk dien."

They both have a point. But it is imperative that we take into cognisance the fact that Ntšala learned the harshness of military discipline as a young man. This was, somehow, an extension of the cultural moral discipline he had learned from his home, and through his schooling under the French missionaries. This contrasted sharply with the ill-discipline and moral laxity that are known to typify the mine compound dwellers with whom he came into contact thereafter. This can easily be confirmed by referring to S.N. Majara's encounters as stated earlier. The pretentious and presumptuous role of the traditional witchdoctor, coupled with conniving in certain social quarters, were hard to reconcile with Ntšala's new values of discipline and honour.

Gérard (1971:153) rightly observes that it was at this stage that "the need for reading designed for entertainment rather than edification" came to the surface. There was now a clear deviation from "mere adaptation of traditional tales". Publications reflected more and more on "moments of crisis in contemporary experience (ibid:153). Gérard does not credit Ntšala with a clear-cut theme, or any theme at all, in the sense of a total, or underlying, message. He maintains that "the main purpose of Ntšala's book is anecdotal entertainment whose underlying attitude is based on a

repudiation of traditional justice characterised by the evil influence of the sorcerer over the headman, and on admiration for the honesty and efficiency of the white police" (p. 154). This underplaying of Ntšala's theme may have been influenced by the mistranslation of the book's title as "a man is seen in his Hiding Place by someone who does not hide". It should rather be "A man who is creeping is seen by someone who is hiding". More directly, the title of this book is "The Creeper is espied by the Croucher" which summarises Ntšala's total message, viz: treacherous submanoeuvres must eventually be exposed. More robustly, he warns against the danger of unchecked power (associated with chieftaincy and traditional diviners) and, more subtly, advocates openmindedness and reason. This introduction of a new type of prose fiction (the thriller) is, indeed, a worthy contribution to Sesotho literature.

Ntšala makes effective use of repetition to create tension and arouse interest. At the very beginning, he imparts his character's (Khabeli's) feelings to the reader:

O utloa a na le letsoalo. O hopola hore mohlomong ho teng motho ea ntseng a mo shebile. A hopola hore mohlomong ke ka baka leo a nang le letsoalo, ka pelong a hopola mantsoe a Sesotho: "Sekhukhuni se bonoa ke sebatlali." (p. 9–10)

(He felt a little fear. He thought that perhaps someone was watching him. He thought perhaps that was why he felt some fear, in his heart he remembered the Sesotho saying: "The creeper is espied by the croucher.")

This repetition of *letsoalo* and rationalising, "*a hopola hore mohlomong...*" arouses the reader's expectation, and creates a tense atmosphere. From the exposition and the motorial moment (Ramafa's murder) the title words are repeated thrice, thereby further heightening reader expectation and suspense. The fifth and last time is at the end of the book as an enunciation of the theme. Ntšala's narration is in simple accessible language, i.e. he does not attempt to sound extraordinary, even in the images he portrays. For example, he depicts the time of morning in the words, *Likhoho le maeba li*

lumelisa letsatsi ka lipina tsa tsona (The fowls and doves greet the day with their songs; p. 13).

The sad tone that pervades the whole novel is reinforced by means of a series of questions, especially after Ramafa's disappearance, viz:

'Me, ntate o tla tla neng? (p. 17)

(Mummy, when will daddy be coming?)

Ekaba monnamoholo o ile kae? (op cit)

(Where could the old man have gone?)

O ile kae, 'me? (op cit)

(Where did he go, mom?)

...Ha la e-s'o 'mone ka koo ha lona? (op cit)

(... Have you not seen him in your vicinity?)

Otherwise, the plot structure in this novel is straight-forward, and centres around the conflict between treachery and justice.

5.15 SETLOBOKO – PRO CATHOLICISM

In 1955 Julius Setloboko published his historical novelette *Monyaluoe*. This is the story of a young girl of the title name whose father, Mokotjo, was a die-hard traditionalist Motlokwa chief whilst her mother, 'Mamare, was an open-minded woman, born of some Matsieng chief. Whilst still an infant, Monyaluoe was allergic to the herbs and red ochred tribal skirts, thereby making the traditionalist advisors of her parents believe that she had spirits that should be nurtured. But her mother's diplomacy and skilful planning saw her go to school, much against tribal belief, and later completing her studies at a catholic college in the Cape, where she, together with two of her peers, become converted. Meanwhile her father arranges her marriage to a polygamous prince 'Mota. She also falls in love with a cousin, Hlasoa, at college and they intend marrying. On reaching home, her two peers are severely beaten by their parents for refusing to surrender themselves for

initiation, and later die. With her mother's help she absconds to her general practitioner uncle's place, where they are later found and carried home. Her mother is beaten up severely and dies later, while she takes deep-sleep medicine obtained from her uncle to feign death. News of her death and her mother's spreads and Hlasoa arrives and kisses the still Monyaluoe, enraging 'Mota who immediately attacks him, but is shot dead during the scuffle, and Hlasoa is jailed. When she comes round, she hears what has happened and dies of heart attack. The grief-stricken Mokotjo arranges a christian funeral for her, and announces his own conversion at the funeral.

The structure of this novelette has three sub-plots centering around the conflicts between 'Mamare vs her husband Mokotjo, Mokotjo vs the headmen and Monyaluoe vs her father; while the main plot conveying the main theme centres around the conflict between uncompromising traditionalist outlook vs christian enlightenment. Setloboko exploits man's tendency to resist what he does not understand by pitting traditional religion against christianity, and ridicules the traditionalists by showing how their trusted diviner cheats. On the other hand the christian faith is unrealistically exalted: from the die-hard traditionalist Mokotjo, a total stranger to this faith, words such as these cannot be expected:

"Ntate, ngoana enoa oa ka ke mokriste, ke kopa hore u mo pate ka meetlo ea sona, ha u qetile u ntano nkamohela le 'na, 'moho le mesalla e fokolang ea ntlo ea ka. Morena Molimo o n'a nkalimile palesa ena, kajeno o e nkile..." (p. 63)

(Father, this child of mine is a christian, I request that you bury her according to such custom, and, thereafter, receive me together with whatever remains of my family. The Lord God had lent me this flower, today He has taken it...)

The closing words, especially, can only be expected of a practising christian of long standing. This novel is also glaringly propagandistic of the Catholic church, as seen in Monyaluoe's own words:

Ke rata haholo ho sokolohela Kerekeng ea Roma, ruri ke e rata ho faso. (p. 21)

(I dearly love to be converted into the Catholic Church, I love it so dearly.)

This can hardly be surprising for it is a Catholic press publication. Over and above its christian bias, this novel is a form of marriage counseling instrument, in which the unusually beautiful Monyaluoe is also unusually self-disciplined and not swayed by frivolous advances up till the right moment. She and her mother are portrayed as some "angels" in a "Hell on earth", later to die as martyrs. Unlike any normal child, she is endowed with adult judgement, and is not easily "ensnared" at college.

The narrating is matter-of-fact, with isolated instances of intrusiveness, such as:

Joale 'Mota a hokobala moo a lebetse setopo seo. A nts'a ema khafetsa ho se aka, athe hoja mong'a sona oa utloa... o n'a tla mo phoqa a b'a soabe. (p. 61)

(Now 'Mota sat there watching the corpse, occasionally standing up to go and kiss it. But if the deceased was conscious... she would rebuff him, that he be ashamed.)

Tragic though this novel may be, it is in design a triumph for christianity and Catholicism. The tragic element in the end, occasioned by misunderstanding, shows striking resemblance to Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet, and could be evidence of intertextuality.

5.16 KHALALA – ACTIVISM

In 1957 J.T. Khalala published his *Motoaitoai oa Lesotho* (The Wanderer of Lesotho).

Jacob Taunyane Khalala was born on 7 April 1935 at Tsoelike ha Makhaola, in the Qachasnek district of Lesotho. His parents were Lirahalibonoe and 'Matema Khalala, and his father was the chief's mentor

in Qachasnek. After his primary education at home, he attended Eagles Peak College, later to continue his education by private study with the International Correspondence College through which he obtained the G.C.E. He started working as messenger, then as telephonist in the Department of Posts and Telegraphs in Maseru. In 1956 he took up a typing job in Clermont, Durban, with I. Alexander & Co. up till the time of his fleeing to Botswana as political refugee in 1972. When writing the above novel, he was preoccupied with the Basotho political problems, and how to overcome the difficulties of life. In his own words, he wanted to agitate for independence from British rule. He was a great admirer of Ntsu Mokhehle, "not the man himself, but the things he did," as will be seen presently. He wrote several manuscripts, some of which were turned down by the publishers. These include *Linatla tsa Lumaluma* (The Heroes of Dumaduma), a depiction of the fictional origins of all the Sotho tribes from one Khabo Tabane. Somewhat disturbed, though he seemed to be, at the time of the interview, he had just dispatched another manuscript titled *Dinatla tsa Lerato* (The Heroes of Love). His main preoccupation seems to be heroism. *Motoaitoai oa Lesotho* is the story of Thunthug, a boy born in Whiteman-dominated Lesotho, in Qachasnek. His hard-working, unlettered father denies him the education he craves as a stepping stone to achieving great things for his beloved country. He spends sleepless nights thinking about what to do for his downtrodden countrymen. He absconds from home and goes to Maseru, where he meets B.M. Khaketla editor of the militant *Mohlabani* and Ntsu Mokhehle, leader of the Basutoland African Congress. He is inspired to form a Youth Congress to conscientise everybody. He works at Mazenod, Johannesburg and Durban, to accumulate funds to start off his organisation. He wins the July Handicap, and buys drums and bugles to organise and interest the youth, and, ultimately, everybody. The movement is thus established.

This novel is to a great extent autobiographical: Thunthung's place of birth, interests and movements coincide with the author's own.

Though the plot structure in this novel is straight-forward, there is a tendency to present states without any indication of the developments to such states. For instance, the struggling Thunthung is presented at a dance

session nattily dressed with a hat *e bitswang Sanremo... dieta tseo a neng a di rwala... tse bitswang "caterpillar"* (called Sanremo... The shoes he wore... called "caterpillar"; p. 16).

The same applies to his collection of valuable books (p. 17) without any prior reference to his interest in books, and their systematic collection. This creates the feeling of a lapse of time unaccounted for. Coincidence also plays a great role in assisting Thunthung on his arrival at Alexander & Co., he bumps against an old schoolmate and is immediately accommodated (p. 72); There is also a Lutheran school near his place of employment to which he is directed for the Boys' Brigade movement (p. 74); Thunthung writes a letter to Sebatso proposing marriage just to find that she has also been interested in him. Her own mother, on hearing of the marriage proposal remarks, even before hearing the name, that it would be better if it were Thunthung (p. 95). The most unfortunate thing is the appearance of *Temoso ho babadi* (Advice to readers) at the end of the book, wherein the author intimates that the idea of the youth Congress in Lesotho is his own fictional creation. This uncalled – for anticlimax has the same effect on the reader as explaining a joke.

Khalala interrupts his narrative at different stages with verse that seeks to highlight a development, an intention or to activate or arouse certain feelings in the people. Note the following few examples:

- (a) *Lebone lela le tukang*
Pelong a me moo le dutseng,
Naledi a ho bonesa Lesotho,
Le ke ke la tima le kgale... (p. 11)

(That light that flickers
 In my heart where it rests,
 A star Lesotho to brighten,
 Never extinguished will be...)

This focuses on an intention or undertaking.

- (b) *helang lona ba heso,
Ma—Afrika ohle tsohang,
Hlomelang le tiile,
Le lwanele fatshe la lona...* (p. 17)

(Hey! you my people,
Africans all, awake!
Be armed and steadfast,
And fight for your land...)

Here we have clear political activism.

- (c) *... Moshweshwe o rwetse mofapa—hloho
Wa naleli tse mashoma dikete,
Tse isang teboho ho Morena Basotho,
Ya ntseng a howa le kajeno,
A re Basotho ba tsohe borokong,
Ba lwanele fatshe la bona...* (p. 19)

Moshweshwe a crown doth wear
of stars tens of thousands,
That to him their thanks do bring,
Who to this day ever summons
The Basotho now to rise,
And fight for their country dear...)

These verses interspersed throughout the book are clearly designed to create and maintain the atmosphere of protest, when no other technique can. In the end the influence of the missionaries is evident, where Motaung resigns himself to eternal rest:

"Ahe, bahale ba heso ba batle, lona le tlileng ho nthwesa tlotla ka mesebetsi ya ka, ke thaba habolo ha le balehodimo ba mpala hara bahale". (p. 101)

(Hail, our beautiful heroes, you who have come to crown me with the honour that befits my deeds, I am happy that even the heavenly ones count me among the heroes.)

The above greeting aptly summarises Khalala's religiously motivated socio-political theme. He is finally activating his people to stand up and be themselves, and fight for their rights, whilst simultaneously insinuating that there is no room for passive people in heaven – in any sense one may take it.

5.17 TJOKOSELA – MAKING AMENDS

In the same year, 1956, J.I.F. Tjokosela published his novel *Mohale o tsoa maroleng* (a Hero grows from the Dust).

Joseph Ivory Fono Tjokosela was born in Tebetebeng, Ha Masopha, Teateaneng, on 19 May 1928. His father, Mohlathe, had never been to school, but owned herds of livestock and a butchery, and spoke English very fluently. His mother, 'Mamaeba Julia, on the other hand, was literate and evangelised. He was sent to the Bantu United School (an interdenominational school) in Ficksburg. Whilst in Std. II, he absconded to the P.E.M. School in Teateaneng, where he continued with Stds. II and III. Whilst in Std. IV, his father died, and he absconded to his mother in Tebetebeng, and continued at the Gethsemane Catholic School. He then proceeded to the Roma Boys Intermediate School for Stds V and VI. All the time he performed the chores of a shepherd after school and during school holidays. He proceeded to the Roma High School (now Christ the King High School) for J.C. and the N.P.H. Teacher's Course at the Roma College, in the same complex. He then started teaching, and studied privately for the National Senior Certificate, which he completed in 1960.

He then enrolled for the BA degree with UNISA where he passed the first year courses in Southern Sotho, History and English, before being overtaken by family commitments whilst teaching at the St. Joseph's Training College (now St. Joseph's High School). At the time of the interview he was the Deputy Headmaster of the Likhakeng High School, in the Leribe district. In

1962–63 he attended a teaching upgrading course at the Nottingham Institute of Education in England. He died on 26 November 1989. In 1959 he published two books: *Mohale o tsoa maroleng* (A Hero grows from the Dust), and *Sarah*; and in 1960, *Mosonngoa* (The Mocked one).

Mohale o tsoa maroleng is the story of a young man, Leballo, who leaves Lesotho to work in the mines. He later leaves the compound to work in town on a forged pass book, but is arrested and endorsed out of town, whereupon he resolves to make a living by hook or crook:

Ba fapane mehopolo. Ke bona ba ka nthutang ho ea haeso ke eso hopole? Ba ntšotlile, le nna ke sa tla ba sotla. (p. 53)

(They are out of their senses. Are they the ones to teach me to go home even before I think about it? They have persecuted me; now I will persecute them too).

He joins a gang led by one Malepa, who also assures him *Kajeno u tla ba motho* (Now you will be somebody; p. 53). They kill an Indian tailor in trying to procure him a suit for his wedding, and he is arrested. On completing his prison term, he takes his revenge on the forger, Mafefenene, by robbing him of Forty Pounds (now R100) before returning to Lesotho where he gets married, repents, and revives his father's farming activities.

The writer regards Leballo as a hero simply because he repented his ways and made amends to his own family, but says nothing about his resolve at the crossroads of his life in the big town.

It is a pity that the writer does not follow up the conflict between the natural desire for freedom to fulfil one's human needs and a repressive political system (as manifested by the Pass Laws of the time). The resolution of such a conflict would have brought to the surface a more plausible theme than being tamed by a short jail term, and forgetting that *Ba ntšotlile, le 'na ke sa tla ba sotla*. If anything, this unexpected twist of events would mean "no man is above the law, however unjust it may be". But Tjokosela's theme is different as he voices his moralistic didacticism:

Empa mohale e moholo ke ea hlotseng mefokolo ea hae, hobane ha ho kamoo u ka hlolang lefatše ha o e-so itlhole. (p. 73)

(But the great hero is he who has conquered his own weaknesses, because there is no way one can conquer the world if one has not conquered oneself).

Behind this "sermon" is a strong feeling that "it takes courage to repent". This will become clear when we discuss his second book, *Sarah*.

Whilst, by the writer's own admission, *Mohale o tsoa maroleng* was prompted by the difficulties which confronted the Black man seeking work in Johannesburg, *Sarah* had a different background. The writer recalls how, as a young shepherd, he grew impatient with the slow movement of an aged donkey. He then drove it to a cliff on the mountains and pushed it down a precipice. Thereafter he ran home to report the "accident". But he never found peace with his conscience, especially as the missionary education had made its impact on him, until he wrote this book reflecting on undue maltreatment of hard-working donkeys. It is more along the lines of A. Sewell's *Black Beauty*.

This is the story of a donkey that did not know its own father. When it is full grown, it is made to work very hard in the service of a man who shows no appreciation. When its mother dies, it continues being harnessed until it is used as part of the dowry paid for a bride. It is further maltreated by its new owner, and also jeered at by other animals. The donkey pulls hard even at the hands of its newest owner, who has stolen it. The story is told by the donkey itself and it is only in the end that the writer appeals more directly for considerateness on behalf of the donkey:

"Batho ba bang ha ba na Molimo. Ba bolaisa lipokola tse tšehali mosebetsi." (p. 44)

(Some people are godless. They overwork female donkeys.)

He brings in femininity to contrast between man's regard for his own female kind and the donkey. He goes on to say of the donkey, "*Ebile e jere letšoa la sefapano*" (It even bears the sign of the cross; p. 44). In this way,

Tjokosela is saying that the donkey also served The King of Kings, and He did not treat it as badly for what it is. If we lose sight of this, we are likely to agree with Gildenhuis (1975:168) that this book is "'n goeie storie vir kinders dan 'n fyn uitgewerkte en afgeronde novelle beskou kan word." It reflects clearly on the writer's own repentance, and the importance he attaches to repentance in *Mohale o tsoa maroleng*.

With a casual look at this novel the causal relationship between the elements of the plot can easily be overlooked. When Sarah's mother died she had to endure the hardship of life on her own. When she was given away as part payment for dowry, the new owner was only interested in output, which compounded her woes. This became worse when she was stolen, because her latter owner had no stake in her. The first person narration mode is used by the author to reach the reader's innermost feelings, making him compare them with Sarah's own as she endures her plight all the way.

Tjokosela's third novel, *Mosonngo*, is the story of a girl who is born after a number of still-births. She is given this name in accordance with the Basotho custom, believably to deceive the ill-disposed ancestors into thinking that the parents are not excited about the baby, and perhaps spare her. She grows up herding cattle with 'Metlakhola (Discriminator). She is ill-treated by her stepmother, Nyepetsi (Tear). Like in all such stories, she finds a wealthy Mr Right, Tšeliso (Consolation), and lives happily ever after.

This story seems to be a counterpart of Sarah. The leading character, as in the case of Sarah, suffers patiently and quietly. She initiates nothing that might lead to some relief, but things turn out well in the end. Tjokosela seems to be over-reacting to his own cruelty to the donkey, and he equates it to cruelty to a defenceless girl. Her meekness is the same as that of the old donkey. Through *Mosonngo* he seems to be saying "blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth" (Matt. 5:5). With these two books he is focussing on man's cruel self-centeredness, and *Mosonngo's* happy ending, albeit by chance, and points to the christian belief that "He watches over His own".

Tjokosela's tone in this book is very friendly and conversational, sets his reader easily at ease, and is characterised by the auxiliary verb stem *–be* as in the following examples:

- i) ... *morora o Khajoane oa be o khumame haufi le lejoe...* (p. 14)
(... the wild Khajoane knelt near the rock...)
- ii) *Esera ha le qosane le motho la be le se le hloeana* (p. 15).
(Do not, when you have charged each other, hate each other)
- iii) *Ha ba ntse ba khobotla, ho be ho le teng tjaka ea mosali...* (p. 25).
(As they kept stamping their feet, there was a beautiful woman...)
- iv) *Che a be a ba fepile, ba khotše 'Mamosele, Solotsi a le moputsoa ke botahoa.*
(Truly, she had fed them, this 'Mamosele, Solotsi being grey with drunkenness).

The above constructions clearly convey the narrator's enjoyment of his own story.

The use of alliterative words which flow naturally into the onomatopoeiac, enriches both the sound and the meanings conveyed, for example:

Ke ha 'Mamosele a noesa motsoetse letsina hore a sise, Mosonngoa a mokonye... (p. 17)

(Then 'Mamosele gave the fresh mother drink to increase her milk, that Mosonngoa might suck...)

The related words with the "s" sound reinforce the words with the "ts" sound (also related) and flow into *mokonye*, the sound of which is suggestive of a baby's sucking.

Tjokosela's mastery of the idiom of the language enables him to import his own enjoyment to the reader without sounding artificial; for instance, the following vivid description of filthy 'Metlakhola:

Jonna! Khopane e neng e le ho 'Metla—khola oe!!! Maoto e le likitifa tse litlhetlhekoo, eka manaka a lahliloeng khale. Metsi o ne a a ila a sa soasoe... Hlohong mona u ne u ka re ho behela likho. (p. 36)

(O, the accumulated dirt on 'Metla—khola's body!!! His feet were thick and scaly, like long discarded horns. Water was to him taboo without joking. ... His head was like a breeding place for spiders.)

Tjokosela makes forceful use of repetition. In emphasising the importance of good choice in marriage, he repeats the root *—kheth—* (choose) thirteen times (but expediently) in a variety of morphological combinations on pages 23 and 24. In spite of traces of religious influence, his style betrays the shepherd that Tjokosela was, with great knowledge of Sesotho customary practice.

In all three of Tjokosela's books, the input made by his upbringing and exposure to the military, the christlike and the compound permissiveness cannot be missed. Much as there may sometimes be lack of clear conflict and suspense, the contradictions of life surface clearly. All the three books are concerned with justice and the right to live.

The naming technique is very well used to depict the characters, as seen above. The name "Sarah" is most fitting for the gentle ass. Tjokosela does not only seek to make amends for his misunderstanding of the donkey's gentility, but also acknowledges the princely dignity that goes with it and should be recognised and honoured. "Sarah" is a Hebrew name for "princess". (Copeland et al, 1957:158).

Taking the stance of Dietrich (et al, 1967:11), a story that deliberately emphasises theme, should not be condemned on the grounds of other considerations. As already observed, in all his three books. Tjokosela has made his point. He has, indeed made his contribution to the development of this genre in Sesotho.

5.18 RAMATHE – SYSTEMIC HANDICAP.

In 1957 the novel, *Tshepo* (Hope) was published by A.C.J. Ramathe.

Alfred Casalis Joseph Ramathe was born on 20 February 1907, in Ladybrand, Orange Free State. He obtained his primary education in Ladybrand up till Std VI, and then proceeded to the Stofberg Training College for the N.T. III certificate (a then popular teacher's certificate). He then went to Adam's College in Natal for the Junior Certificate. Thereafter he proceeded to Fort Hare High School for Matric. He then enrolled for the B.A. degree with the University of South Africa, which he did whilst teaching. He taught in places like Bothaville, Kestell, Phillipolis, Ventersdorp, and then the Monale Training College in Zimbabwe (then known as Rhodesia). On his return, he taught at the Strydom College, from where he was elevated to the position of Sub-inspector of Schools.

He published the book *Tshepo* which, according to his son, Lebona, was part requirement for the completion of the B.A. degree in those days.

He was an active member of the N.G. Kerk (being a member of the MBB. Mokgatlo wa Ba Batjha) and of the teacher's organisation (OFSATA).

This book is written along the lines of Ryder Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines*. Motaung Makgelebane (otherwise Maiyane) comes to learn that his grandfather had been a chief of the Batswahole from around the lake Nyasa Tanganyika area (now Malawi and Tanzania) in Central Africa. After marrying Botlenyane, he prepares to go back and win back his chieftainship. After a hazardous trip in which he loses all his livestock, he eventually reaches Malapanama. His faithful follower, Fanyane, is killed by a venomous snake along the way (in Nantsilo in Malapanama Motaung dies of fever, leaving an expectant Botlenyane with an infant son (Nketsi) and two daughters, Madile and Kgantshe. Tshepo is later born at the chief's place, and is adopted by the chief.

Because of the jealousy of the chief's wives, Botlenyane and her children are forced to leave. She wanders about, working at different places in

Johannesburg. A wealthy white man, De Lowle, employs her children one after the other. Nketsi dies, and Tshepo falls into bad company and gets out of hand. Consequently, Tshepo gets in and out of prison, until he ships to America with a friend on false passports. He is arrested, repents in jail, given documents by a Rev. Kgaebana in New York, and returns to Malapanama. Chief Phiri has no sons, so Tshepo is chosen chief after his death.

This book is a combination of the author's experiences in a strange land (Rhodesia) which then resembled Ryder Haggard's land of the Kukwana people in his *King Solomon's Mines* (a book that was very popular in the Free State in the forties), as well as his own wild dreams about travelling abroad. The impact made on him by religion as a young man can be seen in Tshepo's and Botlenyane's wanderings before he unconvincingly reaches his late father's goal: this seems to come from the archetype of the wanderings of the Israelites on their way to the promised land. This book, however, has no clear conflict, the resolution of which gives an indication as to the theme. It has no fixed plot, and, hence, no suspense. This will be discussed later in greater detail. One can only say that the writer is trying to depict life as a journey full of tribulations.

This novel clearly marks the beginning of a new generation of novels originating within the constraints of the Bantu Education Act No. 47 of 1953. This Act established, inter alia, Language Boards which, in their turn established other bodies amongst which were those designed to regulate the publication of Bantu literature. Though this law was enacted in 1953, it was only implemented in 1955. The first comprehensive Bantu Language Board Meeting was held in Scheidinggebou, Pretoria, on 21 February 1955, under the chairmanship of Dr. N.J. van Warmelo. The first item of business was the "Consideration of the composition and duties of the Bantu Language Board and Language committees". Then followed the nomination of members to language committees.

The language committees had, inter alia, to "scrutinize articles published in The Youth Journals with a view to ensuring an acceptable standard", and to "submit lists of recommended books directly to the Examinations

Committee, which would, in turn, confirm their prescription for use at schools". The latter was resolved at the Language Board meeting held in President Building, Pretoria, on 18 June 1956.

The details of the duties and functions of the Sesotho Language Board 22/1/5/3, vol. 3, reflect the following, inter alia:

- 3.2 (c) to encourage the writing of books so as to progressively encourage the literature of the language.
- (f) to select and grade books for use in schools as prescribed works, classreaders, textbooks, library books and reference works.

The above had to be done in accordance with certain specifications which are more clearly indicated in file 22/1/5/3, vol. 1, Annexure C,

- 4.2 (e) – under Qwaqwa Government Service: "negative references with regard to race relations, vulgar language, disturbing elements, policies, religion, etc must be avoided."

The above, amongst other things, spelled an end to a more mature outlook to literary production. Attention was focussed more on school readership than the general Sesotho speaking public. As evidenced in this book the quality of literary output did not cope with the quantity. This book, accordingly, is a narrative of adventures that are often devoid of causality, and can appeal only to the immature school populace. As Gildenhuis (1973:163) puts it, it contains "ook ander onnodige episodes sodat dit duidelik is dat Ramathe hom nie by die sentrale tema kan bepaal nie."

Ramathe's style, though characterised by good manipulation of the language, is often amateurish with inapt quotations and religious interfusion. Under the circumstances described above, this cannot be surprising.

The ill-effects of this kind of "dogged" authorship, however, were not felt much beyond the borders of South Africa, as evidenced in the works of Lesotho writers such as Khaketla, Ntsane, Majara, Ntšala, Nqheku, Guma and others, as will be seen shortly hereunder.

5.19 MAILE – OBEDIENCE A VIRTUE.

In 1958 M.L. Maile came up with his novel, *Moiketsi* (Self-ruiner). This was his second book, but his first novel.

This is the story of a young man called Moiketsi. It starts with the controversial marriage of his hard-headed father to his unwanted bride, who comes from a family with an undesirable background. As Moiketsi grows up, he seems to have superhuman abilities in fighting and school performance, but, because of heredity, he cannot take advice nor learn from experience. He gets into trouble after trouble and always just gets away with it. His greatest weaknesses are women and liquor. After graduating as a teacher, he messes it up and takes up a clerical job in the mines. He also messes up the job, and is scalded with hot water by Rosina because of Letia. He loses both and then takes up a trade as a "witchdoctor". In due course he takes ill with nobody near him in his dire need of help. One night, unable to stomach the aching feet, he dashes wildly out into the dark night and falls down a precipice.

Maile goes further than Khaketla (in *Meokho ea thabo*) in that he does not just vindicate the Sesotho custom of the parent's right to choose a spouse for his child, but he upholds the virtue of obedience. Like Manyeli (*Liapole*, p. 71), he feels that ..."*bana ba mamele batsoali ba bona linthong tsohle tse lokileng*". (... children should obey their parents in all good things). The very title of the book suggests the theme, and the story confirms it, viz. "...*Moiketsi ha a Uelwe*" (One who lands himself into trouble should expect no sympathy). This is not as robustly conveyed as in his play *Boiphetetso*, though the message is in effect the same. In both books the socio-cultural setting is Sotho but is used subtly as a vehicle for the promulgation of religious norms.

This novel is fairly well structured, with the sub-plots centering around Mothusi vs 'Moko, Moiketsi vs the Law, Moiketsi vs values being complementary to the main plot centering around Moiketsi vs parents. The development from the exposition (parents' history and Moiketsi's birth) to the climax (Moiketsi's death) is quite plausible, with the various elements showing causal relationship. In the denouement, the theme comes out strongly in the song composed by the young people of the village:

*Moiketsi ha a lleloe,
O bonoa ka mali hohle
Hobane o nyatsitse batsoali... etc (p. 91)*
(A self-ruiner deserves no sympathy,
He is seen with blood all over him
Because he despised his parents.... etc)

In this novel Maile's language is deliberately bombastic and showy. He uses expressions which are seldom, if ever, used in normal Sesotho narration and dialogue. This, however, is a noticeable deviation from the old missionary conception of "heathen language", and, though overdone, enhances the literary value of the novel. The author is also conscious of this fact, and has provided explanatory notes at the back for every one of the expressions that make his language, and tone, artificial.

5.20 GUMA – HISTORY AND FICTION.

In 1960 S.M. Guma, a historical novelist writing from Lesotho, published his *Morena Mohlomi, mor'a Monyane* (King Mohlomi, Son of Monyane).

Samson Mbizo Guma was born on 25 April 1921 on a farm outside Brandfort (OFS), where his father died whilst he was very young. He was the youngest of a family of two sons and two daughters. He was brought up in Kroonstad by his mother's family. His mother strongly disapproved of children wandering in the streets. That made such an impression on him that, up till this day, he always tells whenever he goes away. Though both his parents were not literate, they were devout christians, and were very keen on education. His mother, however, died when he was in Form I (Std

VI). He never gave up the fight for education: he worked in town as a garden boy on Saturdays and also washed motorcars, and returned home with three shillings (30 cents). On Sundays he worked as a caddie at the golf course, and attended evening services in church. He tells how, on some days, the police blocked the entrance into town for Blacks, driving them away with sjamboks.

He matriculated under such conditions in Kroonstad under the late Dr. R.N. Cingo. He then went to join his brother in Germiston (Dukathole location) and worked at a shoe factory to raise funds to proceed to Fort Hare. He then got a better job at the "Bantu World" newspaper, just outside the then Sophiatown (now Triomf) before it was burnt down, and worked for one year. He then proceeded to Fort Hare for the B.A. degree. He could not afford to go home on holidays, but worked in the college library as packer and general labourer and cleaner. On completion of his degree, he was offered a post at the college as Teaching Assistant in African Languages. He worked for two years before proceeding to the University of Cape Town for the M.A. degree in African Languages. There he studied under the late Prof. G.P. Lestrade and his own former teacher, Prof. A.C. Jordan. Thereafter he was employed as Lecturer at Fort Hare. In 1955 he was seconded to Rhodes University for one year. When, with the advent of Bantu Education, Fort Hare was changed into a Xhosa university, he stayed on to see the students who had already enrolled through their degrees, and then left for Lesotho's Pius XII College (now National University of Lesotho). Whilst there, he enrolled for the Ph D et Litt degree with UNISA, which he obtained with distinction, his thesis being entitled "The Form, Content and Technique of Traditional Literature in Southern Sotho". Two years after joining the university, it was taken over by the British and renamed the University of Botswana Lesotho and Swaziland (UBLS). In 1969-70 he was invited by King Sobhuza to start the university of Swaziland, which he headed until his retirement in 1985. In his scholastic career he was greatly inspired by the late Prof A.C. Jordan, both at the high school in Kroonstad and at UCT, and wanted to be like him. The painful political position in the Republic of South Africa especially the closing of Fort Hare to other races/ethnic groups opened in him "a spiritual wound that never healed", as he puts it. Fort Hare was a "melting pot of

students from as far afield as Uganda, Zimbabwe etc." His publication of historical novels was prompted, inter alia, by the desire to depict and preserve what obtained among the Basotho (in the face of the threat of Bantu Education). In his research he consulted the "Leselinyana" and old men, amongst whom was the Archbishop Malefane, and was fascinated by the bits and pieces he got from the old men about Mohlomi.

This book depicts the history of the Bakwena traditional rule and lineage, from Kadi (*Monaheng*) to his grandson, Mohlomi before unification of the Basotho by King Moshoeshe. It leans heavily on custom and traditional belief. Monaheng's wife, Dibapatso bears twin boys. According to belief, this portends ill to the tribe, unless one of them is put to death immediately. The chief overrules his court, and names them Mokgeseng (Despicable) and Monyane (Small one) in an attempt to deceive the ancestors into believing that he is not happy with them. Dissatisfaction grows within the tribe to the extent that it splits in two, one section leaving under one Kganyapa. Monaheng migrates to the east. Meanwhile the twins grow up into manhood. Mokgeseng marries one wife after the other. His uncontrollable desire for women leads him to a fight with an angry husband and is killed. Monyane, ultimately marries his own cousin, Ntshediseng, by whom he begets a son, Mohlomi. The story of Mohlomi only commences on page 92 of the book. He grows up to become a king with a difference: he advocates love among tribes. As a herbalist, he heals, marries outside his own tribe and encourages intermarriage as a way of encouraging national growth and harmonious relations among tribes. He travels to the unknown including the lands of the cannibals and dog-eaters. He gains boundless knowledge and, wisdom and experience, and ends up being the young Moshoeshe's diviner and mentor.

In his study of the South Sotho novel, Moloi (1973) does not even allude to any of Guma's books, probably because he does not see anything noteworthy in them. Gildenhuis (1973:103) observes that "Guma slaag daarin om hierdie enkele hoogtepunt-fasette in die vroeë geskiedenis van die Basotho so saam te bind en uit te beeld dat dit gesamentlik bepaalde persone se lewensverloop en ondervindings vorm." He goes further to say "Sy eerste twee novelles staan nie sonder waarde nie en beskik oor genoeg

positiewe elemente waardeur dit as sulks interessante leesstof bied" (p. 106). But he seems to have some problem as to the theme, other than just the general "uitbeelding van historiese karakters." Gérard (1971:155) also states that "Dr. S.M. Guma's historical novels go further back in time and contain a genuine imaginative analysis of the factors that governed the evolution of the political systems of the Sothos and kindered tribes", and points out that "*Morena Mohlomi, mora Monyane* (Chief Mohlomi, Son of Monyane) shows how a once unified tribe could split over a matter of customary belief." Lenake (1968:76) merely refers to it as "a clash between an old Kwena custom and reality."

Whichever way we look at it, this novel seems to be a product of the interplay of several factors, including the writer's personal experiences. It seems to reflect subtly on the solidarity of the heterogeneous Fort Hare populace prior to the advent of Bantu Education by analogy with the solidarity of the Bakwena tribe prior to the birth of the twins. His emotional resistance of the ethnic fragmentation of the Fort Hare community by the government is reflected cunningly in the Mohlomi's encouragement of intertribal marriages for stable intertribal relations — a drifting-closeness which is in direct contrast with the apartness policy embedded in the Bantu Education Act and the Apartheid policy of the Nationalist regime. Whilst the intertribal strife that follows on the retention of both twins seems to vindicate the customary belief in question, it also forebodes some calamity that must come as a result of the disturbance of the social and academic equilibrium by the said Bantu Education Act. One gets the strong feeling that the theme, as "the central idea which may be stated directly or indirectly" (Cuddon, 1976:695) in this novel is a warning against abuse of power. This being the first of its kind of novel since Mofolo's *Chaka*, is a noteworthy contribution to Sesotho literature. The traveling of Mohlomi to the unknown and to the mysterious land of the dog-eaters may be regarded as symbolic of his acquisition of the knowledge and power of healing and divination. It links well with the instructions he received in his dream:

"O ithute meriana ya ho alafa e le hore o tle o tsebe ho ba alafa mafung a ba kgathatsang".

(Learn the herbs of healing so that you be able to cure the ailments that afflict them).

He himself alludes in like vain to his travels at the end of the novel:

"Mmadiepollo, mosadi wa ka, ke tsamaile lefatshe ka ba ka batla ke le geta. Maotong ao a ka kaofela, ntho e nngwe feela eo ke neng ke e batla. Ke bohlale." (p. 139)

(Mmadiepollo, my dear, I have travelled the world over, and almost finished it. In all those journeys of mine, I was looking for only one thing: wisdom.)

Guma's style exhibits a sound knowledge of customary beliefs and Sesotho culture. Examples:

i) *Efela yare ka hora tsa baloi morena a tswa le mofumahadi Dibabatso hammoho le banna...* (p. 15)

(Indeed at dead of night the chief got out together with the chieftainess Dibabatso and the men...)

ii) *Feela he bana ha se ba hae a le mong. Ke ba setjhaba hoba ke bana ba madi a borena ba kweneng.* (p. 27)

(Even so, these children are not his alone. They belong to the tribe because they are the children of the chiefs' blood of the Bakwena).

iii) *... ba korotla ka ho re Sello o senya qai leno le Mohlomi* (p. 67)

(... They grumbled saying that Sello spoils that uncircumcised Mohlomi).

Guma also uses vivid images to convey his ideas briefly and forcefully. For instance, he says that, on hearing of the birth of the twins, "*banna ba fetoha diemahale tulong tsa bona ba ba ba lebala le hore na ba ne ba ntse ba bua ka eng*" (The men turned into statues where they were seated (i.e. they were stupefied) and forgot what they were talking about; p. 18). He goes on to say:

Ditaba ha di timanwe e se bohobe. Tsa mofuta ona tsona, tse amanang le batho ba phahameng ba kang marena le ba bang ba jwalo, di matha ka mokgwa wa mohlolo (p. 19)

(People are not stingy with news like with bread. This kind, that has to do with great people like kings and their like, travels very swiftly).

This is a Sotho saying that reflects on human nature. He uses also very fresh and original images like "*Ba phahamisetsana diphaka, ba nkgisetsana mahafi. Marumo a bona a bina kodi-ya-malla ha a ferella sebakeng a batla moo a ka itshunyang teng.*" (They raised their upper arms towards each other, smelling each other's armpits (i.e. during battle). Their spears sang a doleful note as they whirl in the air, looking for a place to penetrate; p. 51).

Guma often uses single-word or two-word sentences to make very powerful suggestions without actually saying things. For example, when the beautiful chieftainess Mmatumane brings her husband and Mokgeseng some food, Guma states pithily, "*A mmona Mokgeseng!*" (Mokgeseng saw her!; p. 49). This sets the reader's mind racing and arousing his interest immediately.

Guma's powerful word economy is seen in his use of ideophones in describing an encounter with an antelope:

Ho sa le jwalo phuthi ya re ropo!... Ya re ha e ba bona ya re thinkgwil ho leba Bophirima. Moo le teng ya re ptjang! le sehlopha sa batho... Ya re phekgo! ho leba Leboya (p. 67)

(At that moment the antelope appeared suddenly... When it saw them, it turned instantly towards the west. Even there it found itself face to face with a group of people... Swiftly it turned northward.)

Though this novel has as its subject matter the history, customs and beliefs of the Bakwena, the christian element in Guma is betrayed at the end, where old Mohlomi declares:

Le fihlile hantle, thaka tsa ka. Ke tseleng ha ke le tjena, ke nka eto la ka la ho qetela (p. 140)

(You have come at the right time, comrades. As it is, I am on my way, about to undertake my last journey).

The christian conception of the last journey, or the end of the journey — as will be seen in Mofokeng's *Leetong* later — is oneness with God. God is regarded as the beginning and the end of everything — especially the end. This concept is very cleverly worked in, bearing in mind that Mohlomi spent most of his life travelling.

The exposition in this novel takes too much space, but is essential for the better understanding of the plot development. Though conflict is not accorded the usual prominence, the causality of the elements is well motivated albeit by dreams as well.

In 1962, two years into the era following this period of study, Guma published another historical novel, *Tshehlana tseo tsa Basia* (Those Light-complexioned Basia Damsels).

This is a historical novel dealing with three generations of the Batlokwa chieftaincy. The first wife, Ntlokgolo, of the aging chief Motonosi's son, Montwedi, begets a son long after the younger wife, Mmamare, had begotten two sons, Moepi and Sehalahala. Montwedi is an incredibly fast runner. During a hunting expedition, a thief is seen carrying away one of their carcasses. They give chase, and Montwedi outruns his comrades but stumbles when he is about to catch the thief, and is stabbed to death with his own spear. His heart-broken father dies immediately after him. His younger brother, Montwetsana, is chosen regent until his son, Mokotjo, comes of age — as designed by Mafube (Motonosi's brother). After an unsuccessful conspiracy to poison Mokotjo, Mafube is burned at night in his house, but Ntlokgolo escapes by chance and flees to her home, escorted by the Mantwa regiment. Moepi flees to his uncle's place in Phiritona (Heilbron), but Sehalahala remains. At the Basia initiation school, Mokotjo is savagely beaten up by the elder Sehalahala, and left for dead. Later, whilst Mokotjo is on his way to Tlokwen for his chieftaincy, the deserted Montwetsana is killed in a clash with the Bataung. Mokotjo marries his cousin, Monyaduwe, by whom he begets Nthatisi and Sekonyela. At his

death—bed, Mokotjo warns his wife (now Mmanthatisi) against Sehalahala, telling her of his assault on him at the initiation school. Whilst the Batlokwa are discussing a possible successor to Mokotjo, Mmanthatisi shocks everybody by putting on the royal robe and holding the royal staff on her own to become her own son's regentess. With the help of the Mantwa, she thwarts Sehalahala's plans to kill Sekonyela at the initiation school, kills him and removes Sekonyela to the Basia initiation school. She rebuilds the lost confidence in the Batlokwa people and their Mantwa regiment, and engages in battle after battle, conquering livestock from accessible tribes. At Tlapane, whilst the Dikonyela are out, Pakaditha's regiment invades the Batlokwa stronghold, and Mmanthatisi organises the women, arming them, and, dancing mildly on the hill on the outskirts, they await the invaders. Whilst the enemy is puzzled, the Dikonyela receive an SOS and pounce unexpectedly to deal their enemy the final blow. They later siege Moshweshwe's kraal at Botha—Bothe, but he tricks the Zulus and Sibheje into attacking them, and Ntlokgolo is killed. The Batlokwa then move on to settle at Jwala—Boholo, where Mmanthatisi spent her last days.

Of this book Lenake (1968:76) says "Guma shows us how the two great Sia women preserved the chieftainship of the Tlokwa tribe after the death of the chiefs at an early stage"... and "The survival of the Tlokwa tribe during the years of unrest and warfare is ascribed to her" (Mmanthatisi). He, therefore, only regards this book as a monument to those great women, who really lived. Behind any monument there is always the thought "lest you forget". As Guma himself says "There were good days in the past", and telling of Sekonyela Station near Ficksburg, as well as Jwala—Boholo which was Sekonyela's headquarters.

Gérard (1971:155) is in accord with Lenake. The title of the book suggests that it is a tribute to the two Basia women, Ntlokgolo and Mmanthatisi. Ntlokgolo had the presence of mind to take her son Mokotjo, away to her own home where he could grow up, one day to go back for his chieftaincy. Mmanthatisi not only took over the Batlokwa chieftaincy "in trust" for her son, but revived their lost confidence and self—esteem, and founded what was, to date, to be known as Sekonyela's headquarters. Guma brings to the

surface the importance of the woman's role, which is always underplayed in the community, by focusing on what they actually did, rather than portraying their often-overlooked supportive role. This seems to reflect on his appreciation of his mother's role in his own upbringing. His own father, like Montwedi and Mokotjo, died when he was very young, and it was his mother who had education as a main desire. It was his mother who, like Ntlokgolo did, took him to her own home in Kroonstad to grow up, later to challenge the obstacles of life and rise to the top of the educational ladder. Over and above being a portrayal of "the survival of the Tlokwa tribe during the years of unrest and warfare..." (Lenake 1968:76), this is Guma's way of saying women should be given the recognition they deserve.

The underlying unity in these two historical novels of Guma's is in the mutual loyalty and helpfulness between tribes that is brought about by intermarriage. Whilst in *Morena Mohlomi* it is clearly stated, in *Tshehlana tseo* it is the deeds that say it: the two Basia girls who are married into the Batlokwa tribe actually preserve the continuity of the Batlokwa chieftaincy for two generations. When the Batlokwa were driven out of their kraal by the vengeful Hlubis, the Basia offered to join hands with them. In broad terms these two books together seek to show that peoples can find common ground for co-operation from drawing closer to each other, rather than drifting apart. This may be one form of the result of the "spiritual wound that never healed" when Fort Hare was closed to other ethnic groups. Guma alludes to the theme of this novel in broad terms by referring to Ntlokgolo's experiences:

A tswa moo a ithutile thuto ya bohlokwa lefatsheng, thuto ya hore ha sebopuwa sena seo ho thweng ke motho, se ntse se o betlela meno, se bile se ntse se o phaphatha lehetleng, hase hore se a o rata... (p. 29)
 (She left there having learnt the most precious lesson in the world: that, whenever this creature called a person grins at you, or pats you on the shoulder, that does not mean he likes you).

Ntlokgolo enunciates it more directly:

Bobe ha bo ke be bo hlole botle leha ho se ho le jwang. (p. 30–31)
 (Evil never triumphs over good, whatever the circumstances)

Guma ends the novel by letting an unnamed old Motlokwa enunciate it for him:

"Re tje, re tje kajeno, ngwana ka, ka mesebetsi ya tshehlana tseo tsa Basia." (p. 101)

(We are the people that we are to-day, my child, because of the endeavours of those light-complexioned Basia girls).

In simple terms, "give credit where credit is due", regardless of sex, race or creed.

Like in *Morena Mohlomi*, Guma displays great mastery of the idiom of the Sesotho language. This can be illustrated by means of the following examples, inter alia:

- i) of the witchdoctor who is trying to be impressive, he says

"Le yane e fihlang ya be e ntse e feresela hona moo, e phura e bile e ntse e khwefa kgafetsa." (p. 28)

(Even that one who had just arrived kept charging to and fro, whilst crushing something with his teeth and spitting it out lightly).

The onomatopoeic *-feresela*, *-phura* and *-khwefa* appeal vividly to the reader's senses.

- ii) The awesomeness of the Batlokwa royal garb, which Ntlokgolo wore on her own, is sketched in alliterative references which emphasise its high regard:

"Kobo eo ya borena ba Tlokweng, e ne e sa apaaparwe feela, e aparwa ke marena a sethatho a Batlokwa, a tswang mohloding o hwekileng wa borena ba bona." (p. 69)

(That royal garb of the Batlokwa was not just worn by anybody; it was worn by original, i.e. born, Batlokwa chiefs who are descended from the pure lineage of the Batlokwa chieftaincy).

The repetition of the roots "-apar-", the stem "-rena", and the "hl" alliteration seem to shroud this royalness with a certain eeriness that goes with certain taboos.

Guma also repeats utterances which reflect on the character's judgement, and arouse the reader's expectation. For instance, Montwetsana's secret manoeuvres are alluded to in this fashion:

"*Ha ho bophelo mona. Ke lefu feela.*" *A rialo ka pelo* (p. 22)
 ("There is no life here. There's only death". She said to herself).

These words are repeated again after Mokotjo's noisy puppy had been killed at night. The reader is enabled, in this way, to size up the situation simultaneously with Ntlokgolo, without any further comment by the narrator.

Guma seems to have favourite expressions which appear in both these two novels, under similar circumstances. When Ntlokgolo and the *Mantwa* were confronted by Montwetsana's conspirators, he says, like in *Morena Mohlomi*, "*Yare ha ba kgorohelana jwalo, ba bile ba nkgisetsana mahafi, Mantwa a neng a ipatile phuleng eo ... a fihla...*" (Just when they charged at each other, already tackling each other, the *Mantwa* who had hidden in the valley... arrived; p. 25.)

Also like in *Morena Mohlomi*, Guma says of the fierceness of the "*Lerumo la tsetsela sebakeng, le etla le bina kodi-ya-malla...*" (p. 51)
 (The spear moaned in the air, it came singing a doleful note...)

As said earlier, the latter, and the expression "*ba nkgisetsana mahafi*" are a fresh and very original substitute for some hackneyed expressions we have come to get used to.

Unlike in *Morena Mohlomi*, conflict in this novel is "real" and external. It is, at different stages of the plot, between Ntlokgolo and Montwetsana, Ntlokgolo and Sehalahala, and (the non-physical) between Ntlokgolo and Setlokwa custom concerning succession. What follows this is, unfortunately, a series of adventurous warfare that characterised the times, with no noticeable causal relationship between the escapades. Towards the end of this novel the fictional element seems to recede, giving way to the purely historical, and not necessarily fictionally rational.

Both these novels are a contribution to Sesotho narrative fiction. Unlike *Morena Mohlomi*, *Tshehlana tseo* have to do with custom and the hard facts of life with no recourse to religion, except only by subtle analogy with Israelites at the end, where the narrator intimates:

Yaba o ba fihlilitse he Batlokwa ba hae Mmanthatisi fatsheng la bona la pallo,.... (p. 100)

(So had she (Mmanthatisi) brought her Batlokwa to their promised land,...)

Perhaps this is what marks this novel as heralding a new era in the development of Sesotho narrative art.

5.21 SEKOLI – DREAM OR FICTION?

In 1960, just two years before the publication of the above novel, A. Sekoli published his *Lekomo la Ralitoro* (The Tale of the Dreamer).

In this story Ralitoro does not get along very well with his wife. Consequently he leaves her and seeks quietude in town. Once there, he takes to crooked ways, becoming a confidence trickster under different guises. After being cornered a few times, he abandons his chicanery and joins a communist cell. When, later, his makers and mentors begin to feel jealous of him, he flees. Back home, he finds his wife converted to christianity, and burns her christian literature. Thereafter he starts with his series of dreams, viz. that communists don't believe in God; then he dreams of a meeting of animals complaining against one another, with himself

having all the answers to their problems drawn from his communist ideology. He then dreams of a meeting of birds similar to the one portrayed in Sekese's *Pitso ea linonyana*, but they reject his communistic solutions. Thereafter, he dreams of a meeting of people discussing their own views on Christ, and he holds on to his own view on communism. His last dream is of a meeting of animals, birds and people, which is addressed by a messenger from god, and the communist present at the meeting is converted. Ralitoro then wakes up. He becomes very ill and penitent of having persecuted the church of God on earth. He is converted just before dying.

Unless Sekoli intends to suggest that Ralitoro's wife turned to christianity because of the frustration of being deserted, there is no clear link between her rowdy life with her husband and her conversion. The cause of Ralitoro's dreams is also not well motivated. No clear indication is given of a guilty conscience after burning the christian literature. It can only be surmised that Sekoli is using the dreams as a means whereby God reveals himself to Ralitoro. In the absence of a plausible, well motivated plot development, Sekoli resorts to some *deus ex machina* — a dream — for a turning point. He only pits christianity against communism in a dream, with the former gaining the day, and makes it overlap into Ralitoro's conscious state after the dream. This is not convincing. The religious, anticommunist theme appeals to the reader's sentiment with little or no rationality. The story also lacks the artistic narration and imagery that would otherwise enhance its literary value. This book can, therefore, not be discussed in greater detail. It can only be said of it, that it is a christian sermon in the face of some communist threat.

5.22 THAKHISI — INEQUALITY.

In the same year, 1960, J.K. Thakhisi published his novel, *Tsha ha se mele poya* (A Rolling Stone gathers no Moss).

John Kabeli Thakisi was born at Ha Molibeli in Hlotse, in 1922. His father had been a policeman in Botswana and had killed a lion, single-handed, and brought its skin to Chief Jonathan, a deed that resulted in his rapid promotion in the Lesotho Police. He was so keen in education that, before

his retirement in 1937, he bought and donated what was called the "*Thakhisi Trophy*" to be awarded to the school which performed best in the examinations. He died in July 1948, at the age of seventy-five. His mother was a Lovedale trained dressmaker, and all their clothing were home-made. She was very particular, and intolerant with slovenly-done jobs.

Kabeli, one of a family of nine girls and three boys, grew up like a typical Mosotho herdboy, wearing a *tshea* (loin garment). They were taught cricket wearing their *tsheas* with ordinary sticks, by one Selborne Lefoka, using a 25 litre drum as wicket. He has a photo on his wall where he was taken in action. He was always involved in stick fights, and remembers being once floored by the champion. Because of his father's job, he schooled at different places: from beginning to Std. IV in Butha-Bothe; then in Qalo for Stds V and VI, which he completed in 1937. He proceeded to the Morija High School in 1938 for N.T.P.L. He then did the Junior Certificate, in two years, and the Primary Higher teacher's certificate. He then taught at Hlotse for a year (as principal), and at the Government Intermediate School another year. From there he proceeded to Frankfort, where he left after only two months because of friction between the Basotho and the Amakhosa. One month later, he got a post at Commando Nek in Ficksburg. He had started studying for *Matric* privately in 1947. In 1948 one Tladi Samuel Khohloa (his brilliant past fellow student) was invited by Rev. Veldman to oversee an orphan school near Rev. Polile's school, where Thakhisi was teaching (having been given a Sub A class to teach, after passing *Matric*). Whilst there, he learned Afrikaans and sat for the Laer Taalbond examination. He then joined the Strydom Opleidingskool and taught in Afrikaans. *In* 1957, when the school was moved to Thaba Nchu, he returned to Maseru to join the then Basutoland High School. He had already completed the B.A. degree by private study. He later studied for the BA Hons degree with the National University of Lesotho. After twenty years, he left the school to teach at Roma for 9 and a half years prior to his retirement in 1987. He tells how, as a young man, he loved being a policeman. Even after completing his education, he still wanted to work for the government. During World War II he wanted to enlist as a recruit, but his father insisted that he first completed his Primary Higher teacher training; and when he completed the war was over.

This book could easily do as an autobiography of Thakhisi's. It is the story of a Mosotho young man, Mamello, who lived in the early enlightenment days, when teaching was a much venerated profession, even at NTL level.

He, however, does JC against his parents' will, and without their knowledge. After the Higher Primary teacher's course, he crosses into the Orange Free State, where he teaches from one school to another, each time losing his post without any known reason, or notice, or because of some farm school manager's envy or jealousy. The school management do not understand the function or aims of schools, but they want to do everything themselves. This, together with the principal's negative attitude towards him, makes things very difficult for him. He works hard whilst some more favoured, lesser, teachers are protected. He continues to study privately for Matric under such conditions. He also teaches at an orphanage School, "Motse—Motjha", where he has to stomach brutal child neglect and abuse. He departs to another school and continues studying privately for the B.A. degree.

There is a striking resemblance between Mamello's experiences and Thakhisi's own. The envy and jealousy that are directed against Mamello seem to reflect on Thakhisi's relegation to a Sub. A class after passing Matric, while higher classes were given to people with NTL qualifications. Mamello's hard work whilst others were relaxed is an exact reflection of the conditions under which the writer had to work at what he calls Rev. Polile's school. As he puts it,

"O ne o ka makala ho fumana e mong ho rona a itsamaetse ntho e ka etsang beke, a be siyo pela bana ba hae; a itlele ka nako ya hae. Empa ba bang ba qatile mehatla: ntho e kang eo ba sa lore hore ba ka e etsa." — Interview.

(You could be surprised to find one of us gone for about a week without making an appearance before his class, returning at his own time. But others worked timidly, never dreaming of doing anything like that.)

It is clear that Thakhisi was bent on exposing the corruption and brutalities that were rife under the farm-school system, as well as the accompanying discrimination, whilst "*ke bana ba letsopa le le leng, ke ma-Afrika kaofela*" (... they are of the same mould, they are all Africans; p. 42). The title of the book reflects his dislike for his own movement from post to post, over which he had no control. The leading character's name, Mamello (Fortitude), was deliberately chosen to suggest the triumph that must inevitably follow. This sub-theme has some religious flavour, a clear influence of the missionary educational system of the time.

Though the characters are not well motivated, and are, consequently, types, the naming technique has aptly been used in the case of Mamello. As his name suggests, he is symbolic of forbearance, fortitude and tenacity of purpose. The only conflict relating to Mamello, throughout the story, is a clash of ideas and principles. Keeping his mind always on his goal, he overcomes with dignity, without being aggressive or defiant: "blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth."

Thakisi is relaxed and spontaneous in his language, with adoptives like the following flowing out without straining:

"*diresaletse*" – p. 7 (results), "*notisi*" – p. 9 (notice), "*Fannereke*" (p. 11) (Van der Eck), "*Foromane*" – (p. 14) (Voorman/Foreman), "*dinoutse*" (p. 27) (notes), etc. Coupled with these is also the great tendency to quote direct English words and phrases to create an atmosphere of closeness to the reader.

What seems to distinguish Thakhisi, however, from most Sesotho novelists is his inclination to use the demonstrative in the place of the adverbial clause of consequence and main clauses. The following examples should suffice:

- i) *Ha sekolo se kwallwa phomolo ya Paseka, ke elwa a tshwara koloi ya mollo...* (p. 9)
(When the schools recessed for the Easter holiday, there he goes to board a train...)

- ii) ... *a betswa hore a be a babaile. Ke elwa a babailela hae.* (p. 22)
 (... he was beaten so that he was in great pain. There he goes hobbling painfully homeward.)
- iii) *Ha a ntse a emaeme mona, Dambuza le Kgeleke ke bao ba etla ka matswalo a kgutsitseng.* (p. 25)
 (As he stood there a little while, there come Dambuza and Kgeleke with a clear conscience.)

This kind of construction adds to the narrator–narratee rapport. He also describes activities in a vivid and lively manner. For instance, Mamello's application is described as follows:

A a qhala mangolo a kopang mosebetsi, a a qhala hohle naheng ya Foreistate. (p. 28)

(He scattered the letters, asking for work, he scattered them throughout the Free State.)

It is unusual to see a quotation in a novel from another novel. Thakhisi quotes from Segoete's *Monono ke moholi* that "*Mosotho o tshwantsha bona ka maele a reng "Ke bo-setsha-ha se mele-poya"* (The Mosotho alludes to them with the proverb that states that they are "rolling stones that gather no moss"; p. 13), thereby giving an indication as to the source of the title of his novel. He is not apologetic about his stance in regard to religion:

Mohlang oo, kobo eo e tla ba bobebe seka lesiba, ba tla e raha ka maoto, ba e lahlele hole a itlhahanele ho ya kgahlanyetsa Konyana ya Modimo... (op cit).

(On that day that blanket, i.e. the grave, will be light as a feather, they will kick it with their feet throwing it far away, and will hurry to meet the lamb of God...)

The above two examples of intrusive mode of narration bring to the surface Thakhisi's underlying didactic intent.

Thakhisi's second novel, *Peleapele* (Forward!), published in 1971, can only be alluded to in comparison with the above book, and as a product of the same writer, though it falls under a different period of the history of Sesotho literature. Its title raises more expectation than the book is worth. Much as one would have expected experience to have guided him past the pitfalls experienced in the first book, it is of lower value in style, form and theme, even in characterisation. The story is a sketch of four generations, and it is only in the eleventh chapter where a single character, Lesole, rises above others. Characters like Potlaki, Lodi and Puleng, and the episodes involving them, are not indispensable to the flow of the story.

In this book, Thakhisi races through four generations: from traditional Sesotho kenela custom, whereby Phamo could take over his late elder brother's widow, and father Swai and Tatolo, through to the modern sophisticated white wedding of his great grand-daughter, Dimakatso, a medical practitioner. He talks about almost everything there is to talk about, viz. sea-travels, World War II, Russian sputnik, etc, consequently leaving the book without depth and coherence. This leaves the reader unclear as to the actual theme of the novel. At one time he seems to advocate adherence to custom:

... ha o bona ha re ka fokotsa dikgomo re tla nyala kang, re leme kang? (p. 22)

(... if we cut on our cattle, what are we going to marry with or plough with?).

The next moment he seems to be advocating self-rule:

Na Lesotho moo Manyesemane a tla ke a di akgele, ke a kgolwa tsela di a e bona jwale. (p. 84)

(Here in Lesotho will the English ever hand over the reigns? I believe we are ready now.)

In the end, after Mmatatolo's death, Thakhisi talks about how the silent masses will sorely miss her kind generosity. By constant repetition and rhetorical questions, he harps on the fact that people are always

remembered for their kind deeds. The overall impression obtained from the contrasting lives of Dimakatso and her brother Tatalo, is that hard work coupled with sound values, will always lead to success. This seems to be the main theme, with the above three being sub-themes.

Occupational insecurity, which affected the average Mosotho's domicile, seems to have been the order of the day in Thakhisi's times; and this comes strongly to the fore in both of his novels.

5.23 RESUMÉ

The underlying idea in the novels of Mabile, Machobane, Khaketla, Guma and Majara (to a limited extent) seems to be centered around mutualism. In Mabile's *Mokhosi oa Fora* and Guma's *Morena Mohlomi* and *Tshehlana tseo tsa Basia*, co-operation and mutual trust surface in a less disguised manner than in Machobane's *Mphatlalatsane* and Majara's *Moroetsan'a Moshate*, which are, respectively, highly symbolic and subtly symbolic. In Khaketla's *Meokho ea thabo*, co-operation is advocated more like conformism in the sense of placing social values above personal desires.

Whilst in the above novels the theme is subtle and mildly imploratory Nqheku, Matlosa and Ntšala protest more strongly against socio-political and socio-cultural evils. In his *Arola naheng ea Maburu*, Nqheku focuses strongly on man's inhumanity to man, but soon feels helpless and resigns himself to the notion that God's grace is greater than man's brutality. He then takes consolation in the christian doctrine of a better life here-after, and propagates catholicism with his *Lilahloane*. Whilst Matlosa spotlights the odds of social evils that dog the helpless innocent in *Molahlehi*, and goes beyond social codes to universal justice and punishment for crime, in *Mopheme*, he finds himself in conflict (in the latter book) with the christian idealism of "forgive us as we also forgive". Ntšala's *Sekhukhuni se bonoa ke sebatlali*, on the other hand, is an unconditional protest against society's docility in the face of abuse of power by the chiefs, and is uncompromising on the question of punishment for crime.

Machobane and Majara also show concern about self-esteem. In his *Mahaheng a matso*, the former pin-points the painful consequences of hunger and poverty, viz. loss of self-worth. In 'Makotulo, Majara blames it on the migratory labour system. Khaketla and Ntsane in *Mosali a nkhola* and *Masoabi*, respectively, warn against the dangers of incomplete education coupled with incomplete acculturation (in the case of Mosito), and Majara's *Liate oa Mafika-Lesiu* is just a sermon for all age groups, whereby he is saying it pays to be well-behaved. Tjokosela's *Mohale o tsoa maroleng*, *Sarah* and *Mosonngoa* are introspections about "the ills we do", and advocate that all be accorded justice and the right to live.

Manyeli's only novel, *Liapole tsa gauta*, advocates, forcefully and directly, honesty of purpose, and reflects very clearly the christian influence in his upbringing.

From the above, it is quite apparent that the prominent novelists of this period were pre-occupied with the growing self-centeredness of people, the high-handedness of the powerful, and social values that were being eroded by intercultural contact and socio-economic factors. Creativity and originality increased, albeit with a tinge of religious flavour in places. Accordingly the novel as sub-genre of Southern Sotho literature reflects in no uncertain terms the norms, models, relationships and structures that obtained during the period – from the terms of reference of the language boards that were set up in terms of the Bantu Education Act No. 47 of 1953 (traced in the backfiles of the Department), through the influences of politics, church and community (which transpired in our interviews with novelists), to the novelists' own perception of their call, their perception of their craft, and the external influences on the outcome of their laborious efforts.

CHAPTER SIX

THE ESSAY AND SHORT STORY: INCLUSIVE OR SUB-SYSTEM?

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In spite of research in this field by Maphike (1978) and Kwetana (1980), the essay, in African literatures, is often greatly confused with the short story in certain quarters, even at tertiary level, especially the narrative essay.

The former refers briefly to the essay as "a literary form whereby expression is given of viewpoints relating to subjects that are regarded as important by the writer" (1978:1), and "provides a social philosophy or criticism, and reflects more on a mood than a topic." This latter observation could have resulted in Mocoancoeng's *Meqoqo ya phirimana* (Evening Discourses) being regarded as containing one hundred per cent essays. As will be shown presently, at least three of the "discourses" are, in effect, short stories.

Within this period (1930–60), four essay volumes were published, viz:

- | | | |
|------------------|---|---|
| J.G. Mocoancoeng | : | <i>Meqoqo ya phirimana</i> (1953) |
| J.J. Moiloa | : | <i>Sediba sa meqoqo</i> (A Fountain of Discourses), |
| K.E. Ntsane | : | <i>Makumane</i> (Tit-bits; 1959), and |
| K.E. Ntsane | : | <i>Bana ba rona</i> (Our children; 1954) |

The last named is not strictly what would normally be expected of an essay, but is classified as such, probably because, like a formal essay, "it is objective and intellectual" (Shipley 1972:145) over and above concerning itself with "facts and information or philosophical truths" (Maphike, 1978:3). Rather than deal with individual, often unrelated, subjects (as in *Makumane*, for instance), Ntsane deals with the developing child from conception to adulthood, as well as parent attitudes to their own children's psycho-physical changes and adolescent curiosity and impetuosity. These different aspects of developmental psychology are discussed under different headings like, *Matsatsing a boimana* (Pregnancy Days), *Kelello ea ngoana* (A Child's mind), *Tsa Botona le botšehali* (Of Masculinity and femininity),

Se hlahisang toantšano kelellong (The Causes of Internal Conflict), up to the climax, *Lenyalo le letle... ke tsatsi la kotulo ea batsoali* (A good wedding ... is the harvest day for parents), which concludes the book.

This work is clearly a handbook in parent counselling, wherein each aspect discussed may be regarded as an essay in accordance with Williams, quoted by Maphike (1978:4): "the essay is also characterised by the writer's role, which is more to provide some moral instruction than to entertain." The essayistic element of this book, with its theme as message, comes out clearly in the last discourse heading. According to traditional Sotho custom, only women of good character and personality are marriageable – hence the parents' most cherished achievement being their child's marriage.

These essays would be regarded as formal because of the writer's serious tone and intent to teach. But Ntsane has obviously taken pain to research his subject to the extent that he reflects opinion coupled with scientific truths. The essays in *Bana ba rona* could, therefore, best be regarded as scientific essays, as opposed to the essays in Moiloa's *Sediba sa meqoqo* which are mostly formal in the sense that the writer adheres to laid down structural conventions. *Bana ba rona* as a book is a novelty in Sesotho culture and a clear instance of intercultural transfer.

In this category also is Tladi's *Mehla ea bohoholo* (The olden days; 1951), a volume of documentary essays on subjects covering the entire spectrum of Basotho life, from the arrival of the black man in Southern Africa. This book is the same as Segoete's *Raphepheng* with the exception that no clear character has been created to relate things for the writer. The titles are typical essay titles, e.g. *Litlolo* (Ointments), *Liaparo* (clothing), *Koae* (Tobacco) etc. The tone is strictly matter-of-fact as a textbook in Ethnology, discussing nothing but fact.

6.2 J.J. MOILOA – CONVENTIONALIST

Moiloa's essays are also in matter-of-fact tone, but are, nevertheless, essays in the true sense of the word.

According to Jahn (1972:231) and Ngcangca (1989:101) James Jantjies Moiloa was born on 6 June 1916 in the Wepener district, Orange Free State. He started his primary education at Jammerdrift, three miles outside Wepener. After passing Std. IV, the highest class at the school, he worked as a herdbooy on a farm for two years. He then worked in town as a domestic servant for one Mrs Robinson, who was sympathetic and "allowed me to attend school whilst working" (Jahn 1972:232), though under difficult conditions. He passed Std. VI in 1932, and, in 1935, started with Junior Certificate at the Bloemfontein Bantu High School, which he completed in 1938. In 1940 he completed his Teacher Training at the Thaba Nchu Moroka Missionary Institute. From 1941 to 1951, he taught in Brandfort whilst studying privately for Matric and the B.A. degree. He completed the B.A. degree with the University of South Africa in 1958, whilst a teacher at the Bloemfontein Bantu High School. In 1966 he was appointed first Black principal of the Secondary School in Bloemfontein. Four years later, he was appointed Assistant Speech Aide at the University of the Orange Free State, the first Black man to be appointed to a white university teaching staff in any capacity in the province.

Moiloa's *Sediba sa meqogo* contains essays on almost every theme but political and human nature, which distinguishes him from Mocoancoeng and Ntsane, as will be seen hereunder. In his variety of themes, he handles mainly:

| | | |
|-------------------|---|---|
| Didactic subjects | – | <i>Molemo wa difate</i> (The Usefulness of Trees) <i>Lefatshe la Lesotho</i> (Lesotho the Country) <i>Kgang ka tsa thuto</i> (An argument about Education) <i>Mosa diphoofolong</i> (Kindness to Animals) <i>Temo ya meroho</i> (Vegetable Growing) |
| Sotho Customs | – | <i>Bophelo ba badisana</i> (The life of the Shepherds) <i>Lenyalo la Sesotho</i> (A Sotho Marriage) |

| | | |
|-------------------------|--|--|
| | | <i>Letsema la ho pola mabele</i> (A Grain—thrashing Work Party) |
| | | <i>Lebollo</i> (Initiation) |
| Biographical subjects — | | <i>Morena Moshoeshoe</i> (King Moshoeshoe) |
| | | <i>Senatla Setjhabeng</i> (A National Hero) |
| | | <i>Maipolelo</i> (About oneself) |
| | | <i>Sheleng e pheta tsa bophelo ba yona</i> (A Shilling tells its own Life—story) |
| Social Problems — | | <i>Botahwa</i> (Drunkeness) |
| | | <i>Botsotsi</i> (Hooliganism) |
| | | <i>Boipoloko tseleng</i> (Road safety) |
| Natural Phenomena — | | <i>Komello</i> (Drought) |
| | | <i>Nako ya Hwetla</i> (Autumn) |
| | | <i>Pula ke mahlopha—a—senya</i> (Rain does good and harm at the same Time) |

The contents of the essays are conspicuously implied in the titles. Though Maphike (1978:15–18) classifies them into the above theme groups, inter alia, for convenience, they are all glaringly didactic in intent, with the exception of *Maipolelo* (an autobiography) and *Sheleng e pheta tsa bophelo ba yona*. Under didactic themes and Sotho customs, the reader is taught to know (like one who does not know), understand and appreciate the subject under discussion, whilst under social problems he shows the reader how disgusting drunkenness, hooliganism and negligence on roads are. This comes out very clearly in the emotive language he uses in his reference to abuse of liquor by "toddlers":

... e ne e le dijo tsa bontata rona moholo, tse neng di hlomphuwa di sa tanakellwe ke dikgohlwana tse hlamuketseng maminanyana;... (p. 7)
 (... it was our grandfathers' respected food, which was not messed with by slime besmeared "babies" ...)

The feeling of disgust is strengthened by the alliterative and onomatopoeic *dikgohlwana tse hlamuketseng* part of the utterance.

All these reflect on the simple likes and dislikes of the writer, which stem from his rural upbringing, contrasted with the impulsive urban behaviour that seems to totally disregard traditional African values. In *Morena Moshoeshoe* and *Senatla setjhabeng*, Moiloa seeks to extol kings Moshoeshoe and Chaka for their virtues of bravery and wisdom, his basic sources of information apparently being Mopeli—Paulus's *Moshweshwe Moshwaila* and Mofolo's *Chaka*, respectively (Maphike, 1978:70).

In *Maipolelo*, Moiloa is more original, probably because he is writing about himself. Maphike (1978:67) suggests that *Bongwana ba ka* (My childhood days) would have been a better title for this autobiography. Here Moiloa gives a vivid description of his upbringing on the "boereplaas", and how, after many years of faithful service, his father was expelled from the farm for having sent him to high school and for teacher training. This essay reflects the socio-economic circumstances of the farm hand of Moiloa's times, and the accompanying socio-political repression. Maphike (op cit) observes that "the farm hands' ambitions and aspirations were in the hands of the farmer. That they had likes and dislikes, was immaterial to the farmer." There is no trace of didacticism in this essay, and he is in high spirits throughout, like one reflecting on some kind of semi-slavery he was lucky to escape. This is unmistakable in the concluding words, "finish and klaar", a typical Africanism for "final". One thing comes out very clearly in this essay: to a farm owner, a Black man is good as long as he does not aspire to work his way from servitude to a better position in life. This essay is a manifestation of the workings of intersystemic forces.

The "autobiography" of the shilling (ten cent coin), is a more subtle reflection of Moiloa's knowledge of the circumstances of social life and commercial practice through which money goes, from the mint to dereliction in all kinds of bad weather after many years of restless service. Like A. Sewell's "Black Beauty", the story of a horse that complains of being overworked by man, who derives pleasure from its services, the now useless coin moans, "*Ka lahlwa jwalo ke le makumanenyana; ka rusa, ka ba*

mafome" (So I was thrown away mutilated; and became rusty and tarnished; p. 86). The story of this coin is very subtly analogous to the life of a farm hand as seen by Moiloa: as soon as his strength is spent up in the service of the farm boss, he is relegated to oblivion.

Didactic or otherwise, there seems to be some underlying thematic unity in most of Moiloa's essays. He would like us to look closer at things, and see deeper than the surface. His tone is mostly impersonal and matter-of-fact. Moiloa's essays are almost all formal in structure, comprising introduction, body and conclusion. This reflects on him as a conventionalist, probably because of his conservative upbringing on a "boereplaas".

6.3 K.E. NTSANE – SATIRIST

In his *Makumane*, a volume of eleven essays, Ntsane handles the following general themes:

| | | |
|--------------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| Social phenomena | – | <i>Lenyalo</i> (Marriage) |
| On Christianity | – | <i>Thapelo</i> (Prayer) |
| On Didactic themes | – | <i>Botle le bobo</i> (Good and Bad) |
| On Human Nature | – | <i>Ditsietsi</i> (Difficulties) |
| | | <i>Mosadi</i> (Woman) |
| | | <i>Botjha</i> (Youth) |
| | | <i>Boqheku</i> (Old Age) |
| | | <i>Lesowa</i> (A Bachelor) |
| | | <i>Lerato</i> (Love) |
| | | <i>Bohale</i> (Anger) |
| | | <i>Boithabiso</i> (Entertainment) |

In presenting marriage as a social phenomenon that occurs in all communities, in *Lenyalo*, Ntsane points out that there are three occasions in the course of one's life when white is worn: when a baby is baptised, on one's wedding day, and when one is in the coffin, being buried. He indicates that the colour white symbolises purity and happiness, though on the third occasion, happiness is not to be in this world. He emphasises that the bride's white gown symbolises the preciousness of marriage: an occasion on which

serious vows are taken as a matter of course, without giving them a thought, by people who are intoxicated with happiness and the presence of well-wishers. It is only in the quiet of the next day, when the multitudes have dispersed, that the situation is appraised: people outside, and the couple concerned, begin to ask silent questions. In due course true colours surface, and "*Ditshepisano tsa mohla monene? Botho! Botho bo jwang?*" (What about the mutual promises of yesterday? Human nature! How's human nature?; p. 56).

These suggestive questions and exclamation are manipulated, as only Ntsane could, to bring out forcefully the transience of human passion.

From marriage as a social phenomenon, Ntsane switches over to commenting on the unpredictable human nature, his main preoccupation throughout the book. He rounds off by pointing out that every heart desires peace, love and happiness, and *mme ana ke kgotso efeng, ke lerato lefeng, ke thabo efeng e ka fetang ya batho ba babedi, le ha ba ka fapana ka dibopeho...* (... and which peace, which love, which happiness can be better than that between two people, however different they may be from each other?; p. 57).

His theme, as message, is rather didactic:

e mong le e mong o na le mefokolo ya hae eo a tshwanelang ho e jarelwa (p. 57)

(everyone has his peculiar weaknesses, for which we ought to bear with him).

The only essay that is clearly on the christianity theme, *Thapelo*, presents a man who, being flogged, prays hard (begging for mercy), but in vain. The community is then presented going to church, on a particular day, to pray for rain, and a month passes with no sign of rain. A young man who observed all this demands an explanation from his learned uncle. He is told that God's ways of doing things cannot be understood by the human mind, and that no amount of prayer can alter God's ways to suit our own desires.

Though Ntsane keeps to his subject, prayer, throughout the essay, he does allude to human nature:

Ke hangata hakakang re rapellang dintho tseo re tsebang hantle hore di lokiseditswe kgale tlholehong hore di be kamoo di leng kateng!... (p. 10)

(A great many times have we prayed for things we know very well that it has been determined since the Creation that they be as they are...)

The underlying message here is that we should never expect too much, regardless of wherefrom. This confirms his son's observation that he "looked gentle but was, in essence, a hard man hiding behind jokes". The above quotation further confirms the contention that Ntsane felt that it was a futile exercise for the victim of the flogging to plead for mercy, seeing that he was destined to be flogged on that very day. It is not known what Ntsane's religion was before he embraced Catholicism in 1958, but the above views seem to indicate some contact with the Calvinist doctrine of predestination. They may also emanate from the fact that he had had to resign himself to the fact that he could not complete his loved journalism course in Kitwe Zambia, due to ill health – which was beyond his control. This is one of the very rare instances where Ntsane, a basically persuasive essayist, employs the narrative essay structure of embodying a story or anecdote to illustrate a point.

In the only essay on didactic themes, *Botle le bobé*, Christ and his disciples see a dead dog. His disciples cover their noses and flee from its stench, but He calls them back to see its beautiful white teeth. He asks them to show their own teeth, and they are found to be discoloured and ill-shaped. He then advises them, therefore, never to hasten to criticise anything, or anybody, for there isn't anything that is so bad that it has no grain of goodness which we lack. He then points out that humans see only what agrees with their own feelings, like horses wearing blinkers. They are easily swept by the stream of opinion, instead of assessing all aspects of a thing, a phenomenon which is the cause of all disharmony in the world. Ntsane cites several examples, and ends up by pointing out that good and evil are

forever at war, confusing people; hence the crucifixion of the Son of man for knowing that He was right. Though didactic in intent, this essay mirrors human nature very strongly. Using the slogan of the Moral Rearmament Movement, Ntsane's message is, "if I point my finger at my neighbour, there are three more pointing back at me".

Though *Thapelo* above is classified under "christianity", it is, like *Bottle le bobo*, didactic. It is also interesting to note that the latter also has the elements of a narrative essay. It cannot be attributed to chance that these instructional essays have the same narrative essay structure of Christ's parables. This points not only to this essay structure as most suitable for instruction, but also positively to intersystemic interaction.

As indicated earlier, most of Ntsane's essays are more directly a mirror of human nature. Two or three should suffice to illustrate this point, and confirm the view that, in fact, the whole volume contains comments on human nature.

In *Ditsietsi*, Ntsane discusses the difficulties or sufferings that are to be found everywhere, even in the midst of pleasures. He maintains that all suffering is equal, and that, if it was possible to exchange our troubles, we would want them back as soon as the exchange has been transacted. He admits, however, that difficulties sharpen man's desire to overcome them, and are truly an incentive to sound thinking and scientific advancement. For this reason, he expresses the wish that scientists and inventors be the only ones who suffer so that there should be greater scientific advancement and more inventions.

With this essay, Ntsane is merely ridiculing man's tendency to pass the buck, whenever he picks up a problem, instead of facing it and learning from it. He also scoffs at the human tendency to magnify one's own, and underrate other people's, be it positive qualities, problems or sufferings. Then there is *Mosadi*, wherein Ntsane portrays man's initial loneliness after his own creation, and how the Creator is moved to pity and the creation of a companion for the man – the woman. The woman's temptation by the snake leads to the man's falling out of favour with his creator. Then the

world is filled with people who take after their grandmother, Eve, and transgress laws. They are wiped out by means of the floods, with the exception of a few. These multiply and transgress again, and are punished with starvation and enslavement in a foreign land. When they are penitent they are freed to go to their own land. Again they transgress the law of humility and become arrogant. They then lose their kingship, and are placed under other tribes. Then the Creator became so magnanimous as to send His only son to be born of a woman, the very cause of misery in the world, to die for all. Ntsane then describes the irresistible features and deportment, which cause man to pawn his own life and risk all dangers to satisfy a woman. Ironically, she is said to be weak, but she moves the world. She is contrasted with a man to show their diametrically opposed qualities, making the man look the tenderer of the two. He then ends up by showing a woman as combining contradictory qualities: lovable and loathsome; kind and evil; sympathetic and cruel, etc.

Within the theme of human nature, Ntsane, though portraying a woman, is actually deriding man's folly: he likes to think of himself as being big and powerful, when he is so weak as to be manipulated by a woman. He is blind to her powers until she catches up with him; even then, he is too proud to admit it. Ntsane puts it very succinctly in truthful paradox:

Ha o rata o rate mosadi, ha o tshaba o tshabe mosadi. (p. 19)

(If you love, love a woman; if you fear, fear a woman).

In *Boqheku* Ntsane ridicules the old women who will do all they can to secure clothes and make-up to try and cover up their age. He alludes to their preference of youth for company, and take serious offence at any insinuation as to their age. The old men stay clean-shaven, lest the grizzly beard betrays their age. He marvels at the human being's desire for more and more of what he gets: he prays for longevity of life enough to educate his children; then to see them marry; then to see the first grand child; then to see them grow up, etc. Ntsane then points out that the lovable old people are those who go through their old age cheerfully, looking well after themselves, and giving valuable advice to the inexperienced youth. To him,

old age is the climax of a life well spent – the time when one should look back with pride at the distance travelled.

This essay is a didactic satire, scorning perverse tendencies among the aged and, at the same time, pointing the way. Like all of Ntsane's essays, it mirrors his eccentric interest in human nature. He is said to have asked questions as to why people did the things they did, especially those who returned from the mines, to the extent of going to work there to obtain first hand information.

Ntsane's essays do not retain the glaringly conventional introduction–body–conclusion structure. He employs a variety of variations of these components, ranging from anecdotal introductions, direct entries, to provocative questions, and concluding often abruptly and with a "twist in the tail". A tone easily associated with a sinister smile pervades the entire volume.

6.4 J.G. MOCOANCOENG – HUMANIST

Whilst Ntsane's essays reveal his interest in people's ways, his friend, J.G. Mocoancoeng, writes on a greater variety of themes, but mainly on traditional beliefs and customs, and on social phenomena and problems, as well as political ones. Their mutual influence is felt in the subtle satire that is present in Mocoancoeng's *Megoqo ya phirimana*. Though this book was initially regarded as an essay volume only, it has since come to light that the following are, in fact, short stories:

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| On socio–political subjects: | <i>Ha kgwedi e tjhaba</i> (when the moon shines) |
| On christianity: | <i>Moruti ya neng a fofele lehodimong</i> (The Pastor who once Flew to heaven) |
| Comments on Life: | <i>Tsela ya dikepe</i> (The Way of Ships) |

These are regarded as short stories because, in them, the narrator relates the story, from the beginning to the end without being heard to be making any point. The reader is left to make his own deduction as to the theme or message. As will presently be seen, in most of the essays, Mocoancoeng narrates a story to illustrate a point which he makes at the end. These are, therefore, narrative essays (Maphike, 1978:167), and are:

Ditoro tse bohloko (Bad dreams)

Matswelopele (The Civilised)

Monna ya neng a thunye Modimo (The man who once shot at God)

Moruti ya neng a fofele lehodimong (The priest who once flew to heaven)

Ha ke tla fumana sesene mohlhareng (How I got a gap between the molars)

Kganyapa ya Phiritona (The Heilbron tornado)

Moeti ya sa tsejweng (The Stranger)

In *Ditoro tse bohloko* Mocoancoeng tells how a schoolboy is frightened by a life-like picture of a python during a Biology lesson. At night he has a nightmarish dream of an encounter with a python in the bush, and disturbs the sleepers with his yell for help. Another boy pages through a book and comes across a picture of a fierce-looking Zulu warrior. At night he yells in his sleep, dreaming of an armed warrior chasing him. The third boy goes to the railway station to see arriving travellers, and is struck by the mean looks of the locomotive steam engine. He too wakes up everybody at night with his terrified cry as he, in his dream, is chased by the locomotive. At the end Mocoancoeng comments that *Di jwalo ditoro: ke ntho tse itsamaisetswang ke boko bosele bo mpang bo sa lebaleng kapele kapa ha bonolo* (That's how dreams are: they are things that proceed from the other mind that does not forget quickly or easily; p. 21). He then goes on to give a psychological explanation of bad dreams, and sleep walking. The aim here seems merely to make this phenomenon understood.

In *Matswelopele*, an old traditionalist ponders on whether the advent of the white man in Africa has been a blessing, or otherwise. He engages in an argument with the young 'narrator' who had paid up the dowry for his

bride but was preparing for the solemnising by the priest, thereby mixing up two cultures and belittling his own in the old man's opinion. The old man also points at the perverseness of women smoking. In the end the narrator's outlook is changed:

Tsietsi e ne e le hore yena Dipuo eo ke mo ratang sehloho sena se se nang ho lekannwa, o a tsuba o hlanyetsa marikgwe, o tlola dintho tseo monnamoholo a neng a bua ka tsona. Le dieta tsa hae di mo sitisa le ho tsamaya. (p. 24)

(The problem was that the very Dipuo I love so madly was a smoker and was crazy about slacks; she also used those cosmetics the old man was talking about. Even the shoes she wore made her walk clumsily.)

The difference between this essay and the short story is glaring: a problem is posed and illustrated by means of a story, and a point made at the end, based on the illustration. In this essay, Mocoancoeng satirises the conception of "being civilised" that prevailed in his times, viz. adopting the white man's ways, however ridiculous they may be in the face of African customs and culture.

Similarly, in *Monna ya neng a thunye Modimo*, Mocoancoeng tells a story of a farmer who, when his sheep had been killed by the elements, climbs onto the roof gun in hand, and points his gun into the sky "to shoot" Go, and dies in that position. He concludes with the words, "*Ha ho motho ya ka kwantshang Modimo a be a hlole* (No man can fight against God and win; p. 34).

In his pretended seriousness, Mocoancoeng ridicules the farmer who has grown accustomed to having power over all life on his farm. The satire becomes even more robust seen against the religious background of the farmers. Given the socio-political circumstances of the times as described earlier in this chapter, which still persist in certain quarters, one cannot help detecting some political undertones of typical African fashion in the words "*Ha ho motho ya ka kwantshang Modimo a be a hlole*". In difficult man-made circumstances, the African always takes solace in the words,

"God will intervene".

In *Moruti ya neng a fofele lehodimong*, Mocoancoeng tells of the priest who made himself wings and prepared to fly to heaven, from the steeple of the church, in full view of his congregands. After bidding them goodbye, he jumped up but went down very fast instead. Mocoancoeng's narrator ends the story with the remark that "*Ho ya o ile moo a neng a hopotse teng, empa e seng ka tsela e sa tshwaekwang baahi ba lefatshe lena*" (Indeed, he did go to his desired destination; but not in a way that was not meant for the inhabitants of this world; p. 37). This very robust satire lashes at religious fanaticism that leads people into all kinds of irrational behaviour.

If the above sarcastic conclusion of the story by the intrusive narrator is regarded as being outside the story, then this short story is likely, as in the first instance, to be mistaken for a narrative essay. *Ha ke tla fumana sesene mohlahareng* is a humorous narration of the writer's first experience with a toothache. At the end he tells of the uneasiness felt by one who has had such an experience on feeling any kind of discomfort at the roots of the teeth; and concludes with,

Ka moo nna ke seng ke hlonepha leino le bohloko ka teng, ke lakatsa eka ho ka etswa molao wa hore motho ya lakaletsang e mong ino le bohloko a tshwarwe... (p. 44)

(The way I respect a toothache, I wish a law could be enacted whereby anybody wishing someone else a toothache would be arrested...)

This essay has a strong general resemblance to Ntsane's *Ditsietsi*, but, while Ntsane ridicules the human tendency to overrate one's own troubles, Mocoancoeng ridicules the erratic behaviour of the toothache sufferer. The latter is, however, more subtle. In *Kganyapa ya Phiritona*, Mocoancoeng narrates the incidents that happened during and after the tornado that is said to have occurred in Heilbron, in 1941. Then he defines a tornado rather derisively in the light of African customary belief:

Kganyapa ke noha e tsejwang ke Mafrika feela. (p. 47)

(A tornado is a snake known only to Africans)

Seen against the fact that a tornado is a universal phenomenon, this statement becomes even more ridiculous. He compounds this by rounding off with:

Ha ke kgolwe hore ho na le tikatiko mabapi le ho ba teng ha noha ena, mobadi. Ke tshomo e monate bakeng sa ho tshosa bana ba thibaneng ditsebe (p. 47)

(I do not believe that there is any doubt as to whether or not such a snake exists, reader. It is a nice story to frighten naughty children).

This statement, viewed against the seriousness with which this belief is held by those who do, is another swipe at such folly. *Moeti ya sa tsejweng* is a solemn narration of the arrival of a stranger in an old village. He walks up to the ruins of what used to be his home, where he used to play joyfully with his brothers, sisters and friends. He then removes his hat and falls silently on his knees, oblivious of the many eyes piercing at him, and rises up again to retrace his course out of the village. An old woman then recalls that the family that once lived in that house was wiped out by a plague, with the exception of the eldest son who had been sent to school in England. There having been none of kin traceable, nor anybody willing to buy the house, it was kept locked to crumble gradually due to neglect and the elements. The writer then goes on to say:

Ha ho taba e bohloko jwaleka ena, mobadi. Tse hlahetseng monna eo wa batho ke tse ka nnang tsa hlahela mang kapa mang feela... Ho bohloko hakakang ho re: kgidi, re kile ra ne re phela ha e ne e sa le rona! (p. 55)

(There's nothing as painful as this, reader. What befell that poor man can happen to anybody. It is so sad to hear one say, "Man! we used to have life in abundance in our days").

It is this very point that Mocoancoeng illustrates with the above story. His

theme, the unpredicatability of life, is overtly stated in the concluding sentence of the essay:

Empa letsatsi ka leng le na le tsa lona; mehla e a fetoha e re tlele mohlomong le tse babang, mohlomong le dimonate. (p. 55)

(But each day has its own things; days vary, sometimes bringing us bitterness; and, on other occasions, pleasantness).

The rest of the essays in this book are, as the very titles indicate, persuasive, albeit in typical Mocoancoeng fashion. These are:

Dipoko le dithotsela (Ghosts and Zombies)

Thokolosi (The Tokolosh)

Marena a madiba (Kings of the deep)

Menyaka e meng (Other pleasures)

Kwae (Tobacco)

All these are satires, the first three on traditional beliefs, and the rest on human nature. In *Dipoko le dithotsela*, Mocoancoeng states in the opening paragraph that, *Ho boima ho hlalosa hantle "dibopuwa" tsena hobane ke makunutu a batho ba itseng feela, kapa di utluwa ka bo-ba-re* (It is difficult to explain exactly what these "creatures" are, because these are secrets of certain people, or are obtained by hear-say; p. 6). He marvels at the idea of a zombi being an exhumed corpse brought to life, and alludes to "Obe" in Jacottet's *Ditshomo tsa Basotho*, and observes:

Empa tjhe, ke tshomo ya Basotho... (p. 7)

(Anyway, it is only a Basotho tale)

He also states the belief that a ghost is the restless spirit of someone who is shut out of heaven and hell, or some rich man who died having hidden his treasures somewhere. He then shows how many a man has hired a car to go and dig up such treasures — in vain. He then puts it quite ridiculously that, *Ka mehla nna ha ke re ke fofonela nnete, ke utlwa ka nnyeo ya utlwileng ka Nnyeo, ya tsebang motho ya itseng ya kileng a bona sepoko kapa sona sethotsela.* (Whenever I try to find out the truth, I am told by someone who

was told by someone else who knows someone who once saw a ghost or a zombi; p. 10). This is a clear declaration of such beliefs as nonsensical. This same satire is unmistakable in *Thokolosi*, a mysterious being said to be used at night by witches and wizards, and *Marena a madiba*, some kind of serpents that are believed to live in deep expanses of water and have some strange "magnetic" power to lure people and animals to them when hungry. Of the latter he, obviously unbelievably, says:

*Ke hlanya hanyenyane ha ke nahana hore hana mohla ke lakatsehang,
ke tla tloha ha ka mona ke sa thijwe, ke kgile ka saole ho ikisa lefung la
ka mane bodibeng. (p. 17)*

(I get a little mad when I think that, by the way, the day I am desired, I will leave my home unstopably, running to my own death, down in the deep).

Mocoancoeng's mocking disbelief of such beliefs is glaring in these concluding words.

In *Menyaka e meng*, the tendency to see more fun in foreign practices than in one's own way of life is scoffed at. The clumsy handling of fork and knife, inter alia, in an attempt to be sophisticated, is ridiculed, and the Westerner's enjoyment of eating without utensils is spotlighted in the "braaivleis" occasions.

Kwae, though satirical, is also strongly didactic. From the onset Mocoancoeng starts naming all the good things which tobacco is none of. He then tells how many thousands of people, including its former consumers, have cursed it and denounced it, whilst many more still venerate it and coin up impressive eulogues to honour it. After briefly tracing its history, he virtually teaches the reader all the evils of tobacco, alluding mockingly to how it fritter's away the very things man holds dear: money and health. It also deprives him of his freedom, for once its slave, always its slave. In the end he declares categorically, "*Ha ho molemo wa letho ho kwae.* (There's nothing good in tobacco; p. 41), and concludes with an exclamation that crowns his lampoon on tobacco "slaves":

Empa na monate wa yona! (p. 41)
 (But, great guns, its pleasantness!)

6.5 RESUMÉ₁

While Moiloa writes on almost every subject and a variety of themes, showing no peculiar interest, there are two factors that seem to unify Ntsane and Mocoancoeng: interest in human nature and satire. Both had a keen sense of humour, with Ntsane letting people do things so that he could watch them and ridicule anything wayward in what they did. Mocoancoeng did things himself in so humorous a manner that, as a teacher, his colleagues are said to have liked looking into his classes and listening whilst he was conducting lessons. Strangely enough, he is said to have loved frightening stories for children. This explains his impulse to write on *Dipoko le dithotsela*, *Thokolosi* and *Marena a madiba*. Moiloa's unique contribution is the autobiographical type of essay. All three made a valuable contribution to this period of Southern Sotho literary development.

While Moiloa and Ntsane were inclined to description and explanation, with minimal narration, Mocoancoeng on the other hand, was given to narration even in his essays. There is such a fine distinction between his short stories and his illustrative stories that some readers fail to see the difference. In fact for some time now the essay—short story dichotomy has been some puzzle, even to some scholars. We shall attempt to sort this problem out presently, before discussing the short story in Sesotho.

6.6 THE ESSAY VS THE SHORT STORY

While both the essay and short story are classifiable under the umbrella term "short art", the following distinctive differences should be noted:

The essay has to do with realities in that it reflects the writer's personal view or opinion regarding the subject he is writing about. The subject may be concrete or abstract, but it is real. The short story, on the other hand, is a work of fiction, i.e. the author writes about creations or figments of his own imagination — things that are not real, but are simulated realities.

While the essay describes, explains or discusses objects, situations or phenomena, the short story narrates the activities of characters. As explained earlier, there is an overlap here between the essay and the short story. But the basic difference between the two is that the essay always seeks to "explain" while the latter has "narration" as an end. When the narration of a story or an anecdote is used in the course of an explanation, to illustrate a point, and is followed by confirmative comments, then we are looking at an essay. But when events are narrated from beginning to end, without the persona commenting on them (using them to explain something else), then we are having a short story.

Mocoancoeng's *Matswelopele* (1982:22 – originally 1953) commences in this fashion:

Na ekaba ho fihla ha makgowa karolong ena ya naha ya Afrika ho bile le molemo...?

(Has the arrival of the Whiteman in this part of Africa been a blessing...?)

The arrival of the whiteman is a reality that is being discussed. It is not imaginary or fictitious. This introductory question is followed by an anecdote in which the results of the said arrival are illustrated. We do not need much explanation to understand that we are handling an essay here.

Tsela ya dikepe begins in this fashion:

Lapeng le leng la motse o lebopong la lewatile... (1982:1)

(In a certain house in a town along the coast...)

The story goes on up till the following ending:

Hara ba neng ba le teng moo ya be e le mosadi yane wa Modimo... a tadima feela empa meokgo ya nna ya re tsui! A thola feela, mme ka pelo a re: Ho laetse Ya sa arabisweng... le dumme... (1982:5)

(Among those who were there, was that poor woman... she only looked quietly as the tears rolled down, and said to herself: He has commanded who cannot be gainsaid... let it be...)

There is no questioning the fact that this is a short story.

6.7 THE SHORT STORY

This is, and has always been, the most neglected genre in Southern Sotho, probably because of its closeness to the novel. There are only three books published within this period, one of which is, in fact a mere collection of folk-tales, in typical folk-tale structure and rendition, and can hardly be classified as a volume of short stories. This book, *Moririkhohlo le litšomo tse ling* (Moririkhohlo and other Tales) by I. Mothibi, will, therefore, not be discussed here. The first ever short story volume in Sesotho is *Sebogodi sa Ntsoana-tsatsi* (The Sentry of Ntsoanatsatsi), written by C.R. Moikangoa in 1943.

6.8 C.R. MOIKANGOA – MYTHOLOGIST

Cornelius Rakgosi Moikangoa, the eldest of ten children, was born in 1878 in the vicinity of Villiers, in the Orange Free State. He obtained his primary education in Masianokeng, in Lesotho, and then proceeded to Morija for his intermediate, high school and teacher training studies. He took up a teaching post at Lovedale in Alice, where he taught for many years. He married Nombini Thabitha Malgas, a daughter of an Anglican Canon in Middledrift. Some time after her untimely death, he married Marina Sara Opperman (herself a teacher) in 1925. In 1926 he reluctantly accepted his own elevation to the first Black Inspector of Native Education in the Cape. He had keen interest in community activities, and, together with his wife (Marina), was a member of the St. John Ambulance Movement. He held some first aid diplomas issued by the St. John Ambulance Association. His favourite sport was tennis. He retired prematurely in 1948, due to blindness. The stories in his book *Sebogodi sa Ntsoana-Tsatsi* were composed in his blindness. His brother's daughter-in-law, Matšelis, typed his manuscript whilst he dictated. He

was originally a Presbyterian, but later joined his wife in the African Methodist Episcopal Church. He settled in Bloemfontein, but liked travelling to his eldest son's place in Kliptown, Johannesburg. Whilst there, he was escorted by his young daughter, Dawn (the source of this information) to ANC meetings which he never missed. He died in Kliptown on 26 September 1957, and was buried there. His daughter Motšabi Dawn (Now Mrs Mandleni) remembers him for encouraging children to study and become doctors, always saying "it is never too late to learn. Even if you fail, never fail to try again." Having lived long before the advent of Bantu Education, Moikangoa is clearly a product of African upbringing (the Lesotho environment) coloured by missionary education, reinforced by the faith of his in-laws. Like all Blacks of his time, he worked under circumstances that were characterised by a de facto apartheid system: hence he was inspector under a segregated education department.

This book is divided into three parts, each being a complete story. In the preface, Moikangoa expresses his gratitude to Mrs. May Ester Bedford for the prize that was awarded to this book. This May Ester Bedford prize was, as is known, actually established by Dr and Mrs Mumford in London, in 1935, to counter the post-Mofolo literary stagnation in African languages.

In the first story, '*Maphunye*, an unusually pretty and good-natured girl, bearing the title name (born of chief 'Musetsi's son, Makhothi), disappears in a pool for six days in accordance with her uncle's divination at her birth. On the seventh day she returns a changed girl, allegedly from the land of the ancestors. She has mysterious powers of healing and divining, which she uses in the general interests of the community. Her own account of the ancestral land has a very strong religious flavour, referring to different regions specially demarcated for seven kinds of people based on their life-style whilst on earth. Gérard's contention (1971:156) that this story "almost reads like a deliberate vindication and revaluation of the ancestor cult" sounds rather hard and resolute.

With this story, Moikangoa seems to be attempting to reconcile Sesotho traditional beliefs (the link between the living and the dead) with the

christian influences of his own missionary education, and his work in the very educational system. Rather than vindicate one, he seeks to reconcile the traditional conception of the hereafter (based on culture) with the christian conception (based on the current educational system). The seventh region of the ancestral land is analogous to hell, the place where it is to be found people of whom it is said *moiketsi ha a lleloe* (A victim of his own doing deserves no sympathy; p. 28). He also seeks to promote the Sotho value of respect for elders by presenting the heroine ('Maphunye) as an exemplary child:

Habo lapeng e n'e le ngoan'a setsoha-le-pelo-ea-maobane. O n'a sa tsebe ho hlonama le ho topolela 'm'ae molomo ha a n'a mo kgalemela, a mo laea joaleka motsoali. (p. 3)

(At her home, she was of constantly pleasant disposition. She never turned sulky when her mother chided her, remonstrating with her, as is expected of a parent).

The vivid descriptive compound *ngoan'a setsoha-le-pelo-ea-maobane*, Mofolo's coinage for describing his own Fekisi (vide *Moeti oa Bochabela*; 1907) seems to mirror on intertextuality, while sulking is expressed in the appropriate imagery of pouting lips.

In the second story, *Mathomela le Ntsetsana* (Mathomela and Ntsetsana) a young man, Mathomela, remarks about the beauty of chief Thobejane's daughter, Ntsetsana, unaware that the chief is eavesdropping from behind a boulder. He observes that he is something worth dying for. Three days later, the chief summons everybody to a gathering at the *kgotla*, where it is known that someone who has offended him is going to meet his death. Mathomela decides, against his friend's advice, to face the consequences of his desire, rather than disgrace his family by running away. The chief's executioner taunts the dauntless Mathomela with a spear before stabbing him in the leg, whereupon the chief orders a stay of execution, and grants Mathomela's wish to marry his daughter. Eventually, Mathomela is appointed appeal judge at the tribal court.

Over and above showing that courage is rewarded, this story advocates honour above personal safety. The latter consideration is presented so robustly as to suggest the influence of Spartan education, which featured in the Junior Certificate History syllabus before the advent of Bantu Education.

In the third and last story, *Sebolelo le Fakendhlini*, Sebolelo is married to Fakendhlini, the son of Mzondeki, in strict accordance with traditional Sesotho procedure. Fakendhlini turns out to be a drunkard and ruffian, who beats her up each time he is drunk. She ultimately takes her baby and absconds to her parents' home at dead of night. On hearing distant drum sounds and a singing horde of people coming in the opposite direction, she scurries to a tree on the way-side for shelter in its thick foliage, and sits securely on the branches. They turn out to be witches and wizards who rendezvous nightly under the very tree for practice and initiation of new recruits, amongst whom is her own mother. She climbs down the tree in the morning, and proceeds homeward, where she is fondly received by her family. A beast is slaughtered, and her mother dishes out the meat in dishes specified for each person, and for the men. A few minutes after having her meal, Sebolelo's mother lay dead. A diviner declares that she is responsible for her own death. Sebolelo then tells how she switched her dish with her mother's and describes the night escapade, where her own death was prescribed for her mother's final graduation into a full-fledged witch. This story mirrors on the author's contact with the Nguni (the names) and the Sotho socio-cultural milieu. My informant remembers driving with her father past one village, along the way to the south, and her father telling her how notorious it was for witchcraft.

The masterly manipulation of causality in this simple story, and the surprise ending accounted for by flash-back are very impressive, and reflect on Moikangoa's artistic potential.

The sub-theme of this story is spotlighted by Sebolelo's flight from physical assault to a close shave with death. With this incident Moikangoa seems to mirror the Sotho ideal of "once married, married." The main theme focuses on the Sesotho saying that *ha o tjhekela motho lemena, ho tla wela wena*,

meaning that if one plans ill against somebody, it might boomerang. While *'Maphunye* is a combination of christian ideals with Sotho values, the other two stories reflect on the universal values of courage and honour, and moral principles, respectively. All three, however, seek to promote sound social principles. This is laudable pioneering into a literary field that was till this stage untapped.

6.8 S.M. MOFOKENG – MEDITATOR

S.M. Mofokeng's *Leetong* (On a Journey) is a Sesotho short story volume about which P.S. Groenewald (1970:58) says "is een van die rypste en verdienstelikste werke in die Sothotale", because, inter alia, "die verhale is in konstruksie en opset egter volkome europees," He bases his argument on the deviation from the usual (traditional) folk-tale and animal stories, and, perhaps, the fact that this genre was already commonplace in Western Literature at the time of its advent in Sesotho literature. Considering the fact that Groenewald is an authority in Northern Sotho literature, this is a noteworthy recognition of Mofokeng's contribution.

As is typical of Mofokeng, his first story, *Mona pela tsela* (Here by the roadside), sets the tone of the entire volume. In this story, Tumelo, a young orphan from Lesotho, impresses his farm boss with his dedication to work, and is soon given more responsibility, much to the disgust of the "old" farm hands. One of them plants dagga under his pillow and alerts the police. Tumelo is arrested and sentenced to a six-month prison term. On completion of his sentence, he is handed a note for "protection" against the police. Fearing his farmer boss, he cannot return to the farm, where he had already acquired a few livestock, and had been engaged to one Tselane. But he fails to get other employment because of the stigma of the protective note from prison, which replaces his "pass" document. He spends night after night along the roadside, having failed to get a job, until he accepts his plight as what life means.

Over and above showing how petty jealousy can undo one with good intentions, Mofokeng portrays the plight of the Black man (especially the farm worker) in the Orange Free State in his days, when his whole life was

anchored on a piece of paper called a "pass". He focuses on the painful manner in which the inherently painful "pass laws" were administered:

A bomadimabe bo bokaakang ha toka e tsamaiswa ke ba sa boneng, ba thuswa ke ba sa boneng, ba sehloho...! (p. 6)

(How unfortunate it is that justice should be administered by the blind, who are helped by blind, cruel people...!)

The above exclamation reflects more vividly than any number of statements on the unjustness of the justice system of the land at the time. There is a subtle analogy between Tumelo's circumstances and his own at the time of writing the book. Tumelo is in desperate need of help (employment), but one prospective employer and the other refers him to another, or turns him down, because of the stigmatic note. Mofokeng is in desperate need of help in his spiritually paralysing ailment, but doctor after doctor refers him to the next, hoping that he might come up with something. The only time Tumelo is at peace with the world is at night, by the wayside: free from fear of police harassment, unwelcome stirs and abuse. In the still of the night, Mofokeng can reflect on his own circumstances and the inevitable, and grasp the true meaning of life. He then equates his own situation with Tumelo's, and everybody's, and rises above the limited worldly conception of things. To him, each night's rest (wherever one may be) is a pause in life's journey to eternity:

... bohle re baeti lefatsheng, mme bohle re phomola ka mehla pela tsela mantsiboya, re imamella seo re tla se etsa ka le hlahlamang hape leetong. (p. 18)

(... we are all travellers in this world, and we all rest along the roadside at night, and ponder over what we shall do on the next day of the journey).

Mofokeng's higher education enables him to draw from a number of disciplines. He knows that the end of life forms is the beginning of new ones. He also knows that true solace is drawn from resigning oneself, as he has done, to christian faith. He seems to be consoling the reader, whose circumstances may, in one way or another, be analogous to Tumelo's by

referring to the hereafter:

... ka le leng o ne a tla fihla qetellong ya tsela... a yo fihla makgulong a matala, qetellong ya leeto, ya boleleri, hae ho mmae le ntatae. (p. 19)

(... one day he would get to the end of the road... he would arrive at the green pastures, at the end of the journey, of wandering, home to his mother and father.)

Mofokeng's message in this story, therefore, is that, amidst life's tribulations, we should take courage in the hope of a better tomorrow.

In *Ke toro feela*, Molahlehi has but a day to descend into the mine shaft before going home at the end of his two year contract. He is day—draming of his imminent meeting with his family and his earlier fears of the mine. On this, his last day, he keeps feeling like it is a dream that he is going back home, and even feels some disconcerting uncertainty after a strange dream of some force that prevented him from reaching home. Whilst they are down the mine, an explosion occurs and he is extensively injured while his friend and compatriot, Tatolo, is killed.

The title of this story, though the themes are opposant, betrays some influence from H.W. Longfellow's "A Psalm of Life", the opening lines of which are,

Tell me not in mournful numbers
Life is but an empty dream;
For the soul is dead that slumbers,
And things are not what they seem...

Whilst Longfellow's basic message concerns itself with the reality of the soul,

Dust thou art, to dust returnest
Was not spoken of the soul.

Mofokeng is concerned with the futility of man's earthly endeavours in the face of fate:

Ka nqa e nngwe e re hopotsa nnete e hlabang maikutlo a rona ho feta nnete tsohle lefatsheng, e leng nnete ya hore tsohle di na le moo di fellang teng — ... esita le bona bophelo ba rona. (p. 29)

(On the other hand, it reminds us of the truth that hurts our feelings more than any other truth in the world, namely, that everything has an end — ... even our very lives).

Once more Mofokeng portrays a situation in which he finds himself. He is himself the archetype of Tumelo, the character of his own creation. Tumelo's dreams of the things he would do back home, mirror on his own high aims which have been shattered by the realisation that he now lives on borrowed time. That is why he says, of Tatolo's accident,

Kotsi kapa tsietsi le ha e le bohloko e na le hona ho bula mahlo a rona, ho re ruta tseo mohlomong re neng re sa di ele hloko. (p. 31)

(An accident or mishap, painful as it may be, can open our eyes and teach us the things we often take for granted).

Mofokeng's message is clear: on our own, all our dreams are but a dream. We cannot miss the religious implications of this message.

Panana le tamati is the story of an old Indian fruit and vegetable hawker, who takes regular rounds through the dusty township streets, in spite of teasing and fruit snatching by location children. The setting is obviously the old Western Native Township, where Mofokeng lived. This Indian is wealthy and can do without these rounds, but is impelled by a strong desire to provide a service. In due course, he is no longer seen in the streets, and people start asking. They then remember seeing vehicles in a funeral procession departing from the vicinity of his home. It strikes them that it could have been the old Indian, fondly referred to as *Panana le tamati* (Banana and tomato). The children begin to miss him. Their parents miss his fruits and vegetables, and his monotonous "*pana-a-na, tama-a-ti*" song.

Like in the first two stories, Mofokeng draws attention to the things we tend to take for granted. He points out the virtue of service by elevating the humble, humdrum routine rounds of an Indian hawker, dedicated more to service than gain. Whilst he was there, nobody took notice of him. It is his absence that brings his importance to the fore. Mofokeng elevates him from the dusty streets to higher glory:

Ra tseba hore o phomotse Moreneng ka ha a ne a sebeletsa Morena ka ho thusa bana ba Morena. Ra tseba hore bophelo boo a neng a bo teletse ba bang o bo fumane hape Haeng le sa feleng. (p. 39)

(We then knew that he rested in the Lord's kingdom for he had served the Lord by helping His children. We knew that the life he had given up for others, he had got back at the everlasting home).

The formularity of *Morena/Moreneng* emphasises Mofokeng's religious outlook, and the idea of getting back the life given up for others is clear intertextuality, while being "at the everlasting home" is glaringly sermonic.

Humility is linked with higher glory in typical christian fashion that is reminiscent of Christ's rise from the stable to the divine throne. More directly, Mofokeng seems to be saying that, in time the lowly shall be elevated.

Ruthe, in effect, strongly resembles the biblical Ruth, though its setting is a typical Free State boereplaas. In this story, the late Gert Snyman's widow (Mmamosa, to the Basotho farm hands) lives on their farm "Thabong" (Happiness) together with Mmasebolai (Marie to her), also a widow of her late husband's devoted employee and friend. They are both elderly, and, with the passage of time, have become intimate friends. Mmamosa's married son, Petros, who now lives in the big city, has written to say she should sell the farm and come to stay with him. Both women become very sad at the prospect of parting, with Mmasebolai, whose sons have disappeared, having nowhere to go. Mmamosa recalls how, after her husband's death, Rasebolai had managed the farm ably and honestly up till his own death; and how she had invited Mmasebolai to live with her in the

farm—house in appreciation of her late husband's loyalty. Rather than abandon Mmasebolai in her old age, she decides to stay on the farm.

All Groenewald says about *Ruthe* and its theme is that the story is "belangrik, omdat die skrywer die tema metafoeries rondom die eenvoudige intrige ontwikkel" (1970:61). Having been born and spent his early years, in the farming town of Fouriesburg, in the Eastern Free State, Mofokeng has obviously witnessed the plight of many a farm worker who had been dumbed for various reasons, including the urbanisation he alludes to in this story. He also remembers that most of the farmers are Calvinists whose mostly read literature is the Bible. He then refers Mmamosa (who represents the benefactors from farm labour) to the book of Ruth for the answer to her indecision. The magnitude of her decision, and its far-reaching result, is graphically compared to Ruth's:

Mantswe a Ruthe a ne a lla pelong ya hae: "Ke tla dula moo o dulang, tjhaba sa hao e tla ba tjhaba sa ka mme Modimo wa hao e tla ba Modimo wa ka. Ke tla shwa mo o shwang, ke epelwe teng..." (p. 51)

(Ruth's words rang in her mind: "I will live where you live; your people shall be my people, and your God shall be my God. I shall die where you will die, and there be buried...")

Ironically, it is the mistress of the farm who stands in the humble position of Ruth. She is over-awed by the implications of her own decision — more to those who are dependent on her (represented by Marie) than to herself. With this story, Mofokeng seeks to prick the conscience of those who benefit from the services of the less privileged. He seems to be saying remember their "sweat, toil and tears." In contrast to Senkatana's people in *Senkatana*, by the same writer, Mmamosa reflects that, *Eka ba ho hloka teboho ha nka mo furalla nakong ena ha a se a tsofala, a se a hloka bathusi*" (It would be grossly ungrateful of me to abandon her at this stage when she is aging: when she is in need of helpers; p. 51).

Swanepoel (1987:68) points out that, in this short story, "conflict is used as a vehicle for the portrayal of racial harmony" and that "the text shows how

the so-called "race relations" can simply become "human relations" with the potential of being highly affectionate, especially between people who have known one another for many years." He sees the request of Mmamasa's son as a "challenge to the strength of their mutual affection" that is put especially to the Afrikaans woman as the stronger partner. The end result is perceived by Swanepoel as a reversal of "the traditional "master-servant" relationship – in those days even stronger than today – into one of common human affection" (1987:69). Thus Swanepoel sees in this story a portrayal of affection more than gratitude, in spite of Mmamasa's *E ka ba ho hloka teboho ha nka mo furalla nakong ena ha a se a tsofala...*" (p. 51 – see above).

Hosasa (In the morning) has its setting in Johannesburg's Western Native township, and portrays the silent sufferings of the masses under the heavy socio-economic yoke of city life. Hurrying home from work, Molefi crosses a busy Johannesburg street without watching out, and is almost overrun by a car. He is absent-minded, worrying about his ailing wife whom he left bedridden in the morning. His earnings cannot meet the medical fees and the cost of family upkeep. The tram passes his stop without him being aware, and he alights a stop farther from his home. He, consequently, has to walk the distance in the cold, dark winter evening. He is so preoccupied with his problems that he is oblivious of the danger that lurks in the dark. He passes out after being struck on the head with some object. Hours later he arrives home with an ugly gash on the head, and, when his wife opens the door, falls into the house, and passes out again. She forgets about her own illness and starts worrying about the morrow (*hosasa*) and every possibility.

Without being intrusive in his narration, Mofokeng presents the weight of the city socio-economic conditions on Molefi's very soul unequivocally:

Molefi o ne a ntse a itsamaela, a ikakgela pele, pele moo mohopolo wa hae o leng teng, moo pelo ya hae e leng teng – moo bothata bo mo emetseng, moo mosadi wa hae a leng diphateng. (p. 83)

(Molefi kept walking, dragging himself on, to where his thoughts were, where his heart was — where problems awaited him, where his wife was bedridden).

The use of *a ikakgela pele* (hobbling forward) for 'walking' makes the process very laborious and hints at the troubles that weigh down on Molefi. The syntactic parallelisms commencing with *moo...* reflect the rhythm and regularity with which his problems flash across his mind in the process. Mofokeng rubs in the fact that these severe living conditions pertain only to the Black man by making Molefi take notice of the warm, brightly lit homes of a white suburb as the tram passess its streets — a sharp contrast with Molefi's own circumstances:

A bososela hanyenyane ha a elellwa hore ha se bohle ba makaqabetsing jwalo ka yena... Empa ho bososela ho sefahlehong sa hae ha omella teng ya ka ho senama ha motho ya hlajwang ke dihlong ha a hopola ha hae. (p. 88)

(He smiled a little when he realised that it was not everybody who was hard pressed like himself... But the smile on his face solidified into the grin of one who is ashamed at the thought of his own home).

Like in *Mona pela tsela*, Mofokeng reflects strongly on the Black man's plight in White South Africa. The broader concept 'tomorrow' is nightmarish to the Black general labourer, who lives from hand to mouth because of the prevailing socio-political and socio-economic conditions. This is the underlying idea throughout, and it comes out more strongly at the end of the story as a result of the repetition of *hosasa* (tomorrow):

A ba a kgaleha pelong ya hae ho ntse ho duma lentswe le le leng, lentswe le tlisang diqubuqubu tsa ditsietsi... HOSASA, HOSASA. (p. 89)

(She even dosed off whilst, in her mind, one word kept ringing; a word that spelled lots of troubles.. TOMORROW, TOMORROW).

In more colloquial terms, the theme here is inequality of man, or starvation in the midst of plenty.

In *Bonnotshing*, Mofokeng creates a character, Motsamai, who relates his own journey with a friend, Sello. They undertake a trip on horseback across Lesotho to Sehonghong (*Ha Ntaote*). On their second night in the open, they are joined by an elderly man, Motsamai Mosiya, who had been lured to them by their fire, and brings game for roasting. During their conversation, he turns out to be one who has lost his entire family by some infectious disease. He had then moved onto the mountains with his livestock, where he found true peace and solace in the quietness of nature. In his own solitude, he felt closer to the Creator than ever before: far from all kinds of hypocrisy and pretension.

The theme in this story alludes to the relationship between man and nature. Unlike in *Hosasa*, where man suffers quietly whilst surrounded by many laughing friends and neighbours, Mofokeng depicts the plight of a man who had lost all that was dear to him through illness. There is a striking converse relationship between Mofokeng's circumstances and his character's. While Mosiya's family was lost to him by dying, Mofokeng's loss of those who were dear to him was imminent through him dying. But, seeing that he will die alone, he will, like Mosiya, be separated from everybody. It is only in such solitude that one can reflect, undisturbed, on the meaning of life. In such solitude, one hears "*pina e buang le maikutlo a bolawang ke bodutu hara bosiu, ba ikutlwang ba lahlehile lefatsheng...*" (... a song that speaks to lonely feelings of night, those who feel lost in this world...; p. 96–7).

Though the setting in this story is traditional Lesotho, the underlying message is sophisticated and has religious implications: when all is lost, you still have your peace, just look around. In a sense this theme can be seen against the background of Job in the Bible. At the end, the thread of the main theme of the book is connected, as the narrating character relates, *Ka le hlahlamang, ha re tswela pele leetong... mantswe a hae a ne a ntse a fihla ditsebeng tsa rona*". (On the next day, when we resumed our journey, ... his words kept coming to my mind; p. 106). This links with the point made in the first story (*Mona pela tsela*), and repeated in various ways in subsequent stories: life is a journey.

At the end of a journey, the traveller arrives home. The last story in this book is appropriately entitled *Hae* (Home). In this story, Mofokeng emerges from the background, and relates his own experiences with a fellow patient at the hospital. Without naming him, he tells of his systematic drifting, over many months, from Zambia to an unknown paradise, Johannesburg. He only refers to him as *motswalle wa ka* (my friend) or *blulu* (from Afrikaans "broer"), when he apostrophizes him. This "friend" has left his two wives and children behind in search of greener pastures, hoping to go back home well off. As a Black man, he encounters countless problems relating to pass laws, working conditions, and urban social conduct. He ends up in hospital, where he makes the author's acquaintance, and, together, they await the great day when they can be told "you are going home". On some days he fondly repeats the words "I'm going home" with a sparkle in his eyes (albeit in his own characteristic way). But, one morning, the author wakes up to find his friend's bed removed and placed outside, and he understands that he has "gone home".

This story is not only the end of the book, but also the conclusion of what was introduced in the first story, *Mona pela tsela*. Like the first story it abounds in socio-political allusions that reflect on the unenviable plight of the Black man in this country. After commenting on the differences between himself and his "friend", Mofokeng goes on to say:

... o ne a ntse a ikutlwa a nkatametse haholo ka ha nna le yena, jwale ka nna le wena, re tshwere bothata bo le bong, mahlomola a rona a le mang. (p. 107)

(... he still felt a lot closer to me as he and I, like you and I, have identical problems, our miseries being the same).

He is obviously addressing the (Black) reader, with whom he identifies strongly. Further on, in the same page, telling of how the Zambian first heard of Johannesburg, he says:

Setumo sa Egepeta ena ya rona se ne se ile sa mo fihlela hona teng motseng oo a neng a iphelela ho wona. (p. 150)

(The fame of this Egypt of ours reached him whilst there in the town where he lived).

The reflexive prefix *i-* in *iphelela* above has the additional semantic import of "unperturbed", i.e. he lived relatively peacefully in Zambia before departing for this "Egypt".

To Mofokeng, there is no difference between the Black man's circumstances in South Africa and those of the Israelites who, though they ate and drank enough in Egypt, were in bondage. In a manner that is typical of his own longing, contained mainly in his essay volume *Pelong ya ka* (In my heart), he alludes to everybody's natural desire:

Ka matsatsi ohle re ntse re lakatsa tswelopele ya nnete, re ntse re lakatsa ho atamela tlhweko le phethahalo ya nnete: ekare ho na le se re hulelang botteng bo phethahetseng, kgotsong ya nnete.... (p. 108)

(Everyday we yearn for real progress, whilst longing to get nearer purity and perfection: as if something draws us towards absolute goodness, perfect peace...)

This latter statement, seen against the two former ones, brings out the Black man's frustrations clearly, and his disgust at being addressed offensively, regardless of age, by a young white policeman, "*a phahamisitse lentswe jwale ka pohwana* (shouting at the top of his voice like a bullock; p. 112).

But the theme in this story comes out more clearly when viewed in the context of the whole book. While all the stories have to do with human relationships and the tribulations of the Black people, the underlying unifying thought is that all these are transient — they all form part of the journey that was introduced in *Mona pela tsela*:

... ka le leng o ne a tla fihla qetellong ya tsela, ... qetellong ya leeto...
(p. 19)

(... one day he would come to the end of the road... the end of the journey...)

The conclusion of this story (which is the conclusion of the book), links well with the conclusion of the first story:

O ne a fihlile qetellong ya leeto, e ne e le moeti wa Morena ya tswileng mathateng moo lefu le bohloko di tshajwang – o ne a fihlile HAE. (p. 10)

(He had come to the end of the journey; he was the guest of the Lord, who was out of all tribulation, where death and suffering were dreaded – he had come HOME).

From the humble earthly concepts of journey and home, Mofokeng rises to the divine. The soothing effect at the end of this story, and of the book, cannot be missed. There can be no gainsaying of religious influence, and Mofokeng's own resignation to the inevitable.

While every story in this volume has its own beginning and an end, they are structured to constitute a coherent whole, the book, with a subtly discernible introduction at the end of the first story, and an end that links well with the beginning. The title of the volume is a clever lead as to the unity of the contents of the book.

This is a great contribution by Mofokeng to Sesotho literature, and the best in the genre to date.

Both Moikangoa's and Mofokeng's writings exhibit missionary influence, though the former tends to retain certain Sotho values and blends them to promote sound social relationships. Mofokeng does not confine himself to social relationships within the Sotho socio-cultural set-up. He reflects on a variety of inter-cultural, socio-economic and socio-political attitudes, and protests against racial discrimination – he sees virtue in an old Indian who is just overlooked by everybody else. The voice of his higher education, and his understanding of religious doctrines, speaks up and assures him (and his readers) that no man is greater than God, and that He is the end.

6.9 RESUMÉ₂

The essay, a literary sub-system that was unknown even to Sesotho oral literature, became firmly entrenched during this period. In time it moved from the ill-conceived peripheral strata to the canonised centre to be utilised by Sesotho authors of Ntsane's calibre to advise and to lampoon man's inherent waywardness. The ease with which Mofokeng, in his essays, invites the reader to ponder along with him over matters of life and the beyond, thinking deeply about every situation, shows the importance of the transfer of the essay into the Sesotho literary system and its conversion into the central stratum. The function it performs cannot be better performed by any other sub-system of Sesotho literature.

While Moiloa adheres to the conventional structure of this sub-system, Mofokeng, Ntsane and Mocoancoeng (especially the latter two), joined the later generation of authors whose works are characterised by more exploration and greater experimentation. This is evidenced in the structural intersection between essay and the short story exhibited mainly by Mocoancoeng's narrative essays, and, to some extent, by Ntsane's persuasive essays. Mofokeng's works exhibit more thematic overlap and intersection than structurally. This is evident in all his three works which show an interplay of fictionality and realism. Unlike the essay which is a total import, transferred and converted at the centre of the Sesotho literary system, the short story (as it is today) can be traced to the traditional *tshomo*. The extension of its purpose to beyond cultural moral considerations as a result of intersystemic interaction, led, through progressive thematic and structural intertextuality, to the new sub-system as distinct from its source in style (rendition), theme and structure.

The above intersystemic processes could be credited for the basic structural similarities between the narrative essay and the short story that conceal to many an eye the basic distinctions of realism and reasoning as against fiction.

Sesotho literature does owe these authors a debt, not only for importing and developing the continental model of an essay in Sesotho, but also for importing the short story model that enabled succeeding generations of authors to convert the *tshomo* to the central stratum in accordance with the selection rules pertaining to model, theme and style.

CHAPTER SEVEN
CONCLUSION

Having traced the history of Sesotho literature to this point, the problem now is to visualise its distinct status as a literature during this period. Swanepoel (1987:94) regards literature as "a complex unity of systems", and declares that "these systems are in a constant process of mutual fecundation, continuously attaining new and ever-changing relationships which are derived from the dominating norms and models of the relevant period". He goes on to quote Lambert as saying that systemic description amounts to "a Copernican revolution in the approach to literature" (1987:94), wherein a variety of terms are used to denote, question and rewrite literary phenomena. In the centre of these is the concept "national literature".

Lambert (1985:36) maintains that "no single national literature can be explained or defined in static terms as being just a national literature... we have to take into account the various and complex links with particular neighbouring literatures, with recent and older traditions, or with other systems, for example political or artistic systems". What poses a real problem to him is the question of the boundaries of a literature. He intimates that, in spite of attempts over a century and a half by comparatists to "improve this nationalistic perspective", for the moment all theoreticians can do is suggest descriptive models adapted to the situation they want to clarify. The same applies to the Sesotho literature.

Lambert believes that, within historical evolution, "clusters of South African literatures have been formed, either by direct influence or by reactions to situations, such as the use of a new official language, or by literary or cultural 'import' from a dominating culture" (1985:38). In this context, he cites Even-Zohar's contention that "no literature is in 'non-contact', and every contact is, like communication, based on the sender-receiver principle" (1985:38). He states it positively that "some countries have hardly any literary system. They take their books, their norms and their models from abroad, sometimes even from different countries (as is somewhat the case in Belgium)". (1985:38)

Lambert (1985:38) suggests that the question of literary autonomy for each South African literature in particular, and for all South African literatures in general, has to be discussed by a series of general and particular questions, which Swanepoel

(1987:95–100) rephrased and increased for clarity and convenience, and are as follows:

Under what circumstances did the literature commence?

All peoples of the world have their own oral lore (folk–tales, fables, legends and myths). These are designed for the cultural–moral well–being of the people, and "has been with us since the beginning of mankind" (Swanepoel, 1989:121). But contact with other, different peoples, and changed life situations, always invariably add new dimensions to the status quo.

Swanepoel (1987:95) rightfully argues that "although not the only factor, the outbreak and impact of the Difaqane wars, roughly between 1821 and 1831, had a direct bearing on the establishment of the Basotho nation, and eventually on the emergence of Southern–Sotho literature". Because of his strong leadership and diplomacy, Moshoeshe managed to unify the different clans into one powerful nation. At his stronghold, Thaba Bosiu, Moshoeshe resisted the extermination that was the fate of many clans in the face of the ravaging wars. "The political stability under Moshoeshe led directly to the development of the language that became standardized as Sesotho (Southern Sotho), during the second half of the nineteenth century" (Swanepoel, 1987:95). Thus it becomes clear how the Sesotho language system is a biproduct of a combination of cultural and political factors. Moshoeshe's feeling of insecurity, occasioned by the arrival of the Trekkers in the Orange Free State (Swanepoel, 1987:95), and his conviction that danger could be averted only by the acquisition of the Whiteman's skills (Gérard, 1971:101), led to his invitation of the missionaries Arbousset, Casalis and Gosselin into Lesotho, as indicated in the second chapter of this study. As the missionaries' goal was evangelising the people, they first learnt Sesotho, and then taught them to read and write so as to be able to read the Bible.

As indicated in the second chapter, the earliest literary works were biblical texts in Sesotho and religiously orientated Sesotho texts. Literacy among the Basotho added a new dimension to literature as a means of self–expression. The establishment of the printing press and, especially, the commencement of the *Leselinyana la Lesotho* led to the emergence of the first Basotho authors (A. Sekese, L. Sesenyi, C.

Monyoloza, etc) who contributed articles on a variety of subjects (religious and cultural) in the journal. The dominant religious system gradually gave ground to the socio-cultural. Ironically, the first wholly secular literary works in Sesotho were the *Litšomo* series by Rev. Jacottet, as seen earlier. This became an incentive to Motsamai and Mangoaela to come up with their recorded encounters of people with wild beasts and cannibals who were a direct result of the negative interaction between the Zulu military system and the political ideology of "might-is-right" of the time. The first creative work, the translation of John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, translated into the Sesotho *Leeto la Mokreste* by Rev. A. Mabile, entailed movement towards a set destination, and was to show the way for future imaginative writing. Swanepoel (1987:96) regards the popular *Makgoweng* trend as a subtle instance of intertextuality stemming from Bunyan's work. Writers like Sekese, who were among the first original imaginative writers reflect an interaction between the religious system and its values on the one hand, and the Sesotho feudal sub-system.

Otherwise, as hinted above, the structural model of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* has been transferred into Sesotho literature in a variety of subtle forms revolving around the Makgoweng motif, manifested in Nqheku's *Arola naheng ea Maburu*, Matlosa's *Molahlehi*, Majara's *O sentse linako*, and others. There is also striking interaction between opposing traits from two cultures in Khaketla's *Meokho* (traditional conservatism vs modern enlightened tolerance) and *Mosali a nkhola* (traditional vs western political organization), Ntšala's *Sekhukhuni* (traditional vs modern crime detection and justice), and Setloboko's *Monyalwoe* (Sesotho traditional culture vs Catholicism). Ramathe's *Tshepo* is, without being a translation, an instance of dominated relations between two literary systems: it exhibits direct intertextuality with Ryder Haggard's *King Solomon's mines*.

In drama Mofokeng's *Senkatana* and Taoana's *Obe* show amazing intertextuality and conversion from the oral to the literary text, whilst, simultaneously, revealing intersystemic interferences in textual structure between Sesotho and Western drama. Mofokeng's plot propulsion in *Senkatana* strikes the reader as a very possible intertextual transfer from Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, with Lady Macbeth being the archetype of Mmadiepetsane, who, like her, would not allow Bulane to retract from the plot. Another phenomenon that has its origins in Shakespearean plays is Khaketla's Rampai, in *Moshoeshoe le baruti*, who is the counterpart of

Shakespeare's fool.

In poetry, as shown earlier, the interaction between traditional Sesotho poetry and Western poetry resulted in what Lenake (1982:250) calls transitional poetry. This, however, refers to structural intersystemic interferences. There are also thematic and stylistic transfers evident in Sesotho poetry, as demonstrated earlier. Traditional poetry themes are mainly panegyric with subjects covering only kings, warriors, heroes, animals and divining bones. The extension of subjects to ordinary people, natural phenomena, birds, etc and themes to odes, elegies, lyrics, etc is clearly an interference from Western trends. The stylistic and thematic transfers in Mkorosi's '*Hoja ke nonyane*' and Khaketla's '*Mmote*' from Keats's *Ode to a Nightingale*, for instance are evident. The intertextuality between Mocoancoeng's *Noka* and *The Brook* (Tennyson), '*Komello*' and '*Drought*' (Coetzer and Vivier) and *Haeso* and *Heimwee* (Van Bruggen), for instance, have also been demonstrated in chapter three. The above show, at least of Sesotho literature, that "no literature is in non-contact" (Lambert, 1985:38), "and every contact is, like communication, based on the sender-receiver principle". Sesotho literature, like all literatures, is a result of intersystemic and therefore intertextual influence.

Are there links with neighbouring literatures, with recent or older traditions?

Though the various literatures of South Africa neighbouring on Sesotho literature emerged at different times (isiXhosa literature 25 years earlier than Sesotho literature, isiZulu literature in 1930, and Northern Sotho and Setswana literatures also in the 1930's), the links between them were determined by a variety of factors. Apart from their "shared genealogical relations and histories of the different peoples" (Swanepoel 1987:96), their oral literatures have been shown to point to common hypothetical origins, believably with the rest of Africa (Swanepoel, 1989:122), in the second chapter of this study. These literatures also have early missionary literature as their launching ground, and at least one common bridge for intertextuality: Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, which has been translated into all these literatures. This novel, therefore, has been a fine textual intersection for all these literary sub-systems.

Those literatures have common educational exposure and dependence on publishers with similar interests and selection procedures, as well as the whims of the same

colonial masters. S.D. Ngcongwane's *Thaba-Bosiu le lithothokiso tse ling* (1963) is cited by Swanepoel (1987:97) as "an isolated link with Afrikaans literature", as influenced by poet's like Jan F.E. Cilliers and Totius. But there is also Mocoancoeng's '*Haeso*', as pointed out above, that seems to be glaringly an influence of Van Bruggen, albeit on a much smaller scale. The links with English literature have been alluded to above.

Are the literary norms and models (genres) imported or traditional:

The norms in poetry are both traditional and imported. In the *dithoko* and the *ditshomo*, which are still in great circulation, the norms are traditional both in style, structure and theme. As mentioned earlier, there have been instances in the development of the poetry sub-system where structural interferences from foreign systems occurred simultaneously with the traditional traits of rhythm and repetition. While these interferences occupy the peripheral strata of the system, it is when we talk about transitional poetry. When the imported norms get to the centre of the poetry system we talk about modern Sesotho poetry. Though the term is often used, the poetic works published in this period have not shown transfers of norms from adjacent Western systems making their way through the peripheral strata to the centre of the system. Ntsane's *Selemo sa 1939* is among the nearest to the centre, but the tonal problem of Sesotho and the phonological obstacle pertaining to iambic meters halts the foreign norms, at their very best, at the epigonic position of the polysystem.

Traditional norms in respect of style require appropriateness and language purity especially in prose genres and drama. This is the main criterion on which "the people-in-the-culture" approved the canonicity of authors like Sekese, Mofolo, Segoete and also Mofokeng, Khaketla and Ntsane. Modern texts that abound in colloquialisms for whatever reason are bound to remain in the peripheral strata of systems.

There seems also to be no standard norms observable by both literary critic and author: "While the critics are interested in the original and well-made piece of art, authors appear to be less concerned about these aspects" (Swanepoel, 1987:97) though, thank goodness, the few named as 'canonized' did seem to take the necessary pains. Perhaps most of the theorists find it difficult to decide on any of

"the numerous literary theories pouring into Southern Africa in the shape of academic handbooks" (Swanepoel, 1987:97).

What seems to be necessary and most likely, is that the debate on "foreign" literary norms will lead to a continued assessment of relevance for Africa. The relevance enterprise will probably redefine the literary work in African language literature, and even redefine the purpose of writing. In the process, conditions may become favourable for attaining a new clarity.

From which literary systems are texts imported? Are they translated texts? For what purpose and by whom?

It is true that "within South Africa the dominating literatures are obviously Afrikaans and English" (Lambert, 1985:38). It has been mentioned above that Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* was the common link between the South African literatures. The ease and swiftness with which this text was selected and translated is symptomatic of both the need of the Sesotho literature at the time to import techniques of story writing whilst learning the application of religious principles to actual life. Here we have a sub-system imported by the needy or weaker system, inter alia, for reinforcing itself in that particular genre. It is for that purpose that it is acceptable to the "people-in-the-culture".

Mention was made in chapter five of the importation of Booker T. Washington's *Up from Slavery* into Sesotho literary system by way of translation into *Tokoloho bokhobeng* by H.H. Lekhethoa. Over and above meeting the stylistic needs of Sesotho literature in this genre at the time, the purpose was possibly also to reflect the plight of the Blackman in America as basis for comparison with his counterpart in South Africa. With this translation Lekhethoa reinforced the spirit of protest against discrimination on the grounds of race which, inter alia, characterised the Sesotho writings of this period, especially poetry.

The transformation of Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* into *Merafo ya Morena Salomone* (anonymous) and Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* into *Mohwebi wa Venisi* (Ntsane) were indicators as to the needs or lacking standards in adventure stories and drama at the close of this period. The quality of these imported texts implies the following aims:

- *to reinforce the missionaries
- *to initiate the Basotho into foreign literature and norms
- *to reinforce the spirit of protest that was subtly evident.
- *to set examples of good texts in the respective sub-systems.

Sam DUBY's *Ruthe oa Moabe*, serialised in *Leselinyana* from August 1918 (Swanepoel, 1987:98), was more a matter of intertextual transfer from the Bible than direct translation. Mofokeng's *Ruthe* in Leetong may be regarded as an instance of intersystemic transfer in an effort to counteract the current socio-political circumstances of the time.

To which literary systems are texts exported?

Sesotho literature has also exported texts, however limited, though mainly from the writings of Mofolo and Mofokeng. Swanepoel (1987:98) cites the following intersystemic transfers:

From Thomas Mofolo —

- Chaka* into English by F.H. Dutton, Oxford University Press, 1931.
- Into French by Victor Ellenberger, Gallimard, Paris, 1940.
- into English (abridged), Oxford University, 1949.
- into German (abridged) by Peter Sulzer, 1953.
- into Afrikaans (original) by C.F. Swanepoel, 1974.
- into English (complete) by D.P. Kunene, Heinemann, 1981.
- into German (complete) by Peter Sulzer, Manesse, 1988.

Intertextual transfers of Chaka have also been found in the dramatic works of some French-African writers like Senghor, Badian, Abdou Anta Ka and others (Swanepoel, 1987:98). With Mofolo's other works the situation is:

- Pitseng* into German by Peter Sulzer, 1973.
- Moeti oa Bochabela* into English by H. Ashton, 1934.

From S.M. Mofokeng —

Ruthe into German in *Moderne Erzähler der Welt*, P. Sulzer, 1977.

Senkatana into Lozi by Matjila, 1985.

The above show clearly that there are two-way transfers in the interaction of Sesotho literature with other world literary systems.

Which authors are 'canonized'? In what genres are they most productive?

Canonicity, as intimated in the first chapter, is tantamount to acceptability to the "people-in-the-culture" and is based mainly on purity and appropriateness of language and style. The authors of the missionary period (1833–1930), Sekese, Segoete, Mofolo, Motsamai and Mangoaela rank high in this regard. Mofolo, however, ranks the highest on account of his internationally acclaimed novel, *Chaka*, the subject matter of which is the life and times of the legendary Zulu ruler, Shaka. This novel is particularly striking in the way the depicted interaction between the historical socio-cultural elements are interwoven and reconciled to balance with the literary fictitious component. Transfers from his linguistic style are found in the works of modern writers like Moiloa. While the prose sub-system dominated the missionary period, the post-missionary period (1930–60) saw more versatile authors emerging, viz B.M. Khaketla with two novels, three plays and a collection of poetry, all of commendable standard. K.E. Ntsane's unparalleled satirical poetry in two collections, his detective novel and a volume of mainly satirical essays gained him high regard. He also retained his distinctive language excellence in his translation of Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*. S.M. Mofokeng's short story volume, his volume of essays and his play are all ranked high on the ladder in Sesotho literature. After this period Sesotho literary production tended to become more prolific but, somewhat, more peripheral with a few marked exceptions here and there.

It would be interesting, at this juncture, to mention the "unusual exportation" of Sesotho poetry to Afrikaans poetry which occurred in the 1980's whereby "recasting and intertextual adaptation" of some of Ntsane's poems was effected (Swanepoel, 1991:1). In Antjie Krog's "Liefdeslied na die Musiek van K.E. Ntsane", which appears in *Jerusalem-gangers* (1985:14–15), Swanepoel found parts of Ntsane's *Moratuwa* (Beloved), *Mohokare* (Caledon River), and *Tjhutjhumakgala* (Steam train), as well as traces from King Griffith's *Dithoko*.

This is backed by the fact that Antjie's mother, Dot Serfontein, herself a recognised Afrikaans author, received, as a Sesotho student at UNISA in the 1980's, copies of J.M. Lenake's *The Poetry of K.E. Ntsane* (1984) and C.F. Swanepoel's *Sotho Dithoko tsa marena: Perspectives on Composition and Genre* (1983).

What is the position regarding texts? Are there dominating genres etc?

As seen in the preceding chapters, the dominating genres in Sesotho literature in this period are the novel, followed by poetry, drama, the short story and essays, in that order. The most dominated sub-system is the essay, a fact that reflects on the Basotho's inclination to narrative art. The most dominant theme or topic in Ntsane's and Mocoancoeng's essays, and in Ntsane's poetry, is the folly of human nature – be it in the Sesotho socio-cultural set-up or the broader socio-political setting of South Africa. Poetry, on the whole, has protest (against political injustice, frivolousness and ritual shortsightedness) as its main preoccupation, followed by joyous appreciation of good and lamentation of losses of kin or of a sad plight. It is mainly lyrical – thematically, an intersystemic transfer.

The dominant topic in drama is polygamy and human impulsiveness within the Basotho socio-cultural system, while the novel reflects mainly Basotho cultural practice within a variety of physical and socio-cultural settings. These are, of course, interspersed with the dominated enlightenment and christianity topics.

By and large, the literature of the post-missionary era seems to exhibit the following polarities:

| | | |
|--|---|---------------------------|
| oppression (by colonial masters/feudal chiefs) | — | zeal to be free |
| traditional organization | — | modernity |
| parental control | — | youthful recalcitrance |
| disobedience/crime | — | heavenly reward/happiness |
| success | — | jealousy |

These polarities indicate some of the points of intra- and intersystemic contact that were and still could be exploited by Basotho authors in the evolution of this literature. The above concepts, named arbitrarily, are not necessarily viewed as such

by the opposant sides that vie each to overcome the other, thereby generating action in the same way that the outer strata vie for supremacy in the centre of a (poly) system. It has been seen that the Sesotho literature, though dominated by Afrikaans and English, thereby being semi-peripheral in "the South African polysystem context, is", however, an autonomous system not only importing, but also exporting elements which may, in due course, find a way to the centre of the host system subject to canonicity rules approved by the "people-in-the-culture". Moreso as evidenced also in the most recent instance of text importation and adaptation by Krog. She may be forerunner to a trend of the future.

It is also rather strange and interesting that the same sentiment was recently expressed by the internationally celebrated Black author, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, in response to similar questions by a South African journalist: "Literature looks at reality through images, but those images reflect certain realities" (Tribute, Sept, 1991:26).

Dealing with the reality of interactions, we should accept that nobody can tell in advance the direction of transfers of literary influences, but, like with any other literature, the Sesotho has shown that it does have the potential to move towards the centre of a poly-system in the broader national context. Although the "people-in-the-culture" may speak different languages, their loyalty to things African will contribute to an attitude of inclusiveness within the South African polysystem.

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