

THE TREATMENT OF THEME  
IN SESOTHO SHORT STORIES:  
A POLYSYSTEMIC APPROACH

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BY

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION		(i)
DEDICATION		(ii)
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS		(iii)
SUMMARY		(iv)
CHAPTER 1	INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER 2	A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	22
CHAPTER 3	THEMES FROM MOCOANCOENG'S AND MOFOKENG'S SHORT STORIES	34
CHAPTER 4	THEMES FROM ZULU'S, LITABE'S AND MAPHALLA'S SHORT STORIES	60
CHAPTER 5	LOOKING BACK	89
BIBLIOGRAPHY		99

# DECLARATION

I declare that:

## THE TREATMENT OF THEME IN SESOTHO SHORT STORIES: A POLYSYSTEMIC APPROACH

is my own work, that all the sources used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references, and that this dissertation was not previously submitted by me for a degree at another University.



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CN PADI

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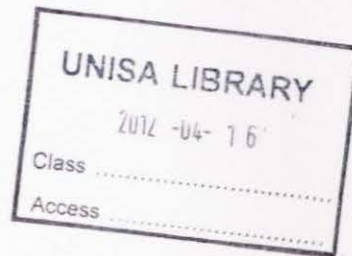
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**896.3977 PADI**

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# DEDICATION

To my daughters

TEBOHO AND PABALLO

## SUMMARY

The main objective of this study and research is to investigate and determine through the polysystemic approach the treatment of themes in Sesotho short stories based on two representative periods: the 1950's and the 1990's. On the volumes produced in the 1950's namely, **MEQOQO YA PHIRIMANA** by JG Mocoancoeng and **LEETONG** by SM Mofokeng; and in the 1990's namely **FISWANA LA MORENA** by NS Zulu and NS Litabe and **MOHLOMONG HOSANE** by KPD Maphalla.

According to this approach the usual collection of literary data and its analysis on the basis of their material substance is to be replaced by a functional approach based on the traditional text analysis in which one concentrates on the context or form of the text and how a particular text relates to what literature is or should be. Focus is on the social, economical, educational and political background during which time the author writes a particular literary text.

Through investigation, we realise that the Polysystemic approach has never been used in the analysis of themes for the Sesotho literary works.

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 PURPOSE AND MOTIVATION

### 1.2 SCOPE

### 1.3 LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 1.3.1 Moloi AJM (1973)

#### 1.3.2 Maphike PRS (1978)

#### 1.3.3 Maphike PRS (1991)

#### 1.3.4 Moleleki AM (1992)

#### 1.3.5 Makhubela YM (1993)

#### 1.3.6 Dube MMR (1996)

### 1.4 DEFINITION OF THEME

### 1.5 THE AUTHORS' BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES

#### 1.5.1 Mocoancoeng JG

#### 1.5.2 Mofokeng SM

#### 1.5.3 Zulu NS

#### 1.5.4 Litabe NS

#### 1.5.5 Maphalla KPD

## CHAPTER 1

### 1. Introduction

This work will look into the treatment of theme in Sesotho short stories. The short story is, and has always been, the most neglected and dominated genre in Southern Sotho, probably because of its closeness to the novel. It is interesting to note that in about four decades no short stories were written in Sesotho, therefore our study will be based on two representative periods: the 1950's and the 1990's. The volumes produced in the 1950's are namely: MEQOQO YA PHIRIMANA by J.G. Mocoancoeng (1953) and LEETONG by S.M. Mofokeng (1954). The 1990s collections are FISWANA LA MORENA by N.S. Zulu and N.S. Litabe (1992) and MOHLOMONG HOSANE by K.P.D. Maphalla (1993).

Short story writing is a particular kind of art, having its own characteristics and structure that differentiates it from other literary genres. Characteristics such as plot, character, incident and atmosphere are used to emphasize theme. Therefore we use theme among others to judge the success of the writer.

Theme is the central or dominating idea in the work of art. It varies according to the period in which the story is being written. This is supported by Shaw (1983:20) when she says that the short story like any other literary form, varies

according to the period in which it is being written, but it has a unique ability to preserve and at any time recall its mixed origins in fable, anecdote, folk-tale and numerous other forms.

## 1.1 Purpose and motivation

It is imperative that we devote our study and research to the Polysystemic analysis of themes in Sesotho short stories. We found out that none of the Sesotho literary studies has investigated and studied this Polysystemic analysis of themes.

It is our belief that various themes emerged in short stories written by various Sesotho short story writers in particular during the 1950's and the 1990's. This belief is supported by Fenson and Kritzer (1966:70) that:

*"... writers do have philosophical, theological and social ideas; a source of ideas which the writer absorbs more or less unconsciously from the intellectual atmosphere of his world."*

Our main objective is therefore to investigate and determine through this study whether these themes have been the same through-out or whether the passage of time had any bearing on them. Thus Nkosi (1981:107) says that scattered as they are over a vast continent, increasingly subjected to a perplexing variety of social, cultural and political pressures, these writers may reveal through the themes they



choose and the manner in which they execute them, the full extent of the diversity and, equally, the underlying unity of the African cultural situation.

## 1.2 Scope

Our study will be devoted to the following short stories: In MEQOQO YA PHIRIMANA by J.G. Mocoancoeng, there are three stories which we would look into namely:

Moruti ya neng a fofele Lehodimong

Ha kgwedi e tjhaba

Tsela ya dikepe

In LEETONG by S.M. Mofokeng, there are eight stories but we shall focus on six only namely:

Mona pela tsela

Ke toro feela

Ruthe

Hosasa

Bonnotshing

Hae

FISWANA LA MORENA by N.S. Zulu and N.S. Litabe has eight short stories, two by Litabe and six by Zulu. For the purpose of our study, we shall examine the following :

Litabe:

Mohau ya lekgutla

Zulu:

Lerato la ka

Lephoka la ditweba

Mpeng ya lefatshe

Lastly, in MOHLOMONG HOSANE by K.P.D. Maphalla, Maphalla wrote seventeen short stories but our study will be based on the following seven stories only namely:

Makatikati a bosiu

Bakgenne, ntja ya ka

Lerole leroleng

Ha taba tsa batho

Ho se tsebe ke lebote

Tsoha hle molebedi

Ntwa ya basadi

The proposed study will comprise of five chapters.



Chapter one introduces and also reviews the literature related to our study. We shall also define theme and lastly give brief biographical sketches of the authors, Mocoancoeng J.G.; Mofokeng S.M.; Zulu N.S.; Litabe N.S. and Maphalla K.P.D. In chapter two we shall focus on the theoretical framework of the Polysystemic approach.

Chapter three will analyse themes in short stories of the 1950's by Mocoancoeng and Mofokeng.

In chapter four we shall examine themes of the volumes written in the 1990's by Maphalla, Zulu and Litabe.

Chapter five will be an evaluation of themes in the periods 1950's and the 1990's with emphasis on their development as a system. Lastly we shall conclude and make recommendations for possible future research.

### 1.3 Literature review

Our main concern here is to review studies that have already been done on the works of Mocoancoeng, Mofokeng, Zulu, Litabe and Maphalla.

#### 1.3.1 Moloi A.J.M. (1973)

In his Doctoral work, The Southern Sotho Novel: A study of its Form, Theme and Expression, Moloi discusses different periods in which South Sotho novels were produced. We shall concentrate on chapter eight based on the developments in

Sotho novel writing in the fifties in which the works of Mofokeng, Mocoancoeng, Khaketla, Nqheku, Majara, Ntsane, Khalala, Ntsala and Monyeli are included, but we will focus only on the works of Mofokeng and Mocoancoeng.

Moloi finds that Mofokeng was the most important South Sotho writer. He regards him as the most important innovator and experimenter in South Sotho literature who initiated the practice of short stories. He classifies Leetong and Pelong ya ka as short stories, but the difference is that Pelong ya ka is inferior to Leetong in terms of skill, analysis and quality of the material presented. Hence he finds Leetong to be well- defined, clear-cut, to the point, original and easy to handle within limited time.

The central message that Mofokeng gives in his Leetong is that, man is on a long journey, the beautiful things around him and those things he attaches importance to, are but passing shows.

On the other hand, Moloi finds Mocoancoeng to be one of the writers of note in the fifties whose short stories are repetitions of some of the well-known folktales. His essays and short stories differ in artistic skill and depth. They range from moral lectures, discussions of traditional value systems, beliefs and superstitions. He classifies Mocoancoeng as an old story teller who engages in direct conversations with the listener, that is, readers. He addresses them directly, asks them questions and warns them. His moral and warning are undisguised and direct.

### 1.3.2 Maphike P.R.S. (1978)

In his Masters work, The Essays in Southern Sotho, Maphike investigates the origin and development of the essays in South Sotho. He concentrates on the works of Mocoancoeng, Mofokeng, Moiloa, Ntsane and Morojele, but we shall focus our attention on the works of the first two authors.

Maphike gives a table of thematic survey of Sotho essays in which he mentions that Mocoancoeng has published seventeen essays on at least seven themes namely: the social phenomena, traditional beliefs, Sotho customs, natural phenomena, didactic theme, socio-political, human nature and comments on life.

Of the seventeen essays, only sixteen have been classified. Moruti ya neng a fofele Lehodimong is probably excluded because Maphike classifies it as a short story instead of an essay. The reason may be that it is mistaken for a narrative essay because of its sarcastic conclusion "**Ho ya o ile moo a neng a hopotse teng, empa e seng ka tsela e sa tshwaelwang baahi ba lefatshe lena.**"

He observes that Mocoancoeng has devoted time to traditional socio-cultural practices and beliefs before looking outward in the world at large. He has looked at his own cultural set-up and life among his own people, as can be seen in the themes on traditional beliefs, Sotho customs and social problems. He also salutes



Mocoancoeng for having broken the ice in the field of modern essay writing, wherein he was followed by Moiloa, Ntsane, Mofokeng and recently by Morojele.

Maphike observes that Mofokeng wrote twenty-four essays on only three themes namely: social phenomena, comments on life and natural phenomena. He mentions that his essays display a close relationship with man, life and the hereafter that the latter theme would do for all of them. Maphike also observes that all of Mofokeng's essays overlap into the main theme that comments on life, and he is not only concerned with life on earth, but he starts here and develops up to speculation about life hereafter.

Another distinguishing factor of Mofokeng is that in his essays, the conscious structuring is seen in individual essays as well as in the collection as a whole. His division of the essay into phases enables him to take a multidimensional view of the theme over which he ponders. Within the collection, the essays are arranged in a way that helps maintain the underlying unity of his main theme, comments on life. Lastly, he finds Mofokeng to be a meditator who creates or portrays his experiences so vividly that they interfuse with the reader's own, and impel him to do something unconsciously.

### 1.3.3 Maphike P.R.S. (1991)

In his Doctoral work on The History of Southern Sotho Literature as system, 1930-1960, Maphike examines the different works of writers of Sesotho. Even Zohar's polysystemic approach, Mocoancoeng and Mofokeng's works are included in his study.

Maphike finds that dealing with the reality of interactions, we should accept that nobody can tell in advance the direction, but, Southern Sotho literature has shown that it does have the potential to move towards the centre of a polysystem 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.

Maphike regards Mofokeng and Mocoancoeng as authors whose works are characterised by more exploration and greater experimentation.

This is evidenced in the structural interaction between essay and the short story exhibited mainly by Mocoancoeng's narrative essay. He finds that Mofokeng's works exhibit more thematic over-lap and intersection than structurally. This is evident in all his three works (Senkatana, Leetong and Pelong ya ka) which show an interplay of fictionality and realism. He sees the essay as being a total import, transferred and converted at the centre of the Sesotho literary system, and the

short story 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 subsystem as distinct from its source in style (rendition), theme and structure.

#### 1.3.4 Moleleki A.M. (1992)

In his book Makokonana a neanotaba le dingolwa tsa Sesotho, Moleleki analyses the different kinds of genres and writers of Sesotho. Mofokeng, Litabe and Maphalla's works are included in his study.

He briefly gives the biographical sketch of Mofokeng and he regards him as a philosophical writer among the Basotho writers who addresses the question: "Bophelo ke ntho e jwang?" in his writing. The answer to this question is the message embedded in his works that life is a journey.

Moleleki finds that Litabe uses ellipsis in a successful way in his poetry anthology, Wa lla molodi and he cites specific examples from his work.

Moleleki finds that refrain in Maphalla's poems appears at the beginning or end of a stanza and they show a marked resemblance to some hymnal refrains contained in the hymns of the Dutch Reformed Church in their hymnal book entitled



"Hosanna". Hence he regards him as a writer who takes over christian literary taste and uses it to reflect his world outlook.

### 1.3.5 Makhubela Y.M. (1993)

In her Master's work, A stylistic analysis of the novels of K.P.D. Maphalla, Makhubela analyses the style used by Maphalla in his novels, Tshiu-tseo, Kabelwamanong and Nna ke mang?

In the second part of her study where she analyses the three novels of Maphalla, she finds that Maphalla has succeeded in the way he handles the images. This success is due to the fact that, he has a way of using them artistically to evoke the emotion and imagination of the reader.

She finds that Maphalla uses the proverbs to fuel his original ideas and to give unity and depth of meaning to his narratives. Songs and poems in his works are used to express various emotional experiences such as to give aesthetic or emotional pleasure.

Lastly, Makhubela observes that Maphalla has chosen to use titles and headings drawn from hymns. This proves that his Christian upbringing has fuelled his creativity. She further mentions that these hymns are drawn from the hymns of his church namely, Dutch Reformed Church.



### 1.3.6 Dube M.M.R. (1996)

In her doctoral work, The autobiographical mode in the writings of Machabe Mofokeng, Dube examines the autobiographical mode in Mofokeng's works.

She makes a correlation between Mofokeng's works and his real lived life, draws attention to the elements such as character, imagery and theme in Mofokeng's writings.

Dube finds that there is a very close relationship between Mofokeng's imaginary characters and himself. That is why she concludes that Mofokeng and Senkatana are one and the same person. Senkatana saved his people from the belly of Kgodumodumo and is therefore regarded as a tragic hero while Mofokeng saved his brothers and sisters by educating them. Also, she shows how imagery can be used to evoke imaginations of symbols and images. Lastly, under theme, she finds that we are able to understand the teachings of Mofokeng through the different themes as found in his work such as life, residential segregation and inequalities, hope, friendship, loneliness, freedom, labour conditions and race relations.

Dube concludes that in Mofokeng's works, the main theme revolves around life and all its intricacies.

The common findings from these works are that Maphalla is indeed a prolific young writer who has much talent and his intervention of his Creator is evident in all his work. Mofokeng is philosophical and his theme revolves around life.

Let us now examine what theme is.

#### 1.4 Definition of theme

Theme is defined differently by different writers (cf. Fenson and Kritzer 1966; Abrams 1981; Pretorius and Swart 1982; Cohen 1973; Smith and Hart 1981).

Scott and Madden (1980) regard theme as the generalization, stated or implied, that lies behind the narration of a specific situation involving specific individuals, and theme exists in fiction because human beings live in the same world, share similar emotions, react in similar ways to similar stimuli and face common problems.

For Heese and Lawton (1983:97) theme is the central idea, the basic issue with which the novelist or playwright is concerned, and on which he comments through the medium of his story and his plot.

According to Gordimer (1973:11) themes determine plots, characters and literary styles because they are statements or questions arising from the nature of the

society in which the writer finds himself immersed, and the quality of life around him. In this case the writer is the voice of the people beyond any glib political connotations of the phrase.

Shaw (1972:378) observes theme as the central and dominating idea in a literary work, a short essay, such as a school or college composition the message or moral implicit in any work of art.

For Peck and Coyle (1984:141) theme means the large idea or concept dealt with in a work. In order to grasp the theme of a work we have to stand back from the text and see what sort of general experience or subject links its details together. The easiest way of doing this is to sum up the work in as few words as possible.

Holman and Harmon (1936:502) regard theme as a central or dominating idea in a work. They further point out that in non-fictional discourse, it may be thought of as the general topic of discussion, the subject of discourse, the THESIS.

Coles's (1985:201) definition, although short and pithy, holds a similar opinion to that of Shaw, Holman and Harmon. It says theme is the central or dominating idea, thesis or meaning of a work.

To round off the definitions cited above, we may say theme is the sum total of everything that takes place in the work of art plus the effect all this has on the

mind of the reader. It is a general thought or a mirror through which we reflect human life.

## 1.5 The authors' biographical sketches

In this section we briefly give the biographical sketches of the following Sesotho short story writers, Mocoancoeng J.G., Mofokeng S.M., Zulu N.S., Litabe N.S. and Maphalla K.P.D.

### 1.5.1 Mocoancoeng J.G.

Jacques Mocoancoeng was born on 22 August 1922 at Bothaville in the Free State. He was the fourth child in a family of seven children born to Gabriel and Lydia.

He received his primary education at Bothaville Bantu United School in 1936. In 1937-1938 he was at Stofberg Gedenkskool where he did his standard six and seven. He then proceeded to Moroka Institution in Thaba Nchu where he completed his standard eight (J.C.) and P.T.C. in the years 1939-1940.

In 1941-1945 he was appointed to the staff of Bethlehem High School and immediately registered as a part-time student for standard ten certificate. After



completion he registered for B.A. degree part-time at the University of South Africa (Unisa) which he completed in 1947.

He taught at Roma College in Lesotho in 1946-1947 where he met his best friend K.E. Ntsane who encouraged him to write. From Lesotho he went to Heilbron College. Then he was appointed as the principal of Senekal High School. In 1957 he was nominated as school inspector. He worked as an inspector until he met his death in 1962.

Mocoancoeng has two publications to his credit. He published a poetry book, Tseleng ya Bophelo and Dithothokiso tse Ntjha in 1947 and Megogo ya Phirimana a collection of short stories and essays in 1953.

#### 1.5.2 Mofokeng S.M

Sophonia Machabe Mofokeng was born on 1 April 1923 at Fouriesburg in the Free State. He was the second child in the family of four born to Mmone and Mmadisele Mofokeng. He received his education at the Dutch Reformed Church Primary school and proceeded to Adams College in Natal where he matriculated with distinctions in South Sotho and Botany.

In 1942 he obtained the B.A. degree with distinction in South Sotho and the Diploma in Education at Fort Hare University. He was appointed to the staff of the

Johannesburg Bantu High School and immediately registered as a part-time student at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) for B.A. Honours in History.

In 1944 he was appointed as a part-time language assistant in the Department of African Languages at Wits and he obtained his B.A. Honours in History. Then the following year he was appointed as a full-time language assistant at Wits and registered for B.A. Honours in Sesotho which he passed with a distinction.

In 1947 he was admitted in hospital with tuberculosis in both lungs. He was hospitalised for eighteen months. In 1949 he resumed duty and immediately started with his M.A. dissertation on his work "A study of Folktales in Sotho" which was completed in 1951. In 1955 he was awarded a PhD degree on his thesis "The development of leading figures in animal tales in Africa".

Mofokeng is one of the major writers of Sesotho literature and all his works point to the fact that he is a gifted writer. In his writings he addresses the question: "Bophelo ke ntho e jwang?". His use of biblical allusions, hymnal refrains project him as the writer in the centre of both his theme and his style.

Mofokeng has the following books published: Senkatana, a drama book in 1952; Leetong, a short stories volume in 1954 and Pelong ya ka, 1953 essay volume. He collaborated with Prof. C.M. Doke in his writing of The Textbook of South Sotho Grammar (Longmans). He died on 6 June 1957 at the age of 34.

### 1.5.3 Zulu N.S.

Nogwaja Shadrack Zulu was born on 4 September 1959 in Harrismith in the Free State. He is the son of Steven and Nozizwe Zulu who are members of the Presbyterian Church and both farm labourers.

Nogwaja studied for his S.S.T.C. at Tshiya College in 1983 majoring in English and South Sotho. He started teaching at Tseki Senior Secondary in 1984-1986 offering Biology and English and at the same time completing his B.A. degree at the University of Qwa-qwa (Uniqwa). In 1987-1988 he lectured at Tshiya College offering Education and English. At the end of 1988 he was appointed as a Senior Education Advisor for English.

In 1989 he went to Leeds University for a short course in English language. He completed his B.A. Honours degree in Theory of Literature with Unisa in 1990. Then in 1993 he obtained the M.A. degree in Applied Linguistics with special reference to English Language Teaching at the University of Durham in England and his research was "The apartheid bilingual education policy and English as a second language". In 1994 he obtained M.A. degree (cum laude) in Literature at the University of Stellenbosch and his research study was "A comparative study of time in selected Sesotho novels". In 1996 he became a District Subject Co-ordinator in Qwa-qwa District, the position he has held to date.



He has three publications to his credit. He published Moduwane, a poetry anthology in 1987; Majwe, another poetry anthology in 1988 and Fiswana la morena, a short story anthology, co-authored with N.S. Litabe.

#### 1.5.4 Litabe N.S.

Nathaniel Sello Litabe was born on 24 October 1933 at Ladybrand in the Free State. He is the son of the late Ephraim Tsie who was an evangelist in the N.G. Kerk and Evodia Lilian Litabe.

He completed his standard ten at Moroka High school in Thaba-Nchu and P.T.C. at Gore Browne Teacher College in Kimberley. In 1962 he was employed at Dealesville Senior Primary school in Kimberley where he taught for ten years. In 1972 he taught at Mampoi High school in Qwa-qwa offering English and Afrikaans.

In 1974-1977 he taught at Bolata Junior Primary School and then went to Bonamelo College where he offered English and South Sotho. Then in 1979 he went to study at Leeds University, and then went back to Bonamelo where he lectured until 1982. From

1983-1988 he taught at Lereng, Manthatisi and Thibella Senior Primary schools as an assistant principal. Late 1988 he worked at Qwa-qwa Parliament as a translator, and he is intending to retire.

He published the following books: Boikgutsong Thabantlenyana and Wa lla molodi, poetry anthologies in 1983; Setloholo sa Jemina, a novel in 1983 and lastly in 1992, Fiswana la morena, essays and short stories collection, co-authored with N.S. Zulu.

#### 1.5.5 Maphalla K.P.D.

Kgotso Peter David Maphalla was born on 25 February 1955 at Bohlokong in the Free State. He is the second child and the only son in a family of four children. His father, Solomon was an ordinary labourer and a frequent church goer who passed away while Kgotso was eighteen years old. His mother, Melita was a labourer at the Whites-only hospital in Bethlehem and a devout christian. Kgotso is a member of the Dutch Reformed Church and also a respectable church elder.

His home life was tough from his childhood. He was forced to do temporary jobs after school and during school vacations to assist his struggling parent. He started school at Thabang L.P. School in 1962. In 1966 he proceeded to the Impucuko Higher Primary School. In 1970 he went to Tiisetsang High School where he developed a keen interest in Sesotho literature more especially the works of K.E. Ntsane. Maphalla together with his three classmates made an attempt at writing a novel.

In 1975 he studied his H.P.T. certificate at Tshiya College. He started teaching at Tshibollo High School in Qwa-qwa in 1976 offering History and English to the standard nines and tens. His exposure to English literature made him develop an interest in writing poems. In 1981 he taught Sesotho at Thabo-Thokoza High School in his birth place. Early in 1983 his first volume of poetry was published and late in the same year he became Secretary of the Qwa-qwa Legislative Assembly, the position he held until the beginning of 1995. In 1995 he established a Book-shop in Bethlehem and in 1996, a restaurant in Qwa-qwa.

Maphalla has published sixteen poetry books, two short story books, two dramas and six novels.

We now move on to chapter two where the Polysystemic approach will be discussed.

## CHAPTER 2

### A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### 2. INTRODUCTION

##### 2.1 A POLYSYSTEMIC APPROACH

##### 2.2 PROPERTIES OF THE POLYSYSTEM

##### 2.3 THEME AS A SYSTEM

## CHAPTER 2

### A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### 2. Introduction

An attempt will here be made to explain and elaborate on the concept polysystem as an approach to literary study. We will use Even-Zohar as our main source since he has done far more in this field. This approach moves away from the traditional text analysis in which one concentrates on the content or form of the text and how a particular text relates to what literature is or should be.

Instead, our approach will focus on the historical development of themes in Southern Sotho short stories as a system.

It is in order, we believe, to preface our discussion of the polysystem with the early beginnings of Sesotho literature. We are indebted to Swanepoel (1987:95) for the following account: Literature commences under unbearable circumstances, the outbreak and impact of Difaqane wars had a direct bearing on the establishment of the Basotho nation,; and eventually on the emergence of Southern Sotho literature. The strong leadership and diplomacy of Moshoeshe I, made him manage to unify the different groups of Sotho people and the remnants of Nguni people into one



powerful nation. At Thaba-Bosiu, that is his stronghold, Moshoeshe and his followers resisted the extermination that was the fate of different groups in the face of the devastating wars. "The political stability under Moshoeshe led directly to the development of the language that became standardized as Southern Sotho, during the second half of the nineteenth century".

From the above, it becomes clear that Sesotho language system is a byproduct of a combination of cultural and political factors. The arrival of the Trekkers near the borders of Moshoeshe's territory also contributed to the development of national spirit, literacy and the emergence of the literature. Hence Gerard (1971:101) asserts that the coming of the Trekkers convinced Moshoeshe that he and his followers would only be able to withstand the possibility of encroachment by acquiring the foreign powers' skills. This assertion led to his invitation of the three missionaries Arbousset, Casalis and Gossen into Lesotho. These missionaries started to preach the Gospel, they learnt Sesotho and taught them to read and write.

The first publications were biblical texts in Sesotho, then the appearance of *Leselinyana la Lesotho* served as a multi-purpose mouthpiece of the printing press and developed a key role in the emergence of South Sotho literature. This publication led to the emergence of the first Basotho authors who contributed articles in *Leselinyana la Lesotho*. Although the publications of the mission society appeared to be less sophisticated, they published authors of note such as Nqheku

and Majara. Therefore, Southern Sotho literature commenced outside the borders of South Africa, in Lesotho which was a British Protectorate. The first publication of Southern Sotho text by a South African publisher was A.J. Selane's collection of poetry, **Letlotlo la Mosotho (1942)**.

Literature is a combination of different language and cultural traditions, that is, a combination of African and Western traditions. Hence modern Sesotho literature germinated from oral traditions, and came into existence under both intrinsic and foreign inspiration. While growing from its own roots, it absorbed various characteristics and influences from other literatures (intrasystemic influences). There is a direct relationship between traditional, oral literature and the modern written literature. This is clearly illustrated in poetry in the blending of traditional dithoko (praise) poetry and modern **dithothokiso** (intersystemic interference).

As far as the novel is concerned, Basotho authors transferred from the Western literature into Sesotho literature in a variety of forms revolving around the **Makgoweng** motif. Here the setting is not a biblical one, but the Mosotho's concrete encounter with denationalization which is faced when nationals leave their fatherland for the Witwatersrand.

There are links between Sesotho literature with neighbouring literatures, with recent or older traditions. For instance, various literatures of South Africa neighbouring on Sesotho literature emerged at different times, such as, Xhosa literature emerged



twenty five years earlier than Sesotho literature, Zulu, Northern Sotho and Setswana literatures in 1930, the links between them were determined by factors such as shared genealogical relations and histories of the different peoples, shared dependence upon the same educational system, shared genesis from oral roots and religious aims, shared socio-political and economical destiny and lastly shared dependence on more or less the same publishing houses. An isolated link with Afrikaans literature is visible and links with English literature are substantial mainly in the field of genres such as novels, essays, short stories, poetry and drama.

The norms and models in the traditional oral literary forms such as the **Dithoko** and **Ditshomo** are traditional. These traditional norms also apply to imported genres such as novel, essay, poetry and drama. They require language purity and stylistic appropriateness. This is the main criterion used by the "people-in-the-culture" to approve the canonicity of Southern Sotho authors.

The norms pertaining to the evaluation of texts appear to be an admixture of traditional and imported standards often with slightly conflicting consequences. For instance, the concept *rhyme* in Sesotho, is an imported device from the European languages that brings in conflicting consequences when applied in the analysis of Sesotho poetry. Norms applied by scholarly critics are for the greater part imported from British, American and Afrikaans source while those applied by African scholars and their European colleagues are overwhelmed by the numerous literary theories pouring into Southern Africa in the shape of academic handbooks. The other

important point is that norms and standards do not appear to be similar among the consumers of the literature. The discrepancy seems to be among authors and the scholarly critics. While critics are interested in originality and well-made piece of art, authors appear to be less concerned about these aspects.

The importation, translation of texts and the purpose of translation is evident in South Africa. In South Africa the dominating literature is in English and the importation of Sesotho texts is mainly from it. This is evident in that many African authors have translated John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. Here we have importation by the weaker system for reinforcing itself in that particular genre.

The exportation of texts in Sesotho literature is limited mainly to the works of Thomas Mofolo and S.M. Mofokeng. Mofolo's Chaka, Pitseng and Moeti wa Bochabela and Mofokeng's Ruthe and Senkatana. Chaka was translated into English, French, German and Afrikaans versions, Pitseng into German and Moeti wa Bochabela into English. Mofokeng's Ruthe into German and Senkatana into Lozi.

The dominating literature in South Africa and Lesotho appears to be English. The effect of this domination is the fact that the informative and educational matter in schools, colleges, universities, general public, newspapers, magazines, handbooks, radio stations and television is in English. The growth of Southern Sotho literature is held back by the prestige and practical value of the dominating culture, lack of diversified adult readership, illiteracy, low literacy, long working hours, inadequate

housing and indoor facilities, foreign entertainment, together with the mere demands of existence.

Concerning the grouping of literatures, Southern Sotho literature may be regarded as one of the system of the polysystemic African language literatures, based on historical, cultural and linguistic grounds. It affiliates culturally and linguistically firstly with Northern Sotho and Setswana literatures, secondly with Zulu and Xhosa literatures from which Sesotho inherited quite substantial lexical, semantic and syntactic characteristics and lastly affiliated to Venda and Tsonga literatures within the geo-cultural contexts. This supports Even-Zohar when he says "no literary polysystem is historically isolated from other literatures" and he goes on to say "literatures are never in non-contact, contacts are mainly unilateral".

The position regarding the texts is that, in the Southern African literary system the dominating genres appear to be novels, poetry and drama. Short stories and essays seem to be dominated genres. Although Basotho readers are proud of their collection of essays. Various collections with mixed content range between folktales, anecdotes and short stories hence fully-fledged short stories seem to have escaped the grip of most authors, except S.M. Mofokeng's Leetong (1954).

The common themes still appear to be ups and downs of love affairs, family instability caused by the weaknesses of either one of the parents or one of the children, parent intervention in the choice of marriage partners, clashes between



traditional values and values of the modern world, including religion, the problem of urbanization, crime and the law, personal miseries especially salient in poetry.

## 2.1 A polystemic approach

According to Lambert, the Systemic approach, addresses all literary phenomena, all elements of literature, including publishers, cultural circumstances et cetera, and what is more important is the relationships between these. In this sense a most flexible theory is needed. This theory must aim at the description of all literary phenomena, not only certain phenomena. Hence a systemic approach serves as a reaction against the current theories of literature, since most limit themselves to certain types of theory, and even to texts from a specific culture, such as western literature. In this sense, universities are not really studying literature, but only some authors and texts which are chosen for what is called literature.

Van Gorp (1984:241) states that rather than to study literature in terms of its essentials, it should be studied in terms of its relationships. Swanepoel (1987:101) quoting Tynjanov, says that literature should be viewed in terms of its relations. This can be viewed as a starting point of a new dimension in literary studies. In 1970 Itamar Even-Zohar launched the Polysystemic hypothesis or P.S. hypothesis which proposes the sign-governed human patterns of communication such as culture, language, literature and society as systems. For the Polysystem, the collection of literary data and its analysis on the basis of their material substance

was to be replaced by a functional approach based on the analysis of relations. Hence a way was opened to achieve the detection of rules that governed the diversity and complexity of phenomena, rather than registering and classifying them. The idea of system has made it possible to account for known phenomena and enabled the discovery of the unknown ones. This made known data which was kept isolated from observed data to become more meaningful for the latter.

To add to the above observation, Van Gorp (1984:241) points out that the Systemic Approach seeks to provide a framework for the description of literature according to general regularities in communication systems. He states that literature is a complex unity of systems consisting of literary views on both practical and theoretical level. These systems are in a constant process of mutual relationships derived from the dominating norms and models of the relevant period. He goes on to say that the word 'system' is an open, historically determinable concept, signifying the organization of literary views within a given context. This implies that the relationships, norms and models are the field of interest to all aspects of literature. All literature, literary views and literary practices are historically determined, no matter whether they belong to a dominating or dominated system. This idea brought change in both structures, methods and functions of every discipline into which it was introduced.

Even-Zohar (1980:288) says that the functional approach was not quite unified, then two different incompatible programmes were therefore circulated. He named

the respective programmes the static and dynamic systems. The static or synchronic system is generally acknowledged as studying the condition of the system or text analysis as seen or occur at that moment but by dynamic or diachronism means the occurrence or event that changes with time. The static system was wrongly identified with the 'functional' or 'structural' approach and usually referred to the teaching of Saussure. This system is conceived of as a static (synchronic) net or set of relations, in which the value of each item is a function of the specific relation into which it enters. While the dynamic (diachrony) is referred to as the factor of time-succession and declared as something which cannot be accounted for by functional hypotheses.

## 2.2 Properties of the polysystem

The purpose of the term polysystem is to make the conception of the system as dynamic and heterogeneous in opposition to the synchronic approach, Even-Zohar (1980:290). Further, he points out that there is no property relatable to the polysystem which cannot be related to the system. Even-Zohar maintains that if by 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 appositions, and the idea of an open structure consisting of several such concurrent nets-of-relations, then the term "system" is appropriate. From what he has said, I concur with Maphike (1991:02) that the term system entails a set of related entities while a polysystem entails a set of related systems. For instance, we do have the South



African government system, which is a polysystem in relation to the police system, the economic system, the social and educational systems.

The emphasis achieved by the term polysystem is on the multiplicity of intersections, and hence on the greater complexity of structuredness involved. For instance, the heterogenic structure of culture in society, can be reduced to the culture of the ruling classes only, but this would not be fruitful beyond the attempt to construct homogenic models to account for the principal mechanism, governing a cultural system when time factor and adjacent systems' pressures are eliminated. This comes out clearly from Schipper (1989:19) who exemplifies the heterogenic structure with a community possessing two literary options, two "literatures" because the society is bilingual, which has been the case or still is, in many countries. For students of literature, to overcome such cases by confining themselves to only one of these, ignoring the other, is naturally more convenient (or rather, more comfortable) than dealing with them both. Actually, this is common practice in literary studies, how inadequate the results are cannot be exaggerated.

The above is not only true for literatures in different languages in one country, but also for the literatures of different social groups in the same country, and for different literatures on the international and the intercultural level as far as they influence each other in different ways within the polysystem. One cannot consider one literature as a separate phenomenon neglecting all the positive and negative

relationships it has with other adjacent literatures (Schipper, 1989:20). This emerges from Even-Zohar's view that naturally one may take an interest in one particular area of a broad field but it is clear that no particular part of any system can be analysed in isolation. In the same fashion literature is part of a complex network of systems all correlated with one another. Each system is governed by its own imminent laws and each is correlated to other systems through a set of specific structural laws.

### 2.3 Theme as a system

It was earlier on mentioned that a polysystem is a heterogenous open structure made up of various systems which intersect with one another and partly overlap, using different options concurrently, yet functioning as one structured whole, whose members are interdependent. We may therefore concur that literature is a complex unity of systems attaining new and ever-changing relationships derived from the dominating norms and models of the relevant period. The concept 'system' is open and historically determinable, signifying the organization of literary views within a given context.

In the study of literature, we may refer to a literature as a polysystem related to aspects such as plot, setting, characterization, theme and so on. The theme can be regarded as a system in the sense that one should consider and understand the social, political, economical and educational environment prevailing at the time the

author writes about a particular literary text. The message or lesson is based on the prevailing situation at the time of its writing and it comprises a set of entities which cannot be analysed in isolation. By so saying I concur with Maphike

(1991:02) that the term system entails a set of related entities while a polysystem entails a set of related systems.

Lastly, we may therefore say theme is dynamic or diachronic in the sense that it changes with time or it is a factor of time-succession. The prevailing situation has an effect on the production of a particular theme by the writer.

In the beginning of this chapter we have mentioned that our approach will focus on the historical development of themes in Southern Sotho short stories, therefore, it is imperative that we define what theme is.

We shall now focus on themes of the 1950's by Mocoancoeng and Mofokeng.

## CHAPTER 3

### THEMES FROM MOCOANCOENG AND MOFOKENG'S SHORT STORIES

#### 3. INTRODUCTION

##### 3.1 THE SOCIAL MILIEU

##### 3.2 THEMES IN MOCOANCOENG AND MOFOKENG'S STORIES

###### 3.2.1 Faith

###### 3.2.2 Comments on life

###### 3.2.3 Hope

##### 3.3 THEMES HANDLED BY MOFOKENG

###### 3.3.1 Friendship

###### 3.3.2 Love

###### 3.3.3 Loneliness

#### 3.4 CONCLUSION



## CHAPTER 3

## THEMES FROM MOCOANCOENG AND MOFOKENG'S SHORT STORIES

## 3. INTRODUCTION

We shall here examine the themes in the texts by Mocoancoeng and Mofokeng. Although Mocoancoeng's work is mainly regarded as a volume of essays (cf. Gerard, 1993:121) it has come to light that three of his productions are short stories and not essays and these are: **Tsela ya Dikepe; Monna ya neng a fofele Lehodimong** and **Ha kgwedi e tjhaba**.

It is evident that prominent themes which emerged from the studied stories deal with faith, hope, friendship, love and loneliness. It is crucial to point out that the mentioned themes are not necessarily handled by both writers. In some cases, as we shall see, the same theme will be discussed for both writers, and we shall try to show if the concerns are the same or not. In certain instances, a particular theme will only be handled from a particular writer. In such a situation, we shall focus only on the said writer.

Before an attempt is made to analyse themes from the studied texts, it is essential that we examine the social milieu which produced our writers. This is so because

writers are influenced by various factors such as culture; family background; social or environmental factors. This observation is in line with Irele who says that a literary work need not be dissociated from its reference to a particular context of life and experience, of existential awareness, to have a general human relevance and application (1981:3). These influences can nurture and shape the writer's style as well as his world- view.

For us therefore to capture the themes of the two writers appropriately, it is essential that we understand the environment under which they lived. We shall now briefly comment on the social milieu of their time.

### 3.1 THE SOCIAL MILIEU

The two writers wrote their stories around the time when the Nationalist Party came to power in South Africa. This was the time when the Verwoerdian Government introduced Apartheid laws, which discriminated and deprived black people of good jobs, education, housing, recreation and so on. The depressing situation is highlighted by the themes in the stories under consideration. This confirms Gordimer's observation when she says:

*Black writers choose their plots, characters and literary styles; their themes choose them.* (1973:11)

Let us now examine themes found in Mocoancoeng and Mofokeng's stories.

### 3.2 THEMES IN MOCOANCOENG AND MOFOKENG'S STORIES

The following themes, namely, faith, comments on life and hope are common to both writers and they handle them differently. We will look at the similarities, differences and also comment on the methods employed by both writers to convey their theme.

#### 3.2.1 FAITH

This is a strong theme that presents the belief that people generally have about their Almighty. The believers say that if you trust in the Lord, He will always avail himself to you.

##### 3.2.1.1 Similarities

Mocoancoeng and Mofokeng both handle the theme of faith in their stories namely, **Moruti ya neng a fofele Lehodimong** and **Hae** respectively. They both have a strong belief that life is a journey and at the end of this journey we all go back to the Father Almighty. But their point of view differs as we shall see later.

In Mocoancoeng's story, **Moruti ya neng a fofele lehodimong** we hear about Moruti who convinced his people that he was to go back to the Father by flying. The people of the time were not so educated and as a result they believed what their Minister told them. Mocoancoeng says:

*... ka Sontaha sa beke e itseng o tla fofela lehodimong sa nonyana pontsheng ya bohle. (Meqoqo ya phirimana:35)*

*(... one Sunday of a certain week, he will in the presence of all fly to heaven like a bird.)*

On the other hand, in **Hae**, Mofokeng portrays a frustrated man from the other side of Zambezi who is exploited in his job and who will, at the end of his journey, go straight home where he will get everlasting peace. The writer says:

*"... tsatsi le leng o tla tswa, mme ha e ba a ka hlola a dika- dika! O tla leba hae feela ... hae." (Leetong:122)*

*(... one day he will be free, and he won't delay! He will go straight home ... home.)*



### 3.2.1.2 Differences

In the story, **Moruti ya neng a fofele lehodimong**, Mocoancoeng presents faith in a misguided manner as he uses the character, Moruti (the priest) to predict his own death and how it will occur. This is not possible as no one is capable of predicting the time and the manner in which he will die, unless one plans suicide. Moruti's ill-advised faith is evident here:

*... re ka re moruti o ne a senoletswe ka toro kapa ka tsela e nngwe eo bapofeta ba senolelwang ka yona hore ha feela a dumela, a kgolwa e le ka nnete, ho fofela lehodimong ke ntho e nyenyane feela.*

*(... through a dream or in some other form revealed to prophets as long as they believe, we could say that it was revealed to the priest that flying to heaven is an easy matter.)*

This is both unbelievable and unacceptable. What Moruti is trying to do is a display of misguided faith. We also ask ourselves this question: How can a person "fly" to heaven? We believe that it is only God our Creator who knows about our departure from this world. This is revealed when Mocoancoeng says:

*" ... a kgutla moruti, a boela fatshe, ba neng ba le holenyana le yena ba utlwa masapo a robaha le pobodi ya ya utlwang bohloko." (Meqoqo ya phirimana:37)*

*( ...the priest came back, he went down, and those who were further away from him heard bones breaking as well as the groaning of one who is in pain.)*

On the other hand, Mofokeng depicts faith in the true sense of the word. In the story, Hae, he reveals to us that life is a long journey that starts the day we are born and ends when we die. He believes that we are not here on earth permanently. Instead, life is a journey to eternity. He describes life as:

*" ... ke pina ya maobane, ya kajeno, ya hosane, pina e sa feleng, ya meloko e ileng, ya meloko e tlang." (Leetong:117)*

*( ... it is a song of yesterday, of today, of tomorrow, a song that will never go away, of the past generations as well as the coming generations.)*

Through Mofokeng's story, we are able to identify his religious faith. He truly believes that at the end of the journey, we arrive at home where we find happiness, peace and rest. The end of our journey is summed up in this way:

*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 - haeng la nnete* (Leetong:119)

*(He had come to the end of the journey, he was a guest of the  
Lord, who was out of all tribulation, where death and suffering  
were dreaded - he had come HOME - the true home.)*

### 3.2.1.3 Observation

Through these stories, we are able to compare the strong and the weak points of the writers. We strongly feel that Mocoancoeng presents faith in a misguided manner. This is brought by the fact that he under-estimated his reader's mind or used a fiction in order to convey his theme. We may agree that no person is capable of predicting the time, moment and the manner in which he will die unless he is planning suicide, where he will be able to gather all the equipments or apparatus appropriate to his intentions. Again, there are no prearrangements for death as we are created by God. Only God knows the time and the hour of our

departure from this earth. But what Moruti tries to do, is to display his supernatural power over his Creator.

On the other hand, Mofokeng's strong point is to depict faith in the true sense of the word. He believes that when we die, we leave this world forever.

We shall now move on to look at what Mocoancoeng and Mofokeng say about comments on life as this is one of the themes found in their works.

### 3.2.2 COMMENTS ON LIFE

Through this theme the writers portray things that we experience in daily life. The sorrowful and joyful ones. They actually unfold to us what they encountered in life and want us to share that with them.

#### 3.2.2.1 Similarities

We find that Mocoancoeng in the story **Ha kgwedi e tjhaba** expresses the same sentiments that Mofokeng talks about in his story **Mona pela tsela**. The message in these two stories is the same that life is a long journey full of happiness and misery. These cannot be separated for one reason or the other.



Mocoancoeng in **Ha kgwedi e tjhaba** shows that life can be miserable as Dineo is disappointed from marrying Montsho, therefore she remains having that strong feeling about him. And it is not simple to forget their happier moments as the writer says:

*A hopola ka moo a neng a rata mohlankana enwa ka teng ba sa le banyenyane bobedi ba bona, Montsho le ho mmuisa a e so mmuise. (Meqoqo ya phirimana: 57)*

*(She remembered the great love she had for this gentleman, both were in their teens by then and Montsho had not even said a word to her.)*

Hence, Mofokeng consoles his character, Tumelo for living such a hard and complicated life. He says:

*" ... 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, e, le ho NTATAE, mmopi wa tsohle tse phelang, kgotsong e sa feleng" (Leetong:19)*

*( ... one day he would come to the end of the road ... to reach green pastures, at the end of the journey of wanderers, home to his mother and father, yeah, to his FATHER, the Creator of all living things, to everlasting peace.)*

### 3.2.2.2 Differences

Mocoancoeng in the story, **Ha kgwedi e tjhaba**, portrays the hallucinations that Dineo suffers after the death of Montsho. Dineo and Montsho were deeply in love though their parents did not know about their love affair. But for a few people who were aware of their relationship they could not resist admiring and wishing them good luck. They were meant for each other and had it not been for the second World War in which the character was forced to go at the expense of his loved one; they could have married one another. The narrator says:

*"A hopola ka moo batho ba neng ba sa kgaotse ho bolela bokgabane ba lerato la bona, hobane e ne e se la bosawana ... Esita le kajeno ho ka be ho ntse ho le jwalo hoja Hitlara a se etse dilo." (Megoqo ya phirimana: 56)*

*(It reminded her about the way people continually used to talk about their precious and true love ... Even today it would still be the same if it was not because of Hitler's deeds.)*

The writer portrays sincere love that Dineo had for her loved one. He actually expresses the feeling that a person experiences after losing the one he loves. Dineo remains committed to her love for Montsho, even if he is dead. The concern here is that it is not simple to forget your loved one. The writer puts it clearly when he says:

*"A hopola jwale mangolo a hlabosang, a tletseng dimonate tse ratwang ke baratani, ao a neng a atisa ho a fumana ha Montsho a sa le bosoleng." (Meqoqo ya phirimana:57)*

*(She thought of the wonderful letters which were full of sweet lovely messages which she used to receive from Montsho when he was still serving in the army.)*

On the contrary, Mofokeng in **Mona pela tsela**, depicts how little education can endanger the life of other people. Tumelo is a responsible farm worker who is dedicated to his work. He is unfairly arrested after police found dagga under his pillow. He is sentenced for six months in prison. On his release from prison, he has

nowhere to go, he is homeless and finds himself rejected because of the stigma of being from gaol. He cannot find work, as a result he resorts to roaming from farm to farm during the day and sleeping on the pavement at night. Mofokeng says this about him:

*"A utlwa e ka ho na le se mmitsang hore a mpe a itelle tsela, e be motsamai wa ka mehla, ya jereng thoto ya hae, ya hopotseng feela moo tsela e mo lebisang teng."* (Leetong:19)

*(He felt as though someone was calling him to take the road, to be the usual traveller with his luggage, he who is only thinking of where the road leads.)*

Life for Tumelo is not easy from the onset, he is an orphan, he loses his girlfriend, Tselane, and all his material possessions that he has acquired. The writer says:

*"A utlwa e ka o hohelwa ke boleleri, hore a thehe lehae la hae hona mona pela tsela."* (Leetong:18)

*(He felt attracted to a life of wandering, forcing him to set up a home near the road.)*



We find such a situation in real life. People tend to be discouraged and feel rejected, then they start to behave in a strange manner. Tumelo finds the road side being the safest place for him as he is harassed by the people and the police. He says:

*"A bomadimabe bo bokaakang ha toka e tsamaiswa ke ba sa boneng, ba thuswa ke ba sa boneng, ba sehlooho..."*

(Leetong:06)

*(How unfortunate it is when justice is administered by the blind, who are helped by the blind, who are cruel...)*

The message that Mofokeng portrays to his readers is that life is a long road full of ups and downs. We must learn to have courage to break the walls of tough life.

### 3.2.2.3 Observations

When we compare the two stories, we feel that Mocoancoeng's weak point is that he gives the impression that some parents are negligent and not responsible enough to bring up and guide their children. Under no circumstances, do parents check whether everything and everybody is safe and secure in the house, more especially

at night. A parent cannot rest and sleep well if one of his children is missing at home.

On the other hand, Mofokeng's strong point is that he indicates clearly that life is a long journey in which we encounter various things such as the good and the bad ones. Therefore, man has to pass through this thorny road of life in order to be successful.

We now move on to look at what Mocoancoeng and Mofokeng say about the theme of hope.

### 3.2.3 HOPE

Here we look at **Tsela ya dikepe** and **Ke toro feela** by Mocoancoeng and Mofokeng respectively. We shall also look at how the two writers arrive or look at the same theme.

#### 3.2.3.1 Similarities

It is clear that both writers handle the theme of hope as is evident from their words:

*"... o tseleng, o a tla, o tla fihla ..."* (Meqoqo ya phirimana:2)

*(... he is on his way, he is coming, he will arrive ...)*

*"Ke shebile moeti ke enwa a e tla mme."* (Leetong:32)

*(There is a visitor coming mother.)*

### 3.2.3.2 Differences

Mocoancoeng in **Tsela ya dikepe**, portrays a lonely woman who hopes that her husband who works on the sea, away from his family will come back safely. The writer believes that the lonely woman is able to survive the difficult times in life because she has a true and responsible husband. This comes out clearly when the lonely woman says:

*"Hosasa ntate o tla be a le teng mona hae. Ho se ho se hokae a bona bana ba hae hape."* (Meqoqo ya phirimana:1)

*(Father will be home tomorrow. Soon he will be seeing his children again.)*

Mocoancoeng, through his characters, displays hope that however far away from his home, maybe one's loved ones will always wait patiently because the conveyor-belt of hope is both love and caring. The writer says:

*"Moo a teng, ke batla ke tiisa ke re, o hopotse bana ba hae. O hole hona jwale, empa o tseleng. o a tla, o tla fihla ..."* (Meqoqo ya phirimana:1)

*(Where ever he is, I truly believe that he is thinking about his children. Even though he may be far now, he is on his way and he will arrive ...)*

He also demonstrates the acceptance of the husband's death by a lonely woman, who knows that her husband worked on the sea, a dangerous job, for their survival. She knows that her husband risked his life with the hope that nothing will happen; yet she knew that anything could happen. The lonely woman, instead of welcoming her husband, welcomes his corpse. Mocoancoeng says:

*"Ho laetse Ya sa arabisweng - le dumme ..."* (Meqoqo ya phirimana:5)

*(He has commanded who cannot be denied - let it be.)*



With this story, the writer shows that joy and sorrow go together. We cannot choose what we would achieve at the end of every event or occurrence.

Contrarily, Mofokeng in **Ke toro feela**, portrays Tatolo and Molahlehi as people who sacrifice their lives and work underground, a dangerous place, for the survival of their families. They take a risk with the hope that nothing will happen, but unfortunately Tatolo dies in an accident and Molahlehi stays in hospital until he is better. The death of Tatolo is made known to Molahlehi's family. They are touched by this but nevertheless, hope that they will hear more from Molahlehi as they are expecting him at any moment. This is confirmed by Mofokeng when he says:

*" ... mme ba tshepa hore ba tla tla di utlwa hantle ka yena  
Molahlehi hobane o ne a ntse a lebeletswe ho fihla hona  
matsatsing ona ao leha kwana a ne a sa ka a bolela letsatsi."*

(Leetong:24)

*( ... and they hoped to get more news from Molahlehi as they  
expected him to arrive any time even though he had not  
indicated when.)*

When Molahlehi's wife, Mmateboho, does not hear from her husband, she concludes that he is also involved in the accident. But the hope and trust she has,

makes her not to despair, as Mofokeng says:

*" ... a mpa a thibelwa ke ntho e le nngwe feela hore a se ke a be a se a di etsa nnete." (Leetong:25)*

*( ... she was prevented by one thing only not to declare the news as the truth.)*

Mofokeng shows us that it is not easy to abandon a person whom you love, trust and rely on. For Molahlehi's children, it is not easy to forget about the warmth and care they get from their father. They expect him any time as the narrator says:

*"O ne a ntse a tseba hore ntatae a ka nna a fihla neng le neng."*  
(Leetong:32)

*(He knew that his father could arrive at any time.)*

### 3.2.3.3 Observation

When we compare the two stories, we feel that both writers have successfully conveyed the message that joy and sorrow go together, even though Mocoancoeng has not given his character a name, as a name plays a vital part in the behaviour or

actions of the character. Therefore one is not able to link the character's behaviour with his name. On the other hand, Mofokeng has given his characters names and they can easily be linked to their actions. For example, Tatolo, in Sesotho stands for "*o latotswe*" meaning "*he is no more*"; Molahlehi stands for "*o lahlehile*" meaning "*he is lost*"; and Teboho means "*gratitude*".

### 3.3 THEMES HANDLED BY MOFOKENG

Apart from the themes discussed above, we find that Mofokeng further writes about friendship, love and loneliness while Mocoancoeng does not handle any of these themes.

#### 3.3.1 FRIENDSHIP

Mofokeng in the story **Ruthe**, portrays true friendship between people of different races. He finds it an attribute that builds good human relations.

The writer presents Mmamosa and Marie as widows who live peacefully on the farm after the death of their husbands. But Mmamosa's son, Petros, writes a letter requesting his mother to join him in the big city. Mmamosa instead discloses the contents of the letter to Marie as they were intimate friends. The writer says:

***"O ne a tseba hore ha ho ka nngwe, o tla mo phetela hobane ba ne ba se ba ntshana se inong."*** (Leetong:42)

*(She was definitely sure that she would relate to her as they shared all their secrets.)*

For Mmamosa to prove to Marie that there is no way that they can be separated, their friendly love for each other is quite intense. She says:

***"Ke tla dula le yena mona ho fihlela re arohanngwa ke lefu ..."***  
(Leetong:51)

*(I will stay with her until death do us part.)*

Mofokeng also reminds us that true friendship is a strong bond between two people that cannot be broken by the third person. Mmamosa is sympathetic to Marie as she cannot abandon her at her age. Hence she says:

***"E ka ba ho hloka teboho ha nka mo furalla nakong ena ha a se a tsofala, a se a hloka bathusi."*** (Leetong:51)



*(It would be grossly ungrateful of me to abandon her at this stage when she is aging, when she is in need of helpers.)*

Let us now move on and discuss the theme based on love.

### 3.3.2 LOVE

Here we talk about the natural love that is displayed by Mofokeng in his story, Hosasa.

In Hosasa, Mofokeng demonstrates that even though Molefi is pulling hard, his first priority is the love of his family. He cares for his children and his ailing wife. He leaves early and comes back late. These awkward hours expose him to danger but this is not a problem to him. What matters is to earn enough money to maintain his family. The writer says about him:

*"Ha a tlola terempeng monahano wa hae o ne o le mong feela: mosadi wa hae le bana ba hae feela."* (Leetong:82)

*(When he alighted from the tram he had one thing only in his mind: his wife and children.)*

Mofokeng through Molefi displays an eternal and everlasting love for his wife. Even though she is unemployed, he loves her whole-heartedly as the writer says:

*"Tsohle tse ding di ne di sa fihle mohopolong wa hae ... O ne a bona ntho e le nngwe feela ... lerato leo a ratang mosadi wa hae ka lona, ka hlohong ya hae ho ne ho dumaduma bitso le le leng feela - MMATSIETSI"* (Leetong:83)

*(Nothing came to his mind ... he thought of one thing only ... the love for his wife, there was only one thing buzzing in his head only one name - MMATSIETSI)*

One day Molefi is late for work due to the scarcity of transport. As their township has dark corners, he is attacked and injured by criminals. All his important documents are taken. When he knocks at that time of the night, Mmatsietsi does not even think of criminals but of Molefi. This shows how much she loves her husband. She opens the door as the writer says:

*"Hara lefifi lena Mmatsietsi a inama ho phahamisa se ka pele ho yena. O ne a sa nahane hore e ka nna ya eba dinokwane. O ne a nahana ka Molefi feela."* (Leetong:88)

*(In the darkness Mmatsietsi stooped to lift something in front of her. She did not think that it could be thugs or robbers. She only thought of Molefi.)*

Through this story we learn that even though Molefi is struggling to make ends meet, his family lives a warm and happy life.

### 3.3.3 LONELINESS

Through this theme, Mofokeng shows the relationship between man and his Creator. Man finds peace when he is alone.

In **Bonnotshing**, Mofokeng starts giving us a picture of Sello and Motsamai who are friends. At the end of the examinations they want to visit their grandparents during the festive season.

While they are resting at night in the mountainous area, there comes Motsamai Mosiya. A man who left his village with his livestock because he lost his entire family due to some infectious disease. This man does not want to go back to his original place because he will remember the mishaps of those he cherished. He then moves to the mountains where he finds peace and comfort in the quietness of nature. Mofokeng says:

*"Tjhe, matshediso a nnete o a fumana botebong ba maikutlo a hao, bonnotshing ba hao ha o thotse o nahana ditaba, ha o di sheba ho se ya o thusang, o phakisa ho matlafala, ho fumana matshediso, wa kgothala mme o tsoha molota hape."*

(Leetong:96)

*(Indeed, real condolence you get out of the depths of your feelings, in solitude, thinking of the news, you soon become strong, you find solace, you find hope and courage.)*

Well, Motsamai in his solitude, feels closer to his Creator, far away from life's constraints, at the place where he can clearly interpret the real meaning of life, hence he says:

*"E, bana ba ka, le rona mona hodimo, mona bonnotshing re isa dillo tsa rona le mathata ho Modisa e moholo, re mohlatswana wa hae."* (Leetong:98)

*(Yes my children, even us here at the top, in solitude we take our pains and troubles to the Lord, Almighty, we are His flock.)*



The writer feels that there is something that attracts people who are troubled spiritually and want to be alone as he says:

*"Mohla le ikutlwang le sitwa ke merwalo, mohla le leng mahlomoleng a maholo, mohla ho reng le ipolaye, le nyollele mahlo mona moo matshediso a leng teng, le hopole hore hodimo mona kgotso e teng, kgotso e fumanwang bonnotshing."*

(Leetong:99)

*(When you feel the burden, when you are in misery, when you feel like committing suicide, lift up your eyes to the place of solace and remember that up here there is peace, peace found in solitude.)*

Mofokeng through the character believes that when you are lonely and life is difficult for you, the only way to overcome this, is to ask for help and guidance from the Almighty.

### 3.4 CONCLUSION

The above discussion reveals to us the hardships that the black people endured in the past. Seemingly, the writers of the fifties felt the effects of these laws so much that they decided to write about them. Let us now move on to the next period of the 1990's and see how theme is related to that period.

## CHAPTER 4

### THEMES FROM ZULU'S, LITABE'S AND MAPHALLA'S SHORT STORIES

#### 4. INTRODUCTION

##### 4.1 THE SOCIAL MILIEU

##### 4.2 THEMES COMMON TO BOTH WRITERS

###### 4.2.1 The love for animals

###### 4.2.2 Relations in marriage

##### 4.3 THEMES HANDLED BY INDIVIDUAL WRITERS

###### 4.3.1 He laughs best who laughs last

###### 4.3.2 Survival

###### 4.3.3 There is never a stalker without a croucher

###### 4.3.4 Dishonesty

###### 4.3.5 Ignorance is a painful experience

###### 4.3.6 God helps those who help themselves

###### 4.3.7 Lies do no pay

## CHAPTER 4

## THEMES FROM ZULU'S, LITABE'S AND MAPHALLA'S SHORT STORIES

## 4. INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines themes of the short stories written in the 1990's by Zulu and Litabe in **Fiswana la morena** and Maphalla in **Mohlomong Hosane**. The following are the emerging themes: The love for animals; relations in marriages; he laughs best who laughs last; survival; there is never a stalker without a croucher; God helps those who help themselves; ignorance is a painful experience; dishonesty; lies do not pay.

As is the case with the themes of 1950's, we find that some of the themes are handled by all writers whilst in some instances a particular theme is discussed by a particular writer.

Once again, we shall establish the social milieu during which the writing was produced.



#### 4.1 THE SOCIAL MILIEU

Some of the themes that come out during the 1950's are also prominent in the 1990's. This is probably so because the effects of apartheid were still felt during this time. Apartheid is still in place even though some resistance is conspicuous in the 1990's. For instance, Black people are no longer as submissive as before. They are looking forward to taking over and governing and being in power. As a result, the society is rebellious in the sense that there is a high incidence of violence, boycotts and strikes in the industries, schools, and institutions of higher learning. The resistance is seen in the form of disobedience, disrespect, the culture of non-payment and boycotts. It is therefore this state of affairs that drives Zulu, Litabe and Maphalla to choose the sort of themes that they are writing about.

Let us now focus on the themes identified in the 1990's.

#### 4.2 THEMES COMMON TO BOTH WRITERS

Here we find that the following themes, namely, the love for animals and relations in marriage are common to both Zulu and Maphalla; and we will also look at the similarities and differences and comment at the end.

#### 4.2.1 THE LOVE FOR ANIMALS

In the stories **Lerato la ka** and **Bakgenne ntja ya ka**, Zulu and Maphalla illustrate the importance of the love for animals. The love we have for them and their importance to us.

##### 4.2.1.1 Similarities

We find that Zulu in the story **Lerato la ka**, expresses the feeling of pity, sympathy and desire that Maphalla also talks about in the story **Bakgenne ntja ya ka**. This is evident when Zulu shows the frustration that Topollo suffers when his dog, Baile is to be killed. The writer says:

*"Ka sarelwa ha ke hopola hore ha ke sa tla tsoma. Ha ke hopola bodutu ba ho dula feela polasing, ka lla le ho feta."* (Fiswana la morena:64)

*(I became disturbed when I realised that I will no longer go hunting. When I thought of the loneliness of staying idle on the farm, I cried even more.)*

On the other hand, in Maphalla, we hear Kgauhelo say this about his dog, Bakgenne when he finds it dead:

*"Ke lahlehetswe ke motswalle wa ka wa hlooho ya kgomo."*

(Mohlomong hosane:20)

*(I have lost a true friend.)*

#### 4.2.1.2 Differences

In Zulu's story *Lerato la ka*, Topollo is frustrated because his father is ordering him to kill all the family dogs because he failed to pay for their taxes and he faces arrest as a result. Topollo wants to disobey his father because among the dogs to be killed there is one that he loves very much. Baile, Topollo's dog, has been a true friend to him. Unfortunately, his father has no choice. If the police find the dogs, he is definitely going to be arrested. He then says to his son:

*"Ngwana ka, o tla utlwisisa ha o se o hodile. Naha ke ya beng ba yona. Ha e sa le ya rona, rona re se re fetohile bathoduwa."*

(Fiswana la morena:64)

*(My child, you will understand when you grow older. This land has its owners. It is no longer ours, we have turned to be the adopted ones.)*

Even though Topollo's father did not act responsibly, he also puts the blame on his employer who failed to pay them for the last three months. Topollo cannot take the pain of seeing his dog killed and decides to witness the killing instead of taking part in it. When he realises that the boys in the neighbourhood are excited that they have to kill the dogs including Baile, he makes this comment:

*"Ka hlokomela hore ba thabiswa ke ho ya bolaya thatohatsi ya ka, Baile. Mohlomong ke hobane ha re tswile le bona ho ya tsoma, nna ke atisa ho tla ke leketlisitse nyamatsane, ha bona ba kgutla ba tshwere dikoto tseo ba tsamaileng le tsona."*

(Fiswana la morena:65)

*(I realised that they were happy because they were going to kill my favourite, Baile. Probably this is because every time we go hunting I come back with something while they come back carrying only sticks they took along to hunt.)*



Whereas in Maphalla's story **Bakgenne ntja ya ka**, we find an element of irresponsible behaviour. Kgauhelo was given a dog by his grandfather when he was five years old and he looked after it so well that they developed true friendship.

Bakgenne also protected him and his family. Kgauhelo comments thus:

*"Bakgenne e ne e le modisa wa ka wa popota wa lelapa leso ...*

*E ne e le motshepuwa wa ka. E ne e le setshabelo sa ka."*

(Mohlomong Hosane:21)

*(Bakgenne was the best protector for me and my family ... It was my trusted. It was my shelter)*

Bakgenne was knocked down by a car after Pulane, Kgauhelo's sister let it free so that it could stretch its legs. Kgauhelo feels that if the driver of the car that killed Bakgenne was responsible, he would have been careful not to run over his dog. He says:

*"Bakganni bana ba se nang maitseo ba tla tjha diheleng."*

(Mohlomong hosane:22)

*(These drivers with no manners will burn in hell.)*

#### 4.2.1.3 Observation

Coincidentally in both stories, the writers teach us about the importance of animals. They protect us and our properties. We also learn how important it is to be responsible so that we do not lose the things we love and value in life.

#### 4.2.2 RELATIONS IN MARRIAGE

We find that both writers portray marriage as a bond between two people who care and love each other.

##### 4.2.2.1 Similarities

Zulu and Maphalla both handle the theme of relations in marriage in **Lephoka la ditweba** and **Lerole, leroleng!** respectively. Both writers clearly point out in their stories that marriage is a bond between two people but if a third person interferes then chaos or death will result. For instance, Zulu says:

*"Tswibila ha a utlwa tsena a reka babolai ho qeta ka Mokwena."*

(Fiswana la morena:72)

*(On hearing this, Tswibila hired killers to finish off Mokwena.)*

Whereas Maphalla in **Lerole, leroleng!** says:

*"Ho thwe o kile a ba kgaoletsa ba ntse ba botsana hore tseketseke ena e Makgafola e tla hlekwa neng."* (Mohlomong hosane:72)

*(He found them planning the death of the foolish Makgafola.)*

#### 4.2.2.2 Differences

In **Lephoka la ditweba**, Zulu portrays Mokwena as a person who is not faithful in his marriage. He is married to Seipati but he wants to marry Tswibila as well.

Unfortunately he finds out that he is not the only man in Tswibila's life and he decides to leave her. On hearing this, Tswibila vows that she is not going to let Mokwena abandon her like that. She then bribes criminals to kill Mokwena so that she and Seipati both lose him. The narrator says:

*"Ha ba se ba mmolaile, ba mo kenya ka hara lebokose la diaparo, ba notlela."* (Fiswana la morena:72)

*(After they had killed him, they locked his corpse inside a kist.)*

It is his bosom friend that carries out the act of killing and his corpse is locked inside a kist. In the meantime, Seipati is not prepared to go and look for him as she normally did. She also ignores the premonitions that she gets as seen from the following comment:

*"Le ha Seipati a ntse a utlwa letswalo le mo seha kgafetsa, o ikutlwa a sa tshoha hakaalo ... Hape a utlwa le ntja e hlaba moolo ... Hodimo sefateng ho utlwahala sephooko se hihitsang ... Monkonyana o sa tlwaelehang o a utlwahala jwale."* (Fiswana la morena:74)

*(Even though Seipati is constantly troubled by her conscience, she is not very afraid ... She also hears a dog howling and an owl wailing in the tree ... Something unusual is smelling now.)*

Seeing that Mokwena is not coming back, she decides to be dishonest and opens the case to look for money as she is tired of the abuse and negligence she endures in the home. To her surprise she finds Mokwena dead. The surprise is captured in the following:



*"Ha a re mahlo tloha, a bona ho hlaha letsoho leo a le tsebang.*

*A ba a tseba le reng e monwaneng ... a idibana."* (Fiswana la morena:79)

*(When she looked , she saw a hand which she could recognise. She also recognised the ring on the finger ... then she collapsed.)*

Had Mokwena been faithful to her, this might not have happened.

Contrarily in Maphalla's **Lerole, leroleng!** Mmakgethollo is a woman who is unfaithful. She has an extramarital affair with Raselakga while her husband is still alive. Because her husband is an obstacle, she plans to kill him together with Raselakga. Unfortunately for her, her son Kgethollo overhears them and begins to lose respect for his mother. Kgethollo also loses his temper:

*"O ne a mo jabela monnae a ntse a phela."* (Mohlomong hosane:71)

*(He attacked his mother while his father was still alive.)*

Makgafola was a very rich man as can be seen from the fact that he owned three houses and had about ten cars. People gauge one's status financially by what one has. But as word goes round, it is said that Makgafola himself was not an honest and faithful person. Most of the things that he had were inherited unlawfully. It might then be the case that the wife is not honest because of the past history of her husband. After Makgafola's burial, rumour says Mmakgethollo is pregnant by Raselakga and they intend to get married soon so as to protect her from her unruly son Kgethollo.

#### 4.2.2.3 Observation

Through these stories we learn that unfaithfulness can lead to disrespect. There is no way that Mokwena's children will have any respect for both their father and his concubine. The same is true of Kgethollo who actually displayed disrespect by beating up his mother.

### 4.3 THEMES HANDLED BY INDIVIDUAL WRITERS

Here we find that a particular theme is handled by a particular writer. For instance, Zulu discusses three other different themes, Litabe handles one whereas Maphalla discusses five other different themes.

#### 4.3.1 HE LAUGHS BEST WHO LAUGHS LAST

In Litabe's **Mohau ya lekgutla**, we learn that in life we must never laugh at other people's weaknesses because we never know what will happen tomorrow. Mohau has a hump on his back and he is a laughing stock in his community. He stays with his father and stepmother who also ridicule him as we hear her say:

*"Tswela ntle kwana selotjana towe!"* (Fiswana la morena:80)

*(Go out you little hump!)*

His peer friends also make a fool of him. The narrator remarks:

*"A hola jwalo Mohau wa batho hara bomphato ba hae a fetotswe sekatana, semamina, seiphomolo sa mang le mang. A fetotswe tsona kgobe tsa seotlong hantle. A hoboswa ngwana wa batho, a jewa ditsheho, ho ya ho ile a keketehisa mabewana."* (Fiswana la morena:80)

*(He grew up among his peers regarded as dirty cloth, a handkerchief, a dust pan for whoever.)*

At the end, Mohau decides to keep to himself and spends most of his time reading. This helps him to improve his English and his father is impressed. Unfortunately he cannot get a job when he applies for one because the lawyer's wife refuses that her husband should employ a humped person for she declares:

*"Mona ha ke batle diqhwalala, ke o jwetse!"* (Fiswana la morena:81)

*(Let me tell you, here at my home I do not want cripples)*

But despite all such behaviour and remarks, Mohau is not rejected by everybody. One machinist has a liking for Mohau and Mohau spends most of his time with him. In the process he learns how to sew and then requests his father to buy him a machine. Mohau becomes an expert and therefore becomes known by the beautiful clothes he sews.

Mohau finds himself a girlfriend who is only interested in his money. When she sees that Mohau is not giving her enough money, she dumps him. She even goes to the extent of belittling him in front of her other boyfriend, Moferefere, and ridicules him with the words:



*"Boela hae kwana sekokotwana towe! (Fiswana la morenha:86)*

*(Go back home you creature!)*

Moferefere threatens Mohau and makes fun of him. Mohau goes back home hurt and disappointed and decides to forget about her and to concentrate on his job. Immediately after this incident, war erupts in Mohau's country and young men are called to go and fight in that war. Mohau survives the call because of his physical make up. Manana's boyfriend, Moferefere goes and in his absence Manana finds herself another boyfriend, a rich man's son, and they get married. But her marriage is not a success. At one stage, Mohau witnesses a fight that Manana has with her husband. Manana assaults him and she is arrested while her husband is taken to hospital. On the other hand, Moferefere comes back from war crippled. Moferefere meets with Mohau one afternoon outside their village. He asks Mohau for a cigarette. When Mohau realises that this is Moferefere, he is surprised:

*"Hela! Na ke wena Moferefere?" ke Mohau eo, a makaletse seqhwa sena se pudufetseng, se siileng mahlo le matsoho a sona kwana Itali, ntweng ya Hitlelara. (Fiswana la morenha:82)*

*("Hi! Is that you Moferefere?" that was Mohau, surprised to see this crippled man who is poor, who left his eyes and hands at Hitler's war in Italy.)*

Yes, Litabe teaches us here that we should never laugh at other people's disabilities. Mohau was regarded as a nobody by most people in his community but at the end he has the best laugh.

#### 4.3.2 SURVIVAL

In the story, **Mpeng ya lefatshe**, Zulu exposes the high death rate that occurs to migratory labourers in the mines. Both Tlhoriso and Tokollo work in the mine. Tokollo has a feeling that something unexpected will happen to him in the mine shaft. Truly, they are one day trapped in the shaft and he dies. The high death rate instils fear in Tlhoriso and he does realise that he has no choice but to work for his family. He comments:

*"Ntho e neng e nkuhlwisa bohloko ke hore batho ba shwa ka sehloho. Letsatsi le leng le le leng ho shwa motho."*(Fiswana la morena:32)

*(I am heartbroken because people die horrible deaths. Each day a person dies.)*

One day, on his way out of the mine shaft, Tlhoriso realises that they are trapped by water. He thinks that it is the end of his life. He therefore says:

*"Ha re batla tsela, ra fumana hore e kwetswe ke metsi. Ke lena he, la ka lefu. Le sehloho la tlala."* (Fiswana la morena:34)

*(When we were searching for the way, we found that it waterlogged. Here is my cruel death from hunger.)*

Through this story, Zulu teaches us that the state of affairs that one finds oneself in can persuade one to live in a dangerous environment.

#### 4.3.3 THERE IS NEVER A STALKER WITHOUT A CROUCHER

Maphalla in the story, **Makatikati a bosiu**, portrays the different kinds of evil that normally happen at night. Through Mosito, who is a night watchman, we are exposed to the different kinds of evil behaviour that take place at night. Mosito, who works at a hotel, shares with us that in the kind of work that he does, he usually sees what the people in his community do. These include well respected

personalities like businessmen, school inspectors, and taxi owners. Some of the evil deeds that come to the fore are the following:

- A car stops in the dark and a prostitute goes toward it. The narrator says:

*"Koloji ke eo e eme lefifing. Motho ke eo a hwehla. Mosetsana ke eo a kwakwaila a haba koloing e lefifing. O melomo e mefubedu. O manala a mafubedu. O tenne kgutlela e bonaletsang ..."* (Mohlomong Hosane:6)

*(There is a car in the dark. A person waves. A girl moves fast towards the car in the dark. She has red lips. She has red nails. She wears a transparent mini dress ...)*

- An inspector's wife is seen entering the hotel with another man:

*"Koloji ke ena e kena kampong ya hotela. Ke koloji ya mohlomphehi Katola. Mohlomphehi Katola o tsamaya le mme Mmakgaba. Mme Mmakgaba ke yena mohatsa ntate Kgaba. Ntate Kgaba ke yena mohlalobi wa dikolo tsa rona. O ile kwana mose ka thuto tsa bana ba rona."* (Mohlomong Hosane:7)



*(Here comes a car to the hotel's camp. It is Mr Katola's car. Mr Katola is with Mrs Kgaba. Mrs Kgaba is Mr Kgaba's wife. Mr Kgaba is our school inspector. He has gone overseas in connection with our children's education.)*

- Ntshediseng, a month old widow already goes out with another man, Tshomo, an insurance broker. Ntshediseng's husband never had a car but she is driving a brand new car:

*"Ha eka ke Ntshediseng eo ya fihlang ka koloi tjee! ... Monna wa Ntshediseng o ne a patwa kgweding e shweleng ... Koloi jwale o e rekile neng? Monnae o shwele a se na le baesekele motho wa batho ..."* (Mohlomong Hosane:8)

*(The person that has just arrived in a car looks like Ntshediseng? ... Ntshediseng's husband was buried a month ago ... When did she buy a car? Her husband died without having had even a bicycle, poor man ...)*

- The last straw comes when Mosito discovers that his wife has ultimately been overpowered by Ramabidi who is proud to say:

*...Nka tsamaya dibaka le wena. Kajeno lebelete lane la mosadi ke bile ka le qhautsa. O ne a hopola hore o tla fella kae yena eo?... (Mohlomong Hosane:11)*

*(...I can go places with you. Today I managed to grab that wild woman. Where did she think she would end up?...)*

When Mosito moves closer to the taxi in which the two men alighted, he hears one of the women say:

*"O se ke wa etsa lerata monghadi, ... o tseba hore monna wa hae o sebetsa hona mona. E ka tshwana ya re utlwa tseketseke eno!" (Mohlomong Hosane:11)*

*(Do not make noise sir, ... you must remember that her husband works here. That fool might hear us!)*

What hurts Mosito is that he has seen all and in some cases he was tempted to tell the people he knows about the actions of their loved ones. Now that it is his wife, he is shocked and disappointed.

The lesson we derive from this theme is that all evil gets exposed at the end and no evil is above God. We can do all kinds of evil but at the end we pay for our deeds.

#### 4.3.4 DISHONESTY

In the story, **Ha taba tsa batho**, Maphalla portrays the manner in which different offences are handled in the court of law. It looks like in some instances there is no justice. Some perpetrators are not found guilty while on the other hand you may find innocent people receiving heavy fine charges or given long imprisonment terms for crimes they did not commit. All these happen because people are not honest.

First we hear about Kgauta, who borrows a sheep from his friend, Melato, to celebrate with his family. He does not replace Molato's sheep until Melato takes one of his sheep. In court, Melato is found guilty for taking the law into his own hands. As Maphalla puts it:

*"Nyewe e ile ya hlola Melato. O ile a fumanwa a le molato wa boshodu. O ile a ahlolwa a ba a bolellwa hore ho phoso ho inkela molao matsohong."* (Mohlomong Hosane:54)

*(Melato lost the case. He was found guilty of theft. He was convicted and told that its an offence to take the law into one's own hands.)*

If Kgauta was honest and had given Melato his sheep back, he wouldn't have taken the law into his hands.

In the second theft case, Mmamosela and Mmadineo are fighting over a peach tree. Mmamosela owns the tree but it protrudes into Mmadineo's yard. Mmadineo's children eat peaches and Mmamosela opens a case against Mmadineo. In court, Mmadineo is not found guilty for eating Mmamosela's peaches even though the trees are not hers. Maphalla's comment is:

*"Ha eba Mmamosela a llela diperekisi tseo tsa hae, a etse bonnete ba hore di se ke tsa wela ka ha Mmadineo."*

(Mohlomong Hosane:55)

*(If Mmamosela complains about her peaches, she must make sure that they do not protrude into Mmadineo's yard.)*

It was very difficult for the court to solve this case because in between someone is not honest. Mmamosela knows very well that, her tree is protruding through to



Mmadineo's yard and Mmadineo has no control over it. If she were fair enough, she shouldn't have taken Mmadineo to court but rather she should have made sure that her tree does not disturb Mmadineo in her own yard.

The third case is a rape case. A rapist is not found guilty because the woman is not able to answer some of the embarrassing questions posed by the rapist. Maphalla's remark about the results of the case is:

*"Le dikweta tsena e ka ka di se di tseba hore basadi ba tla tshaba ho araba dipotso tse itseng, ka hoo ba di botsa ka ona mokgwa o tla thatafaletsa batho bao ba batho, o ba behe tsietsing."* (Mohlomong Hosane:55)

*(Even the perpetrators know that the women are not willing to respond to certain questions, therefore they ask them questions in such a way that it will be difficult for the poor people to answer.)*

This rapist is well aware that he is guilty!

In the last murder case, Tshehisi is picked up from his home by his friends. He is murdered and it is not known who killed him. It seems his wife is also a suspect as

she had an affair with one of the suspected murderers but the police investigation fails to come with concrete evidence to arrest the killers. This teaches us that even one's best friends can turn out to be ones enemies. Both Tshehisi's friends and his wife are not prepared to tell the police the truth because they are not honest people. Through this theme, Maphalla shares with us the unfairness that we normally come across in life where it is possible that justice may not be carried out because people are not trustworthy and honesty.

#### 4.3.5 IGNORANCE IS A PAINFUL EXPERIENCE

Maphalla talks of ignorance being a painful experience. Lack of knowledge can lead one to live a miserable life.

In the story, **Ho se tsebe ke lebote**, Maphalla shows that it is not easy for one to choose a true and real partner in marriage. Here is Tieho, a school teacher who honestly loves Ntebaleng, a nurse. Even though he loves her, he is afraid to reveal his love to her as he does not know her deeply. This is revealed when Maphalla says:

*"Kgarebe eo Tieho a neng a e rata haholo, empa a e tshaba, ke Ntebaleng. O ne a mo rata a sa iketsise."* (Mohlomong

Hosane:49)

*(The only person that Tieho loved and was afraid to propose to was Ntebaleng. He really loved her.)*

Tieho does not know Ntebaleng well, and he delays to propose to her because when he tries to do so, doctor Ditsebe is a stumbling block. He does not know that Ditsebe is related to Ntebaleng. He concludes that they are in love as they are always together. As Maphalla puts it:

*"E ne e le kgetlo la pele Tieho a teana le Ntebaleng. Kgetlo le leng le le leng o ne a teana le yena a tsamaya le ngaka Ditsebe."*

(Mohlomong Hosane:49)

*(It was not the first time that Tieho met Ntebaleng. Each time he met her, she was in the company of doctor Ditsebe.)*

On the other hand, Ntebaleng suspects that Tieho is in love with Mponeng. She then phoned Tieho to find out whether they have a relationship or not. The narrator says:

*"Ho bonahala eka Tieho o kgahlilwe ke ... Mponeng. Empa ha se taba e kgolehang hore Tieho a ka kgahlwa ke heletwane ena. Ho hang ho thata ho kgolwa."* (Mohlomong Hosane:50)

*(It seems as if Tieho is interested in Mponeng. But it is unbelievable that Tieho can be interested in this gossip. It is really unbelievable.)*

Maphalla, through Tieho, teaches that people do not trust one another, more especially partners. Therefore, Tieho phones Ntebaleng to find out whether there is a relationship between her and doctor Ditsebe. This shows that not every man inquires from a woman about her involvement with someone. They just propose to break the existing affair to win the love of a woman. After realising that Ntebaleng is related to Ditsebe, Tieho is disappointed. Ntebaleng phones Tieho to clear the air. He then tells her that he suspected that they are lovers.

#### 4.3.6 GOD HELPS THOSE WHO HELP THEMSELVES

With the story **Tsoha hle molebedi**, Maphalla shows that honesty has rewards. Maphalla portrays Ketsisi as a prisoner who is under the strict guard of an old prison-warder, Motsielwa. As Ketsisi is to appear in court the following morning, Motsielwa is warned not to fall asleep. But instead, he falls asleep and Ketsisi is now guarding him. Some young, selfish prison-warders advise Ketsisi to escape so that Motsielwa can be in trouble and dismissed from work. He says:



*"... ba nkeletsa hore ke hle ke kgope phalo a tle a tsebe ho di arabela."* (Mohlomong Hosane:26)

*(...they advised me to escape so that he may be accountable.)*

Ketsisi needs a job, and tells himself that God will help him one day to get one if he is honest enough. Instead he wakes him up. The writer says:

*"Ke ile ka atamela molebedi, yaba ke mo phaphatha lehetleng, ke re, tsoha hle, molebedi."* (Mohlomong Hosane:26)

*(I went near the warder, patted him on the shoulder, and said please wake up guard.)*

Then the old man, on his retirement day, insisted that the job be given to Ketsisi as Maphalla says:

*"Monnamoholo o ile a dihela hona tsatsing leo, mme a ba a ba kgothaletsa hore ke fumane mosebetsi ona wa bolebedi oo ke ntseng ke o sebetsa le kajeno."* (Mohlomong Hosane:26)

*(The old man went into retirement that very day and he encouraged them to appoint me to the same job of security, the position which I still hold to this day.)*

#### 4.3.7 LIES DO NOT PAY

In the story **Ntwa ya basadi**, Maphalla shows that women like to gossip and this leads to fights. These fights, degrade their dignity and they loose respect in society. On the other hand, they are regarded as soft-speaking creatures who do not like to idle.

Mmamonoto and Mmadiatheng are unemployed and are good gossips. They are jealous of Mmambehle's progress in life. Her husband is deceased and she works to raise her other children. Her first born is married to the priest's son. Everyday she brings some vegetables home to feed her children. So all this , does not please the two unemployed women. They find it easier to discredit others than to credit them.

They say:

*"Mambehle o a ikgantsha, o etswa ke tsona ditapole le mokopu tsa ha Motsarapane."* (Mohlomong Hosane:17)

*(Mmambehle is proud because of Motsarapane's potatoes and Pumpkin.)*

Maphalla in this story shows us that we should deplore fights and believe in helping and guiding other people. To him fights are a sign of indolence as he says:

*"Ba tla ba lwana ke hona mohlang oo basadi. Ba lwana e mona e bitswang ntwana e mpe, ntwana ya dibono."* (Mohlomong

Hosane:16)

*(The women really fought on that day. They fought tooth and nail.)*

There are types of personalities, those who like and those who dislike fights. Those who dislike fights, tend to go to opposite direction when they realise that fight is coming their way. But those who like fights, enjoy seeing others suffering in front of them and they wish it could be a daily event. Maphalla says this about those who like fights:

*"Ha ba lakatse ha ntwana e ka kgaotsa. Ha e ka kgaotsa ba tla tshwarwa ke bodutu."* (Mohlomong Hosane:16)

*(They do not wish this battle to stop. If it does they will idle.)*

With this story, we learn that a good and healthy upbringing makes one gain more respect in the society. We tend to ask ourselves this question: Are Mmamamoto and Mmadiatheng Christians? From the way they behave themselves we doubt. We wonder how they raise their own children.

We now move on to the next chapter to evaluate themes as portrayed in the 1950's and 1990's. We shall attempt to find out if the themes developed as a system within the two periods or not.



## CHAPTER 5

### LOOKING BACK

#### 5. INTRODUCTION

##### 5.1 THEMES IN THE STUDIED TEXTS

##### 5.2 FINDINGS

##### 5.3 CONCLUSION

**CHAPTER 5****LOOKING BACK****5. INTRODUCTION**

As we conclude, we take a pause and look back on what we have done. This will enable us to find out whether we have achieved our goal of evaluating themes of the 1950's and the 1990's in the short stories of the writers we have selected.

As we pointed out at the beginning, the aim of this research was to investigate and determine whether themes have been the same throughout or whether the passage of time had any bearing on them. Our findings are that, short stories as an art form have always been the most neglected genre and it is also interesting to note that in about four decades no short stories were written in Southern Sotho. Probably, the reasons may be that writers produced work in other genres during the same era and a lot of short stories were produced in English. Also the lack of diversified adult readership has probably affected the production of short stories aimed at a mature market. But if more adults would show interest in reading Sesotho, writers would explore other new themes such as educational problems, abuse and injustice confidently.

In our study we regarded literature as a polysystem that is heterogeneous and themes as a system that focuses on the social, political, economical and educational environment prevailing at the time the author writes about a particular literary text. Then let us look at the classification of the emerging themes of the short stories written in the 1950's and the 1990's of the selected writers.

## 5.1 THEMES IN THE STUDIED TEXTS

Sesotho short stories cover a wide thematic field. We shall look at different themes of each writer and classify them. This field has been divided into twelve themes mainly comments on life; friendship; hope; faith; loneliness; love; he laughs best who laughs last; relations in marriage; love for animals; survival of the fittest; dishonesty; ignorance is a painful thing; God helps those who help themselves; lies do not pay; there is never a stalker without a croucher.

The classification below is a water-tight compartment since themes do not overlap into others than the ones under which they have been classified. According to the table of classification of themes, Mocoancoeng has written three stories on three themes; Mofokeng has eight but only six stories have been handled with focus on six themes; Zulu has six stories and we concentrated on three themes in three stories; while Litabe wrote two stories and we analysed only one. Lastly Maphalla wrote seventeen stories but we looked at seven stories and seven themes.

Below we present a table that indicates the different themes as treated by the writers researched:



THEME	Meqoqo ya phirimana - Mocoancoeng JG	Leetong - Mofokeng SM	Fiswana la morena - Zulu NS and Litabe NS	Mohlomong Hosane - Maphalla KPD
Comments on life	Ha kgwedi e tjhaba	Mona pela tsela		
Friendship		Ruthe		
Love		Hosasa		
Hope	Tsela ya dikepe	Ke toro feela		
Loneliness		Bonnotshing		
Faith	Monna ya neng a fofele lehodimong	Hae		
Relations in marriage			Lephoka la ditweba	Lerole, leroleng!
Love for animals			Lerato la ka	Bakgenne ntja ya ka
Survival			Mpeng ya lefatshe	
He laughs best who laughs lasts			Mohau ya lekgutla	
Dishonesty				Ha taba tsa batho
Ignorance is a painful thing				Ho se tsebe ke lebote
God helps those who help themselves				Tsoha hle molebedi
Lies do not pay				Ntwa ya basadi
There is never a stalker without a croucher				Makatikati a bosiu

## 5.2 FINDINGS

When we compare the themes of the 1950's and the 1990's, we find that in the fifties, apartheid was in operation and writers were motivated by a deep need in which black people everywhere were united. At the same time they wanted to preserve the memory of the great deeds of the past.

We find Mofokeng to be a hero and a man with noble qualities whose themes are dynamic in the sense that they relate to the time of his writing. They are original, well defined and easy to handle within a limited time. They interweave and intertwine forming a system comprising of related entities. This fact tallies with Gordimer's observation:

*"the ideal achievement, from the point of view of literature, occurs when a man's experience and his talent are equal to each other."* (1973:8)

An example can be found in the stories **Mona pela tsela** and **Hae** where Mofokeng compares life with a journey. One is made aware that in this long journey, one encounters different experiences, the sorrowful and joyful ones. These cannot be separated as they go hand in hand and they revolve around the main theme , **life**.

These can also be regarded as a close net-of-relations as Mofokeng is able to create the necessary atmosphere for his central theme and one does not search around what he is trying to portray or say. Everything is clear and to the point.

It is no doubt that his themes show a historical development in Southern Sotho short stories and these themes can be regarded as a set of related entities that form a system as they are not isolated from one another. When one looks at the first to the last theme, one concludes that he was aware and understood the social, political, economical and educational environment that prevailed at the time he wrote.

On the contrary, we find that Mocoancoeng's themes are static in the sense that they are testimonies of social changes and they refer to occurrences that took place at that moment.

As a writer he has a point to make but when we examine his story **Monna ya neng a fofele lehodimong**, we find that it sounds like a fairytale. He presents his faith in a misguided manner because in the true sense nobody is capable of flying except when one displays a supernatural power over his Creator and is planning suicide.

In **Tsela ya dikepe**, the husband works far away from his family while the wife is taking care of the children. This story focuses on the migratory labour laws.

While in **Ha kgwedi e tjhaba**, Dineo collapses and dies when she imagines her boyfriend who died in the military services during Hitler's wars.

When we summarise Mocoancoeng's themes, we find that they provide some moral lessons but they do not form a system as they do not interweave and intertwine. We can refer to them as being scattered and isolated because they do not form a closed net-of-relations.

When one moves to the themes of the nineties, one continues to feel the effects of the apartheid system as it was experienced in the fifties. Politically we are still in the same position but when we consider Maphalla's themes, we find that they focus on the decline of social life when society is rebellious as can be seen from the engagement of boycotts, and strikes. We therefore feel that Maphalla has moved his themes away from the apartheid focus where black people were oppressed and were submissive. His themes are dynamic as they show a change of time - they move from the apartheid era to the democratic era. We can conclude that he seconds Mofokeng in his writing as his work has a characteristic of originality and freedom of expression. The development is shown in stories such as **Lerole**, **Ieroleng!** where he portrays how unfaithful a partner could be in a relationship, or how irresponsible people could be toward animals as seen in **Bakgenne ntja ya ka** or a display of the different kinds of evil that normally happen in life as in the story **Makatikati a bosiu**.



Beside Maphalla as a writer of the nineties, we also have Zulu and Litabe. We find Zulu's themes to be static in the sense that they still focus on elements found during the apartheid era like the migratory labour system. For instance, the story *Mpeng ya lefatshe*, where Tlhoriso and Tokollo work in the mines and a mining disaster occurs resulting in the death of one and survival of the other, we realise that this is almost the same story as Mofokeng's *Ke toro feela*, where Tatolo and Molahlehi work in the mines and one survives while the other dies after the mine falls. This says to us that there is no development in Zulu's story as he is parasitic of Mofokeng. Lack of development in Zulu's stories undermines the importance of the quality of a literary work. Gordimer comments on this importance when she says:

*The quality of writing, the creative gifts or lack of them, of the writer are what matters. (1973:7)*

The same is true of Litabe whose theme is static and based on life. In his story, *Mohau ya lekgutla*, we learn that in life we must never laugh at other people's weaknesses because we never know what will happen tomorrow. We therefore feel that both Zulu and Litabe's themes are static as they do not show any historical development from the fifties to the nineties. Their themes do not form a system as it comprises of related entities, therefore their themes are not related but they are

scattered and isolated. They need a force of attraction that will bind them together to form a system.

In our view, we would say from the fifties up to nineties, there is no Sesotho writer who surpasses Mofokeng's themes. His stories and themes intertwine and form a system. His themes are original and will last longer. All other themes of the nineties originate from his main theme that "*life is a journey*". His works will last forever and will be remembered by the coming generations.

### 5.3 CONCLUSION

In this section, we will lay out the contributions of this study and also bring up suggestions regarding possible future research.

In the first part of our study, we tried to develop the theoretical framework whose purpose was to explain and elaborate on the concept polysystem as an approach to literary study. In developing the theoretical framework, we discussed the following aspects: *A Polysystemic approach; the properties of the polysystem ; and theme as a system*. This study has shown that when talking about treatment of theme in Sesotho short stories, one must first examine the social milieu which produced the writers. This is so because most writers are influenced by various factors such as family background, culture, environment or social factors.

In the second part of this study we analyse the 1950 themes from Mocoancoeng and Mofokeng's stories and the 1990 themes from Zulu, Litabe and Maphallas' stories. Our findings from the analysis is that the themes from Mocoancoeng, Zulu, and Litabe's works do not show a historical development of themes in South Sotho short stories as a system. Therefore we refer to them as static systems as they do not form a set of related entities because they focus on conditions or occurrences at that particular moment. But Mofokeng and Maphalla are exceptions from the above-mentioned writers. They can be regarded as innovators and prolific writers whose themes are original, open and dynamic as they change with time or they are factors of time-succession. Their messages or lessons are based on the prevailing situation at the time of writing and they comprise a set of related entities which cannot be analysed in isolation as they are interwoven.

This study calls for further investigation of the polysystemic approach in the analysis of theme of other writers. Probably at this stage we may call for further study to investigate the treatment of theme in Mofokeng and Maphallas' other works of art, to determine whether they are static or dynamic.

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