

**THE AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL MODE
IN THE WRITINGS OF
MACHABE MOFOKENG**

BY

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DECLARATION

I declare that:

***The Autobiographical Mode In The Writings Of
Machabe Mofokeng***

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



Mmagauta MR Dube

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My heartfelt gratitude goes to my promoter Professor Rampasane Sol Chaphole whose guidance, insight and knowledge are beyond description. His motivation and encouragement are immeasurable. When I was about to fall by the way side, he was always there to pick me up. *"Ke a o leboha Motshweneng, le ka moso. Ha ba bakae ba kang wena Kgabo ntweng ena ya thuto."*

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who showed interest in the work I was engaged in and were happy to see me arrive for an interview with their mother. That was great. Lastly, I thank all the other people I talked to about Machabe, especially his old friend and colleague Prof Nyembezi. May God bless you all.

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Nnete ke ena:

*"ha o ikutlwa o imelwa ke morwalo ... mefokolo ya hao
o tla utlwa e fela hobane o tla kopana le Motswalle e
mong...Motswalle wa bana, Motswalle wa bohle.*

(Pelong Ya Ka:54)

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to:

My late father Makhetha Makobane, my mother MmaMohlomi Mampesi AND my two children Lebohang Makwati and Amohelang Mampesi.

SUMMARY

This study examines the works of one of the most gifted writers of Sesotho, Sophonia Machabe Mofokeng. He wrote **SENKATANA**, a drama, **LEETONG**, a collection of short stories and **PELONG YA KA**, a volume of essays. In this work we trace the link between his writings and his real lived life because we have a hunch that his works are autobiographical. Our informants about his real lived life are his family, friends and associates.

In our analysis we are guided by the principles and conditions of autobiography. Our emphasis is on the elements of autobiography as presented by Howarth (1980) namely, character, technique and theme.

We do find that a link exists between the characters in the books written by Mofokeng, and Mofokeng himself. For instance, we do see through the characters Mofokeng the poor man, the achiever, the selfless person, the leader, the teacher, the oppressed man and so on. Secondly, through his style, we are able to see a portrayal of himself. He succeeds to do this because as he establishes his past he is at the same time revealing himself to us readers. This goes along with Starobinski's declaration that every autobiography is a self-revelation. Lastly, through his themes, we get to know what Mofokeng's aspirations and visions were. We learn for instance that he longed for freedom, was against evil, was full of hope, was a staunch christian and wished that all should live their lives in full.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE AND MOTIVATION

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1.3 LITERATURE REVIEW

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Mosadi o belehile ngwana moshanyana,

Pholo ya letlaka, kabelwa-manong.

(S.M Mofokeng)

In May of 1990 Professor Sol Chaphole read a paper on Theory and Autobiography at a regional ALASA conference held at the University of the North. Professor Chris Swanepoel asked the question: How does one come to know if a piece of writing is autobiographical? Chaphole responded that one must be privileged to look through a little window into the author's real lived life. To this, Swanepoel nodded visibly. Professor Johnny Lenake who was also at the conference commented: I do not think that Mofokeng has written autobiography. There was no response to this comment. My curiosity was aroused, my interest in autobiography kindled; and I never looked back since.

All three Africanist Professors mentioned above were correct. For Chaphole there is a **thing** called the meeting place of autobiography and theory (cf Jelinek 1980; Olney 1980; Folkenflik 1993; Ashley, Gilmore and Peters 1994). For Swanepoel, "in autobiography the narrator has to some extent at least, a privileged knowledge of the consciousness of the protagonist of his/[her] narrative" (Folkenflik 1993:15). This position can be supported by texts like The Ochre People by Noni Jabavu;

Muriel at Metropolitan by Mirriam Tladi; A Window on Soweto by Joyce Sikakane and many others. For Lenake, it is **true** that Mofokeng did not write autobiography, our research has also taught us this. What we have also learnt from the research is that there is a difference between **autobiography** and **autobiographical writing or fiction**; the difference being a question of the degree to which a piece of writing consciously embraces conventions of fiction as opposed to those of autobiography (cf Renza 1980; Starobinski 1980; Owomoyela 1993).

1.1 PURPOSE AND MOTIVATION

The purpose of this work is to investigate the autobiographical mode in Mofokeng's fiction. The claim we make is that Mofokeng wrote fiction, not Confessions; not Memoirs; not Diaries and certainly not the truth about his real lived life.

What parallels his work with true autobiographies is that both draw their meaning from life. The meaning in question may take the form of a story of alienation, of rejection or of rootlessness. Gusdorf (1980:44) adds on this that we understand everything outside of us as well as ourselves with reference to what we are and according to our spiritual capacities. Some of the meanings pointed here can be found in Mofokeng's texts: **SENKATANA, LEETONG AND PELONG YA KA.**

The most simple of all art-forms is autobiography because it offers a privileged access to an experience that no other variety of writing can offer. What is surprising however, is that extensive critical discussion is yet to be given to the

considerable volume of this writing. We join the critical discussion by looking at the writings, in an indigenous language, of one of South Africa's most talented writers.

1.2 SCOPE

In chapter one, we introduce the study, and then look at the form the study takes. We proceed to examine studies conducted by other researchers. Lastly, we give a biographical sketch of the subject of our research, Machabe Sophonia Mofokeng.

Chapter two attempts a theoretical framework which underpins the study. First, we define autobiography. In the second part we look at the origins of autobiography from different settings like Europe, America and Africa including South Africa. Finally, we present an analytical tool that will inform our discussion.

In Chapters three through five, we focus on an analysis of Mofokeng's works but concentrate on the fictional element of the texts. Howarth's three important elements of autobiographical writing feed our study and these are **character, technique and theme**.

We look at **character** in Chapter three and our emphasis is on the drama **SENKATANA** which we consider to be a book on character. On a limited scale, we also examine how character is handled in the other two texts.

Chapter four deals with imagery. This is an aspect of **technique**. We look at how Mofokeng uses images to portray himself, his experiences and thoughts about life in general.

In Chapter five we examine the themes as presented in all three texts.

Chapter six is a synthesis of Mofokeng's works. Here we attempt to show that Mofokeng's works have elements of autobiography in that some aspects of the texts deal with his real lived life.

In the concluding chapter seven we reflect to see whether this research has been able to achieve its intended purpose. Recommendations are put forth for possible future research that can be conducted.

Finally, a list of sources consulted is provided.

1.3 LITERATURE REVIEW

As we know, the aim of literature review is to achieve a number of things. Mertens and McLaughlin (1995:10-11) summarize the purpose of literature review as follows:

- (a) First, the intent may be to summarize the extent research to inform the reader of what is known about the subject, that is, what research has already been conducted. A by-product may be a publication that could become a resource to practitioners.
- (b) A second important purpose of the literature review is the identification of weaknesses or gaps in the current knowledge base. The literature review informs the researcher of the results of previously conducted studies. The review may be used to inform practitioners of successful practices, and it may also enable the researcher to identify the next logical step in the research chain.
- (c) It is often necessary to return to the literature throughout the research to obtain information to help explain expected and unexpected findings. The researcher may be thought of as a problem solver. Because the goal of the research is to increase understanding, the problem may be the gap in the knowledge base. To solve the problem, the researcher must establish an

empirical information base from which to draw conclusions and make recommendations about the problem.

- (d) The literature helps the researcher construct a theoretical or conceptual framework. The framework becomes the standard for the proposed research, a statement of what the researcher expects to observe as the research unfolds. It communicates expected outcomes, activities or interventions necessary to achieve these outcomes, and resources that must be available to support the intervention. Further, it tells the researcher what information to collect, what should be measured to increase understanding about the problem addressed in the study.

We now examine studies that have already been conducted on the works of Mofokeng, with the aim to achieve the objectives as stipulated by Mertens and McLaughlin.

1.3.1 Moloi AJM (1973)

In his doctoral work, The Southern Sotho Novel: A Study of Its Form, Theme and Expression, under theme, Moloi examines among other writers, Mofokeng's works. First, he establishes whether Mofokeng has been a successful short story writer. He classifies **LEETONG** and **PELONG YA KA** as short stories. This leads him to say that **PELONG YA KA** is of an inferior quality in terms of skill, analysis and quality

of the material presented. On the other hand he finds **LEETONG** to be well-defined, clear cut, to the point original and easy to handle within limited time. This points to his definition of what a short story is.

He further moves on to give an analysis of the short stories, integrating this with an examination of Mofokeng's theme. His finding is that the central message that Mofokeng gives is that man is on a long journey; the beautiful things around him and those things he attaches much importance to, are but passing shows. Lastly he finds commonality between the themes in **LEETONG** and **SENKATANA** as he mentions that the central theme of his short stories is reinforced in **SENKATANA**.

Moloi fails to comment on the theme(s) in **PELONG YA KA**. Probably this emanates from the fact that he classifies it as a short story instead of an essay volume, and in the process is unable to find anything stimulating that can lead to its analysis.

1.3.2 **MAPHIKE PRS (1978)**

In his Masters dissertation, Maphike investigates the origin of the essay and its development in Southern Sotho. He looks closely at the theme, structure and style of Southern Sotho in the acknowledged collections of Mocoancoeng, Moiloa, Ntsane, Mofokeng and Morojele. We shall here concentrate only on Mofokeng. Further we shall briefly look at each of the elements at a time.

Starting with theme, Maphike observes that Mofokeng's work pondered over life in all connotations of the word, always overlapping into the hereafter. His entire volume is found to be structured into a thematic unity, always reflecting on life. Maphike finds this to be the main theme.

He classifies Mofokeng's essays into three themes, namely social phenomena, natural phenomena and comments on life. A close relationship between man, life and hereafter is found to be displayed. Again it is found that all of Mofokeng's essays overlap into the main theme "comments on life". This is due to the fact that Mofokeng is not only concerned with life on earth. Despite the fact that this is where it starts, Mofokeng develops speculation about life hereafter.

Under structure, Maphike points out that there is a generally accepted conventional form of the essay which consists of the introduction, the body or contents and the conclusion. Each of these parts has a definite purpose in the essay, the effectiveness of which depends much on the writer's skill to utilize them. There are also deviations in various ways from this standard or conventional form.

He finds that Mofokeng's essays fall under what he calls variation C in which case the body of the essay is divided into parts, each part dealing with a phase of the body or contents. Here the writer looks at his subject from different forms.

On style, Maphike warns that we should not ignore the apparent overlap between form and style. As a result, structure is used as a framework within which the writer's employment of stylistic techniques is analyzed. The form chosen by the writer, and the development of the subject within that form, form part and parcel of his style because they are inextricably intertwined within paragraphing, word choice and maximum but appropriate utilization of imagery within the paragraphs.

Mofokeng is found to present himself not as a thinker for but a co-thinker with the reader. He makes the reader think out certain unsaid things. He attaches significance to thinking deeply about things. His overall style is mainly philosophical.

Another distinguishing factor of Mofokeng is that his essays are found to be subtly persuasive in that no single essay can be picked up with ease as being more clearly persuasive than the rest. Mofokeng urges us to look deeper than the surface of things and to make the best of the little that life seems to offer.

Lastly Maphike finds Mofokeng to be different from other essayists in that he at no stage becomes 'essayistic' though he retains contact with his reader. By essayistic its meant that it offers to teach us something that can be of use to us, or seeks to persuade us to some action the writer considers desirable.

On the whole Mofokeng is found to be meditative. His contact with the reader is strictly that of co-ponderer. He is therefore not only subtly persuasive, but also an eminently meditative essayist.

1.3.3 MAPHIKE PRS (1991)

In his Doctoral study on The History of Southern Sotho Literature as System, 1930-1960, Maphike examines the works of Machabe Mofokeng, as they fall under the period he is examining. His study looks at the different genres each at a time. **SENKATANA** is therefore studied under Drama as subsystem. He also touches on **LEETONG** through which he finds Mofokeng to be a meditator.

Like in other works, he first traces the life history of Mofokeng. He then focuses on **SENKATANA** and explains that it is originally a Sesotho legend, named after the hero but has been remoulded into a drama by Mofokeng.

Thirdly, focus is on an aspect of imagery wherein Maphike finds striking similarity between the circumstances of the legendry Senkatana and Christ. To this Maphike says it is probably due to his ailment that Mofokeng is struck by the impact of the similarity between Senkatana and Christ. The end result of this is that there are parallels in the lives of Senkatana, Christ and Mofokeng. In his short life, Christ shook the world with his teachings; on the other hand, Mofokeng does the same. In his short life span, Mofokeng shook the Sesotho literary world. Senkatana is the Sesotho parallel of Christ.

On theme, Maphike finds that as subject Senkatana is man's transient gratitude or appreciation firmly rooted in a supreme sense of justice. Lastly he also looks at the structural and stylistic devices employed in this work.

On the whole, Maphike sees Senkatana the character and Mofokeng the author as one. Even though he does not explicitly say so, this points to the fact that Maphike does recognise some element of autobiography in this text.

Maphike also discusses Mofokeng's short stories. He first gives an overall picture of the story and thereafter traces the link between Mofokeng and the story. For an example, in the story **Mona Pela Tsela**, he says that Mofokeng equates his own situation with Tumelo's and everybody's and rises above the limited worldly conception of things.

In his conclusion he draws our attention to the fact that even though every story has its own beginning and end, we note that the stories do constitute a coherent whole. The title of the book is also found to be a clever lead to the unity of the contents of the book.

1.3.4 MOLELEKI AM (1993)

In his book **MAKOKONANA A NEANOTABA LE DINGOLWA TSA SESOTHO**, Moleleki examines and analyses the different kinds of genres and writers of Sesotho. Mofokeng's works are included in this study.

First of all Moleleki briefly gives the biographical sketch of Machabe Mofokeng. He mentions here that Mofokeng is the only writer among the Basotho writers that can be regarded as a philosophical writer.

Among the genres he examines are prose and drama and Mofokeng's works fall under these. Under his analysis of the short story, Moleleki first explains what a short story is, pointing out its characteristics. The main difference between it and the novel is that in a short story, the story is shorter but the devices used to analyse it are the same as those used for a novel. To illustrate his point, he uses **Mona Pela Tsela** from **LEETONG** to discuss the plot structure, language and style, characterisation and theme. What comes out is that the procedure of analysis is the same as in a novel.

On essays, Moleleki distinguishes first the different types of essays. Among those identified, he classifies Mofokeng's essays as being argumentative but most of all, they are philosophical.

On his analysis of drama as a genre, there are observations that are associated with our study of Senkatana. He states that Kgodumodumo for instance is not an animal as portrayed in the book, but it represents evil. Bulane is also likened to an evil monster Kgodumodumo because his actions portray him as a person that is full of evil and can do anything to destroy the good. Moleleki finds though that even if Bulane kills Senkatana, he achieves nothing by so doing. Instead his conscience pricks him such that he decides to kill himself. Seboni had actually predicted this for he says:

Ya phelelang ba bang ke yena ya tla phela,

Ya iphelelang ke yena ya tla shwa.

(The one that lives for others will live,

But the one that lives for himself will die.)

Moleleki finds the theme of **SENKATANA** to be: life is a journey, it is a river.

1.3.5 SELEPE TJ (1993)

In his discussion of ideology in the production of African literature, Selepe explains that perceptive and prolific authors like Mofokeng were able to "sneak" their revealing works through the censorship. In a way, Mofokeng is not like other Africans who cannot perceive reality. Using Mona Pela Tsela to illustrate his point, Selepe says it is a story that signifies the capitalist-apartheid ideology in South

Africa. It is this ideology that is responsible for the subordination of blacks socially, politically and economically.

Selepe finds Mofokeng's work to be articulate on social relations which provide raw materials to be creatively used by the author in producing a work.

Common findings from these works are that Mofokeng is philosophical. Secondly, they identify as theme: **Life**. This confirms Howarth's (1980:88) observation that the theme of autobiography is life.

1.4 SUMMARY OF THE TEXTS

1.4.1 SENKATANA

Senkatana is a drama about a young man Senkatana, who one day realizes that he is alone in this world with his mother. Mmaditaolane had survived from an incident in which Kgodumodumo swallowed all the people except herself and she was pregnant at the time. Concerned that he is only alone with his mother, and at the same time not free, Senkatana decides to attack the monster, to free all the people. Seeing that her son was determined to carry out the attack, she gives him his father's weapons and Senkatana succeeds to kill Kgodumodumo and to rescue his people. Impressed and grateful that they are now free and safe, Senkatana is made king. But after a while, some of the people are not happy with him. One such person is Bulane who actually goes all out to incite people and to plot with a few

to have Senkatana killed. On the other hand, we find that he is also forced to behave that way by his wife Mmadiepetsane, who has a grudge against Senkatana's mother. The grudge emanates from a long dispute that existed between their families. Senkatana is aware of Bulane's intentions, but he refuses to take any step to prevent any harm that may occur. He strongly believes that he cannot repay wrong with wrong. Mmaditaolane advises her son that he should not do anything that clashes with what he believes is right. Soon thereafter Mmaditaolane dies. In the process, Bulane lies to his followers that they had been chosen by the ancestors and their names were revealed to him through a vision. Even though they agree to be part of the conspiracy, they feel that it is Bulane who should do the killing. Bulane does kill Senkatana but after that he cannot stand his action. He then hurries back home to drink poison and he also dies. Mmadiepetsane is apprehended and she bravely tells the people that she is happy and satisfied because what her ancestors longed for had been accomplished. Mmaditaolane's family is finished as they have all been wiped off. Instead of being punished, Maswabi advises that she should be left to suffer from her conscience as that is exactly what Senkatana would have done.

1.4.2 LEETONG

There are eight short stories in this collection namely:

Mona Pela Tsela; Ke Toro Feela; Panana le Tamati; Ruthe; Setloholo; Hosasa; Bonnotshing and Hae.

1.4.2.1 Mona Pela Tsela

It is about Tumelo, a farm induna who is unfairly arrested after his colleagues placed dagga underneath his bedding. He is sentenced to six months and on his release from prison, has no where to go. He then decides to make his home by the road side.

1.4.2.2 Ke Toro Feela

Two friends, Tatolo and Molahlehi work in the mines. Molahlehi is about to go on holiday and Tatolo envies him. On the eve of Molahlehi's departure, an accident occurs in their shaft. Tatolo dies and Molahlehi is injured and taken to hospital. Tatolo's family receive the news about his death but nothing is said about Molahlehi. It is only after his discharge from hospital that his family reunites with him. The one sad part is that he can no longer work as he is now disabled.

1.4.2.3 Panana le Tamati

This is a story about an Indian businessman who sells fruit and vegetables. His good service is only recognised after his death when people no longer see him and miss him. It is at this time that they realize the worth of his services.

1.4.2.4 Ruthe

After the death of Tjhere the farmer and his employee Rasebolai, Mmamosa and her domestic worker Marie are left alone in the farm. This does not bother Mmamosa as she is comfortable with Marie. Mmamosa's son is unhappy that his mother is the only white person in the farm and he requests that she sells the farm and come to join them in Johannesburg. Mmamosa refuses as she feels she cannot leave Marie behind. She vows that it is only death that would separate her from Marie. Mmamosa resembles the Biblical Ruth.

1.4.2.5 Setloholo

Motsamai, a widower, now stays with his only daughter Matshediso after the death of his wife and son. After years of loneliness, he is excited at the news that Matshediso and Malefetsana are courting. What actually excites him is the thought that a grandchild will soon be on the way. He will now have somebody to play with but most of all he is happy that his family will increase.

1.4.2.6 Hosasa

Molefi is the only bread winner at his home. His wife is sick and cannot work. He has school going children and he also must feed them. He really struggles to make ends meet. It becomes worse when one day after work, he is attacked by criminals who injure him, take all his money as it was pay day, and run away with his

important documents. When he arrives home, his wife is shocked and worried about what is to become of them. She cannot imagine the situation that they will have to face the following day.

1.4.2.7 Bonnotshing

One holiday, Sello and Motsamai decide to visit Sello's grandparents. On the way they meet an old man that stays alone in the wilderness. He explains to them that he decided to stay alone after the death of his wife and children. This he finds to be a better arrangement as he then has time to himself. In the wilderness he can engage himself in deep thoughts, can reflect and as a result is able to get all the strength he needs.

1.4.2.8 Hae

The story is about a man who came to Johannesburg from the other side of the Zambezi river. He had heard about the green pastures of this part of the world and decided to leave his wives and children. After a struggle, he gets a job in the farms. Whilst working there, he contracts TB, is taken to hospital and is admitted. He tells a friend who suffers the same disease as his that he longs to go back home and plans to do so as soon as he is discharged. Unfortunately he dies and goes to another home, home to the Almighty.

1.4.3 PELONG YA KA

Mofokeng wrote twenty essays in this volume namely:

Pelo; Botho; Bodutu; Lefu; Reisisi; Tseia Tshweu; Phetoho; Nako; Metswalle; Pampiri; Hlahlobo; Noka; Ho Kganna Motorokara; Lewatle; Sepetlele; Dimela; Tjhelete; Lenyalo; Boqheku; and Qetello.

His main focus is on **life and death**. Maphike (1978) explicitly states that Mofokeng pondered over life in all connotations of the word, always overlapping into the hereafter. The entire volume is found to be structured into a thematic unity, always reflecting on life. He observes that there is a close relationship between man, life and the hereafter in Mofokeng's works.

We move on then to give Mofokeng's biography.

1.5 MOFOKENG'S BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Sophonia Machabe Mofokeng was born on 1 April 1923 at Fouriesburg in the Free State Province. He was the second child of Mmone and Madisele Mofokeng. The eldest was a sister called Disele. He had two other brothers called Peter Mochorwane and Andrew Ralephele.

They grew up on the farm called Matsekanyane in Eastern Fouriesburg, but later on the parents moved to a township - Mashaeng - in Fouriesburg. This is where one of their neighbours, a certain Edwin Moeketsi, advised the parents about the importance of education.

Machabe and Disele then started their primary education at the N.G. Kerk school in Fouriesburg until they passed Standard Six in 1934. In 1935, without prior arrangements, Machabe went to Stofberg Gedenkskool in Viljoensdrift accompanied by a second year student teacher Oriel Leputla, who negotiated on his behalf that he be accepted. In 1937, he obtained a first class pass for his Standard Eight (JC). On the other hand, Disele went to St Catherines in Maseru to do Home Economics. Machabe proceeded to Adams College in Natal for his Matriculation (JMB) which he successfully passed with a first class (M1), obtaining a distinction in Sesotho and Botany, in 1939. In 1940 he went to Fort Hare University and registered for a B.A degree, majoring in Sesotho and History. In 1945, he registered for a History Honours degree at the University of the Witwatersrand under Professor Harris and passed it in second class.

Thereafter he registered for an Honours degree in Sesotho and passed with a distinction in 1947. For his Sesotho Honours project he wrote on Praise Poetry. Machabe completed his Masters degree in 1951 and his research was A study of Folktales in Sotho. Thereafter, he registered for his PhD under the supervision of Professor Hattingh who was in the Department of Afrikaans and Netherlands. His research study was The Development of Leading Figures in Animal Tales in Africa. He successfully completed his PhD in 1954 at the age of thirty one years.

Machabe Sophonia Mofokeng has three publications to his credit. In 1952 he published a drama **SENKATANA**; in 1954 it was a collection of short stories **LEETONG** and his last book were essays **PELONG YA KA**, which he wrote before he died and could only be published in 1962, five years after his death.

Machabe started teaching at Madibane High School (then called Johannesburg Bantu High School) in 1943 at the age of twenty one. After the death of Rev Ellenbeger in 1946, Dr Vilakazi advised him to join them at the University of the Witwatersrand in the Department of African Languages. He taught at this institution until he departed from this world.

Mofokeng got married to Papadi Letlabika in December 1949. Papadi's father was an inspector of schools in Bloemfontein. Mofokeng's family had known Inspector Letlabika before in Fouriesburg when he used to put up with them when he had gone there for school inspection. On the other hand, Mofokeng met Papadi in a train from Johannesburg to Bloemfontein and he discovered then that Papadi was

Mr Letlabika's daughter. They were blessed with two children Mmone who was born on 28 August 1950 and 'Mantoa, born on 1 May 1952. Mmone is now a medical doctor in Bloemfontein, married to Thembi and they have three children. 'Mantoa is a lawyer and has two children. Machabe and Papadi divorced in 1954.

In January of 1957, Mofokeng got married to Harriet Matshele Malahlela of Mafube, Matatiele. His health deteriorated while they stayed together for only six months of their married life. They had no children.

During the year 1947, Mofokeng fell sick. He was diagnosed for TB and admitted at Rietfontein Hospital for two years. Even though he was discharged in 1949, he had to attend treatment every two weeks. He went back to work and joined colleagues like Mr Mncube and Professor Nyembezi. Six months after his second marriage, he fell sick again and doctors wanted to take him to England to go and thicken the pleura of his lungs. Unfortunately, whilst making arrangements he died. Sophonia Machabe Mofokeng passed away on the 6 June 1957.

Mofokeng was a good hearted person. He took it upon himself to educate his other two brothers, Peter and Andrew.

Ha e sekame Kakapa, E phomole Kwakwariri;

"Mohahlaula wa nnete Separolathota!"

O re rutille Mmulane, o re butse mahlo Motlatla;

Le ka moso Phoka!

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

- 2.1 **DEFINING AUTOBIOGRAPHY**

- 2.2 **ORIGINS OF AUTOBIOGRAPHY**

- 2.3 **AUTOBIOGRAPHY IN EUROPE, AMERICA AND AFRICA**
 - 2.3.1 **European Autobiography**
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 - 2.3.3 **African And South African Autobiography**

- 2.4 **THE ENVISAGED FRAMEWORK**

CHAPTER 2

A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

*A man with one theory is lost. He needs
several of them, or lots! He should stuff
them in his pockets like newspapers!*

(Bertolt Brecht 1993)

In this chapter we define autobiography, trace its origins and then look at the different forms of autobiographies as produced by different people and nations.

The second part will attempt an analytical tool that underpins this study.

2.1 DEFINING AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Samuel Johnson (1963:262) warns that definitions are hazardous and that the definition of autobiography has proved elusive (in Folkenflik 1993:13). The following are some of the definitions of autobiography:

Stephen Spender (1980:115) says it is the story of one's life written by [one] self.

For William Howarth (1980:85), an autobiography is a self portrait.

Barret Mandel (1980:49) sees it as recollections or memories of the past.

There are obvious problems with looking at autobiography in a simplistic manner as these critics do. As Gilmore (1994:3) observes, autobiography as a self representational practice, is complexly situated within cultures and increasingly within trans-disciplinary critical practice. Renza (1980:271) proposes that "we look at autobiography as a genuine imaginative enterprise only if we adopt the reader's a posteriori relation to the text and insist that the writer's references to his past are subordinate to a narrative essentially representing the writer's present self-identity." What Renza is suggesting here is that we need not consider autobiography as either fiction or non-fiction. He contends that we might view autobiography instead as a unique, self-defining mode of self-referential expression, one that allows, then inhibits, its ostensible project of self representation, of converting oneself into the present promised by language. Renza's argumentation is a forerunner to the postmodernist standpoint on autobiography as we shall see shortly.

Chaphole (1991:1) sees autobiography as experience turned into literature. Clearly, problems of selection and arrangement; of vision and memory; of time and space remain central if we view autobiography this way. Picking up this point, Renza (1980:269) stresses that "in selecting, ordering and integrating the writer's lived experience according to its own teleological demands, the autobiographical narrative is beholden to certain imperatives of imaginative discourse."

Autobiography, in short, transforms empirical facets into artifacts; and it is therefore definable as a form of prose fiction.

Howarth (1980:86) supports this view by saying that in writing his story, the autobiographer artfully defines, restricts or shapes his life into a self-portrait - one far different from his original model, resembling life but actually composed and framed as an artful invention. Another interesting point Howarth makes is that an autobiography is equally a work of art and of life, for no one writes such a book until he has lived out the requisite years. Folkenflik (1993:15) agrees that autobiography is usually written in old age or at least in mid-life; but it may be written by the young. When we look at Mofokeng's actual lived life, we notice that he died young. However, when we come to consider what we may call Mofokeng's oeuvre (we are coining a usage here following Swanepoel 1991), we realize that he was a **LITERARY OLD MAN, FAR ADVANCED IN YEARS OF CREATIVE COMPOSITION; PROFOUNDLY EXPERIENCED TO REPRESENT A MEETING PLACE OF LIFE AND ART. At that age MACHABE SOPHONIA MOFOKENG WAS AN IMAGE, A FIGURE, A PROSOPOPOEIA.**

(Chaphole in personal communication).

We move on to the next definitional stage to see how the post-modernists attempt to define autobiography. According to Gilmore (1994:3ff) postmodernists view autobiography and other forms of self-representation as a site of identity production where texts both resist and produce cultural identities. By situating self-representation in relation to a range of critical and disciplinary texts (historical,

philosophical, psychological), a context of inquiry emerges that challenges autobiography's previous generic definition. The argument continues that time has come to consider the implications of genre for autobiography:

When we shift away from the effort to define autobiography as a genre, the debates about autobiography's status reveal much about genre theory itself. For example, autobiography has often been seen as insufficiently objective because the eyewitness may be simultaneously the most sought after and most suspect interpreter of events the autobiographer becomes the site of meaning in this activity as producer of meaning and organizer of knowledge[The] doubled nature [of autobiography] confounds definition through pre-existing generic categories. What we can call autobiography's resistance to genre can now be taken as a crisis in genre itself.

(Ashley, Gilmore and Peters, 1994:6-7); our emphasis.

There is no doubt that judgements of duplicity attend autobiography. However, this is not a necessary and sufficient condition to exclude autobiography from generic consideration. What the postmodernists are doing is to take the special position of autobiography as an artform and use it to further the rumblings of postmodernist debate. Our own position is that autobiography creates an enlivening instability in

both text and context. Contradictions in the discourse of self-representation provide the life-line for autobiography. As Folkenflik (1993:13) puts it, autobiography has norms but not rules. Many theorists would deny that autobiography is a genre, and yet since the eighteenth century it certainly has been recognised as such by its writers and readers.

To round off the elusive definition of autobiography, we agree with Folkenflik (1993:11) that autobiography now occupies the position held by the poem during the time of New Criticism. The difference in our more self-conscious age is that whereas the poem was the exemplary form for the New Critics (see Brooks 1939; Richards 1929; and Eliot 1933 among others) autobiography is the battlefield on which competing ideas about literature are fought.

2.2 ORIGINS OF AUTOBIOGRAPHY

The task to trace the origins of autobiography is a daunting one. This view is also held by Olney who says that it seems inevitable that the subject of autobiography produces more questions than answers, more doubts by far than certainties. He finds that this situation leaves us at least with the perception that what is autobiography to one observer is history or philosophy, psychology or lyric poetry, sociology or metaphysics to another. Olney captures this difficulty as follows:

The first autobiography was written by a gentleman named WP Scargill; it was published in 1834 and was called The autobiography of a Dissenting Minister. Or perhaps the first autobiography was written by Jean-Jacques Rousseau in the 1760's (but he called it his Confessions); or by Mitchel de Montaigne in the latter half of the sixteenth century (but he called it Essays); or by St Augustine at the turn of the fourth-fifth A.D. (but he called it his Confessions); or by Plato in the fourth century B.C (but he wrote it as a letter, which we know as the seventh epistle); or and so on.

(Olney, 1980:5-6)

Peterson (1986:2) points out that for most literary historians, the history of autobiography as a genre begins with either a mirror or a book. Those who chose the mirror, tend to see the genre as one of self-presentation. For them autobiography begins when Renaissance man learns to make mirrors and receives a reflection back from the glass he has created (cf Gusdorf 1980; Howarth 1980). Those literary historians who chose the book, tend to treat the genre as one of self-interpretation (cf Starobinski 1980; Pilling 1981; Sayre 1964). Autobiography begins for them in the act of reading, initially the book of Scripture but later other books of autobiography; and this act of reading provides the versions of history that autobiographers then use to interpret the lives they tell. Peterson remarks as a result that the view of autobiography as self-presentation is essentially French

(cf Osborn 1959), the qualities of the genre finding full expression in Rousseau's **CONFESSIONS**. The view of autobiography as self-interpretation is more typically English, the originating example being John Bunyan's **GRACE ABOUNDING**.

One renowned scholar who traces the origins of autobiography is Roy Pascal (1960). He sees it first from what he calls *The Early History of Autobiography*, through the Classical Age; and to how it develops in the Modern Period. He contends that autobiography is a creation of European civilization and really begins with Augustine. This view is echoed by Gusdorf (1980) who intimates that Augustine's **CONFESSIONS** offer us a landmark of the genre autobiography. Pascal (1960:22) traces the indebtedness of autobiography to Hellenistic and Roman literature; and discerns in it the self - assertion of a proud and mighty personality. Misch quoted by Pascal (1960:23) points out that the **CONFESSIONS** is the first book "to represent plastically the coherence of human existence in the mother-earth of his story" and thus to establish the "structural law" of autobiography. Hence, for Pascal, when one reads the **CONFESSIONS** one does not merely take in historical facts, but participates in an integrated succession of experiences. The writer brings to the fore the inner self, and this is achieved through scrutiny of life experiences that one has gone through. The integration of the two, namely self and experience enables the writer to reveal himself to the reader. The lack of what Misch (1955) in Pascal (1960:23) calls "the integration of personal existence" and its concomitant, "the ethical energy of self-knowledge" accounts for the scarcity of autobiography comparable to Augustine's work for over a thousand years.

Rather what are found are piece-meal accounts of events or religions or experiences, in which the author fails to distance himself. A few of such remarkable examples are:

- (a) Abelard's **HISTORY OF MY CALAMITIES** in which he accounts of his misfortunes and how he had borne them in order to strengthen a friend in distress.
- (b) Suso's **LIFE OF THE SERVANT**, which was written as a devotional work for the aid of a "spiritual daughter".
- (c) Margery Kempe's **THE BOOK OF MARGERY KEMPE** in which we see her determination to fulfil her mission, a self-consciousness which belongs to good autobiography; but usually her actions and her manner of behaviour derive from the obscurest of urges. This work is found to be a precious historical document that is raw and not shaped material.

During the Renaissance, a change surfaces in the way autobiographies are written. A shift to concern about self is realized. Petrarch's **LETTER TO POSTERITY** (1335) is an example as it expresses a new direction of interest and self-confidence. He introduces a decisive theme, the untroubled concern for the inward dimensions of

the self, springing from a compulsion to meditate upon oneself; and he released the self from the hegemony of faith. Buck, quoted by Pascal (1960:26), notes this change and he says:

"he is less concerned for salvation than for the cult of soul".

In the sixteenth century, the pace set by Petrarch is fulfilled. According to Pascal (1960:27) three autobiographies of major quality were written by Cellini, Cardano and Saint Theresa. He observes the following about them and makes this comment:

"All write their minds, their affections, their soul, but all delineate it also through the concrete detail of the fortunes, without strain, as if it were the most natural thing in the world to do. Montaigne also represents this trend, though he is their slightly younger contemporary. He writes of his opinion with the mock - modest assumption that what he says and does is interesting precisely because it is his thought and behaviour."

The seventeenth century is seen as a great age of memoirists and diarists but not autobiographers. Here we think of people like Cardinal de Retz, Saint Evremond, Evelyn and Pepys. We also find religious autobiographies like Bunyan's **GRACE ABOUNDING**.

The later eighteenth and early nineteenth century may properly be called an "age" of great autobiography, aptly referred to as the Classical Age of Autobiography. Here we have works like Rousseau's **CONFESSIONS** (1782), Goethe's **POETRY AND TRUTH** (1831) and Wordsworth's **PRELUDE** (1928). These men were found to be inwardly turned, deeply concerned with their sensibility and imagination. This period is also considered to have been decisive in the history of autobiography. Its ground - plan was now laid and subsequent writers have had little more than modifications to contribute. This is so because the significance of the autobiographies of this period can be recognised from their impact on other forms of literature.

Pryce-Jones (1956), quoted by Pascal (1960:55) attributes the great expansion of autobiographical literature in the twentieth century to the fact that "that was the moment in time when mankind first became aware of its own fragility." The most common trend in modern autobiographies is that which tells the story of a particular profession or calling, the steps by which public achievement was reached; this type is securely rooted in the older convention.

The essayistic autobiography is also new, when personal circumstances are used as the basis for reflections on contingent matters as with De Quincey, Renan, Stefan Zweig, or Somerset Maugham. The autobiography which restricts itself to childhood, and the autobiographical novel are modern forms of the main. What also affects both the scope and the technique of autobiography is the feeling of time lost, and the consciousness that one's life is representative. In recent times, the fearful dislocations caused by revolutions and civil wars, by ideological wars and dictatorship, have brought a great crop of autobiographies of exiles and refugees who remember and try to understand their past. Pascal (1960:57) notes for instance that, Modern Spanish literature was lacking in autobiographical statement until the civil war of the 1930s; from refugees like Arturo Barea and Ramon Sender remarkable autobiographies have come.

With this brief discussion on origins, we shall now move on to distinguish the different types of autobiographies in accordance with their settings or birth places.

2.3 AUTOBIOGRAPHY IN EUROPE, AMERICA AND AFRICA

Stull (1985:21) observes that autobiographers come from all walks of life. Their experiences vary from the most trite to the most sublime. As a consequence, he finds that the literary quality varies from the point of view of form and content.

We shall here then concentrate on the following: European autobiography, American autobiography and African autobiography. The main purpose of this is to find whether setting has an influence on how people write their autobiographies.

2.3.1 European Autobiography

Osborn (1959:11) teaches that before 1600, autobiographies of the modern type are nearly impossible to find. He observes that in France, the art of autobiography did not flower until the seventeenth century, although a notable tradition of personalized military memoirs had grown up in the previous century. Attention to individual self-analysis and introspection sprouted rapidly here, and through the pen of Michel de Montaigne, produced in his *Essais* (1580) one of the renowned classics of subjective writing, wherein he proceeded to test general truths by the touchstone of his personal responses. The great contribution of France to autobiography came in the eighteenth century, topped off in 1782 by the **CONFESSIONS** of Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

Italy did not lag behind as we find writers like Cellini, Cardano and Saint Teresa. Osborn maintains that the Renaissance had opened the minds of man to human personality and concerns, and to the writing of antiquity. This is the reason why Cardano, who set down to analyse himself in 1575 in Rome, justified the procedure by citing the practice of the ancients. Interest in self-revelation had suddenly become part of the Italianaire although only a few of the sixteenth

century autobiographies came down in tact. Here, Osborn (1959:) thinks of Tartaglia the mathematician and Vesalius the anatomist, who both produced self-biographies in Latin but of which only fragments remain.

The autobiographies of Cellini, Cardano and Saint Teresa are regarded as of major quality. Pascal (1960:27) finds that: " all write of their minds, their affections, their soul, but all delineate it also through the concrete detail of their fortunes, without strain, as if it were the most natural thing in the world to do." According to Pascal, even Montaigne, their slightly younger contemporary, represents the same trend.

Cellini, was supremely confident of his greatness as an artist, and in part his purpose is to tell us the story of his works. Cardano's motives on the other hand were primarily "know thyself" combined with a zeal for undying fame. And in Saint Teresa's, the life is written in the assured conviction that she had received the "gift of wisdom" from God and with the knowledge that it would be read by a wide public.

Pascal (1960:27) observes that all these writers claim an objective validity for their achievements, the truth of their ideas or religious visions, the excellence of their art, and what is peculiar is that they felt these achievements to be embedded in their specific personality.

In Britain, it seems autobiography was scarce during the Middle Ages. Delany (1969:8) attributes this partially to the rather undeveloped sensitivity of autobiographers to change, in both their own and other's lives, and this appears to have characterised the man of that time. They were aware that the ancients were different from themselves, but the difference was mainly thought of as quantitative - the ancients were merely superior, they lived in an unhistoric ideal realm. The following is seen as the cause for interest in autobiography:

- (a) The rise of a more relativist concept of historiography. One feature of importance in this history was the writing of many family histories, to which their authors, as the most recent representatives and chroniclers of family tradition, often added sketches of their own lives and opinions. Improved literacy of the upper classes also contributed to an increase in family histories.
- (b) Interest aroused by the extraordinary political disturbances of the seventeenth century, created in many men an urge to record their own participation in important events.
- (c) The awareness of the internal tensions of England's social structure undoubtedly contributed to the development of a more sophisticated sense of history during the seventeenth century. This deeper

understanding of historical forces, through insight it offered into the origins and significance of personal actions and allegiances, was another important factor in the rise of autobiography.

This last factor, according to Delany (1969:17), gives rise to autobiography and class, of which we distinguish between religious autobiographies and secular autobiographies. Religious autobiographers came from all levels of society. They were concerned more with the status they hold within the church and the general mass of christians. Secular autobiography on the other hand came from members of aristocracy, gentry or upper middle class.

Even though we see the distinction between the two types of autobiographers, the motive for writing is basically the same. This is confirmed by Delany:

"To undertake an autobiography, the author must have a sense of his own importance."

(1969:18)

He brilliantly shows that this is the case when he points out that even though religious men seem to be equal candidates for salvation, when they gave testimony of their spiritual experiences, the works they produced naturally differed in accordance with the writer's background and education.

If we look at the cause of writing of secular autobiography, it seems to have been that some social force was acting diffusely on men of all classes, bringing them to a higher level of self-awareness through the medium of autobiography.

Peterson (1986:3) notes that by the beginning of the nineteenth century, the mode of autobiography in the English tradition was dominantly spiritual. Such autobiographers transmitted a sensibility that value(d) the private and the inward more highly than the public and the outward. There is therefore a continuity of the introspective spiritual autobiography that transmit the generic form from Bunyan to the Victorians. This method is called hermeneutic.

Peterson (1986:4) observes that "hermeneutics recognises that autobiography distinguishes itself as a genre by the act of interpretation rather than the act of presentation. Its emphasis lies in the understanding of events rather than in the act of narrating them."

2.3.2 American Autobiography

In discussing American autobiography, we first distinguish between white and black autobiographies. This is so because there are differences between the two. Before we make this distinction let us first look at American autobiography in general.

Butterfield (1974:1) says that the genre of autobiography lives in the two worlds of history and literature, objective fact and subjective awareness. For him it is a dialectic between what you wish to become and what society has determined you are. In response to a particular historical period, the autobiographer examines, interprets and creates the importance of his life. He may also affect history by learning about the works of others before him. Probably this is the reason why Couser (1979:2) states that prophetic autobiography is not exclusively American but it is characteristically American. He observes that the prophetic mode of autobiography may be to American autobiography what the romance is to American fiction - that is a literary form which survives its initial, specialised uses because it is uniquely suited to expressing the complexity and contradictions of American experience. He links this prophetic mode with the old Testament prophets whom he says have been characterised "not as professional men" nor men concerned with predicting the future for a fee or without it:

A prophet was a person filled with the divine spirit, who in such moments of inspiration, might utter the word of God; he was a preacher rather than a fortuneteller; a forthteller rather than a foreteller.

(Couser, 1979:2)

Couser finds then that like the old Testament prophet, the prophetic autobiographer interprets the history of his community in the light of God's will. He also functions as a representative of his community - as a reformer of its ethos, articulator of its

highest ideals, interpreter of its history, and activist in the service of its best interests. Typically his stance is one of opposition to the status quo or the apparent flow of history, but he is a critic rather than a schismatic; his ultimate loyalty is to a divine principle, but his immediate concern is with the community's destiny. Prophetic autobiography therefore flourishes in times of crisis - when change threatens communal values or when historical developments demand new modes of interpretation.

For Sayre (1980:146) American autobiography is historically rich and culturally revealing. He mentions the fact that forms of autobiography inevitably showed up in the earliest exploration narratives and traveller's tales that described and promoted the new land. In the eighteenth century, before Americans had written any plays, novels or much poetry of distinction, a number of them wrote unique interesting diaries and autobiographies. Autobiography in America, he says, is somehow both a part of the daily vernacular and the earliest heritage, reaching back to the Puritan diaries and the seventeenth - and eighteenth century travel narratives, the Indian captivity narratives and the "biographies" and "autobiographies" of notable Indian chiefs, the countless success stories of ex-slaves and victims, the tales of pioneering and "Americanization" of immigrants, the deceitful apologies of scoundrels and rogues, the utterly artificial "True Confessions" in magazines of romance and pornography, the formulae of high school year books, photograph albums, curricula vitae and who's who. Sayre also points out that autobiography in America is not only a genre with significant origins

and distinguished classics, it is also an industry, a sometimes handmade, sometimes machinemade common commodity. The autobiography is or can be that second house into which we are reborn, carried by our own creative power (1980:148).

He further observes that American autobiographers have generally connected their own lives to the national life or to the national ideas. Fitzgerald (1956) supports this fact when he says that America is not a land or a people. America is an idea or many ideas (in Sayre 1980:156). This perception, contends Sayre, holds for American autobiography, as autobiography is not the most intellectual of genres, but ideas play a crucial role in it. Hence he likens American autobiographers with American houses, whom he says have imported imitations of foreign styles - the English Puritan, the Palladian Historical, the Mercantile Journalistic, to suggest a few - and a mixture of these styles with new forms and experiences.

We now move on to distinguish briefly between white and black American autobiography.

Individualism may be said to mark white American autobiography as opposed to black American autobiography. Butterfield (1974), distinguishes between the western "self" and black "self". He explains the western "self" as the concept of identity that dominates most well-known white personal narratives since the Renaissance, as the individual forging a career, a reputation, a business or a family out of the raw material of his neighbours.

Other people are rungs on the ladder of his success or reflections of his greatness. On the other hand, the "self" of black autobiography, on the whole, taking into effect the Western culture on the Afro-American, is not an individual with a private career, but a soldier in a long, historic march toward Canaan. The self is conceived as a member of an oppressed social group, with ties and responsibilities to the other members. It is a conscious political identity, drawing sustenance from the past experience of the group, giving back the iron of its endurance fashioned into armour and weapons for the use of the next generation of fighters.

Sayre (1980:165), find white autobiographers to be both the emulators and the emulated. He says that renowned autobiographers like Franklin, Whitman, Henry Adams, John Adams and Scott Fitzgerald are a group of autobiographers that have been different from their families, friends and the people around them. They also offend or risk offending one of the basic pieties of closeknit bourgeois society, privacy, which is deemed so essential to keeping the secrets of family business and to hiding scandal.

This is reiterated by Butterfield (1974:2) who says that white autobiography since the nineteenth century tends to depict the self as a rebel, an isolated maverick at odds with the direction of his society. But what partially sustained these white autobiographers in their rebellions against these customs - and what they implicitly appealed to in their reader's psyches - says Sayre, was a sense that an American life should not be confining, that it ought to be adventurous, open and free.

When we examine black autobiography on the other hand, Sayre says we constantly find refutations of the white ideas of America, of both the white concepts of white character and the white concepts of blacks (1980:165). Rosenblatt (in Sayre 1980) observes two elements in black autobiography which point to the fact that there is argument in black autobiography:

1. **The expressed desire to live as one would choose, as far as possible.**
2. **The tacit or explicit criticism of external national conditions that, also as far as possible work to ensure that one's freedom of choice is delimited or non-existent.**

The autobiographical form is one of the ways that black Americans have asserted their right to live and grow (Butterfield 1974:3). It is a bid for freedom, a beak of hope cracking the shell of slavery and exploitation. It is also an attempt to communicate to the white world what whites have done to them. Sayre (1980:166) also notes that the prevalence of kinds of corrections of white error and complacency indicates that black autobiographers like Douglass were writing for a white audience. That was the audience that needed to be illuminated. But since the white audience had never been slaves (at least in the physical sense), the author obviously did not expect it to imitate him. This is opposed to the white autobiographies whose goal was to get imitators. The appeal of black autobiographies is in their political awareness, their empathy for suffering, their ability to break down the division of "I" and "you", their knowledge of oppression

and discovery of ways to cope with that experience, and their sense of shared life, shared triumph, and communal responsibility. The self belongs to the people, and the people find a voice in the self (Butterfield 1974:3).

The black autobiographer hoped to deliver the white man from political ignorance to knowledge, and if we look at Douglass's goal, we find that he wanted to teach and persuade rather than to acquire white imitators. His original experience therefore did not represent an American ideal but an American shame that had to be changed. Yet in another sense, Douglass and other outstanding black authors have represented an American ideal. In one of his narratives, Douglass does not tell the story of his flight from gaol, but he is more concerned with details of the stages of his resolution to escape. The acquisition of a hard-won secret, and subversive education is perhaps the most important, for it is education that is finally the equalizer of white and black and the object that the southern masters had guarded most closely. With an education Douglass cannot only "write my own pass" to be off the plantation, he can also become an articulate hero, one who can use the power of language and persuasion to tell his own story and use in the liberation of other men and women.

As we see the difference in both white and black autobiographers in America, Sayre suggests that autobiography in America should be looked at as a kind of mandala or a horizontal wheel with four points - a compass rose of four significant American directions.

In the east is Benjamin Franklin, looking further east to his English origins and to model English writers like Defoe and Bunyan but also looking to the west and other directions to the new American who will one day imitate him. In his autobiography, his life was a kind of instrument to be studied and adopted by other men who wished to become prosperous and useful. In the south - which is not just a geographic direction but a different condition - is Douglass, who used his life as an instrument of persuasion. In coming from slavery and oppression, he and other black or once excluded people told a story that would change the national character or renew it by making it responsive to conditions it had previously ignored. Douglass and other former victims, the axis of America did not lie east or west between tradition and opportunity but between oppression and freedom. And the freedom needed renewal and redefinition as much as the oppression needed to be escaped. For Whitman, the mythical wild and unknown west was America, an inspiration to the poet to identify himself with it and "promulge" its meanings. His autobiography does not tell how to, it says start to, then becomes the nation and man. Adams represents the northern elevation that looks back on harsh simplicity but that looks in the other directions for its own escape and toward new opportunity. Wealth, caste and the excellence of ancestors is a burden, but it is also a critical standard and a source of independence. (Sayre, 1980:167-168)

We now examine African and South African autobiography.

2.3.3 African and South African Autobiography

It would appear that in the case of African literature in general and African autobiography in particular, colonialism and neo-colonialism inform the African writer. According to Nkosi (1981:32), the history of Africa and the Africans is one of iron, blood and tears. As such, whether openly admitted or merely implied, there seems to exist at the core of the writer's imaginative works a deeply held belief that Africans have been dealt a cruel hand by fate; that they have been victims in a very special way. Hence Griffiths (1971:90) sees the role of autobiography, (often the first book produced by young African intellectuals), as less to record past experience and evaluate it than to assess the possibilities for future action. The need to determine what I am, precedes the possibility of defining what I can be or do.

Although, as Griffiths says, the role of the African autobiography is less to record past experience, we do realise that it is the African experience that informs the writer in his works. It is on this fact that Olney (1973:7) sees African autobiography as that which offers a clear and persuasive testimony about African life that comes from the heart of the African experience, from the central consciousness that participates in and registers the experience. The lessons we get from the different writings by African autobiographers inform us about the different experiences of African autobiographers. This is reiterated by critics of "studies" such as American Studies, Black Studies, Women's Studies, and African Studies whose positions Olney (1980:13) captures as follows:

"..... autobiography - the story of a distinctive culture written in individual characters and from within - offers a privileged access to an experience (the American experience, the black experience, the female experience, the African experience) that no other variety of writing can offer."

It is not surprising then that some of the most powerful autobiographical writings emerged from the African continent. We can mention Eski'a Mphahlele's **DOWN SECOND AVENUE**, Todd Matshikiza's **CHOCOLATES FOR MY WIFE**, Peter Abraham's **TELL FREEDOM**, Bloke Modisane's **BLAME ME ON HISTORY**, Mariama Ba's **SO LONG A LETTER**, Bessie Head's **A QUESTION OF POWER**, Buchi Emecheta's **HEAD ABOVE WATER** and many others.

We further note that most African writers' works are autobiographical. The reason may be, as Nkosi argues, due to the fact that history itself becomes the true 'hero' of the novel. Mofokeng's works, which form the basis of this research, fall into this category.

What is important in autobiography is that in it the whole person speaks in a way that he may not in certain other kinds of writing. As an example, Ngugi (1981) illustrates the fact that in his resistance to evil, it is through art that the artist can draw pictures of the universe of our struggle that instil strength, clarity, hope, to

our struggle to realise visions of a new tomorrow as embodied in the struggle and survival of our children; or pictures that instil fear and despondence or give rational, artistic legitimacy to the world of the oppressor - nations and classes. Nkosi (1981:30) retorts that if we are to see the African society as a living organism, a society constantly in motion, always plunged into conflict and contradictions, we surely need the novelist as much as the professional historian to recover for us the essential meaning from the "supple confession" of history and to guide us with a firmer hand than we have been accustomed to through history's cunning passages. We need therefore to align ourselves with Olney's illustration that when a specialist, for example a politician, a priest, a doctor and so on, comes to write his autobiography, he expresses not merely his political or religious or other sensibilities, but his totality as a man. With an African politician you will find the man not only generally but specifically African, not only homo-sapiens but homo-African. Further, with a number of Africans of various professions and classes, you will come up with a number of perspectives on and expressions of the one experiential fact: what it has been like and what it is like to be an African. One characteristic of the African world is its unity, its indivisible coherence and singleness, its non-compartmentalized texture. This tallies with Butterfield's observation (1974), who sees in the black autobiographers the "self" that is conceived as a member of an oppressed social group. Ngugi (1981:13) believes that this emanates from the belief that "A people united can never be defeated".

While Western thought and literature developed directly and consistently from the Greeks through the Renaissance to the present time, the African thought developed in its own and different way on a continent where the effect of the Graeco-Roman and Hebraic-Christian traditions was almost nil. There are traditions of art and literature in African society that grow directly out of the cultural matrix of that society, and they are different from traditions of the West.

Further, autobiography is seen as a vehicle that is able to provide the most narrative enactment and immediate manifestation of the ways, the motives, and the beliefs of a culture foreign to the reader. Autobiography can be assigned a primary role in approaching African literature generally on three counts:

1. **For the non-African reader, it offers a way of getting inside a world that is inevitably very different from his own in its assumptions and values, in its attitudes and beliefs, in its practices and observances.**
2. **Much of the best literature from Africa generally is in a strict as well as in a loose sense of the word - autobiographical. Davies and Fido (1993:320) point out that generally women that want to be writers tend to undergo a period of self-examination, and autobiography thus becomes an important form for them. They observe that African women specifically write autobiography in different tones, which vary from the distanced, socio-**

cultural (cf Joyce Sikakane's A Window on Soweto [1977]), to the cautiously personal (Nafissatou Diallo's A Dakar Childhood [1975]) and the frankly personal, thinly disguised as fiction (Buchi Emecheta's Second Class Citizen [1975] and In the Ditch [1972]).

3. Through autobiography one can, in many instances, approach fiction or whatever other literature with considerably greater assurance and validity.

Another argument is that while philosophical and psychological unity informs African literature, they display formal and motivational diversity. Hence it is important to define simultaneously and equally both the unity and the diversity that exist - the essential African one that lies beneath and the formal, cultural many that appear on the surface.

Olney (1973) explains the unity and diversity of the African autobiography as follows:

- (a) In African autobiography, ancestral descendant motive is something infinitely deeper than curiosity. It points to an entirely un-western relationship between the individual and his past. Far from being a mere link in a serial time, it is a ritual repetition or reincarnation of the past and a precise rehearsal of the future. Within Africa and especially within any given African culture, both experience and personality tend to be conceived of as repetitive and unchanging, the same in the past, now and forever.

- (b) The autobiographer who offers his own life as an example or a model will do so in a larger, more symbolic sense. For instance we may here think of an African that marries a non-African. The two need to symbolise and model that they can live harmoniously together.
- (c) A few African autobiographers find delight in recalling a time that was better, more coherent and unified than the present. Recalling life at Maupaneng, at the communal fire-place, Mphahlele says:

"We learned a great deal at the fire-place, even before we were aware of it: history, tradition and custom, code of behaviour, communal responsibility, social living and so on.

(Mphahlele, 1959:15)

- (d) The act of writing an autobiography implies a certain vanity on the author's part, but there is one variety of African autobiography - namely political autobiography - which the author's high opinion of himself and his achievements is not merely implicit or discreetly veiled but is spread broadcast across the page in accounts of heroic martyrdom and marvellous accomplishments, in stirring descriptions of lonely grandeur, faulty friends and villainous opponents. We here think of Karanja who betrayed his friends to be on the side of the oppressors of his people, and worse still got an

opportunity to make love to Mumbi when she lost her senses because of her excitement as he delivered the good news that her husband would be released soon. (Ngugi, 1967)

- (e) Many African politicians have emphasised the need to respect and preserve, at least in record, a fast disappearing past of unique glory. This reverential attitude of the past also motivates autobiographers whose work, depending on which past they choose to embrace, will issue in personal, cultural or symbolic autobiography.
- (f) Making the past live again in the present and for the future that would otherwise know nothing of it is similar to describing the African world for an outsider who is altogether ignorant of it. This desire to inform the world outside provides a major motive in African autobiography by the fact that a great majority of the autobiographies were originally written in either English or French. The list is here long as we think of among others writers like Chinua Achebe, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Flora Nwapa, Mirriam Tladi, Eski'a Mphahlele.
- (g) Many of the writers, choose to inform the outside about Africa and the African experience by dramatizing their lives and then taking their own case as representative. African life is marked, directed, and regulated by ritual repetition so that the description, like the experience, assumes a communal and archetypal quality. Thus Bloke Modisane dramatizes his life and says:

"But I am black, because I am black I was a piece of the ugliness of Sophiatown and a victim of the violence of white South Africa;.... There was no choice, during the riots the police shot their rifles and sten guns at anything which was black.

(1986:140)

2.4 THE ENVISAGED FRAMEWORK

It appears that autobiography tends to put the literary critic into problems more than any other type of writing. Olney reflects on this problem and says:

"Even though it is the least complicated, autobiography is the most elusive of literary documents. One never knows where or how to take hold of autobiography: there are simply no general rules available to the critic."

(1980:3)

This problem is also highlighted by Sturrock (1993:21) who says:

"The autobiographical text is the certificate of a unique existence, and the theorist who comes to it full of questions, and with a will to formalize its uniqueness

*away, knows himself to be playing a reprehensible part;
he is not as other innocent readers of autobiography."*

When we consider an approach to autobiography, we realize that there has been a shift in autobiographical criticism from an emphasis on autobiographical writings as a source of "truth", to an emphasis on autobiographical writings as literature (Frieden, 1983:13). We find here that the earliest critical studies of autobiography focused on autobiographical expression as a source of truth about a particular individual or on an individual as a representative of a larger group; or they focused on the element of truth itself, trying to establish degrees and criteria of truthfulness to be found in works in which authors claimed to be recounting their own life experiences. This, probably emanates from the theory of realism, where truth is the cornerstone. The belief here is that art always aims at the representation of Reality, that is of Truth. Furst (1992:3) explains that the belief that art is truth telling, has its intrinsic shortcomings. It may not be that simple to translate an allegedly true but necessarily subjective vision into words. Further, the theory of realism would emphasise truthfulness rather than apply the content of autobiographical work to a particular field of study. Critics such as Bates, seldom questioned the possibility of absolute truthfulness in autobiographical accounts, because to them, there was no dividing line between autobiography and fiction. Thus scholars like Pascal still maintained prescriptive standards which linked facts and developmental stages in an author's life to the possible level of artistic achievement in an autobiographical work but also claimed for autobiography an aesthetic validity - a "truthfulness" which was self rather than externally verifiable. This change accounts for the

consideration of autobiographical writing as a literary form which must be viewed as such before being equated with actual life events. Hence George Eliot's warning (as cited by Furst, 1992:173):

"Examine your words well, and you will see that even when you have no motive to be false, it is a very hard thing to say the exact truth, even about your own immediate feelings - much harder than to say something fine about them which is not the exact truth".

There is therefore a need for a recognition that autobiographical writings cannot be regarded as "raw truth" but rather as the process of transformation from lived experience to literary form as characterizing the autobiographical text.

Criticism of autobiography could also focus on the function of the genre within the community. Frieden (1983:22) finds that such criticism recognises the correspondence between generic changes and the changing needs of the particular linguistic/ literary community served by an individual genre. Interest here is in investigating what purpose is being served by a genre within a community, and tracing generic changes, determines the changing communal needs. For instance, autobiography can be seen as a form of conscious communal strengthening whereby experience could be shared across time and inscribed in the communal memory; autobiography is a confessional outlet and releases the tension that was once provided by the church; autobiography is a means of self-authentication in the

face of an increasingly incomprehensible culture; autobiography is an expression of cultural myth, which is a means within the society to delimit permissible roles (cf. Gusdorf 1956; Spender 1962; Kazin 1964; Spengeman and Lundquist 1965).

Criticism of autobiography could also be one in which the perspective of autobiography as a primary literary form concentrates on the linguistic dynamics present between text and reader. This relates to phenomenological criticism which Eagleton (1983 :59) says it aims at a wholly "immanent" reading of the text, totally unaffected by anything outside it. The text itself is reduced to a pure embodiment of the author's consciousness: all of its stylistic and semantic aspects are grasped as organic parts of a complex totality, of which the unifying essence is the author's mind. Hence Starobinski (1971) says that the unique nature of autobiographical style accentuates the present - writing - time of the author and makes particularly evident the coexistence within the autobiographical text both *histoire* (narrated events of the past) and *discourse* (present - time narration between author and reader).

Another group of critics that Frieden identifies is that which dealt with autobiography chiefly as a literary form and questioned the previously existing system of literary categorization. The main question here is whether autobiography is functional or not. Frieden notices then that investigations of the literary identity of autobiographical works took two main paths. Critics like Mandel, Hart and Weintraub attempted classifications of autobiographical types based on literary traits, like the work is "flawed"; or the work is based on the ontological, ethical

and cultural - historical claims; or whether the social roles are the key to distinguish the differing characteristics within the genre. Other critics like Shapiro, Cox, Olney, Howarth followed literary conventions and their functions within autobiographical narrative. For instance, literary techniques could be used in autobiographical works like in any other imaginative literature; Cox (1971) showed that there could be blending of fiction and non-fiction in contemporary American autobiography; metaphorical structure, do constitute the base of autobiographical works; it is possible to have characterization, style or theme in the creative work of autobiographical narration.

The analytical tool that underpins this study will then be informed by theoretical guidelines from **Conditions and Elements of Autobiography**. In this essay, Howarth identifies three major elements namely, **the writer (character), the work (technique) and the reader (theme)**. As we can see, each of these relate to a separate aspect of literary composition. In the body of the thesis we look at the three elements each at a time. Our approach would first be to concentrate on the fictional aspects of these elements in chapters three, four and five. Thereafter, we shall attempt to show in chapter six how Mofokeng's fictional work merges with his autobiographical mode.

CHAPTER 3

CHARACTER IN MOFOKENG'S WORKS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

3.2 CHARACTER IN MOFOKENG'S WORKS

3.2.1 SENKATANA

3.2.2 LEETONG

3.2.3 PELONG YA KA

3.3 CONCLUSION

CHAPTER 3

CHARACTER IN MOFOKENG'S WORKS

*"We ain't what we wanna be, and we ain't
what we're gonna be - but we ain't what
we wuz."*

(South Carolina mountain proverb: Shaw, 1952)

3.1 INTRODUCTION

At the end of the previous chapter, we mention three major elements that Howarth (1980) identifies as being of importance in the analysis of autobiography, and these are *character*, *technique* and *theme*. We note further that even in the analysis of prose fiction, these elements play a major role. In this chapter we concentrate on the element *character*, where we show how Mofokeng has created his characters. First, we briefly explain character in fiction.

A character is a created person in a text. Cohen (1973:37) says characters seem to become people with traits and personalities which a reader can recognise, respond to and analyze.

In the process of writing, the writer mirrors life and as a consequence what we see reflected in a text is an image of ourselves as we exist within the framework of human experience.

Fenson and Kritzer (1966:18) observe that through fiction, we meet people we have never met before; yet they are strangely familiar. We are exposed to incidents which are disturbing or even shocking, yet they are inevitably believable. Hence the emphasis that characters are to be believable or plausible human beings. A reader should be able to recognise a situation or characters as belonging within the limits of possible experiences in life.

Even though characters are creations of the writer, they do have a beginning somewhere in reality. Burnett (1983:19) quotes Somerset Maugham who says:

No one can create a character from pure observation; if it is to have life it must be at least in some degree a representation of himself.

Barnet (1992:68) finds causality to be partly rooted in character. He points out that "things happen in most good fiction, at least partly because the people have certain personalities or characters (moral, intellectual and emotional qualities) and, given their natures, because they respond plausibly to other personalities". What their names are [cf. Alvarez-Altman and Burrelback, 1987; Maphiri, 1994; Sekeleko, 1993] and what they look like may help you understand them, but probably the

best guide to characters is what they do. As we get to know more about their drives and goals - especially the choices they make [cf. Shakespear's Othello, Macbeth; and Khaketla's Mosito] - we enjoy seeing the writer complete the portraits, finally presenting us with a coherent and credible picture of people in action.

Burnett (1983:23) like Barnet above concludes that often enough, characters are persons we think we know and understand or fail to understand and hope by the process of writing to know better.

At this stage, we begin to examine the characters that Mofokeng has created.

3.2 CHARACTER IN MOFOKENG'S WRITINGS

It is our view that **SENKATANA** is, by and large, a text anchored on character. As in **CHAKA**, the events revolve around one major character. As a result, this text will enjoy greater prominence in our discussion of character which will be followed by a brief discussion on character from **LEETONG**. As Dlamini (1975:64) points out, characterisation is not used in an essay unless it tells a story as is the case with the essays Bogheku and Metswalle among others in **PELONG YA KA**.

3.2.1 SENKATANA

SENKATANA is a drama that is classified as a tragedy. Following this classification, we shall examine characterization in this text within the parameters of tragedy. We start this discussion by giving a description of tragedy.

Aristotle (in Dorsch, 1965:38) defines tragedy as:

a representation of an action that is worth serious attention, complete in itself, and of some amplitude; in language enriched by a variety of artistic devices appropriate to the several parts of the play; presented in the form of action, not narration; by means of pity and fear bringing about the purgation of such emotions.

It is our view that the tragedy **SENKATANA**, can be described in terms presented by Aristotle in this quotation. Aristotle further teaches that since tragedy is a representation of an action, it is chiefly on account of the action that it is also a representation of persons. Character, according to him, is that which reveals personal choice, the kind of thing man chooses or rejects when that is not obvious.

The hero, Senkatana, graduates into a tragic hero. Ordinarily, tragic heroes as characters usually go beyond the standards to which reasonable people adhere. They do some fearful deed that ultimately destroys them (cf. King Lear in

Shakespear's **KING LEAR**, Hamlet in Shakespear's **HAMLET**; Chaka in Mofolo's **CHAKA**; and Okwonkwo in Achebe's **THINGS FALL APART**). The hero in **SENKATANA** fits perfectly in this description because we find Senkatana to be mechanically judged as a tragic hero. Barnet (1992:117) explains that a tragic hero is judged mechanically if he or she is noble, has a flaw, does a fearful deed, we recognise his or her flaw and he or she dies. This is so because tragedy dramatizes the conflict between the vitality of a single life and the laws or limits of life. The tragic hero reaches a height, going beyond the experience of others but at the cost of his or her life.

If we consider each of the mechanical points above, we find Senkatana to be noble, for no person would risk his life for others if he does not possess the noble quality of caring for humanity. We learn from Seboni, one of the two wise old men, that Kgodumodumo had devoured all mankind except for one pregnant woman at the time. The woman struggled alone to bring up her child. The child, now grown, learns from his mother that everyone was in the belly of the monster, and resolves to rescue them. Senkatana says to himself:

.....

A ke nna feela ya bitswang ke tseo ke di bonang,

Ya bitswang ke tseo ke di utlwang?

Botle bo bokale ha se mpho ya a le mong,

Ya leng mong a ke ke a thaba ka mehla,

Bo ka tlala pelo ya hae, ba e phatlola,

A ba mahlomoleng. Ke botle ba bohle!

Empa bohle ba kae! A kae a mang mahlo

A ka bohisanang le a ka, Botle bona?

(Senkatana:5)

(Am I the only person attracted to what I see,

Called by what I hear?

Such beauty is not meant for one person.

A lone person cannot be happy always

His heart can suffocate, and burst,

But where is everyone? Where are the other eyes

That can share this beauty with me.)

Senkatana's words, tell us that he is a kind- hearted, selfless person, who is concerned about the well being of other people. He could not stand and watch his kind go through misery. He strongly believed that he needed to rescue them from their calamity in spite of the danger he put himself in. He says this to his mother who was deeply concerned about his safety:

Ntho e nngwe eo nka ba etsetsang yona. E boima, empa

ha ho ka nnqa e nngwe e tshwanetse ho etsuwa hore re

phele, le bona ba phele. Ke tshwanetse ho leka ho ba

pholosa tsietsing eo ba leng ho yona.

(Senkatana:12)

(There is only one thing that I can do for them. It is difficult, but there is no other way it must be done so that we can live, and they can live also. I should try to rescue them from their problem.)

There is no doubt that by attacking the dangerous monster Kgodumodumo, Senkatana engaged in a fearful deed.

Over and above Senkatana's nobility, we recognise in him a tragic error, a tragic flaw captured by Aristotle as a hamartia. This is an error that ultimately results in his death.

Bulane started to mobilise conspirators to kill Senkatana. This came to Senkatana's knowledge but he did not take any steps to prevent the impending murder. This comes out clearly when his mother advises him that he should take care of himself, and he instead says this to her:

Mme, se o hlorisang ke a se bona. Nka be ke re ke tla leka ka matla ho itlhokomela ho kgahlisa wena; nka be ke re ke tla leka ho phema ditsietsi tsohle hore ke leke ho o fokoletsa matswenyeho; empa nka itlhokomela jwang hara batho ba bangata hakale?

(Senkatana:41)

(Mother, I do understand what troubles you. I could be saying that I would try by all means to please you and say that I will protect myself; I could be saying that I will avoid all problems so as to reduce your troubles; but how am I going to protect myself among so many people?)

Senkatana is convinced that every person has a conscience. Further, he strongly believes that nothing will happen to him if the people truly love him. We find this trust and hope in the following words:

Tshireletso ya nnete ke e tswang dipelong tsa bona, se tla ntshireletsa ke lerato leo ba nthatang ka lona. Mme tseo tsohle ha se tseo re ka di bonang, hoo rona re ka ho etsang ke ho tshepa ... E, ho tshepa hore botle bo tla hlola bobo dipelong tsa bona, hore ho loka ho tla feta bokgopo, lerato le fete mona.

(Senkatana:42)

(The best protection comes from their hearts, what will protect me is their love for me. And all that cannot be seen by the naked eye, what we can do is to hope ... Yes to hope that good will conquer evil in their hearts,)

It is this trust and hope that blurs his judgement. Had Senkatana not misread the situation, he probably might not have been assassinated.

Barnet (1992:117) finds that tragedy commonly involves irony of two sorts: *unconsciously ironic deeds and unconsciously ironic speeches*.

Ironic deeds have some consequence more or less the reverse of what the doer intends. Senkatana is concerned about the plight of the lot that is in the belly of Kgodumodumo. Their freedom becomes paramount. He says:

Bongata bo ka mpeng ya sebata,

Bongata bo lefifing le tshabehang,

.....

Thabo e ke ke ya phethahala re le bang.

bohle re bopetswe ho phela le ba bang,

Ho boha le bona tse thabisang,

Ho nyakalla le bona, ho phedisana le bona!

Ka ntle ho bona tokoloho ya rona ke lefeela,

Ke sesosa sa maswabi le dillo;

(Senkatana:6)

(Many are in the belly of the monster,

Many are in terrible darkness,

.....

Happiness will not be complete without them,

We are all created to be free, freedom is for them also,

All are created to live with others,

To see like them what pleases the eye,

To rejoice with them, to live together with them!

Without them our freedom means nothing

It is the source of misery and tears;)

It is these thoughts that drive him to want to rescue his people. He says:

Seo ke se buang ha se qale ho fihla hloohong ya ka kajeno. Ke taba eo e leng kgale ke e nahana, mme ke se ke itokiseditse ho etsa seo pelo ya ka e mpoellang hore se tshwanetse ho etsuwa. Ba tshwanetse ho pholoswa hore re pholohe bohle.

(Senkatana:12)

(What I am saying is not occurring to me for the first time today. I have long been thinking about this, and I am now prepared to do what I think should be done. They should all be saved so that we can also be saved.)

Indeed Senkatana succeeds to save his people as we hear from Moberi:

O ile, o hlabanne; o hlotse, o pholositse;

(Senkatana:17)

(He went, he fought; he won, he saved;)

The irony of the good deeds come out when the very people that he sacrificed his life for, deprive him of the very birth right to live. He had thought that by rescuing his people, he would be free and happy forever, but alas; the reverse is the case. Moberi confirms the irony of these deeds when he says:

Ho madimabe ya phelelang ba bang,

Ya ba sebeletsang, ya ba lopollang matshwenyehong;

Ke yena ya tla jara mathata a bona,

Mathata ao a ba lopolotseng ho ona.

Ke yena eo ba tla mo hloela setumo sa hae:

Hona hobane a ba lopolotse -

Ke yona teboho eo ba tla mo neela yona.

(Senkatana:17)

*(The one who lives for others is unfortunate,
 Who serves them, who delivers them from their suffering;
 It is he who will carry their burden,
 The burden that he freed them from.
 It is him whom they will hate for his popularity:
 For the very reason that he saved them -
 That is the gratitude he will receive from them.)*

On the *ironic speech*, the speaker's words mean one thing to him or her but something more significantly different to the audience. Just as Bulane and his group were planning Senkatana's death, Senkatana's mother dies. A few days later, Bulane comes to Senkatana to sympathise and console him, and Senkatana believes him:

*Re a leboha Bulane. Re batho kaofela mme re tshwanela
 ho utlwelana bohloko, leha re ka ba le diphapang tsa
 rona, leha re ka ba dira.*

(Senkatana:103)

*(We thank you Bulane. We are all people, and we should
 feel sorry for one another, despite our differences, or the
 fact that we are enemies.)*

In response Bulane denies that he is still Senkatana's enemy, but admits that previously he was. Further, he assures Senkatana that even if anything can happen to Senkatana, Senkatana should know that he is innocent. Senkatana believes Bulane and comments as follows to Maswabi:

Ntweng ya leeto la bophelo

Re ntse re fetoha ka mehla,

Ka mehla re ntse re ithuta;

Mohla phetoho e felang

Ke mohla hae re fihlang,

Ke mohla leeto le felang.

(Senkatana:103)

(In the battle of the journey of life

We change continuously,

We continue to learn;

The day change stops

Is the day we arrive home,

Is the day the journey ends.)

Both Bulane and Senkatana's words mean the opposite to us the audience. We definitely know that Bulane is lying when he says that he should not be held responsible for whatever may happen to Senkatana. There is no way that he can

withdraw from the plot to kill Senkatana at this point because his wife has threatened to expose him and say that he is the one behind the killing. He has no choice except to comply. This is what Mmadiepetsane says:

....Ha o ntse o sheba batho lefatsheng mona, o ye o ithetse ka hore ba phetha thato ya bona! Ba bang ba tswaletswe ho phetha thato ya ba ba laelang - haholo makwala. Jwale ke o neha matsatsi a se makae feela hore o batle sebaka sa ho bolaya Senkatana.

.....

Ho seng jwalo nna le Hlabakwane re tla ikgula, mme ha re ikgula re tla hulela wena pontsheng!! Ebe o nkutlwile hantle he.

(Senkatana:100)

(....When you look at people here on earth, you can lie to yourself that they do their will! Others are born to do the wishes of those who instruct them - especially the cowards. I now give you a few days to find a chance to kill Senkatana.

.....

If not, Hlabakwane and I are going to withdraw, and when we do that we shall expose you!! I hope you have heard me.)

It is because of this that we find Senkatana's words ironical. Bulane is not a changed person because as soon as he finds an opportunity, he is going to kill Senkatana.

This brings us to the elements of pity and fear. We the audience are advantaged because we know exactly what is going on. It is from this knowledge that we feel pity for Senkatana. In the first place we pity him for misjudging the situation that leads to his painful, undeserved death. As the audience we wish we could whisper in his ear and say:

Hlokomela! Bulane ha se motho. Bulane ke moloji, ke satane, ke mmolai!!!

(Beware! Bulane is no good. Bulane is a witch, he is a devil, he is a murderer!!!)

Further, we feel pity for him because all that is to happen to him is not of his doing. He is not the cause of the misunderstanding that was there between the family of his mother and that of Mmadiepetsane. Mmadiepetsane is determined to hurt Senkatana despite the fact that he is innocent. This is what she says:

*Ya rona ntwana ha se ya baholo feela, e fetela le baneng.
 Taba ke ho iphetetsa, ha ho tsotelehe hore na ka mang!
 Ha mmae a ile, ngwana o kena tulong sa mmae! Ha nka
 ke ka kgotsofala ha ho sa na le mothwaelanyana feela
 wa bona! Ba tshwanetse ho fela kaofela ha bona.
 (Senkatana:99)*

*(Our fight is not for the adults only, it is transferred to
 the children. The main thing is to revenge, irrespective
 of the victim! When his mother goes, the child replaces
 her!*

*I will never be satisfied if there is still some trace of
 them! They should all be finished.)*

We also feel pity for Bulane for different reasons. He is involved in this battle not out of choice, but because he is blackmailed. His wife is too powerful for him and as a result he finds it difficult to withdraw from the assassination plot because she will expose him. Bulane is trapped in a situation that is almost impossible to get out of. Personally, he sees no wrong in Senkatana for when alone he says:

*Keng ena eo ke e etsang? Ke jewa keng? Ke ikenyetsang
 tshotso dinaleng?..... Ke laba-labela borena, Empa ha
 ke qetile? Ha ke qetile ke tla etsang? Ha nka dula setulo
 sa Senkatana teng ke tla etsang? Ekaba batho ba tla*

bona ke se loketse jwaloka Senkatana. Senkatana ke morena kantle, ke morena kahare, ke morena setulong sa borena, e tla nne e be morena leha a se theohile. O tletse kgotso, mosa, lerato. ...

(Senkatana:76)

(What am I doing? What is wrong with me? Why do I involve myself in this? ...I long to be king, ... But when it is done? What will I do when it is done? ... Will people find me fit like Senkatana? Senkatana is a king outside, he is a king inside, he is a king in the king's seat, he will remain king even when demoted. He has peace, kindness, love)

While we feel pity for both the protagonist and antagonist, we fear for ourselves. This leads to what Aristotle calls *catharsis*. Cohen (1973:201) mentions that the sense of order is part of Aristotle's emphasis on catharsis. He explains that by the sense of order is meant:

the cosmic, moral, social, or political order that is frequently maintained in tragedy, despite the cataclysmic events.

He describes Aristotle's catharsis "as the effect of tragedy on an audience which allows it to find pleasure in the painful actions it witnesses." Cohen continues to say that what apparently Aristotle meant by catharsis was that he felt that tragedy purges its viewers of the emotions of pity and fear which the events induce or what Ben Johnson calls evil bodily humours. By its emphasis on man's dignity and on the sense of larger order surrounding him, tragedy elevates the audience to a feeling of harmony (emotional, intellectual, or aesthetic) with the tragic experience.

For Senkatana to see any change in Bulane, is an error of judgement. We can also commit this error and be easily deceived that all is well. Further, we ask ourselves if we would have done any better. This is so because even Maswabi did not challenge Senkatana's wrong judgement that Bulane has changed. He actually agrees with Senkatana for he says:

*Mohlomong phetoho eo, eo re e bonang, ke e tliswang
ke lefu la mofumahadi mma rona.*

(Senkatana:104)

*(Perhaps that change, which we see, is brought by the
death of the queen, our mother.)*

The same is true of Bulane's behaviour. As human beings, we are all in search of power in one way or the another. The power we crave for, is of different sorts but nonetheless, the urge is there to want to be powerful. Deep down in his heart,

Bulane was ambitious and wanted to be king, and it is this hunger for power that made him play into his wife's hands. This is why we fear for ourselves because we are also ambitious. What comes out here is that our ambitions, if not controlled, can lead us into problems like Bulane's.

We find however that as the audience, we are now wiser and we thank God that we are not in their position. Both the mistakes, the tragic flaws, of Senkatana and Bulane have taught us life-saving lessons; and this has a cleansing, purifying, purging effect on our emotions.

The discussion of characterisation in **SENKATANA** has given us an opportunity to agree that tragedy is indeed a representation of human life, a mirror put up for us to look and see ourselves. We proceed now to examine *character* in the other two texts.

One important element that comes out of the study of characters, is that the author uses certain means that assist us to know and understand the characters. Cohen (1973:37) comments as follows:

In reading (prose) fiction, you may tend to concentrate on the created person (the end result) and not on the means which an author uses to shape the humanity of his fictional character.

The following are some of the different ways that the author can use to communicate the traits, feelings, and thoughts of his characters:

- (a) He can give the physical description of varying exactness and fullness so that the character can be visualised by the reader.
- (b) He allows the characters to do and say things that provide enormous insight into their make up.
- (c) Other characters are made to say certain things about other characters and these further assist to provide information that make readers understand the characters more.
- (d) The characters can also be given names that resemble their traits and personalities.

(Cohen, 1973)

We now try to decipher how Mofokeng make his characters known to us in his short story book LEETONG.

3.2.2 LEETONG

Even in his short stories, Mofokeng has created and imagined characters with traits and personalities that we can recognise, respond to and analyze.

In his creation of characters, Mofokeng does make use of the means identified by Cohen (1973) above. We shall take them one at a time and show how he successfully portrays his characters by making use of the techniques mentioned above.

To exemplify the first means, we use the stories Panana le Tamati and Hosasa.

In the story Panana le Tamati, Mofokeng gives a description of the Indian man as follows:

*Hodima koloï ena ho ne ho dutse leqheku la lekula.
Hloohong le ne le rwetse katibanyana e kgubedu, moo
katiba e fellang ho simoloha moruhadi wa ditedu, o tla
jwalo ho theoha marameng ho tla fihla seledung. Di ne
di le putswa mme di hlile di kwahetse sefahleho kaofela.
Ka hodima mahlo dintshi le tsona e ne e le sehlahlahadi
sa moriri o moputswa. Ka molomong ho ne ho se ho
bonahala menonyana a se makae a hlileng a
bontshahatsang ka moo disene di seng di atile ka teng.*

(Leetong:35)

(On top of this car, sat an Indian man. He had a red hat on his head, and at the end of the hat, a forest of his beard started, coming like that through the cheeks to cover the chin. The beard was grey and about to cover the whole face. Above the eyes, the eyelashes were also a bush of grey hair. One could only see a few teeth in his mouth which was a sign that nothing was now left in his mouth.)

In the story HOSASA, the following physical description of Molefi is given:

Hara batho ba tsamayang ka thoko ho seterata ho bonahala e mong. Ha motho o mo shebile a le hole e kare ke motho e mokgutshwane, empa ha a mo atamela o fumana hore ha a mokgutshwanenyane, empa ha a molelele. A ka be a le molelele hoja ha se ka ho kobeha ho bileng teng mahetleng a hae. Ka baka leo, hlooho ya hae e hlile e siya mmele morao ha a tsamaya.

(Leetong:72)

(Among the people found walking along the pavement, there is one that we see. When one looks at this person from a distance, he appears to be a short person, yet when one comes closer one finds that he is not short,

neither is he tall. He would have been tall, had it not been for the hump around his shoulders. As a result, when he walks, his head protrudes and as such his body is left behind.)

The manner in which these characters have been described, makes it possible for the reader to visualise and see the character as portrayed.

On the second tactic, we find that Mofokeng makes his characters to do and say things that give the readers a full picture of the created persons.

When we examine the story Bonnotshing (Mona Hodimo), we find that Motsamai's words and actions reveal the type of person he is.

Motsamai lost his entire family when they were all killed by an infectious disease. After their burial, he decided to leave his home and settle in the wilderness. What comes out of this behaviour is that Motsamai is a loner, a person who finds solace in meditation. This is confirmed by his words:

"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. Ho bile jwalo le honna."

(Leetong:102)

(No, true consolation is found deep in your thoughts, when alone and thinking about problems, when you realise that there is no one to help you, you quickly become strong and find solace, you become strong and become active again. It was like that with me.)

Were he not a meditator, he would not have taken this decision to go and stay alone in the wilderness.

We further learn that through fiction, we meet people we have never met before, yet we find them very familiar. Mofokeng has created such people in his writings. We think of a person like Rantsho in the story Mona Pela Tsela. When he meets Tumelo after his release from prison, Rantsho makes a fool of him in front of the many people in the shops, where Tumelo had been waiting since morning. Tumelo had gone to the shops because he thought that he might meet people he knows and they may inform him about the latest developments of the farmer he worked for before his arrest. Instead, Rantsho ridicules Tumelo, and informs everybody how bad he is. This is what he says about Tumelo:

Ka nnete ke taba e bohloko ha ngwana eo e leng kgutsana a itshwere jwalo, ha ho lebeleletswe hore a itshware setho, a tiise jwaleka monna.

(Leetong:9)

(Truly, it is painful when an orphan behaves like that, when it is expected that he will behave like a human being, and persevere like a man.)

In our everyday life, we do meet people like Rantsho. These are the kinds of people who rejoice at the downfall of other people. It was not necessary for him to shout at Tumelo and tell everybody how bad Tumelo is. In actual fact, these are the people who are worse than the person they talk down or talk badly about. We conclude then that Rantsho is a person who derives pleasure in other peoples' pains. He is not supportive but is instead a person who can destroy others.

We also come across incidents that are disturbing, yet they are shockingly believable.

In the story, **Ke Toro Feela**, there is an accident at the mine where Tatolo and Molahlehi work. Tatolo dies in that accident and Molahlehi is injured and taken to hospital. After a while, he is discharged and sent back home. Like others, he is given a small amount of money yet he is now disabled and unable to work. He accepts the money and goes back home. He will never be able to work again.

What we observe here is that Mofokeng has created a character who do not question anything. He accepts his fate and does not challenge anybody.

Other characters can be used to say things about others. Mofokeng also uses this technique to reveal to us some of the characters he has created.

In the story Hosasa, we learn through Molefi that Mmatsietsi is a loving, understanding and supportive mother and wife. When Molefi delays from work because he has to go to Teboho to collect his money, he is disappointed when once again Teboho fails to pay him. In the morning of that day, he left his wife sick in bed. On top of that, as the only breadwinner in the home, he has so many debts to settle and is hopeful that Teboho will pay him and he will be in a position to take his wife for medical treatment. Because he had to wait for a long time at Teboho's work place, he went back home long after knocking off time. As he is deep in thoughts about what to do next, he does not notice the stop where he is supposed to alight from the tram. One colleague of his sees him and starts to make fun of Molefi. He asks Molefi why he is that late yet he has long knocked off from work. When he tries to explain that he had other commitments, one woman intervenes and says she would never accept all the lies that a man would tell. It is at this stage when we learn that Mmatsietsi is an understanding woman for Molefi says:

"E, Wena! Wena! Wena! Wena nako ena kaofela. Wena o e mong motho, wena o Mmadiphapang, wena o hloka kutlwisiso, empa wena, wena, o se ke wa lebala hore

batho kaofela ha ba tshwane le wena! Ke bile lehlohonolo ka mofumahadi wa ka, hoja o tshwana le wena nka be ke se ke le mahlanyeng ..."

(Leetong:81)

(Yes, You! You! You! You all the time. You are another person, you are Mmadiphapang, you have no understanding, but you, you, do not forget that people are not like you. Definitely how fortunate it is that people are not like you! I was fortunate with my wife, if she were like you I would be at the mental hospital by now ...")

Mofokeng uses the naming technique to let us know more about his characters. In most of the stories, we find that the names of the characters have been used to reveal their personalities. I will briefly illustrate this with a number of characters from a few stories.

In the story Ke Toro Feela, Tatolo dies in a mine accident. In Sesotho, it is said "*o latotswe*", meaning "*he is no more*". On the other hand it takes a long time for Molahlehi's family to know that he is still alive, because "*o ne a lahlehile*", meaning "*he was lost*".

When ntlate Motsamai, in the story **Setloholo**, loses his wife, it is as though he will never overcome the grief. His wife was everything to him. Fortunately, he has somebody to console him; a true pillar of his strength, and that is his daughter Matshediso. Matshediso means "*consoler or comforter*".

The life of Molefi and Mmatsietsi in the story **Hosasa**, is surrounded by miseries and hardships. The name Mmatsietsi suits this description as it means "*mother of hardships*". On the other hand, Molefi is attacked one night and injured by thugs while on his way home. For the little that he has in his possession, he has to pay with his life as the thugs take all his money. His name means "*the one who pays*".

We now examine how the characters are portrayed in the essays **PELONG YA KA**.

3.2.3 PELONG YA KA

It is important to mention right from the onset that an essay, unlike other narratives, does not tell a story. The essayist may however tell a short illustrative story or anecdote as part of an essay. Earlier on, in our introduction, we mention that in the process of his writing, the writer mirrors life and as a consequence what we see reflected in a text is a reflection of ourselves as we exist within the framework of human experience. We then observe that whilst an essayist does not

tell a story, he does through his subject matter, mirror life and in the process, gives us readers, an opportunity to look at ourselves in that mirror and examine our humanness. In some of his essays, Mofokeng does also make use of characters to portray life experiences.

We shall use the essays Boqheku and Metswalle to illustrate what we mean.

In the essay Boqheku, Mofokeng portrays life at old age, wherein he brings to the fore the fact that we are all afraid of this stage as it indicates the end of life. To achieve this, he uses in his illustration, an old couple who appears to be frightened by the thought that they would soon leave this world. What actually bothers them is that they are so used to living together, and the thought that between them, there is one who would have to leave this world first is not easy to accept. By the use of the two old people, Mofokeng is in fact demonstrating the human weakness that generally grabs hold of all people, and that is *fear of death*.

In the essay Metswalle, we observe once again the fact that Mofokeng has a short illustrative story in which there are characters who portray real life experiences. In this essay, the author is talking about true friendship. In life we meet different kinds of friends, some are true friends and some are evil friends. The minor incident that occurred between Tlala and Paseka, tells us what good friendship is. Both Tlala and Paseka were school mates and friends. Unfortunately after the death of Tlala's father, he could not continue with his schooling. When he found himself in that situation, Tlala decided to withdraw and forget about all his school friends.

When he and Paseka meet after some time, Paseka is unhappy that Tlala never responded to her letters, and when Tlala explains that he no longer regarded himself as her friend, Paseka gets annoyed and says to him:

".... Na ke ne ke le motswalle wa hao ha o sa le sekolong feela, ... Se jwalo setswalle hase seo ke se kgathallang. ..."

(Pelong Ya Ka:53)

("... Was I your friend only when we were at school,.....? I do not care for such friendship ...")

The two essays above, clearly show that to clarify a point or to convince the readers about a certain point, the essayist may at times employ characterisation.

3.3 CONCLUSION

Mofokeng has successfully created characters in all his texts that we the audience/reader can identify with. Through the created characters, we are able to reflect and see ourselves in life's mirror. For example, any of us can commit the same mistakes that **Senkatana** made. We do not all react the same to situations. As a result, we can all want to run away from the things that would remind us of the past like **Motsamai** in the story Bonnotshing (Mona Hodimo). It is normal for us to feel timid and withdrawn because we think we no longer belong to a group

like **Tlala** who thought he could not be a friend to people who attend school whilst he was no longer a scholar. Through Mofokeng's writing, we have been able to meet people with personalities and characters that are true to life. We can only conclude then by saying that Mofokeng has successfully created **characters** that reflect to the full, the people who go pass this world.

CHAPTER 4

IMAGERY IN MOFOKENG'S WORKS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

4.2 SOME OF MOFOKENG'S IMAGES

4.2.1 THE JOURNEY

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CHAPTER 4

IMAGERY IN MOFOKENG'S WORKS

Ntweng ya leeto la bophelo

Re ntse re fetoha ka mehla,

Ka mehla re ntse re ithuta...

(S.M Mofokeng)

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, we mention that imagery is one of the techniques, which Howarth (1980:86) says help to build the autobiographer's self-portrait. This chapter examines the role that imagery plays in portraying the model, the hero, the author the autobiographical writer in the writings of Mofokeng.

The discussion on imagery reminds us of an important observation made by Moleleki (1988:4) that there is a reciprocal relationship between form and content. He points out that there is need to investigate the relationship between the poet's artistic devices and his poetic world. We extend this view to say that there is also a need to investigate the relationship between the autobiographical writer's artistic devices, like imagery, and his real life. In this regard we recall the uncompromising stand of Marxist critics like Brecht and Lukacs as well as critics who subscribe to the Sociology of Literature like Achebe and Ngara who reject the elevation of form

over content. These critics, as Chaphole (1991:7) observes, have moved away from the art for art's sake dogma when evaluating literature. A balance is struck by Ngara (1984), that content and form are on equal footing and that none should be subordinated to the other. Following on this Chaphole (1991) suggests that in autobiography, not only the technique but the narrator's experience as well plays a central role. After all, every image gains clarity and significance only from its context (Clemen in Moleleki 1988:69).

We move on to briefly look at what imagery is:

Heese and Lawton (1975:65) define imagery as:

a reference to a description of something concrete, by means of which the writer wishes to tell you about something else. Concrete in this sense means that it can be perceived by one or more of the senses.

For Abrams (1971:76) imagery is used to:

signify all the objects and qualities of the sense perception referred to in a poem or other works of literature, whether by literal description, by allusion, or in the analogues (the vehicles) used in similes and metaphors.

Cohen (1973:187) says imagery is:

a direct sense appeal, a figure of speech, or both, which lead a reader by a process of association to combine at least two elements inherent in the figure.

Barnet (1992:279) points out that imagery is established by language that appeals to the senses, especially sight, but also other senses.

What emerges from these definitions, is that the study of imagery concerns an examination of the images that appeal to the senses, whether literal or figurative. Grebanier (1975:53) explains that imagery is literal when the images are to be taken in their natural or strict meaning, and imagery is figurative when the meaning is an extension of the image presented.

Our next definitional step is to consider images, the little bits and pieces which collectively make up imagery.

Spurgeon (1961:9) says that an image can be a description or an idea which by comparison or analogy, stated or understood, with something else, transmits to us through the emotions and associations, it arouses something in the wholeness, the depth and richness of the way the writer views, conceives or has felt what he is telling us.

Cohen (1973:51) sees an image as generally a sense impression created by a direct or recognisable sense appeal in words.

For Ngara (1984:24) an image is an expression that is meant to convey vivid meaning. It appeals to the senses in such a way that its effect strikes us and gives us pleasure.

Moleleki (1988:65) finds images to be mental impressions that symbolize in various ways the things and qualities of the external world in which we live.

Barnet (1992:153) explains images as the sensory content of a work, whether literal or figurative.

From the above definitions we conclude that images are mental pictures created as a result of the appeal made by the different senses.

4.2 SOME OF MOFOKENG'S IMAGES

Imagery in autobiographical writing is an aspect of technique which in turn relates to the work. The work, autobiographically speaking, is lived experience transformed into an artistic piece. The images we discuss in this chapter will relate in some ways to the happenings Mofokeng witnessed during his 34 year sojourn

on this planet. Some of these images are of **life, birth, time, evil, the heart and the ocean**. In the second half of this chapter, we will discuss images created through the use of poetic language.

Strangely or perhaps expectedly one does not find images or topics and titles which deal with pleasure, joy or happiness in Mofokeng's writings. We wish we could ask him if he did in fact experience joy before he journeyed to the ancestral world. Somewhere in his writings he says:

Thabo le nyakallo ha se tsa lefatshe lee.

(Happiness and joy do not belong to this world.)

4.2.1 THE JOURNEY (LIFE)

Ngwaneso ha o hlaha lefatsheng lena o fihla o se ntse o e na le metswalle e o lebeleletseng, e thabang ha o fihla, e didietsang, e tshelang ntatao ka metsi, kapa e mo shapang ho beha hore o fihlile.

(Pelong Ya Ka:49-50)

(My brother when you are born in this world you find friends who are already expecting you, friends who ululate, friends who pour your father with water, or who beat him to announce that you have arrived.)

Here the life long journey begins with the miracle of birth. There are ululations says Mofokeng, to mark this very special happening and to declare wishes and expectations. The wish that (if a girl) there will be ululations ha kgomo tsa bohadi di shatamana lepatlelong; the wish that (if a boy) there will be ululations ha mophato o tjha, o theoha thabeng o le letsoku o re:

"Ke nna Selailai se mahlo mafubedu. Moshemane ke dikoti marameng ke se ngwanana."

Yes there will be a cultural expectation symbolized by the women soaking you in water that ngwana wa ngwanana e tla ba sekgametsi. Hitting you with a stick will be to confirm what Mofokeng teaches that bophelo ke ntwā. The boy who has arrived will be a protector. He will carry the stick, the spear and the shield.

On page 70 of **PELONG YA KA** Mofokeng comes back to the image of birth. This time he introduces the birth of a river:

.....le noka e jwalo feela. E hlaha e le sedibanyana mona le mane. Se a hola, se fetoha molatswana, molatswana e be molapo le wona.

(.....even a river is like that. It springs up here and there as a fountain. It grows, and changes to be a rivulet, and then a rivulet becomes a river.)

After this fountain has grown into a river, it begins to flow; and as it flows it passes by. Mofokeng warns that whoever wants to make use of this flowing river, should do so now because once it passes by, it is gone just like time, because time and river are one and the same thing. In the opening pages of his powerful drama he says:

Nako ke noka e sheshang feela, e phatlaletseng. E ke keng ya arolwa dikoto le dikotwana.

(Senkatana:1)

(Time is a river that only flows, it is scattered. It cannot be divided into bits and pieces.)

St Augustine in Confessions X1 asks this question about time:

How do we measure time, since it has no extent? We must measure it as it passes by; but once it has passed what would be measured no longer exists. From where does [time] come, and by what path, and to what place does it go?

This question is a mouthful and an attempt to answer it would produce volumes. Be it as it may, it does link up with what Mofokeng says that we should make use of a river, as it flows and before it passes by.

At this stage we crave the indulgence of Physics and Philosophy and ask the question what is time? Albert Einstein would say time is that which flows at an even rate. Fair enough! If we look at the invention called a clock we see that the arms tick at an even rate, at the same speed. On the other hand, Philosophers like Carnap, Firth and Quine among others, would say time is a network of human intentions (**Chaphole in personal communication**). What do we make of this? A lot of sense we believe! Yesterday we laboured very hard to give birth to a democracy. Today that democracy is a newly born baby fragile and vulnerable. KA MOSO? Yes, we do not know what is going to happen tomorrow. Our intention is to protect, feed and nourish the newly born baby. Mofokeng the literary philosopher, (to coin a usage) subscribes to the human-philosophical view just cited. He says:

[maobane e tla be e le] Nako e fetileng, metsi a phalletseng a sa kgutleng. Rona re tla ba eng? E, le rona re tsamaya le matsatsi a rona, re a sesa re bile re theoha le metsi a noka ya nako.

(Senkatana:1-2)

([yesterday will be] time that has passed, water that has flown past and will not come back. What will we be? Yes, we also pass with our days, we swim and go down with the river of time.)

When we look at the narrative, the point of view in the extract just cited, we notice use of the first person. The first person is the self: it is plural and representative. If we recall that Mofokeng the artist turned persona, was not well at all at this stage, we can hear him talking about himself in that plurality:

E, le rona re tsamaya le matsatsi a rona,

(Yes, we also pass with our days,)

4.2.2 EVIL

Ke bona sebata sa setonahadi

Ke seo se metsa batho kaofela,

Ke seo se metsa phoofolo tsohle,

Se metsa tsohle tse phelang!

(Senkatana:3)

(I see a huge monster

There it is swallowing all mankind,

There it is swallowing all animals,

It swallows everything that lives!)

These lines are an exaggeration; an hyperbole. This is so only if we take them literally. On the other hand, these happenings as graphically presented in the lines above, are real in the lives of characters who populate the world of folktales and legends. Symbolically the beast Kgodumodumo takes yet another real form whether in actual life or in the life texts. In the life of the text **SENKATANA**, Kgodumodumo represents images at two separate but related levels. At the level of surface structure it represents **BOKGOPO**. Mmadiepetsane, Bulane's wife, is the embodiment of this wickedness. She will not rest until Senkatana's family is wiped out. As Mofokeng puts it, [sena ke] "sehloho se re wetseng hodimo rona bohle, bomadimabe bo se nang ho lekgwa!" Underlyingly (deeper level) Kgodumodumo is the image of darkness, **LEFIFI!**

*Bongata bo ka mpeng ya sebata,
 Bongata bo lefifing le tshabehang,
 Moo mahlo ho seng seo a ka se bonang,
 Moo ho bonahalang lefifi feela,
 Lefifi le tebileng ho feta botebo ba lewatle,
 Lefifi le se nang phello, leha e le teng!
 Mme lefifing leo ho sello sa dibopuwa tsa Mmopi,
 Sello se tebileng ho feta lona lefifi leo,
 Sello se hlahang botebong ba maikutlo a tsona.
 (Senkatana:5)*

*(The majority is in the monster's belly,
 The majority is in terrible darkness,
 Where eyes cannot see anything,
 Where only darkness can be seen,
 Darkness that is deeper than the ocean,
 Darkness that has no end, even though the end is there!
 And in that darkness, the Creator's creatures are weeping,
 Their tears are deeper than the very darkness,
 Tears that come from their very deep feelings.)*

An informant called Rantoa in the Oral History Project by Jeff Guy and Motlatsi Thabane (in Ndebele, 1991:52) says:

I did not study. I just see blackness (Ke bona botsho feela), I can leave my letter at the post office not knowing that it is mine because I did not study.

Rantoa is in darkness, o lefifing la ho hloka thuto!

The history of black education in South Africa has been slow but sturdy (Thanks to the commendable efforts of the early missionaries). In 1921 9,7% of blacks were literate. Ten years later in 1931 12,5% could read and write. Seventy years later in 1991 literacy workers revealed that 65% of South African blacks are still illiterate. (In Chaphole, forthcoming).

Mofokeng, with his acute sensitivity, reacts to the darkness Rantoa is talking about in two ways. First, he writes for us an outstanding book in which he symbolizes EVIL as represented in Mmadiepetsane, Bulane and others. Secondly, he takes it upon himself to educate his brothers Machorwane and Ralephele, to take them out of darkness; **Lefifi** le tebileng la ho hloka thuto.

4.2.3 PELO

Pelo e nngwe e re ke thole, e nngwe e re ke qoqe.....

(Pelong Ya Ka:4)

*(My one heart says I should keep quiet, the other heart
says I should talk.....)*

Ordinarily, the heart represents the seat of one's life. As it ticks away, it is said that one is alive. On a philosophical level, it takes a different dimension altogether. When we look at the two lines above, the first thing we notice is contrast:

..... ke thole

..... ke qoqe.

.....I should keep quiet

..... I should talk.

The basic function of contrast in a literary text is to breed conflict. Conflict is the essence of life both in the world of texts and in life as we live it. Learned literary critics teach us all the time that we have both internal and external conflicts. When we refer to the two lines once again we can tell that Mofokeng, narrating in the first person, is experiencing internal conflict. The lines in question come from **PELONG YA KA** which was written while he was ill. It is both reasonable and feasible to believe that he must have suffered conflict during the period of his long association with a terrible disease.

Thabo le maswabi ke mahlakore a mabedi a bophelo ba rona.

(Pelong Ya Ka:2)

(Joy and misery are two sides of our lives.)

When we are happy, we hear ourselves saying:

Ke thabile, ke nyakalletse; pelo ya ka e tshweu.

At times we are sad, joy has departed from us. In this case we even talk without thinking. O tla nahana jwang o le maswabing, o le morwalohadi o o tetebetsang habohloko? Ha ho le tjena re utlwa o re:

Pelo ya ka e bohloko

Pelo ya ka e ntsho

Pelo ya ka e a teba

Ke nyahame pelo.

(My heart is in pain

My heart is sore

I am downhearted

I am disheartened)

What all this is saying is that the **HEART** is the image, the symbol of life itself. Mofokeng says *pelo ya hao ke bowena* (your heart is yourself). It is not surprising then to find among us:

Basotho ba pelo-nolo.

Basotho ba pelo-keletsi.

Basotho ba pelo-tlhomohi.

Basotho ba pelo-telele.

(Kind hearted Basotho.

Basotho who are willing to advise.

Sympathetic Basotho.

Patient Basotho.)

Ha re bua ka bana, re bua ka Basotho ba pelo di ntle, ke hore ba pelo tse jewang.

4.2.4 THE OCEAN

Lewatle le jere dintho ka dintho - tse nyenyane, le tse kgolo; tse ntle le tse tshabehang.

(Pelong Ya Ka:77)

(The ocean carries lots and lots of things - small and big ones, beautiful and horrible things.)

Contrast still continues; and it will continue as long as life continues. This is borne in the opposites:

tse nyenyane versus tse kgolo
tse ntle versus tse tshabehang.

Yet on the other hand Lewatle symbolizes life or more specifically what goes on inside us.

*Motho ke kweetsa e tebileng,
Motho ke lephatlalla,
Ke lehwatata, ke lesaballa,
Ke LEWATLE.*

*(Man is an abyss,
Man has no beginning or end,
He is like a desert, he is very wide,
He is an OCEAN.)*

What goes on then inside a person, inside us?

*Ho etsahala makatikati, manyofonyofo, masetladibete.
Batswana will go even further and say go diragala
DINTSHO!*

Just like in a deep abyss, re ntse re fumana dintle, dibenyane diratwang, ditsoto!
inside us.

4.3 IMAGES CREATED THROUGH POETIC LANGUAGE

We move away from realism and briefly look at imagery as language. We shall deliberately exclude direct discussion of metaphor and simile. There are several reasons for our decision. We highlight two of them. First, in almost every MA dissertation on Imagery that one picks up, one will almost assuredly find a discussion of metaphor and simile. This has become monotonous. Secondly, Leteane (1995) has devoted an entire Honours project to the discussion of Imagery in **SENKATANA**.

Mofokeng abandons realism in the drama **SENKATANA** through the use of poetic language. He escapes from reality through the medium of poetry. A number of examples will be considered in support of this claim.

Example 1

Mosadi o behile ngwana moshanyana,

Pholo ya letlaka, kabelwa-manong.

Dikgwedi di a feta, dilemo le tsona.

Moshemane o hodile, moshemane ke monna

O hodile, thabo ya bongwana e fedile

E fedile, ho fihlile bothata bo boholo

(Senkatana:3)

(A woman has given birth to a baby boy

Ill-fated to be killed in battle and to be eaten by vultures.

The months go by, and so do the years.

The boy has grown, the boy is a man

He has grown, the joy of youth is gone

It is gone, the hardship of adulthood has come.)

The first image appears in the second line of the first stanza. Kabelwa-manong refers to a young man, a warrior, a bearer of arms ill-fated to die on the battle field and be eaten by vultures. There is a prediction here, a premonition almost that the hero Senkatana will depart violently as a result of a stab wound from a spear.

In the second stanza, a boy has been transformed into a man. The joy of youth has departed. The finality of the departure of joy is confirmed by the parallelistic linking of:

..... e fedile (thabo)

E fedile

(..... It is gone [happiness])

It is gone

It would appear that the hero Senkatana will never know happiness in his adult life.

Example 11

Ke tsoha ke bona botala bo se nang phello,

Ke bona dithaba tse entseng leqhubu le le leng,

Tse nyolohelang lehodimong jwaloka difate

Dithoteng ke jwang, ke dimela tse tala.

A bomadimabe bo se nang ho lehangwa

Bomadimabe bo re arohantseng!

Bongata bo ka mpeng ya sebata

Bongata bo lefifing le tshabehang.

(Senkatana: 4-5)

(I get up seeing endless green

I see mountains forming a continuous wave

Rising up like trees

On the plains is grass, green plants.

Oh what incomparable ill-luck/misery

Misery that has separated us

The multitudes are in the belly of a monster

The multitudes are in fearful darkness.)

In a real sense, the two stanzas contrast in a very painful manner depending on where the analyst is standing. In the first stanza botala suggest or symbolizes plenty, abundance, life. There is a sharp, stark contrast of misery, incomparable misery loudly audible in the vocative opening line of the second stanza. The intensity of the misery is evident from the repetition of Bomadimabe. The word multitudes is also repeated. First, the multitudes are in the belly of a monster. Secondly, the same multitudes are in utter darkness.

One is tempted to suggest that in a land of plenty, the multitudes, the majority were deprived, the majority were in darkness. Mofokeng the social philosopher, artistically draws attention to the ills that plagued this beautiful land for a very long time. One is instantly reminded of Mqhayi's apostrophe when he bitingly addressed the Prince of Wales on the occasion of his visit to South Africa in 1925. He says:

You brought us light

We sit in the dark

Benighted in the bright

noon day sun.

To this day, those South Africans who are "children of a lesser God" are still sitting in the dark of ignorance and in the belly of poverty.

Example 111

Wena ya kgethileng tsela ya toka

Wena ya tla mamela lentswe la hao

Wena ya tla phetha seo o se kgolwang,

Tsela e a nyolosa, e nyolosa thaba

Oho, ngwaneso hangata o tla lla

Hangata o tla lakatsa ho dula fatshe

Hangata o tla lakatsa ho phomola.

(Senkatana: 44-45)

(You who have chosen the path of justice

You who will obey your conscience

You who will carry out what you believe in

The path is steep, it goes up a mountain

Oh! my brother often you will cry

Often you will wish to sit down

Often you will wish to rest.)

These lines draw a picture of a selfless person, a person with a deep sense of justice. Some of the contents of **A LONG WALK TO FREEDOM** by Nelson Mandela come to mind here.

Once again, the intensity of the burden of choosing the road to justice is evident in the pile up of wena ya..... repeated three times. This repetition also goes forhangata o tla.... This is a warning sounded by the two old wise men. They have seen it all. The best teacher, experience, has taught it to them; and theirs is to transmit it, to hand it down to generations to come.

Example 1V

Oho, mojadi, jala peo hle!

Ha matla a sa le teng.

Setsumi, tsoma kapele hle!

Ha mesifa e sa dumela,

Le wena, modisa wa dinku,

Di dise hantle, di rute hle.

(Senkatana: 89)

(Oh sower, please sow the seed!

While the strength is there.

Hunter, please hunt quickly/ in haste!

While the muscles still allow you,

Even you, the shepherd of the flock,

Watch over them well, teach them please.)

In Matthew 13:1-23 Jesus teaches using the Parable of the Sower. In the opening lines of this chapter Matthew says:

Then he told them many things in parables, saying: A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop - a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.

It is obvious that Mofokeng the dramatist is parasitical on Matthew the saint. Intertextuality is at work here. More importantly, the spread of seed that landed in different places matches Senkatana's subjects. The Mmadiepetsane's and Hlabakwane's on the one hand and the Masilo's and Maswabi's on the other. At the end, when Mmadiepetsane is found guilty and a call is made for her to be killed, Maswabi says NO! he had been soaked in Senkatana's teachings. The seed in this case had landed in good, rich soil.

In John 10:1-21 we find yet another case of intertextuality in the story of the Shepherd and His flock. In the opening lines Jesus says:

I tell you the truth, the man who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. The man who enters by the gate is the shepherd of his sheep. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.

As the audience of the drama, **SENKATANA**, all we need to do is close our eyes and see Bulane, the thief, climb in by some other way and rob the flock of its shepherd, its leader. In the same manner, we can almost visualize Senkatana calling his flock out of the dungeon of the monster, Kgodumodumo, and lead them out.

Example V

Ntweng ya leeto la bophelo

Re ntse re fetoha ka mehla,

Ka mehla re ntse re ithuta;

Mohla phetoho e felang

Ke mohla hae re fihlang

Ke mohla leeto le felang.

Dintha tsohle di bopilwe,

Dintha tsohle di leetong,

Di leetong di leba ho Mmopi,

Ho Mmopi wa tsona phethahalong

Hae, moreneng, Hae, phethahalong.

(Senkatana:103-106)

(In the battle of the journey of life

We keep changing day by day,

Every day we are learning;

The day change stops

Is the day we arrive at home

Is the day the journey ends.

*(Everything has been created,
 Everything is in a journey,
 A journey, outward bound to the Creator,
 To the Creator, to life everlasting
 Home to the Lord, Home everlasting.)*

The first of the two stanzas just cited attempts a response to the question:

BOPHELO KE ENG?

The way Mofokeng sees it, can be put differently as follows:

*Bophelo ke ntwá.
 Bophelo ke nkotle,
 Ke o otle.
 Bophelo ke masiyasiyane,
 Ya se nang sekajana
 Mmae a tele.*

This is indeed a ruthless world, the world of only the strong survive.

The second stanza pulls together all of Mofokeng's three books together into an "epic", an "epic" of a nation born, a nation struggling, a nation dying. A nation dying perhaps to be re-born like a grain of wheat which we bury in the soil in order to grow and yield in abundance.

4.4 CONCLUSION

In sum then Mofokeng's images as Maphike (1978) confirms are about **LIFE**, about **US**; the most complex creature God has ever created.

CHAPTER 5

THEME IN MOFOKENG'S WRITINGS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

5.2 THEMES IN MOFOKENG'S WORKS

5.2.1 LIFE - A JOURNEY

5.2.2 HOPE

5.2.3 FRIENDSHIP

5.2.4 LONELINESS

5.2.5 FREEDOM

5.2.6 LABOUR CONDITIONS

5.2.7 RESIDENTIAL SEGREGATION AND INEQUALITIES

5.2.8 RACE RELATIONS

5.3 CONCLUSION

CHAPTER 5

THEME IN MOFOKENG'S WRITINGS

*It is not what is around us that counts but
what is within us.*

(J.W. Goethe)

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, we discuss theme, one of the important elements of any genre. First, we briefly look at what the concept theme entails.

Abrams (1981:111) observes that theme is sometimes used interchangeably with "motif", but the term is more usefully applied to a general claim, or doctrine, whether implicit or asserted, which an imaginative work is designed to incorporate and make persuasive to the reader.

For Holman and Harmon (1986:502) theme is a central or dominating idea in a work. They further point out that in nonfictional discourse, it may be thought of as the general topic of discussion, the subject of the discourse, the THESIS. In Poetry, Prose Fiction and Drama it is the abstract concept that is made concrete through its representation in Person, Action and Image in a work.

Pretorius and Swart (1982:4) say that theme is the interpretation of life as conveyed by the story as a whole. Functionally they find theme to be the strongest binding or cohesive factor in any novel or novelette. It is the central element which determines the unity of the story. All the events described should be related to the theme (or themes) to ensure unity in the story. The theme should run through like a golden thread.

Brown (in Makaryk, 1993:643) suggests that a better way of using "theme" today would be to view it as the meeting place of the semantic level of a literary work and the formal structural qualities such as rhythm and repetition. Theme might then be thought of as the semantic dimension of a work dispersed by and through its formal elements.

What emerges from these definitions is the importance of the meaning that theme has to convey to the reader. To succeed in the conveyance of the theme, the author has to present his story in a coherent manner to ensure the unity of his theme with other elements of the text.

5.2 THEMES IN MOFOKENG'S WORKS

We shall now look at the different themes found in Mofokeng's works, which broadly speaking, portray his vision of a good life wished by everyone whilst on a journey to life everlasting.

5.2.1 LIFE - A JOURNEY

Through this theme, Mofokeng reveals his general philosophy that life is a journey which flows like a river and cannot be divided like we divide time for our own convenience. The journey begins the day we are born and ends when we die. In this journey, we encounter different things, joyful and sorrowful ones.

Mmaditaolane says:

*.....Lefatsheng lena moo re teetsweng hare ke
nyakallo le maswabi ka mehla,.....*

(Senkatana:7)

*(.....On this earth..... where we are surrounded by
happiness and misery always,...)*

Mmaditaolane suggests further that happiness and misery go hand in hand when she says:

*Thabo e sa feleng ha se ya lena lefatshe. Thabo ya
ka le yona e fetoha maswabi hape.Na ekaba motho
a ka hlola a phema bohloko fatsheng lena mme a phela
nyakallong matsatsi ohle? Na bohloko bo tshwanetse ho
latela monate ka mehla?*

(Senkatana:13-14)

*(Everlasting happiness is not meant for this world.
My joy has again turned into sorrow..... Will one ever
evade pain on this earth and live happily for ever?
Should pain always follow happiness?)*

Normally, as people we bother ourselves about time and fail to achieve certain things because we think that we do not have the time, yet we can do a lot of things with the available time. In the essay Nako Mofokeng says:

*Ho ya phelang bophelo ba hae ka botlalo "Letsatsi e
ntse eka dilemo, mme dilemo eka letsatsi."*

(Pelong Ya Ka:49)

*(For the one who lives his life to the full "A day is like
a year and a year like a day")*

For one to live one's life in full, one has to go through hardships. Tsholo says:

Bophelo ke tsietsi le bothata, ke ntwana e sa feleng.

(Senkatana:42)

(Life is hardship, it is an unending war.)

The short story book **LEETONG** captures the theme appropriately. The title of the book itself represents this theme. Through the stories, Mofokeng is actually taking us on a long journey. The story **Mona Pela Tsela** is the beginning of the journey. The journey begins with Tumelo who decides to make the road his home. Mofokeng says:

A utlwa e ka ho na le se mmitsang hore a mpe a itelle tsela, e be motsamai wa ka mehla,.....A utlwa e ka o hohelwa ke boleleri, hore a thehe lehae la hae mona pela tsela.

(Leetong:18)

(He felt as though there was something calling him to take to the road, turn to be a man on a journey,....He felt attracted to a life of vagrancy, so that he could lay a foundation of his home here besides the road.)

This is exactly what Mofokeng is doing to us. He invites us to go with him in this journey, share with him his experiences and probably see things as he does. We accept the invitation with the hope that one day we will reach our destination as is the case with Tumelo. The storyteller remarks as follows:

....ka le leng o ne a tla fihla qetellong ya tsela, e mo tshedise dinoka, a yo fihla makgulong a matala, qetellong ya leeto, ya boleleri.....

(Leetong:19)

(He would one day reach the end of the road, cross the river, until he gets to the greener pastures, at the end of the journey of vagrancy.)

Truly, we do reach the end of the journey. Mofokeng captures the end of the journey in the story **Hae**. Having gone with him this long journey, (where we saw hope in **Mona Pela Tsela**, loneliness in **Bonnotshing**, friendship in **Ruthe**) at the end we are free because we have arrived at **HOME**. This is what is expected of the end of a journey. At the beginning of a journey one does not know what lies ahead, but when one reaches the end one should feel the freedom. When the man from the other side of the Zambezi dies miles and miles away from home we feel sorry for him, but reach his destination, he had! When he left home to come to Johannesburg he was in the middle of the journey which ended when he died at a TB hospital. The end is summed up in the following words:

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 arrived at the end of the journey, he was the Lord's visitor who was now out of problems where death and pain are feared - he had arrived at HOME - a true home.)

As Mofokeng talks about a journey, we also identify his religious faith. He strongly believes that at the end of the journey we find some rest, we depart from this world to go to the Almighty where we get lasting peace and rest.

Dintho tsohle di leetong

Di leetong, di leba ho Mmopi,

.....

Hae moreneng, Hae, phethahalong.

(Senkatana:106)

(Everything is on a journey

On a journey to the Creator,

.....

Home to the Lord, Home, everlasting.)

This strong religious faith brings us to the recurring theme of Hope found throughout Mofokeng's works.

5.2.2 HOPE

Mofokeng is a person who has hope. This comes out in his portrayal of Senkatana, where we find him hopeful. When Senkatana is faced with death he is hopeful that his subjects will protect him. When his mother warns him to look after himself, he says:

*... Mme tseo tsohle ha se tseo re ka di bonang, hoo rona
re ka ho etsang ke ho tshepa E, ho tshepa hore
botle bo tla hlola bobo dipelong tsa bona, hore ho loka
ho tla feta bokgopo, lerato le fete mona.*

(Senkatana:41)

*(.....Mother, that is not all that we can see, what we
can do is to have hope..... Yes, hope that good will
defeat the evil that is in their hearts, that justice will
beat wickedness, that love will win over jealousy.)*

Mofokeng believes that it is only through hope that one can survive the misery of looking at death in the eye. This kind of hope comes only from the Almighty. He remarks:

Ke efe ntho e ka fodisang motho kapele ha e se hona ho tseba hore bophelo ke mpho e kgolo e tswang ho Mmopi?

(Pelong Ya Ka:84)

(What is it that can cure a person quickly except to know that life is a gift that comes from the Creator.)

Mofokeng's hope makes him courageous enough to accept death, for he strongly believes that we are not here permanently. We all have to go through this life and at the end we must go back to the FATHER, OUR CREATOR. It is only through death that we can go back to him.

Lefu ke moromuwa, ke leqosa la Morena. Lona le romilwe ho re biletsa hae moo re tswang, kganyeng eo re dumelang ho yona.

(Pelong Ya Ka:21)

(Death is God's messenger It is sent to call all of us back home where we come from, to the light that we all believe in.)

Mofokeng demonstrates the courage and acceptance of death in the story **Ke Toro Feela** where he brings to the fore hardships that mine workers go through. Working underground, is one of the most dangerous jobs. But if one has no alternative, one takes the risk with the hope that nothing will happen. At the same time one knows that anything can happen. This acceptance emanates from one's knowledge that accidents are part of our lives. Mofokeng reminds us of this:

Ke mang ya phelang moo kotsi e leng siyo? Lefu ke karolo ya bophelo ba rona, ke karolo ya bona ya ho qetela, mme kotsi ke leqosa la lefu.

(Leetong:21)

(Is there anybody who lives where there is no danger? Death is part of our lives, it is the last part, and danger is death's messenger.)

Hope that we will one day, have true happiness and everlasting life gives us the strength to accept death when those we know and love die and leave this world.

When people missed the Indian man from the his vegetable corner in story **Panana le Tamati**, they concluded that he must have died. The service that this man provided, made him one of them, and the people had grown to love him. It was even more painful for those who knew him but missed his funeral. They consoled themselves saying: *he is now with the Creator.*

*Ra tseba hore o phomotse Moreneng ka ha a ne a
sebeleletsa Morena ka ho thusa bana ba Morena.*

*Ra tseba hore bophelo boo a neng a bo teletse ba bang
o bo fumane hape Haeng le sa feleng.*

(Leetong:39)

*(We know that he was resting with the Lord because he
worked for the Lord when he assisted the children of
God. We know that he had found the Life that he had
sacrificed for.)*

While he is hopeful, Mofokeng also believes that we are able to survive the trying moments in life because we have true friends. We turn now and smile at these friends.

5.2.3 FRIENDSHIP

The strong theme of friendship emerges regularly in Mofokeng's writings. He is probably inspired to talk about friendship because he finds it to be one of the qualities that build good human relations and assist in creating a harmonious atmosphere that people need so much. As a result, he is concerned about people who abandon and forget old friends when their status changes. This comes out clearly in the story Metswalle. To illustrate his point, he talks about an incident where friends meet after a long time. The one friend accuses her old school friend

that he did not reply to the letters she wrote after he left school. The friend's reason is that he could not reply because he did not consider himself as one of them anymore as he no longer attended school. The true friend is disappointed and she replies:

*.....Na ke ne ke le motswalle wa hao ha o sa le sekolong
feela, ha dintho di sa o eme hantle feela?Se jwalo
setswalle hase seo ke se kgathallang.*

(Pelong Ya Ka:52)

*(..... Was I your friend only when we were at school,
when things were still fine with you?..... I do not care
for that kind of friendship.)*

Impressed by such an answer, Mofokeng comments:

*E jwalo metswalle ya nnete. Se jwalo setswalle sa
nnete. Ha dintho di dubehile, ho le mahleke, eka lefatshe
le eme..... Ha ho le jwalo se a hlahela.*

(Pelong Ya Ka:52)

(True friends are like that. True friendship is like that. When the situation is bad and it's a mess, as though everything is at a stand still.... When the situation is like that it (true friendship) emerges.)

Mofokeng uses the story Ruthe to further illustrate his view about true friendship. He employs here people of different races to prove that true friendship knows no colour or race.

Rasebolai and Marie came to join Tjhere and Mmamosa on their farm and worked loyally for this couple for a very long time. Tjhere, the farmer died, but Rasebolai and his wife Marie continued to work and stay with Mmamosa. Mmamosa's son was not happy as he feared for his mother. On the other hand, Mmamosa was comfortable and relaxed. She had placed all her trust and hope on Rasebolai. Unfortunately, after some time, Rasebolai also dies and Mmamosa was now alone with Marie. This put more pressure on her son who was again bothered about his mother's safety. He wrote a letter and requested his mother to sell the farm and come to stay with them. His concern was based more on racial issues. He says in his letter:

"Ha re iketle ha re hopola hore ke wena e mosweu feela polasing moo."

(Leetong:43)

(We are uncomfortable about the thought that you are the only white person on the farm.)

But for Mmamosa this is not a problem. Marie had turned to be her greatest friend. When she does not relate the contents of the letter, Marie is not bothered.

O ne a tseba hore ha ho ka nngane, 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 (the contents of the letter) as they shared all their secrets.)

Only close and true friends share secrets.

Their relationship was no longer that of employer and employee. This comes out clearly when Mmamosa does not drink the second cup of coffee that she had asked for and Marie says:

"Mmamosa basadi ha a eso nwe kofi ela eo e leng kgale ke itlisitse, molato keng? Ka nnete o bapala ka nna! O ka

re ke o etsetse kofi athe ha o tlo e nwa? Ke hampe hobane ke hona o bapalang ka nna mantsiboya ana ke se ke tsofetse le wena o se o le molora ona!"

Leetong:43)

(Mmamosa, how come you did not drink the coffee I made for you? You are making a fool of me. You asked for a cup of coffee and yet you do not drink it? It is unfortunate that I turn to be a fool this evening when I am now so old, and you also are just as old.)

Mmamosa's reply confirms the fact that they are true, dear friends and she says:

"Tjhe Marie, mokgotsi wa ka, ha ke a ka ka eellwa. Ke ne ke nahana."

(Leetong:43)

(No Marie my friend, I did not realise this. I was thinking.)

Because of the strong bond that exists between them, Mmamosa could not imagine separating from Marie. To her that would mean ingratitude. Marie and her husband were trustworthy and had sacrificed all their lives for her family. She therefore decided to rather disappoint her son and stay with Marie. She gets solace

in the biblical text, from the book of RUTHE, where Ruthe refuses to part with her mother-in-law. Mmamosa identifies with the words:

*.....ke tla ya moo o yang, ke dule moo o dulang;
Jehova a nketse ka hore le hore, ha nka kgaohana le
wena ha e se ka lefu...*

(Leetong:50)

*(.....I will go with you wherever you go, I will stay with
you wherever you stay.....Let Jehova do as he pleases
if I should part with you, except through death)*

Mmamosa's decision and response to her son's concern and request, reveals her true personality. It is very difficult to detect one's personality unless through one's actions. Mofokeng says:

*Botho ba motho ke ntho e ipatileng, leha e le ntho eo re
ratang ho e tseba.*

(Pelong Ya Ka:4)

*(One's personality is something that is hidden, even
though we may love to know it.)*

This is why Marie felt lost when she heard the son's request as she did not know what Mmamosa's decision would be. As a result, she was overcome with joy when she heard Mmamosa's reply:

"..... Wena o bua ka hore ke nna feela e mosweu mona Thabong. Ke nnete ho jwalo empa o lebetse hore ho na le e mong mona polasing eo e seng e ka ke ngwaneso, eo monna wa hae e neng e se e ka ngwanabo ntatao Ke fumana ho le thata ho mo tlohela a le mong, mme ke tseba hantle ha a sa le mona ha ho tsietsi e ka ntlhahelang. Ke bolela Marie. Re tla dula le yena mona ho fihlela re arohangwa ke lefu....."

(Leetong:51)

(You are worried that I am the only white person here in Thabong. Yes, that is true but you have forgotten that there is my other sister here, whose husband was your father's brother....I find it difficult to leave her behind, and I definitely know that as long as she is with me, I am safe. I refer to Marie. I will stay with her until death do us part....)

We concur with Mofokeng that one's personality also plays a role in determining good relations. The above response as a whole reveals Mmamosa's personality. Mofokeng remarks thus about the revelation of one's personality:

*Diketso tsa motho ofe le ofe di tswa maikutlong a hae,
di tswa pelong ya hae. Ha re tsebe se leng botebong ba
maikutlo a hae, ha re se bone, empa re tseba re bile re
bona mesebetsi le diketso tse tswalwang botebong boo.*

(Pelong Ya Ka:7)

*(Anybody's actions come from his/her feelings, from
his/her heart. We cannot see that, but we do see from
his/her works and actions what comes from the bottom
of his/her heart.)*

Mofokeng does warn us though that at times, one goes through hardships alone with no friends to support you.

*Lefatshe lena le sehloho, ngwaneso. Mohlomong le
tsietsing ya hao, metswalle ya hao kapa bao o neng o
ithetsa ka hore ke metswalle ya hao, ba a o furalla.*

(Pelong Ya Ka:53)

(This is a cruel world my brother. Probably in your problems, your friends or those you thought were your friends turn away from you.)

His advice is that one should not despair. No matter how difficult it may be, there is always a friend that is willing to assist you in your burdens, and that is the Almighty. This thinking confirms our earlier remark that Mofokeng is a staunch religious person. He says:

*Ke re, ngwaneso, leha ho se motho ya o tellang letsoho
la hae hore o itshetlehe ka lona,..... ha o thotse o
imametse, o tla fumana matla, mefokolo ya hao o tla
utlwa e fela hobane o tla kopana le Motswalle e
mong.....Ke yena motswalle wa hao wa bongwaneng
ba hao,..... Motswalle wa bana, Motswalle wa bohle
le ha ba wele jwang kapa jwang;.....Setswalle sa Hae
ha se fele, ha se na phetoho.*

(Pelong Ya Ka:54)

*(I tell you my brother, even when there is no one to
extend his/her hand for you so that you can lean on
When you are quiet and are thinking, you will get
strength, your weakness will fade away because you
will meet another*

friend..... He is your friend from childhood..... Children's friend, A friend to everybody irrespective of how they may be;.... His friendship does not come to an end, it does not change.)

We shall now move on to look at what Mofokeng says about loneliness because this is one of the themes that are found in all three of his works.

5.2.4 LONELINESS

Through this theme Mofokeng teaches us that we can reap good fruits, even though at face value we have a negative attitude towards it.

In the essay Bodutu, he begins by giving us the negative side of loneliness. The narrator meets an old homeboy Diphapang in the train whom everybody in their village has forgotten about because he no longer visit home. His reason is that he feels bored and lonely at home. He does not see himself wasting his precious holidays as it happened during his last visit when two weeks of his holidays were very lonely. Hence his lack of interest to go and see his people.

In another incident, the narrator visits a friend and when he arrives, he finds his friend asleep because he is lonely. These two examples give us nasty experiences about loneliness.

This is so even with sick people. They become miserable when they have to remain home when everybody is gone, probably to work or to visit friends. When they are in that state they feel more sick and tired. But when friends and family arrive, you see a change as they start to talk and smile. When they act that way, one may even forget that they are in pain.

On the contrary, there are other very sick people who enjoy being alone and lonely. It is through this kind that Mofokeng finds loneliness to be a vehicle that assists people to do good. It looks like there is something that attracts people who are very very sick, or who are troubled spiritually and want to be alone.

When we examine **SENKATANA**, we identify another positive aspect of loneliness. When Senkatana realises that he is alone with his mother, he becomes concerned because he cannot stand the loneliness that they experience. It is this loneliness that prompts him to do something for his people. His mother is happy to have him because she now has peace as she has someone who keeps her company and consoles her after the misery and hardships that she had to go through after surviving the disaster that befell her people. On the other hand, Senkatana thinks differently. He poses this question to her mother:

Na ekaba rona ha re bolawe ke bodutu boo?

(Senkatana:9)

(Aren't we suffering from that loneliness?)

Mmaditaolane's view is different. She admits the fact that they do suffer loneliness, but to her that weighs less when compared to the pain that she felt. Senkatana is not convinced. If other people were there, there would be no feeling of loneliness. He is then motivated to rescue his people because he also wants to share his freedom with them. He succeeds, and that is an indication that one can at times benefit from the element of loneliness, just like the people that were saved by Senkatana.

We shall, at this point, examine some of Mofokeng's themes that concentrate on the sociopolitical aspects of the environment that shaped his philosophy and worldview.

5.2.5 FREEDOM

First of all we find that Mofokeng is bothered by the limited freedom that black people enjoyed generally. They could not stay where they liked and wished. Most of them were deprived of education. They do not have opportunities to develop economically, hence the majority of them are so poor. There are a lot of unfair labour practices and employers treat most of them (Blacks) like nothing. These are just but a few examples. This is why Blacks have always wanted to get their freedom back. This is likened to Senkatana, who when he focuses on his situation, and sees that it is not normal that he should be alone with his mother he says:

Mahlo a ka a bulehile, ke bona ho feta.

Ke tsoha ke bona botala bo se nang phello,

.....

A botle bo hlolang! Botle bo sa feleng!

.....

Botle bo bokale ha se mpho ya a le mong,

.....

Ke botle ba bohle!

(Senkatana:4-5)

(My eyes are now open, I can see more.

I wake up to see the green that has no end,

.....

Oh! how beautiful! Continuous beauty!

.....

Such beauty is not for one person,

.....

It's beauty that belongs to all!)

Mofokeng realised and saw that there are a lot of good things that Blacks have no access to. Instead people are divided and discriminated upon. Depressed by such circumstances, Senkatana cries out and says:

..... *A bomadimabe bo se nang ho lekanngwa!*

Bomadimabe bo re arohantseng!

(Senkatana:5)

(..... Oh! what a misfortune that cannot even be measured! Misfortune that has divided us!

It is this kind of reaction as seen from Senkatana that drives Mofokeng to protest and this is clearly demonstrated through Senkatana's words when he says:

Le rona re nyoretswe tokoloho,

Tokoloho ya ho thaba, ho nyakalla;

(Senkatana:6)

(We are also thirsty for freedom,

Freedom to be happy and to rejoice;)

When Senkatana realises that he is not free because some of his people are in the belly of Kgodumodumo, he feels obliged to rescue them. Deprivation of freedom is no different from being in the dark, because in such a situation, your movements are limited as you cannot see the way. No person enjoys being in darkness because we all want our freedom. Senkatana fully understands this longing that his people

crave for. Whilst he is not in the belly of Kgodumodumo, he feels he is no different from them. It is for this reason that he has no peace in his heart as it appears in the words:

Bohle re a hlora, re hloka kgotso;

Re laba-labela dintho tse fapaneng!

Ba hloretse tokoloho, ho phela tokolohong,

Ho boha tsohle tse kgahlisang, tse bonwang kganyeng.

(Senkatana:6)

(We all are lonely, we have no peace;

We long to have different things!

They long for peace, to live in peace,

To see all that is attractive, all that is seen in the light.)

The question that we all ask is: Who does not want to enjoy his freedom? This question is answered by Senkatana this way:

Bohle re bopetswe tokoloho, ke tokelo ya bohle;

Bohle ba bopetswe ho phela le ba bang,

Ho boha le bona tse thabisang,

Ho nyakalla le bona, ho phedisana le bona!

(Senkatana:6)

(We are all created to be free, it is a right for everyone;

All are created to live with others,

To see with others that which pleases the eye,

To rejoice with others, to live together with others!)

5.2.6 LABOUR CONDITIONS

It is mainly in the short stories where Mofokeng exposes some of the imbalances that are experienced in this country. For instance, in cases where people lack basic education, they are obliged to go for hard labour as is the case in the mining industry. As such, the employers (whites in particular) take advantage of such people. Mofokeng uses the story Ke Toro Feela to depict the hardships that black miners go through. We hear in this story about Tatolo and Molahlehi who work in the mines. A day before Molahlehi goes on leave, they are involved in an accident. Tatolo dies and Molahlehi stays at the hospital for about a month.

Mofokeng exposes this dangerous situation of the mines when he says:

Tjhe, mmeleng leha ba sa apara diaparo tse ngata ha ho re letho. Ona marantha ana a mmeleng ya bona a lekane hobane ka tlase ka kwana, mpeng ya lefatshe, ha se mofuthu ke tsietsi. Ha feela ba sireleditse maoto a bona le dihlooho tsa bona ho lokile.

(Leetong:20)

(Even though they did not have a lot of clothing on, it does not matter. The very torn clothes on their bodies is enough because down there underground, the heat is intolerable. As long as you have protected your feet and head it is fine.)

Who in his right senses can want to do a hard and dangerous job? What we find is that with people like the mine workers, they have no choice, because if they do not take the risk, their families will suffer more. All of them take the risk knowing very well the dangers that accompany the kind of job they get into. Tatolo refers to this knowledge and expresses his fears when he tells Molahlehi that it normally crops up in his mind that there is a possibility that he may never be able to go back home. As fate would have it, they get involved in an accident and Tatolo dies. After his release from hospital, Molahlehi recalls his last discussion with his friend, and he now understands what Tatolo's fears were, but at the same time he realises that they had no choice. Mofokeng captures Molahlehi's thoughts by saying:

A qala ho utlwisisa hore letswalo le neng le hlola le mo sehile (Tatolo) le ne le mmolella nnete. Empa ho ne ho se ka moo a ka etsang ka teng: O ne a tlamehile ho ya sebetsa.

(Leetong:28)

(He now started to understand why he (Tatolo) felt afraid. But he could not do otherwise: He had to go and work)

What is most depressing is that, despite the risks that the miners take, at the end of the day, there are no benefits. This point relates to the attitudes of the employers at some of the work places. The oppressive uncaring attitude of the white man comes to the fore when we look at the lillywhite mine management. To them, as soon as a worker becomes sick or disabled, he is of no use and must be sent back home empty handed. Empty handed in the sense that the money he gets is so little that it will only see him and his family through for the first few days. This leaves the victim with no hope to survive.

A fumana hore jwale ka yena o filwe tjheletenyana e seng kae, mme o romellwa hae hore a yo dula teng ditshiu tsa hae tsa ho qetela. Tjhelete ya hae e ne e sa lekana empa hoo ho ne ho sa tshwenye bao a neng a ba sebelletsa.

(Leetong:30)

(He was also given less money, and then sent back home to spend his last days on earth. His money was also not enough but that did not bother those whom he worked for.)

These are some of the conditions that people face everyday. We move on to look now at residential segregation and inequalities that people were exposed to in their lives.

5.2.7 RESIDENTIAL SEGREGATION AND INEQUALITIES

Apart from the hardships that black people were subjected to, Mofokeng further notes ways in which racial, rather than class factors determine the life style of the black man. This is in line with Tom Lodge's observation that:

Many petty-bourgeois Africans of the 1950's had intimate personal experience of the poverty and insecurity most people lived in. African townships, though socially heterodox in a number of ways, did not have the 'geography of class' that was and is a feature of white suburbia. (1983:92)

Mofokeng demonstrates the different life styles typical of blacks and whites by using the short story Hosasa. Molefi is a married man with three children. His wife is unemployed. Unlike with the whites, his work place is far from his home, and he must therefore leave home very early. He also comes back very late in the evenings. These awkward hours expose him to criminal violence. This is aggravated by fact that in the black townships there are no street lights. People use candles in their homes.

One evening, as Molefi was in the tram going back home, he is like awakened from his thoughts by the imbalances that he notices. Their tram is going through the houses of whites in the suburbs. Everything is bright here. There are lights in the streets and the houses are also electrified.

*A phahamisa mahlo a hae a sheba metse ya makgowa
eo ba fetang ho yona. A bona e le kganya hohle
diterateng le ka matlung ... hohle ho bonahala hore moo
teng nyakallo e teng.*

(Leetong:80)

*(He looked up and realised that they were going through
the white suburbs. There were lights in the streets and
in the houses. One could only see happiness all over.)*

As he alights from the tram, Molefi is confronted with darkness.

*Hoja a sheba a ka be a elelletswe hore o tsamaya
lefifing.*

(Leetong:82)

*(Had he concentrated, he would have realised that he
was walking in darkness.)*

Lefifing empa hara lerata

(Leetong:83)

(In darkness amidst the noise ...)

Lefifing le lekana, Molefi o sitilwe ho utlwa lerata le lekana

(Leetong:83)

(In such darkness, Molefi failed to hear the noise ...)

The repetition of the word lelifing contrast the bright streets and the houses found in the white suburbs. It is this kind of environment that promotes criminal violence. This we see when Molefi gets home late because he had to go via Teboho's place to ask for money he owed him and on his way back home is attacked by criminals, who leave him for dead. Fortunately he manages to arrive home and his wife applies first aid to his wounds. The misery that this attack has brought is reflected in Mmatsietsi's thoughts:

*.....Hosasa...hosasa, hosasa kante ho dipasa, hosasa
kante ho lengolo la kgafa, hosasa kante ho tjelete, le
ya ho ya mosebetsing;*

(Leetong:88)

(...Tomorrow....tomorrow, tomorrow without a pass book, tomorrow without a tax letter, tomorrow without money, even money to go to work;)

These are the results of a depressing, dark environment which is an easy hiding place for criminals. We now discuss the theme based on race relations.

5.2.8 RACE RELATIONS

Mofokeng also observes that race relations in this country are very strange. He uses the story Ruthe to illustrate his point.

Race relations in this country have been strained because of the apartheid system. But through this story we realise that race relations have not been negative throughout. The relation between Mmamosa and Marie is a case to reckon with. Their relation dates back from the time when Marie's family joined Mmamosa's while both were still young.

We learn that both families bore children more or less at the same time. Marie had two sons and Mmamosa had one son and two daughters. Their children then grew up together and played together. This is an indication of the good relations experienced by the two families. But in the same breath, Mofokeng highlights the fact that with the children, the relationship did not go a long way. As they grew older, they were assimilated into the abnormal situation of this country that says,

people belonging to different race groups, they cannot mix and relate except only under certain conditions like in the work place. Mofokeng's comment on this point is:

Ba hola, ba kena sekolo, ba qala ho kgesana ka ho ya ka moo ba fumaneng taba di eme ka teng ka ntle.

(Leetong:46)

(They grew up, went to school, but then following the situation as found in the country, they started to curse each other.)

Marie's children left school after standard three, worked on the farm for a while and thereafter left for Johannesburg, probably to go and work in the mines. Mmamosa's children on the other hand, completed Matric, got married and went their different ways. We learn that her only son went to stay and work in Johannesburg after his marriage. As far as the children were concerned, they found and accepted themselves as being different from each other because they did not belong to the same race. But when we look at the parents, as already pointed out under the discussion on friendship as theme, we find that they regarded themselves as one. Hence Mmamosa and Marie's friendship grew stronger and stronger.

5.3 CONCLUSION

As we go through Mofokeng's works, we find that there is unity of ideas flowing throughout all the three books. As a result, his main theme revolves around life and all its intricacies.

CHAPTER 6

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL MODE

6.1 INTRODUCTION

6.2 MOFOKENG THE SELF-REFERENT

6.3 MOFOKENG THE TEACHER

6.4 MOFOKENG THE SUBJECT

6.5 MOFOKENG THE SOCIAL PHILOSOPHER

6.6 CONCLUSION

CHAPTER 6

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL MODE

"Every great work of fiction is simply an interior life in novel form."

(Francois Mauriac, 1937)

6.1 INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of this work, we set out to investigate the autobiographical mode in the writings of Machabe Mofokeng. We pointed out at that stage that Mofokeng had written masterpieces of fiction in the form of drama, short stories and essays. This is his oeuvre. We mentioned further that Mofokeng's fictional magnificences were underpinned by a strong autobiographical pillarage.

In the preceding chapters we presented analyses of fictional aspects of Mofokeng's writings. The purpose of this pen-ultimate chapter is to grapple with those autobiographical bits and pieces which hinge on the periphery of his literary output almost unnoticed. We shall indeed, in this chapter, focus on a writing as a moment of life that it recounts; a writing struggling to draw a meaning from that life, a writing that is itself a meaning. The meaning we are struggling to extract from Mofokeng's writings is both fictional and non-fictional.

Let us nibble a tiny bit from **DOWN SECOND AVENUE** to illustrate what we mean. On page thirty-two of this novel, Mphahlele presents a landscape that is confused, chaotic and numb. He says of Marabastad:

Marabastad was an organised rubble of tin cans. The streets were straight, the houses rusty as ever on the outside, as if they thought they might as well crumble in straight rows if that were to be their fate. Each house had a fence of sorts. The wire always hung limp, the standards always swaying in drunken fashion.

While Marabastad is presented as lifeless on the outside, there is a deeper meaning on the inside that is strongly conveyed in the autobiographical voice. This is the inner meaning of humanity (botho), of friendship (setswalle), of love (lerato), of caring (tlhokomedi). Mofokeng's real lived life abounds in the life-giving qualities just mentioned. Non-fictional and familiar as these qualities are, he defamiliarizes them and gives them a fresh look.

In presenting himself as the subject (in part) in his writings, Mofokeng must have known that the present differs from the past and that both past and present will never be repeated in the future. In a narrative in which the narrator takes his own past as meaning, the individual mark of style assumes particular importance.

The body of this chapter will focus on Mofokeng **THE MAN**.

6.2 MOFOKENG THE SELF-REFERENT

As Mofokeng talks about himself in his works, we the readers are privileged because we get an opportunity to know him. Eakin (1992:3) observes (and we agree) that:

[Autobiographical writing] is nothing if not a referential art, and the self or subject is its principal referent.

The self-referential nature of autobiographical writings makes it necessary for them to be read differently from other kinds of texts. How differently one might ask? Since reference lies at the heart of the autobiographical mode, knowledge of the self (the writer in relation to the character) becomes a prerequisite.

This must be so given the fact that the writer, the self and the character, form the subject of the narrative.

Barthes takes this argument further and says:

Writing myself, I myself am my own symbol, I am the story which happens to me: freewheeling in language, I have nothing to compare myself to; and in this

movement, the pronoun of the imaginary, literally immediate: essential danger for the life of the subject: to write on oneself may seem a pretentious idea; but it is also a simple idea: simple as the idea of suicide.

(in Eakin 1992:56)

Folkenflik (1993:215) on the other hand, observes that the placement of self behind one's back makes of the true self an other, for though we are not normally present to ourselves, yet we can in some sense see ourselves by means of a mirror. This confirms Jacques Lacan's claim that in the infant, there is a "mirror stage" in which the infant gains a sense of self by seeing itself in a mirror (cf Peterson:1986).

In Mofokeng's works, the self as principal referent is revealed very subtly. In tracing his life, we do find a close link between his "heroes and himself". As we read through his works, we see in them a moment in which the subject perceives himself as another self. He himself says:

Seo o leng sona ke se senolwang ke diketso tsa hao.

Pelo ya hao e hona ka hare ho wena, e emela bokahare

ba hao; ke botho ba hao, bowena.

(Pelong Ya Ka:3)

(Your actions reveal what you are. Your heart inside represent you; your personality, your very being.)

Gusdorf reiterates this by saying:

"No one can know better than I what I have thought what I have wished; I alone have the privilege of discovering myself from the other side of the mirror - nor can I be cut off by the wall of privacy"

(1980:35)

On seeing his reflection in a mirror (the mirror in question here is the life mirror), Mofokeng invites us to aspects of his personal life, to look and see together with him that mirror image that he is, and says:

Pelo e nngwe e re ke thole, ke se ke ka qala batho ba ituletse, ka ba senyetsa nako ka mafela, ba tla ba tloha ba nthohaka mme ka ho etsa jwalo ba tla ba mpakela maswabi.

E nngwe e re ke qoqe ka tse leng pelong ya ka ka mona, ke e fokoletse morwalo, e se ke ya teba e mpe e be kgotso; mohlomong ha ke qetile ke tla ba pelo-tshweu.

(Pelong Ya Ka:4)

(My one wish is to keep quiet and not bother people lest I find myself insulted and regret the consequences thereafter. My other wish is to say all that is in my heart and relieve myself so that I can have peace afterwards.)

With an illustration from the drama **SENKATANA**, we shall show how Senkatana the hero represents Mofokeng the author. Mofokeng tells the story about Senkatana, yet he enacts it as a protagonist.

.....

Bohle re a hloro, re hloka kgotso;

Re laba-labela dintho tse fapaneng!

Ba hloretse tokoloho, ho phela tokolohong,

Ho boha tsohle tse kgahlisang, Tse bonwang kganyeng;

.....

(Senkatana:5-6)

.....

We all are miserable, we have no peace;

We desire different things!

We long for freedom, to live freely,

To see all that is beautiful and bright;

.....)

The monster (Kgodumodumo) can take quite a number of shapes. It may symbolize poverty, deprivation, ignorance, injustice, darkness, captivity and so on depending on the investigator's point of departure and emphasis.

The interviews we conducted taught us that Mofokeng came from a poor family.. We learn that despite their poverty coupled with the fact that the parents were illiterate, they realized the importance of education. When Mofokeng passed Standard Six, he hadn't applied for admission to any secondary school. Fortunately, a certain Oriel Leputla, a student teacher at Stofberg Gedenkskool at the time, took him along and managed to register him in Form One. He then continued with his studies until he completed his B.A degree from Fort Hare University. On completion, Mofokeng looked back and saw that he had to rescue his brothers from the monster, which in this case is illiteracy. Had it not been for his parents, who sacrificed for him, even though they had nothing, he also would have been in the dark. He could not have peace of mind knowing that his brothers were not as fortunate as he was. They needed his assistance, and he was there for them.

Senkatana was not happy to be alone with his mother who is a source of knowledge and education. He could not have peace knowing that his folk, his kind were in deep trouble. He says to his mother:

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Senkatana was not happy to be alone with his mother who is a source of knowledge and education. He could not have peace knowing that his folk, his kind were in deep trouble. He says to his mother:

"E mme, ha ke kgotso. O bua nnete. Nka ba kgotso jwang batho ba heso, mofuta wa heso, madi a heso a le tsietsing, mahlomoleng, bothateng?"

(Senkatana:15)

(Yes Mother, I am not happy. You are right. How can I have peace when my people, my kind, my blood are in trouble, in misery in hardship?)

Mofokeng's brother Ralephele says:

"Tsietsi e kgolo e ne e le bofuma, feela Machabe o ile a nka boikarabelo ba ho pepa bana babo."

(In personal interview)

(The greatest problem was poverty, but Machabe took responsibility to carry his people.)

Just like Senkatana he carries his people on his shoulders. As always, this noble deed is not without a great price. Both Senkatana and Machabe paid dearly for their selflessness.

Senkatana's bravery paved the way for him to climb the ladder. Despite this rise, Senkatana remained a humble person. To him all people are important including those who were plotting to kill him. Maswabi says this about him:

.....Borena ha se tlhompho. Tlhompho ke seo borena bo se fumanang ka baka la seo bo leng sona. Borena ke mosebetsi, Ya sebeletsang setjhaba, ya se lopollang ditsietsing, ya lehang ho se phemisa dikotsi, ya behileng boiketlo le thabo ya setjhaba pelong ya hae, eo ke yena ya lokelwang ke borena.

(Senkatana:26-27)

(..... Kingship is not respect. Respect is what kingship attains because of what it is. Kingship is service..... He who serves his nation, who frees them from trouble, who puts his people's happiness and joy in his heart, that is the one who should be king.)

Like Senkatana, Mofokeng was a down to earth person. His humbleness is reflected in Ralephele's words:

"E ne e le motho ya bonolo. O ne o ke ke wa tseba le hore o rutehile, o ne a ikokobeditse. O ne a kopana habonolo le batho ntle le kgethollo."

(In personal interview)

(He was a soft humble person. You would never think that he was educated, he was down to earth. He was able to mix easily with people.)

But for Mmadiepetsane, Senkatana deserves no special treatment. Hence her desire to harm him. This kind of behaviour reflects the irony of life. Mboni refers to this irony when he states:

*Ho madimabe ya phelelang ba bang,
Ya ba sebeletsang, ya ba lopollang matshwenyehong;
Ke yena ya tla jara mathata a bona,
Mathata ao a ba lopolotseng ho ona.
Ke yena eo ba tla mo hloela setumo sa hae:
Hona hobane a ba lopolotse -
Ke yona teboho eo ba tla mo neela yona.*

(Senkatana:17)

(Woe unto one who lays down his life for others. Who serves them and redeems them. He will bear their burden, the burden he has freed them from. They will hate him precisely for freeing them. That will be his reward.)

When we look at Mofokeng, we find that as far as his family is concerned, he is a great person. All have high regard for him. On the other hand, whilst doing good for his family, his life with his wife suffered. His close relationship with his mother might also have been a cause for concern. After his marriage, Mofokeng's mother moved in with them at Western Native Township, while his father worked in Olifantsfontein. She might have been possessive of her son, and as a result got too much in control even though Mofokeng was a married man. It is not easy to let go. Mmaditaolane says this to her son Senkatana:

Ya nang le ntho ya bohlokwa, ntho e leng pelong ya hae, ya jwalo ha a tsebe kgotso ha e se feela ha seo a se ratang se le pontsheng ya hae. Ha se le sio pelo e bala-bala ho fihlela se fihla hape.

(Senkatana:8)

One who has something precious in her heart, cannot know peace unless that precious thing is in front of her eyes. Her heart will not rest until it comes back.)

Probably, as his flaw, Mofokeng took it for granted that his wife understands, as we know that in African culture, communal life takes the upper hand. But married the western way, Papadi might have interpreted their marriage differently. This would then point to a clash of beliefs. The burden might have been too much for Papadi, for she exclaims:

Mofokeng e ne le motho ya lokileng ntle le hore lapa labo le ne le kene kene haholo bophelong ba rona.

(in personal interview)

(Mofokeng was a kind hearted person except for the fact that his family interfered a lot in our life.)

6.3 MOFOKENG THE TEACHER

In revealing himself, we see Mofokeng as a selfless person. His selflessness does not only go for his family. We learn that he did not only assist his brothers financially to reap the fruits of education, but he also extends his helping hand to the nation as a whole. Mofokeng, through his works, also educates us the readers, and this education is both intellectual and spiritual. It runs through all of his works.

His very act of taking his brothers along, rescuing them from the darkness of illiteracy teaches us that if you are fortunate and are able to succeed in whatever you do, do not forget to help those who are less fortunate. This is confirmed by Seboni who says:

Ho lehlohonolo ya itellang ba habo,

Ya beang bophelo ba hae kotsing

.....

Ya phelelang ba bang ke yena ya tla phela,

Ya iphelelang ke yena ya tla shwa.

(Senkatana:13)

(Blessed is the one who sacrifices for his people,

Who puts his life in danger

.....

The one who lives for the others will live,

The one who lives for himself will die.)

Mofokeng's teachings touch more on human nature. As people, we are different and as such behave differently. His knowledge and understanding of this important fact is revealed in the words:

Botho ba motho ke ntho e ipatileng, leha e le ntho eo re ratang ho e tseba. Re batla ho bo tseba hobane Ha re ne re bo tseba Re tla utlwisisana mme diphapang di tla ba siyo. Ke hore re ne re tla hloka dintwa malapeng, dintwa metseng, dintwa mahareng a ditjhaba. Mme hoo ke e nngwe taba.

(Pelong Ya Ka:4)

Personality is something that is hidden even though it is something that we would love to know. We want to know it because If we know it We shall be in a position to understand each other and there would be no clashes. That is to say, there would be no fights in the homes, in society and none among the different nations. But then that is something else.)

Mmadiepetsane's intention to kill Senkatana is mainly aimed at hurting Mmaditaolane, even though he is innocent. Here Mofokeng reminds us about the words from the Bible:

Ke tla otlala bana ka bokgopo ba batswadi ba bona.

(I will punish the little ones because of the sins of the parents.)

When Mmaditaolane hears that there are people out to kill her son, she tries to alert Senkatana and to advise him that he should be careful. To her surprise, Senkatana assures her that there is nothing to fear and he says:

.....Ha eba ba sa mpatle ba tla mpolaya; ha eba ba mpatla ba ke ke ba mpolaya, ba tla mpoloka. Tshireletso ya nnete ke e tswang dipelong tsa bona, se tla ntshireletsa ke lerato leo ba nthatang ka lona. Hoo rona re ka ho etsang ke ho tshepa. E, ho tshepa hore botle bo tla hlola bobele dipelong tsa bona, hore ho loka ho tla feta bokgopo, lerato le fete mona. Re phela ka kgotso lefatsheng Tshepo, mme ke yona matshediso a rona, ke yona e tla re matlafatsa.....

(Senkatana:41-42)

(..... If they do not want me, they will kill me; if they want me they will protect me, The best protection comes from their hearts, what will protect me is their love for me. What needs to be done, is to have hope. Yes, to hope that good will conquer evil in their hearts, that justice will defeat cruelty, love will overcome jealousy..... We shall live in peace in this world. Hope, mother, is our consolation, only hope will strengthen us.)

The strong teaching from these words also lend heavily on Mmaditaolane, who admits and says:

Ke a utlwa ngwana me; ke a utlwisisa ntjhanyana.

(Senkatana:42)

(I hear you my child; I understand you my son.)

Mofokeng does not believe in revenge. In all that happens, he gathers his strength from his faith and trust in the Almighty. In his essay Metswalle his advice to us the readers is:

.....Ha o ikutlwa o imelwa ke morwalo wa bophelo eka o tla wa, ha o setse o le mong to, hona bonngweng boo, ha o thotse o imametse, o tla fumana matla, mefokolo ya hao o tla utlwa e fela hobane o tla kopana le Motswalle e mong.

(Pelong Ya Ka:54)

(.....When you feel that the burden is too much, and you feel as though you are about to fall, you are alone, when you are quiet and deep in thoughts, you will gather strength, your problems will subside because you will meet another Friend.)

Senkatana is accused by some of his people that he is lenient in his sentences to those who have committed crimes. Through this act Mofokeng teaches us that what comes first is reconciliation, for Senkatana answers to this accusation thus:

Se hlokahalang ke hore batho ba sokolohe mekgweng ya bona, moqosi a kopanngwe le moqosuwa, ba tshwarelane, ba utlwane hape. Kahlolo e shapang ka thupa feela e sa bontshe tsela ha e na thuso, yona.

(Senkatana:59)

(What needs to happen is that people should repent, bring together the complainant and the accused so that they can forgive each other and be on good terms again.

The application of heavy sentences alone is useless.)

Answering the question that those who commit crime seem not to interpret that as a way to build reconciliation, but instead, take that as an advantage to their continued criminal way of life, Mofokeng teaches that it may appear like that on the surface but what happens inside one's heart is more important. Senkatana says:

Tlase botebong ba pelo tsa rona ho na le lebone le sa timeng, ho na le thotse e sa shweng, e ntseng e ka mela neng le neng. Bone leo ke letswalo la e mong le e mong wa rona. Kahlolo ya nnete ke e hlakisisang kganya ya bone leo, e hodisang matla a thotse eo.

(Senkatana:60)

(Deep down in our hearts there is a lamp that does not go off, there is a seed that does not die, that can grow at any time. That lamp is everyones' conscience. A true sentence brightens the light of the lamp, helps to strengthen the seed to grow.)

Mofokeng strongly believes that one's conscience is one's guiding principle, for through it, one will always know the truth. Senkatana confirms this this way:

Tseo ke di emelang, ha se tse ka shwang, mme. Di ke ke tsa e-shwa le kgale, ha ho ya ka di bolayang. Bobe bo ke ke ba hlola botle le kgale!

(Senkatana:87)

(What I stand for mother, will never die. They will never ever die for nobody can kill them. Evil will never overcome good!)

Senkatana's mother also emphasises the importance of responding to one's conscience when she realises that Senkatana begins to doubt himself and feels as though everybody has turned against him. He even doubts if it had been a good decision to rescue his people. His mother's advice is:

..... Ha o e nahanne, letswalo la hao le o eletsa, o le mamele hobane bothateng bofe kapa bofe ha ho mothusi ya ka fetang eo.

(Senkatana:88)

(..... When you have thought it over, and your conscience advices, listen to it because in every difficulty there is no one that could assist more than your conscience.)

Mofokeng repeatedly teaches us about good and bad, and he strongly believes and emphasises the fact that good will always triumph. As a result, for the one who does good, his name will never die. Maswabi says:

*Senkatana! la hae lebitso ha se le ka shwang le yena. Ha
o a fedisa lebitso la hae, o le
pheditse, o le file matla, e tla ba la ka
mehla. Tseo a neng a di lwanela ha se tse
fetang, ha se tsa kajeno feela, ke tsa mehla yohle.*

(Senkatana:117)

*(Senkatana! his name will never die. You have not
destroyed his name, you have made it live, you have
strengthened it, it will
always be there. What he fought for does not go by, is
not only for today but is for ever and ever.)*

Mofokeng's belief and conviction is that true happiness is found where you serve your people for no gain. The old Indian businessman in Panana le Tamati, found his happiness in the selling of vegetables to the people around him, and not so much in large gains and profits.

*Lena leqheku le ne le fumane tsela e nngwe ya ho
fumana nyakallo O ne a thaba ha ba reka hoba hoo
ho ne ho mmontsha hore mosebetsi wa hae wa hlokeha.*

(Leetong:37)

(This old man had found another way of rejoicing.....

He was happy when people were buying because that was an indication that his services were needed.)

This teaches us that at times we should be prepared to do good for others and offer ourselves for nothing. Sacrifice does pay because the fulfilment you get brings true happiness and satisfaction. Mofokeng was himself, a happy and satisfied man. His life had been fulfilled. To have been able to uplift his family was a great achievement. As an example, one of his brothers Peter, later qualified as a lawyer and at the time of his death was a magistrate in Maseru, Lesotho. To encourage us and to give us strength to strive for the good he refers to the Indian man whom people had not seen for some time and nobody knew what had happened:

Ra tseba hore o phomotse moreneng ka ha a ne a sebeletsa Morena ka ho thusa bana ba Morena. Ra tseba hore bophelo boo a neng a bo teletse ba bang o bo fumane hape haeng le sa feleng.

(Leetong:39)

(We know that he is resting with the Lord because he worked for God when he assisted God's children. We know that through sacrifices, he now has an everlasting life.)

Through this discussion, we have been able to know the teacher closely and we have seen how he used the pen to introduce himself to us.

6.4 MOFOKENG THE SUBJECT

Gusdorf (1980:35) believes that the autobiographical writer, gives himself the job of narrating his own history; what he sets out to do is to reassemble the scattered elements of his individual life and to regroup them in a comprehensive sketch.

As he reassembles the scattered elements of his individual life, we learn different things about Mofokeng. To mention a few we find that:

- (a) he was a sick man, suffering from an incurable disease at the time - TB.
- (b) he lived under poor conditions.
- (c) he was a scholar.
- (d) he was a socialite.

Concentrating on the first observation, we come to know about his TB problem in the story **Hae**. First of all we notice his use of the first person narrator. In this story he tells us about his experience and that of other people suffering from this disease. We hear about an imaginative man who had come to Johannesburg to look for greener pastures. His home was on the other side of the Zambezi river. Whilst working on the farms, he contracts TB. His employer summons a doctor who confirms that he has this terrible disease and orders that he be taken to

hospital. At the hospital he realizes that he is not the only one suffering from TB, but all the people in that hospital have the same problem. This man was not so much bothered by his cough until his employer showed some concern. Even then, as he was taken to hospital, he was still not aware that this is a serious matter. He could not understand why people looked at him with an expression of sympathy and pity.

*Le kajeno o ne a sa ntsane a hopola ho sarelwa ho neng
ho le sefahlehong sa monga hae*

(Leetong:116)

*(Even today he still thought of how miserable his
employer was on that day*)

*Empa kahodimo ho tsena kaofela a makatswa ke ho
bona mahlong a bona kaofela pontsho ya hore ba mo
utlwela bohloko ha e le mona a le hara bona.*

(Leetong:115)

*(On top of all that he was surprised to see that
everybody sympathised with him as he was now one of
them.)*

One consoling fact was that some people become better and are discharged whilst some die. He has the hope that he also will be cured. Unfortunately he dies.

Mofokeng was also in and out of Rietfontein hospital because of TB. As this was an incurable disease at the time he had to be admitted now and again. As a result, he had to come to terms with the fact that sooner or later he would die. He narrates saying:

*Re bafeti lefatsheng mona, mme re a le rata, Re mohau
hobane re se na nako e lekaneng ya ho phela ho lona,
lefatshe lena le bopetsweng rona ke Mmopi wa tsohle.
(Pelong Ya Ka:8)*

*(We love this earth, even though we are sojourners. It is
unfortunate that there is not enough time to live on this
earth that the Father had created for us.)*

The thought that one has contracted this killer disease is a terrible experience. It looks like when one is in this kind of situation, one feels lonely and think that people have turned their backs against one. Mofokeng should have suffered from loneliness, as he repeatedly talks about loneliness in his works. After the long journey of Motsamai and Sello in the story **Bonnotshing**, they decide to rest right there in the wilderness. It is at this stage when everything is quite and one's thoughts wonder that Motsamai says:

..... eka mahlo a ntseng a lebetse bohle ba hole le mahae, bohle ba lahlehileng; mahlo a tshedisang ba leng maswabing, mahlo a tletseng matla a ho tshedisa ba furaletsweng ke metswalle ya bona, ba seng ba fellwa ke tshepo.

(Leetong:96)

(.....These looked like eyes which watch all those far from home, all those who were lost; all those who are disappointed, eyes that console those whose friends have turned against, those who now loose hope.)

We come to realise that Mofokeng suffered from loneliness as his condition deteriorated. At this point we understand that he was not lonely because friends and family were not visiting him often, but rather because his condition had deteriorated.

This comes out clearly in the essay Bodutu.

*E mong hape o a kula. Yena o se a kulela ho shwa,
O rata haholo ha a ipaqametse a le mong, a shebile marulelong, kapa matsoho a hae a bapala ka boya ba dikobo. O rata ha a le mong hona bonnotshing moo ba bangata ba llang ka ho bolawa ke bodutu teng.*

(Pelong Ya Ka:14)

(Another one is now sick. He is about to die, He enjoys resting alone, looking up on the roof, or playing with the wool of the blankets. He loves it when he is alone, where others would complain and say it is boring.)

To Mofokeng, it is at this time that one gets the opportunity to meditate, hence he says:

*Felleng ke hona moo matla a sebele a fumanwang teng
hobane ke moo re nang le hona ho itlhahloba, ho itekola,
ho itjheba mehlala, ho lekodisisa metsamao ya rona, ho
bona mefokolo ya rona, ho bona moo re kgelohang tsela
teng, ho bona moo re iketsetsang mathata a rona ao re
atisang ho nahana hore a bakwa ke batho ba bang.
Felleng re na le hona ho mamela matswalo a rona, re na
le hona ho a utlwa hantle hobane re le haufi le Mmopi
wa rona ha re le teng.*

(Pelong Ya Ka:15)

*(It is in the wilderness where we gather strength
because it is here where we examine ourselves, look at
our ways of living, examine thoroughly our footsteps,
see our weak points, see where we go wrong, discover*

where we create problems for ourselves. It is in the wilderness where we are in a position to listen to our conscience and can thoroughly obey because we are nearer our Creator.)

On the other hand we identify this as a premonition. It looks like Mofokeng was preparing his family and friends about what was to come sooner than later. As he talks about death in the essay Lefu, he remarks:

Bohle re a teneha ha ntho efe kapa efe e sa fele. Re lakatsa phetoho. Leha ntho e le monate jwang kapa jwang, ha re batle hore e be ya ka mehla. Ke hantle hore re tenehe. Dintho tsohle di na le qalo le qetelo. Le bona bophelo ba rona .

(Pelong Ya Ka:21)

(We all get annoyed when something does not come to an end. We always wish that there be change. Despite the fact that we enjoy something, we do not want to have it dragging on. It is good to be annoyed. Everything has a beginning and an end. Even our own lives.)

But as a person with a good heart, Mofokeng realises that we also get hurt and become sad as we go along with him in his suffering. At this point he concentrates on us and shares with us his courage. That gives us his other side. Mofokeng is a staunch christian, and it is in his belief in God that he gathers his strength. He reminds us that this is a passing world. We need to remember always that we are not here permanently.

The title of his collection of short stories, **LEETONG** is taken from Hymn 176 in the Sione hymns:

Re leetong, re lebile

Ha eso, moreneng.....

Re mathela kgotsong

E hlokwang lefatsheng,

Re be re fihle phomolong,

Ha eso, Moreneng.

(We are on a journey, heading

Home, to the Lord.....

We are running towards peace

Which is non-existent here on earth,

Until we get rest,

Home, in the Lord.)

We should then be like Tumelo who when he found himself along the road with no family or home was still satisfied because he knew that he will one day go to his permanent home, to the Lord, the Almighty. Mofokeng says:

Mohlomong ho ne ho le jwalo hobane ka le leng o ne a tla fihla qetellong ya tsela, e mo tshedise dinoka, 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)

(Perhaps it was like that because he would one day get to the end of the road, cross over the river, until he gets to the greener pastures, at the end of the journey, of vagrancy, be home to his mother and father, yes, even his FATHER, the Creator of all that lives, be at peace that is everlasting.)

6.5 MOFOKENG THE SOCIAL PHILOSOPHER

We also find Mofokeng's works to carry with them some political connotation of the situation of the country of his birth. This says to us that he had been influenced by the political atmosphere. This makes him no exception as this

surfaces a lot among black writers. This fact tallies with Olney's (1980:8) observation that the lesson that South African autobiographies teach is a political and social one (cf Mphahlele 1959, Matshikiza 1985, Ramphele 1996).

We could then say that black South Africans respond the same as with other blacks elsewhere as seen from Rosenblatt's (1980:171) comment that there is argument in black autobiography. He notices two elements that are found to be constant in bringing about the argument and these are:

- (a) the expressed desire to live as one would choose, as far as possible.
- (b) the tacit or explicit criticism of external national conditions that also as far as possible, work to ensure that one's freedom of choice is delimited or non-existent.

Kunene (1991:37) is also of the same opinion. He cites Gordimer who says:

Black writers choose their plots, characters and literary styles; their themes choose them.

Kunene finds this to mean that the themes arising out of contemporary milieu in South Africa stare the writer in the face daring him to ignore them. If he does, he will be irrelevant to the human drama enacted daily in this country. If he accepts the challenge, he inevitably situates his characters within the daily trials that surround the black person's life.

Nkosi concurs with Kunene and observes that with very few exceptions, the literature of Southern Africa is wholly concerned with the theme of struggle and conflict. He sees therefore the literature of Southern Africa as committed to the notion that certain "tasks" are the legitimate function of socially responsible writers. Protest, commitment, explanation: South African readers and critics expect these qualities from their authors; but the nature of this expectation is itself controlled by what is perceived to be proper relationship between literature and commitment, between truth and art.

Mofokeng is therefore no exception. As a black South African, who was affected by the political situation of the country, he felt obliged to bring to the fore the conditions and imbalances to which other black fellows were subjected. His works are also a testimony to the human drama, as Kunene puts it. We can for instance, correlate lack of opportunities for Blacks from the meaning of the plot to kill Senkatana. Seeing how his family was economically deprived, Mofokeng felt that this was a plot to kill the black nation morally as a whole. Fortunately for him, the plot fails because despite the conditions under which he lived he manages to be educated and is able to rescue his family. This is an achievement that goes beyond his brothers' education. We learn from Ralephele that after his death, they (the brothers) contributed towards the education of Mofokeng's children. Just as Senkatana's name lived on even after he was killed, Mofokeng's also lives on.

Senkatana! la hae lebitso ha se le ka shwang le yena.

(Senkatana! his name will never die.)

Today, Mofokeng's two children are successful in their respective careers. His son Mmone is a medical practitioner and has put up a medical centre in one of the locations in Bloemfontein. His daughter Mantoa is a lawyer. Definitely this has kept his name alive. Secondly, through his works which are loaded with excellent teachings, his name lives on.

When we look at how Mofokeng interacted with white people in South Africa, we see him observe that even though there were discriminatory laws that separated people from different races, we do find that there were white people who considered black people as human beings. This is the case with the farmer that his father worked for. We learn from Papadi that when the farmer realised that Mofokeng was intelligent, he allowed his parents to educate him instead of following the normal procedure where at a certain age the child had to leave school and begin to work in the farm together with the parents. As it is known, the white farmers were and some are still not interested in the well being of blacks. To them it is not important that a black child can go to school and be educated. Hence the ugly child labour practices. Mofokeng appreciates the fact that their farmer was considerate and not selfish.

It is not only the farmer who made an impact on Mofokeng about the positive attitudes and relations. We have also established that there was a certain Miss Marie who took great interest in Mofokeng. She was his teacher at Stofberg College. Later on she went to stay in Bloemfontein with her relatives and continued to keep contact with Mofokeng. This is how Papadi, Mofokeng's first wife, came to know her. She also invited them to her place after their marriage. It is not surprising then that we meet Marie (the teacher) in the form of Mmamosa in Ruthe and Marie (the domestic worker) named after Marie (the teacher).

The meaning of good relations across the colour line in Mofokeng's works is also shared by President Mandela in his autobiography - **LONG WALK TO FREEDOM**.

He says:

At Wits, I met many people who were to share with me the ups and downs of the liberation struggle, and without whom I would have accomplished very little.

Many white students went out of their way to make me feel welcome.

(1994:84)

Among the white people whom Mandela is grateful to are Joe Slovo, Ruth First, George Bizos, Bram Fischer who was from a distinguished Afrikaner family, political radicals Tony O'Dowd and Harold Wolpe, Jules Browde and his wife who were both liberal champions.

Mofokeng's encounter with different people of other races does acquire an experience that embraces a whole life. Further insight into the many occurrences around him, both socially and politically contributes towards the enormous teachings we benefit from his works and the meanings that fill our brains with deserving knowledge.

6.6 CONCLUSION

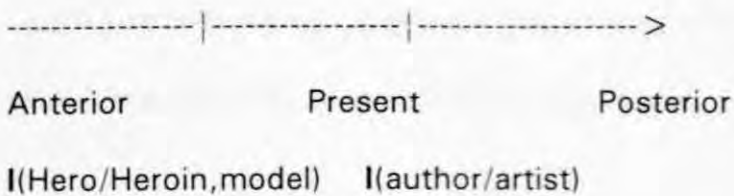
The above discussion cannot agree with Gusdorf (1980:30) more that:

The man who takes the trouble to tell of himself knows that the present differs from the past and that it will not be repeated in future; he has become more aware of differences than of similarities; given the constant change, given the uncertainty of events and of men, he believes it a useful and valuable thing to fix his own image so that he can be certain it will not disappear like all things in this world.

Hence Starobinski's observation that autobiographical writings assume a double role: at once a deviation of time and of identity (1980:79). His remark on this point is that:

One would hardly have sufficient motive to write an autobiography had not some radical change occurred in his life.

Howarth (1980:87) argues that although the character and the author are the same person, artist and model, they can still be distinguished from the same name, but not the same time and space. It is necessary to retrace the genesis of the present situation, the antecedents of the present moment, since the deviation that establishes the autobiographical situation is double. It is at once a deviation of time and identity. This could be represented diagrammatically as follows:



The "I" of the author/artist, who writes now, that is at the present time, is a different "I" of the hero/heroine who lived and experienced things in the past time. The "I" author/artist is the same person as the "I" hero/model. They share the same name but are two different persons since their time and space are different. The "I" who writes now is a changed person. Hence the division of the life time as: the **present**, that is the time **now** of the author writing, as opposed to the **anterior**, that is the time **then** which is the past lived time of the author, which will

of course be different from the **posterior**, that is the life to **come**. As a result, the autobiographical writer strives towards writing about his life. He strives to identify himself across time. Starobinski (1980:78) states then that:

It is because the past "I" is different from the present "I" that the latter may really be confirmed in all his prerogatives. The narrator describes not only what happened to him at a different time in his life but above all how he became - out of what he was - what he presently is.

Had it not been of his autobiographical mode of writing, we would not have known Mofokeng **the man** as presented in his works.

CHAPTER 7

LOOKING BACK

7.1 THE EPILOGUE

7.2 CONTRIBUTIONS

7.3 POSSIBLE FUTURE RESEARCH

CHAPTER 7

LOOKING BACK

Tshupane ke mang a ka ntshupise?

A supe kapele ke bone mokgotho,

Mokgotho [wa Kakapa, Senatla, Kwakwariri.]¹

"Mohahlaula wa nnete, Separolathota."²

(1. Khaketla B.M)

(2. Maphalla K.P.D)

7.1 EPILOGUE

We now pause and reflect on what we had set out to do at the beginning of this study. This will give us an opportunity to check and see whether we have achieved our goal. We shall also indicate contributions that this study makes.

The aim of the research, as we pointed out at the beginning, was to investigate the autobiographical mode in the writings of Machabe Mofokeng. We had a hunch that Mofokeng's works relate to his real lived life, even though they were written as prose and drama.

We have been taught in this study that autobiography has been in existence since the fourth century B.C, even though it appeared in different forms and names like Confessions, Essays, Memoirs. What is recent are the critical and theoretical studies of autobiography. Olney (1980) says these in effect began in 1956, with Gusdorf who handled questions of concern - philosophical, psychological, literary and more generally humanistic - and that these have preoccupied students of autobiography since then.

As we join in the critical discussion of autobiography, we establish that criticism of autobiography could focus on, for example, the function of the genre within the community or the linguistic dynamics present between text and reader. On the other hand, we learn that it is possible to have characterization, style, or theme in the work of autobiographical creation. In our attempt to see the correlation between Mofokeng's works and his life, we draw attention to the second possibility. Our analysis, which is informed by the elements the writer (character), the work (technique) and the reader (theme) as suggested by Howarth, first deals with the fictional aspect of Mofokeng's works. Here our analysis confirms what was noted earlier in our study that Mofokeng wrote fiction and not autobiography. As we handle matters that pertain strictly to fiction, we learn in Chapter 3 how Mofokeng creates characters. In accordance with the type of drama that **SENKATANA** falls into, we truly identify Senkatana as a tragic hero. We see in Chapter 4 how imagery can be used to evoke imaginations of symbols and images. In Chapter 5 we are able to understand the teachings of Mofokeng through the different themes as found in his works.

On style we find that like other writers of autobiography, Mofokeng doubles as a writer and a model. In the process of writing, he establishes his past but also reveals himself to the reader. Further, in his style, Mofokeng deviates from the norm of writing autobiography. Far from being suspect, Mofokeng's style offers us a system of revealing indices, where he himself is revealed.

In the second part of the analysis, we peep through the little window to look into Mofokeng's real lived life. For instance we do find that there is a very close relationship between Mofokeng's imaginary characters and himself. This is why we can for example, unhesitatingly conclude that Mofokeng and Senkatana are one and the same person. Senkatana saves his people from the dark they experienced in Kgodumodumo's belly. Mofokeng saves his brothers and sisters from the dark by educating them. In another example we conclude that the man from the other side of the Zambezi river represents Mofokeng's physical suffering.

On the whole, Mofokeng's works are based on his experiences. This is what brings about the autobiographical mode in his works. At the same time, as we approach the end, we learn and agree that he did not write autobiography but that his works are autobiographical.

7.2 CONTRIBUTIONS

There is no doubt that this work breaks new ground in the study of literature in African Languages. This claim will be evident in the next two paragraphs namely, 7.2.1 and 7.2.2.

7.2.1 CONTRIBUTIONS RELATING TO THE CRITICAL DISCUSSION OF AUTOBIOGRAPHY

For a long time, there has been debate as to whether autobiography can be studied like all other types of genres (cf. Gusdorf, 1980; Olney, 1980; Folkenflik, 1993; Gilmore, 1994). This was prompted by the fact that it was not clear as to where autobiography belongs. The major question was: Is it fiction or not? If it is fiction, why is it not studied like all other types of fiction? If it is not fiction, as it deals with matters of truth-value, why should it be studied like other forms of literature? This confusion is found in the many different definitions of autobiography, some of which we cited in Chapter 2.

In this study we align ourselves with the view that autobiography treats both aspects of truth-values and of art. We believe that it is a form of art creation that is built around true life experiences of the author. Further, since our emphasis in this research had been autobiographical fiction rather than autobiography per se, a dimension is added that generic considerations, especially by the postmodernists, should be revisited. The question of methodology and approach to autobiographical

writing had been brought under the spotlight in this study. The researcher found it necessary to interview friends and relatives of the autobiographical writer, Mofokeng. If Mofokeng were still alive, his own responses to the questions asked, would have informed interpretation of his works tremendously.

7.2.2 CONTRIBUTIONS RELATING TO AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL STUDIES IN INDIGENOUS LITERATURES.

At the beginning of this study, we refer to Prof Lenake's comment that Mofokeng did not write autobiography. We cannot dispute or question this comment due to the fact that in general we do not find in the literature of Sesotho a book that is purely an autobiography. Possibly this is also true of the other Indigenous languages of South Africa. A lot of autobiographical fiction by Africans are written in the English language. It therefore required us to do an intensive study of writing in an indigenous language. This is the first of its kind! a major contribution because a fresh direction has been shown. Through the work of an Indigenous writer, we have confidently shown that there is a difference between autobiography and autobiographical writing or fiction. Further, we believe that this work will contribute in motivating writers to consider producing autobiographies written in African Languages.

7.2 POSSIBLE FUTURE RESEARCH

Olney (1980:9) discovers that there are works of art that present themselves as autobiographies (e.g Montaigne's essays, Newman's Apologia) and on the other hand, there are those works which were autobiographies that presented themselves as works of art (e.g Joyce and Lawrence in all their works). Mofokeng falls in the second category. What interests Olney is the fact that one finds works which present themselves as virtually the same work - metaphoric representations of one and the same experience and consequent vision - while bearing titles that would identify the one as an autobiography, and the other as a piece of fiction and a work of art, that is a novel, a poem or an essay, yet there would be a strong odor of autobiography in them. Mofokeng's works have proved to be pieces of fiction that have autobiographical features. A strong possibility may be that there are other works of art in the indigenous languages that appear on the surface as fiction whilst they may bear some elements of autobiography in them. As mentioned earlier, Nkosi believes that the history of the African writer determines who the "hero" of his novel would be. With an indepth study of autobiographical mode of writing in the indigenous languages, it is likely that more works would come out as being autobiographical. It is therefore important that more research be undertaken to investigate works by other indigenous languages writers and establish if we do not have more of autobiographical works in these languages.

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