IDENTITY: *From Autobiography to postcoloniality: A study of Representations in Puleng's Works*

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I declare that **Identity:** ***From Autobiography to Postcoloniality: A Study of Representations in Puleng's Works*** is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

MR S N C MOKGOATŠANA

17/08/99.
DATE

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SUMMARY

The issue of identity is receiving the most attention in recent times. Communities, groups and individuals tend to ask themselves who they are after the colonial period. The dawn of modern democracy and the fall of the Berlin Wall have become important sites of self-definition. In this study, I examine narratives of self-invention and self-legitimisation from a variety of texts ranging from poetic to dramatic voices. The author creates characters who represent his wishes, desires and fears in dramatic form. The other characters re-present the other members of his family. He uses autobiographical voices to re-create and re-present history, particularly his family history which has been dismembered by memory's inability to recover the past in its entirety. Memory, visions and dreams are used as tropes to negotiate the pain of loss. These narratives assist him to recapture that which has been lost dearly, and imaginatively re-members what has been dismembered. The autobiographical *I* shifts into an autobiographical *we* where the author uses his poetry to lambast the injustices of apartheid.

The study further examines some aspects of postcolonial identity, which include the status of African writing and the role of africalogical discourse, the conception of *home* in apartheid South Africa as well as the juxtaposition of power between indigenes and settlers. These reflect the problem of marginality as a postcolonial condition and how the marginals can be returned to the centre of power. Marginalisation of the indigenes occurs by coercion, inferiorisation, tabooing certain political and cartographical spaces, harassment, torture and imprisonment. Despite these measures, the poetry of NS Puleng persisted to remove the fetish of apartheid disempowerment and disenfranchisement.

KEYWORDS:

Identity, postcolonial identity, postcolonialism and criticism, postcolonial discourse and indigenous writing, apartheid city, settlers and marginals, home and nativity, home and away, autobiography, autobiographical selves, autobiographical representation, postcolonial representation, africalogical discourse, African epistemology vis-a-vis western historicism.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

> The post-colonialist critics claim that the term 'post-colonial' covers "all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day." While the claim is problematic to me, what is even more problematic is the collapsing of our separate histories in the name of "shared" post-colonial experience. (A.P. Mukharjee, *Whose Post-Colonialism, Whose Postmodernism?*)

> There is no doubt that development in the eyes of the White Government meant a total annihilation of the cultural identity of African people and a re-orientation of this to a new dislocated identity which will lead them to perpetual dependency. (S. Mokgoatšana, *It is herstory too)*

1.1 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Puleng Samuel Nkomo, generally known in literary circles as N.S. Puleng is the son of a Zimbabwean black missionary who died in the orange estates of Zebediela. His mother is Peggy [1]Mmapoo Molele from GaMadisha. His early efforts to write in Sepedi bore no fruit until he adopted the pseudonym N.S.Puleng which gave him a new identity. His works are a quest for identity, that is, (1) the identity of the text which is trapped in a network of others; (2) self-identity - an attempt to recreate and discover a self in a mystery overshadowed by alienation and (3) a broader national identity which he expresses as the collective *I*. The collective *I* searches for autonomy, and an identity which battles with issues of recognition from the oppressive "master narrative" which controls the centre space. It is the need to access the space in the centre which occupies Puleng's mind. He searches for territorial authority for the "nation", and battles with such an identity which will see the nation free from displacements, dislocations and subjugation.

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[1] The name Mmapoo has a number of variations as a result of inadvertent editors who changed it to Mapoo or Mmapo as well as other queer derivations. Wherever these are found, they should be seen as corruptions of the appropriate name Mmapoo.

In his case, Puleng is doubly oppressed. He suffers the domination of a racist, imperialist/apartheid domination and on the other hand, he is subjected to discrimination by his fellow Africans who are shaped by well structured and ordered apartheid thought which consolidated a strong sense of ethnocentrism among African people. It should be remembered that the apartheid philosophy in South Africa has succeeded in naturalising ethnic discrimination to such an extent that even within the borders of South Africa, Africans would still be considered aliens in certain African communities. What a fallacy? How difficult would it be then for a fellow African from other parts of Africa other than South Africa? Hugh Masekela's song *Chileshe* addresses such a narcisstic stereotyping of people as *makwerekwere, isilwane* which are fundamental labels for discrimination and rejection born out of apartheid.

Puleng's life is a riddle which the reader continues to guess at throughout the texts. His dramatic texts do not only provide a window through which we can examine him under a different guise, but also baffle the reader with the ways in which he refuses to be tamed into a literary subject. The poetry puts flesh on the skeleton suggested in dramas. He skilfully tells a story from "some(w)here" as "nobody". His father is a Black missionary from Zimbabwe and he (Puleng) writes poetry in Sepedi, a "foreign" language in which he finds a way to create a space for self-definition. He is "rejected" and pushed to the periphery, but uses name-changing as a strategy to gain hold of the centre. His voice becomes the voice of Puleng the person, and that of an African yearning for a true African identity free from European subjugation. It is interesting that he does not want an ethnic identity, but a collective identity.

Going through his works, the reader joins in a journey for the search of an identity of the fragmented self (borrowed from postmodernists). The *I* has been displaced, and this displacement leads to various forms of alienation and dislocation. Given this, the *I* reveals itself through autobiography, dreams and prayers. It is in prayers where the *I* directly speaks to God that the sense of alienation is expressed.

Displacement alienates a person from his/her land, culture, religion and philosophy. Puleng's poetry focuses on these aspects which largely reflect some sense of isolation and desperation. This study will look into the ideology that shapes the construction of a self within these problems and how these elements are bound together to form an identity of a self (individual and corporate).

This study also works on the premise that the Apartheid state is a perpetuation of the colonial empire in South Africa, hence there have been serious debates and conflicts on a white South Africa and black South Africa in the 'reserves' or the "future Black Government". The "empire" authenticates its authority by using various legislative and organs of the state. This has been the case in South Africa where the migration of Africans into the cities was controlled, and where even the property rights were governed by the laws which entrenched unequal power relations. South Africa as a postcolony therefore, faces a number of challenges to maintain the "centre" and to ensure that the indigenous people remain in the periphery in terms of development, politics, industrialisation, rights and all aspects of their lives. The struggle from the margins is bound to be a fierce one in which the colonial mentality will be challenged. It is this appeal for the revision of power relations which Puleng addresses in:

- *Hle mphe le nna*
- *Homola ngwanaka*
- *Ke kae mo?*
- *Gareadulelaruri*
- *Nkosi sikelel'iAfrika*
- *A ke mafelelo*

and several other poems which seek to provide an alter/native discourse which not only oppose and unsettle the apartheid hegemonic discourses, but attempt to redefine and revise such discourses.

1.2 AIMS AND MOTIVATIONS FOR THE STUDY

As intimated earlier on Puleng's works represent a journey towards uncovering a series of representations. The author re-creates and re-presents history masquerading as fiction. It is, therefore, the interest of this study to reflect on those multiple identities created in Puleng's works and to discuss how memory and imagination are used as tropes for re-creating identity and life. It should be clear from the outset that the concept identity is not to be looked at from a reductionist/essentialist vista whereby attributes can be listed and pinned down to a single subject for description. Identity is a complex entity which is fluid and ubiquitous. The colonial notion of 'fixity' is therefore a misguided definition which this study will not adopt.

Because the study of identity in Sepedi Literature has not received any attention, this will probe into a field which is little traversed, yet fertile for further research. I shall as far as possible lay a foundation in the study of identity and representations from a post-colonialist and Africalogical vantage point. I shall make inroads into autobiography as a means to (re)present the self, and will connect self-(re)presentation with the presentation of a national identity.

1.3 DEFINITION OF TERMS

1.3.1 Identity

To define the concept "identity" is a treacherous act for the idea itself is so ambiguous that it rejects unity of descriptions across disciplines. An ontological definition of identity would as far as possible trace the ancestry of the subject, its attributes and history. The idea of sameness already comes to mind when one applies the term, in this way, identity brings together those attributes which are essential to describe what *is*. Without sounding reductionist, identity is a mental construction of what one perceives of a subject. The perception is not necessarily uniform among all the people, but depends on what each one of them constructs as the most important kernel for the description of the *self*. This view therefore, complicates the matter further, for the construction of identity depends on perspective. To cite an example, what the former apartheid state described as terrorist acts, was in the language of the African majority, a freedom struggle. One reads these contestations of power from such lexical binaries as: rebel/soldier; terrorist/freedom fighter; settler/native; country/colony. I shall use the concept identity in this study to describe literary creations which attempt to describe subjects, irrespective of how such constructions are made.

1.3.2 Representation

If I were to stand before an audience, I would be able to turn round repeatedly for the audience to see me. I could almost do this to the satisfaction of the audience because I am always present. But, if I had read a story from a book, I would not be able to present all the details of the story even if I could repeat the story all over again. I would not be able to "show" all that I had read because what I tell has limitations. I can only present fragments I can remember. What I describe becomes a representation of the whole story.

The concept representation implies that what you see is not an entity on its own. It stands in the place of another subject. A representation therefore, is both a mental and textual construct.

1.3.3 Postcolony

Boehmer (1995:3) defines the controversial term *postcoloniality* as that condition in which colonised peoples seek to take their place, forcibly or otherwise, as historical subjects. The concept *postcolony* therefore, refers to a place of suffering from a condition, a state of affairs in which the colonial subjects find themselves as a result of colonisation. It is basically a difficult stage, for the colonised are trapped in the culture of the colonial power, and the attempt to maintain their own cultural identity. This state is actually resisted by the colonial subjects who, in their pursuit to redefine their true identities, attempt to undo what the colonial power has already worked up into a powerful authority. They in turn create their own narratives to counteract the *master narrative* which has dominated their lives for so long.

The notion *postcolony* can be open to multiple interpretations. It can be (mis)read as a metaphor for a country that has been subjected to colonialism. This is the same sense applied by Mbembe when he notes that postcolony is a place where *'l'independence ça n'est past constaud constaud'*.

In his *Provisional notes on the postcolony*, Mbembe (1992:3) defines the notion in this way:

> The notion ... identifies specifically a given historical trajectory — that of societies recently emerging from the experience of colonisation and the violence which the colonial relationship, *par excellence,* involves. To be sure, the postcolony is chaotically pluralistic, yet it has nonetheless an internal coherence. It is a specific system of signs, a particular way of fabricating simulacra or re-forming stereotypes.

Mbembe's notion of postcolony acknowledges the ambivalence of postcolonial identities, and the different ways in which colonial relationships affect colonial subjects. The term postcolony should be understood to refer to the postcolonial condition in a postcolonial state as shaped by colonial experience. In a metonymic simulacrum, the idea of postcolony can be transferred to the colonial subjects and their country hence, Mbembe employs the term *cibles* to connote people in the postcolony, the target victims of colonisation or the colonial subjects.

Mbembe (1992) further identifies the ways in which the imperial/colonising power establishes and entrenches its authority in the postcolony. As for him, the colonising power:

> (1) *creates*, through its administrative and bureaucratic practices, a world of meanings all its own, a master code which in the process of becoming the society's primary central code, ends by governing- perhaps paradoxically– the various meanings within that society; (2) attempts to

> institutionalise its world of meanings as a 'socio-historical world' and to make that world fully real, turning it into a part of the people's common sense not only by instilling it in the minds of the *cibles*, or 'target population', but also by integrating it into the consciousness of the period.

From the preceding quotation, it becomes clear that the colonial power embarks on a strong campaign to authenticate its superiority. Domination becomes the 'master code' which is tacitly accepted as natural because it has been institutionalised and ingrained into the colonial subjects' consciousness. It is in this way that the naturalised myth of European superiority and the backwardness of the colonised are accepted as "common sense." It should be understood frankly that "common sense" is what the dominant in society consider normal and wish the subdominant group to accept without challenge. In this way, it becomes clear that common sense is not common to all, but serves only the dominant authority in society to create expectations of submission on a silver platter. Unfortunately, the colonised/suppressed are so worked up that they regard such expectations as genuine and moral, and contravention is tantamount to reproach or a retraction of certain basic benefits.

We should take a leaf from Mbembe's ideas about the importance of the 'socio-historical world'. It would be a grave mistake in any study of identity to disregard history and myth-making, for these two narratives help us understand how a particular self has progressed and changed through the passage of time. The relevance of history in the study of identity is well expressed by Schlesinger:

> ... history is to the nation rather as memory is to the individual. As an individual deprived of memory becomes disoriented and lost, not knowing where he has been or where he is going, so a nation denied a conception of its past will be disabled in dealing with its present and its future. As the means of defining national identity, *history becomes a means for shaping history*. (Wertsch 1997:5)

In definition of identity, subjects in the postcolony are haunted by the legacy of colonialism which forms a fundamental aspect of their history from which they cannot unwind themselves. Because of the relevance of history in identity formation, the historical conditions in South Africa in the days of apartheid including his historical life, will form a sub-text to Puleng's text.

1.4 METHODOLOGY AND APPROACHES

1.4.1 Introduction

This section provides a brief overview of the approaches adopted in this study. Postcolonialism and Afrocentricity are the two major approaches used to access the text. It should be acknowledged here that it is largely the pursuit of the idea of identity which the study follows and, therefore, any relevant textual or extra textual tool will be used as far as *possible* to arrive at the intended goal.

1.4.2 Post-colonial Theory : An overview

On defining the concept post-colonialism in their ground-breaking work *The Empire Writes Back*, Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (1989:2) explain:

> We use the term 'post-colonial', however, to cover all culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day. This is because there is a continuity of preoccupations throughout the historical process initiated by European imperial aggression. We also suggest that it is most appropriate as the term for the new cross-cultural criticism which has emerged in recent years and for the discourse through which this is constituted.

Although I agree that postcolonial cultures have been shaped by colonial experience, I am less sanguine about "continuity of preoccupations". Such a view is not only deterministic, but undermines the possibility of the various ways in which imperial domination affects the colonised subjects. It is post-colonialism's major concern to dis/mantle and to dis/figure such continuities as preempted by Ashcroft and his associates. That *The Empire Writes Back* is concerned with the world as it exists during and after the period of European imperial domination simplistically relegates the post-colonial process to a predictable linear progression.

The term postcolonialism should be treated as a process, a methodology, and not as a genre category. In the preface of *English Postcoloniality: Literatures from Around the World*, Mohanram and Rajan (1996:3) assert that:

> The most commonly used tropes in postcoloniality analyses are meant to reveal tracks of aggression through the deconstruction of such polar terms as nation/location, identity/subjectivity, rootedness/diaspora, and, in some cases, writing and literature.

Postcolonial discourse engages in dialectical redefinition of the relations between the 'imperial/colonial' state and the indigenous/colonised subjects. This relationship is marked by a pursuit to re(w)rite the place of the colonised in the land of their birth. This idea is tellingly expressed by Mohanram and Rajan (1996:3) who go on to suggest that the logic of postcoloniality uses language as a tool to re-think and re-write the history of the 'colonised' nations. Ngugi (1993) sees this proclivity to rewrite an own history as an 'epistemology to break with the past'. The "past" here as used by Ngugi should be understood as the experiences of the colonised nations as shaped by colonial impact.

All forms of legitimizing the 'empire/colonial' power represent the "past" which must be discarded and avoided, although this becomes very difficult if the nation is not careful to embark on a deliberate national programme to redeem its culture and norms. In the case of South Africa, there is a need for clearly defined programmes which are geared at correcting the mistakes of the past and according Africans a proper place in the history and development of the country. Perhaps, Mbeki's call to African renaissance should sound as a wake up call to the needs for programmes to unsettle the psychological impact of colonialism, and to reconstruct a new African identity.

Redress is important to recover the lost dignity, and to restore African cultures and experiences in science and knowledge creation and discovery. Rigorous programmes addressing the imbalances of the past, redeeming the image of the African, and restoring the dignity which has been deliberately distorted are necessary. Token affirmative action is merely cosmetic because it does not address the serious issue of identity crisis and inferiorisation which has been institutionalised. Such an inferiorisation is deeply rooted in the minds of the oppressed. Thus, the postcolonial subjects are faced with such Herculean tasks as redefining their place in the new postcolony. It is imperative therefore, to design academic programmes which aim at altering the psychological impact of colonisation/apartheid. These programmes should deliberately assert an African experience. Without positive moves to challenge the pseudo-scientificism which relegated African people as *personae non gratae*, South Africans will fall into the trappings of "unknowable indoctrination" by their colonial masters. The African intelligentsia has a responsibility in this regard. However, they should be careful, as Fanon warns, 'not to immerse the people in the past they have left behind but to join and aspire them to confront the present as a historic moment...' (Aschcroft; Griffiths & Tiffin 1995).

Postcolonialism represents an activist gesture in the theatre of decolonization, a renaissance in art, literatures, and cultures of the people's lands (Mohanram & Rajan 1996).

> ... the postcolonial text underscored a mass of diverse discourses of aggression, to a romanticized nationalism, to a sense of displacement from the homeland in exilic subjects ... but always revealing the tense relationship to the imperial language.

Boehmer (1995:3) is in support of the previous statement. She describes post-colonial literature as that literature that critically scrutinises the colonial relationship. She goes further to suggest that:

> It is writing that sets out in one way or another to resist colonialist perspectives. As well as a change in power,

> decolonization demanded symbolic overhaul, a reshaping of dominant meanings. Postcolonial literature formed part of that process of overhaul. To give expression to colonized experience, postcolonial writers sought to undercut thematically and formally discourse which supported colonization– the myths of power, the race classifications, the imagery of subordination.

From Boehmer's view, it becomes apparent that the daunting task of postcolonial writing and criticism is to unmask and to demystify the myth of European/imperial superiority, and to reverse the inferiorisation of the colonial subject. The postcolonial critic is therefore faced with a difficult task of dismantling the stereotypes created about the colonial subject, to de-scribe the postcolonial in the right perspective, and de-centre the metropolitan imperial power. By so doing, the colonial subject will be redefined to assume a new position in the centre of discourse, and drift away from the peripheral margins which have confined him/her for so long. Following Boehmer's opinion, the postcolonial critic has to re-present the colonial subject, and remove the distortions which were a largely colonial concern as Bhabha (1983:18) retorts:

> An important feature of colonial discourse is its dependence on the concept of 'fixity' in the ideological construction of otherness. Fixity as the sign of cultural/historical/racial difference in the discourse of colonialism, is a paradoxical mode of representation: it

> denotes rigidity and an unchanging order as well as disorder, degeneracy and daemonic repetition.

Because colonial discourse represents the colonial subjects as naive, unchanging, and inferior, the postcolonial critic has to undo this (sm)othering in the process of creating a true ambivalent identity.

Tiffin and Lawson (1994:16) contend that postcolonialism is used in various fields to de-scribe a remarkably heterogeneous set of subject positions, professional fields, and critical enterprises. The idea of "heterogeneity" as borrowed from postmodernism implies a polemic polarization of the self and the Other. The idea of *difference* is pivotal to underscore the colonial (re)presentations. The colonised other experiences itself as totally different from the colonising self. The colonised view colonialism as an apparatus to form constituting subject positions through the field of representation. The colonised reject projections and (re)presentations by the colonial (master) power. Postcolonialism thus becomes a tool and method to fight colonial portraiture and distortions.

Postcoloniality has been largely defined and examined through its effects by using literary (and political) texts as evidence of domination and as revealing a potential for insurgence of the colonised. Mohanram and Rajan condemn this method because, as they put it, it bypasses the *cause* for such phenomena. There is a need for the inclusion of cultural formations as well as history. Edward elaborately argues that history (and culture) is the fulcrum to the debates on colonial/postcolonial consciousness:

> For the first time in the history of imperialism and its culture can now be studied as neither monolithic or reductively compartmentalized, separately, distinct. True, there has been a disturbing eruption of separatist and chauvinistic discourse whether in India, Lebanon or Yugoslavia, or in Afrocentric, Islamocentric, or Eurocentric proclamations; far from invalidating the struggles to be free from the empire, these reductions of cultural discourse actually prove the validity of a fundamental liberationist energy that animates the wish to be independent, to speak freely, and without the burden of unfair domination. The only way to understand this energy, however, is *historically*. [my italics] (Mohanram & Rajan 1996:6)

Postcolonial texts therefore, should be subjected to the historical discourses which produced them. In their analysis, attention should be given to the manner in which the dominant and subjugated write and interpret their own scripts, and how they use these scripts to create meaning for the world around them.

1.4.2.1 (W)HERE IS THE POST IN INDIGENOUS LITERATURE(?)

Postcolonial critics have largely occluded and relegated literature written in indigenous languages in their scholarship. Aware of this deliberate attempt to "silence" indigenous writing and the appropriation of literature written in English, Barber makes (1995:3) this salient observation:

> Despite intermittent claims to specificity, this model blocks a properly historical, localized understanding of any scene of colonial and post-Independence literary production in Africa. Instead it selects and overemphasises one sliver of literary and cultural production-- written literature in the English language-- and treats this as all there is, representative of a whole culture or even a global "colonial experience." It thus negligently or deliberately erases all other forms of expression– written literature in African languages, oral literature in African languages, and a whole domain of cultural forms which cross the boundaries between "written" and "oral," between "foreign" and "indigenous" – making way for the "postcolonial Other" to emerge, defiant yet accessible, conveniently articulate in English and consolingly preoccupied with his or her relations to the center — "writing back" in a language the ex-colonizers can understand because it is a modified register of their own.

The brand of postcolonial criticism that pushes indigenous languages into the periphery privileges the colonial language at the expense of the language of the colonial subjects. Writing in *english* is seen as a way of "writing back" as if it were necessary to "write". I want to argue in this thesis that the colonial subjects have always objected to imperial/colonial domination through various art forms. (Rock) Paintings, sculptures, singing and dancing, as well as the various verbal forms of orature have been used and still continue to be used to "right" that which they think and believe deserves to be put right. Any form of postcolonialism which creates a Manichean chasm between orature and (written) literature attempts to glorify the West with a view to relegating orature to a precolonial activity which dies away with the advent of writing.

In South Africa, for instance, the Bantu Authorities Act (1951) was determined to bring down African polities and kingdoms by dismantling their power base. Mokgoatšana (1998a:3) describes the implications of the Act in this way:

> The Act violated the discourse of succession politics, eroded cultural patterns and dislodged people's cultural outlook and further led to an increased loss of land and dislocation of the people.

A major concern of the people was the unabated process of forced removals, anomalous taxation system, ranging from bicycle tax to land tax; and the Pass system. Such an Act was an affront to the people, and various means were sought to challenge it. The people employed orality which is their convenient medium rather than print media to challenge such a peccable system.

Re gana nnang,
Re gana nnang tšhaleta 'a naga.
Re patela motšhelo,
Komosasa le yena o nyaka pasa.
Magoši a mabedi -
A magoši a mabedi re tlo a reng?
Mmotoro 'o motala
Mmotoro 'o motala ka Sekinoto.
Tsatsanka lesogana tholi e eme ka dieta ka tenteng.
Šabana la ga Masha,
Šabana la ga Masha le šwalalane,
Go šetše Disoba le Makopole.
Ke lebetše dieta, ke lebetše dieta leporogong ...
Ro gata Mapono,
Ro gata mapono ka masantase.

We adamantly reject
We adamantly reject land tax.
We pay tax;
The Commissioner too, demands a pass book.
Two kingdoms -
How would we serve two kingdoms?
A blue car,
A blue car from Schoonoord.
A lanky lad stands on his legs in the tent.
Masha's people,
Masha's people have split,

Only Makopole and Disoba remain.
I have lost my shoes,
I lost them by the bridge.
We are going to trample down the Swazi with our feet,
And crush them with our sandals.

The Governor-General's powers to impose taxes and levies upon the African people was read as a violation of the authority of their *magoši*. In African culture, there can only be "one bull in the kraal" and the presence of another signifies an intent to declare war or to undermine the other's authority and independence. The rhetorical question *magoši a mabedi re tlo a reng?* not only points out the dilemma created by the situation, but also reflects a willingness to resist the Native Commissioner's instructions to demand passes and taxes. These people are not prepared to serve two masters, and thus openly challenge such an awkward system that allows for double standards to be maintained.

It is not imperative for these people to reduce their ideas to print, and they have employed their oral heritage to attack and assault the apartheid state which invaded their authority. Oral as it is, the song was used to challenge the dubious and peccant authorial power of apartheid without being reduced to print. The valorisation of the keyboard metaphor expresses a romantic appraisal of the West, bestowing on European culture a "holy past" as opposed to the "dark past" of Africa. Adherents of such notions would shrink into their skins if they realised that the first library in the world was in Africa and the first book *The Book of the Dead.*[2] To this day, orature continues to be used effectively as an oppositional strategy to challenge the authority of the dominant groups. The demise of the apartheid regime was also accompanied by the various resistance campaigns including the chanting of slogans and political songs which ridiculed those who held positions of apartheid power.

Postcolonial criticism, following Fanon, argues that indigenous languages and literatures were devalued and displaced, and the colonial subject culturally and linguistically dispossessed, leading to a deep loss of self-esteem and cultural confidence (Karin Barber 1995:4). Barber continues the dialogue by borrowing concepts from JanMohammed to explain that the colonial subject is caught in a double bind between the "catalepsy" of total self-identification with imperial cultural values and the "petrification" of adhering to a devalued, "calcified" indigenous system "whose development has been checked by colonisation."

I want to support Karin Barber's assertion that postcolonial criticism has a political bite, and that "it turns the searchlight back on the center and exposes the agenda underlying its claims to a universal literary humanism". In a way, Commonwealth critics use the concept postcolonial criticism as a way to find a pedestal to rest their feet after years of domination. It is on this perception that Mukharjee (1990:7) opposes the manner in which critics from European institutions use the concept postcolonialism, and for Mukharjee, that makes postcolonialism a "Eurocentric invention":

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[2] **Greek Philosophy: A Stolen Egyptian Legacy** (George G.M. James) is an invaluable source.

> It seems to me that Eurocentric academy homogenizes and ghettoises the literatures from non-European societies even in the act of giving them a collective name. (*op cit.*)

He proposes that 'we should stop making and accepting homogenizing theories to create a "unitary" field out of disparate realities'. Mukharjee rejects the totalising attitude by certain groups of postcolonial critics like Ashcroft, Tiffin and Griffiths who bundle colonial experience as a "shared" experience. He believes such a view undermines the heterogenous nature of colonial experience, the *differance* which accompanies all colonial relationships, as well as the manner in which subjects in the various colonies rid themselves of the colonial yoke. Mukharjee's argument is to an extent understandable because colonisation and independence take different routes in various (ex)colonies. What he seems to miss is the commonality of the purpose of colonisation, that all colonial pursuits are motivated by a common need for profit for the colonising power. In this pursuit, colonial powers have always abused and exploited the indigenous population. In all colonies, the colonial powers embarked on deliberate policies of assimilation. In this way, the world of the coloniser was transplanted into the colonies to create an extension of the colonial power. The indigenes were created as second or third rate citizens of the colonising power, but had to contend with ethnic rights entrenched into customary law, while the civic rights belonged to the colonial masters (Mamdani 1998).

Postcolonialism as practised by such Eurocentric institutions is a perpetual strife to contain literary discourse and tame it for the "empire" -- hence the exclusion of indigenous writing from the stock of trade. In the same vein, critics in the postcolonies use the criticism to question the colonial legacies, as well as to reshape an identity from within.

Reading Carusi's postcolonialism in *Post, Post, Post. Or, Where is South African Literature?* (1991) more than suggests that postcolonialism in South Africa is not only political, but has a racial bite. She argues that:

> If one thinks along the consolidation of the importance of national language (in South Africa, national languages - Afrikaans and English), and through this of a national culture, including racial, social and religious practices, there is a large part of the (white) population, for whom the label "post-colonialism" is not an issue at all. Post-colonialism, as a deliberate state of affairs, has been accomplished, de facto, and in a most successful manner. The South African nation exists because of the success of the construction of Afrikanerdom. The only problem now is to defend it. (Carusi 1991)

Carusi is aware of the need for language and a national identity, yet she chooses to erase the existence and stature of other national groups in South Africa. Through *palimpsesting* and *slippages,* Carusi manages to valorise the Afrikaner identity, and marginalise other post-colonial identities in South Africa. She is content with the apartheid regime and pulses on an authorial oblivion hoping the defence of apartheid would last forever. Her claim that "post-colonialism is not an issue," may be so to some white tribes who already believe that "they are there" and that they hold the centre permanently. Carusi would certainly feel ashamed of herself to realise that when her article was completed in 1991, already the liberation movements whose role she undermines, were preparing for a smooth overthrow of the superiority of Afrikaner hegemony. Her contorted view of Afrikanerdom as the meta-narrative ignores the fact that such identity is a representation of a small fraction of the large African population which is dominated both in society and in her discourse of "post-apartheid-ism".

She suggests that the term "post-colonialism" is not a suitable term for South African literature, and thus creates her own post to which the literature is pos(i)ted, that is *post-apartheid.* She situates indigenous literatures on this new post because she claims it would be "pre-emptive" and "the coloniser will not be got rid of" (Carusi 1991). Does she really expect the "coloniser" to be got rid of? Perhaps she does not realise that the apartheid state was a continuation of the past role exercised by the Batavian Republic and the British Empire. The same people who were suppressed under colonial rule continued to suffer subjugation under the apartheid system. The same system continued land dispossession on a large scale like any colonial power, eroded the people's religious beliefs and declared Christianity a national religion. All forms of the people's lives were to be converted in favour of the European culture -- the culture of those in power in South Africa. The mockery of all these was to be seen on official application forms which assumed that everybody in South Africa was a Christian, hence the need to fill a Christian name – another bastardising strategy to hoodwink the colonial subjects into believing that they can only experience God through the European prism. Of course, the state fooled itself that South Africa was a Christian country even if the multiplicity of religious views were held by its inhabitants.

On this post, the indigenous literatures assume a role of minority literatures serving ethnic interests while "white" literature, particularly Afrikaans, borders on the national and international. I strongly argue that indigenous literatures are post-colonial for they also share the strife of post-colonial literatures of other worlds. Those in South Africa needed a national identity whose nature is not determined by the colonial power. Indigenous writing also wished to dismantle, to demystify and unmask the authority of the apartheid state. They were also oppositional, and openly challenged the apartheid's authorial power. Their prime impulse was to create an "independent identity" even if they had osmotically imbibed and integrated aspects of colonial culture and system into their own lives. This view clearly highlights the problem of a nostalgic return into the romantic, idyllic pre-colonial past. This does not however, suggests that the pre-colonial past can easily be erased or recovered, yet some of its aspects can. A new cultural identity can be appropriated without compromising too much on the demands of the post-colonial future.

There are several bands of postcolonial theory which take up positions which are antithetical. One is "primarily concerned with a critique of colonial discourses, from a position which claims to be neither wholly inside nor entirely outside the colonial episteme" (Barber 1995:4). This form of critical inquiry ignores the existence of other voices in other tongues other than the colonial languages. The subaltern's voice is "simply there to be recuperated" and in this world the "subaltern cannot speak" because his/her voice is inaccessible to the Western episteme and ear. Barber appropriately ascribes this to be a statement of the limits of Western epistemic access rather than subaltern articulacy.

In South Africa, the various legislations were passed to ensure that the "subaltern cannot speak." English and Afrikaans became the two "official" languages in state administration, education, science and commerce; to be exact, "all forms" of governance and expression were destined to be either in English or Afrikaans.

> ... indigenous discourse appears only fleetingly, glimpsed out of the corner of the eye, conjured up almost inadvertently; it crosses the path and evasively, only to advertise its own inaccessibility. The theoretical effect is either to consign "native" discourses to the realms of the unknowable, or to imply that they were displaced, erased or absorbed by the dominant colonial discourses. (Barber 1995:5)

Even today, the dawn of democracy in South Africa has provided eleven official languages. Talk of these official languages is merely political window-dressing, for in practice, parliamentarians use English or Afrikaans to address parliament and meetings and outside parliament with the African vernaculars used to express defiance of the old order and to hoax constituencies to support them. Any attempt to exercise language rights by other population groups is declared and described in the metaphor of the "tower of Babel." This is a very dangerous phase of transition in the development of a country that aspires to regain its lost glories by redefining for itself an identity which has been bleached by colonial experience. This is tantamount to what Fanon defines as "unknowing indoctrination".

Postconiality as a condition and approach seeks to address the problem of the oppressed in terms of redefining and relocating what has been lost and integrating those on the periphery into the system. This integration has to take into account that these people have a set of values and experiences. This is where Afrocentricity will become useful.

1.4.3 Afrocentrism: Towards privileging African experience

Afrocentricity in itself implies taking a perspective from African experience, and there is no way in which these experiences can be left out in an attempt to recreate an identity. In explaining the role of the africalogist, Mokgoatšana(1997a: 5) contends that African experience should become the axis of our social analysis of reality. In interpreting phenomena, be it African or otherwise, the African world-view should guide us into a meaningful understanding of that aspect of reality. Using the cosmological premise Molefi Asante (1992:106) explains:

> The place of African culture in the philosophy, myths, legends, literature and oratories of African people constitutes, at the mythological level, the cosmological issue within the African enterprise, which is an enterprise entirely one within the Africalogical discipline. What role does culture play in the interface with the cosmos?

He continues with probing questions which should guide the researcher:

> What dramas of life and death, in the African tradition, are reflected in the metaphysical metaphors? How are those dramas translated by lunar, solar, or stellar figures?

Asante identifies four principles which should guide the African scholar: *location premise, cosmological premise, epistemological premise*, and the *aesthetic premise.* The location principle is related to dislocation and relocation. With the location principle, the researcher takes a perspective which centralises African culture and brackets off all that is alien to it, all that has no value for understanding the social phenomena under scrutiny. Asante explains the location principle in terms of fallacies which explain a contorted view as a result of disorientation, misorientation and de-centring. This is what Fanon describes as conditioned white intellectualism. Mokgoatšana (1997a: 7) contends that such a skewed view of reality is a result of cultural dislocation whereby the self negates itself and explains itself in terms of the Other. Even the Other negates that self as authentic other.

The cosmological principle provides an Afrocentric scholar with an opportunity to find unity in the seemingly different cultural patterns, and to see how these are organised to reveal yet another perspective, the epistemological premise. Using the cosmological premise will make it easy to understand why Puleng only meets his father in a dream or "in death". In this case, one has to go through the cosmological argument where the return cycle is explored. The return cycle is based on the premise that life starts from the primeval water and moves to the territorial and back into the nether world. Using the narratives of loss and return borrowed from the lost domain theory will shed light on the cosmological premise in interpreting Puleng's works.

At the epistemological level, the researcher has to look into the rhythms of dance, creative arts and the myths to reconstruct knowledge that is hidden behind the texts (Mokgoatšana 1997a). The last principle, the aesthetic premise looks into those aspects which are typical African aesthetics such as repetitions, rhythmic movements and cycles as represented in the image of a coiled snake. Repetitions of the historical re-workings of historical narratives, particularly the arrival of the white settlers and the economic exploitation of the black people should be seen at the epistemological level consolidating the structure of the author's ideas on the problem of marginalisation as it shall be seen in chapters four and five. In terms of these four principles, the totality of reality is viewed as an intertwined enterprise. The distinction between the *noumena* and the *phenomena* is not significant because these are bound together like a web. The interpretation of reality is guided by the African world view which sees life as a continuum between the chthonic and the terrestrial, making a thin distinction between the profane and the sacred, science and theology.

The approaches used in this study will definitely complement each other to facilitate the understanding of Puleng's creation of identities and representations in his works.

1.5 SCOPE AND CHAPTER DIVISIONS

To handle the problem of identity from autobiography is a task that cannot be handled within a single text. The study shall start from the dramatic texts *Le diphiri di tla utologa* (Puleng 1994) and *Thellenyane Batlabolela* (Puleng 1990) and move to the poetic works of NS Puleng. A cross-examination of Puleng's works will largely receive attention in this study. This will range from poetry to drama.

- Chapter 1 focuses on the statement of the problem, the aims, definitions of concepts and details the methodology and approaches to be used in this study.

- Chapter 2 will explore the way in which Puleng re-creates his identity through autobiography. Various arguments are made to reposition the genre of autobiography within literary discourse. The chapter will also explore the role of memory in the re-creation and imagining history.

- Chapter 3 will discuss how the author uses the discourses of loss and return to scrutinise his past, and dreams about life. The lost domain theory is employed to analyse the loss and return motifs in Puleng's works.

- Chapter 4 discusses Puleng's construction of home narratives, and oppositional strategies employed to challenge and resist the apartheid/colonial master narratives which foster displacement and alienation among the indigenes.

- Chapter 5 explores the polemical centre - margin debate. The chapter looks into the problem of marginality as it is de-scribed in Puleng's works, particularly his poetry.

- Chapter 6 looks back into the study and makes recommendations for future research directions.

CHAPTER 2

AUTOBIOGRAPHY : RE-WRITING THE SELF

> We do "live again" in memory ... in history as well as in biography. And when these two come together, forming a narrative, they approach fiction. The imprecision of memory causes us to create, to extend remembrance into narrative. It sometimes seems, therefore, that what we remember is not– could not be– true. And yet its *accurate.* The imagination, triggered by memory, is satisfied that this is so. (Patricia Hampl, *A Romantic Education.*)

Ke rata mma ke hlompha le mohu tate a ithobaletše,
Gobane ba nyalane ka lerato le borapedikgolo;
Ke leboga go ba setšwammele sa bona (Puleng, N.S.; *Sefahlego sa pelo ya ka)*

I love my mother and respect my father in the beyond
For they married in boundless love and faith;
I am thankful to be a product of their loins

Mmago o bitša Kagišo
Gobane puno ya gagwe ya bosadi
Nna o nkgopotša mohu tate. (Puleng,N.S., Sefahlego sa pelo ya ka.)

Your mother calls you conciliation
Because you are a product of her womanhood
You remind me of my late father.

> ... lives that at some point issue in autobiography are typically lives lived in anticipation of that fact, lived in consciousness of their own narrativity (Geoffrey Galt Harpham, *Coversion and the Language of Autobiogrphy.)*

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the various techniques which N.S. Puleng employs to re-write the self. It will be argued that autobiography may be used as a vehicle to centralise the life of the author, and that the personal experience of the writer may be employed to (re)construct a life within temporal and spatial terrains which have radically altered. Within post-colonial societies, autobiography is normally used as a strategy for centring the lives of those who are denied space, and such authors use autobiography to gain access to the centre from which reality is defined. Autobiography thus engages in a process of self-definition, another task of post-colonial discourse which we have defined in the previous chapter. Such (re)constructions, therefore, depend largely on memory, emotion and imaging elements which are fundamental to the study of autobiography as opposed to other historical forms of writing. Autobiography becomes a means of access to the self, a writing self *(graphie)* and a life writing self *(bios)*.

The *modus operandi* in this chapter will largely be a vacillation between dramatic and poetic texts, which will reveal the texts to lay bare the "life" which is fundamental to this study. Each of the texts, poetic and dramatic, explores a different representation of the author's life so much that exploring it as a linear and chronological progression from childhood to adulthood will not be the optimal approach. It is basically autobiography's defiance of chronology which subverts attempts at recreating a chronology of time and events in autobiographical writing and analysis. This observation is also made by Janice Morgan (1991:5) who contends that we no longer expect to receive a full, factual account of the author's public self, nor do we "anticipate a linear, chronological exposition of events nor do we expect the autobiographical enterprise to be contained, necessarily, within a single work." We shall vacillate between the texts and try as humbly as possible to "excavate" the braided and plaited life from them.

2.2 AUTOBIOGRAPHY: RE-WRITING SELVES

The origin of autobiography is disputed. Africa is known for its oral heritage. It is through stories, songs, praises, riddles and proverbs that an abundant wealth of history and historiography is generated by its societies. Life histories, personal accounts, achievements and exploits of individuals and groups are transmitted through the oral medium. In African societies, the act of narrating one's life is best effected in songs and praises. In this way, orality in its broad sense produced arguably the earliest form of autobiography, and the invention of modern writing and the printing press merely complemented an age-old form of self-scrutiny, giving it new shape and fluidity.

In ancient Africa, specifically Egypt, statues of kings were engraved (and fed) with words which an onlooker could ascribe to the dead person symbolised by the statue. A classic example is the story recounted by Percy B. Shelly in his poem *Ozymandias*. Great rulers had messages carved on their statues which described the sculptors' emotions and feelings about these kings. In most cases, the sculptors did their utmost to inscribe the deeds of those represented using words (*graphie*). These graphic representations attempted to capture the temporal and spacial elements which influenced the artwork. To re-present time, both temporal and narrative, is often problematic, for such representations depend on the relationship between the artist and the subject being translated into language and art. The inability to reflect objectively on time, particularly the past, is a major concern of critical inquiries into autobiography. An interesting revelation is that the life of the person is fed into a text by another self who impersonates the statue into a living past. This is also a common practice today, where autobiographies are not necessarily written by the person whose life is being told, but by a specialised editor or ghost writer who is commissioned to complete the task on behalf of the subject and thus undertakes rigorous research on the specific personality before (re)writing that life into book form, as we find for an example, in Nelson Mandela's autobiographies.

The concept of autobiography can be defined simply as a biography of one person written or given by that same person. This simple definition is likely to create a problem because it already assumes that the reader knows what a biography is.

Whereas biography can be considered as committed to the truth (and facts), autobiography presents a one-sided view of events which cannot always be verified because the author assumes a position of authority in which (s)he chooses what to tell and what to omit. It should be noted, however, that biography like autobiography is selective. Though autobiography defies Bruss' constitutive rules on verification and truth-value, insistence on verification and truth value can elevate autobiography to the level of authentic historical text. Indeed, aspects of autobiography are largely built on truthful accounts, but these accounts are plausible in the hands of the autobiographer who deliberately or unconsciously chooses what to tell the audience and how to tell it.

Elbaz (1988:2) explains autobiography as a narrative similar to other narratives: it develops linearly from *a* to *n*, following a temporal sequence the logic of which is retrospective. The autobiographer always tells the story of a past and, within that past, the linear development of his/her 'own existence': his/her individual life which is self-consistent throughout its history and belongs to or is privately owned by the author alone. Flowing from Elbaz's ideas, one can make these observations: (1) autobiography is a narrative, that is, it tells the story of a person, (2) it is retrospective, and (3) it reflects inner experience or the private life of a person. Because of autobiography's retrospective nature, autobiographers tend to rely upon memory to construct narratives. Thompson (1975:26) contends that autobiography is a self-analysis, either historically accurate or concealed beneath a fictional guise, which, regardless of its adherence to or avoidance of historical fact, attempts to characterise the nature of the self through the exposure of certain developments affecting the autobiographer's life.

Autobiography covers diverse elements, personalities, events, feelings, ideas, histories, imaginings. Despite the hybrid forms available, Thompson (1975:22) argues that there remains the prevailing pattern of autobiographical impulse – the search for identity – which unites content and form.

The tenets of autobiography are, among others, an attempt to re-write personal experience into a life, reliance upon memory in the recreation of the narrative, imaginative recreation and narrativity, an interplay of fiction and history, and the use of language to construct identities. Through reminiscence, the autobiographer sails into the past and allows it to become part of the present. At times the autobiographer is inclined to conflate the past with the present to such an extent that they become inseparable. Such a practice tends to evaluate the past in terms of the present, whereas the opposite would perhaps be more fruitful.

In the case of written poetry, there is abundant evidence that autobiography has received much attention though to a lesser extent than in prose. In verse, Dante's poem *La Vita Nuovo* is a precursor of the narrative autobiography. *The Prelude* by

Wordsworth is another example of prominently autobiographical verse. Much, though not all of Puleng's poetry is highly autobiographical. In all such cases, we are bound to meet with problems of authenticity. When a story is rooted in the past, how can one trust memory, and memory alone, to provide the actual data, time and place? Memory reinvents history, and because of its slippages, cannot be trusted as a sole source of [historical] facts.

Because of its strangeness, its tendency to defy strict categorisation into genre, autobiography remains a contested genre, usually being arbitrarily relegated to the field of prose. It is probably the failure of the Formalists' attempt to find devices which would define the literariness of autobiography, and the failure of this genre to be controlled by pre-established rules and conditions, which led to its marginalisation and subjection to prose. What complicates attempts at subjecting autobiography to genre is the fact that it re-tells a story, and this in a way misleads many critics who see it as a branch of narratology. Though a story, autobiography tells its story in many ways. It can be poetic, dramatic, or use any literary form which is capable of taming imaginative thoughts and memory. Bloom (1991:13) goes further to explain that autobiography differs from conventional historical writing, even social, "because it foregrounds the experiences of single individuals or extended families".

Although it is generally believed to be prose, and often discussed within the rubric of historical of narratives journals, diaries and memoirs, autobiography deserves to be considered a genre on its own. Bloom (1991:13) agrees with the proposition that autobiography should be treated in this way:

> I am hereby defining auto/bio/history as a literary genre distinctive in its own right. Though a hybrid form with variations (as any form with variations has), this genre is quite distinctive from scholarly editions of diaries or collections of letters. In scholarly editions the editor commonly provides an interpretative introduction, perhaps a preface and epilogue, and abundant notes. All of these are subordinate and not integral to the original text, which in many (but not all) instances could exist in its own right, independently of scholarly apparatus.

Bloom clearly observes that autobiography is hybrid and yet distinct from other forms of writing. Its 'variations' and 'hybrid' nature indicate to us that although form is an important kernel of autobiography, it can, however, not be considered the main distinguishing feature to classify works into genre. It becomes crystal clear that content should guide us in our attempts to define autobiography.

Another heated debate stems from the accusations levelled against the term *autobiography*. Most feminists label the term as male-gendered and thus do not believe that as genre autobiography can be free from ideological underpinnings. Feminist critics such as Audre Lorde, Adrienne Rich, Kate Millet, Patricia Williams, Jeanne Perreault, and Lynn Bloom are not happy with the generic terminology of "writing selves" in *autobiography.* They find the term designating a locus of male authority and also seeking to describe a [male] gendered self. Various replacement concepts are sought for the erstwhile concept. Some feminist writers and critics use the concept *autography.* Other concepts include: *autogynography, lifelines,* and *personal narratives.* Lynn Bloom uses the term *auto/bio/history* and she promises to keep this term until an alternative is found. She further explains that:

> In auto/bio/history the original author, often unknown outside her circle of intimates, kept a diary, wrote letters, or composed an abbreviated autobiography, narrating isolated incidents or presenting a fragmented self-characterization. These documents, however, often written without the concept of the external audience that a professional writer would keep in mind, are so elliptical, private, context-specific, or remote in time that most readers, unfamiliar with the author, cannot understand them. (Bloom 1991: 12)

What Bloom says is true of conventional autobiography where the author uses memoirs, letters, journals and diaries or any personal notes or documentation to construct a life, a self-analysis in the form of an autobiography. Would it mean therefore that where these documents have not been used writers are doomed to failure in (re)constructing and writing selves into the genre of autobiography? One should not be misled by Bloom's opinion that autobiography flows from "documents" which she describes as elliptical and private. There are cases, as in

Puleng's works where the author does not engage the services of a "professional writer" to compile versions of his life or use his own previously composed written memoirs, letters or diary, but relies on memory, emotions and reminiscence to recreate a life within the text. In this way, the author assumes the role of an historian-cum-fiction writer. Unlike an historian who relies heavily on records, written and oral, Puleng ventures into his past and provides the reader with a new assessment. This assessment is based on how he defines himself at that point in time within the context of his continued search for meaning in life. This search is related to his identity. Autobiography entails a construction of identity.

Thompson(1975:1) observes that identity is relative; it assumes the relationship of one thing to another. In this case, identity relates to two frames of reference: a personal frame of self-definition, of knowledge of who the self is and what the self is existing for, or, in other words, the relationship of self and purpose, a scheme of private values; and a social frame where the self seeks to assert itself outwardly and attempts to gain a public acknowledgement of its uniqueness and value. According to Thompson, the creative act of the autobiographer is therefore threefold: it is personal because it discovers the self, social because it seeks to ameliorate the human condition, and literary because it symbolizes universal experience.

Thompson goes further to indicate that the search for identity begins with a search in self-knowledge, which radically implies that identity compels us to seek our own definition of the self, and also propagates association with others. It is the social nature of identity which helps an individual to form a better understanding of the self. Self-knowledge requires a critical evaluation of the self in isolation, as well as in contact with others as expressed in the notions of *Dasein* and *Mitsein* which explain one's sense of being in the world.

Bloom contends that autobiographies are varied and yet distinct from other forms of literature. Thompson (1975:2) ascribes such differences to the "peculiar identity of the autobiographer as he tentatively understands [experience] it and to the unique configuration of values which exist as the basis of that identity." This view provides another aspect necessary to the concept of identity – that it is created around certain values which the autobiographer regards as basic and worth following. In support of this, Thompson (1975:15) adds that:

> Autobiography is therefore an argument for the values which shape the identity of the author. Hence, it constitutes an invitation to society that it structure its values as the autobiographer has his own. Such an intention results in rhetorical devices of persuasion, and, indeed, autobiographies are more didactic than neutral.

Because it contains elements of fiction, autobiography details the development of a subjective, intuitive self-portrait. Thompson (1975:5) asserts that some critics of autobiography suggest that its greatest achievement lies not in the factual details themselves, the portrayal of a life, but in what the details say about personality and about the human condition. For this reason Thompson suggests that autobiography is not only about the author's life, but tells us "more than that." How much "more" should the critic dig into the life of the artist for the interpretation of the literary work? How much detail brings us closer to the truth in the literary work? These questions are pivotal to the critic in "excavating" a "braided and plaited" life. The task is complicated for it digs into the private life of a person who chooses to shed information according to his/her whims. Not all can be obtained from the artist, especially not since some experiences have become blurred in memory.

Reading through Puleng's works, the reader is introduced to the private life of an author who, consciously or unconsciously, examines his past and translates it into fiction which often masquerades as history. This historical writing both reveals and conceals secrets, and makes the reader rely on textual details for more "facts" and the unveiling of the "truth". When the author reveals:

> Ketlabona ngwanaka, ke itšibotše ka wena ke sešo ka nyalwa. Mokgalabje Moruti Batlabolela, o nkhweditše ke na le wena ge a nnyala. (Puleng 1990:75)
>
> Ketlabona, my child, I gave birth to you before I was married. The Honourable Minister Batlabolela (*translated,* they will talk) found me with you when he married me.

the reader is compelled to trust in the text for an honest and sincere history of the Batlabolela family, whereas it later becomes evident that it is a representation of the author's constructed version of that life. This narrative invades into the private space of the author's life and provides the reader with 'confidential' information to seal the autobiographical pact with the reader. This pact makes the reader reliant upon the author for further divulgences. The manner in which the author uses the narrative of Mmakwatlapa in *Thellenyane Batlabolela* (Puleng 1990) to describe how his wife's mother deserted her children because he refused to accept a leviratical husband after the death of her husband, and the sincerity with which he turns this historical account into fiction, which an ardent and prudent reader would identify as *historical truth*, leaves the reader with complete confidence in the author. In this case, the author writes his life into the text. History is collapsed into fiction, subverted into myth-making.

Autobiography, by its nature, legitimises the narrator's life and turns it into a narrative of self-evaluation. It authenticates and justifies the author's actions as formalised in fictional form. The problem one faces in trying to read "more than that", as alluded to earlier on, is where to draw the line between history and fiction in what is presented as a single text. The "excavation" is selective, and nobody but the author can choose what elements of the past deserve to be enlivened and shared with the reader who is part of the autobiographical pact. This pact holds the reader ransom, and compels him/her to evaluate the *bios* of the text and how this construction of identity functions to appropriate what the author considers invaluable information from the past, information which subsequently collapses into an unending *now*. Only extensive research into the past can determine the accuracy and veracity of all this information, but even then it often remains difficult to verify. Autobiography thus, becomes an interplay, a collusion, between past and present, whose significance lies more in the revelation of the present situation than an uncovering of the past.

The search for identity, then, becomes the central motive of the autobiographer, while the reader's vicarious experience of that quest and of the universal truth he discovers there forms the basis for autobiographical pact. In a way, autobiography is a confession of truths held dearly by an author, and truths which only find escape under the guise of fiction. At times these confessions are to a certain extent apologetic as we shall show with the poem *Lefase leo ke le nyadišitšwego ka megokgo* [The world to which I related with remorse]. Gilmore (1994:68) tellingly explains the relationship between fact and fiction as dictated by the confessional nature of autobiography:

> Because the subject of autobiography is a self-representation and not the autobiographer her/himself, most contemporary critics describe this "self" as a fiction. When we locate the pressure to tell the truth in the context of the fictive self accountable for producing truth, the problematical alliance between fact and fiction begins to emerge. For autobiography's roots in the confession— spiritual and juridical— continue to mark it a form in which it is both possible and necessary to the truth. The vow "so help me God" seals the courtroom and the confessional account in the presence of a witness authorized to return a verdict, to determine the veracity or perjury, to judge innocence or guilt, to decide on absolution or damnation. Some higher authority or recourse to its function is a fixture in scenes

> where the truth is at issue, for it is necessary in this construction
> of truth telling to speak to someone.

Gilmore's paradigm is built on the Christian model of confession where an imagined authority assumes the role of the audience and listener, and judge. Within autobiographical discourse, the reader becomes that "abstract authority". Gilmore maintains that even when the reader, or the autobiographer, replaces God as the implied audience, the structure of confession remains available.

It is interesting to note how Puleng uses his work as a means of penetrating his being, and the meaning he attaches to his existence in the midst of others. He is aware of his failures, which are represented in the figure of Thellenyane who is pompous and unable to come to terms with his poor performance at school. He uses other characters such as Tintela and Kotentsho who proclaim that *o be a goga ka kgara (he was a struggler)* (Puleng 1990:8). Tintella, Kotentsho and Kekwele provide the dark past of Thellenyane which should be balanced against Kgobadi's versions of Thellenyane's life. As indicated elsewhere, Kgobadi serves as an angel that placates all the fouls that Thellenyane has committed. All that Puleng attempts to do is to define his own self and how others project him. In the same text, *Thellenyane Batlabolela*, one seems to hear a voice that is determined to succeed against all odds.

Despite his failures and the conspiracies against him, Thellenyane manages to obtain a conditional exemption from the Matriculation Board and proceeds to do a degree in music. These textual constructs are shadows of the author's deepest desires and ambitions. As a music lover, he allows himself space to succeed in the textual world for he finds it difficult to achieve the same heights in real life. The Andronicus and Alacrity university by the sea metaphor represents his innermost wish to obtain a university degree, and this was finally achieved when Puleng the person completed a BA and then an Honours degree at the Universities of the North and Pretoria respectively. This burning desire is mythologised and transformed into fictional form as the author employs other characters to pursue his needs in life. It is not only Thellenyane who obtains a degree in music to satisfy the author's whims, but also Kobi in *Roko e ntsho* (Puleng 1994) who assumes the author's role and ambitions:

> Ngwaga wo o šupologago ke nyaka go ikhwetša ke le University of Alacrity (*ka boikgantšho*). Kua lebopong la lewatle.
>
> I want to find myself at the University of Alacrity in the coming year (*with a sense of pride*). There by the shores of the sea.

The same sentiment is echoed in *Thellenyane Batlabolela* where the archetype of Alacrity is Andronicus, another university by the sea. It is only at this seaside university, where there is natural harmony and quietude that his dream of becoming a professional music scholar will be realised. The reader is drawn into an imaginative and creative narrative in which the author's desires are converted into fiction. These desires are reiterated in *Thellenyane Batlabolela* when Retlabona advises Thellenyane to apply for a conditional exemption certificate:

> O dire o laele ka pela ka kua Nthušeng gape o ngwale mangwalo a dikgopelo e sa le bjale gore ge ngwaga o šupologa, o šupologe le wena yunibesithing.
>
> Ensure that you bid Nthušeng farewell in time and apply immediately so that when the year commences, it will find you at university.

The author uses different voices to echo the same feelings and sentiments, for these are representations of his inner self and unrealised wishes. All these voices speak for the body outside the text, and this body transmutes itself into fictional selves which pursue its demands, ends and motives. The truth of the matter is that the author's relentless academic failure seemed to have closed all doors to possible university entrance, and to pursuing his interests in music. By applying his imagination, the writer re-places his life, and turns it into a fiction which can satisfy his whims. Autobiography in this way becomes a re-telling of a life story, a duplication of the author's life in a manner determined by the one who rewrites that life into *fiction*. These revelations prompt the researcher to ask several questions. How does one differentiate between fiction and fact in a text? How does one draw a line between autobiographically true statements and imagined truths? These are very difficult questions to answer because the art of self-scrutiny in itself suggests an imaginative activity which works upon the experiences of the self while reducing that self to an object of analysis. One may even be tempted to argue that critical inquiry itself is to some extent a form of autobiographical exercise, since it entails the use of the critic's personal experiences in the process of analysis.

Because autobiography involves self-analysis, and an attempt to define meaning for the self, we find Puleng using different strategies to interpret his life and his worth. He expresses a sense of inadequacy and self-rejection which he translates into the experience of being hated and gossiped about. In *Thellenyane Batlabolela*, his academic qualifications as a teacher, that is, his Primary Teachers' Certificate, are subjected to consistent criticism from various voices. First it is articulated by Thellenyane's rival, Kotentsho, who remarks:

> A sa tšo fihla bjale. Ka mo ga a na matriki. (Puleng 1990: 28)
>
> A new arrival such as him! He doesn't even have matric.

After Thellenyane has allegedly taken the choir from Kekwele by force, this criticism is levelled against him with a view to ridiculing his integrity. Kgobadi's intercession turns the discourse into a farce:

> Anthe ge le le mo le kgenthola Thellenyane e le gore le lena matriki nkhokho? (Puleng 1990:33)
>
> Are you discrediting Thellenyane for the matric you yourself do not have?

Thellenyane's enemies, who accuse him of being underqualified, suddenly turn into the accused: they are discovered to be throwing stones while they too live in glasshouses. The statement not only reflects the extent of people's prejudice against shortcomings they themselves possess, but becomes a vehicle to address what the author sees as an anomaly in the teaching field: the tendency to shun away from further studies, and to retaining the only qualification one has acquired as though it will be relevant forever. The Department of Education's directive in *Thellenyane Batlabolela* reinforces the author's ideas. This inadequacy is not only levelled at the self that turns itself into a writing self, but also at the other selves concerned with children's education. From these representations, one observes that Puleng's autobiography works on the ordering of experience into a "concrete, observable metaphor" which stands for the self. Smith's assumption that

> All "I's" are not equal. Nor are they conceptualised similarly. There is, for instance, the "we" that is sometimes an autobiographical "I." There is also the Rastafarian "I and I"; and the female "I." (Smith 1991:186)

suggests that identities occupy different strata in space, and that each of these subjects continually redefines its role and position to access the centre stage which is the seat of power and control. Autobiography becomes a springboard to traverse these spaces from periphery to centre. Indeed, these I's, be they Blacks, women, the alienated or foreigners, compete unequally for resources and freedom(s). In autobiography, especially its American form which is predominantly written by women, the self finds a means to challenge those oppressions and injustices which deny its admission to the space of the centre.

In settler colonies, the marginalised use aspects of autobiography as a means of attaining social and spiritual liberation. Women have employed this medium to express their discontentment with male domination in society, and Puleng's poetry has to be understood in the same light, as a means of reflecting the injustices of the past, in this case, apartheid and colonisation. The *I* occupies various positions in the text, sharing the identity of the narrator, protagonist and the author. Autobiography thus engages in a process of self-definition which is another task of post-colonial discourse. Goodwin (1993:18) maintains that autobiography has made significant contributions to social history and political thought, for it offers to individuals otherwise excluded from the spheres of political representation and publication the opportunity to address the public in their own voices.

Quoting Judith Butler, Smith(1991:187) goes on to suggest that if oppression is to be defined as a loss of autonomy by those who are oppressed, as well as a fragmentation or alienation within their psyche, then a theory which insists upon inevitable fragmentation of the subject appears to reproduce and valorize the very oppression that must be overcome. That theory, by implication, is autobiography. Autobiographical practices thus, become occasions for the staging of identity, and autobiographical strategies occasions for the staging of agency. Such texts are described as autobiographical manifestos in Smith's terminology. The autobiographical manifesto can provide:

> ... an account of the world as seen from the margins, an account which can expose the falseness of the view from the top and can transform the margins as well as the center ... an account of the world which treats our perspectives not as subjugated or disruptive knowledges, but as a primary and constitutive of a different world. (Smith 1991: 191)

Thus, the autobiographer of the margins enters the generic arena as an alienated speaker, though not an alienated speaker in the postmodern sense. What needs to be understood from Smith's opinion is that, the marginal voice should be seen as an alter/native voice which deserves the same attention and status as the dominant voice which wishes to naturalise its position and authority. This debate will receive sufficient attention in chapter 5.

An interesting scenario is found in Puleng's writings. His birth represents an ambivalent identity which marks all his works. He was born in South Africa, which virtually makes him a *bona fide* South African citizen, but his father is a Zimbabwean. This dual identity later haunts him in literary circles. Despite his knowledge of Sepedi, his books were allegedly rejected on the basis that he was not an "authentic" speaker of the language. This kind of discrimination was rife during the apartheid years. In an interview, Phatudi Sekhukhune, claims that such discrimination forced Puleng to use a pseudonym, N.S.Puleng, to disguise his true identity.

Pseudonyms are used by people who want to conceal their identity for various reasons, and this frequently occurs among marginals. For his first anthology of poems, he uses the name N.S.Puleng instead of his real identity Puleng Samuel Nkomo. Only snippets of his life give the reader some clues which serve as signposts to discover who this writer really is. There are no photos or biographical details of the author at the beginning or end of the book. Even snippets of historical truths which the poems provide are likely to be relegated to mere fiction.

Though *Ditlalemeso* (1980) opens with a dedication to his deceased father, it does not mention the father's name. The date of death and the father's profession are sincerely given without providing other signposts of identity. This is an attempt to bring into the centre the story of a man whose life is yet to be recorded in future publications. In *Seipone sa madimabe,* Puleng (1981) reveals who his mother is, namely; Sarah Peggy

Mapoo Nkomo, yet the concept *mma* is hidden within a very long sentence which prevents the reader from relating it to the author:

> Pukwana ye ke e ngwala ka lerato go ba sešupophadimo le segopotšo sa go wa le go tsoga go morategi wa pelo ya ka le maatlakgogedi a moya wa ka, *mma*, lehutšo le boithekgo bja ka; *Mohumagadi* Sarah Peggy Mapoo Nkomo, yoo a kgonnego go bona mahlasedi a letšatši. Ga ke kgone go lebala borapedi bjoo ke bo bonego lapeng lešo; ke lekile ke paletšwe. Ke leboga lerato le tlhompho tšeo di re kopantšego le ge re ka arogana.
>
> *Phejane ya gago*
>
> *N.S.Puleng* (Puleng 1981) [*My emphasis*]
>
> I write this booklet in memory of, and as brilliant symbol of love, to the one I love with all my heart, whose love is an attraction to my soul, Mother, my hope and anchor Mrs (Honourable) Sarah Peggy Mapoo Nkomo who has survived to this day. I cannot forget the faith I have experienced in my family; I have tried, but failed. I thank you for the love and respect which have united us even if we may be separated.
>
> Your last born son
>
> N.S.Puleng

In this preface, the word *mma* [mother] is dominated by the long name which follows it. The prefixing of the name with *Mohumagadi* [Honourable Lady] betrays the reader into believing that another honourable person, rather than his mother, has been of help to the author, and is thus thanked. The reader is further misled by the biblical reference to the hymn *ho rorisoe rato lena* in the line "*ke leboga lerato le tlhompho tšeo di re kopantšego le ge re ka arogana*." Only at the end when we read "*phejane ya gago*" [your last born son] are we cautioned to raise our eyebrows, only to be treated to another disguise, the signature, "N.S.Puleng." How important this is as a self-legitimising strategy remains to be seen.

Malopo a boreti (1983) is Puleng's first book where his plotted life appears on the outside cover. On the same cover his photo discloses his identity for the first time. Here, his full names are given. As if this is not enough, he gives an abridged version of his life from his mother's womb to the time when he becomes a writer in the poem *Bolwetši bja letšofalela* (Puleng 1983:38-44). This poem, approximately seven pages long, seems to be a challenge to his critics to 'erase' him from the world of writers, if they can. He does not leave his identity to the biography at the end of the anthology, an act which may lead to an omission by the publisher, but inscribes it into the body of the text in an unequivocal manner:

> Bjalo ka bana,
> Bana ba badumedi
> Le nna ka kolobetšwa,
> Ka kolobetšwa ka apešwa maina,

Maina a bakgethwa,
Ka bitšwa Samuel:
Baruti bagwera ba tate,
Ba mpea diatlamaruru ka tshepho... (Puleng 1983:40-41)

Like all children,
[Christian] Believers' children
I was baptised too
Baptised and named
Named after the anointed
I was named Samuel.
Priests, my father's friends,
Blessed me with hope...

It is significant to note that this introduction to the author's life comes directly after the biography published at the end of *Malope a boreti (Puleng 1983)* He reveals to the world what his identity is, and this also sheds light on his religious upbringing. The narrative reinforces this idea and introduces other signposts which are undoubtedly historical, not fictional. Thus far, the reader is convinced that the poem is historical and/or autobiographical. At this stage, the author has reached the climax of his writing, and has received acceptance as another self, rather than for his true identity, Nkomo. Now that everybody seems to know who he really is, he discloses his identity and starts writing in his real name, P.S.Nkomo (*cf. Direti tše nne* series). He has succeeded in using autobiography as a means of gaining access to the centre from which he was denied entry. Susan Stanford Friedman argues that such a form of alienation:

> ... is not the result of creating a self in language, as it is in Lacanian and Barthesian critics of autobiography. Instead, alienation from the historically imposed image of the self is what motivates the writing, the creation of an alternate self in the autobiographical act. Writing the self shatters the cultural hall of mirrors and breaks the silence imposed by male speech. (Smith 1991:191)

According to Friedman, autobiography concerns itself with an attempt to duplicate life, to create an alternate identity represented in language. Friedman further holds that autobiography breaks the silence created by male speech. This "silence" is a marker for marginality, which all marginals such as Blacks, women, foreigners, and settlers share. Puleng's poetry must be understood as sharing the same marginal status which finds expression in autobiography, which penetrates the private self, and enters the arena of public speaking.

2.3 MEMORY AS A NARRATIVE STRATEGY

The relationship between memory and autobiography has been a contested field of research, particularly by autobiographical researchers. Psychologists in particular have used reports from patients, and the validity of such reports has always been a matter of great interest. Recognising the importance of memory in the everyday life of a human being, memory scholars differentiate between various types of memory which perform differentiated functions. Tulving speaks of two types, the episodic memory and generic event memory (Thompson, *et al* 1996).

Tulving's episodic memory refers to memory for something (an event) that occurred at a specific time and place, "it is these kind of specific episodes that are often thought of as constituting one's *autobiographical memory*" (Thompson, *et al* 1996). Nelson (1993) distinguishes various forms of memory: episodic memory, generic event memory, and autobiographical memory. Her definition of episodic memory is similar to that of Tulving, but her view is that such a memory is not always autobiographical (Thompson 1996). Episodic memory should be understood as a temporary holding system that provides information which is merely reproduced. Brewer (1993:13) limits such a memory to the experience of a single incident which is 'relived' and 'recollected' from an individual's past.

The generic event memory is considered to be the schema that provides an outline for a type of event without providing any of the details of the event in question. It involves a reconstruction of an event, and such a (re)construction is, as Thompson, *et al* (1996) explain, based on knowledge of the structure of the type of event and the characteristics of individuals, objects and places involved. Similar events repeated are bound to create a ‘generic personal memory’, to borrow Brewer's (1993) terminology. Such a memory is endowed with imaginal properties that result from experiencing a series of similar events.

Thompson *et al* (1996:2) view autobiographical memory as personal, specific and long-lasting, and usually of significance to the self-system. Nelson goes on to suggest that autobiographical memory 'forms part of one's personal life history' (Thompson, *et al* 1996). Brewer (1993) identifies autobiographical memory by frequency of exposure, types of input and forms of representation. This type of memory is a non-phenomenal, 'non-imaginal memory of a single instance of information relating to the self' (Brewer 1993). Brewer's opinion emphasises the connection between experience and the self which forms an inseparable alliance which is reflected in the subject's reports. In the introductory chapter of *Remembering our Past: Studies in Autobiographical Memory*, Rubin (1996:2) observes:

> ... one component of autobiographical memory is *verbal narrative*. Autobiographical memories are usually recalled as words, often as stories. The verbal structure of an autobiographical memory is the structure of the genre of narrative that it is. (My italics)

Autobiographical memory, therefore, reconstructs a narrative through cues and motifs which are fundamental to the inner experience of the subject. The subject uses such motifs as verbal structures on which the full narrative is constructed. Rubin regards emotions and imagery as *topi* for such a narrative construction.

It should be emphasised that this study does not attempt to do a psychoanalytic exploration of the Puleng texts. I shall proceed, as promised, to steer a course between

Afrocentricity and post-colonialism. In this section, the various arguments regarding the role of memory, its validity and reliability, will not be evaluated, nor will I discuss the various types in the construction of a Puleng text. The most important issue in this debate is how the author uses memory as a narrative strategy to reconstruct his life, identity and the *othering* of fellow human beings.

Memory is a trope that Puleng employs to take the reader on a long journey towards (re)defining his own identity. It is through memory that we are carried into the past of the protagonist/speaker's life, where we meet Thellenyane, a young adult who battles with understanding his new role and position in life. He battles with his becoming, and attempts to find himself, a task which is difficult for all adolescents. This dilemma is pointed out by Mmathapelo:

> Mmele wa gago o beputše moya wa go inyaka. Na o tla ikhwetša
> neng? (Puleng 1990:3)
>
> Your body is laden with a self-defining spirit. When shall you
> find your [true] self?

Indeed Thellenyane does not understand why he should become the laughing-stock of his peers. Taking the location principle into account, Thellenyane centralises his own life above that of others, becomes self-centred and fails to see the world in its true perspective. His continued failure to pass matric does not open his eyes, but instead, further inflates his pride:

> Ke le ngwana wa mooki, e sego mooki fela – *sister tutor*– mohlahlabaoki, ka tla ka goboga pele ga manaba a ka ke itebeletše? (Puleng 1990:1)
>
> Being the son of a nurse, not merely a nurse, but a sister tutor, one who trains nurses, should I be disgraced before my foes' eyes?

We seem to find parallels of the author's life encroaching into this text. This to an extent confirms Neuman's (1991:77) assertion that:

> Autobiography in its modern, introspective form at least, situates itself at the very juncture of the public world of announcement and the private world of self-analysis and mediation.

The public eye is drawn to the life of the author and his immediate family. Puleng's mother assumed similar roles to Thellenyane's mother, Mmathapelo. Mmathapelo, as the name suggests, refers to a very religious person who uses prayer as her shield. If one were to closely examine the life and predicament of Puleng's mother and compare it to Mmathapelo's, one would be tempted to conclude that Mmathapelo is a textual construct, a representation of the life of Puleng's mother. In the same vein, Thellenyane should be understood as an attempt by the author to (re)construct fragments of his own real life. Through the veil of fiction, Puleng employs Thellenyane to perform a "role with which to disguise his real self — a mask to beguile the reader and one which might even delude the writer himself" (Thompson 1975:24). I am aware that the textual constructs have been fed with frills of fiction and imagination, so much so that attempting to make a one-to-one correspondence of the author/speaker's life can turn into a nightmare.

Dialogue with Thellenyane is revealing of both Puleng's condition and that of his mother:

> Ke tseba gabotse gore *ke mošemane ke nnoši ka mo gae fela e sego a nnoši. Re babedi fela ka mo gae,* ke tseba gabotse. Bjale ge kgaetšedi Retlabona, a hlalane le monna wa gagwe nna di nkama ka eng? Ee, ke a tseba gore nna le yena re tlemagantšwe ke dithala tše thata tša bophelo. ... *Nna ke mošalagae,* yeo mpho yeo ke e filwego ke Modimo le badimo. Ga se ka swanelwa go bakišwa ke motho, gobane yo a mpakišago goba a nkgopotša maemo a ka o swana le mpša ya mootlelwana yeo e gobolago ngwedi wa letopanta... *Lapa lešo ke la borapedi, gobane mohu tate e be le moruti wa purabura. Le nna ke morapedi*: ke bona ka mahlo a moya. (Puleng 1990:3) (My italics)
>
> I know very well that I am an only son in this family, but not one and only one. We are two in this family, that I know well. Now that my sister Retlabona is divorced, how does that involve me? Yes, I am aware that she and I are bound together by a common thread in life... I am an heir, this is a gift I have been given by *Modimo* [God] and *badimo* [ancestors]. No one has the right to wrestle this right away from me, for (s)he who attempts to remind me of my position in this family is like a little puppy which barks at the moon in the twilight. My family

> is a religious one because my father was an ordained minister.
> I am also very religious and I can see visions.

The extract is undoubtedly autobiographical, and reflects an actual family episode. Like Thellenyane in this text, Puleng is an only son of Mapoo Peggy and Bismarck Nkomo. This family is blessed with two children, one son and a daughter. Retlabona epitomises Mantsho, Puleng's sister. The statement:

> Ke tseba gabotse gore *ke mošemane ke nnoši* ka mo gae fela *e sego a nnoši.*
>
> I know very well that I am an only son in this family, but not one and only one.

is open to multiple interpretations. It locates the speaker's position within the family as an only son and heir. This view can be understood as meaning that the speaker's family consists of the speaker and his sister only as reinforced by the assertion: *re babedi fela ka mo gae* (we are only two in this family). Another view might be that not only is the speaker aware of his position as an only son, but all others too, that is, not the speaker *a nnoši.* The presence of the construction *ka mo gae* (here in my family) invites further questions about the speaker's statements. The conjunctive *fela* seems to introduce to the discourse an opposite viewpoint to that stated in the part of the sentence preceding it. Seemingly the construction *e sego (mošemane) a nnoši* functions in opposition to *(mošemane) ke nnoši.* This new interpretation should be understood against the background of

Puleng's father coming to the country as a fully-grown man who may have left children in Zimbabwe, either in or outside marriage. One may deduce from these statements that his father might have had children elsewhere, which would make the speaker not the only son of Moruti Nkomo, but the only son from the marriage of Nkomo and Mmapoo.

Other extra-textual details which feed into this text and illuminate the thoughts involve the developments following Nkomo's death. After his death, another marriage was arranged between the speaker's mother and her Rapetsoa relative in Bochum, Uitkyk number 1. African marriages have to be understood as perpetual agreements which are nurtured by all the "signatories" both in the bride's and the groom's families. In the event of the death of a spouse, the other party bridges the gap by providing another spouse, in the form of *go tsenela* or *seantlo*. Nkomo's death represents a lack, and/ or absentation of this stage. The author/speaker was upset by this arrangement, which led to the family moving to the new *bogadi*.

In this family, it is possible, then, that the mother may have given birth to other children who would nullify the speaker's chances of being *mošemane a nnoši* and *mošalagae*. It is against this background that the speaker's statements should be understood. He employs the locative *ka mo gae* in opposition to *ka ntle* which is implicitly derived from his utterances, and in this way we read into the text the possibility of sons in the in-group and the out-group. He creates these dichotomies to protect his position as *mošalagae*, a position which he regards as *mphabadimo* - God-given.

He uses the narrative to reject being part of the new family into which his mother has married. It is for this reason that he does not want to be reminded of his new position: *gobane yo a mpakišago goba a nkgopotša maemo a ka o swana le mpša ya mootlelwana ...(because [s] he who contests with me or reminds me of my position is like a little puppy...)* . This reluctance to be reminded of his changed status because of his mother's new marriage represents an abrogation of that marriage and an attempt to retain his identity as a distinct member of his family. The statement *lapa lešo ke la borapedi gobane tate e be e le moruti (my family is a religious one because my father was a priest)* is another narrative strategy which is used to distinguish his family from the Rapetsoa family. Religion and the father's profession are here used as distinctive markers to justify his rejection of the new family.

Another narrative representing the same abnegation is found in *Lefase leo ke le nyadišitšwego ka megokgo* [The world to which I related with remorse] (Puleng 1991) in which the speaker addresses the conflict which ensued as a result of the marriage discussed in the previous paragraphs. The title of the poem in itself suggests a denial of the displacement. The speaker negotiates forgiveness of his mother:

Ntshwarele mma,
Nkwele bohloko ke ngwana' gago;

Ke go ratile e bile [*sic*] ke sa go rata,
Megokgo ya ka e ntlhokiša khutšo...
Gobane medu ya bophelo bja ka,
E tsemilwe Kgobadi `a Nyedimane. (Puleng 1991:26)

Forgive me Mother,
Feel pity for me as your child,
I loved you, and I still do.
My laments disturb my peace,
Because the roots of my life
Are firmly grounded in Kgobadi `a Nyedimane.

Although the speaker is upset, and cannot accept the mother's decision, he still proclaims his love and respect for her. The poet is distressed by the movement of the family from Moletlane, hence he appeals:

Mpušetše gae ...
Gobane ke thonkgegile maikutlo;
Ke kgole le boithekgo bja ka,
Ke kgole le difahlego tšeo mahlo ke di tlwaetšego,
Ke kgole le bagwera le dithaka tša ka... (Puleng 1991:26)

Return me to my home
Because my soul is troubled,
I am removed from my anchor,
I am far from the faces that are familiar to me,
I am far from my friends and my peers.

These lines express the same sense of displacement and discomfort caused by the alienation of the speaker from his place of birth. We shall return to this aspect in the next chapter in the discussion of the lost domain and return myth.

That "Retlabona", who represents Puleng's real sister, is divorced is echoed several times in Puleng's works. In *Inama, inama se go tshele* [Surrender and comply] (Puleng 1994), she is represented by Oanteka who has been abandoned by Inama, a treacherous man who claims "*E be e se nna; e be e le nna yo mongwe. Lehono ke nnanna*" [I was not myself, it was my other self]. Punished through natural justice, Inama defers his identity to become an- other, and in this alterity he pursues his coventous, adulterous needs. In *Kgotlelela Mantsho (Persevere Mantsho)* (Puleng 1991) we find another representation of the same man who now assumes the figure of a dog:

E rile go lala mafekong *mpša ya kgotho* (sic),
Ya bona bokaone e le go tliša ka lapeng...
O rile go tšwa thupantlong ya basadi,
Pholo o e phathakgetše namane— Mpho... (Puleng 1991:37)

Having slept out, the bull dog,
Finally saw it fit to bring them home ...
When you returned from maternity,
Grasping a sturdy boy, Mpho.

The *poo* and *kgoto* images express how Puleng feels about the man who had "married" his sister. To create him in the identity of *poo* and *kgoto* not only conjures up representations of maleness, but also helps the reader to develop his/her own construction of this subject's identity. Along the lines drawn by the author, the reader is guided to extend the textual semiology and its signification. The man's virility and insatiable sexual appetite are articulated through vulgar, erotic imagery and representation. With regard to the imagery used to represent this man in the poem Mokgoatšana (1996:49) goes on to explain:

> The dog imagery in the extract aptly describes the insatiable sexual lust of the male partner and further reveals the disgusting nature of the character in the poem. No better words could describe him other than denigrating him as a dog for the unfaithful and disrespecting qualities he displays. Like a dog that appears to be driven by its sexual drives he also leaves his wife for other girlfriends and rubs salt into the wound by bringing them home in the presence of his wife.

We find the same portraiture in *Inama, inama se go tshele*:(Puleng 1994:92)

> Ke rile ke ile setswetšing sa ngwana wa rena, Nakeyena, wa katwa fase ke kganyogo ya nama.

> When I went to give birth to our son, Nakeyena, you were overpowered by the desires of the flesh.

The author does not introduce the other side of this man's life. Only later are we confronted with the same figure in *Inama, inama se go tshele,* where the reader must read between the lines and conclude that Oanteka is a telescoped construct of the same figure found in *Kgotlelela Mantsho Ngwana' Mma.*

In the earlier extract several names which can easily be mistaken for fictitious names are introduced. Firstly, we are introduced to Mpho, who is Mantsho's son. He is used in various contexts in Puleng's poetry and dramas, which indicates the importance attached to him, particularly to the fact that he was an only child of Mantsho. In *Inama, inama se go tshele*, he is represented in the figure of Nakeyena, the name that foretells a sense of rejection on the part of the father, Oanteka. Unfortunately, Mpho died in a car accident in 1995. We will also detail this issue in the next chapter. The second name suggested in the poem is Mashakwe, Puleng's cousin. The third name introduced is Seshego, a township outside Pietersburg where Puleng's sister has her house. It is here that the whole "drama" of the incidents represented in the poem and in *Inama, inama se go tshele*. take place. Lastly, Moletlane, described by the praise name- Kgobadi `a Nyedimane functions as a narrative that binds the author's soul to his ancestral land. We have shown in the previous discussions that Kgobadi as used in *Thellenyane Batlabolela*, assumes the role of a spiritual force that acts as a shepherd to the life of the author.

From the analysis carried out so far, I tend to agree with Sarton's suggestion that artists make myths of their lives in order to sustain, cut losses, or to negotiate pain, and that memories of childhood are marinated in appropriate bits of what we've read or heard since then and what we *choose* to believe in (Braham 1995). Braham is aware of the difficult task facing the autobiographer who wishes to recall the events of the past in detail:

> We trust memory against all the evidence: it's selective, subjective, cannily defensive, unreliable as fact. But a single red detail remembered - a hat worn in 1952, the nail polish applied once in a summer's day by an aunt to her toes, separated by balls of cotton, as we watched- has more real blood than the creatures around us on a bus as, for some reason, we think of that day, that hat, those bright feet. That world. This power of memory probably comes from its kinship with the imagination.

The same observation is made by Robert Elbaz:

> The past evades complete recapture, especially as it recedes further back in time. Memory reconstructs and recreates, often more with an eye toward the present moment of remembering than toward the past experience remembered (Goodwin 1993:12)

Because autobiography re-presents and re-creates experience of the past, it cannot claim authentic historicity, but will always have fiction providing the shadow text to the historical text:

> ... autobiography is an imaginative arrangement of the world, and at the same time it repeats experiences as they were lived. This paradoxicality is dictated by ideology, for one cannot concede that the mind - at least the mind of the artist - is a xerox machine, yet at the same time one has to posit for the sake of the *status quo*, that reality is the same both within and without the text. Only the ideology of sameness can accommodate a myth of autobiographic duplication. (Elbaz 1988:10)

Autobiography allows its writer to engage in an imaginative journey which traverses the past, and this cannot be done without compromising and exaggerating certain aspects of reality. That autobiography reflects a private life by a writer who has absolute power over the text also minimises the chances of using it as an historical text free from distortions. Like all other texts, autobiography is fabrication. On examining how Puleng uses his texts as autobiographical reflections, one is likely to observe the way in which reality is twisted into fiction and then reversed into imaginative constructs. In *Thellenyane Batlabolela*, for instance, Thellenyane's involvement in a car accident is a narrative strategy used to express an autobiographical manifesto, a truth which is twisted in the hands of the author. Indeed the author had a car accident, in which his first *Honda* was smashed to bits. This incident, as respondents explain, aroused interest from his foes who were elated by it. The author thus uses the same incident as a trope to project his evaluation of his life. In this narrative, the protagonist/speaker has his leg amputated:

> O gobetše kudu, e bile [*sic*] ba mo ripile leoto la nngele. (Puleng 1990:47)
>
> He is so seriously injured that his left leg has been amputated.

The author deliberately amputates Thellenyane's leg as a metaphor for the mutilation of the body and soul. In this instance, a lacerated body encapsulates the physical pain suffered as well as the emotional distress that accompanied the incident. The narrative is used to imagine what would have happened had he personally broken his leg. By using an imaginative construct, the author seeks to rethink his careless attitude towards life and the consequences that may ensue from it. The same attitude has been a matter of grave concern for his mother, as expressed here in the voice of Mmathapelo:

> O a tseba ge nka be tatago a sa phela o be a ka se dumele mantshegele a o mpitšhago ona. (Puleng 1994:2)
>
> You should know that if your father were alive, he would not tolerate this 'nonsense' of yours.

The author deliberately exaggerates certain incidents from his life in order to strengthen and magnify their effect, and to close the gap between what is said and what has been sifted and left out. Another example can be obtained from the narrative following Thellenyane's admission to hospital. The narrative, the protagonist/speaker meets Lerato, a nurse at the hospital to which he was admitted. Throughout the text, the reader is led to believe that the love between the protagonist and the nurse only began after the accident. The reality of the matter is, that the author and the nurse have been in love for some time even before the accident. This mythic narrative is used to gloss over the truth. Fiction parades here as history, and narratives such as this invite questions about the authenticity of fictional writing as a source of historical evidence. The same sentiment is shared by Braham (1995:42) who points out that autobiographical truth revealed through memory and metaphor is not the same as historical truth; the autobiographical act is simultaneously an invention and a discovery. A similar view is also attested by Louis James (1984:113) who proclaims:

> A novelist may draw entirely on personal experience, and create a work of fiction. But autobiography need not indicate a simple relationship to a history: indeed the literal recording of objective data belongs not to the finer art of autobiography, but to the biographical dictionary. Facts are selected, shaped, fused into significance by a faculty one can call creative imagination. Like fiction, it is shaped towards a purpose.

From James' work one notes that autobiography may not be entirely factual, which suggests that an attempt to verify all incidents is at times a fruitless exercise. Objectivity is not always achieved in autobiography because of the fictional nature of autobiographical texts. How the facts are arranged depends largely on the purpose the artist wants to achieve. According to Thompson (1975:2) the design of autobiography is determined by the autobiographical purpose, which refers to the relationship between the quest for identity and form which suggests that an autobiography is an instrument for establishing identity. It should be remembered, though, that autobiography remains fictional work, and thus, that there is no way in which the author can avoid distortions which may always be relegated to the realm of fiction and fantasy. The author suspends certain details, and expands on others to the benefit of the text. Robert Elbaz (1988:13) sums up the problem in this way:

> The text cannot be completed and is therefore suspended. The reader must, then, go to the beginning- which is the end - for autobiography (like fiction) is an act of ceaseless renewal: the story is never 'told' finally, exhaustively, completely. The story of a life cannot be laid out in full detail from beginning to the end; the significance of that life cannot be exhausted in a single narrative.

The reader is struck by the manner in which Puleng recreates several identities to represent his wife. She is represented, first, in the comforting figure of Lerato, a nurse who grew up with Thellenyane and later cared for him in hospital after he had been involved in a tragic accident. The same character is later explained as *ngwana' Tladi* whose mother refused a leviratical husband, a narrative which indeed offers an honest description of the wife's mother who has later reunited with her children after the marriage of her daughter Jacqueline to Puleng Nkomo, the author. The same image is found in another character also named Lerato in *Le diphiri di tla utolo*ga. She is almost the same construct as Lerato in *Thellenyane Batlabolela*. She is also a nurse. In *Le diphiri di tla utologa*, the wife's appearance is projected onto the fictional figure:

> Ge a ahlama, legano le fetoga Gauteng ka maphadiphadi a meno
> a gauta. (Puleng 1994:67)

> When she opens her mouth, it turns into a Golden City as a
> result of the glittering golden teeth.

This image is constructed from the identity of the author's wife. When I first met his wife, I was confronted by the portrait which I had been introduced to in the textual world. Though Butler (1968:4) suggests that a portrait is difficult enough, and that the self-portrait, whether through the medium of a mirror or a book is even more difficult, I have found personae in Puleng's works illuminating those aspects of the portrait which the author purports to foreground. Another representation of the author's wife can be read from *Roko e ntsho* in the personality of Mmalehu who is described as follows:

> Nywaga ye eka bago 30. Ke mooki ka *profešene* gape ke mosadi
> wa Kobi. Segadi sa mosadi.

> She is aged 30. A nurse by profession, and Kobi's wife. A
> chatterbox of a woman.

Throughout these texts, one realises that the characters Mmalehu and Lerato in *Le diphiri di tla utologa* and *Thellenyane Batlabolela* underlie the same personality and embody the same figure, each complementing the other. Of interest is the meaning the author attaches to Lerato as a paradigm for real love and companionship, which is later translated into reality when he names his youngest daughter Lerato.

Reading these textual constructs, one realises that Puleng uses memory to re-invent history, and elevates his family history into myth and epic. Braham (1995:37) maintains that memory can blur the specific detail in order to recover the truth, and that it can group events and re-order them to demonstrate latent meaning; it can invest the tumble of the spontaneous or accidental with the wisdom of hindsight. Thompson (1975:24) warns against the danger of using memory as an authority to uncover the truth:

> Memory, too, is a dangerous authority since it fails to remember all circumstances and the past it remembers is most often colored by the attitudes which exist in the present.

Thompson also makes this important observation about memory and its role:

> ... memory is not thorough; it forgets, and with a literary artist, it usually forgets for aesthetic reasons -- in other words, it selects in order to render the whole more pleasing as a literary statement. But selection necessarily distorts-- "memory is a great artist." The mind censors what is disagreeable and the imaginary provides a more acceptable substitute" (Thompson 1975:25)

As it stands, the various representations are coloured by the author's attitudes, and these have been subjected to alterations in the space of time so that one may not necessarily rediscover all autobiographical selves as faithfully as they are represented in language and words. Despite the various problems with using memory to recollect images of the past, memory itself is an important narrative and trope for negotiating the meaning of the past and the present. The autobiographical process is a product of the experiences of the past. Thompson (1975:13) argues that the autobiographical process:

> ... humanizes the past, while at the same time it enriches the present by showing us life with a vividness and completeness that few men experience in life itself. ... To men who lack imagination, history is difficult to visualize, while biography brings them the past in concrete , real, and vivid terms. To men who have known little of life or dwelt in narrow environments, history is often meaningless confusion, while the reading of a series of biographies holds out all the richness that human existence can present.

The preceding extract emphasises the role imagination plays to "visualize" and re-create episodes from the past in order to re-live and re-tell the subject's life.

2.4 SUMMARY

Autobiography may vacillate between the scientific and fictional modes. When it is scientific, it lends itself to verification of objective empirical data as expressed in documents, both written and oral. It should be clear, though, that the written form of any document is an animation of its oral form, and thus the valorisation of written documents is part of a strategy to officialise the authority of the pen and keyboard as argued in the first chapter.

In this chapter an attempt has been made to discuss the origin, nature and strategies of autobiography. Autobiography as a genre has been marginalised, so that in Sepedi Literature, it has been observed, no single text has been written with a view to the tenets of the genre itself. Despite this, Puleng's works have remained obedient to the subjection of his life into an autobiographical text. He uses memory as a narrative to re-invent the past, to recapture the events and experiences which have shaped his life. In autobiography, the author uses his life and the lives of others as the subjects for debate. These autobiographical constructs are typically 'lives lived in anticipation of that fact lived in consciousness of their own narrativity' (Harpham 1988).

Through memory and imagination, the author has been able to focus on the dismembered past, and articulated these painful memories and images to interpret his being and that of others. Although autobiography is criticised for its one-sided presentation of events, Puleng uses it to turn his life and that of his family into a myth and epic. He seems to suggest that nobody would be interested in his family history, and thus bestows upon himself the task of re-inventing that history for the future, the more so since he believes himself to be the only descendent of his father's lineage. In this way, his family history and ancesterology are officialised into history as distinguished from official historical documentation which focuses on great (royal) families. Thus an element of his father's historical account in South Africa, as opposed to the non-existing Zimbabwean account, is preserved. What is surprising though, is the fact that his mother seems to have ignored his father's family ties, and left them to disintegrate with history.

Puleng uses characters in various texts and contexts to represent his views, experiences, fears and wishes. These portraits are so constructed that one feels that further research may reveal the real identities and names of the associates and enemies described in the texts. One senses that these events are centred on the small community around Groothoek Hospital so that members of this microcosmic community are evenly distributed in Puleng's works. Through his various representations, the author attempts to negotiate losses, gains and the fears that dominate his life. Through the other characters, the unachievable becomes realisable. Some of the representations reflecting the sense of loss, absence, presence, and return will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

RE-PRESENTING LOSS AND RETURN

> Exile is predicated on the existence of, love for, and bond with, one's native place; what is true of all exile is not that home and love of home are lost, but that loss is inherent in the very existence of both. (Edward Said, *Reflections on Exile*).

> Alienation, sociological or psychological, is often the consequence of the loss of identity. Alienation and identity are closely intertwined. Whether one seeks identity with a lover or a culture, the search has social, moral, or spiritual dimensions, which are interrelated, especially in the sense that the focal point in each case is discovery of the self. (K.D. Verma, *Alienation, Identity, and Structure in Arun Joshi's "The Apprentice".*)

> Modimo wa ka, ke llela ngwanaka, morwaka,
> Ke llela leloko lešo, ke llela setšhaba sešo
> Sekgoba se tlo thibja ke mang ge e se Wena-
> Wena fela net!

> *My God, I lament the loss of my child, my son,*
> *I grief for my lineage, I lament the loss of my nation.*
> *Who shall bridge this gap except You,*
> *You, alone. (Nkomo, P.S. in Direti tše Nne).*

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the ways in which N.S. Puleng uses the discourses of loss and return as narratives for negotiating an identity. These narratives are employed to negotiate the meaning of existence in the world, and to convey the author's interpretation of his being and his relation to others. The idea of return should be seen as an attempt to (re)discover a lost identity. This is evident when we look at how Puleng changes his real Nkomo identity as a result of the colonial/apartheid divisive policy which encouraged discrimination on the basis of ethnic identities. He twists his own identity in favour of a "new" one which uses the (dis)guises of the Other as opposed to the unacceptable *other*. It is in this otherness that he manages to carve an avenue through which he can communicate his inner self. In this identity, he has lost even himself, and continues to seek what his real self *is*. At the end of this pursuit, he returns to his real identity and writes as Puleng Samuel Nkomo. Having recovered his *new* identity, one hopes to see him keep this identity within Sepedi literature which is currently characterised by the adoption of pseudonyms. This is done with the hope that selection panels will, in their pursuit of fair distribution of the authors selected for prescription, unwittingly select one author (dis)guised in various names, a hope fuelled by the greed for money.

3.2 MYTH OF RETURN

The idea of return has to be understood within the epistemology and metaphysics of African culture, African culture, like all cultures explicates the concepts of its being through mythology. Members of African culture create narratives which help them understand and interpret the course of events in their own lives, and to penetrate the mysteries which their minds need to comprehend. In this effort to tame reality by making it susceptible to understanding, myths are told to justify their own ignorance and fear, belief and hope in life. In myth, human beings find an avenue to create an order and balance which they need to experience in society. In the world of myth, humanity seeks its own origin and the source of that creation. Explanations are provided for human actions and the idiosyncrasies which mark their lives. Not only are origins traced, but the destiny of all humanity is postulated.

Within various world mythologies, the concept of death receives much attention. Death poses a problem to the understanding of humanity. People want to know where they will go after death. They want to know where their souls will go, and how the world will look like. Is there life after death? Is there a relationship between the world of the living, in the spatio-physical domain, and the world of the spiritual entities? Questions such as these preoccupy almost all societies and their answers are all contemplated within a mythological paradigm. Myths become narratives to explain the course of the human soul and its destiny.

The myths of African folklore, are populated by spirits and divinities who have control both over the cosmos, and over human life on earth. In this world, death is seen as a mechanism of return, that is, return into the *chthonic* world; a world of spirits, divinities and the supreme creator. The creator works in council with the spirits and divinities, and does not rule the cosmos as a select despot. It is in the light of this that families have their individual shrines and spirits. In this way, the power of the supreme creator is decentralised amongst the various spiritual beings.

In their myths, African societies formulate the existence of a spatio-physical domain populated by all living creatures as well as the chthonic world. Life is a continuum between these two worlds, and death becomes the mediating agency between them. In death, a human spirit departs from the world of the living into the world of the spirits. In Sepedi cosmology, for instance, when a person dies, (s)he is said to have departed (this world); that is, *o tlogile.* The idea of *go tloga* [departure] is suggestive of the displacement of the person from one domain to another. The departed relatives descend into the underworld where they join the company of their fellow relatives who have been transmogrified into spiritual form. The deceased are also said to have gone to *(ga) moletemohlaela(thupa)* or *badimong.* One tends to read into the philosophical reflections of these people their conception of death and how they define themselves in relation to their deceased relatives. The idea of *moletemohlaelathupa* has semantic associations of a world of no-return which characterises all lost domains.

The concept of myth has to be understood within the larger framework of the epistemology and metaphysical forms of knowledge informing African myths and their interpretation. As meta-narratives, myths explain the events of human history and grapple with the future prospects for lives. The future is interpreted as a continuum where the past is encapsulated in the present, and this conflation of the temporal aspects of reality serves to provide a projection into the future. In African myths, the sage establishes order in reality in a world radically different from the one we inhabit today. This world is attributed with affluence, plenitude, balance and harmony, quietude and stability. This original world, which is credited with the vital source of life, does not permit an easy re-entering. The Sepedi adage *maropeng go a boelwa, ke teng go sa boelwego (we can only return to our ruins but not into the womb. i.e. do not burn your boats behind you)* is a lucid expression of that quality which characterises all lost domains. Lost domains normally deny fictional characters a point to re-enter them. In *Bolwetši bja letšofalela* Puleng (1991) devotes a greater part of the poem to de-scribe such a world. This world is remembered like a dream which cannot be re-lived. Here, he describes how he spent a greater part of his childhood in his mother's womb where he was fed and nourished. He cannot forget the tranquil nature of that world where he enjoyed an unparalleled security. The womb is described like all lost domains; it provides comfort and security. These luxuries are lost as soon as the child is born. The womb narrative de-scribes another world to which the voice wants to return, yet finds it impossible. A myth of a pre-existing world before the spatio-temporal domain, and even human life itself is graphically represented. This is the world to which a singer expresses a need to return: *tsela mpoetše gagešo o etše mola ge o ntliša,* society believes that this world is worth recapturing, hence this pastoral nostalgia to return to the ceaseless bliss.

The *badimo world*, as a lost domain, is also described in the same terms of the womb metaphor. It can only be entered permanently through death, and dreams and visions are only transitory routes into the terrain. This world, is created as a blissful arena in all mythologies. In other societies this world is described as *paradise*, or *nirvana*, which people wish to inhabit for the rest of their lives. Because human beings cannot find peace and stability, harmony and balance, in their everyday lives, they create myths which compensate for their lack. This domain, as we find in Hebrew folklore, provides a prelapsarian pleasure which is disturbed by Adam and Eve's fall into sin. In Sepedi cosmology, we find a parallel of the same tale where the chameleon fails to deliver *the* message from *badimo* and the balance of things is upset when the lizard delivers a contrary message that people shall die and not return to the world. A similar narrative is found in Milton's *Paradise Lost.* In *Ngwana* (Puleng 1980:33) Puleng describes such a world as:

> Faseng la khutšo le kagišo (a world of peace and harmony).

Such worlds are normally not accessible to all. In some societies, the entry requirements are even daunting: One has, for example, to be blameless to re-enter this world. In other societies the person's blemishes are corrected before entry.

3.3 THE MOTIF OF LOSS/ABSENCE AND RETURN

3.3.1 Death as absence/presence and nostalgia

The motif of loss seems to be a narrative strategy through which Puleng communicates his deepest feelings of loss, remorse and displacement. In *Thellenyane Batlabolela*, the author inscribes the loss of his father using imaginative creativity and narrative discourse. Sonia Snelling (1997:21) views such a loss as a disruption of the seamless line of descent often leading to a search for absent or lost parents. Such a disruption of the patriarchal challenges the authority and universality of western historicism and also demystifies its discourses of metaphysics and history which implicitly assumes a universal narrative of progression. Thellenyane, the protagonist/speaker, is presented fatherless. This narrative device represents *absence* which does not necessarily negate the trope of *presence*. The quest for absent parents examines the "irony of imperialist universalization of values of development and history" (Snelling 1997). The search for the ancestral past interrogates the whole process of history and history-making.

Presence is a state of harmony and balance. The balance is disturbed by the death of Thellenyane's father within the textual world. Death becomes a figure by means of which he comes to terms with his past experiences. It disrupts the chronological linearity posited by western historicism and blurs the rigid distinction between the past and the present. His father is seen as part of the past, and in this way, death and the past remain a meaningful, active presence in his life. The present is related to the past by a string of experiences relating to death. Death becomes a trope which signifies the past, and in this way the past and his father are collapsed into a single narrative entity. The past is made more accessible because it is validated by memories which "confirm that it existed and that it had meaning" (Snelling 1997). Puleng uses memory to make a selective choice of experiences of the past to re-create history, a daunting task for a writer concerned with his family history. His ancestry becomes a microcosm for history as a whole and helps him find a route back into the complex past. Snelling (1997) advises that such historical writing subverts and problematises the genre of history because it negotiates the ambiguity between fact and fiction in an attempt to reconcile the investigative operations on the one hand, and narrative operations on the other.

The partiality and subjectivity of memory also calls for the interrogation of such historical constructions. Versions of the past are incomplete and at times inadequate to serve as evidence for the meaning of the past, and these experiences are subjective and emotive, they may represent events in a distorted manner. This does not suggest that the canonical history itself is immune from distortions and falsification. Even well-documented stories may later be deemed inaccurate and discredited for misrepresenting the subjects they have presumed to represent as "honestly" as possible. All history is fallible and "subjective" because it is bound to reflect only a predominantly in-side or out-side version of events. Snelling (1997:23) concurs that all history is subject to the process of selection, interpretation and fictionalisation. Puleng's works are no exception to such tendencies in historical writing.

Puleng deliberately textualises an historical narrative of his father's death who died when he (Puleng) was so young that he does not seem to have a clear picture of what his father looked like. In *Thellenyane Batlabolela* Act 4.ii, we seem to find a confirmation of this observation since the protagonist/speaker consistently attempts to establish the nature and identity of his father. He persistently probes his mother to describe the identity of the father:

> Bjale Mma, ka gore tate e be e se motho wa polelo, na ka gore e be e le moruti, o be a di kgalema bjang ge a be a le kua pele borerelong?
>
> Mother, since my father was a quiet person, how would he as a minister conduct his sermons from the pulpit?

Such persistent questions indicate the subject's desperate need to get to grips with his father's representation. The elusiveness of his father and the failure to represent his father in language makes him realise that human life cannot easily be translated into language, speech, words and/or pictures. The mother, as represented by Mmathapelo, however, makes a number of revelations through which the subject manages to reconstruct the father's identity. The father's shrewdness and poised character are described in the same scene described by Mmathapelo, on whom we depend for a clear understanding of the subject's father. If we concede that Mmathapelo is a textual construct of Puleng's mother, we should then understand that Puleng has not seen much of his father's life and that we should depend on his mother's versions for our clarification.

It is interesting how the subject distances himself from the story as though he were to be told that his version is not authentic. It is for this reason, perhaps, that he chooses his mother to provide an 'authentic' version of his father's life. How authentic that version is, remains suspect. Mmathapelo, bordering in the margins of society, is made to tell history, a male-dominated discourse. This is a radical affirmation and empowerment of those who suffer from what Mishra (1995:28) describes as the dangerous principle of women exclusion. There are certain elements of her version which need to be balanced against the historical texts, namely, the matter relating to insurance policies, and the saga surrounding Mantsho's parentage. As fiction, the texts also enjoy the liberty of being considered to be close to reality, a representation of reality, yet not reality itself.

It is probably because of the subject's reluctance to tell his version of the story that, throughout his writings, the father's representations are vague and limited to one single attribute, that is, his role as a church minister. Except for making a commentary on his father's position as minister, the subject would rather consult him in a dream or in a grave. The absence of the father as the figure of authority is introduced through Thellenyane's unbecoming behaviour, which his mother deplores:

> ... ge nkabe (*sic*) tatago a sa phela, ruriruri o be a ka se dumele mantshegele a o mpintšhago ona. (Puleng 1990:2)
>
> If your father were alive, he would not tolerate this nonsense of yours.

In his reply Thellenyane foregrounds the absence of his father in the words:

> Ga se gore ke dira boithatelo ka mo lapeng ka gore tate a tšerwe ke phiri... (Puleng 1990:2)
>
> This should not suggest that I misbehave because my father is not alive.

Thellenyane, who epitomises the authorial voice does not seem to take his mother seriously. She seems to acknowledge that the loss of his father affected the discipline of the son. This loss is animated as a desire for the father's presence and represented by the figure of death, which not only signifies loss of 'life', but also that which interferes with the idea of mediacy. The author uses the voice of Mmathapelo as a manifestation of his own body to articulate his sense of loss. He aspires to understand the loss and attaches significance and value to this phenomenon. The loss is treated as a narrative device despite its historical foundation. His father died in 1965, and this the author sincerely reports in a *memorium* described in *Ditlalemeso* (Puleng 1980) which reads:

> Ke ngwala pukwana yekhwi ka nepo ya go ba segopotšo go mohu morategi tatane, yo e bego e le moruti wa kereke ya N.G. Yena o bileditšwe bodulong bjo bokgethwa ka la 5 Dibatsela 1965.

> I write this booklet as memorial to my beloved father who is deceased, who was a priest of the Dutch Reformed Church. He was recalled to the holy dominion on 5 November 1965.

The significance of this event is evident in the number of (inter)textualisations appearing throughout Puleng's works. In one instance, Mmathapelo in *Thellenyane Batlabolela* uses the same narrative to explain to Thellenyane when his father died. Although the narrative is disguised as fiction, it actually beguiles the truth:

> Bona ge tatago a balwa le bagologolo, wena o be o le serathana sa mphato wa **A**.

> Look, when your father died, you were a young Sub A pupil.

These statements should be balanced against Mmathapelo's further explanation that Retlabona might have been in standard VIII when the father died, and she should be in a position to remember her father's sermons well (Puleng 1990:75). These fictional narratives are based on the historical narratives which inform them. On the basis of this information, one can understand the chronological age difference between Mantsho and Puleng. This helps us understand why Mantsho started teaching when Puleng, the historical person, was still in a primary school. It is this age-gap which makes it possible for Mmathapelo to instruct Mantsho:

> Hunadi `a Bahlalerwa, o šale le ngwana yo weno, o mo rute sephiri se sa Modimo sa bophelo. A be le mahlo a moya le ditsebe tša moya.
>
> Hunadi of the *Bahlalerwa* remain with this child, and teach him the secrets of God. He should be able to hear and understand the spiritual matters.

The responsibility to supervise a youth's spiritual upbringing should be entrusted to a matured person whose character is also upright and exemplary, someone worthy of emulation by the youthful candidate. Retlabona, who is a textual construct of Mantsho's historical life, is entrusted with the difficult task of raising his brother on behalf of his mother. The same narrative is attested to by the poetic voice:

> Ka di bona le motswala Mashakwe
> Gobane o ntšere le yena gae ...
> Gore re tle re thupetše lapa Seshego ga Mantšhaotlogele.
> (Puleng 1991: 37)

> I experienced that with my cousin Mashakwe
> Because you took us from home...
> To come and look after the home in Seshego, the affluent area.

This text fictionalises historical events and personages. The *I* in the text represents an historical person, an authorial voice, that is, Puleng who was taken to live with his sister in Seshego where he completed his primary education. Mashakwe is Puleng's cousin who stayed with them under the same roof, particularly in the days when the sister; Mantsho, went on maternity leave.

Mmathapelo, Thellenyane's mother, has sugar diabetes and this ailment is used not only to (re)construct history, but also to mark her frailty. Sugar diabetes coupled with old age are used in this text as signs which warn the speaker of the impending 'death' which is looming:

> Ke kgauswi le go ya phentšheleng ngwanaka, le gona o a tseba
> ke na le bolwetši bja swikiri. (Puleng 1990:4)

> I am about to go on pension, and you know that I am diabetic.

Going on pension would mark the 'death' of Mmathapelo's active professional life as a nurse, and diabetes will only add salt to the injury. Her greatest fear, it seems, is to die before Thellenyane becomes self-sufficient and able to fend for himself. Mmathapelo's grave concern is the continued survival of the Batlabolela lineage. Now that we understand the predicament in which Mmathapelo finds herself due to the adolescent Thellenyane, the reader will likely understand Retlabona and her mother's fears. Failure to beget a child to continue the family name will undoubtedly bring an end to the Batlabolela's lineage. To solve this problem, Mmathapelo pleads:

> ... Thellenyane ke kgopela gore o nyake mosadi ke sa totobatotoba ngwanaka... Ge re ka tshela fao, ke tla robala ka pelo ye tšhweu. Lentšu leo ke le fago Thellenyane pele a dira kgetho šele: Monna ge a nyaka mosadi, o ya basading e sego makgarebeng. *Lefase le tletše makgarebe le banenyana e sego basadi*! ... o ngwana yo a belegetšwego ka lapeng la borapedi. Moopedi o *re re bafeti mo lefaseng*... gomme *ipetlele bokamoso go sa bona.* [My italics] (Puleng 1990:79)
>
> Thellenyane, I beg you to find a wife while I am still alive. When we have achieved this, I will die a satisfied person. The message that I give to Thellenyane before he makes a choice is this: When a man needs to marry, he should choose from women and not lasses. This world is full of lasses and girls but not women. You were born into a religious family. A singer says we are sojourners in this world. Prepare your future while the sun shines.

The same sentiment is shared by Thellenyane's sister who fears that the Batlabolela family may become extinct:

> RETLABONA *(A šokwa)*: Ruri ge Thellenyane a ka se tsoše hlogo, kgoro ya ga Batlabolela ke gona ge e ile moletemohlaelathupa. (Puleng 1990: 14)
>
> RETLABONA (Mercifully): Truly, if Thellenyane does not stand on his feet, the Batlabolela lineage will be gone to the world of no-return.

Puleng uses this narrative to explain his mother's concern about his future. Mmathapelo, a textual construct for Puleng's mother, is determined to ensure that her son has a bright future, and makes correct choices for such a future. The religious axiom *re bafeti mo lefaseng* functions as a subtle reminder to the son about the fallibility of human nature, and further serves to warn that it would be a grave mistake if he made a wrong choice because that would bring disrepute to his life and family. Puleng seems to be aware that the same predicament may befall him. In a poetic voice, he animates a desire to bear children:

> Nka se kgotsofale le gatee ge nka se gaše peu,
> Segwana seo ke swerego peu ka sona
> Tema ke tla e wetša bašalamorago mohlala ba lata... (Puleng 1980:8)
>
> I wont be satisfied if I would fail to disperse my seed
> The guard that contains my seed
> Shall be used to the fullest for my successors to follow.

The sentiment echoed by Retlabona, Thellenyane's sister, should be understood within the context of African cultures and beliefs. African societies, those in Southern Africa in particular, are predominantly patriarchal. In these societies, the survival of the lineage group depends largely on the number of sons one has, for these sons will help raise the family name and will inherit wealth in terms of the law of succession. If one closely examines the *authorial voice* in the Puleng text, one is struck by the slippages from the fictional world into the author's life. Thellenyane, who has elsewhere in this study been described as an epitome of Puleng's life, is the only son of Batlabolela. This is also echoed in the following words:

> Ngwanaka, ke wena Thellenyane Batlabolela; o morwa wa mathomo, e bile (*sic*) wa mafelelo wa ba ga Batlabolela. O mollo, e bile (*sic*) o thipa ya lapa le. Ge ke go bona, ka nako ga ke tsebe gore ke reng, gobane o seswantšho sa tatago.
>
> My child, you are Thellenyane Batlabolela; the first and only son of the Batlabolela. You are the fire and the knife of this family. At times I look at you, I do not know what to say, for you are your father's replica.

Mmathapelo's fears about the threat to the Batlabolela's lineage are aggravated by Thellenyane's immature actions and behaviour which leave the family with serious doubts about him, and with questions which only the Supreme Being can answer. An only child receives prominence in the text because it has far-reaching implications in his life: he is expected to raise the family seed, and thus extol his family name. He experiences for himself an ambivalent identity, since he has to live his personal life, with its merits and shortcomings, and yet is expected not to fail in ensuring the continued survival of his father. Like Thellenyane, Puleng is the only son of Paul Bismarck Nkomo who is a former resident of Zimbabwe:

> Re dithellenyane re a thedimoga
> Ga re magogodi a noka
> Lešo naka la phenyo
> Le popodumišitšwe ke tatane
> Ge a tshela Limpopo
> A gabile papa-le-noka molatolwaoswerwe
> A kwele mokgoši wa gauta Motsellakoma
> A bitšwa ka pitšo ye thata pitšosephiri
> Tšešo dithaka tša mela tša nama
> Kgobadi 'a Nyedimane moriting wa hlare sa namune
> Lerato le tatane ka dinao a le bona le sepela
> E le Sarah e le Mmapo [*sic*]
> E le morwedi 'a Motantshi le Phetola
> Bathabakwena Baroka ba meetse a pula
> Batho ba boMolele 'a Masilo
> Batho ba Mohosi batho ba thabadimo
> Batholentšu bagaiwa-ka-madi...! (Nkomo, *et al* 1991:37)
>
> We are gliding animals which slide,
> We are not flotsam.
> My family's triumph was initiated by my father,
> When he crossed the Limpopo,
> Hoping to find money,
> When the news of a gold rush spread.
> He had to honour a demanding call made.

> My family roots grew from the orange estates,
> Zebediela, under the shade of the orange tree,
> My father saw love walking on its feet,
> In the person of Sarah Mmapo [sic]
> The daughter of Phetola and Motantshi,
> Baroka of the rain water, whose totem is the crocodile,
> People related to Molele of the Masilo lineage,
> People from Mohosi, a haven of the Spirits.
> Spiritual people strengthened with blood.

The toponym Mohosi refers to a mountain in the Matlala area, north west of Pietersburg. This is where his mother came from, though she later stayed at GaMadisha. Beyond these toponyms, we are treated only to the genealogy of the mother: Motantshi and Phetola, his grandparents, the Molele and Mashilo from whom his mother descends. We later learn in the preface of *Malopo a boreti* that Phetola Molele is also a cousin to Puleng. This revelation indicates that the name Phetola as we find it in the previous quotation is not fictional but a real family name. In all his works, the full history and lineage of his father is lacking, representing a silence which surfaces through his continued search of the lost presence. This absence can only be understood against the background of apartheid which de-legitimised marriages beyond the borders of the apartheid state. One seems to read into the family text, script which suggests that the marriage with the 'foreigner' did not receive the blessing of the family, and this lead to the arranged marriage after Nkomo's death. If this is true, then it is understandable why the poet feels offended by such a move because he prides himself with his father from whom he identifies with the world. His search for the identity of the father also represents in his works and attempt to make the past meaningful, not only as a 'dead' temporality, but a continuum that explains and illuminates the present.

A close reading of the previous poem reveals who "Thellenyane" actually *is*, and how we should understand Thellenyane as an archetype of Puleng the person/author. Mojalefa *et al* (*op cit*) explain the origin of the metonym *Thellenyane* and the ancesterology of Puleng's family:

> Sereto se se hlatholla matšo a boPuleng. Tatabo o thedimogile a etšwa ka mošola wa Limpopo, a tla mašemong Gauteng.
>
> This poem explains the origin of Puleng's family. His father comes from the other side of the Limpopo, and came to settle in Johannesburg in search of fortune.

On the basis of this poem, one could confidently argue that Puleng uses his texts to reconstruct his 'unknown' history and officialises it with the power of the written word. He explains how his father came to South Africa. First, the motive seems to have been financial, as is suggested by the concept *a gabile papa-le-noka molatolwaoswerwe* which undoubtedly refers to money. Secondly, a religious calling made him stay in the Zebediela estates, that is, Kgobadi 'a Nyedimane. Puleng attaches significance to this place because it is connected to his childhood experiences as well as his father's life and death. We read into Thellenyane Batlabolela a subtle acknowledgement of the power and magnanimity of this place, Kgobadi, represented by the character Kgobadi, in the text. In this text, Kgobadi is not only a friend to Thellenyane, but a confidant who stands by him at all times, and protects him from Kotentsho and Kekwele who represent forces of darkness and enmity. Puleng deliberately employs this narrative to laud and commemorate what Moletlane, *Kgobadi a Nyedimane* means to him. For him, it is a sanctuary in which he finds solace and spiritual comfort. This is the place where he grew up, where he first started teaching and still teaches, a place where he "meets" and "separates" with his father. The continued reference to Moletlane and Kgobadi `a Nyedimane in his works seems to suggest that he is trapped in a kind of cosmic consciousness which binds him to his place of birth. The circularity of events around this place and his attachment to the area reinforce the significance he attaches to it.

In *Lefase leo ke le nyadišitšwego ka megokgo*, Puleng (1991:26) describes such a close link betwen himself and Moletlane:

> Moya wa ka o fofa lefaufaung
> Gobane medu ya bophelo bja ka,
> E tsemilwe Kgobadi `a Nyedimane.
>
> My soul flounders in the sky
> Because the roots of my life,
> Are anchored in Kgobadi of Nyedimane.

In this poem, we are introduced to physical departure as a narrative of loss and absence. The troubled voice feels displaced from the place with which it claims cosmic unity, leading the subject to insomnia:

> Ke reng ke sa robale?
> Ke reng ke lala ke lora toro tša maephuephu
> Ke bona bahu bagologolo ba ntlogetše kgale,
> Ba mpitša ba mpolediša ka maleme a mathata,
> Ao tsebe ya ka e sa kgonego go a kwa?
> O ntšhwahlišetšang magora
> Wa nkiša magorong a šele mo ke ithutago bophelo ka lefsa (*op cit*)
>
> Why don't I sleep?
> Why do I see complex dreams
> Where the deceased, my ancestors who died a long time ago,
> Call me and talk to me in difficult languages,
> Languages my ears cannot comprehend?
> Why do you make me cross fences
> And take me to alien kraals where I must learn life anew.

The subject experiences the presence of a spiritual visitation which deprives him of his sleep. In a world of dreams, he meets his departed relatives who intervene because he has deserted his birthplace. He yearns for a return to Moletlane where his father lies buried. The idea of being forced to cross fences presents a graphic image of travel which symbolises physical departure and feelings of nostalgia which are tropes of absence. Fences do not only mark territory, but bar and fence out those who do not belong to the in-group. Puleng uses this imagery of fences as a way to reject the mother's second marriage and Bochum as 'home'. It is for this reason that the place is described as *magorong a šele* which undoubtedly denies possible blood or affinal relations.

In re-telling his family history, Puleng concentrates his attention on the mother's family because he knows it better than that of his father. His father's ancesterology is limited to mere social movements and migrations. The movement from Zimbabwe to the Republic of South Africa is not detailed. This part of the history is lost and cannot be recovered. In the preface to *Sefahlego sa pelo ya ka* Puleng writes:

> (Segopotšo) Go batswadi ba mohu tate Paul William Bismarck Nkomo, bao ke sa kago ka ba bona, bao ke se nago le seswantšho sa bona mo bophelong gape le maina a bona ke sa a tsebego. Koko le rakgolo ke hlomoga pelo ge ke thoma go gopola ka lena. Robalang ka khutšo! (Puleng 1991:iii)
>
> (In memory) Of the parents to my late father, Paul William Bismarck Nkomo, who I have never seen, not even their picture or their names which I do not know. Grandmother and Grandfather, I become [emotionally] touched when I remember you. Rest in peace!

From this sentimental episode, Puleng provides us with a reasonable justification why he cannot trace his father's genealogy. Even in the illustrious seven page poem; *Bolwetši bja letšofalela,* we are merely treated to a mythical origin of the author's life, then tossed back to the narratives of travel from Moletlane to Randfontein and back to Moletlane. The historical narrative of his family is disrupted by the complex past which is unrecoverable, as well as death which has robbed the author of an opportunity to know his patriarchs.

3.3.2 DREAMS AND VISIONS

In his poetic *oeuvre*, Puleng employs dreams and visions as a means to go beyond the body and gain access to the space which seems impenetrable. A good example is found in *Ba tsoše, ba tsošane*. In this poem, the disembodied subject penetrates the spiritual domain where he addresses a plethora of ancestors. These spiritual beings are addressed in order of their superiority to intercede on behalf of the subject. The subject expresses his need without mincing his words:

> Le ntshephišitše bongaka
> Ka mohu koko Lefentše
> La re: "Kgwadi ya meetse wena o selepe,"
> La re: "Mo o notletšego go ka se bule motho,"
> La re: "Mo o butšego go ka se tswalele motho."
>
> You promised me I would be a diviner
> Through my grandmother Lefentše.
> You proclaimed: "Water animal, you are an axe".
> And said: "Where you have locked, nobody will unlock".
> You said: "Nobody shall undo what you have opened".

The claim "*le ntshephišitše bongaka...*" is an expression of an unfulfilled promise. This lives in the memory of the subject, and is experienced as a loss. That which was given, that is; God-given, has not been received. The poet regrets that the promise has not been fulfilled. This failure is a representation of the lost domain which the character is unable to reclaim. The deep desire to capture the lost dream is an indication of the character's yearning for return into the reality of the dream-world. In this dream, the poet employs the discourse of divining bones to justify his appeal to be ordained as a *ngaka*. He retorts:

> Tsela di marangrang ke mararankodi
> Ke manthaladi a tsela
> Ngwana mararela le tsela o lala phukhuhleng ya dibata
> Hunollang meraba le di ušeng makgolela;
> Nna ke letša molodi ke re:
> Tsodiotsotsoo ... diodioo ... ooo!
>
> The future is entangled
> The routes are dangerous.
> A child following the meandering road is in danger.
> Release your divining bones and predict the future,
> I, however, whistle.

The narrative is used to request the ancestors to fulfil their promise. This narrative already suggests to the reader that the subject possesses a certain degree of competence in interpreting some of the *mawa*[falls] which are fundamental to the diagnosis of the patient and the prognosis of the therapy. An in-depth study of the discourse makes very important revelations. To the uninitiated reader, the language subscribes to the speech community of traditional doctors in their craft and in spiritual seances. The extract can easily mislead the reader into believing that praises to a specific *lewa* [fall] are sung. The very first three lines of the extract are borrowed from the children's game called *Manthaladi-a-ditsela* [The entangled roads]. This is a folk song involving two participants who engage in a call-and-response activity. *Ngwanamararela-le-tsela* [The child who meanders with the road] is positioned at the entrance of the circular kraal, ready to journey round the circle, and behind her, jutting out, we find *Manthaladi-a-ditsela.* Actually, *Manthaladi,* as she is often called, is at the beginning of the journey where the participant/competitor has to commence. She is to venture into an 'unfamiliar' territory, into the future, and thus puts her life at stake. The participant/competitor closes his/her eyes while the other party points at the beginning of the journey, and the participant/competitor has to shout: *Manthaladi-a-ditsela.* When the partner points at *Ngwanamararela-le-tsela*, the competitor should shout the appropriate name as a gesture for recognition of the subject. The game continues by pointing at the various stations all round the circle, back to *Manthaladi-a-ditsela.* At each station, the competitor should indicate to the partner that *khuromolla o bee fase (open and declare it empty)* when (s)he reaches the station for the first time, that is, to reclaim property; and *ka mo le gona ga go selo (this one is also vacant)* when the station is reached for the second time, when property has been reclaimed in the first circuit.

The game runs like a puzzle, and what complicates it is the fact that the movement round the circle is not uni-lineal, but runs to and fro with the intent of testing the concentration span of the competitor and to train his/her memory to go round the circle with closed eyes and identify the stones or lids which are to be "opened" and those already "opened", to use the language of the game. This identification is of value because it trains children at the early stages of their lives to remember and care for their property.

Like *Manthaladi* and *Ngwana' mararela-le-tsela* who wonder about in search of an unclaimed destiny, Puleng's works vacillate between a conscious search for the realisation of his unfulfilled dreams and self-discovery. Having failed to regain the ability to see visions as recounted in *Ba tsoše ba tsošane,* he inhabits Tumi's body as a site for reclaiming the desired world of the spirits and divinities. Tumi becomes a textual construct inhabited by the author's spirit and cosciousness to penetrate his own troubled psyche. Tumi's achievements, both spiritual ones such as the power to see visions and to heal, and his academic achievements at university, represent those dreams which the author aspires to realise himself but fails to. Through Tumi's material and spiritual body, the author returns to the desired domain which has been difficult to access in the poetic dream. This realisation of a long cherished desire is announced through claims in *Thellenyane Batlabolela* (Puleng 1990:3) that:

> Le nna ke morapedi: *ke bona ka mahlo a moya.* [My italics]

> I am a believer too, and I can see visions.

The same claims are made as soon as Tumi is declared fit to commune with the spirits. He exclaims that *mahlo a ka ke a moya ... tsebe tša ka ke tša moya* (Puleng 1994:12), a long cherished dream which, in a Freudian sense, would be viewed as a pleasure principle which is reinforced through repeated fantasies. When these claims are made, the author employs certain africalogical paradigms to suggest the presencing of the spiritual power inhabiting Tumi's body. Motantshi, who in an historical sense is Puleng's grandmother, appears here as the ancestor who initiates Tumi into the cult. Within the text, Motantshi serves as a liaison between the spatio-physical and the spiritual domains. She inhabits the world of the spirits, *Badimotimo* in the area called *Badimobatlabolela.* This scene represents the recovery of the loss intimated in *Ba tsoše, ba tsošane* where the subject's continuous appeals seem to fall on deaf ears:

Nna ke Mokwanta malomelakobong
Ke tlogolo sa Motantshi yoo a robetšego le lena
Ke wa madi a ba gaMolele `a Mašilo
Lešiko lešo ke la mathamaga ...
Ke morwa Mmapoo morwedi `a Motantshi.
Nthuteng ngaka bjo ke bješo. (Puleng 1980:10-11)

I am the one who feels the treacherous louse.
I am a descendant of Motantshi who is within your company.
I am of the Molele of the Mašilo blood.
My family is of the royal blood.
I am the son of Mmapoo; Motantshi's daughter.
Teach me this craft [*bongaka*], it's my birthright.

Despite his elaborate introduction of himself to the *badimo world*, the subject is denied the fulfilment of his desires and appeals. He invokes the hierarchy of divinities without avail. In *Le badimo ba tla bolela* (Puleng 1994) Motantshi, as an immediate ancestor, entrusts upon herself the task of anointing the grandchild Tumi, who is a textual construct representing Puleng's aspirations. Motantshi, Puleng's deceased grandparent, is re-lived in the texts to bring about the *prensencing* of the spiritual realm.

The oracle also, signifies the presence and power of the spiritual force:

> Lentšu (*kgalagalo tšhegofatšong ya sedimo*): O leuba! O mollo! O a fiša!
>
> Voice (shouting the blessings of the ancestors): You are the hearth! You are the fire! You are ready!

The previous extract is repeated several times with some intertextual variations to consolidate the teachings of the spiritual world, and to confirm Tumi's transmogrified status into a diviner.

■

> MOTANTSHI (Go Tumi): Tumi, bjale o Leuba! O mollo! O a fiša (Nke o tsenwa ke malopo.) Bolela mantšu ale o a laetšwego ke badimo kua Badimotimo. Re tla go tiišetša. (Puleng 1994:9)
>
> MOTANTSHI (To Tumi): Tumi, now you are

the hearth! You are the fire! You are ready! (As
if possessed by the spirits.) Profess the words
Pronounced to you by the spirits at Badimotimo.
We will support you.

- MOTANTSHI (A sega lekepekepe): O Leuba! Badimo ba
go arabile!
MOTANTSHI(Laughing ceaselessly) You are the
hearth! The spirits have responded to your
demands.

- MALOPO (Ka ntšutee); O mollo! O fiša! (Puleng
1994:12)

SPIRITS (With one voice): You are the fire! You
are ready!

The presence of fire or smoke, is a signal of life in a homestead. It indicates that the family is well, and that its well-being is certain. It is against this background that the subject's life has to be understood. He is blessed to continue his spiritual life as a distinct personality chosen to fulfil a spiritual mission. Fire as a spiritual sign is common in spirit possession. Normally a possessed initiate calls for what is commonly called *sefišane*, glowing embers of fire, a fire to dance upon, when inducing the spirit of the ancestor to communicate its demands.

The image of fire in African experience has thus to be understood within a broader perspective. Fire in a homestead symbolises life, and smoke and fire are interchangeably used to signify continued presence of life. Fire on the other hand has spiritual overtones: it induces possession and enables the *patient* to achieve a transit into the spiritual domain. In such an altered state, the initiate is believed to occupy both the chthonic and spatio-physical domains. The oracle's instructions should be understood with reference to the spiritual connotations attached to the image of fire. The metaphor of the hearth and fire makes us understand Tumi's altered identity. He has transmogrified into a new being who is capable of what an ordinary human being is not. In the invocations:

> Lentšu (*kgalagalo tšhegofatšong ya sedimo*): O leuba! O mollo! O a fiša!
>
> Voice (shouting the blessings of the ancestors): You are the hearth! You are the fire! You are hot!

the injunction *o mollo!* identifies Tumi with fire. Because he has become fire, he has acquired a new identity, an identity which assume the role and function of a spiritual force. As fire, he performs the works of the fire spirit. Like fire, he provides warmth to his patients, and thus assumes the role of a comforter to their troubled souls. He takes away disease from the body like a burning fire. Soon after this, Tumi's academic success baffles even his psychology professor. He succeeds despite the unending queues of consulting patients who seek his advice in divination and traditional medicine. His success is animated into a fire symbol which connotes unsurpassed progress.

Another africalogical symbol which represents divine presence is the water snake. Tumi in *Le badimo ba tla bolela* is initiated into *bongaka* through a baptism of fire. He yells: "*Ke* *latswa ke mmamokebe ... o a mmetša; o a mmetša*" (Puleng 1994: 9). Like other aquatic symbols, the mermaid represents the spiritual force which empowers and transforms Tumi and enables him to become part of the spirit world. This presencing is also denoted by the whirlwinds and lightning which mark changes of events and the beginning of things yet to come. We find this turbulent atmospheric signs also present in Gaseselo's dream which foreshadows Thellenyane's accident. The awesome and melancholic sounds of nocturnal animals disturb the stillness of the night to portend the danger as well as the catastrophe which is about to happen.

Tumi, as an extension of the authorial body feels the presence of the spiritual power addressing him. This experience is exclusive to him, it is absent or lost in the case of his parents, particularly his father who seems to regard Tumi's experience as a facade. This absence/presence dichotomy, as explained earlier, is used to demarcate the religious differences of the family. Tumi's life becomes a disruption of the family 'order' and provides a plurality of possible experiences within the family structure. Tumi's father should take a page from this 'plural' text.

As soon as Tumi has fulfilled the demands of the spirit world, the oracle announces:

> Bjale o ngaka. Bošego bja gago ke mosegare.
>
> Now you are a diviner. Your night shall be your day.

Some narratives of denial and discovery are worth discussing at this point. In *Le badimo ba tla bolela,* Kehwile, Tumi's father, blatantly rejects Tumi's spirit possession, calling it a mere dream:

> Ke kgolwa gore ke a lora goba ke hwile. Ruri ga se nna. (Puleng 1994:6)
>
> I hope I am dreaming or I am dead. Indeed, I am not true self.

Kehwile's name is an onomatological strategy which rejects the works of the ancestral spirits, a task often assumed by fundamental imperialists who consciously deny African experiences and relegate them to the realm of the *other.* He would better die than see his son become a *lelopo.*

> Na ke tla phedišana bjang le ngwanaka ge nna ke le morapedi, mola ka mo go lla meropa ya malopo? Ke tla kgona na? ... Tšatši le lengwe ke tlo hwetša Bibele ya ka e tšhetšwe ka *dineifi.* Ke na le maloka le maleba a go lwantšha tirelo ya medimo e šele ka mo lapeng la ka. Ka mo ga ka, gwa rapelwa Modimo le badimo? *Nekese!* Ke a gana nna. Mohlomongwe ke hwile.
>
> How will I live with my child when I am believer and he has to play *malopo* drums on the other side? Will I cope? One day I will find my Bible sprayed with snuff. I have the right and responsibility to fight the worship of alien divine beings in my

> family. How can we believe in God and ancestors? *Niks!* I decline. Perhaps when I am dead.

He declares himself a *morapedi* and relegates the other believers to the margins, from where they have to negotiate a return to the centre via his own religion. To people such as Kehwile, the world is very narrow, and consists of only one set of beliefs which should be universalised to salvage the rest. We find the same attitude in *Thellenyane Batlabolela* when Thellenyane distinguishes himself from the rest in declaring *nna ke morapedi: ke bona ka mahlo a moya (I am a believer: I can see visions].* Such narcissism and fundamentalism is a recipe for a great religious war which will tear the world apart. For Kehwile, only the biblical religion is important, all others are a worship of alien gods. Kehwile is prepared to transmogrify and undergo a *metamorphosis* before he can tolerate the presence of another religious practice in his house. He has little tolerance for Tumi's religious beliefs. He has to experience himself as an altered self in order to accept the other's views as authentic as his. He lives in a fantasy world dominated by a mono-religious doctrine which *erases* other experiences and religions. African religion is regarded as a worship of foreign gods. This is basically what Christian philosophy teaches with a view to universalising itself as the only religion. The God of other nations is relegated to the periphery and declared alien in the contesting battle for religious domination. Such misguided philosophies and doctrines miss a very important point, namely that the world consists of several centres of knowledge and beliefs, and each religious community constitutes a microcosm of a larger spectrum. The author does not kill Kehwile, and this eventually allows for religious plurality in the family. Stage directions are employed to relate his change of heart:

> KEHWILE (Ka wa lethabo): Aowa ngwanaka, bjale gona ke kwešiša gabotse." Puleng 1994:13)

> KEHWILE [With excitement]: No my child, now I understand clearly.

At this level, harmony and normality return to the family. Tumi's father now understands Tumi's "problems" and re-accepts him as his son. Return, as a construct, is often followed by pleasure. In this text, we find the reconciliation of the spiritual forces and Tumi's unparalleled academic achievements at university. The presence and appropriation of African and Christian religions in the same text, and the resolution of conflict, suggest to us the undeniable challenge of religious pluralism, which demands tolerance of each other's religious views.

Other forms of return are discernible in various texts, such as in *Tlhologelo*, where the poetic voice indulges in a nostalgia that incites a desire to recapture the 'glory' of atonement. The subject remarks:

> Moya wa ka o utswitšwe ke tšatši la bofelo,
> Masa a lona a khukhuša ka thaba tša bohlabela
> Moo go kwalago mekgoši le dillo tša mahlomola...
> Nna tlhologelo ya ka e namile e a dikadika. (Puleng1980:32)
>
> My soul longs for that day,

Its dawn blossoms from the mountains in the east,
Where sounds the war cries and lamentations,
My desire suddenly vacillates.

The nostalgic appeal of the voice represents a desire for re-turn, a need to recapture the desired "pleasure". This is a need to experience oneself in a world other than our own:

Tlhologelo ya ka e feletše faseng leo le sa tlago,
Ke nyoretšwe go bona mohla wa ntshe,
Ditiro tša ka, dikapo tša ka gammogo le tšohle tša ka,
Di mphelegetša gona gae Maphuthaditšhaba. (Puleng 1980:33)

I long to be in the coming world.
I yearn to see that day.
All my deeds, my utterances together with everything that is
mine,
Will accompany me home to the Saviour.

Because humanity believes in the tranquillity of spiritual domains, they long to re-enter such worlds in order to rid themselves of the problems of the spatio-temporal world. The speaker's voice yearns for the attainment of the eternal pleasure of the spiritual domain. Like other lost-domain narratives, this narrative projects a mood of piercing nostalgia.

3.3.3 MANTSHO AS A NARRATIVE (STRUCTURE)

The tropes of loss and absence are fore-grounded in the narrative which explains the departure of Mantsho from her family. If we locate the narrative within the discourse of Africalogy, we can read into this narrative a fallacy of orientation which leads to dis-orientation and (dis)location. Separation from one's parents and the entry into independent life is marked by a series of rites of passages which signify a transition from one status to another. These rites are obligatory, and any detour from them violates the order and the sense of balance in society. The harmony and rhythm of life are interrupted to such an extent that misfortune can always be ascribed to this violation.

On reading *Kgotlela Mantsho ngwana' mma (*Puleng 1991: 37) it becomes apparent that the official rites of passage for transition, particularly separation, departure and incorporation, were not observed. This is attested by the author's sentiments:

> O rile a laya mmešo,
> A re motho ke tšhukudu o a rerwa,
> Wa ngangabala wa ipofa ka dithala tša lerato,
> Wa tloga ntle le mekgolokwane le direto.
> Le pudi ya leleme le letala ya šitwa go wa ka lefase;
> Ke le ngwana pelo ya rothiša megokgo,
> Ge o etšwa o ikgonere... (Puleng 1991: 37)

> When my mother instructed,
> That human life is planned like the death of a rhinoceros,
> You stubbornly went ahead to marry without consent,
> You left without ululations and praises,
> Not even a goat was sacrificed,
> Although I was a child, tears dropped from my eyes,
> When you left without accompaniment.

The poet uses the life of his sister as a narrative to address inhibited feelings of discontent. One of the major incidents which simmers in his memory concerns the way his sister left the family without proper marital rituals conducted. These ideas are fully addressed in the poem *Kgotlelela Mantsho Ngwana' Mma* (Puleng 1991). The poet does equivocate concerning the familial relationship between himself and the subject of the poem. They are siblings.

Within Africalogical discourse, a major concern for the interpretation of reality is to take into account the African experience and articulation of meaning within the context of discourse. Mantsho's actions violate traditional custom and practice, though she acts within her as a human being. There is clearly enough textual evidence that Mantsho was warned beforehand about the dangers of disregarding the marriage rites which form the core of her culture. Notwithstanding all advice, she chose to leave without having observed these rites. In this predicament, her personal rights are weighed against those of society. African societies despise individualism, and within them individual rights cannot take precedence over community rights. For an African, "I am because we are", which signify that the self is not to be raised above the community, and for this reason the *I* can at times be experienced as the *we*, which is a collective-*I*. In the case of Mantsho too, her choice to go without "*mekgolokwane le direto*" finally works against her, as is intimated by the hardships with which she has to contend and her subsequent divorce:

> "Bjale ge kgaetšedi Retlabona, a hlalane le monna..."
>
> Now that my sister Retlabona is divorced, how does that affect
> me?

The poet also employs the onomatological device of using a name to suggest a theme or meaning. The name Retlabona carries with it semantic dimensions loaded with feelings of surrender and the hope that Fate will intervene and resolve the crisis. The author uses Retlabona as a paradigm for explaining his doubts about the possibility of a successful marriage. Retlabona, as a construct, signifies both Mantsho and her archetype, Oanteka. Following this argument, a miracle would have to occur for the marriage to succeed, hence "Re tla bona" [We will (wait and) see] is corrupted into Retlabona. Retlabona experiences the dispersion of identity, an identity dislocated from its optimal core as embodied by society. This sense of dislocation is reflected in the trope of divorce, separation, absence or loss. We read this loss of a husband in *Thellenyane Batlabolela* where Thellenyane remarks makes reference to his sister's divorce.

Divorce as a form of absence seems to be an expected result of such a relationship between Mantsho and her would-be husband. This expectation is raised in the name Retlabona. We are treated to yet another disruption of the family in *Inama, Inama se go tshele* (Puleng 1994) where Oanteka is deserted by Inama after the birth of Nakeyena.

Puleng uses the life of his sister as a narrative structure to communicate the essence of loss and attachment. The loss of their father seems to have forged a bond of attachment between Mantsho and Puleng. Mantsho's life epitomises several disruptions in the life of the author. In the expression:

> O rile go tšwa thupantlong ya basadi,
> Pholo o e phathakgetše namane – Mpho ...
>
> When she was released from the maternity ward,
> She was carrying a young baby, Mpho.

the poet alludes to the birth of Mpho, Mantsho's only child. We are introduced to Mpho's birth as a narrative of presence. His arrival is premeditated in a dream where the poetic voice approaches the spiritual power to provide him with the power of divination:

> Mpho ke wa kgaetšedi, ke setlogolo ...
> Le nna bongaka bjo nkabe le mphile
> Ka ntle ga tshele le manganga

Ke be ke tla šiela yena...
A ile le hlogwana ya letsedi nke mokoe
Le go nyanya monwana a godile
Ngwana wa kgaetšedi ya ka Mantsho,
Ka tsogwana la mpati a ilalo,
O tlogetše Khomotšo madibamatala
Gobane ge ke porofeta go ba ntshe gagwe
Ke ukame la gore (*sic*) ba tla wa kalana e le mafahla;
E le Mpho le Khomotšo,
Sellolethabo sa kgaetšedi ya ka Mantsho
Ka ge thagaletswalo ya gagwe
A itšibotšego ka yona e llwe ke ngwako. (Puleng 1980:14)

Mpho is my sister's son, he is my nephew,
You should have passed *bongaka* to me,
Without dispute and hesistance,
I would pass it to him
This one with a sharp-pointed head like [3]*mokoe*'s
He sucks his finger though he is old,
My sister, Mantsho's son,
Left-handed there he is.
He left Khomotšo from the primeval home,
I made a prophecy about his birth,
I anticipated they will be twins,
Mpho and Khomotšo.
My sister's sweet-sorrow,
For her first born child,

---

mokoe is a bird with a sharp-pointed head, and its name seems to be derived from the sound it produces when it sings.

> Her very first child died too young.

From the preceding text, the voice makes further visionary claims. Within the dream, Mantsho is consoled with a set of twins: Mpho and Khomotšo. Khomotšo becomes a gift of consolation because Mantsho had lost her first born child. That loss, would be re-placed by Khomotšo who is also lost in a dream. The loss of a child is a traumatic event which is not easy to forget. The same loss lives in the memory of the author. He attempts to create meaning from the dismembered past, and uses this narrative to accommodate the loss.

Puleng seems to be struggling with the concept of death and dying, such that his works are grappling with such notions in various ways. At one level he de-scribes his father's death, while on another he deals with his sister's lost children as well as Koko Motantshi and other departed relatives. Mpho who has been premeditated in dream becomes the only child on whom Mantsho can pin her hopes. Mpho as an only child, adds to the narrative of the "only child syndrome" characterising Puleng's works. He describes Thellenyane and Retlabona as only children who have to care for each other, and now Mpho is also that only *I* (eye). Unfortunately, Mpho died in a car accident in 1995, and this becomes an actualisation of the family's fears as we read in Retlabona and Mmathapelo's utterances in *Thellenyane Batlabolela.*

Besides this loss, we read into the quoted extract a failure of the spiritual forces to transfer the divine power to the subject, and thus his claims that he would also bequeath the craft to Mpho is also experienced as a loss.

3.4 SUMMARY

This chapter focussed on the concept of return as a manifestation of an attempt by human beings to re-live their hopes and experience. They create a world order which becomes an idealisation of what they dream of, an order which can only be captured in their dreams, wishes, protests, and visions. These worlds are often expressed as lost-domains.

Lost-domains are visionary lands visited or witnessed for brief moments by fictional characters (Boies 1983). Dreams and sleep allow subjects to penetrate these domains. The brief penetration of the domain provides an overpowering excitement combined with a "knife-sharp bitter-sweet yearning containing all of the urgency of sexuality" (Boies 1983). Sexual images are not necessarily the chief ingredients of lost domain narratives, as we have seen in the works of N.S.Puleng. Dreams provide the dreamer with a temporary fulfilment of those wishes which s/he wants fulfilled. On waking up, the dreamer would wish to 'die back into a dream' to recapture that lost pleasure. It is against this background that we analysed texts in which Puleng wishes to retain the dreams about his visions and keep them alive for their realisation. On dying back, he would be able to recover his sister's lost children together with his departed relatives.

Dreams and visions assist the subject to cross material borders which divide him from spiritual and political freedom. He manages to enter into the various domains to enjoy temporary realisation of his whims and wishes. He uses dreams as tropes to protest his mother's second marriage. Through dreams, he rejects the experience of displacement and wants to be connected to his father through Moletlane as a point of reference.

Finally, Mantsho's life is used to negotiate the meaning of loss. Her marriage is critiqued as a misnomer which invites for itself the subsequent misfortune which follows. Her consequent loss of children confirms the text's preoccupation with forms of absence.

The coincidental or strategic choice of titles such as *Le diphiri di tla utologa*, *Le badimo ba tla bolela* and *Thellenyane Batlabolela* together with such toponyms as *Badimotimo* and *Badimobaabolela* warrant further research from onomasticians interested in literary criticism.

CHAPTER 4

BETWEEN HOME AND HAREM

Our story is the old clash between history and home. Or to put it another way, the immeasurable, impossible space that seems to divide the hearth from the quest. (Jeanette Winterson, *Orion*)

Each country is home to one man
And exile to another. (T.S. Eliot, *To the Indians who died in Africa*)

Everybody needs a home, so at least you can have some place to leave, which is where most folks will say you must be coming from. June Jordan, *Living Room*)

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter together with chapter five represents the second and last theme of the thesis; *Identity: From Autobiography to Postcoloniality: A Study of Representations in Puleng's Works*. The title of the thesis dictates a study of identity that looks not only at the autobiographical representations, but also at the postcolonial representations in N.S. Puleng's creative works. This part of the study situates Sepedi literature, in particular N.S.Puleng, within "contact literatures," better described by the label postcolonial literature since this concept itself pre-dates the colonial period. On this understanding, postcolonial literatures should be understood to have developed even before the colonial period, though the latter imprisoned the colonial subjects into capturing European/American literacy programmes. Contact with the colonial world generated a new impetus, and started a new *worlding* of the colonial subjects. Writing systems of the colonial subjects were simply erased, and in their stead, European history and culture were inscribed when the keyboard metaphor as well as the power of the 'pen' was extolled as development in favour of the mnemonic and *writing* systems of the colonised.

The major thrust of this chapter is the discussion of home as represented in N.S. Puleng's poetry. Representations of home cannot be discussed outside the historical conditions which shape them. In laying bare the problems surrounding the conception of `home`, I explore the various ways in which historical discourse under colonial/apartheid rule has shaped the nature of discourse and interpretation of the 'other' with the intention of subjecting the other to a colonial mythology which deliberately strips colonial subjects of their land and attempts to dis/mantle the indigenes' conception of home.

4.2 NARRATIVES OF HOME AND DISPLACEMENT

The three extracts prefacing this chapter have been chosen to indicate the relationship between history and the manner in which home narratives are constructed. Depending on who has the power over historical narratives, members of society may either benefit or lose substantially. That everybody needs a home is an undisputed truth, but the problem lies in how members of society define 'home' for themselves. Within African societies, home is less mobile, less fluid, and fixed to a specific locale than in western societies. Historical discourses can either cement such a representation or uproot it. A discussion of home cannot be undertaken without acknowledging its connection to the idea of land.

Land becomes a contentious debate in postcolonial discourse because the colonised are often dispossessed. It represents a complex matrix with which to understand colonial experience in postcolonial Africa. Land is an economic site of survival as well as political authority. Those without land are devoid of power. To possess land is to be at the centre of power and control. People with land are able to sanction certain transactions which range from soliciting work parties to helping the poor to have access to subsistence and agrarian economics. To deprive people of their land is to alienate them from their very roots, to deracinate that base of their social, cosmogonic and political lives to which they are tied.

On the cosmological level, land represents an original source from which human life is traced. Every human species is considered to be connected to land through a point of contact, described in Sepedi cosmology as *bowelakalana.* This point of contact has spiritual power which binds the new born to the *chthonic* realm. The spiritual constellation of a person's place of birth also connects that individual to other family members in the beyond and to those in the immediate environment designated by other members of the community as `home`. Oboe (1994:139) makes a telling observation that:

> Territory is relevant to ethnicity because of an alleged "symbiosis" existing between a certain piece of earth and "its" community. Identity seems to be grounded in locality, and communities are seen as *inseparable* from particular habitats. But the tie with a given *ethnie* makes a landscape part of ethnic lore and the focus for collective dreams even when communities are dis-located, or separated from their homelands. [My emphasis]

Home, therefore, is to be seen as a cosmological construct which shapes the lives of the members of a society. Given historical rootedness, home is a site for explaining and writing communities' histories and lives. What colonisation does to colonial subjects is to write over their bodies new histories and life narratives of home. Home as understood by the indigenes becomes glossed over, and completely reversed and twisted, so that they begin to 'wander' in search of new meanings for their lives. Colonial discourse works by creating myths which turn history into a meta-narrative, a master-code which explains the colonial subjects' predicament and position as a natural condition of their quotidian existence. This discourse challenges the 'symbiosis' between indigenes and their territory. The indigenes are simply erased and colonial mythology creates a void; unoccupied tracts of land which must be claimed and occupied to extend colonial authority. Colonial subjects are de-scribed as part of this void, for, in the mind of the coloniser, the colonial subjects are non-existent; if they do exist, they are uncouth, uncivilised, and below the status of human beings.

> Their communal practices of quotidian existence, their cultural acts of self-definition and resistance, are written out of record; and in the process, the subjugated peoples are 'troped' into figures in a colonial pageant, 'people without history' whose capacity to signify cannot exceed that which is demarcated for the semiotic system that speaks for the colonising culture" (Slemon 1987:5).

They have to realise their *being* through the image of the coloniser. No wonder apartheid statesmen championed what they called *civil* policies, and schools attended by Africans were on the other hand called *normal colleges*. Africans have to attain normality through a system of education aimed at erasing their culture and replacing it by a European culture which serves as a model, a base, a *norm* to be identified with. In this way, colonial subjects are encased in mythologically knit walls which make them see colonisation as a blessing, a necessary intervention to redeem them from their primitive, savage ways and traditions. These myths are created by colonial masters to ensure that colonial cultures are deracinated and decimated. By its authority, myth possesses a clarity statement of fact, and thus becomes a 'justification' for history, as Barthes explains:

> [Myth] has the task of giving an historical intention a natural justification, and making contingency appear eternal ... What the world supplies to myth is an historical reality, defined, even if this goes back quite a while, by the way in which men have produced or used it; and what myth gives in return is *natural* image of this reality ... *myth is constituted by the loss of the historical quality of things*: in it, things lose the memory that one once were made of. The world enters language as a dialectical relation

> between activities, between human actions; it comes out of myth as a harmonious display of essences.

This realisation prompts Barthes (Oboe 1994:11) to conclude that historical discourse is essentially a product of ideology, or rather imagination. Barthes goes on to suggest that:

> ... the only feature which distinguishes historical discourse from other kinds is a paradox: the "fact" can only exist linguistically, as a term in a discourse, yet we behave as if it were a simple reproduction of something on another plane of existence altogether, some extra-textual "reality". Historical discourse is presumably the only kind which aims at a referent "outside" itself that can in fact never be reached.

Once the colonial authorities have the power to determine the *veracity* of facts, and to create myths which govern the lives of the colonised subjects, they are on the verge of stripping colonised people of their past. They used such mythology to naturalise oppression, and to distort images of 'home' among the colonised.

> ... the "truth" of the story ... about the past is not to be found in the uniqueness of its content or its ability to produce a faithful record of the past, but rather in its own internal system of describing and structuring events in such a way as to give one version of its past experience (Oboe 1994:16).

History becomes a re-writing of the past, a de-scription of the various textualisations which cannot be held to be authoritative accounts of the past. Emphasis on documentation is another strategy employed by colonial powers to re-place and erase oral testimonies and reduce them to personal, subjective narratives which should be *acted away* and *thought away* in dealings with history. In this way, history ignores the hidden transcripts which Mokgoatšana (1998a) argues are central to the debate in historiography and history-making. From what we learn from Barthes, history cannot claim to represent an innocent view of the past, an objective reflection of past events, but instead is a politically charged site. A value free history is merely a dream of those who believe they are well-positioned to universalise their way of seeing, experiencing and feeling as if these were not personal. Such contorted views are bound to discredit other historical paradigms and permutations in their search for a neutral perspective, an 'objective view.' Because of this, the various land textualisations are not free from the trappings of ideological underpinnings of various classes, races and periods. Oboe (1994:12) argues that:

> If documents are not mere sources that divulge facts about "reality," but discourses that supplement or rework reality, it follows that we can have no access to a full and authentic past, unmediated by surviving textual traces. The past as "referent" becomes inaccessible, and is available to study only by way of its prior textualisations; what we are left with are simply texts, not history, but histories.

Because documented history represents only one view of events, the colonialist view, impressions given in the narrative discourse creates a void in the territorial spaces occupied by native inhabitants. Impressions created by such terms such as discovery and expansion suggest that these worlds are unknown and unoccupied. Expansion seems to be an innocent word devoid of force and the subjection of people to colonial authority. The centrality of colonial discourse privileges the exploitation of all resources and systems at their disposal and the dispossession of indigenous people of their property. Facts are distorted, and reality is turned topsy-turvy to justify imperial objectives which not only extend colonial hegemonic discourses but further denigrate the colonised subjects and reduce them to 'slippages' of the text of life. What they document as 'history' becomes the 'official' view of the interpreting history; and all other alter/native systems become unacceptable and/or subversive .

Although the fiction writer invents the past through imagination, the historian "finds" his stories. Oboe (*op cit*) further argues that "invention" plays an important part in the historian's operations, given that the same event can be assigned different meaning and value in different histories. Histories are always an imposition of form upon the past, and historical texts are literary "artifacts" whose status as modes of historical representation depend upon a coherence of vision which does not derive from external data, but is essentially meta-history (Oboe 1994:113). Oboe maintains that the difference between history and fiction is cultural rather than cognitive, since the historian attempts to represent the past as real, whereas the fiction writer represents it as imaginable. He goes on to suggest that any past, individual or collective, exists not as an absolute but in *versions*, and that it is possible to look for each version in the kind of representation and structure that embodies it (Oboe 1994:115).

Gurr (1981:14) is of the opinion that deracination, exile and alienation in varying forms are the conditions of existence for the modern writer the world over, and that the basic response to such conditions is to search for an identity, the quest for a home, through self-discovery or self-realisation. The writer continues to search for a national identity, a country, for the body and mind. Writing thus becomes an attempt to raise the national consciousness of the evils which have become chronic threat to society. Gurr (1981:15) opines that alienation from a cultural and physical home has radical effects on a writer's mind as well as his/her choice of theme.

We find such an allegoric displacement in *Thellenyane Batlabolela* where the protagonist leaves his home to go and stay with his sister. A similar narrative is echoed in *Lefase leo ke le nyadišitšwego ka megokgo.* In this poem in particular the poet protests against his mother's new marriage, which forces him to leave his 'ancestral' land, a land where his father was buried. Such a displacement makes him traverse a vast landscape in a dream world trying to re-connect with his lost 'home'. We find here a troubled psyche trying to re-member the dismembered past in order to negotiate its meaning in life.

Puleng uses home as a discursive strategy to subvert the colonial/apartheid policies which denied African people the right to occupy, sell and use land. It is used as a trope to negotiate a return to the idyllic pre-colonial past, a past free of colonial enslavement and bondage. For the colonial subjects it represents a desire to recover or recuperate what has been lost in order to reclaim a previously fragmented identity.

Puleng's title *Gareadulelaruri [We are not permanent here]* is an allegory for perpetual displacement and dislocation. On defining the use of allegory as a narrative strategy in postcolonial texts Slemon (1987:12) explains:

> Allegory, here foregrounds the fact that history, like fiction, requires an act of reading before it can have meaning. History must be *read*, and read in adjacency to a fictional re-enactment of it, and this relocation of the received shibboleths of history into the creative and transformative exercise of reading opens a space within which new ways of formulating the past can come into being.

Reading through *Gareadulelaruri [We are not permanent here]* the reader is confronted with this 'transformative exercise' which opens new ways of rethinking the past and to inscribe it. The poem *Gareadulelaruri [We are not permanent here]* has ambivalent representations. At one level, it signifies a statement of subtle protest by the colonial subjects who resist the South African land policy which continuously defined and demarcated land into White South Africa and black reserves. *Gareadulelaruri [We are not* *permanent here]* as a black reserve is destined to be a fluid cartographical plain to be redrawn to satisfy the economic whims of the White South Africa.

The second level of the representation is an allegoric transcription of the white settlement in South Africa. The poet deliberately lampoons the first white occupation of the Cape. This occupation was meant to be temporary and to serve as a refreshment station for the route to India. Against this backdrop, the metonym *Gareadulelaruri [We are not permanent here]* should be understood as an historical re-presentation of the colonial empire's initial intention, but it further re-creates a mental construction which revises orthodox history. By employing allegory, Puleng challenges the interpellative and tropological strategies of colonialism. His poetry seeks to contest and subvert, colonial appropriation. The textual counter-discourse provided openly opposes and challenges the authenticity of the voice that speaks for the African people in historicising the arrival of the white settlers in Southern Africa.

It is ironic that the refreshment station, whose initial purpose was temporary, marks the beginning of a ruthless expansion policy which pushed indigenous inhabitants to the edges. That *Gareadulelaruri [We are not permanent here]* was a temporary settlement helps us understand the settlers did not consider the place as their 'home'. Home was beyond the salt waters. This conception later changes when white settlers seek ways to expand into the hinterland. The white settlers' search for expansion displaced indigenous people and devastated their ideas of permanence and rootedness, which characterise their cultural and ideological conception of home.

The isolation inscribed into *Gareadulelaruri [We are not permanent here]*:

> O reng bjalo o dutše o *nnoši* Gareadulelaruri?
> Bana bago ba lala ba lla dithama di ela megokgo,
> Ba hloka bahomotši ba šupša ka ditšhupabaloi,
> Bagwera ba ba fetogetše manaba *ba hladile...* (Puleng 1981:68)[*My italics*]
>
> Why are you secluded temporary settlement?
> Your children cry all night with tears running down their cheeks,
> They have no one to comfort them, though ambushed,
> Friends have turned into foes, and deserted them.

can be ascribed to the sanctions imposed upon South Africa by those countries which viewed apartheid as a crime against humanity. The indigenes were subjected to brutal and ruthless authority championed by the apartheid state. South Africa was virtually transformed into a militarist state, a country which trampled upon people's fundamental human rights, and subjected them to absolute tyranny and abject poverty. The image of *tšhupabaloi* attests to such brutalisations, represented by the form of a pointing gun. The isolation stems from disinvestment and other policies which ostracised South

Africa because of the tyranny of apartheid and which were designed to put pressure on her to bring about transformative change.

Puleng's poetry re-tells the experience of apartheid as inscribed on the lives of black people. To live in South Africa was to experience a tragic end to one's life. Racism, became a means to achieve colonial subjugation. People were barred from certain privileges and amenities on the basis of their colour. The body thus became a political pawn. Depending on its colour and ancestry it would be continually re-classified, and it would gain access to power or be denied it. African people could not accept such discrimination and alienating strategies lying down. Puleng captures snippets of the resistance to apartheid and re-creates an historical re-presentation of this epoch, thus weaving historical time into manageable fragments. In *Marung a mogopolo* (Puleng 1983), the voice in the text invites us to tread the paths of memory and examine what the voice considers unjustified:

> Bapela le nna mogagešo re be namatee ka nagano,
> Akanya le nna o mphe tlhaologanyomaleba ka šedi...
>
> Come close to me and let's have one mind,
> Let's think together and meticulously share our precise thoughts.

The poet identifies with his readers/audience because they share his problems and frustrations. He chooses to conscientise them about the evils which dehumanise them, and he provokes them into ruminating on these problems together because he believes the root of the problem is common knowledge to all and sundry:

> Ruri, dimpe le dibotse di bonwa ke mahlo a difofu (Puleng 1983:7)
> Truly, the good and the bad are witnessed by all.

On pondering over these issues, the poet traces the socio-economic and political problems of Africans to the incursions of the white community who swindled the former of their land and of other forms of property. The poet makes claims to the effect that he has re-discovered the root of their problems:

> Ke le bone šoba moo go šwahlilego kgomo tšešo,
> Ba rile ba ntšhela phori mahlong "matlakašuthe",
> Ba re: "Kgwadi-ya-meetse, tšea kgwadi ya šeleng..."
> Nka rafolla šaka la ka bjang ka kgwadi ya šeleng,
> Mola hlale bja go bua kgomo ke tšwa [*sic*]nabjo madibamatala?
> (Puleng 1983:8)
>
> I have discovered the opening through which my father's cows have strayed,
> When the settlers wanted to swindle me,
> They said: "Grey one of the water, Here is a knife for you..."
> How do I demolish my kraal for the sake of monied objects,
> When I was born with a talent to skin the beast?

The quoted extract represents an attempt by the poet to re-present an episode from the historical past which narrates the early contact between Blacks and Whites. This text, like other post-colonial texts, establishes an "oppositional, disidentificatory voice within the sovereign domain of the discourse of colonialism, and in doing so they help open a space upon which the false clarities of received tradition can be transformed into the uncertain ground of cognitive resistance and directional reiteration" (Slemon 1987). The historical representations made provide a counter-discourse to the representations in imperial historical texts.

The assertion "*...ba ntšhela phori mahlong*" unequivocally gives the reader a clear picture of the unfair economic transactions described. What the expression brings home is the fact that the transactions were not conducted in good faith, and like the folkloric ogre who blinds the eye of the person who is supposed to provide help, the white settlers too are believed to have cheated their clients and in turn claimed that the indigenes stole property from them. The poet disputes the story of bartering which is said to have legalised the transfer of property from Blacks to Whites. Puleng finds the imperial discourse nebulous and challenges it by providing this alter/native representation.

African people attach a high value to cattle. Cattle are not only an economic barometer, but also form the crux of their religious system. Given such significance, it is unthinkable that they would exchange their cattle for *kgwadi ya šeleng* (a knife). Economic value was judged in terms of cattle, not money, and industrialisation had not developed to such an extent that money would be seen as an inevitable mode for the exchange of property. Their economic barometer could not be devalued by the western system of economic power, because money and cattle, in addition to the value of *dithipa* (knives) and *diipone (*mirrors) could not be compatible, for cattle were prized more than these foreign objects. Such a transaction was anachronistic to the African economic exchanges of that time. Colonial discourses reduced Africans to economic buffoons with no sense of value and responsibility to make informed decisions. They were created as an "underdeveloped" species that could not estimate the value of knives and mirrors as compared to that of their livestock. Discourses such as this one, are intended to justify the manner in which African people have been cheated in the so-called bartering system by means of which most Africans were repeatedly ripped off, and later labelled as thieves on the frontiers.

In *Matlakašuthe*, Puleng (1983:32) also re-creates the story of the arrival of the Whites in South Africa to expose the unjust marginalisation and exploitation of the indigenes which ensued:

> Ba tlile ba kgelempua ka mafula a lewatle,
> Ba swerwe ke lenyora le tlala e le dišokiša,
> Ka maselawatlana ba rwele dithipa le diipone,
> Ba re ba fihla ba gaba nagalegola bolemi,
> Ba hwetša beng bahutelelwa ba naba maoto...
>
> They came from the sea sailing on the waves,

They were ravenous and asked for mercy,
Loading knives and mirrors onto their vessels,
On arrival, they aspired to farm on the open veldts,
They found the indigenes who allowed them to rest.

Puleng crosses the limits of imperial discourse which Stephen Slemon (1987:6) describes as the name for that system of signifying practices whose work it is to produce and naturalise the hierarchical power structures of the imperial enterprise, and to mobilise those power structures in the management of both colonial and neo-colonial relationships.

Colonial hegemonic praxis privileges itself at the expense of the colonial subjects, and thus monumentalises its achievements. The privileged few inscribe those events and figures measurable in 'bronze and stone' as the only events and figures with the capacity to signify. This palimpsestic gesture erases and writes over the colonial subjects, ensuring that they remain uninscribed, non-existent, somewhere 'out there', or alternatively, homeless. Puleng inscribes this historical episode as an alter/native discourse, a voice underwritten and almost reduced to silence. Like all postcolonial writers and critics, Puleng, most particularly in *Seipone sa Madimabe* (1981) and *Malopo a boreti* (1983) resists and subverts the apartheid discourses and provides a platform for a revision of such satanic policies which denied people freedom on the basis of their colour.

The expression *ba šuthelelwa ba naba* represents not only the settlers' settlement, but their burning desire to extend the borders of their colonial empires into the hinterland. The idea of *go naba* can best be understood in the metaphor of a creeper or someone stretching his/her legs. The poet makes us imagine an instance where a visitor stretches his/her legs in a relatively small space in which s/he him/herself is merely accorded space on the basis of mercy. Without considering that s/he will inconvenience even the hosts, the visitor simply claims the limited space for him/herself.

Matlakašuthe appropriates the techniques used in a traditional narrative where young children push and jostle a stranger with their backs. The visiting child has to use more power to gain access into the kraal of his/her hosts who are also making efforts to deny him/her that access. Access into the new area depends on the strength and tenacity of the stranger/visitor. Puleng subtly reconstructs the white settler as an intruder who like the stranger/visitor child pushes his/her way into the domain of the hosts. The incursion of the Whites into South Africa receives prominent attention in various parts of Puleng's poetry as a way to 'write back' to the colonial texts which preceded it. In this counter-discourse, the Whites begged for food and mercy:

> Ba tlile ...ba swerwe ke lenyora le tlala e le dišokiša. Puleng (1983:32)
>
> They came thirsty, hungry and begging for food.

The graphic representations of the settlers as *dišokiša* makes a telling description of the settlers in dire need of help. Their social conditions forced them to be humble beggars who should be helped out of mercy. Thirst makes reference to their squalor and the disease such as scurvy which ensued as a result of starvation. Later, however, this thirst becomes the supremacist zeal to turn the world into an extension of Europe.

The title *Matlakašuthe* signifies the forceful territorial acquisition and cultural subjugation implicit in the enterprise of colonialism. The colonial enterprise itself works on the assumption that there is a vastness 'out there' waiting to be conquered, captured, discovered and claimed and appropriated. The presence of other people in that 'vastness' does not shock them out of their slumber; they continue to celebrate the discovery of new lands and continue to re-name them. By re-naming, the settler community appropriates reality for their own benefit, as we see in *Ga ke mofaladi,* and *Ke kae mo?.*

In *Bohwa bja ka*, the poet describes a loss of land through conquest and military subjection:

> Šo motseta wa Bodikela;
> Rumo o swere la ntšhotšhonono
> Mellwane o letile ke sehlwaseeme. (Puleng 1981:6)
>
> Here is a messenger from the West,

Carrying a sharp-edged spear,
Guarding the frontiers like a statue.

The citation is a re-invention of the historical narrative and explains the misappropriation of land by the white-settler community. This narrative provides an alter/native discourse to the colonial theory which arrogates land to the white settlers by simply erasing and decimating the indigenes. Through allegory, the poet foregrounds the militarist misappropriation of colonial land which dispossessed African people. The figure of the military armour and insignia reinforced by the image of attentive guards on the frontiers of the country superimposes the image of colonial authority over that of the indigenous people who are forced to submit to colonial authority. Frontiers become charged spaces maintained for torture, exploitation, arrests, banishment and brutalisation. These ~~*fault lines*~~ should not be crossed. A deafening silence is what the authorities expect from the colonial subjects, or else they will be forced to toe the line:

Ke golegilwe,
Ka hloka molomo,
Ka lomišwa ditšhitšhito. (Puleng 1981:6)

I was imprisoned,
And silenced,
And ants were made to bite me.

The military insignia and statues evoke images of war, plunder and heroism. The soldiers in armour almost succeed in reducing the indigenes to vulnerability, insecurity and defencelessness. The armour further allegorises colonial/apartheid authoritarian rule which thrived on the political silencing and underdevelopment and based this on the myth of separate development:

> Ke bjalo ka lefotwana,
> Ke ahlame ke letetše dijo,
> Mmane le tatane ba a kobakoba. (*Op cit*)
>
> I am like a little chick,
> Opening its mouth waiting for food,
> My mother and my father are tossed around.

The image of the fledgling reinforces the idea of dependency and defencelessness. A fledgling depends for its livelihood on its parents for feeding and continued growth. The metaphor of the fledgling is an evocation of the historical discourse. The adults who are expected to care for the young ones are reduced to pawns on the political chessboard. The settlers' mythology of development ingrained in the theory of modernisation reduces indigenous people to occupants of the lowest rungs of the development ladder, and positions themselves on the top rungs. This theory divides the world into First and Third worlds, with the West coming first before all (post)colonies. This kind of social and economic worlding centralises colonial authority over the indigenous subjects, and strips them of their power and ability to develop. As First World countries, the colonising powers of the West become pace-setters, and have the original stereotype to frame the rest. They hold the key to development, and the rest of the world is forced into imitation in the race for second position. Needless to say, the designation 'Second World'; is always unoccupied and unclaimed. Development programmes from the West are, however, meant to underdevelop, and impoverish those areas they claim to develop, for, in the final analysis, the West enriches itself more than it does those who are supposed to benefit.

The poet's assertion that *ke llela bohwa bja ka* invokes an African epistemology regarding, namely land, that land is an inalienable right which must not be given away. *Bohwa* refers to inheritable property. Land as *bohwa* is transferred from the progenitors to *bajalefa*: heirs. Most African societies find it morally binding that every person has to have a piece of land to settle or farm. It is because of this that land is inherited through the partible principle. In this poem, the poet laments the loss of such an inalienable property, thus disrupting the discourses of the various Land Acts which alienate the subjects from their native land:

> Ke lebetšwe, ke a itsheka,
> Ke beilwe ka mafuri. (Puleng 1981:6)
>
> I am ignored, and question myself,
> I am cast into the backyard.

These statements explain the manner in which native inhabitants become marginalised through physical violence and conquest as well as discriminatory legislation. The poet's declarative statement that *nna ke mobu* disrupts colonial discourse by invoking the inseparable bond between the subject and the earth as connected by the cosmological bind. In this cosmological unity, separation leads to various forms of dislocation, disorientation and misdirecting. The speaker asserts a connection with the material products of his country; by so doing, he refutes all attempts at displacing and distancing from that privileged position.

In *Mo ke bokhutšo* the poet reconstructs an imaginary homeland devoid of the racist and discriminatory laws which ensnared African people in dynamics from which they could not unwind themselves. In this land, all are equal before the law, all are at peace and there is no need to carry a permit: *Bjalo (sic) mo ke gae ga mahlaku/ Gago nyakege lengwalo la tumelelo* [Here is home indeed, there is no need to produce a permit]. Written in the late 1970's and published in 1981, the poem provides an avenue to the experiences of imagined freedom which could not be enjoyed in South Africa then. An imaginary home created in this text is devoid of apartheid laws; it subverts and 'outlaws' the use of permits and grants freedom of movement to all.

Reading beyond the wording of the text, however, one notes a subtle resistance to the unprecedented displacements and removals which blur the conception of home among the indigenes. The re-membering of home narrative attunes the subject to what is considered ideal, that which must be pursued and attained at all costs. This narrative dismembers the past and posits a future within that continuum with a view to challenging narratives of apartheid. The voice animating the text considers home as an environment where freedom of movement and access is not curtailed by bureaucracies established to serve the needs of a limited few. It is for this reason that his imaginary homeland provides an inversion of what apartheid wanted to achieve, namely, a clear distinction between master and servant. In the imaginary homeland created in the Puleng text, *Ga go nyakege lengwalo la tumelelo/ Kgoši le mohlanka e fo ba moswanamong* [there is no need for a permit/ the master and servant are but the same].

The poet exiles himself to this imaginary homeland which provides what his immediate country cannot offer. By exiling himself, the poet anticipates a loss of identity, history and its corollary loneliness which are chronic and deplorable in his society. Gurr (1981:14) believes that deracination, exile, and alienation are the conditions of existence of the modern writer, and the basic response is self-realisation and self-identity.

The troubled voice continues to implore its audience not to be deceived by apparent discrepancies and social imbalances, but suggests lessons should be learned from birds about how they live in their country. The poet argues that poverty and hardship do not make one an outsider in his/her place of birth. The analogy drawn from birds is open to a multiple of interpretations. I will examine only a few which are relevant for our discussion. Birds make their nests anywhere they choose to, as long as they feel safe there. They know no walls. They have no borders, no divisions which keep them away from the areas they want to inhabit. In their flight, they have no forbidden paths. Birds are always on the lookout for snares which may end their lives. The bird analogy disrupts the apartheid discourse which traps indigenous populations in a political mess which removes their freedom, their right to land and even to movement.

Gona kua matopeng presents the idea of home as a ravaged concept. The landscape is littered with ruins and images of decay which function like a collation of images of dereliction. Such a construction works well to represent the manner in which apartheid wrought to a perpetual destruction of the African people's culture and political organisation. The ruins represent a state of decline, not only of the people's development, but also of their envisaged participation in the body politic of the country. The landscape is dominated by horrific signs, with eagles hovering above the ruins and jackals stalking the still area. The silence and loneliness of the area are a mnemonic gesture for the solemnity accompanying death, not only the death of the physical body, but that of the freedom of the soul and spirit. The village knows no freedom. The hovering eagles with their lacerating claws, ready to pounce upon the prey represent the draconian laws of apartheid ready to snare anyone suspected of treading 'foul', while the murderous jackals stalking the silent landscape represent the informers who betray their own people. These spies and police informers are sly and cunning:

> Ke ... dimpša mabogola di sa lome,
> Di phura marapo khutlong ya leswiswi,
> Di goba di sa lome anthe di na le menomaripi;
> ... ke kgomo tša otopedi
>
> They are dogs which bark without biting,

Crunching bones in a dark nook,
They bark and do not bite because they have half-chafed teeth,
... these are two footed beasts.

These cunning spies and police informers are charlatans who swindle members of their society and lead them to brutal experiences and harassment:

Ka diatla ke hlokofaditšwe le a mpona.
You can almost see that I have been physically wounded.

The bruised body of the speaker is the theatrical site of corporeal mutilation, which was a prevalent feature of apartheid authority. The skin was always the receptacle of the apartheid brutality- a racially charged site of the body. I will elaborately discuss this aspect in detail in the next chapter which examines how the body functions to receive and respond to the oppressive laws of apartheid. The spirit inhabiting this mutilated body is suppressed; it must not express its wishes, but must remain silent in fear of the 'hovering eagles" and 'stalking jackals.'

Given the limited freedom of this imagined community, the indigenes experience 'home' as exile, they become withdrawn, and fail to reach out to express themselves. With the hovering eagles and stalking jackals, the poet recreates a country under siege, with its inhabitants brutalised and maimed by their colonial masters. This colonial encounter, where the native inhabitants have become silent and are without voice, is characterised by subjugation and cultural deracination. The physical ruins and dereliction of the landscape are suggestive of the wilful annihilation of this community by colonising powers as well as the concomitant material exploitation which ensues.

4.3 URBAN SPACE AND THE APARTHEID CITY

In South African politics, the urban space has been a politically charged site. The apartheid city epitomised the authorial impersonation of the body politic which was racially constituted. The city space became a symbol for white hegemonic discourses, authority and control. Through discriminatory and restrictive laws, the city was to become the exclusive space for the whites, and other population groups were tabooed from that 'golden' tropological space.

One way to control the economic wealth of the country and to reserve it for the white community was through apartheid legislation. The influx of Africans into the cities had to be controlled through influx control measures. Africans from the 'reserves' were only allowed to stay in the urban areas for a maximum of 72 hours, failing which they would be charged with trespassing. Although the apartheid governments wanted to remove all Africans into ethnic reserves designed through the Separate Development Act, which gave rise to ethnic Homelands, there was the necessity of acquiring cheap labour in the white reserves, especially with the growing industrialisation of South

Africa. To accommodate such a need, "section 10 rights" were extended to those who had worked for fifteen years or ten consecutive years under one employer, and those who were born and bred in the townships. By according them these rights, the apartheid governments tried to avoid the looming tension which could erupt from those Africans who did not want to be tied any longer to their historical 'homelands'.

With the strict influx control measures in place, power was centred in the cities, particularly the PWV (Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vereeniging). The PWV itself became the powerhouse of apartheid, a metropolis which safeguarded itself from 'foreign' intrusion. Given the opportunities available in this area, most people who wanted to go to the cities wished to be swallowed up by this area, notwithstanding the *risk* that they took by plunging into the city.

The Witwatersrand, in particular, became a contested area, a cauldron where racism was brewed, tasted and inflicted. In *Mmetšatholo ke mang?* Puleng describes how various people became engulfed by the apartheid cities:

> Bjalo ka makeke ge a keka sehlwa,
> Ba tšwele ka difata ba hubaka dikudumelabjoko;
> Morago ba tlogetše mafotwana dihlageng,
> Ba khunthane ba tlopatlopa ba tshelatshela,
> Ba tšhiralala ba gabile papalenoka molatolwa-o-swerwe. (Puleng
> 1983:20)

> Like termites in search of grass,
> They left their homes with imagined hopes,
> Behind they left their little ones,
> They are committed, abused and tossed around,
> They exerted themselves hoping to find money.

The motives behind hoarding money are varied, some want to rob, others are conspirators and murderers, while others cheat the passerby in the name of God. In all these cases, the central drive to the city is money.

Urbanisation became a tool to infiltrate the centre of apartheid cities, and to challenge the various limitations imposed upon black people. In *Mophamola dikanapa* Lentsoane (1975) develops a subtle discursive strategy to challenge the inhuman apartheid laws which made the city a restrictive environment which was to be a lily-white metropolitan space. The city space is unwelcoming, and the young man feels alienated, and discovers that unlike his 'home' the city makes several unpleasant demands upon him. Documentation is demanded which he does not have, but he vows not to return 'home' because he wants to claim a space for himself in the inner city. Because he cannot be employed, the young man turns into a "savage" and snatches people's purses. What Lentsoane manages to communicate in this narrative is the idea that failure to secure employment in the apartheid days turned many people into criminals against their will. They wanted to survive, and they could not be employed. They were separated from employment by a thin layer of their skin which alienated them from all resources and amenities. Temptation fuelled by hunger and poverty would definitely ensue.

Tsakata (Ramaila 1952) subverts the apartheid machinery and helps his own people who are caught in the trappings of apartheid. He makes passes and permits for them so that they can have free movement in the city. Although the 'scam' is later discovered and he is arrested, his acts represent an attempt to demystify the urban mythology which simply writes over black peoples' lives. Tsakata, the main character, manages to dismantle the apartheid bureaucracy, and thus achieves the imagined pursuit of the struggles against apartheid - equality for all. He disrupts the discourse of apartheid machinery by misspelling the names of the Boers, which finally leads to his arrest. The organic structure of apartheid is such that he could not continue unnoticed. The bottom line is, that the permits are unnecessary discriminatory mechanisms which Tsakata wants to destroy, or rather declare meaningless, because all who can be helped by him would not need the "official" documentation which is difficult to acquire.

The Group Areas Act was instrumental in relegating Africans to the reserves which subjected them to squalor and abject poverty. These reserves were contrived along ethnic/dialectical lines. At times the apartheid logic failed its contrivers because certain groupings proved very difficult to fit into their schemes of classification. The Indians and the Coloureds became most subjected to colour classifications and constant re-classifications to fit into the morbid theory of apartheid. The manner in which, for an example, the Northern Ndebele were placed under Lebowa is also an indication of the myopic epistemology of apartheid. Such omissions created polyglots which today create problems which cloud language politics. Apartheid taxonomies were indeed fraught and naive.

Apartheid thrived on the myth of separate nations and separate origins. These separate nations were to be drawn away from the cities and dragged to the borders of the country where they would die a natural death in places without economic/agricultural and industrial development. All industries were destined to be on white soil, and thus an irregular situation will obtain where just a small piece of land or an institution will because of its economic strength and viability, belong to the white South Africa even if it is embedded in the area demarcated for Blacks. The separate Amenities Act became a reinforcement of the previous exclusionary apartheid acts. These Acts, passed and amended one after another, harnessed the urban space as the imperial/apartheid metropolitan centre. Movement and access to public amenities was restricted on racial/colour lines.

The metropolitan centre was narrativised into a mythology which was later developed through various purposeful ritualisations. Perhaps the concept needs to be explained here. What the colonial power does to naturalise its policies into laws of common sense is to transplant the European world, be it in literature, law, epistemology, religion or any other sphere by which they want to achieve indoctrination of its subjects. Colonial subjects accept these naturalised 'truths' without much questioning, and embrace them into their fold. In the case of the apartheid state, the architects have so well mapped out the ideology and epistemology of separation into urban cartography that even in our literary texts we find these exclusionary policies unwittingly glorified. If we were to cast a look at a number of the earlier writings in our language, we will (re)discover that the 'Jim goes to Jo'burg' theme was not only a linearly arranged narrative, but a politically and racially charged story. Jim, normally the protagonist, deserts his 'home' and becomes swallowed into the urban space which devours him like the mythological monster does in a mythic world. Wilkinson (1994) who contends that the city could no longer be inscribed within a geometric further makes this representation of the city:

> It appears as a viscous, mobile, octopus-like monster,, drawing the surrounding territory into its omnipotent and all-devouring net and recalling the mythological swallowing monsters of South African mythology.

The city as a monster destroys and ravages the character's cultural background and sucks his/her corporeal and economic strength to 'return home' as a living corpse. In Lentsoane's *Ga se ya lešaka le, (Lentsoane 1973),* Marabe leaves his 'home' **Molapo'a pula** in search of employment and plunges himself into the city where his enjoyment is merely ephemeral and detrimental, because when he returns home, he finds a completely changed space in which he feels alienated. He is old and unmarried, something which makes him an outcast in his community, and worse still is the fact that his mother is aged and would need a *ngwetši* who would look after the household chores. What lessons do we learn from such narratives? They perpetuate the apartheid mythology that the city is a racially segregated landscape dominated by the white community with the other population groups relegated to the peripheries. Interestingly, this characters are swallowed by the periphery of the city, mostly the black townships, which were also marshalled under strict surveillance. These peripheral settlements are also controlled because they are seen as the extension of the city.

The division between home and outside is well articulated in *Motsemollakoma* (Puleng 1983). That everybody migrates into the city is an indication that the city is an alien space to which they seek temporary refuge:

> Ba tlile ka ditlhologelo tša mehuta,
> Bangwe ba šikere, bangwe ba ikgonere;
> Ba gabile mafulomatala Motsemollakoma ...
> Ba tlogetše dirathana gae le diputswa.
> Tshepho ke go hwetša dilatšatlalakgang.
>
> They arrived with different aspirations,
> Others were carrying loads while others were bare-handed.
> Craving for the green pastures in the city...
> Leaving their children and parents back home.
> They hope to find something to eat.

The apartheid city is represented here as *mafulomatala* which epitomes affluence. Indeed, the discoveries of gold and diamond shook the whole world, and fortune-hunters flocked to South Africa to try their luck. Home in this case is associated with hunger and starvation which mark the lowest levels of economic advancement. The economic imbalances between 'home' and 'city' provide a pull factor which draws those without economic means to the city. Interestingly, the people enumerated in Puleng's poem come from those areas which are destined to perish in their ethnic homelands, or Independent black states outside the borders of the apartheid South Africa. They come from Transkei, Lesotho, Botswana, Zambezi, Swaziland, Sekhukhuneland and GaMphahlele, while others come from the erstwhile Portuguese colonies in West Africa, possibly Angola and Uganda. All these become swallowed too:

> Ba meditšwe ke mekgolokwane ya Borwa.
>
> They have been swallowed by the dins of the South.

The swallowing metaphor has its other connotations which have to be understood in the discourse relating to the struggle to access the city. Swallowed objects are susceptible to manipulation and mutilation by the swallower. Swallowed objects reflect vulnerability as it manifests itself in their digestion and consumption. The sense of mutilation has to be seen in the context of "cultural washing" which colonial states embark upon in the process of exploiting indigenes in the name of religion and education.

4.4 SUMMARY

This chapter discussed the conception of home in N.S. Puleng's poetry. It has become evident that the idea of home under apartheid has been a ravaged concept. This was because of such events as forced removals, influx control, and the manner in which the oppressed people of the country was alienated from the centre of power. Home had to be understood in ethnic terms, and this was an attempt to uproot the conception of home as a place where one belongs, a geographical and metaphysical space to which one feels connected.

Home, like *Heimat* among the Germans is connected to blood and territory. This connection is bound to find expression in nationality and nations. Although the idea of nationality did not receive much attention, it became clear that it is closely bound to the us/them dichotomy which colonial discourse created. This us/them dichotomy found expression in the manner in which the city space became harnessed for political and economic reasons.

Another observation made in this chapter is the manner in which history becomes amenable to (ab)use in the hands of those who control discourse. They turn it into a national narrative which frames reality for inspection only from the perspective of the dominant. Minority discourse challenges such a one-sided view which tends to universalise itself. These discourses carry with them ideological underpinnings which inform each of them.

CHAPTER 5

FROM SPACES TO MARGINS

Ke tšhaba kgatelelo ya go hloka kelo,
Ye e mpeelago mapheko le mellwane gohle,
Mo ke hlokišwago molomo ke na le boikarabelo. (N.S. Puleng, *Sefahlego sa pelo ya ka*)

I am afraid of excessive oppression,
The one that sets borders and prohibitions all over,
Where I am denied a say and responsibility.

To know how I am and how I have fared, you must understand why I resist all kinds of domination, including that of being given something. (Nurridin Farah *in* Kadiutu Kanneh, *African Identities: Nation and culture in Ethnography, Pan-Africanism and Black Literatures*)

Frontiers are articulations, boundaries are constitutively crossed or transgressed. (Geoffrey Bennington *in* Annalisa Oboe, *Fiction, History and Nation in South Africa*)

Ga ke llele naga bokgabo le matsaka mphiwafela,
Ke llela beng ba rego ba lla ba itsheka bojalefa
Ba gogelwe swiswing ba lomišwe ditšhitšhito... (N.S. Puleng, *Malopo a boreti)*

I do not worry about aesthetics of the landscape and the God-given wealth,
I worry about the owners who cry and make a case for their heritage,
And they are dragged to the dungeon and, are severely brutalised.

Margins are popular these days. Everyone is claiming them. But one thing remains the same. Colonial and post-colonial literatures remain on the margins. We were marginal to the old critical approaches and we are now marginal to the new. (Diana Brydon, Commonwealth or Common Poverty?: *New Literatures in English and the new Discourse of Marginality*.)

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter explored representations of home as a post-colonial construct and how colonial/apartheid discourses and hegemonic practices dismantle and disfigure identity. I have chosen to preface this chapter with the four excerpts which give us a good background to understanding the settler-margin dichotomy which has become a site of resistance in Puleng's poetry. This chapter, therefore, builds on the vein of the previous one and includes the strategies by which Puleng's poetry attempts to resist such constructions of *inferiorisation* which are integral to apartheid's theory of racialisation. The chapter also discusses the problem of marginalisation as a major feature of postcoloniality. Because of the close link between marginality and the discourse of power, the settler representations will be analysed as these are considered fundamental in the study of race relations in the apartheid years. The labels given to the white population are based on the ideology of the time, and reflect a large scale rejection of dominance. These labels are emotive and contrived to resist the power of the dominant settler communities.

5.2 OF SETTLERS AND MARGINALS

The term marginality refers to the state of being a marginal. To be a marginal is to be in the periphery of power, to be alienated from the centre which is the source of power which controls and regulates discourse and property. Marginality is defined in relation to access, and denial of that access. Marginalisation induces subordination by creating borders and boundaries which should be revered and venerated.

In their *Key concepts in post-colonial studies,* Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (1998:135) maintain that although the term marginality carries a misleading geometric implication, marginal groups do not necessarily endorse the notion of a 'fixed' centre. Although marginality is a direct result of and response to centrality, it should not be seen in the Manichean sense, where the mention of one necessitates the other. Ashcroft *et al* (1998) argue that those structures of power that are described in terms of margins and a centre actually operate in a complex, diffuse and multifaceted way.

Opinions expressed by Ashcroft, *et al* (1998) and Gunew (1994) indicate that both centrality and marginality are fluid states of being, and each of them contains inherent contradictions which problematise the notion of fixity in these states. These ideas reveal that there cannot be a unitary state of centrality or marginality: each has its internal conflicts which continue to challenge the possibility of rigidity. It should be noted that marginality is a deliberate condition created by those occupying the centre to protect their interests and allow them to declare the other sector of society less developed. In South Africa, this view was entrenched by a racist legal system which went so far as to claim that apartheid was justified by God's Law. The marginalisation of the other sector of society is done to eliminate competition for resources, and yet this is not always supported by all those who benefit from it.

Gunew (1994:27) strongly believes that the process of marginalisation cannot be reduced simply to a struggle between oppressor and oppressed in which the latter remains utterly passive. She maintains that in their spatially conceived representation of exclusionary gestures, margins have always been ambiguous signs which have served to frame the centre in terms of indictment as well as approbation. Gunew's view is that exclusion represents the condition of its possibility, and in this way marginality frames the 'conditions of existence' of those *other* writings included or endorsed by the analytical process. Gunew's discussion shifts centrality to the marginalised writings, and opens up a debate which challenges the authority of centrality, since in her view, centrality is always informed and sustained by marginality. Her citation from Derrida, that framing always sustains and contains that which, by itself, collapses forthwith makes her argument unambiguously clear.

Ashcroft, *et al* (1998), however, define marginality in terms of *positionality* — limitations of a subject's access to power. The same contention is held by JanMohamed and Lloyd (1990:9) who argue that:

> "Becoming a minor" is not a question of essence (as the stereotypes of minorities in dominant ideology would want us

> believe) but a question of position: a subject-position that in the final analysis can be defined only in "political" terms — that is, in terms of the effects of economic exploitation, political disenfranchisement, social manipulation, and ideological domination on the cultural formation of minority subjects and discourses.

To speak of minority is to invoke the presence of a relationship with a majority. The two are not merely opposites but co-exist, and are interdependent. Minorities grapple with the canons of the majority and are suspicious of their meta-narratives and codes. They continue to seek ways to disrupt and demystify them by developing an oppositional or counter-discourse which 'undoes the power of dominant discourses to represent themselves as universal' (Gunew 1994:42).

In his inaugural lecture, Mamdani (1998) discusses the complex issue of settlers and natives. In his address, he describes the settler-native question as a political one. Using the Manichean dichotomy, settlers are only defined in relation to natives, for the two "belong together":

> You cannot have one without the other, for it is the relationship between them that makes one a settler and the other, a native. To do away with one, you have to do away with the other. (Mamdani 1998:4)

The settler-marginal relationship in South Africa is a product of military and political domination. The settler community used military conquest, the pretext of the cloak of religion as well as a colonial, divisive education system to penetrate territories occupied by Blacks and inscribe their authority in these cartographical spaces. Although a minority in the classical sense, they assumed a dominant position and renamed the African world to fit their own conception of reality, thus creating spaces and palimpsests in it. By naming it, they assumed control over that world and pushed the indigenes to the margins of power through oppression, exclusion and forced assimilation.

This minority power they appropriated in order to submerge those native to the land. Marginalisation begins with knowledge. Ideas native to the inhabitants are either forsaken in favour of those of the dominant group, or appropriated within the epistemology of the colonising power.

> The ideas which are original with the figure being marginalised, but fruitful anyway, are co-opted so that the source of the ideas seems to be the central figure rather than the marginal who has been looted, that the central figure deserves its position. (Gallant 1996:31)

In this way, colonial subjects are dispossessed of their knowledge. Fiction masked as history enacts European achievements and creates a damning past for the Africans, thus eradicating the contributions of African intellectuals of yore and today. This 'looting' is an annexation of the space occupied by the marginal body, a body with thoughts which is yet denied recognition. The colonising master usurps the discourse of the marginal for himself:

> If one begins with the assumption that the marginal figure *by nature* can have nothing to do with the discourse, then it becomes plausible to deny that the marginal could have anything to contribute to it. If what this marginal *is* defines that which the discourse is *not*, then there can be no similarities between the two... . To appropriate is to re-define. (Gallant 1996:31)

What Gallant suggests is that the colonial power simply inscribes its power and discourse on the colonial mind, and thus twists reality upside down. Ngugi (1993:117) uses the term *obscurantism* to define such a contorted view of events. Such a calculated hegemonic discourse creates the condition of marginality, which unintentionally reifies its source, centrality. Ashcroft, *et al* (1998:136) hold that imperialism cannot be reduced to a structure, a geometry of power which leaves some particular races on the margin, but instead is a continuous, processual, which works through individuals and upon them. What it does is to encourage tacit and unintentional complicity on the part of the marginal..

> It reproduces itself within the very idea of the marginal ... despite its ubiquity as a term to indicate various forms of exclusion and oppression, the use of the term always involves

> the risk that it endorses the structure that established the marginality of certain groups... (Ashcroft, *et al* 1998:136)

That marginalisation reproduces itself within the very idea of the margin prompts Brydon (1989:5) to argue that "from our perspective, we are central. We are where we must begin and we are not marginal to ourselves, however much others may marginalise us economically and politically". Brydon's marginal "we" refuses to be named marginal, and claims for itself a central position from which it is defined as a source of power. The loss of this power comes as a result of political ad economic disempowerment, a process often generated from outside. According to Ashcroft, *et al* (1998) and Gallant (1996), marginalisation is achieved through appropriation, censorship and oppression. According to Gallant (1996:77) censorship and oppression are the two forms by which the colonial subject's awareness is blocked. She defines exclusion as the final step in silencing the tabooed voice that has been marginalised.

Exclusion takes various forms. Members of marginalised groups are barred from public schools, hospitals, universities, social and justice system and most government agencies. In the case of South Africa, the homeland system provided apartheid with a 'grand' plan which allowed differentiated treatment in areas racially separated. This demonic practice created learning empires for the various race groups and allowed for the inferiorisation of Blacks through a policy of *Bantu Education*. In this way, the technocratic space was harnessed for white control while Blacks were forced to cluster in few technikons and universities where they were subjected to the worst means of academic exclusion.

Puleng addresses some of the forms by which apartheid philosophy was upheld, namely, censorship, torture, imprisonment and inferiorisation:

> Motse wo ke motse mang ge beng ba se na khutšo?
> Mellwane e o patlile, magoro o segetšwe, o hloname
> Gohle ke melao, ga go toka, ga go tirišano, ke tirelo. (Puleng 1983:47)
>
> What kind of state is this where the landowners have no peace?
> They have stretched the borders, and set limits to you, and you are saddened.
> There are laws all over, there is no justice, no consultation, all is autocratic.

Puleng clearly points out the manner in which black people were disassociated, and distanced from their own country through apartheid legislation. The racist legislation regulated every aspect of their lives. They were not consulted in the formulation of these laws. These laws were questionable because they were not a representation of the people's wishes. It was important to consider their wishes in all areas where their lives were affected by the law suggested, as opposed to having the law imposed upon them. An imposed law does not represent the people's voices and aspirations, and thus becomes a thorn in their flesh. It is against this background that the subject delivers his saddening message.

Apartheid legislation took away civic rights from the indigenous people and set out borderlines which confined them to margins as implied by the line *mellwane o segetšwe.* The idea of delimited borders should also be understood within the context of the various colour bar acts which discriminated against black people. The *mellwane* (frontiers/borders) alluded to include the censorship laws which ensured that the apartheid ideology was publicly not challenged. Such a society without freedom of expression, where intellectual production is discouraged, is likely to lead to intellectual stagnation, as Puleng warns: *meno nagano go ja tša wela maleng* (ideas cannot be fully ruminated).

Political thought becomes the sole responsibility of the apartheid State, and any other alternative ideology or view is suppressed by means of harsh legal measures:

> Dinatla di tloletšwe tša hloka maatla,
> Bohlale tša thinthwa di thekesela ka ditšhitšhitho –
> Tša hlokišwa molomo mogopolo wa bolela ka sehebehebe;
> Kgonthe tša e hlokišwa ... (Puleng 1983:57)
>
> Influential people have been imprisoned,
> Have had their knowledge removed by torture.
> They are denied a say, and can only whisper their ideas,
> They are denied to speak the truth.

Alternative views challenging apartheid and its gross violations were declared inflammatory, and thus branded propaganda devoid of truth. In this way, the apartheid

State became the only truth-telling machinery and possessed absolute truth which was to be venerated. Truths told by those who opposed apartheid were turned into vulgar lies which led to the inhuman torture and imprisonment of those responsible. The idea expressed in *(Dinatla) Kgonthe tša e hlokišwa* in the previous extract tellingly explains the manner in which those subjected to apartheid terror were made to disown their ideas, and refrain from expressing their personal conviction. The same sense of brutalisation, aimed at achieving subjection, particularly through imprisonment, is articulated in *Sehlakahlakamatete* [The Incredible Island](Puleng 1981) and *Monna wa mahloko* [A man of all troubles](Puleng 1983). Imprisonment and torture are seen as the two primary instruments of apartheid subjection:

> ... beng ba šupša ka ditšhupabaloi
> Ba re ba lla ka megokgo ya pelobohloko le kgakanego,
> Ba homotšwe ka mpakubu ba hloke mošito?
> Ke kae mo basetsokami ba gatikela babotlana,
> Go rego go sekwa molato o tshedišwe mahlo? (Puleng 1983:48)
>
> The indigenes are threatened with guns
> When they are expressing their objection and flustrations,
> They are silenced with a sjambok and left undignified.
> What a place is this where the governors suppress the poor,
> Where cases are judged without considering their merits?

In the society described in the previous extract, torture has virtually become the rule of law. Suspects are brutalised and already found guilty before being charged in a court of law. They have no rights at all, not even the right to know why there have been arrested.

The answers to such questions are nothing but threats with guns and assault. Assaulted suspects are subjected to undue admission of guilt. This takes away their dignity and leaves them vulnerable to further subjugation. This happens contrary to the subject's culture. In the subject's culture, a case is judged on its merits, and no attempt is made to use the suspect's past or present in the adjudication of the case. This is well attested by the proverb *a go sekwe tšhipa e sego mmolai wa yona* [adjudicate the case and not the person] which is contrary to the imaged country in the poem *go rego go sekwa molato o tshedišwe mahlo?* [where the case is not as important as the suspect].

In several poems, Puleng decries the inferiorisation of African culture and the valorisation of its western counterpart. With its 'normalisation' agenda, apartheid education and theology condemned African practices as backward, heathen and uncivil. Christianity and education became instruments to *wash away*, and shed off the African ways of life and adopt practices of 'civilised' culture. In *Ba ineetše lefase* (1981) he describes the youth who are "swallowed" into the city and suddenly shed off their names in favour of European names, and look down upon their culture:

> Setšo se lebetšwe se lebelelwa ka bosodi... (Puleng 1981:17)
> [Culture is ignored and always blamed.]

Such people are like leopards without spots. Their identity is shattered. They are compelled to model themselves upon the identity of their conquerors. The poet's assertion that *lefase... ba le tsena phulaša* (Puleng 1981:17) [they are approaching the world the wrong way] is a telling observation that what they are doing is contrary to what is expected of them. Although admittedly identities are syncretic and hybrid because, like spaces, they are continuously fluid and moving, what these youths do is an insipid collusion with apartheid's contrivers to destroy their cultural identity. They suffer from what Fanon describes as 'an incurable wish for the permanent identification with the West' (Ngugi 1993). This syndrome drastically affects their identity and washes away the basic principles of *botho* which characterise African culture:

> Khutšo, tirišano le potano a šwalantše (*sic*),
> Leago, phedišano le therišano a fenamišitše ...
> Merero le dikgopolo tša lesedi di ribegilwe,
> Mantšu melomong a ngwadilwe eupša a pala go tšwa ...
> Motse wola wa setumo, wa mekgoši le direto,
> Ke mohlologadi bana ba fetogile makgoba nageng di šele...
> (Puleng 1981:28)
>
> Peace, co-operation and trust are destroyed,
> Hospitality, sociability and communication turned down,
> Plans and bright ideas are suspended,
> Words are written on their lips and yet they are tight-lipped.
> That honoured village filled with jubilations and praises,
> Has turned into a bereaved zone with children in bondage
> under foreign rule.

A loss of the quality of love, peace, co-operation, mutual trust, and free speech is a worrying factor. Any human being devoid of these, is inevitably relegated to the lowest base of humanity, and thus experiences the worst form of psychological domination. The idea expressed in the line: *Mantšu melomong a ngwadilwe eupša a pala go tšwa...* [words are inscribed on their lips but cannot be uttered] is a stark revelation of the harshness of the limitations imposed upon the colonial subjects. Although they have brilliant ideas to express, these are merely swept under the carpet because they fear to transgress the laws of censorship imposed upon them. The following lines are a reflection on the problem of censorship:

- Dinatla tša polelo di gogetšwe swiswing le eja motho (Puleng 1981:30)

  Great orators have been dragged into prison.

- Dirutegi tša ntshe eke diphala di hloka mafulo (Puleng 1981:30)

  The educated are like antelopes without pasturage

- Methepa le masogana ba ... etša diphala ge di hloka mafulo (Puleng 1981:68)

  Young women and men are like antelopes without pasturage.

- Ba etša diphala di hloka phulo le meetse. (Puleng 1983:45)

  They are like antelopes without water and pasture.

The intellectual capacity of this nation is limited by the censorship laws, which contribute to the marginalisation of intellectuals. Intellectual suppression encourages inferiorisation and complete erasure of the marginals' ability to create ideas. This kind of inferiorisation eliminates the possibility of contending ideologies, and reveals the out-group's insipid plaster over the cracking philosophy and ideology of separatism.

Apartheid/colonialism removed indigenes from the civic space and confined them to ethnic space where they were said to belong to an ancestral area. Although it is important to locate indigenes within territorial space, this space does not have clearly identifiable limits. The boundaries of the area are commonly wider than the space occupied, and extend to the spiritual realm which cannot be measured. Mamdani (1998:4) indicates the failure of colonialists to understand such mappings:

> The native identity was not defined by where he or she was born or lived, but by his or her ancestral area. That area , in turn, was defined ethnically: you belonged to your ethnic area. You were obliged to follow the customs of your ethnic group. Your rights and obligations were defined by your custom, and a Native Authority, whose seat was the local state, enforced that

> custom as a 'customary' law. The local state spoke the language
> of culture, not rights.

The Native Administrative Department (NAD) in South Africa looked after the welfare and interests of Blacks. Such interests were from time to time determined by the apartheid state through the assistance of the Native Commissioner who was not himself a native. This Commissioner 'knew' what the Blacks wanted and would decide in their 'best' interests. The logic of representation in the apartheid regimes was absurd and misguided. How could a foreigner, whose interests were well catered for in the government of his choice be held responsible for the lives of those who have no say in government. By means of a simplistic logic, the Native Commissioner was to re-place the African chiefs, and become a colonial authority superceding all other authority in the black reserves. People are denied the responsibility of taking responsibility for their own lives, and this is what concerns Puleng. People with *boikarabelo* make their own choices and are held accountable for the decisions they make. What Puleng laments is the continuous infantilising of the black people where someone has to decide on their own behalf, and they are denied an opportunity to choose their own leaders, and to manage their own lives.

The poems *Gareadulelaruri* [We are not permanent here](Puleng 1981) and *Mahloko bana bešo* (Puleng 1981) from which these lines are drawn constitute an eloquent description of colonial domination. The following extract adapted from *Mahloko bana bešo* [We are in trouble brethren] reveals the poet's attitude to the settler-native question:

Mmušo wa bona o tekotšwe ke *bantle*,
Atla tša *manaba* di ba thunkantše ke dišokiša...
Ga go sa le monamoledi kgauswi go šetše *dira*,
Talare ya wona e hloboletše e šetše ka maponopono,
Diepšaepšane tša wona di reka sekgotse le bantle,
Serithi se wetše madibeng go renne *bomofeta-ka-tsela*,
Sera se ntšhitše tsogo la moleketla se a rafa,
Tša matsaka di lewa malapeng a bona,
Bao ba šetšego ba fiwa disohlo le maganogano...
Ka moka ba fetogile digoboga ga ba sa na molomo.

Their authority has been overthrown by outsiders,
The enemy's hands have squashed them into desolation.
There are no pacifiers but only rebels remain.
The greenery has been ravaged and the area is bare.
Mined products consolidate alliances abroad.
Their dignity is lost and the aliens have regained theirs.
The enemy stretches his extended hand to hoard.
Those who remain subsist from hand to mouth.
All have become disgraced, they have no say.

The situation depicted in the previous poem is appalling. The once glorious kingdom of the colonial subjects is devastated by colonial conquest and plunder. The subjects have their political and administrative system shattered, and in return, they are reduced to abject poverty and have the status of aliens in their own country. While the colonial subjects relish in squalor, their oppressors build alliances by means of the mineral resources of their country. A close examination of the relationship between the marginals and their oppressive masters in this context reveals the economic inconsistencies that distinguish them. The colonial masters live affluently and enjoy life in their opulent houses while the colonised *ba lla tlala ya bogobe ka mešo e go fela* (suffer from starvation at every turn).

The descriptions of the dominant group in Puleng's poetry should be understood within the context of the revolutionary and resistant nature of his poetry. In the previous extract, the white settlers are described as *bantle* (outsiders), *manaba* (enemies), *dira* (war opponents),and *bomofeta-ka-tsela* (wanderers). All these anthroponyms describe the nature of the relationship between the in-group and the out-group. Surprisingly, the out-group dominates and subjects the in-group to unbearable conditions, hence the poet emotively describes the exploitation in these words: *sera se ntšhitše tsogo la moleketla se a rafa* (the enemy extends his unbearably long arm like a honey-extractor). The poet uses the image of the extremely long arm honey-extractor to de-scribe the insensitivity of the apartheid/colonial masters who ravage and exploit the economic resources of the country without bothering to allow the in-group to benefit from such proceeds.

To describe the settlers as *bantle* is to reject their posture as the only genuine national group to benefit from the economic resources of the country. Basically, the poet questions the apartheid oppressors' nativity. The discourse employed resists the mythology created by apartheid to authenticate the race distinctions and the consequent domination of the black people. This term is closer to the second anthroponym, *bomofeta-ka-tsela* which describes them as wanderers. Within the logic of local wisdom, though *mofeta-ka-tsela* can be permitted to give an objective judgement, s/he does not hold any title in that community and thus cannot occupy a position of authority as the contrary holds with the settlers. The Kiswahili word *muzungu* is not far from the word *mofaladi* which Mamdani (1998:6) eloquently explains:

> Mzungu, however, does not literally mean a white person. It simply means a restless person, a person who will not stay in one place, a person full of anxieties. It comes from the verb *kuzuguka.*

Mamdani describes the Whites as pro-type settlers because they were citizens of colonial states. This taxonomy makes provision for other types of settlers, particularly native settlers. Other labels include *bahlomari* [persecutors] (Puleng 1981:68)*; matlakašuthe* [one who advances by force] (Puleng 1983:30; 47; 53); (Puleng 1981:69); *mofeti* [passerby] (Puleng 1983:52); *mofaladi* [migrant] (Puleng 1983:52;53) and *mphetakatsela* [passerby], *mohutalelwa* [one accorded a place to sneak in] *(*Puleng 1983:33;). Some of these labels invoke persecution and suffering under the hands of the white settlers, others are allegorical references to the colonial voyages. Those describing the settler community in terms of the voyages of 'discovery' do so to remind them of their 'real homes', which they seem to forget by claiming South Africa for themselves as described in the various poetic texts.

The claim to the wealth of the land is fuelled by economic and political greed and gluttony. In this way, settler communities appropriate most of the economic resources for themselves leaving their black counterparts existing in poverty:

> Tema ga e ntšwele, ke khokhoba ka seroba,
> Moetapele o nketile pele ka seroba,
> Tsela tša ka tša boiphedišo o di thibile,
> Ke tsoga ka madimadimane ke re ke selela mmane,
> Tseka tša ka di felela ganong ka moka. (Puleng 1983:14)
>
> I have no success, I am driven by a stick,
> An obstructor struts in my way with a heavy stick.
> He blocks all my economic means.
> I wake up at dawn to feed my mother,
> All I get goes from hand to mouth.

The subject complains about a salary which is mere pittance and not enough to support him and his family. The oppressor determines not only the salary he receives, but sets out conditions of service which are unbearable. The subject has to suffer ceaseless brutalisations which are a gross violation of his rights. The subject, as part of the indigenes, is removed from the economic control of wealth, displaced and becomes a tool to assist his oppressor in the (mis)appropriation of wealth, as clearly articulated in these lines:

> Humo la ka le tsenetšwe ke phehli?
> Ke le epišwa ka kgang le megokgo (Puleng 1983:52)

My wealth is attacked by a weevil,
Sadly, I am forced to dig for others.

It is ironic that the coloniser wants to claim the largest share of the economic wealth but the native insiders must be exploited to gain access to that wealth. The indigenes have become physical objects to be used for the benefit of their white oppressors, who in this case represent the out-group:

Se llele naga bokgabo le mahumo,
Beng ba lala le tlala ba hloka bogobe le sešebo (Puleng 1983:52)

Do not worry about the riches and beauty,
While the owners of the land cannot afford porridge and relish.

It should be understood that colonisation occurs because it is profitable for the coloniser, and therefore, profits are maximised by an economic exploitation of the colonised subjects. The subject is dispossessed, dis-empowered and distanced from his wealth. The relationship between labour and capital become so obscured that the subject is made to feel unimportant, and his contribution to the provision of capital becomes distorted. When he becomes aware of these distortions, the subject can no longer hold his breath, and bursts out in retaliation:

O motšwabotšo, nna ke mobu, ga ke mofaladi. (Puleng 1983:52)

You are a foreigner, I am the soil, I am not a wanderer.

The same sentiment is echoed in *Bohwa bja ka:*

Nna ke mobu
Ke humile,
Ke humile le kgopolo. (Puleng 1981:6)

I am the soil,
I am rich,
Even my mind is rich.

The statement is emotive and aggressive. The subject re-tells the 'truth', truth distorted deliberately by his coloniser and oppressor for economic gain. He hopes this re-telling event will awaken the coloniser from his oblivious slumber; an incurable amnesia. The labels *motšwabotšo* and *mofaladi* are synonyms suggesting that the origin of the person addressed must be traced outside the resident group, which by implication is native to the soil. *Mofaladi* is a restless individual who has deserted his/her place of birth in search of a living outside his/her own. *Bafaladi* on the other hand are wanderers, their life style is unstable, they have a fluid conception of home. All these representations are significant to understand the coloniser-colonised polarities in the South African situation and the world over. In Botswana, for an example, the freedom fighters were labelled *matshelaterata* (those who leaped over the fence). *Motšwabotšo* comes from somewhere, normally an unfamiliar place to the insiders, and because of their cultural differences, such a person is normally assimilated into the mainstream . Such individuals normally pay homage outside the in-group because their mythological bond is believed to be out there. They trace ancestry outside the community in which they reside.

Puleng's anger and frustrations is understandable if one considers the fact that those people who claim nativity in South Africa are the ones whose lives are squalid. Note the stark differences represented in the following lines:

> Bona mantlomabaibai o nyapole wa ka;
> Atla tša ka le maatla ke a ka ka dikudumela,
> Nna ke moagi, ke mmetli le moswiedi,
> Fela ngwako wa ka o nkga lefetla,
> Ke bobapalelo bja ditšhikidi dintšhi le maphene,
> Mola beng-ka-nna e le maphadiphadi a magadigadi.
> Ke mošomi wa bašomi fela ke šomela šekeleng,
> Maatla a ka a felela fase ka lefeela
> Ke gabile go tlatša mpa ke rapela boroko ka go budulala.
> (Puleng 1983:15)
>
> Look at the opulent houses and regret to see mine,
> All are products of my hands, my efforts and my sweat,
> I am a builder, a carpenter, a cook and a cleaner
> But my house is stinky,
> It is a home for bedbugs, flies and cockroaches
> While my masters live in opulent, clean houses.
> I am a worker among workers but work for nothing,
> My strength is wasted for nothing,
> I surrender my being in order to find something to feed the tummy.

Although the subject is able to do all the jobs mentioned in the text, he cannot afford the luxuries of his employers because he cannot afford to buy the necessary materials himself. Although he is aware that the conditions to which he is subjected are unacceptable, he sacrifices his dignity in order to survive. These discrepancies still exist today. Even if Blacks constitute the majority of the South African population, proportionally, more Blacks live in shacks than their white counterparts. When a white person is a resident of a shanty town, s/he makes the news as opposed to Blacks who stay in shanties. Sol Plaatje blames the whole system to the Land Act (1913) which arrogated 87% of the land to white people, and ensured that "there is no such a thing as a white squatter". There are few whites living in squalor and this is regrettable since these people were protected by affirmative policies which discriminated against black people. Although Whites tend to condemn affirmative action as a reverse racism, I believe the law should do enough to enforce it. The same goes with the attempt to achieve salary parity, because the imbalances of the past are still widening the gap between Blacks and Whites.

Out of anger, the poet reminds his oppressors of the nature of their settlement in South Africa. He re-calls the story of their arrival in these lines:

O reng o ntlhokiša boroko o be o le *mofaladi?*
O gakilwe ke tsela ya go ya boenyane,
O gaeletšwe o lebetše gore o *mofetakatsela*;
A hleng bjale o mpona molahlego etšwe o le *molahlegi*?

Why do you pester me while you are a wanderer?
You have forgotten the route of your errands,
You have strayed and forgotten that you are a passerby,
Why then take advantage of me while you are lost?

The poet reworks and rewrites history in poetic form. The relationship between history and fiction is not a coincidence, because history in itself is a story, and thus it is bound to certain elements of fiction. The fictional aspect of history derives from the human element of bias which is difficult to bracket off. Fiction also has proved to be a medium which can handle historical details, as it can be seen with historical narratives and drama. The poet uses this historical narrative to remind his masters that their route to the East was not meant to culminate in South Africa. As people who strayed into South Africa, they should keep in mind who the rightful owner is, and appropriate to him/her what is due to such a person. Puleng condemns all forms of domination by the settler community, the group he describes as the lost crew. The expressions: *o gaeletšwe* and *o gakilwe ke tsela* all explain a state of confusion when one cannot retrace one's route. The other term *o gaeletšwe* also has connotations of losing track of the way as a result of darkness, and normally, in African culture, such people are given shelter until the following day when they can be helped to retrace their route back home.

The poet uses several proverbs to reject the marginalisation of the black people in South Africa; one such proverb employs the metaphor of the jackal to explain human life. When a jackal goes beyond its territory, like all other dogs, it submits itself to the authority of the jackal having territorial advantage. Puleng wonders why the colonial masters ignore such a natural law in the animal kingdom. Beyond their European centre, they are expected to behave and respect their hosts, that is, the indigenes, and cut their tails short instead of upsurging all power to themselves.

By identifying himself with the soil as in ... *nn*a *ke mobu* the poet invokes the inseparable bond between himself and his country of birth. By using this narrative, he succeeds in declaring his nativity as opposed to those he describes as *bafeti,*[passers-by] *bafaladi* [migrants], *bantle* [outsiders], *bahutelelwa* [outsiders accorded some place to inhabit], *balahlegi* [strayed people], and so forth, who are excluded from the mythological bind by means of which he identifies himself. These constructions of Otherness, question the authenticity of the settlers' claim to land and mineral rights in South Africa, particularly when those rights tend to exclude the indigenes

The poet appeals to his people to act on the impending problems:

> Kgonene, matšaga! Hlabang ntlo lebalelo
> A tsene ka kgoro mahloko — ntšhang phehli mabeleng
>
> Hail, fellows! Be on guard,
> Calamity has befallen us, remove the weevil from the granary.

The white settlers in the extract are represented as weevils which will burrow into the grain and devour its seed. This description helps us understand the way the poet sees the impact of apartheid/colonialism on his people. Its effects are destructive, dangerous and unacceptable. In various instances the poet uses the burrowing image of the worm to describe the white settlers.

> Seboko sona nyobeng se tsene,
> Ra se upe se tlo fetša. (Puleng 1981:8)
>
> The worm plagued into the sweet-cane,
> Left to itself, it will finish [the crop].

The settlers are imaged as destructive worms which deserve to be exterminated before they can completely devastate the expected harvest. The same idea is expressed in the intertext:

> Seboko se tsene nyobeng,
> "Matlakašuthe" a hlabile dithaka,
> Ba re Gareadulelaruri ke "gae" ga mahlaku;
> Modubadube o aparetše nagalegola. (Puleng 1981:69)
>
> The worm has plagued the sweet-cane,
> Settlers have made a permanent settlement,
> Claiming this place as their home;
> The country is in trouble.

The worrying factor for the poet is the manner in which the settler community usurps power for itself to the exclusion of the native inhabitants, and making the latter feel displaced in the place of their birth. Undoubtedly, this unwarranted reversal cannot be left unchallenged, hence:

> Bana ba tletše naga go befile,
> Motho o wa ka sa mohlana a gata dibeubeu,
> Yo mongwe o tsorutla madi ka dinko le ditsebe,
> O thathankgana a ipalabala ka mahloko,
> Yo mongwe o a gogoišwa ke dithaka,
> O hemelana a ntšhitše leleme bjalo ka mpša,
> Go hlafile ga go na bobono,
> Go tupa muši go tupa ntshororo ya lerole,
> Ke mpherehlakana go fofa leswika,
> Go nkga khudušabophelo nkokoi ya mafohlogela. (Puleng 1981:69)
>
> The youth are running amok,
> One falls on his back, and is trampled upon.
> The other oozes blood from the nose and ears,
> Dismally kicking the air, appealing for help.
> Another is dragged by peers,
> Ghastly breathing with his tongue sticking out like a dog's.
> It is terrible, a sorry sight.
> There is smoke, there is the thick dust going up.
> There is confusion with stones flying about.
> All over, one sees deadly weapons never seen before.

The scenario described in the previous poem alludes to one of the black struggles against apartheid. It foregrounds the role played by the youth in the struggle and the confusion that ensued when police retaliated brutally. The youth, took advantage of their marginal position to spearhead resistance to white domination, and caused chaos which sought to restore what is considered orderly. This event clearly authenticates Gallant's view (1996:77) that the marginal position is not always a state of powerlessness, but a source of power:

> Those at the margins are not simply existing in a state of powerlessness, cast off and rejected by their society. Marginality can be a source of power. This power is not any revolutionary power — that of outsiders who join forces to mash the hegemony. Rather the power comes from the state of marginality itself, and from the dangers that its formlessness poses for the prevailing social order.

The youth undertakes a revolutionary struggle to dismantle apartheid's machinery and replaces it with a new dispensation which Puleng describes as: *moo go sego mollwane, moo go sego kgethologanyo* [where there are no restrictions, where there is no discrimination].

Douglas, as cited by Gallant (1996:77) explicitly explains the problems that face marginals and the power that inheres in marginality:

> To have been at the margins is to have been in contact with danger, to have been at a source of power. There are pollution powers which inhere in the structure of ideas itself and which punish a symbolic breaking of that which should be joined or a

> joining of that which should be separate. A polluting person is always in the wrong. He has ... crossed some line which should not have been crossed and his displacement unleashes danger. A power that produces a danger for careless humans is very evidently a power inhering in the structure of ideas, a power by which the structure is expected to protect itself.

The state of marginality is viewed as dangerous because of its *formlessness* as opposed to the organised and ordered oppressive system which denies it access to the power that controls it. Marginality in this way is construed as a series of borders and frontiers which are not intended to be crossed. Domination thrives by the creation of barriers and limits to which marginals should confine themselves. In its disordered form, marginality vests the power to 'pollute' others, either to conform and accept their condition of marginality as a natural condition of their lives, or to resist that condition, and dismantle and demystify the narratives which enforce it.

What Puleng does with his poetry is to assume that role of 'polluting' others to break or join that which should not be. On numerous occasions, the poet makes direct invitations that incite the reader/audience to take corrective action to rid South Africa of the apartheid evil. He goes on to warn his readers against complacency, lest they face social and political paralysis:

> Seboko se tsene nyobeng
> La se upe se tlo fetša taata.

Joko ye boima ya mehla yeno
Senwelo sa yona a se re fete hle. (Puleng 1980:18)

A worm has plagued the sweet-cane
It will completely devastate them [sweet-canes] if you do not
bait it.
The heavy yoke of these days
Is a cup we would rather not drink from.

The ideas expressed in the previous extract are repeated on several occasions in other poems. The poem entitled *Kgonene matšaga* (Puleng 1980:17 -18) also makes an appeal to fight the injustices of apartheid. The youth are encouraged to take the lead to address political change which will eradicate the poverty which has already become institutionalised. A similar sentiment is expressed in *Mahloko bana bešo* (Puleng 1981:31) where the poet discourages complacency when the 'war' is about to be won:

Kgonene, matšaga! Hlabang ntlo lebalelo,
A tsene ka kgoro mahloko – ntšhang phehli mabeleng,
Tlogelang go swara melomo le go šišinya dihlogo,
Le reng le nyama mooko kgauswi e le mo re yago?
Khutlwaneng tša dira re tšo fihla diphiri re bone,
Ka kgang swiswing lekhwi mphapahlogo re tlo o rwešwa,
Swarang diragamabje le bora bja ntwa,
Ganong la tau re yo tsena ga go kolobe ya lešalamorago,
Maswabi akhwi a tlo fetoga leru leo le rothišago!

Hail, fellows! Be on guard,
Calamity has befallen us, remove the weevil from the granary.
Refrain from confusion and astonishment,
Why do you become dispirited when we are about to win?

> We have penetrated the secret corridors of the enemy and have
> revealed,
> That by all costs we will be crowned from this confusion.
> Hold your slings and armour ready,
> We will plunge into this terror, no one will remain behind.
> Our grief shall turn into a cloud full of hope.

The youth is encouraged to remove the "weevil" which destroys the grain, which is not only food for the present, but also seed for the future. Resistance to apartheid is seen in this case as a justifiable course which will bring prosperity to all, as is explained by the image of the cloud in *leru leo le rothišago.* The voice warns its audience of the cracks within the apartheid system which will make the impending change easy to achieve. Because the poet is part of the community that is dominated, he does not see himself outside them, but takes them along in the struggle for freedom and justice. It is for this reason that he does not say *senwelo sa yona a se mphete* but ... *a se re fete* implying that they should let the dish from which apartheid is served pass them by. Puleng's ideas on change, particularly under apartheid, were shaped by the State's recalcitrance which convinced him that:

> Naga e thopša ka madi ka dipoledišano e a ila;
> Marumo ke diefakotsi ... ke mantlhabanedi,
> Ga a rutle a pilofatša naga ya fetoga...
> Gwa bobola ntšhi ye tala nong tša bakišana borena... (Puleng
> 1983:41)
>
> Land is won by conquest, dialogue is tabooed.
> Armaments are shields, they are for defence.
> They do not destroy but blacken the land when it changes.

Then a green fly would drone while eagles contest for power.

The poet is convinced that when dialogue is forbidden war is the only solution. It should be understood that negotiations with liberation movements were tabooed, and occurred, if at all, outside the borders of the country. In an environment like this, there was no hope except to face the bullet.

Legislation is often used to enforce the state of marginality, ensuring that change does not benefit the marginals at all. Marginals who resisted their state of marginality and wanted fair treatment by the state were often subjected to physical force in the form of torture. Force not only lacerates the body, but torments and 'kills' the soul that inhabits that body. Various discriminatory apartheid legislations made marginality a legal product, a socio-political construct which benefited the white tribe of South Africa. The polluted marginal, however, interferes with the boundaries which are set to be avoided and respected. Crossing them breaks down the 'order' which characterises them, and threatens resistance which goes beyond these borders and limits of power (Gallant 1996). Polluted marginals of this category are deemed to be dangerous and their ideas are considered subversive. These are the marginals who attempt 'to join that which should not be joined'. It is against this background that the following lines should be understood:

Beng ba segetšwe mellwane,
Ba lala ba lla bošego dithama di ela megokgo...

> Bašalagae ba segetšwe mellwane ba dišitšwe mesepelo (Puleng 1983:45).

> The indigenes have boundaries set for them,
> They cry all night, tears running down their cheeks.
> Those who remain home have boundaries set and their movements closely watched.

The poem *Sehlakahlakamatete* [The Incredible Island] cited in the previous citation is a lucid representation of a society denied freedom of expression. The borders referred here should be understood in their wider context to include the suppression of intellectual property and free speech. All forms of writing were subjected to surveillance and scrutiny. Ideas not consonant with the apartheid State were declared undesirable and constituted a violation of the law, which would lead such a person to feel the weight of the legal system or alternatively to be banished to the mysterious island defined by Puleng as *Sehlakahlakamatete* [The Incredible Island]. This is an epitomisation of Robben Island to which most freedom fighters who were accused of treason were banished. During the apartheid years, the island was a living narrative for the suffering and hardships of the black people. It became an embodiment of the censorship laws, and its displacement from society is an image that tells of spiritual and political suppression. Though today the island's image has been revamped to attract tourists, the damage it has done to our society is immeasurable.

5.3 THE MARGINAL BODY AND ALIENATION

Foucault defines the body as the inscribed surface of events (traced by language and dissolved by ideas), the locus of a dissociated self (adopting the illusion of substantial unity and a volume of disintegration (Gilbert & Tompkins 1996). The body is a narrative of race, gender and politics and it signifies through its appearance and actions. Gilbert and Tompkins attest to the manner in which the body makes signification:

> As well as indicating such categories as race and gender, the performing body can also express place and narrative through skilful mime and/or movement. Moreover, it interacts with all other stage signifiers — notably costume, set, and dialogue — and crucially with audience.

The body as the most charged site of theatrical representation represents through dance, movement, *voice* and *silence*. Boehmer (1993) acknowledges that the colonial subject's body has been an object of fascination and repulsion:

> In colonial representation, exclusion or suppression can, often literally be seen as 'embodied'. From the point of view of the colonizer's specifically, fears and curiosities, sublimated fascinations with the strange or the 'primitive', are expressed in concrete physical and anatomical images.... [T]he Other is cast as corporeal, carnal, untamed, instinctual, raw, and therefore

> also open to mastery available for use, for husbandry, cataloguing, description or possession.

Whereas Grosz believes that the body is never simply a passive object of power upon which regimes of power are played out, Gilbert and Tompkins (1996:204) contest that:

> If the body is the strategic target of systems of codification, supervision and constraint, it is also because the body and its energies and capacities exert an uncontrollable, unpredictable threat to a regular mode of social organisation. As well as the site of knowledge-power, the body is thus a site of *resistance*, for it exerts a recalcitrance, and always entails the possibility of a counter-strategic reinscription, for it is capable of being self-marked, self-represented in alternative ways.

These colonial bodies therefore are capable of disrupting constrained space, and in this way become sites of resistant inscriptions. In *Sello sa mojalefa* (Puleng 1983:56-57) the subjugated body refuses to be named and defined in terms of suffering and discrimination:

> O nkapešitše kobontsho ka megokgo,
> Ka ba Lelahlelwa gare ga Mahlaodi;
> Ke sentšeng ka hloka boikarabelo,
> Gomme ke beilwe ka mafuri ...?
>
> You have forcibly clothed me in black, mourning apparel,
> I became a Nonentity among the Racists.

> What have I done to deserve no rights,
> To be placed in the backyard...?

The colonial body in this citation is excluded from the main centre of power on the basis of colour. Colour here has become a means to enforce a racial agenda which isolates and ostracises black people, and draws them to the margins of power. The idea contained in the parts of speech, *Lelahlelwa* (interjection) and *Mahlaodi* (adjectives) is deceiving. Written in the heydays of apartheid, these constructions could mislead apartheid agents into believing that these were merely grammatical forms. Going beyond the surface structure, one realises that these metonymic symbols bring forward the centre-margin dichotomy. *Lelahlewa* represents here the figure of the marginal who is tossed around, who like an inappropriate interjection thrown into discourse becomes anomalous. The marginal too is a passive object manipulated by *Mahlaodi* (racists) who push *(lahlela)* them to the margins. The latter as their grammatical voice indicates, are active, and instrumental in mapping out the lives of the marginals. They isolate *(hlaola)* the marginals, and decide for them which cartographical spaces of power to occupy. In these blank spaces, marginals are left with little responsibility *(boikarabelo):*

- Nna ke reng ke se na boikarabelo? (Puleng 1983:42)

  Why am I left without responsibility?

- Ke sentšeng ge ke hloka boikarabelo (Puleng 1983:56)

  What have I done to deserve no rights?

The South African black population is denied even the responsibility of making their own choices, and oftentimes, those who hold the centre of power define what choices are suitable for the marginals. The central figure assumes the role of guardian while the marginal is reduced to a childlike creature whose interests are better understood by their masters and mistresses. In these extracts, the poet openly challenges such a system that belittles his society by denying them the opportunity to exercise their basic rights, and to decide who can best represent their interests.

The metaphor of the black garment in the poem reinforces the marginal voice's disillusion and displeasure. The subject resists being defined as a muted subject like *kgagara* which has to rely upon the interpretation of the diviner. Unlike *kgagara* or what the poet calls *thokgola,* the muted voice in the text appeals for self-representation. The divining bone metaphor explains the manner in which colonisers stereotype the representation of colonial subjects with a view to justifying their claims to the myths of colonial superiority and their theories of racial determinism. In this way, colonial subjects are stripped off their rights, and surrender them to their colonial masters.

The subject's realisation that *mohlaba wešo o mmeletše meno/ Etšwe go thwe tšhipa e taga mohlabeng*... [my home has turned against me whereas the genet should find its beauty at its home ground while I am expected to be at home] has to be understood in terms of the local wisdom which informs it. On its home ground, the genet waggles and prances, displaying its beautiful fur and tail for all and sundry to appreciate. It is in this environment that it enjoys freedom and security. In foreign soil, it withdraws itself and respects the territorial authority of other genets. Lessons from the genet world are to be translated to the human world where marginalised communities are denied freedom even on their home ground where they should be dictating terms to aliens. The voice of the marginalised in this text reveals a topsy-turvy condition in which marginals are subjected to foreign domination and exploitation. The settler-invader group usurps power and dominates the native inhabitants despite the fact that the settlers are numerically in the minority in terms, and that they are not indigenous to the soil. The voice's identification with *thokgola ya sephiri* [the magical amulet] is a strong warning that his situation cannot be taken advantage of forever without repercussions.

Instead of learning from local wisdom, that advises bush animals to take lessons from domestic animals about tricks in the homestead, settler communities simply override the indigenes and subject them to their own conceptions, which are less informed about the lives of the indigenes. What African wisdom teaches with this proverbial expression is that freedom must begin with insiders before it can be extended to outsiders. The outsider does not travel with his/her authority since *bogoši ga bo ete* [authority does not cross borders], but instead should take lessons from the insider group, rather than impose themselves upon the indigenes. Freedom must be relinquished on foreign soil, where the lores and mores, in short, the authority, of others must be complied with.

Puleng constructs the subject's body as a site of graphic representation of 'mutilation' and 'disfigurement'. The disfigured bodies of the subject's heroes who have fought for his freedom, bequeathed land to him, and prepared his future are turned into a site of remembrance. The bloodied corpses in *madi a bona a falala ba khupetšwa mpeng ya lefase* belong to the fallen African heroes who toiled for the freedom of the African masses. Some of these heroes were imprisoned and banished to prisons far removed from society, some died mysteriously in police cells. All these heroes were united by one common pursuit, that is, the denial of foreign domination, and the appeal for the restoration of human dignity to all members of the South African society.

Images of mutilation and disfigurement can also be seen in the poem *Ke kae mo?* (1983) when the poet rhetorically asks:

> Beng motse hleng ba dutile dihlogo ba hloka lentšu,
> Bahlomari ba ba fofotša ba ba iša thapong ka megokgo?
> Ke kae mo beng ba dutšego lehumo mphabadimo kemanoši,
> Ba rego ba le epa "matlakašuthe" a ba dire ditlotlwane?
>
> Why are rightful owners submissive and without voice,
> While their executioners persecute them, and hang them forcibly?
> What place is this where the landowners stand apart from their god-given wealth
> Where settlers have turned them to *naguals* when they mine the wealth?

The poet here uses body images to construct meaning. The idea in *ba dutile dihlogo* has to be understood in terms of the position which the subject takes in relation to his master. The subject speaks from a position of weakness and bends his head as a sign of respect caused by fear. The settlers are described here as *bahlomari,* people who ride on one's back to engage in a ceaseless persecution. Because of ceaseless persecution, the subject is silenced, as expressed in *ba hloka lentšu.* Silence and voicelessness are here treated as constructs which explain absence. The subjects are deprived of civic and political rights, and in this manner, they are erased from the civic polity and become mere stooges to be employed to serve apartheid ends. The idea of stooges is also connoted by *ditlotlwane* which are bodies of humans employed in witchcraft. These bodies are deprived of all rights, and have to serve the needs and commands of their master. Constructed as *ditlotlwane*, black people are exploited and manipulated for the economic gain of their employers. From these constructions, it becomes apparent that apartheid was a disabling ideology which degraded and dehumanised black people.

The poet uses intertextuality to rewrite and re-present the lack of freedom among the indigenes. A common motif is that of mouthless bodies which we find in several poems such as *Ga ke mofaladi* (Puleng 1983:52), *Sello sa mojalefa* (Puleng 1983:56), and *Gona kua matopeng* (Puleng 1983:42). Such poems condemn the injustices of apartheid and colonialism which mutilate the body of the colonial subject:

Ke kae mo ge bahlale ba gogwa ka dinko,

Ba re ba thuntšha kanono tša tsebo ba tsebafelwe?
Baokamedi, babuši le marema ba ripilwe melomo,
Magoši a lahlegetšwe ke filosofi ya pušo,
Bakgomana le bahlomphegi ga ba sa na seriti,
Molao le toka tša mokhwi di ba kgaotše maoto.

What place is this where sages are abused,
And condemned when they explode canons of knowledge?
Supervisors, governors and great hunters *have their mouths cut*,
Magoši have lost their philosophy,
Councillors and honourable people have lost their dignity,
The law and justice of this place has *cut their legs short.* [**italicised phrases have been literally translated**]

Here the poet's concern is how the state deals with the suppression of the body. The body as the thinking subject is discriminated against, and made to distance itself from its thought. Village sages are scorned for their ideas and local wisdom is discredited, which leaves the governors devoid of a clear, typically African philosophy.. Not only are these people devoid of voice and thoughts, but they have their "legs amputated". The image of amputated legs well indicates the extent to which these subjects are affected by discriminatory laws which place restrictions on all aspects of their lives. This image suggests that the racist legal system disabled the African communities by drawing marginal lines to which they had to confine themselves. The state of mouthlessness and voicelessness is also echoed in the lines:

Bjale ke hlokišitšwe molomo
Ga ke na lentšu le boikarabelo... (Puleng 1983:30)

Now I am *denied a mouth*,
I *do not have a voice* and responsibility
Ga ke na molomo,
O nkamogile
Go lekane (Puleng 1981:8)

I do not have a mouth,
You have taken it away from me
It's enough. **[italicised translation is literal]**

The figure of a defaced mouth points to the colonial subjects' inability to express themselves even in issues that directly affect them. To be without a mouth is to be denied the right to speak, an inability to make meaningful sounds to express one's views and ideas. These bodies are muted, voiceless, and when they have to speak their voices are shut into silence or whisper:

Dinatla di notleletšwe tša hloka maatla ...

Tša hlokišwa molomo mogopolo wa bolela ka sehebehebe.
(Puleng 1983:57)

Powerful people are impounded and deprived of strength,

Denied the freedom, their minds can only whisper.

Their corporeal and anatomical disfigurement, coupled with their voiceless and speechless representation, describes the extent to which the subjects are subjugated and marginalised. The voice as the fulcrum of human existence distinguishes humanity from other species in the animal world. It gives one the power to express ideas clearly and eloquently, rather than in a muted form. The power of the word , which is the basis of speech, lies in its articulation. Because the voice is an animation of ideas expressed, to be devoid of speech and the ability to speak or to express one's self is to perpetually drift to the margins of power and authority. It is in these margins that the power to control wrestles with the power to be controlled.

What Puleng communicates to us with these graphic images is the manner in which the native communities are deliberately and consciously pushed to the periphery of power and resources by various racist, narcissistic apartheid regimes. These subjects are continuously placed *ka mafuri* [in the backyard], a place suitable for all abandoned property and junk in the homestead. *Mafuri* represents the hidden part of the courtyard, where all that may embarrass the inmates is kept, items including disused pots and gourds, calabashes, rags, broken utensils, and in the family of witches, this is the abode of *dithuri*, which are familiars and *zombies* or *naguals* employed in their craft. To be kept *ka mafuri* is to be bundled with garbage, and to be denied a decent place in the family. Native inhabitants are pushed to these borders, and confined to areas where they have limited rights. Within the limits of the backyard, the indigenes have to content with the restrictions and constraints set by apartheid legislation to regulate their lives. *Mafuri* in this case represents a border which is tabooed, and should thus be respected as part of the indigenes' life-world. Such constructions are worked out into a new mythology of suppression whose contrivers even claim to represent divine destiny.

The subject's statement that *Ga ke mofaladi* is an open challenge and a denial of the serfdom and servility contrived by apartheid by means of which the laws of the land displace him from the land of his birth. To state that he is not an alien, is to redefine himself, to assert himself, and proclaim his right to freedom of thought and movement. This reinscription removes the inhibitions which ensnare the subject and limit his expression. Despite his nativity, he is treated as an alien on his land, which is a contradiction in terms:

> ... *mohlaba wešo o mmeletše meno* [my home has turned against me].

The settler-invader community has turned the natives into aliens in their own country through discriminatory legislation. The native inhabitants are thus detached, and banished from their 'home', into small enclaves called *homelands*. The homelands, as separate reserves for Blacks are at the topographical margins of South Africa. They either border South Africa's neighbouring states, or they are landlocked in areas without facilities and resources. Going beyond the homelands, the indigenes experience themselves as the 'other'. Here the colonial Other has appropriated all the land to himself.

> Beng ba hidinya sa mahlomola,
> Ba re ba itsheka ba lahlelwa swiswing,
> Ba lomišwa ditšhitšitho ba se na molomo. (Puleng 1981:68)
>
> The property owners are aggrieved,

> They are thrown into dungeon when they lodge claims to their
> property.
> They are brutally punished.

In the same poem *Ga ke mofaladi,* the subject describes strategies which the colonial power uses to manipulate reality. One such strategy is naming. By naming, we attach meaning and value to things and people. We name things because we want to understand them, control them, and master them. At times we name them because we think we own them. These things become part of the world we control, and in this way we display our mastery of the world around us.

It is for this reason that we manipulate names as soon as we feel that it is vital to assist our understanding, and this is determined by the value we attach to these things. These names reflect our attitudes, beliefs and ideologies. Colonial powers have used names to subject colonial subjects to their power. These names are derogatory and reflect the attitudes they have against the colonial subjects. In South Africa, for instance, Black people have been branded with *unholy* names such as *kaffirs, natives, naturals, non-whites, bantu, plurals,* and many more stigmatising labels which are unacceptable. Throughout the world, labels are given to marginalised communities to reinforce policies of discrimination, even if these are not endorsed by their legal system. *Pikes, niggers, coolies* are just a few examples.

In most cases, colonial powers abused some of the positive names to give them a negative flair, the purpose being to dismantle such semantic configurations to the extent that reality only becomes controllable from within their centre of understanding. In this way, colonial subjects have to erase certain terminologies or reject them even if they were positive, which gave their colonial masters an opportunity to take the lead in the race to define the world for the colonial subjects. Such concepts include *native* and *Bantu*. In their original conceptions, these words are devoid of derogatory connotations, but they were abused with the time and acquired negative meanings which indigenes have refused to become associated with. Trinth uses the term *natives* to indicate the extent to which the word was abused:

> Terming us "natives" focuses on *our* innate qualities and our belonging to a particular place by birth; terming them the "natives", on *their* being born inferior and "non-Europeans". (Byrne 1995:38)

To be a native is to be rooted to a place, to belong somewhere by virtue of one's birth. Being native implies an act of being connected both in time and in space. This cosmological bind is the most undeniable connection which gives the soul its security and allows the body to express itself in a much more comfortable manner than it would do on foreign soil. In their nomenclature colonial powers therefore sought, to decimate such constructions of indiginity, rootedness and connectedness. In *Ga ke mofaladi*, the voice refers to such naming where the coloniser uses different labels to beguile the truth, and to find a credible excuse for alienating the indigenes. In this text, the coloniser blames the colonised for their condition, and goes to the extent of declaring them aliens:

Se ntšhupe ka kgobogo ka tšhupabaloi,
Wa mpitša mofaladi ka go itshesengwa;
O nkapola ala tša botšhepi ka bohwirihwiri,
Maina o mphara ka a mehuta o ntsenya mahlo,
O mpakiša bojalefa etšwe o le kgorulane. (Puleng 1983:52)

Do not use guns to defame me,
And label me when you feel guilty.
You cunningly steal away my pride.
You give me different labels to disgrace me.
You want to be the heir while you are the youngest.

The poet's statement: *Se ntšhupe ka kgobogo ka tšhupabaloi* amounts to what Spivak calls 'othering'; the projection of one's own systematic codes onto the 'vacant' or 'uninscribed' territory of the Other. Slemon (1987:7) gives a telling description of the othering process:

> By this process, the Other is transformed into a set of codes that can be recuperated by reference to one's own systems of cultural recognition. The unknowable becomes known; and whatever 'spillage' might have occurred in the problematics of racial or cultural difference becomes stoppered by the network of textualization that is inscribed onto the Other and then read as a 'lack' or 'negation' of that which constitutes the Imperial transcendent One. The Imperial discourse that engineers thus fixes the limits of value and signification of the Other to that which takes place within the projected system, and arrogates (him)self sole purchase on the possibility of organic wholeness.

The colonial master negates the colonial subject's possibility of being, but theorises a state of being which is below themselves where the indigenes serve as permanent appendages. They create a migratory theory which acknowledges only the San as native inhabitants of Southern Africa. This sort of theorisation coupled with the Great Lakes theory, assists them in striking a balance in their equation of diasporic homes. The idea of *go itshesengwa* (feeling guilty) effectively explains the subject's attitude to the colonial masters who deliberately want to twist the truth around and cover up for their own foreignness. The use of certain constructions in the first stanza is interesting:

- *Wa mpitša mofaladi* (You named me a migrant)
- *O nkapola (di)ala...* (You take away my pride)
- *...o mphara* (You besmirch my name)
- *o mpakiša bojalefa* (You also want my share as an heir)

In all these statements, the subject is an object of the oppressor's wilful and dreadful acts. The subject in the poem is stripped of his property and status with a view to looting what is rightfully his own. The sequence of actions in the stanza is so worked out that at the end, the voice explains why all these things have happened in that order. The events are ordered towards a logical conclusion which indicates that the coloniser wants to become an heir to property despite his distance from the line of succession. This is contrary to the law of succession as espoused by local custom. Because the coloniser benefits from his system of colonisation, he thus uses it to foster inferiorisation.

> Colonialism..turn the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures, and destroys it … . When we consider the efforts made to carry out the cultural estrangement so characteristic of the colonial epoch, we realize that nothing has been left to chance and that the total result looked for by colonial domination was indeed to convince the natives that colonialism came to lighten their darkness… . Every effort is made to bring the colonized person to admit the inferiority of his culture … to recognise the unreality of his 'nation', and in the last extreme, the confused and imperfect character of his biological structure.

The poet rejects these distortions with the appeal:

> Se ntšhupe ka kgobogo ka tšhupabaloi,
> Wa mpitša mofaladi ka go itshesengwa.
>
> Do not use guns to defame me,
> And label me a migrant when you feel guilty.

He does not want to be declared an alien (*mofaladi*) by those who almost feel that they are aliens. He strongly feels that he would rather be killed than be alienated from his country of birth:

> Dinoka le mawatle di ka ela madi lerumo la nthothobetša,
> Mo ke gae, bokhutšo, le bolemi bja mašemo a ka. (Puleng 1983:53)
>
> The rivers and oceans shall overflow with blood, and the spear pierce into my body,
> Here is home, my place of rest, where I will cultivate my fields.

Rather than be dissociated and distanced from his home, he elects to resort to war, and defend his rights. The impossible has to happen before he can surrender his rights to a settler community. Rivers and oceans would overflow with blood when his body is pierced with a spear. Although this is an overstatement, Puleng uses his body as a substitute for the African masses under the yoke of apartheid. He sees his life as an extension of his people, and would do all in his power to challenge what they regard as ominous.

The poet also undertakes to make his own recording of the history of the oppressed in their attempt to rid themselves of the colonial/apartheid yoke of oppression. He recreates this history in order to unsettle the apartheid power and to make his readers aware of the role that faces them in the challenge against apartheid. His poetry is subversive, and he is determined to use it as a weapon to transform the consciousness towards freedom:

> Pene yekhwi ke hlabanela setšhaba,
> Puku yekhwi ke thebe ke šireletša thokgola tšešo;
> Ke lapišitšwe ke go ba Lelahlelwa gare ga Mahlaodi. (Puleng 1991:17)
>
> I fight for the nation with this pen,
> This book is the shield to protect my culture.
> I am tired of being a Nonentity among the Racists.

As a writer, he chooses to be the conscience of the people. He openly challenges what his society would challenge if they could. Because they do not have a say, he takes the risk of carrying the responsibility on his back. In terms of historical representations, there is in some sense an attempt to re-live the heroes of the struggle such as Steve Biko, Nelson Mandela, Hector Peterson, and many more. It is very difficult to precisely say who is being specifically alluded to because these heroes are not named but merely their deeds are commented upon. It should be understood that these names were anathema in the apartheid years, that whoever mentioned them would face the might of the law. Although *Sehlakahlakamatete* [The Incredible Island](Puleng 1983) concentrates on the isolation of the island, and how it distances its inhabitants from the mainland, the nameless subjects of the poem seem to be the political heroes who were banished to die with their ideas to avoid the possibility of 'polluting' others.

In *Bagale bešo* [our heroes] (1981:48-49), Puleng commemorates the heroes who died for the struggle against apartheid. In the middle of the poem, he tends to divert his attention to the mysterious killing of Steve Bantu Biko:

> Bagale ba thothobeditšwe ba ragile phušušu,
> Maina a šala ya ba segopotšo baneng ba thari,
> Diphiri tša bošego di senogile mosegare,
> Ge bahlale ba di ala phatlalatša,
> Go ntsikela kgobalo tša mohu ge a sa phela,
> Ba hlokile bohlatse ka moka therešo ya šala.
> Tša begwa lefaseng ka bophara tiro tša mohu,

Matlakašuthe a di gata ka maoto tša senoga,
A hloka molomo mogale wa bagale a robatšwa ke dinatla,
Kobo e ntsho ya aparwa ke bana ba batho,
Ina la gagwe la tuma mekgotheng ya lefase,
A robatšwa le bagale ba tšhaba sešo. (Puleng 1981:49)

Heroes have been pierced with spears and killed,
And their names remained in the memory of the black children.
The wolves of the night were exposed day light
When experts published them,
Conducting autopsy on the injured corpse,
They all found no evidence, and the truth was laid bare.
The person's deeds were reported world wide,
The Invader pushed them under carpet, yet exposed.
He had no say, hero among others had a dignified funeral,
All black people were embittered.
His name became famous in the streets of the world,
And he was laid to rest with other heroes of my nation.

The extract is allegoric of the mysterious death of Steve Biko which apartheid architects contrived and kept a deep secret. His death made international news, and the world was left stunned by the manner in which the State handled it. Police involved in his killing fabricated lies which became a worldwide concern. The killers were kept a secret until recently in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission when these murderers appealed for amnesty. Although the poet does not name the subject described, the incidents alluded to largely correspond with the killing of Biko. The death of Biko inspired the youth to continue the struggle against the satanic forces of apartheid.

The 1976 riots are also a feature of the representations Puleng makes to challenge the colonial discourse that merely dismissed such struggles as terrorist acts which threatened ordinary civilians. In *Marung a mogopolo,* (Puleng 1983) the poet makes references to the June 1976 riots and details the popularity which this event had. He describes the outbreak of the uprising by using the language of the divining bones where he says *...di wele makgolela tša re di ewa moraro lewo latšo la itatola.* Two positions, which in the language of divining are called *falls,* are foregrounded in the text, namely, *makgolela* and *moraro. Makgolela* signifies great trouble which can only be unravelled by the subject and the assistance of the family as the complement of the praise explains:

> Di wele makgolela
> Motho o kgolelwa ke letswele,
> Tlou e kgolelwa ke naka tša yona.
>
> Trouble has started,
> A person will depend on his/her children,
> And the elephant will depend on its stumps.

The divining discourse is introduced here to reinforce the severity of the condition accompanying the 1976 uprising. The discourse helps the reader to understand why the youth came together as a nation of the future to challenge Bantu Education which they described as *mpholo (*poison) they were not determined to drink. He describes the resistance to Bantu Education in this way:

> Kgang le kgankga di kgakgane sebakeng
> Ba re ba itsheka bana ba thari ka megokgo;
> Ba re ba tlapetšwe ke *mpholo wa komaselehono*,
> Ya ditsebe ya ithiba tšona ya thunya sethunya;
> La fifala legodimo Borwa bja tlhafa *(sic)* ka mabefi,
> Tše botse le tše mpe tša iletšwa ka kwadi ya marumo. (Puleng 1983:9)
>
> Force and stubbornness challenged each other in space,
> Children of the soil made serious allegations,
> That they were tired of the poison of the modern initiation school.
> The white people pretended deaf and shot at them.
> The sky darkened and confusion filled the South.
> All were silenced with brutality.

When Bantu education was targeted, this marked the beginning of an open resistance to the education system which aimed to underdevelop the African masses. The fierce battle between police as state agents is recorded in this poem, and representations are made of how the state retaliated with the unreasonable state of emergency which later led to the banning of student movements. Like all uprisings, the June 1976 also had its casualties:

> Wa ikgoga ngwaga wa tshela marega o hlotšahlotša ...
> Anthe rumo la mmolai le kgotlile motšhitšhi wa semane;
> Ya ba e wele ka lefase e rapaletše naledi ...
> Etša sa yona ba re ba se khupetša sa ikhupolla,
> Sa gana go teba sa tsoga phupung tša bahu sa hlaba mokgoši,

Moya wa sona wa feta wa Sisare ya ba wa moswananoši.
(Puleng 1983:9)

The solemn year advanced as far as winter.
Only to find that the killer's weapon has incited impending trouble.
This led to the fall of a great star ...
Its illumination could not be hidden,
It refused to stay at on place and rose from the bed of the dead and shouted,
Its unique spirit was greater than Caesar's.

The poet seems to be describing the death of Hector Peterson which united the youth to continue the struggle against Bantu education. Although police attempted to silence them with brutality, the committed youth could not be stopped. They damaged buildings and property and set fire on schools and government property. The poet's assertion that *gwa rutlomologa mollo wa poo nageng* (great trouble ignited like wild fire) describes the manner in which the events which started in Soweto spread throughout the country to sweep away what the youth, and the black population in general felt as a menace. Considering that these poems were written just after the June 1976 riots, and when the jaws of apartheid were sharper than ever, the reader will understand why the poet makes no specific details such as names, dates and places. One has to use inference to reach to the appropriated events under discussion. It took guts from a poet to picture the events in this way because he could face a jail sentence for merely airing his views.

5.4 SUMMARY

This chapter focussed on the problem of marginality and how marginals define their position in relation to the settler community which represents their masters. The issue of settlers has been explored as a contentious problem. Discourses of the settler which name the indigenes as "foreigners" as implied by their naming and disenfranchisement, social segregation and other forms of discrimination are met with opposition from the marginals.

Because marginality is not a fixed position of passivity, the marginals continue to unsettle the apartheid power by alter/native discourse which also uses naming. Various oppositional titles are given to their oppressor to reject domination. The chapter also looked into the various ways in which the marginals opposed their disenfranchisement, inferiorisation, and stereotyping. In his alternative discourse, Puleng looks into the struggles against apartheid and uses them to rewrite the history of the black people under apartheid rule.

CHAPTER 6

THE *POST SCRIPT*

6.1 (IN)CONCLUSIVE REMARKS

Coming so far with this study, one may be tempted to make conclusive statements about the study. To speak of conclusive statements is to create an impression that the researcher has the last word, and that no voice can be heard after the researcher's conclusive statement. I use the concept the *Post Script*, instead of the usual concept, "conclusion" because this study is not the last word, but part of an ongoing debate in the postcolonial and africalogical discourses.

This study continues the ongoing debates in postcolonial and africalogical discourses. It explores identity, as a general feature of postcolonial societies. These societies are characterised by a quest for their origins, their imagined roots and possible reunions. These texts are subjected to postcolonial criticism. Arguments are raised against the band of criticism which ignores indigenous writing, and concentrates on literature written in colonial languages.

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It first locates Sepedi literature within the domain of postcolonial texts, which put simply, emerged out of colonial experience, and expresses how the people live with such experiences. It is argued that postcolonial critics who are unable to access the language of indigenous writing exclude such writings in the domain of postcolonial writing and criticism, and thus creating indigenous texts as palimpsests on which the Other writes his/her script. Experiences shared by indigenous literature are often ignored, and only those expressed in the medium of European languages are valorized. Writers such as Matsepe, Puleng, Mamogobo, D.B.Z.Ntuli, Maphalla, Ntsane, Raditladi, and many others engaged in indigenous writing are replaced by Mtshali, Ngugi, Achebe, Tladi, Emecheta, Damrenga, and those others writing in European languages since the latter are understandable to the foreign 'ear'.

As postcolonial texts, Puleng's works challenge the meta-narratives of apartheid, and provide counter hegemonic discourses which unsettle the authority of apartheid praxis. The works demystify the distortions of the history of black people, and thus recreate an alter/native view to the study of history. In this way, Puleng resists orthodox history, and provides another window from which history can be gleaned.

This study continues the debate started by Karin Barber (1995), and Swanepoel (1998). Unlike the two scholars, this research concentrates on an analysis of African texts written in Sepedi as the case study and it goes further to marry the tenets of postcolonial discourse to autobiography and africalogical discourse. The latter helps us understand reality from African epistemic inquiry as opposed to the universalising and totalising Eurocentric epistemology.

In this study, I examined the notion of identity within the framework of postcolonial and africalogical discourse. N.S. Puleng's works are subjected to scrutiny, and what comes out clearly is that Puleng uses his texts as avenues to rediscover his own identity. He uses autobiography, not only as a genre but as a postcolonial strategy to examine his identity within a dominant society which makes him feel insignificant. Autobiography enables him to enter the forbidden centre space. As a descendent of a Zimbabwean, he felt rejected in Sepedi writing circles to such an extent that he had to change his name and to adopt a pseudonym. As an altered subject, he is able to participate in writing, and gaining access to the forbidden discourses where he identifies with his audience, and incites them into revolution to transform the apartheid state and city.

The idea of re-naming is another post/colonial feature. He re-names himself by twisting the initials around, and adopts his first name Puleng as a surname. The reading public is treated to a *new* writer in Sepedi Literature. This name is used to conceal his rather unacceptable identity, until late in the 1990's when he reverted to his real identity and write as PS Nkomo. This change confirms his continuous search for self-definition, and seems to suggest that he now has a better understanding of the world around him, as well as his real identity. The change signifies an affirmation of himself within Sepedi literary circles. With the new name, he has to re-establish himself with his audience, and re-connect his past and present through content and other tropes. It is not a simple task though, because his new poetry is born out of new experiences unlike his earlier works which challenged apartheid. Today, apartheid is dead, but its impact lives with the people, perhaps this is the new route his poetry will take.

He openly attacks the apartheid mythology of inferiorisation, and racialisation. Apartheid mythology thrived on misappropriation, that is, the 'looting' of local knowledge and resources as well as land. By looting land, it blurred the distinction between home and exile. Indigenes were exiled in their own country and experienced no freedom in the strict sense of the word. Forced removals, disenfranchisement, police harassment and brutalisation ravaged the concept of home among the indigenes. Home, that place of security to which indigenes felt attached, bound and fixed, became a place to experience oneself as an other, an outsider, and not connected to the body politic of the country. Despite the partible principle which ensures that no one is left homeless and destitute, the apartheid contrivers have ensured that black people should remain homeless in the country of their birth. Puleng's poetry is mainly concerned with such anomalies where the indigenes have been reduced to aliens without political and economic power.

His poetry transcends the boundaries set by apartheid and goes all out to challenge the evil and peccable authority of apartheid discourse. He provides alter/native historical discourse to the one prescribed by apartheid. He first re-writes the story of arrival of the settlers. His poetry in a way addresses the fears and problems brought about by the contact with a stranger. This contact as it has been indicated in the body text, undermined the indigenes and created palimpsests on which native lives were written. In response to such portraiture, Puleng recreates images of home in an apartheid state. These images reflect the pain of apartheid, and how the lives of the indigenes are continuously displaced. Their homes are turned into ghettos, and life made unbearable while their counterparts lead lavish and sumptuous lives. This discrepancy, prompts the poet to condemn the manner in which the indigenes are marginalised, brutalised and continuously disenfranchised.

Puleng finds the marginalisation of the black people unreasonable and senseless. He openly incites his readers to do 'something' to end such an anomalous state of affairs where the rightful masters have been turned into slaves, and stooges to be manipulated in the exploitation of the country's economic resources.

The study makes a break through by attempting to reflect on the terrain of autobiography in an unusual manner. The conventional autobiography is normally seen as a complete text devoted to the narrator's life. In this study, the research pursues the narrator's life from various sources ranging from poetry to drama. This approach is seldom employed in autobiographical studies, and in this way, the study makes a significant contribution in the study of autobiography in African languages.

Puleng's works challenge western historicism and universalisation of knowledge. He frames local epistemological and axiological discourses which demystify the universality of European conceptions of knowledge and truth. He uses local wisdom to raise the consciousness of his readers to the injustices of apartheid, and to provoke them into action which will rid them of the burden of oppression.

He also uses autobiographical memory to reconstruct his family history, a task entrusted upon Mmathapelo, who epitomises the narrator's mother. That history is told by a woman, is a further challenge to history as a story of a man, and thus lays foundations for the accommodation of the female voice in the reconstruction of historical discourse.

Arguments are made about the origin and use of the concept autobiography. It is argued that the oral version are a precursor to the written forms of self-scrutiny. In this study, autobiographical discourse is used to discover the identity of the author. By employing autobiography, the poet collapses the past with the present, and evaluates his past. His past is reduced into a textuality which is disguised as fiction. It has been observed that the author uses fiction and masquerades it as history and history fictionalised. This treatment of history and fiction blurs the relationship between fact and fiction. Although facts are necessary, the autobiographical text should be given enough scope to explore the poetic licence accorded to all other forms of writing.

Autobiographical discourse, it has been noted, employs memory and imagination to re-present the past. These narrative structures are selective, and at times unreliable to be used as tools to recover the past. It should, however, be noted that in oral societies, documentation is mainly oral, and thus memory takes precedence over written documents.

Memory as a narrative, is used to penetrate the lost domain, which is accessed mainly through dreams and visions. He maximally uses tropological spaces as mnemonic narratives to negotiate the already evident rift between himself and his place of birth. This rift is caused by his displacement from Moletlane. Matome, Mabolepu and Nkumpi are the topographic features which bridge the gap between him and his father. The sight of these features brings relief to the author's troubled heart and soul. Matome, in particular, reminds him of his dead father. The author's special affinity with Moletlane can best be seen from the numerous references to *Kgobadi 'a Nyedimane* which is a praise name for the toponym Moletlane. The place has almost become a sanctuary, and his connection with it may be viewed as a spiritual contact with his deceased father. The amicable relationship with his father through the trope of Moletlane is evident in *Thellenyane Batlabolela* where one character, Kgobadi provides that supportive role when all others have turned against Thellenyane.

Dreams go beyond what memory is capable of doing. They become a medium to re-enter the lost domain, and commune with the ancestors. He articulates his desires, and unfulfilled promises are questioned. Dreams allow the dreamer to escape from the pressures of this world to experience ephemeral freedom. In this world, what the author cannot achieve becomes realisable. Political freedom is also realised in this dream world.

These narratives help the author to re-cover the loss of his father, his nephew; Mpho, and to centralise his life as a narrative of loss. This loss syndrome is important to understand his status as an only child, and how this state of affairs threatens his chances in life to extend his family lineage. In various texts, the author documents the fear for extinction, and this fear is represented as a loss, and also reinforced by the optimism expressed by his determined zeal to procreate extensively.

He rewrites his life as a narrative to represent the marginal voice. Honest descriptions of his family are scattered all over his texts with a view to make a deliberate recording of his history which is likely to die unnoticed. Knowing only his mother's relatives, it is very difficult to re-establish and re-trace his patriarchal past, and make his search for identity achievable. As a marginal, he risks his life by choosing to become the conscience of his people who are also marginalised by the settler community which has assumed the role of the colonising power, and a guardian to the black people. The task was risky, because in the days of apartheid, all aspects of apartheid authority constituted a tabooed space which could not be encroached. Any attempt to question the racial policies, censorship laws or to comment on political figures like Biko, Mandela, Hector

Peterson, or any other outstanding political figure or model was like a 'heathen' treading on holy ground.

6.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has merely scraped the surface of a large field in postcolonial discourse and africalogy. Subsequent research would build on the base laid by this study. The study recommends further studies into identity and representations, and that substantial research should be done on how academic and social programmes can be conducted to address the material and psychological damage caused by apartheid/colonisation.

Social scientists, particularly in psychology and social work practice should begin to acknowledge the importance of literary texts as sufficient autobiographical reports to be used in counselling. Care should, however, be taken to balance these reports with other reports because fiction writers tend to add frills of fiction on historical data. In the case of Puleng's works, I suggest that these works should be considered enough material for autobiographical reports which are necessary to address the problems of the author. These sources reflect certain anomalies which necessitate the services of professional counsellors to address the author's traumatised past. If this route is taken, the author would certainly be assisted to cope with his father's death, as well as to accept his separation from the mother which seems to make him unable to deal with his expectations made on his wife in contradistinction to his mother. He seems to look for the qualities of his mother in his wife (cf. Mokgoatšana 1996). On their own, the Puleng texts seem to have both cathartic and bibliotherapeutic effect on the author. The narratives contrived achieve a self-fulfilling purpose which the author wrought (un)consciously.

This study has joined the centre-margin debate initiated in African language literatures by Karin Barber (1995) and Chris Swanepoel (1998), but took it further to discuss the problems of marginalisation of the black people. I recommend that further research should unmask these hegemonic discourses of marginalisation, and concentrate on how transformation processes in the country should eradicate all inherited marginalisation practices and discourses. Another important factor is to continue the dialogue of re-locating indigenous writing within the discourse of postcolonialism. Efforts should be made to centralise African discourses in the interpretation of the African texts, and the colonial experiences which feed them will make the marriage between postcolonialism and africalogical discourse possible and profitable in the analysis of texts produced by both colonial and African environments.

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