THE SOUTHERN SOTHO NOVEL:

A study of its form, theme and expression.

A thesis

submitted in satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree

Doctor of Literature

by

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I declare that the thesis presented herewith for the degree of Doctor of Literature in the University of the North has not been presented by me for a degree in any university, and that it is my own original work.

Alosi Johannes Mafaleng Moloi

To my loving wife, Mma-Seima

and

to Mr. Harry P. Madibane

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I express my gratitude to Professors Endemann and Groenewald for guidance, criticism and encouragement. In addition, I wish to extend my thanks to my loving wife, Mma-Seima, who has always remained a pillar of strength to me even during very dark moments, and for proof reading several drafts of this work.

Finally, my thanks are due to the Ernest Oppenheimer Memorial Trust in Johannesburg, the African Studies Center, University of California, Los Angeles, and the Human Sciences Research Council, Pretoria, who helped considerably with money to finance this project.

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

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by

Alosi Johannes Mafaleng Moloi

for the degree Doctor of Literature

University of the North, Pietersburg, 1973

Professor T.H.M. Endemann
Professor P.S. Groenewald

The object of this study is to examine the development of the form, theme and expression in the Southern Sotho Novel to the present day. Such a broad study is necessary, especially because of a scarcity in meaningful literature critiques in Sotho. This is a humble attempt to correct this oversight, and perhaps set up or suggest criteria for the analysis of Sotho fiction. The scope of the study is thirteen chapters, and in these chapters selected works of the major Sotho writers are treated in their chronological order. This method of division was adopted to facilitate a progressive analysis of phases of development in both content and artistic style. We have not attempted a detailed literary history since our objective is a textual analysis of the works to reveal their artistic quality. Factors to consider in the analysis of Sotho prose have been suggested.

Chapter One attempts to place Sotho fiction in the context of the conventional notion of the Western novel. Accompanying pitfalls are pointed out. Chapter Two traces the origins of Sotho prose fiction. Chapter Three relates modern Sotho fiction to traditional oral compositions with regard to form and stylistic features.

Chapters Four and Five give a close analysis of Thomas Mofolo's works, and his development as a writer. Chapter Six deals with the works of Mofolo's contemporaries. Socio-political factors which influenced their works are noted.

In Chapter Seven representative works of the Forties are discussed. Significant changes in the style and other innovations are evaluated. Further development in the Fifties receives attention in Chapter Eight.

A detailed appreciation of prose fiction in the Sixties to date is given in Chapters Nine and Ten. Common themes in Sotho fiction and their development are discussed in Chapter Eleven. Chapter Twelve attempts to offer some reasons for certain observable features of the content of most works and the writer's artistic skill.

Chapter Thirteen, the conclusion, singles out the findings, suggests possible conclusions, speculates on future trends in Sotho prose fiction and, perhaps, raises questions which still may be answered in the future.

Points noted are:

1. Foreign cultural values need not be applied to judge Sotho creative writing. The fact that Sotho culture is different from Western cultures suggests that literary standards, to be valid and relevant to Sotho spiritual creations, should be sought in Sotho culture itself.

2. A temporary "arrest" of the Sotho culture resulted because of the contact situation between the Europeans and the Basotho. Spiritual poverty, often evident in some Sotho works of art, is a result of such a cultural "deprivation". However, some writers like Mofolo, Khaketla and Machobane, to name only three, have risen above mere mimicry and imitation, to produce rich and meaningful works of art.

3. Sotho writers have not fully mastered their art, however, commendable efforts have been made. Themes are not yet broadly human, i.e., they are not widely interesting. Episodes in the novels lack probability.

4. Most works do not give sharp pictures of the Basotho, because writers avoid, either deliberately or under pressure, daily experiences of the people. We believe that literature should be a true reflection of the lives and experiences of the community that produces it. More mature literature is bound to come out as the depreciated self-image of the Basotho is destroyed, and the Basotho become less dependent on indifferent Publishing Houses, indiscriminate book

reviews, and the over-concerned Department of Education. Strict supervision and censorship only destroy good authorship.

5. The University of the North and the University of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland can help writers to improve their techniques and subject matter by properly organizing their literature programs. Over the years there has been indifference to literary pursuits in Bantu Languages.

6. An exacting reading audience should be encouraged. Without a wide reading public, the development of literature is not conceivable. Radio Bantu is making commendable efforts in promoting interest in our Languages and literature.

7. A commendable beginning has been made. The younger generation of Sotho authors need encouragement and guidance from worthy critics and a lively reading public.

'n Samevatting van die Proeskrif

THE SOUTHERN SOTHO NOVEL:

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deur

Alosi Johannes Mafaleng Moloi

vir die Doctor Litterarum graad

Universiteit van die Noorde, Pietersburg, 1973

Prof. T.H.M. Endemann (Universiteit van die Noorde)
Prof. P.S. Groenewald (Universiteit van Pretoria)

In hierdie studie word die ontwikkeling van die roman in Suid-Sotho t.o.v vorm, tematologie en woordkuns ondersoek. 'n Breed-opgesette studie is nodig, omdat daar min werklik rigtinggewende letterkundige kritiek in Sotho bestaan. Hierdie studie is 'n beskeie poging om dié leemte aan te vul en maatstawwe vir die evaluering van Sotho-fiksie op te stel of minstens aan die hand te gee. In die dertien hoofstukke wat die studie omvat, word geselekteerde werk van die belangrikste Sotho-skrywers in chronologiese volgorde behandel, omdat dit 'n voortskrydende ontleding van ontwikkelingstadia ten opsigte van inhoud èn stylgehalte vergemaklik. Die bedoeling was nie om 'n breedvoerige letterkundegeskiedenis op te stel nie, maar om deur teksontleding die kunsgehalte van die werke te bepaal en 'n grondslag vir die ontleding van Sotho-prosa te probeer vind.

Hoofstuk Een stel Sotho-fiksie in die konteks van die

konvensionele opvatting van die Westerse roman. Die slaggate in hierdie benadering word aangetoon. Hoofstuk Twee gaan die oorsprong van Sotho-prosa na. Hoofstuk Drie bring moderne Sotho-prosa in verband met tradisionele mondelinge woordkuns t.o.v. vorm en stylkenmerke.

Hoofstukke Vier en Vyf bied 'n indringende ontleding van Thomas Mofolo se werke en sy ontwikkeling as skrywer. Hoofstuk Ses behandel die werke van sy tydgenote en verwys na sosiaal-politieke faktore wat die werke beinvloed het.

In Hoofstuk Sewe word verteenwoordigende werke van die jare veertig bespreek. Betekenisvolle veranderinge in die styl en ander nuwighede word na waarde geskat. Die ontwikkeling in die jare vyftig kom in Hoofstuk Agt onder die loep.

Hoofstukke Nege en Tien bied 'n breedvoerige waardebepaling van die prosa vanaf die jare sestig tot die hede. Gemeenskaplike temas in Sotho-prosa en hul ontwikkeling word in Hoofstuk Elf bespreek. In Hoofstuk Twaalf word gepoog om sekere kentrekke van die inhoud van die meerderheid werke en die skrywers se kunspeil te beredeneer.

In Hoofstuk Dertien, die slot, word die bevindinge uitgelig, moontlike gevolgtrekkings gestel, word daar oor toekomstige strominge in Sotho-prosa bespiegel en vrae geopper wat mettertyd moontlik beantwoord sal kan word. Die belangrikste punte is:

1. Vreemde kultuurwaardes hoef nie by die beoordeling van skeppende skryfkuns in Sotho toegepas te word nie. Op grond van die verskil tussen die Sotho-kultuur en die Westerse kultuur is dit stellig gerade om letterkundig maatstawwe in die Sotho-dultuur self te vind, as hulle geldig en in ooreenstemming met die geestesskeppinge van die Sotho moet wees.

2. Die kontak met die blanke het 'n tydelike "stilstand" van die Sotho-kultuur tot gevolg gehad. Die geestelike armoede wat in sommige Sotho-kunswerke opval, vloei uit hierdie kulturele "nood" voort. Skrywers soos Mofolo, Khaketla en Machobane+om net ryk en betekenisvolle kunswerke voortgebring.

3. Sotho-skrywers is nog nie volkome meester van hul kuns nie, maar daar is lofwaardige pogings. Die temas het nog nie 'n algemeen-menslike inslag nie en wek daarom nie wye belangstelling nie. Die romangebeure is te onwaarskynlik.

4. Die meeste werke bied nie 'n helder beeld van die Basotho nie, omdat skrywers òf opsetlik òf onder druk die daaglikse lewe van die mense vermy. Die letterkunde behoort immers 'n getroue weerspieëling te wees van die lewens en belewenisse van die gemeenskap waaruit dit ontspring. Ryper letterkunde sal stellig kom namate die ontluisterde selfsiening van die Basotho uit die weg geruim word en die

Basotho minder afhanklik word van minderwaardige uitgewerye, onoordeelkundige resensies en 'n oorbesorgde Onderwysdepartement. Streng toesig en sensuur verniétig goeie skryfkuns.

5. Die Universiteit van die Noorde en die Universiteit van Botswana, Lesotho en Swaziland kan skrywers help om hul tegniek en temakeuse te verbeter deur hul letterkundeonderrig behoorlik te beplan. Tot hier toe is letterkundige werk in die Bantoetale onverskillig bejeën.

6. 'n Gehaltebewuste leserpubliek moet gebou word. Sonder 'n getalsterke leserpubliek kan die letterkunde nie vooruitgaan nie. Radio Bantu lewer 'n lofwaardige bydrae deur belangstelling in ons taal en letterkunde te bevorder.

7. Die begin is tog nie sonder verdienste nie. Wat die jonger geslag Sotho-skrywers nodig het, is aanmoediging en leiding van bevoegde kritici en 'n wakker lesserpubliek.

PREFACE

The object of this study is to examine the development of the form, theme and expression in the Southern Sotho Novel to the present day. Such a broad study is necessary, especially when it is realized that, other than the M.A. dissertation of J.M.M. Tekateka on Mofolo's writings (A Critical Literary Survey of Thomas Mofolo's Writings), and a few other critiques by Daniel Kunene (The Works of Mofolo), Beuchat and Sulzer, no serious study of the Southern Sotho Novel has been made. The critical function in Sotho literature has not kept abreast with the creative function. Thus far, comments and observations made on Southern Sotho literature as a whole, have been too general, and very superficial. This does not belittle G.H. Franz's paper "The Literature of Lesotho"[1] in which is given an able survey on Sotho literature. Even this survey, however, does not treat the various aspects of the Sotho Novel. Also, even where such a study was undertaken, literary or aesthetic standards were often sought outside Sotho cultural values. One wonders if such an approach to Sotho literature is valid. It is time that this oversight is corrected, and perhaps, criteria set up for the analysis of

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[1] Bantu Studies, Vol. IV, No. 3, September, 1930, pp. 145-180.

Sotho fiction.

English scholars such as Muir, Liddel, Pritchett, Forster, Allot, Read and others, have written treatises on the structure of the English novel. Others like Watt, Gross, Holloway, Lerner, Ricks, to name only a few, have produced volumes on the works of individual novelists such as Richardson, Conrad, Mrs. Gaskel, Sterne, Dickens, Jane Austin and others. Some novelists have also commented on their art too. Southern Sotho is lagging far behind in this respect, and, as a result, we do not know if there are any characteristic forms in the Sotho novel, that is, if the Sotho author has come up with a distinct mode or modes of seeing life and method of expression. All that exist in the form of criticism are paternalistic condescending praises or fault-findings that do not lead one very far. Critics have not yet tried to find any link between oral traditional forms of prose, and present day Sotho writings, both in the method of presentation and the significance of the author's message.

I propose to examine the writings of the major Southern Sotho prose writers so as to be able to divide them, if necessary, into classes, and then examine the principles underlying the structure of each one of the classes of the novels. This will enable us to determine the phases of development, if there are any, and also the literary

value of the Sotho novel. We shall not attempt to write a detailed literary history. The scope of the study will be thirteen chapters. Selected works will be treated in their chronological order, but emphasis will be on the definition of their form and appreciation, and also significant changes in style and content. This Author adopted the descriptive method, however, comparison will be attempted where it appears to facilitate description. Our concern is to suggest, a valid, relevant and comprehensive literary approach, aesthetically as well as in its meaning within Sotho cultural context. In our analysis, we shall go beyond a mere analysis of sentences, word relationships and peculiar structures in a book. The interpretation of the writer's message will also be our concern. Such an interpretation involves a close scrutiny of the quality of the author's pronouncements and their relevance to the intended audience. Literary criticism is both the analysis of the aesthetic and meaning in a work of art. In short, it implies two major factors:

1. To what extent such a work of art is a unified whole i.e. the writer's artistic skill in the choice of word images, keeping the book as a coherent whole, depth of his judgment and general mastery of writing to captivate his audience;

2. The universality of the writer's message: even though the writer deals with local material, his analysis of human experience should transcend local limitations and confined environment.

In the following pages, this approach will become evident as it is applied to the books of our study. A textual analysis of the books will reveal not only the authors' artistic skill, but also, the depth of their vision and message. In every chapter we shall attempt to indicate any major change or transition in context, as well as stylistic features of the works and writers concerned.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Very little attention has been given to literary appreciation in Southern Sotho. Scholars have either been preoccupied with theoretic studies in linguistics or were just indifferent to any literary studies because of the alleged inferiority of Bantu creative writing. The native writers were, as it were, left to themselves to experiment with the art of writing which they had learnt from the European settlers. They were writing for an unexacting audience--or no audience at all--outside the school buildings. Few people, if any, have given a second thought to the possibility of a unique style of writing developing among the Bantu authors, or for that matter, unique literary forms developing. The present author is of the opinion that authors, especially those from a different cultural heritage, can make innovations in traditional literary forms. The Sotho novelist need not become a slave to conventional rules set up by his European counterparts. His cultural background is different, and, naturally, his own life view will be different.

Sotho culture, if not all African cultures, suggests

that the Basotho not only have different conceptions of several aspects of life such as love, hate, honour, prejudice, among others, but also have different attitudes to them. This has implications for any valid literary criticism of Sotho fiction since these tenets of life find expression in many Sotho books. Attitudes towards love and marriage, for example, may not necessarily be those of the Westerner. The fact that he may not even comprehend Sotho mentality on certain issues, or have feelings that the Basotho are not passionate or sensitive, should not lead him to believe that his judgement is valid. Only when he fully recognises or understands value systems of the Basotho can the Westerner, or someone with a Western outlook towards life, realize that critical standards for Sotho fiction should be sought in Sotho culture itself.

Southern Sotho prose fiction will be examined to find out if any characteristic forms have evolved. However, it is noted that not all prose fictions are novels. To separate the Sotho novel from ordinary prose fiction, the known definition of a novel will be applied in as far as it is acceptable and useful to the present author. Our authors turned to European, especially English models for inspiration. For this reason, we shall attempt to show to what extent the Sotho creative writers have conformed or deviated from their models. However, this does not imply

that Sotho prose fiction is an extension or outgrowth of the English or Afrikaans novel. From the very early missionary inspired fiction, the Sotho writers came up with the "not so acceptable" ways of writing, since these were not according to Western tradition. These differences or "peculiar" innovations were noted superficially by the critics, however, no responsible literary critic ever bothered to find out what these differences consisted in, or tried to unfold their causes. Whether or not these differences called for a different literary analysis, did not interest Sotho critics. Praise was either given condescendingly, or outright condemnation of Sotho books was pronounced. But questions such as "Why praise or condemnation is due" or "What gives a form and pattern to Sotho prose fiction," were always evaded. It is our intention to answer these questions. Since suspicion is that praise or condemnation were often based on Western concern with characterization, style and plot development; a brief review of the definition of the novel, a Western creation, will be given in the following paragraphs. This will enable us to pinpoint the difference and then determine their causes.

The English and the American literary critics see the novel as a specific form of art. They are agreed that it is an attempt to give a broad representation of life

although the novel is not life itself. Muir[2] says there is a pattern in life, yet there is a difference between it and the pattern of a novel. This implies that the novel cannot give a complete or detailed picture of life. Only certain aspects of life or human experiences can be revealed at a time. The novel deals with human relationships and human experience. It will be demonstrated later that there are several ways in which the novelist can dramatise human experience and relationships. The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines the novel as "a fictitious prose narrative of sufficient length to fill one or more volumes portraying characters and actions representative of real life in continuous plot." The Sotho novel will be measured against this definition but we shall not lose sight of the fact that it may evince its own unique patterns which may not necessarily conform to the known English or European patterns.

The constituent elements of a novel are theme, characters, setting, events and language. These elements are not loosely bound. A definite principle knits them together to give the total effect of the message delivered. Action and places must have strict relationship to one another. Events must happen in a particular order. The author, who may either be the narrator of incidents or creator,

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[2]Muir, E.: The Structure of the Novel, The Hogarth Press, London, 8th Impression, 1960, p. 10.

must be extremely careful in the selection and shaping of characters to dramatize human relationships and life. The reaction of characters should be accounted for. Thus the author must motivate his argument sufficiently to render episodes in his book probable. After all character is the very centre of the Western novel. Character delineation is important.

Yet many Sotho novels defy this very rule. Characterization is of limited importance. The writers do not probe into the inner feelings of the individual characters to study their emotional reaction to external stimuli. In very few exceptions are the characters complex beings. Most characters do not grow. They are the same from the beginning to the end of the book. However, this is really not a weakness, except when viewed from a Western perspective. The very societal outlook of the Basotho precludes attaching any importance to the individual. Granted, Sotho society, like all other communities in Africa, is continually changing to an individualistic society. Yet emphasis is still on group solidarity and experience, and not character delineation. One or two individuals are often selected by most Sotho writers to relive the experience that involves everybody. We shall note the role of Mofolo's Fekisi and Phakwane and other characters from other Sotho books. Modes of characterization adopted by Sotho writers will be

discussed fully in the following chapters and the importance of what Charles Larson (Emergence of African Fiction, p. 117) calls "collective consciousness" in the novel will be demonstrated. The present author hopes to bring forth the basic principles underlying the structure of the Sotho novel--i.e. characterization, plot development, devices used to give form and pattern to the Sotho novel.

The plot of a good novel will be dramatic if the author's vision of life is deep and he is able to intensify the conflict in or among his characters. Whether the conflict is internal or external, it will be sufficient motivation or even explanation for the actions of the characters. The language used must be purposeful. It must characterize the speakers and thus advance the story. This is the well made story in European fiction. The story develops and grows in an ordered and coherent whole throughout. But several Sotho novels consist of loosely bound series of separate or independent stories or events. The main characters often link these separate episodes together. In some books it is often hard to determine whether the book is really a collection of short stories, arbitrarily joined together. Yet in novels such as Chaka by Mofolo and Mosali a Nkhola (Khaketla), to name only two examples, one notices that Sotho writers have found devices to hold their stories together and thus give form to their creation. Devices of

oral tradition are still used as unifying factors of many Sotho books. Among these we mention the use of rhetorical questions, as if telling a story and proverbs to give meaning, and depth to the stories like in the traditional fables, myths, folktales or legends. The Sotho novel seems to be an outgrowth of oral tradition rather than that of European fiction. The story is often developed in a straightforward manner as if the writer is telling a simple traditional story. The writer describes the characters and events. The reader seldom sees these in action. The moral overtones of traditional prose are still felt in modern Sotho fiction.

European prose fiction has been divided into several kinds of forms such as Romance, Novel of Character, the dramatic novel, etc. It may not be easy to distinguish the various forms in Sotho, but where such elements are noticeable, we shall try to examine them closely. A "romance" is intended to rouse curiosity. It prefers action to character, and it is less inclined towards presenting reality. A single complicated action takes the place of a succession of actions to evoke fear, apprehension or anticipation. This is the opposite of a novel which attempts to render reality closely and in minute detail. In a novel an attempt is made to unfold complex human experience. Yet a <u>romance</u> is not a mere asking of another marvel. Even though it

seems to be an escape from reality, a fantasy of desire and an attempt to satisfy irresponsible curiosity because of its astonishing events, romance has a symbolic rather than a realistic plausibility.

For Sotho we cannot quite keep out "romance" as a part of the novel. The Basotho speak in parables and proverbs. Their meaning is very profound if the symbolic reference is comprehended. We shall demonstrate later that Machobane's Mphatlalatsane is something more than a mere astonishing story. For purposes of our criticism, we shall treat it as an epic with tendencies towards describing and probing into human character. In his The American Novel and its Tradition, Richard Chase has demonstrated that element of romance has been more noticeable in the American Novel than in the English. Such a characteristic may not be ruled out as a possibility in the Southern Sotho novel. Inspiration might have been European, but evolution is distinctly Sotho.

Muir speaks of the novel of Character, and the Dramatic Novel. In the novel of character, unchanging characters pass through changing scenes. Thus, the so-called flat characters i.e. those characters with stereotype reactions, are mainly the markers of this kind of form. These behave typically; they do not adjust to realities. However, flat characters are a necessary vehicle for conveying

one kind of vision of life. The pattern of this kind of form is loosely woven because the plot changes frequently to elucidate the characters. Perhaps the didactic nature of many Sotho novels favours so-called flat characters.

In the dramatic novel characters and plot are inseparable. "Given qualities of the characters determine the action, in turn, progressively change the characters."[3] Muir states that in the dramatic novel we are shown the complete range of human experience in the characters. Thus the dramatic novel is an image of modes of experience.[4] The main object in the dramatic novel is to trace development. It is for this reason that personality changes as the character gains new experience. There is an attempt at adjusting to realities. According to Muir, "these two types of the novel are neither opposites, then, nor in any important sense complements of each other; they are rather two distinct modes of seeing life: in Time, personally, and in Space, socially."[5]

Many superficial evaluations of Sotho writing will deny the existence of good novels in Sotho. They would like to see the Sotho novel becoming a mere duplicate of European attempts. To them, mastery of the art of writing implies

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[3]Muir, E.: Op. Cit., p. 41.

[4]Muir, E.: Op. Cit., p. 60.

[5]Muir, E.: Op. Cit., p. 63.

evolution in the form of the novel that can be equated with improvement. This notion is not accepted as Walter Allen rightly states: "Art does not get better and better. Its manifestations merely change--Somehow their value for their own times and their value for us now must be held in the mind simultaneously."[6] Even the European novel is changing with generations.

The apparent simplicity of many Sotho novels will disgust many critics who, like Lubbock, maintain difficulty i.e. complexity in a novel is an additional source of enjoyment. To appreciate Sotho creative writing one must understand the socio-economic-political milieu in which the Sotho authors find themselves. This environment has, in many ways, shaped the works of several writers. Traditional culture should also be examined to find answers to many unanswered questions regarding form. The forces that affect imaginative writing itself must be fully comprehended. The relationship between the Publisher and the Department of Bantu Education on the one hand, and the Publisher and the author, on the other, should be examined closely to find if it does not affect (if not control) creative writing. Admitted, weaknesses will be found in Sotho writings, but these do not mar the good works that have already been

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[6] Allen, Walter: The English Novel, p. 20.

created. Literary appreciation will pinpoint pitfalls which our authors should avoid.

The Sotho novel will not be judged slavishly on European models. We propose to treat it as a work of art with its own merits and demerits. Individual works will differ one from the other; even within the same book, one may find differences in values--i.e. the author may be successful in characterization, but have a commonplace message to carry across. Sotho creative writing is a worthy attempt by our authors. It serves its own purposes for its own time. We need not be ashamed of it. In his interview with Radio Bantu, Johannesburg, in 1964, Kem Edward Ntsane admits that he and other Sotho authors were inspired by Keats, Tennyson, Wordsworth, Shelly and Shakespeare, among others. He states, in the same interview:

> We thought and started writing. What there is now in the way of Sotho books, I and my late dear friend, feel is a personal contribution we cannot possibly feel ashamed of. It is meagre in many ways, but not too slimy.

Ntsane speaks for all Sotho writers, including his predecessors, for they all accepted the challenge.

The present writer suggests that, even though Sotho novels may not evince the authors' mastery of the art of description to convey mood and atmosphere, or depth and penetration in analysing inner emotions of individual char-

acters, or convincing dialogue as a means of character delineation, other devices substituting these should be traced within these creative works. The differences in emphasis seem to stem from differences in cultural backgrounds. The problem with present day Sotho if not African literary criticism, is that works of art are judged according to Western tradition, regardless of different cultural backgrounds. It would seem a compound of Sotho and Western aesthetic values may be found in Sotho literature since the Sotho are in fact living double life styles, one Sotho, the other Western. We agree with the editor of the Journal of African Literature and Art, Spring, 1967, Okpaku, that the Western approach to the analysis of the novel, or critical standards for that matter, is not the only valid method of analysis. Okpaku (Op. Cit., p. 1) rightly points out that Western critical standards are developed in the Western tradition and are applied by Western critics to interpret and criticize Western literature to the Western audience. He points out further that, when the Western critic looks at African works, he immediately tries to find out which Western works they best resemble so he can use this to establish communication with the Western reader. For example, the Western reader would always be told that Moeti oa Bochabela was another Pilgrims Progress, and so forth. The Sotho critic should use criteria relevant to him and his

audience. After all the writer is talking in the common idiom between him and his audience, Sotho culture.

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In Chapter Two a brief history of the origin and development of the Sotho novel will be given. We shall confine ourselves to the development of prose fiction and not other diversified forms of Sotho literature, i.e. this will not be a detailed literary history. It has been suggested in the preceding pages that modern Sotho prose fiction has borrowed heavily from oral tradition. A brief description of oral prose will be given to facilitate discussion in the following chapters.

Chapter Three is an attempt to relate modern Sotho fiction to traditional oral compositions with regard to form and stylistic features.

Chapter Four will deal with Mofolo's earlier contribution to the development of the Sotho novel. It has been noted already that several critiques have been written either on the individual books or complete works of this author. For our purpose, we shall examine further the author's artistic skill and the qualities of his works. A more detailed literary analysis will be attempted--textual analysis. Chapter Five will examine closely his masterpiece, Chaka.

Mofolo's contemporaries will receive attention in

Chapter Six. Selected works will be analysed to reveal operating forces of the time and the author's own responses. The structure of the works, their content and quality will be fully discussed.

Chapter Seven deals with developments in novel writing in the Forties. Representative works of the time are examined. Further development in the Fifties receives attention in Chapter Eight. In all cases significant changes in style of writing will be accounted for.

Chapters Nine and Ten are a detailed appreciation of prose fiction in the Sixties to date. Carefully selected works--the best of this period--will be our subject of discourse. A close textual analysis of the works will be given.

From the works studied in the first ten chapters it will be possible to trace the more common themes in Southern Sotho prose fiction. Observations will be made about the development of such themes by various writers. This will be the content of Chapter Eleven. In this study reference is made to some interesting manuscripts which for some reasons were not published. Mazenod in Lesotho is rich with unpublished cyclostyled material.

Chapter Twelve is a brief comment on the apparent dilemma of the Sotho novelists as evinced by their numerous works. The present writer is attempting to find a reason for certain observable features of the content of most works.

Chapter Thirteen, the conclusion, singles out the findings, suggests possible solutions, speculates on future trends in Sotho prose fiction and, perhaps, raises questions which may still be answered in the future.

Translations into another language often sound ridiculous and artificial. They often miss the spiritual content of the passages translated. We have attempted to translate quoted Sotho passages into English. As far as possible care has been taken to preserve the spirit and intended message in the passages concerned. However, in some passages the present writer has deliberately resorted to literal translation to retain the effectiveness and force of Southern Sotho idiom.

The reader should note that plural forms Basotho and Southern Sothos will be alternated in the following chapters. However, this will not be done arbitrarily; the plural Sothos will be used where "Southern" precedes. The word Bantu, too, will be used to refer strictly to a linguistic family of people rather than a racial label. African will refer to peoples of non-European. ancestry, the direct descendants of the aborigines of Africa.

CHAPTER II

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE SOUTHERN SOTHO NOVEL

In this Chapter we do not intend to make a detailed chronological study of the development of the Sotho novel. Literary historians such as Albert Gerard[7] and other scholars such as G. H. Franz[8] and J. M. Lenake have dealt adequately with this problem. Gerard's book in particular, is a unique, deep and far-sighted attempt at Southern Sotho literary history. Yet, even Gerard's book makes superficial comments on the quality of Sotho prose fiction. The writer seems to have been too dependent on informants and incompetent translations. There are several glaring mistakes such as the translations of some poems e.g. Morena Marena (King of Kings) is translated as King Marena. Used cautiously, Gerard's book can serve as a good introduction to Sotho Literature. We propose to examine the humble beginnings of Sotho prose fiction, the characteristics of the different phases of development, the "golden age" of

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[7]See Albert Gerard's Four African Literatures, Kimberly Press, California, 1971.

[8]Bantu Studies, Vol. IV, no. 3, September, 1930, pp. 145-180.

Sotho literature, present day attempts at novel writing and the quality of these works.

Any literary history of Southern Sotho is indeed the history of the written word or script in the language. Southern Sotho is a young language in the literary world because attempts to reduce its speech sounds to writing were made only when the French missionaries came to Lesotho sometime in the nineteenth century. As in all preliterate societies, the education was informal. Valuable folklore, myths, traditional laws and customs were handed down from one generation to another by word of mouth. The Sotho's valuable spiritual creations depended much on memory. Thus, much of this valuable contribution to mankind was lost to the younger generations. The few praises that have been saved from oblivion testify to the wide range of experiences of the older generation, their keen observation, clear and expressive descriptive power, strong identifications with the emotions felt and objects seen; unfeigned love or admiration for the beautiful experiences. The rhythm of these praise poems brings back the echo of the long forgotten past and the lively music and dance of those unschooled old composers.[9]

The missionaries and the first products from their

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[9]Moloi, A. J.: A Comparative study of the Poetry of Ntsane and Khaketla, Unisa M.A. dissertation, 1968, p. 9.

schools were the first people to record the oral compositions around them. First, a set of symbols was devised to reduce Southern Sotho to writing, and their material was carefully selected to realize the main aim of the missionaries--to propagate christianity. Thus, the most important and obvious feature of the early Southern Sotho writing was its christian clothing and intent. The new symbols--the practical orthography--~~was~~ were clumsy, yet Sotho literature continued to flourish. However, one critic observes that "for long the majority of the vernacular produced were the work of European Missionaries... It has been more and more realized, however, that in a truly indigenous literature the African must play the largest if not an exclusive part."[10]

The old Basotho writers who were educated at Morija, the cradle of modern Sotho literature, answered the challenge. These men, Azariele Sekese (1849-1930), Everitt Lechesa Segoete (1858-1923), Edward Motsamai (1870-1959) and Zakea D. Mangoaela (1883-1963), were trained as teachers and/or evangelists. Some of them taught in the teacher training and Bible schools. Almost all the early writers worked also at the Printing Press and Book Depot. Their close association and their own type of training assured the religious colouring of the works of these men. Thomas Mofolo, the greatest among them and the all-time great of

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[10]Journal of the Institute of African Languages and Cultures, Africa, July, 1938, p. 361.

Sotho literature, was also greatly influenced by the teachings of the missionaries.

The efforts of these men, as Tekateka rightly observes, ushered "the dawn of the new age, the real moment of birth of our modern Sotho literature."[11] Further, Tekateka notes that:

> ...they are writers who have the barest rudiments of learning, and cannot boast of any literary ancestry. These pioneers of Sotho literature were beginning to shape the rough materials of their mother tongue into something like literary form for the various purposes of instruction and entertainment. In this way an appetite for literature has been fostered, and an immense impetus given to the growing love of everything that makes for the enrichment of life. The works of these early Basotho writers made a remarkable contribution to the humble beginning of their own Sotho literature in their own Sotho language.[12]

The first Southern Sotho author was Azariele Sekese, who, in 1893, had his Mekhoa ea Basotho le maele le litsomo (The Customs, Proverbs and Stories of the Basotho) published. This attempt is of historical and literary importance in that it was not only the first of its kind, but it saved valuable oral compositions from oblivion. In 1928, his Bukana ea tsomo tsa pitso ea linonyana le tseko ea Sefofu le Seritsa (A booklet on the story of the Meeting of Birds

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[11]Tekateka, J. M. M.: A Critical Literary Survey of Thomas Mofolo's Writings, Unpublished M.A. dissertation, Unisa, Pretoria, p. 6.

[12]Tekateka, J. M. M.: Op. Cit., pp. 6-7.

and the Case between Sefofu and Seritsa--the blind man and the cripple) was published. This is a satire which will be treated in later chapters.[13]

The greatest and first novelist in Southern Sotho, Thomas Mofolo, began his literary career with his Moeti oa Bo-chabela, which was published by Morija in 1907. No Southern Sotho author has received as much attention in literary circles as Thomas Mofolo. Various critiques differing in depth and insight, have been produced by several literary scholars on his literary works. In his Four African Literatures, Albert Gerard refers to critiques on Chaka, Mofolo's greatest contribution, by Ezekiel Mphahlele, D. D. T. Jabavu, Alice Werner, Beuchat, Sulzer and Claude Waulthier, among others. However, the most penetrating critiques on Chaka or Mofolo's works, for that matter, have been produced by J.M.M. Tekateka, Daniel Kunene and Albert Gerard. Yet even in these scholarly criticisms, one is often confronted with general remarks and very little or no textual analysis to back up statements and observations made. Moeti oa Bo-chabela was followed by Pitseng in 1910 and Chaka in 1925. The latter novel was first translated into English by Mr. Dutton, whose translation in the International Institute of African Languages and Cultures,

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[13]Note that the works of writers mentioned in this chapter will be treated in detail in the following chapters.

gave Mofolo world-wide recognition. The book has since been translated into several other major European languages. Mofolo's three books show a clear development in his literary skill and attitude towards his socio-economic-political environment. For our purposes, we shall deal with this development in the following chapters.

Mofolo inspired Segoete to write books. In 1910, Segoete's Monono ke Moholi ke Mouoane was published. Gerard suggests that it was Mofolo's condemnation of old times in Moeti oa Bo-chabela (The Eastbound Traveller) which prompted, as a reaction, the glorification of olden days of Lesotho in Segoete's Raphepheng (Father of Scorpion) which was published in 1913.[14] Other contemporaries of Mofolo produced volumes of narratives which were either recordings of existing oral compositions or original compositions. Edward Motsamai wrote short stories in Mehla ea Malimo (1912) (The era of the Cannibals) and Moshweshwe's biography, Morena Moshoeshoe, mora Mokhachane (King Moshoeshoe, son of Mokhachane). The former book is important in that the contents reveal how the Sotho christian converts viewed their past. The author finds those days to have been evil, dark and callous. It will be shown later how this view of life of the converts affected the quality of the contents of

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[14]Gerard, A.: Op. Cit., p. 111.

their books. Zakea D. Mangoaela's contributions to Sotho literature are important, especially his record of traditional praise poems in Lithoko tsa Marena a Basotho (Praises of Basotho Kings) which appeared in 1921. Other contributions from his pen are: Hara libatane le linyamatsane (Among Beasts and smaller animals) 1912, and Tsoelopele ea Lesotho (The Progress/development of Lesotho) 1911.

The period 1906 to 1912 was the "Golden Age" of Southern Sotho literature. After 1912, a decline set in. Sotho literature was no longer showing its former brilliance, vigour and virility. Several reasons can be advanced for this decline, but the most important one is the interference of the missionaries. They owned the press and they had a certain mission to fulfil--the Sotho were to be won over to christianity. Any piece of writing was to serve towards this purpose. When Mofolo's Chaka was held back for fifteen years before publication in 1925, an irreparable damage had been done to Sotho creative writing. It is often suggested that Mofolo was broken by the missionaries, since he never continued to write after 1910.

Numerous religious narratives were produced at Mazenod and Morija by minor authors between the First and Second World Wars. The first Southern Sotho drama, Sekh'oana sa Joala, by Twentyman Mofokeng, appeared in 1939.

However, it was not until after the Second World War that prose narratives began to flourish once more. Although these were not of the calibre of Mofolo, the new writers "deepened and diversified the general trends of creative literature in Southern Sotho."[15] Many of these prose narratives centered around the social and political problems of the time, such as ritual murders, which were prompted by minor chiefs who hoped to raise their status through black magic, or past events among the Basotho. Among the prolific writers of prose were Matlosa, the author of Molahlehi (1946) and Mopheme (1965); A. Nqheku, the author of Arola naheng ea Maburu (1942); F. Nqheku, author of Tsielala (1959); Machobane, who produced Mahaheng a Matso (1946), Mphatlalatsane (1947) and Senate, Shoeshoe a Moshoeshoe (1954); Ntsane, the author of Masoabi (1952), Nna Sajene Kokobela, C.I.D. (1963) and Bao Batho (1969); Khaketla, the author of Meokho ea thabo (1951) and Mosali a nkhola (1960).

With the introduction of mother tongue instruction in the South African Bantu schools in 1955, a wider reading population was created. A host of writers sprang up to seize the school market. Quantitative increase, therefore, was not often accompanied by qualitative production.

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[15]Gerard, A.: Op. Cit., p. 150.

Lesoro's books, ranging from poetry, drama and prose fiction, saw the light of day. Leshala le tswala molora and Pere Ntsho, Blackmore were published. The latter book was the first prize winner in the Republican festival competition of 1968. Reference will be made to this book later, to reveal the quality of recent book reviews. Another prize winner, Mofufutso wa Phatla by Mophethe, will be analyzed later. Other noted versatile prose writers in Southern Sotho include Moiloa, who among others, has written Paka-Mahlomola, and Maile, the dramatist, who has also written the novel Moiketsi.

Southern Sotho can boast of a host of novelists. With varying degrees of success, these authors have expanded, even though quantitatively, imaginative writing in Sotho. We may include among prose fictions, Ovid Mofolo's Lesiamo le Ema; Majara's; 'Makotulo; Ramathe's Tshepo; Thakhisi's Tsha ha se mele poya; Maboe's Menyepetsi ea Masoabi; Manaka's Lerole le lefubedu; Malefane's Nqalong ya lerato, and Mopeli-Paulus' Moshoeshoe Moshoaila.

It has been stated that the increase in prose writing after 1955 was only quantitative. The writers were producing works for schools, and therefore, they had to comply with certain requriements laid down by the Department of Bantu Education. For example, among other prerequisites, the reviewers had to find out if books had any

political tendencies or whether the contents of the book would make one section of the population turn bitter against the other section. In the hands of ill-trained reviewers, most of whom are not literary scholars, the interpretation of the requirements was not clear. The mere superficial mention of known social conditions in our country, or clashes between white and black, even though these were not intended to incite the public, was enough to disqualify many a good manuscript. Maboe's manuscripts, which were rejected by some publisher's on many occasions, is a case in point. Publishers too would not publish any material that would not be prescribed for school use. Thus, the quality of Southern Sotho books suffered greatly because of official regulations on the one hand, the publishers economic interests and the author's poor workmanship on the other. In a way, the directive of the Department of Bantu Education began to define lines to be followed by writers.

The above reasons account for the Sotho novelist's lack of involvement in his environment. His works, as it will be observed, are often far distanced from his daily experiences. Such issues were last attempted by A. Nqheku. Although with limited success, Nqheku was the first to deal with Black-White relations in South Africa. His book was outspoken on race relations, since extremists were his chosen "characters". Lenake observed this when he leveled

this criticism against it:

> Nqheku protrays friction between the Boers and a young Mosotho who apparently knows very little about the Afrikaner in the Free State. In fact, Nqheku has chosen extremists from both the Sotho as well as the Afrikaner groups. Arola leaves Lesotho to seek employment in the Free State. On his arrival there, he comes across some of the most cruel and unfriendly farmers. A terrible clash between himself and the farmers develops. He is badly assaulted and as a result of this, Arola becomes extremely hostile towards the Boers. In the hands of people with an unbalanced mind, this book may easily cause strained relationships between these two racial groups.[16] (My own underlining)

One wonders whether a literary critic does not become a censor if he deliberately refuses to recognize cause and effect, the very heart of novel development in any book. Reviewers have become more axe-wielders than analysts of artistic values in books.

Southern Sotho prose fiction was enriched in 1954 when Ntsala's Sekhukhuni se bonwa ke Sebataladi (A hiding person is really never alone) was published. It was a type of thriller which left the reader in suspense until the mystery was solved. However, the story is an uninvolved, simple narrative. The writer failed to keep his narrative lively and credible. This story is about Khabele who was framed by a deceitful witchdoctor, Nkokoto, who had been

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[16]Limi, no. 6, June, 1968, p. 77 (A brief Survey of Modern Literature in the South African Bantu Languages: Southern Sotho).

bribed by Pitsa and Senare, the callous murderers of Ramafa. Khabele was condemned to die, but his cousin Koto's quick thinking saved him. Police intervened and revealed the fallacy of justice dependent on witchdoctors. Chief Leraha, a just man, learned his lesson and was very grateful.

Another valuable contribution to Sotho literature, especially to novel writing in the Sixties, was Guma's historical novels Morena Mohlomi, mora Monyane (1960) and Tshehlana tseo tsa Basia (Those Beauties of the Basia) (1962). The former book deals with the internal split of Monaheng's tribe, while the latter portrays the survival and preservation of the Tlokwa tribe by their queens. These works are, however, not great historical novels like Mofolo's Chaka. Their literary value will be assessed in the following chapters.

Mofokeng's Leetong and Pelong yaka in 1954, added another dimension to Sotho prose fiction. These are collections of Mofokeng's genuine and original short stories--the first of their kind in Southern Sotho. They are not mere recordings of known tales and happenings as in Mocoang-coeng's Meqoqo ya phirimana. Mofokeng's short stories will be treated in this study of the novel because of their nature. They represent another mode of looking at life.

It should be remembered that no literature may develop in any cultural group unless it is accompanied by

serious analysis and penetrating criticism. We must pause, reconsider and evaluate the works of Southern Sotho authors. Our comments and opinions will help to eliminate pitfalls into which future artists may falter. Literature must be examined and appraised to create a permanent and rich emotional and intellectual link between us and posterity. Our experiences and thoughts can remain indelibly marked only in literature which is mature and is of a high standard. One hopes that the University of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland and the University of the North, the real custodians of Southern Sotho literature, will help enrich our literature. We trust that these institutions will help to draw readers to the works of art so that a healthy climate for the development and enrichment of our culture could be created. Sotho literature should be taken back to the path which had been carved by Mofolo's Chaka.

CHAPTER III

ORAL COMPOSITIONS AND MODERN WRITTEN SOTHO PROSE FICTION

Literary critics and laymen alike regard the literature of a people as a reflection of their culture*, a mirror through which a culture sees, chastises, builds, praises, corrects, judges, or warns itself. The ideas, beliefs, pre-occupations, hardships, achievement or everyday activities of a society are recreated or re-enacted in its literature, be it poetry,drama or novel. Oral traditions of many preliterate societies serve the same purpose. Pre-literate as well as literate societies have attempted, through their literature--be it oral tradition or the written word-- to formulate values, traditions and standards by which they judged and sustained themselves. Such values and methods of preservation were many and varied. Every pre-literate society had such means by which it attempted to preserve its laws, customs, social and political organizations, religion, belief systems and

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*(We do recognize that art reaches even beyond this claim. We do not sacrifice the idea of art for art's sake as some critics would argue, but we are merely pointing out that the artist may/can, and/or should not distance himself from his experiences.)

tradition. For its own survival, a village, a clan or a tribe, had devised means and ways by which to tie down the individual to group solidarity. What affected the individual as a member of the group, affected the whole clan. Life revolved around group-felt experiences. Group solidarity was nourished, nurtured, conditioned, re-enforced, and fortified by the community's mythology, fables, folktales and legends. Thus traditional prose-forms served an important function of bolstering group solidarity and seldom served purely for entertainment. The individual found his being in his clan, tribe or group. John Mbiti in his African Religion and Philosophy (quoted by Larson) noted that:

> In traditional life, the individual does not and cannot exist alone except corporately. He owes his existence to other people, including those of past generations....He is simply a part of the whole.... Whatever happens to the individual happens to the whole group, and whatever happens to the whole group happens to the individual.(See Charles R. Larson's Emergence of African Fiction, p. 116).

The significance of this statement for Sotho prose fiction will be noted when both the contents of oral compositions and written fiction are closely examined. Myths attempted to explain to the individual and the group their origin, natural phenomena, the origin of their beliefs and religion, perhaps the purpose of man's existence and

his destiny. Legends, a mixture of fact and fantasy, exalted the great deeds and achievements of the kings and warriors, the very stronghold, preservers, guardians and custodians of the tribe and tradition. This gave the individual a sense of worth and increased even his loyalty to his group, its customs, beliefs and laws. Through legends the individual felt his continuation from past generations; he understood his present circumstances and could thus visualize the continued existence of his group. Didactic fables guarded and insured the continued respect for the traditional mores and social order. Other fables explained traits and characteristics of the animals around man, and some were for his entertainment and amusement. Several folktales also fulfilled this function. It is important to note that fables were at times vehicles for social change. It was through fables that tyrants and oppressive social systems could be criticised and satirized. The disguised nature of fables protected the disgruntled. Reference has been made to Sekese's Pitso ea linonyana.

The above mentioned traditional prose forms were intended for a listening audience and not a reading public. Thus methods of narration adopted by the variou traditional composers were suitable for preserving them in the minds of people for a long time. Memorable verse was in-

sured by the use of brilliant metaphors, alliteration, other figures of speech, direct dialogue between the narrator and the audience, the various voice modulations of the narrator to break the monotony, and the confidence and trust which he worked hard to instil in his hearers/listeners. The apparent simplicity of traditional prose forms and the use of animals as characters, may deceive many casual observers about their depth and profound meanings, yet these were not merely intended to while away time.

As observed in the preceding chapter, early written Southern Sotho fiction consisted of recordings of traditional folktales, legends and fables: Mofolo's contemporaries carried these past tales to the new generation of readers. What traditional composers achieved with their voices and gestures, Mofolo's contemporaries had to capture with symbols, word-images -- the written word. Guma, in his The form,content and technique of Traditional Literature in Southern Sotho, adequately discusses Sotho oral compositions. It will be demonstrated later that not only fables and legends have passed into modern fiction, but also stylistic features of these forms have marked the writings of many modern Sotho writers. In fact, the use of fables and legends in modern Sotho fiction is a method of presentation itself. Often fables are used to elucid-

ate the author's story. Thus Sotho cultural material not only provides stories for our fiction, but also suggest forms and stylistic features in harmony with Sotho tradition. One may suggest that fables and legends have inspired the stories of many Sotho writers e.g. Guma's Mohlomi, Tshehlana tseo tsa Basia; stories about Moshweshwe, Dingaan and Chaka. There seems also to be a link between traditional poems and modern Sotho drama and poetry. It is therefore necessary to seek literary criteria for Sotho literature in Sotho culture itself. Any foreign standards may be inadequate, especially when Sotho traditional forms are not well known.

A brief literary history provided in Chapter Two covers books ranging from straight-forward traditional oral composition, those that deal with group-felt experiences such as the disintegration of traditional societies, urbanization, perhaps human relations, to those dealing with exposure and adaptation to Western civilization. Mission inspired books embraced and propagated christianity among the Basotho. Several books e.g. Mofolo's Moeti oa Bochabela and Segoete's Monono Ke Moholi ke Mouoane to name only two, sang praises to the new religion. Western values could be questioned later as in (to a certain extent) Mofolo's Pitseng. However, a total rejection of Western norms as in East African Fiction, has not yet

become a literary theme in Southern Sotho. The school, education and the city, are still preoccupations of many Sotho writers. Even then, unconvincing thesis of "Go to school, get a good education and you will find a good job" is poorly presented in these books that purport to demonstrate the value of education and Western norms.

However, in Mofolo's Chaka, Mofokeng's short stories, especially the best ones in Leetong, and Khaketla's Mosali a Nkhola there is a new direction towards the presentation of the individual and his relationship towards the larger community. The three writers, although in varying degrees, were beginning to probe into the inner self and present a kind of individualized life style. Mofolo, in particular, succeeds in his portrayal of Chaka, if it is accepted that his masterpiece, Chaka, even more than a historical novel, is a penetrating psychological study of the king of that name. Mofolo's artistic skill, and the efforts of the other two mentioned writers will receive attention in the succeeding paragraphs.

It is the contention of the present writer, as it will be demonstrated later, that modern Sotho fiction finds its roots in traditional oral compositions both in form and technique. The content has expanded, but several traditional stylistic features still give grace to modern compositions. Further, it is our belief that it is not quite ac-

curate to regard Southern Sotho fiction as a curious offshoot of English or Afrikaans prose fiction. Cultural backgrounds are different and so we believe that even literary standards cannot be the same for Sotho and English or Afrikaans.

Successful story-tellers addressed their audiences directly. They sang accompanying songs of their stories with refined voices whenever this was necessary; they mimicked dialogues between various characters when this was necessary: they used proverbs and profound metaphors and similes if these language devices helped to develop their narrative. The story-tellers of old imitated noises and sounds if that would serve to recapture the essence of their subject matter; they chose short, thought-provoking sentences to speed up action if conciseness would hold the listeners in suspense and make them more attentive. The dramatic effect of their stories could be felt when these story-tellers made listeners to cry or sympathise with the underdog in their stories, or become excited and roaring with laughter whenever a comic episode was described. Story-telling was, in the true sense, an art--a creative heritage of past generations.

A repetition of sounds and word-groups intensified the images the story-teller wished to make very vivid and lasting; comparisons and contrasts were the ingredients of

memorable verse and stories. Grandmothers send their grandchildren as well as their great-grand-children to bed with fearful memories of Dimo (Cannibal) or pleasant and humorous thoughts of Tselane le Dimo (Tselane and the Cannibal), Mmutla le Taumoholo (The hare and the old Lion) or Phokoje le Phiri (The jackal and the hyena). Much of oral tradition was preserved through the use of these effective methods and styles of narration. Stories of ancient times were passed from one generation to another by word of mouth.

Modern Sotho writers have not freed themselves of these tools of oral compositions yet. The best writers such as Mofolo, Khaketla and Ntsane, to name only a few, are at their best when they resort to these techniques of ancient story-tellers. Even in their mediocre and less mature earlier works the above-mentioned authors still fascinate the readers with their pleasant style of presentation. Indeed, a separation between mature (sophisticated) and immature (unsophisticated) novels is determined by how close or removed the method of narration of a particular writer is to oral compositions. Most Sotho prose writers are still duplicates of ancient Sotho story-tellers, except that their subject matter has changed and expanded and newer topics are presented. Their narrative is still functional and topical. One needs to read Machobane's Mphatlalatsane, Matlosa's Molahlehi and Mopheme, Maile's Moiketsi or

Mophethe's Mofufutso wa Phatla to see how close our writers are to story-tellers of old, both in intention and method of narration. Even Mofolo in Moeti oa Bo-chabela or Pitseng, for that matter, is not yet wholly divorced from traditional means of narration. Like in the stories of old, many Sotho novels still make character subservient to ideas and message of the writer.

Perhaps, Sotho novels may indicate other modes of characterization. If characterization is not brought about through action, introspection -- an indication of emotional reaction to external stimuli, or dialogue, for that matter, then the author's commentary or description in a well set background may be just as effective as in the conventional European character modes. Chaka, in Mofolo's book of that name, and Mosito, to a certain extent, in Khaketla's Mosali a Nkhola, are complex characters, yet at times these same authors indulged in direct comments on the actions of their creations and events surrounding them.

For the most part critics analysing Sotho books are pre-occupied with the Plot, Style and Characterization without bothering to investigate the influence of Sotho culture and tradition on the structure and method of presentation of the successor of fables, legends and folk-tales -- the "new" novel maybe. After all, even in Western culture the novel has several new manifestations from

generation to generation. The tragic element of Shakespearian times is no longer the standard of definition of the modern sense of what is really tragic. Southern Sotho too may be awakening into a new manifestation of the classic definition of a novel. A study of Mofolo's works in the next two chapters will give us insight into the development of prose fiction in Southern Sotho.

CHAPTER IV

THOMAS MOFOLO AND THE ORIGIN OF THE SOTHO NOVEL: HIS EARLIER WORKS

It was stated in the previous chapter that Mofolo was the first true novelist in Southern Sotho. He rose above mere story-telling of his time and introduced creative novel writing in Southern Sotho. Mofolo's works testify that he was after precision and clarity. His purposeful use of words, idiomatic expressions, proverbs, ideophones and other techniques of clarifying meaning, gave life to his creations. His masterpiece, Chaka, has been translated into several European languages, thus giving this great Sotho author world-wide recognition.

No other Southern Sotho vernacular author has received as much attention in literary circles as Thomas Mofolo. Several critiques have been written on his works, especially on Chaka. The most important among these are Daniel Kunene's The Works of Thomas Mofolo (Summaries and Critiques) and Tekateka's A Critical Literary Survey of Thomas Mofolo's Writings. The latter dissertation is the most profound attempt and it gives a detailed appreciation of Mofolo's style of writing and the quality of his charac-

terization. However, it will be necessary for our purpose to relate Mofolo's works to his time, examine the relationship between his socio-economic-political environment and the quality of the contents of his works, and how the author himself relates to these.

Mofolo was a man of his time, the time when christianity was beginning to make an impinge on African minds. His world was beginning to split into two--the African background and christiandom. Doubts about traditional values were beginning to cloud the judgement of many people. The christian God existed side by side with the tribal gods. At first Mofolo took a firm stand--a total rejection of traditional practices and complete acceptance of the new things that had reached Lesotho. This was in line with the Missionaries' objectives, and thus Mofolo received much encouragement. Achievement was assessed by religious writings whose main objective was to win Lesotho over to christianity.

Mofolo understood the people of his time. They were also going through the same "religious revolution". Therefore Mofolo, in his first two books, Moeti oa Bochabela and Pitseng, made an appeal to the religious conceptions and feelings of his audience. His tone and manner are those of the pulpit. This prompted Tekateka to say:

> These are novels of contemporary social, religous and domestic life, the interest of which

> depends upon the doings of people in a familiar setting. The world of his works is not the world of romance, but of contemporary Lesotho with her types, manners, foibles affections, etc. In this way Mofolo initiated a fresh movement towards a modern novel of characters and manners.[17]

Moeti oa Bo-chabela was published in 1907. This book is about an upright figure, Fekisi, who was disturbed and hurt by the corruption, adultery, murder, jealousy and dishonesty in Lesotho. He was a complete opposite of the evil people of his time, people in "utter darkness, at the time when nations were devouring each other like beasts of the veld."[18] He marveled at the wonder of creation, and asked profound questions about the existence of things and the Creator. When Fekisi learnt that his people came from Ntswanatsatsi, and that God had deserted them because of their corruption, he decided to leave his people and seek God. His journey was full of hardships and dangers, but he was saved by white sailors who took him with them to their country in the East where God was feared. Fekisi received instruction, was baptised and later died in the temple.

Some people have claimed that this allegory is based on The Pilgrim's Progress, but Tekateka has demonstrated

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[17]Tekateka, J.M.M.: Op. Cit., p. 94.

[18]My own translation; see Moeti oa Bo-chabela, Morija, 1951, p. 1.

well that the similarities between the two books are superficial. Fekisi, unlike his counterpart, Christian, was ill-prepared for the journey. He had no sword for protection, no provision, and no comforter. The writer has had to run to impossible situations in trying to save Fekisi from total destruction. Lions move away so that he may get food from their prey; dreams assure him of success and he wakes up to find men who help him to cross the ocean. Everything around Fekisi is unreal; it happens by chance. Fekisi is not a true character; he is, as Tekateka rightly points out, an image of mankind. His existence is symbolic. Phakwane, a notorious drunkard and murderer, is the opposite of Fekisi. In this book he represents all the evil things and he is just not an individual. According to Tekateka, in Moeti oa Bo-chabela, society is depicted and the author is not interested in the inner developments of character.

Life is presented as a struggle, and for man to reach self-realization, he must persevere like Fekisi. Like Fekisi, he must have a strong will power. Direct comments by the author on his characters destroy the effect of the book. Fekisi, Phakwane and Sebati are seen only in the eyes of the author. Thus the readers are deprived of their right to evaluate the experiences of characters. However, it should be realised that Mofolo's objective was not to probe into the inner life of the individual characters. He dealt

with types to teach a moral lesson. Fekisi's adventures explain Mofolo's religious lesson. The whole story is a loosely bound series of separate adventures revolving around Fekisi. The adventures follow no particular sequence; except for a few fantastic happenings in the book, e.g. Fekisi's confrontation with serpents, his fight with lions and escapes, there is no suspense. Brilliant and really captivating descriptions save this book from being a completely dull story.

Mofolo's attitude to his audience determines his stylistic features in Moeti oa Bochabela. Right from the beginning of the story he is talking directly to his audience. His story is going to develop by narration as if he is telling a traditional story. The writer describes Fekisi and events need not be rendered in action. The contents of the story have changed, for, instead of material to exalt traditional culture and gods, Mofolo is crusading for christianity. His reverence and awe for christianity inspired Mofolo to condemn the old ways of his people and preach the "new" light. He opens his book thus:

> Lefifing le letsho, le reng tsho, mehleng ya ha ditjhaba di sa ntsane di jana jwale ka dibatana tsa naha, motho o ne a le teng ya bitswang Fekisi. E, ke re motho; e seng motho sebopeho, le ho tseba ho bua feela. empa motho dipuong, motho diketsong, motho mekgweng yohle; motho sephiring le pontsheng, motho bohlokong le thabong boiketlong le bothateng, tlaleng le naleng. (Moeti oa Bochabela, 1951, p. 1) (Changed orthography by me).

(In the darkest darkness, darkness of darkness, during the era when nations still devoured one another like beasts of the veld, there was a man named Fekisi. Yea, I say a man, a human being; not a human being merely by his physique and ability to speak, but a human being in all his deeds, a person in private and in public, a person in hardships and pleasure/joy, comfort and difficulties, in hunger and in plenty.)

Immediately the reader is thrown into attributes by which Fekisi's future activities will be judged. No further development of Fekisi is necessary because the above quotation and the following three paragraphs of the book describe Fekisi fully. The use of ideophones e.g. Lefifi le letsho, le reng tsho, similes, repetition of the word motho, contrasts, comparison and opposites in the above passage give captivating force and vivid meaning to the opening story. The reader is carried away by the graphic description, and bothered less by the super perfect caricature that is presented before them.

The following paragraphs of the opening chapter give a setting that will enable the reader to place other archtypes of the book such as Phakwane. The author addresses his readers directly:

Ditaba tsa motho eo re mmolelang, re itse ke tsa kgale, tsa boholoholo, mehleng ya ha lefatshe la Afrika le ne le sa aparetswe ke lefifi le leholo, lefifi le tshabeng, leo tsohle tsa lefifi di etswang ka lona.....mehleng ya ha ho ne ho se borena bo tiileng,....ere motho a robetse, a

tsoswe ke lerumo....kapa a tsoswe ke mollo, ntlo eo a leng ho yona e se e e-tjha. (Moeti, p. 1)

(The story of the person we are talking about, is ancient history, the story of olden times, during the era when the land/continent of Africa was clothed in utter darkness, fearful darkness in which all things of darkness are done.....times when there was no strong kingship/government.... a sleeping man would be awakened by the spear or fire, a house in which he was sleeping burning.)

Mofolo can create an atmosphere of anxiety, fear, insecurity and despair. Close descriptions and fear-inspiring word-images in the above passage and throughout the first chapter are some of the redeeming features of Mofolo's style. He was a great story-teller. Yet the book is still a shallow presentation of fact and fantasy. A succession of unmotivated loosely bound episodes makes dull reading at times.

Mofolo is a master in the use of techniques of traditional story-tellers and baroki (praise poets) such as metaphors, repetition of words and phrases, unusual constructions and word-order, concise and to-the-point sentences to describe rapid movement and heighten fear, comparison and contrasts for a full effect of an experience. Throughout Moeti oa Bochabela the reader, if not fascinated by anything else, is captured by Mofolo's lyrical style. Among the best passages is the touching description of Fekisi's departure from home, Fekisi o tloha hae hahabo,

and the musical praises of his cattle. Extention suffixes are reduplicated, verb stems and descriptive words are doubled to capture the effect, of distance, time, to create anxiety and a feeling of uncertainty:

> Yare ha a tswela ka ntle ho motse a ema-ema;letswalo la mo re he....a tloha ka saole....o ne a tadimile pele feela, botjhabela.....A tshetshemela, a tshetshemela, a titima jwale ka phoofolo ya naha, etswe letshweya o ne a se na lona. (Moeti, p. 37, underlining my own)
>
> (When he got outside the village, he stood for a while; his conscience bothered him greatly, he ran fast.....he was facing ahead of him, towards the east. He hopped around, ran fast and faster like a wild animal, moreover he had stamina.)

Proverbs, short and precise sentences, use of synonyms, alliteration and repetition of words to intensify the image are among beautiful stylistic features of Mofolo in Moeti oa Bochabela.

The concluding paragraph of the above-mentioned chapter is particularly beautiful to illustrate the author's style of writing:

> O ile, o ile, o ile, bosiu ba mo sela a le kwana, hole hole, mme le hona a sa bea butle. Ba esa a kgile diphoka, a meneletse mohlankana wa pholo. Ba esa a kene tseleng, a eya moo a sa tsebeng teng. Ba esa a kene tseleng, a batla ho loka, a ya batla modimo. Ba esa a baleha, a balehela bokgopo bo atileng, a balehela lefatshe leo ho loka ho leng siyo ho lona. Pelo yahae e ne e batla, e ne e bala, e duma ntho e le kgolo. (Moeti.... p. 38)

(He travelled for a long distance; darkness/night cleared and found him in far off lands, even then he had not reduced his speed. The night cleared with our young man soaked in frost. It dawned and found him on the way/road, not knowing where he was going. It dawned while he was still looking for righteousness, looking for God. It dawned with him running away, running away from the unrighteous land. His heart was searching, asking questions, longing for something great.)

Note the repetition of o ile, o ile, o ile (literaly, he went and went and went) and its effect on the distance covered and Fekisi's determination. Ba e-sa (literaly, it (the night) cleared) is repeated for the same purpose. The close description of lefatshe (land) and explanation given by the use of the applied form balehela (running away from) help to demonstrate Fekisi's determination to avoid corruption and evil. The anxiety, fear, insecurity, loss of guidance, uncertainty and longing in Fekisi's heart are summarized in:

Pelo yahae e ne e batla, e ne e bala, e duma ntho e le kgolo.

(His heart was searching, asking questions, longing for something great.)

Note the repetition of the subjectival concord referring to pelo (heart).

Despite some of the brilliant passages given above, Moeti oa Bochabela is still a pulpit through which Mofolo warns the Sotho to leave their culture, value systems and

religion to embrace christianity. Lesotho is synonymous with utter darkness and all evil things, whereas progress, according to Mofolo, is synonymous with a white God with long straight hair and sailors who saved Fekisi. This was a natural response if we remember that the early Sotho converts reacted emotionally to their new faith without discrimination, and also that the mission schools had done everything to discredit Sotho culture and values. One needs to read the earliest Sotho Readers in Lesotho for beginners to understand the systematic annihilation of self-confidence in things traditional which the Missionaries permitted. It might not have been done for sinister intentions. Perhaps the Missionaries' over zealousness to propagate christianity was responsible. Albert Gerard, quoted earlier, suggests that Moeti oa Bochabela might have prompted, as a reaction, the glorification of olden times of Lesotho in Segoete's Raphepheng. Segoete, through his mouthpiece, Raphepheng, a traditional Mosotho, gives a different picture of Lesotho from the one Mofolo paints in the following passage:

> Mehleng eo, mona o ne o jele setsi haholo. Ba nang le dintho ke bona ba neng ba patelwa ka sehloho seo re tswa se bolela. Matla e ne e le tokelo mehleng eo.....Nnete e ne e sa tsejwe lefatsheng, e ne e welwa. Ho bolaya e ne e se ntho e makallwang haholo.....Ho utswa, mahlong a ba bangata, e ne e se ho utswa, e ne e le ho iphedisa. Sebe sa nama e ne e se sebe, e ne e

le sebe feela ha motho a tshwerwe. Morena wa setjhaba o ne a etsa ka batho kamoo a ratang kateng, a bolaya bao a ba hloileng ka ntle ho molato, kapa a ba tlatlapa dintho tsa bona.[19]

(In those days jealousy was widespread. Those with large herds were the ones who were often attacked with the severest cruelty we have just related. Right was might and might was right in those days. Truth was unknown and one seldom found it. Murder was not something shocking. In the eyes of many, theft was a way of living. Adultery was not sin except when one was caught redhanded. The king did as he pleased with his subjects, killing those he hated without cause, or usurping other people's properties.)

In the above quotation there is no question that Mofolo was speaking for the new religion and advocating a complete break with the past.

Mofolo's Moeti oa Bochabela initiated a national Lesotho creative writing. In 1910 another book, Pitseng, came out of Mofolo's pen. By 1960 this book had gone through nine impressions. The book centres around happenings in a Lesotho village named Pitseng; the selfless love of a teacher-preacher named Mr. Katse and his favourite pupils, Alfred Phakwe and Aria Sebaka. It is a book about love and marriage; perfect and unfeigning love defined by Mofolo in terms of his new religion.

A preacher, soon to be nicknamed Mr. Katse by his

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[19]Moeti wa Botjhabela, p. 2. Note I used the official Southern Sotho orthography of the Department of Bantu Education in the quotations.

pupils because of his hat, came to bring light to Pitseng, a heathen centre. Right at the beginning Mofolo throws us into the heart of Pitseng with a forceful description of this village of contrasts. Note the comparison and contrasting of images in the following passage:

> At the time of writing about Pitseng, Lesotho was already in the midst of progress, yet Pitseng is still in utter darkness of traditional Sesotho; Lesotho was a time of light, Pitseng was primitive; Lesotho was a time of schools, Pitseng pursued circumcisions and beer drinking; this means that at the time of progress, they (people of Pitseng) were in the heart of darkness and stupidity; to them it was night in the day.[20]

The above passage is a straight-forward yet graphic description of the village Pitseng. The comparison and contrasts above give a vivid picture of primitive Pitseng as opposed to other progressive villages in Lesotho. Everything evil happened in this village according to Mofolo, and the writer takes time to describe senseless faction fights, callous murders and wife-beatings. Yet there is hope for Pitseng since a new day and life styles are about to dawn for it:

> Empa wa Pitseng ya fumanehileng o ne a le lekgatheng la ho fumana leruo le leholo; wa Pitseng ya hlorang o ne a le lekgatheng la ho tshediseha wa Pitseng ya ntseng a le lefifing o

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[20]Mofolo, T.: Pitseng, Morija, p. 9.

ne a lekgatheng la ho tjhabelwa ke lesedi.....
mehla ya lefifi le bothoto bo boholo e se e
feta.....ka baka leo kgobang matshwafo hanyenyane,
lona ba Pitseng. (Pitseng, Morija, 1960, p. 9)

(But the poor at Pitseng were about to receive great riches; the persecuted ones in Pitseng were about to be comforted; the one in great darkness/ ignorance at Pitseng was about to receive light.... the days of darkness and ignorance are already passing by....for that reason be comforted/encouraged for a little while, you (dwellers) of Pitseng.)

In all his beautifully descriptive passages, Mofolo balances one statement with another, one word is placed against its antonym, one image against another. The total effect is thus a vivid and captivating mental image.

The bringer of light and life to this village, Pitseng, is Mr. Katse. It was his main objective to spread the gospel and true love by exemplary conduct. Already his kindness and love were manifested when he saved three drunk men from possible death by freezing. He sacrificed his own life to fetch them in the cold snow on a dark night, among rugged mountains and canyons. His pupils loved and respected him. His sermons were based on genuine love and not the flirtations he observed around him, even among his pupils. Katse was attracted to two youngsters, Alfred Phakwe and Aria Sebaka, who did not indulge in playful love affairs. He wished to see these two getting married when their time came, and, in many indirect ways, he tried to

make them "discover" each other. Alfred Phakwe at high school in the Cape, received letters from his old mentor in which Aria Sebaka was always sending her greetings.

At school Alfred Phakwe still kept aloof from youthful pastimes. He met other boys and girls from different parts of South Africa who were evil in nature. The author digresses to explain their behaviour at school. Tekateka explains fully the treatment of love in Pitseng. He has demonstrated how Mofolo hated the hypocritical love of Milton Thotho, the frivolous and purposeless love of Linganiso Diniso, and the fanciful and materialistic love of Ioda Msimang. Only Aria Sebaka and Alfred Phakwe were groomed for real and meaningful love. Even James Moraka's sincere but grudging love, according to Kunene, is not what Mofolo respects.

When Mofolo had no more use for Mr. Katse, he allows him to disappear suddenly from the book. Mr. Katse is denied even the company of his former pupil at his death bed. He dies away from Pitseng, the very village he helped to improve. Alfred steps into Katse's boots in Pitseng. He is an upright character like his former teacher. In a rather unconvincing fashion, Alfred and Aria, the young people who had never loved in their lives, fall madly in love; they marry and live happily thereafter.

Pitseng still has many characteristics in common

with Moeti oa Bochabela. Like its predecessor, Pitseng, deals with types of virtue and evil; its message is still didactic. Like Fekisi, the "hero" of Moeti, Aria Sebaka and Alfred Phakwe are presented as near perfect earthly angels that do not indulge in love affairs and are horrified by the evil nature of their compeers such as Ioda Msimang or Milton Thotho. They dream right dreams about each others names and virtue. Every happening in their lives is mechanically planned by the author. Alfred Phakwe and Aria Sebaka are merely puppets of the author. Too many comments of the author on their moral conduct mars this book.

In composition Pitseng is slightly different from Moeti oa Bochabela in that Mofolo attempted to give a coherent story revolving around one central theme of love and marriage. However, the plot was clumsily handled. In fact the book has no real plot as such; for example Mr. Katse is slightly connected with the love theme. Too much use of coincidence in matters connected with Alfred and Aria, makes one feel that their sudden discovery of each other at the end of the book was an accident unconvincingly arranged by the author. A series of loosely connected stories around Milton Thotho, Ioda Msimang, Linganiso Diniso or James Moraka, and Katse's death are forced into the main story.

The poetic style of Mofolo can be observed in

several pages of the book e.g. the return of Alfred Phakwe to Pitseng under similar weather conditions of Mr. Katse and his family's arrival, Lesotho and the village around Pitseng, especially the description on their wedding day:

> Alfred a fumana sefahleho sa Aria se le sekgunwana-kgu-nwana-kgunwana, se butsweditse kahare jwaleka lehapu; marama ahae a le bonolo, a le borethe, e le marama a nnete a morwetsana wa Mosotho; mahlo ahae a le bonolo ho fetisa a bile a sekisekile ho ona, mme a tletse thabo e fetisang. (Pitseng, p. 167)
>
> (Alfred found the complexion of Aria's face to be red--beautiful and admirable; it was as red as the pith of a well-ripe watermelon. Her cheeks were soft and smooth, like the cheeks of a genuine young Mosotho maiden; her eyes were soft and humble like those of a pigeon; they were of a beautiful black and white colour and droplets of water were gathering in them, and they were full of great joy.)

Mofolo's similes in the above passage are not dry and worn out. His use of reduplicated stems and graphic relative stem such as sekgunwana-kgunwana-kgunwana; sekisekile; thabo e fetisang and lehapu le butswitseng, create a lasting beautiful image. Note especially the effect of the triplicated adjectival stem--not just red, but also beautiful, captivating and admirable.

Mofolo's descriptive power is further observed in the description of nature and animals on the wedding day of Alfred and Aria. He used short sentences to capture the swift flight of birds; he duplicated verb stems to echo

their voices. His descriptive words and figures of speech are the typical fresh and vivid Mofolo creations:

> Alfred a tadima dikgomo tsena ha di feta ho bona; a boela a tadima marallaneng a ka mose; a tadima lehlakanyana le letala, le letsho, le haufi le bona pela noka, mme a bona dithaha di tutumolotseha ka dihlopha tse kgolo, di fofa-fofa, di boela di dula. A bona tale-tale e tlala, e bina-bina pina ya yona, e boela e dula fatshe; a bona nonyana e phatshwa e tsamayang le dithaha, e tloha e ntse e bobola, e pota lehlaka..... Dithaha tsa boela tsa tutumolotseha, tsa feta haufi le bona, mme yare ha di le kaekae tsa re hlana-hlana, tsa tla feta le ho bona ka lebelo le leholo ho boela lehlakeng, ho le jwaleka hoja hoo ke tumediso eo di ba dumedisang ka yona. (Pitseng, p. 166)
>
> (Alfred looked with admiration at these cattle that were passing near them; again he looked at the ridges beyond; he stared at the dark green reeds along the river near them, and he saw finches rising suddenly, flying around and once more settling down. He saw the green sunbird flying all over and singing its song and then settling down; he saw a greyish bird which was accompanying the finches rising, chirping lowly and going round the reeds.....again the finches took off suddenly, passed near them and, at some distance away, they turned round suddenly and passed near them at great speed to return to the reeds, as if this was a kind of greeting given them.)

The writer brings out Alfred's admiration for the scenery around him by the repetition of tadima (to stare at for a long time with admiration) and bona. Mofolo seems to find many uses for reduplicated stems; to express admiration and beauty as in fofa-fofa, or bina-bina; exceeding beauty and intensity as in kgunwana-kgunwana-kgunwana: sudden action

and speed as in hlanahlana; or to give the effect of distance as in kae-kae, etc.

In Pitseng, unlike in Moeti oa Bo-chabela, Mofolo seems to have re-evaluated his cultural heritage and examined his new religion objectively and critically. He is still for European values and modernization, yet he looks with pride and satisfaction at his own Sotho culture. He loves and respects the method of finding a bride for a young Sotho man, the permanent and respectful Sotho family of old:

> Motho ha a bona bana ba Pitseng, a ka ba a makala hore na bana bana mokgwa ona ba o nka kae, ha moruti wa bona, Mr. Katse, a kgesa lefereho le jwalo hampempe. Ke hona moo bahedene ba bolelang nnete ha ba re, tse mpe di tswa Makgoweng, di kene Lesotho ka majakane, hobane mokgwa ona wa hore mohlankana a itherele tsa lenyalo le morwetsana ba nnotshi, o qadile ka ona majakane. (Pitseng, p. 26)
>
> (When one looks at the children at Pitseng, one wonders where they got this behaviour from, because their teacher, Mr. Katse, criticises and discourages this kind of love-playing. The heathens are telling the truth when they say the evil influences (found among the Basotho) come from the whites and come into Lesotho with the christian converts because this habit whereby a young man decides independently upon marriage, consulting only with his girl friend, started with the converts.) (Translation partly by the present writer and partly by Dan Kunene.)

He points out for the first time, the evils that came with modernization even at schools, the very centres

of civilization. In modern days Mofolo begins to see new evils, darkness and ignorance. Lesotho and Sotho customs are no longer portrayed as in "Lefifing le letsho, le reng tsho....," (In the heart of darkness, complete darkness....) so emphasised in Moeti oa Bochabela. With the coming of christianity to Lesotho many good Sotho practises were lost--and Mofolo notes this fact.

In Pitseng, Mofolo still addresses the reader directly with his moral lessons. Chapters end with moral persuasions like:

> Hana botahwa ke ntho e mpe hakaakang! Le tholwana ya bona e baba hakaakang!
>
> (How terrible/evil drunkenness is! And how bitter is the fruit!)

Despite its clumsy plot and other limitations described, Pitseng was a pointer to the future development of Mofolo as a writer and to the new artistic form in Chaka. Here Mofolo was already making an attempt at presenting a unified, coherent book, although it was still hard for him to link the events together in a convincing manner. The story, or little stories for that matter, still hang loosely around and outside the individual characters.

Mofolo's masterpiece, Chaka, will be examined in the next chapter.

CHAPTER V

THOMAS MOFOLO AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF MATURE FICTION IN SOUTHERN SOTHO

In his THE WORKS OF THOMAS MOFOLO: Summaries and Critiques, Daniel Kunene rightly notes that in Chaka Mofolo reached his highest creative genius. Chaka is a sophisticated novel and a masterpiece. In this book Mofolo probed into the inner lives of his characters and abandoned, to a large extent, the dominant feature of his earlier works--subservience of the character to the ideas and message of the author. It will be demonstrated in the following pages that Chaka has a well developed plot; events are tightly knit together and follow one another in a definite sequence. The real world of people and the world of the supernatural are well linked together. Historical events and the author's fictional creation are well-blended. There is a definite relationship between cause and effect, and the character's actions are fully motivated. Magic, horror, fear and anxiety help build the suspense which develops Mofolo's narrative.

Events follow one another in a definite order. A minor chief of the Fenu Lwenja, Senzangakhona, seduces a

young woman, Nandi, from Ncube's village--a crime punishable by death; worse still because it is committed by someone who is looked upon as the custodian of tradition, customs, laws and the preserver of the tribe. Thus Chaka, the product of illegitimacy, is to be followed by this stigma which transforms him into a callous individual.

In his excitement at having an heir at last, Senzangakhona reported the birth of Chaka to his senior chief Jobe. This action is significant in that later when Senzangakhona's three senior wives had had their own sons, Mfokazana, Dingana and Mhlangana, and were attempting to disinherit Chaka, Dingiswayo, Jobe's son, refused to recognize any other heir but Chaka Senzangakhona, a cowardly man, disgraced Nandi by sending her back to her people and disowned his own son, Chaka, for fear that his evil secret may be revealed by his jealous wives. The village and Chaka's age group ridiculed and abused him since his illegitimacy was known to a few people.

Chaka learns to fight and defend himself because of this ill-treatment. Nandi finds a woman doctor to "strengthen" Chaka. Chaka becomes famous over night. He kills a lion single-handed when big men have run away. The skin is sent to the senior chief, now Dingiswayo. Dingiswayo longs to meet Chaka personally but his father does not send him. A river serpent meets Chaka. He learns of

his doctor's death--and the promise of a new one, Isanusi.

Chaka's wondrous deeds continue. He kills a feared hyena that had taken Mfokazana's girl friend--in his presence but did nothing. This brought praises on Chaka from the village girls and shame on the cowardly Mfokazana and Dingana. In his anger Senzangakhona commands that Chaka be killed. Thus begins Chaka's run from his village, his father's callousness and hatred. Dingiswayo fined Senzangakhona many head of cattle and ordered him to find Chaka. The village mourns for Chaka; there is commotion in the village and animals add their eerie cries to the already fearful and tense atmosphere.

In his wanderings Chaka meets his great doctor, Isanusi--a very strange character full of treachery, deceit, kindness and love at the same time. Isanusi feeds Chaka's ambition for greatness. He is strengthened by strong medicines that would make him blood-thirsty. Isanusi leads Chaka to Dingiswayo's village but he does not go in after giving false information to Chaka. Dingiswayo welcomes Chaka with great joy. He is introduced to the army and there distinguishes himself by killing a feared mad man.

Isanusi provides Chaka with two servants, Malunga and Ndlebe, to serve as his "ears and eyes." Chaka begins to change. For the first time he lies to his mother and

Dingiswayo about these characters. Malunga and Ndlebe help-Chaka defeat Dingiswayo's arch-enemy, Zwide. This pleased Dingiswayo and Chaka was put in charge of the whole army.

After Senzangakhona's death Mfokazana is enthroned. Dingiswayo refuses to recognize him. He gives Chaka an army to claim his rights by force. Mfokazana is killed and Chaka becomes chief--a step nearer his ambition. Chaka continues to win wars for Dingiswayo and his fame rises.

Zwide surprises Dingiswayo and the latter is taken captive. Dingiswayo is killed and the army proclaims Chaka their new chief. Zwide is destroyed and Chaka begins the unification of tribes, to be given the name AmaZulu. The new name came at the suggestion of Isanusi who had advised Chaka--although "jokingly"--to sacrifice his beloved, Noliwa, Dingiswayo's sister, for greatness. Chaka chooses greatness and fame and kills Noliwa. Thus began Chaka's complete transformation:

> Ho tloha lefung la Noliwa, Chaka a fetoha hampe sebopehong sa mmele wahae le sebopehong sa kahare, sa pelo, sa merero le diketso...tlhasenyana ya botho e neng e sa saletse ya tima, ya re lore mafifing a tshabehang a pelo yahae; kutlwisiso ya ho tseba ho kgetha ntwa ho polao, ho fenetha, ya fela, ya fella ruri; ho yena dintho kaofela tsa tshwana, a di talima ka mokgwa o le mong. Taba ya bobedi boyena ba e-shwa, ba shwella ruri, ha kena bophoofolo ka ho tlala; hobane leha e ne e ntse e le motho ya sehloho pele, empa e ne e le motho, sehloho sahae e le sa botho. Motho ya tsholotseng madi a fetang ahae ka borena, ya tsholotseng madi a motho ya kang Noliwa, ho a utlwahala hore ho yena

madi a bafo a tla tshwana hantle le a diphoofolo tseo re di hlabang. (Chaka, 1957, p! 119)

(From Noliwa's death, Chaka changed greatly; physically, mentally, emotionally, in his intentions and deeds...the little light of humanity, kindness, which still remained within him died completely in the fearful darkness of his heart; understanding and knowledge to discriminate between war and murder, manslaughter, disappeared completely. To him all things were alike; he adopted the same attitude to all of them. Secondly, his conscience died completely, beastly behaviour entered him fully; for, although he had always been a cruel person, yet he was still a human being, his cruelty was that of beings. To one who has spilled royal blood greater than his own, who has spilled blood of one such as Noliwa, it is understandable that to him the blood of commoners would be exactly like that of animals we slaughter.)

The above passage is one of several beautiful and captivating passages in this book which reveal the lyrical style of Mofolo. Chaka's physical, mental and complete personality transformation is clearly portrayed by the use of ideophones, close qualification by means of relative construction, repetition of certain constructions for the full effect e.g. "ya tsholotseng madi a fetang ahae ka borena, ya tsholotseng madi a motho ya kang Noliwa..., boyena ba e-shwa, ba shwella ruri." The long sentences in this passage have a particular effect of sustaining and reenforcing Chaka's transformation. Mofolo contrasts one statement with another for a vivid description e.g. "hobane leha e ne e ntse e le motho ya sehloho pele, empa e ne e le

motho, sehloho sahae e le sa botho." (For, although he had always been a cruel person, his cruelty was that of human beings.)

Chaka transformed his new nation completely. Everything, from games, dances, conversation, to serious military training assumed military character. Neighboring tribes are attacked, people are massacred in cold blood, bad singers at feasts are killed since they spoil the festivities; good singers are killed since they make people cry. The downfall of Chaka begins. He begins to have bad dreams; he sleeps in the veld like a beast because he, like other tyrants, is afraid for his life. He begins to see the multitudes he has massacred. Chaka is assasinated by his brothers, Dingaan and Mhlangana.

Events are interconnected in this book; the previous happening is a preparation for the next event. For example, Chaka's accession to Senzangakhona's and Dingiswayo's thrones are predicted early in the book. Chaka becomes a great warrior. Even when Senzangakhona is pressured by his jealous wives to disinherit Chaka, he does not report any change to his senior chief. Chaka's fantastic feats endear him to everybody including Dingiswayo, who later gives Chaka an army to claim his father's throne. He is raised to a position of power in the army. The reader is given a logical and convincing picture of the interac-

tion between Chaka and his environment. The book is an excellent study of Chaka's psychological make-up. Mofolo's artistic skill enabled him to mix fact, fantasy, witchcraft, horror, mystery and suspense to create an intense and frightening atmosphere. Tekateka is impressed by Mofolo's masterpiece and he observes that:

> In Chaka we witness dramatic self-revelation of a character through speech and action. All the characters are drawn through what they do and say; what they are said to think and feel, and not by direct comments upon them from their creator. This is a sign of maturity on the part of Mofolo that he can employ so ably the dramatically revealing possibilities of speech and action in depicting his characters. Their speeches and actions do reveal their moral dilemmas and conflict .....This method of characterization operates at deeper levels than the purely descriptive one which touches the external part of a man.[21]

This is a summary of the structure, theme and expression of Chaka, which is further supported by Gerard when he states:

> What is less expected, however, in view of the strictures legitimately levelled at the deficiencies of most modern African fiction both with regard to character depiction and plot organization, is that Mofolo's research and meditation and genius should have produced a work that is remarkable for clarity of its structure, the sharpness of its psychological insight, and the depth of its ethical approach.[22]

The earlier critics on Chaka based their arguments on the

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[21] Tekateka, J.M.M.: Op. Cit., p. 78.

[22] Gerard, p. 117.

stereotypes that had been allowed about the Zulu monarch.

Mofolo seems to say that Chaka was a victim of circumstances. A product of illegitimacy, Chaka, was rejected and abused by his father, age group, community, and had to flee to save his skin. The forces around him shaped his psychological make up. In the world around him, he had not found love, justice, and mercy. Therefore, he vowed that he would not know these human qualities. He would rule the world according to its standards and would do as he pleased, killing or hurting those he so desired to kill or hurt. The writer persuades the reader to sympathise with Chaka during his earlier hardships. The reader finds himself deploring the cowardly action of Senzangakhona of disowning his own son and disgracing Nandi.

Chaka's rise to power began at Dingiswayo's Kraal. Isanusi, the great witchdoctor, and his henchmen, Malunga and Ndlebe, made Chaka great. After the fall of his brother Mfokazana and the death of Dingiswayo, Chaka became the undisputed monarch of a new powerful nation, AmaZulu. Chaka chose the name for he wanted to be above the heavens. A reign of terror began and blood flowed freely from innocent souls. The Zulu monarch ceased to be human after killing the woman of his heart, Noliwa. Mofolo intensifies the horror with large scale massacres, talking graves, strange sounds, wild moans, water serpents and the magical powers

of witchdoctors. The purposeful use of words and lively expressions to intensify the gloomy, eerie and frightening atmosphere. Mofolo is a real master in keeping his readers in suspense and captivating their minds. The following lines will illustrate:

> Kweetseng eo metsi a le matshwana-tshwana a re tsho! Ka mose ho noka, malebana le moo a leng teng, empa hona metsing, e le lehaha le leholo, mohohoma o motsho o lefifi, o fellang moo motho a sa boneng, hara metsi empa morapameng. Thapolla eo ya bodiba e ne e sa bonahale moo e fellang teng, hobane tlasana ho yona, noka e ne e kgurumeditswe ka mahlakoreng a mabedi ke lehlaka le teteaneng. Moru o ne o kwahetse letswapo la leralla, o bile o tlilo ikgohla ka noka, mme le ona o teteane haholo ....E ne e le bobeng moo ho tshabehang le motshehare, moo motho a neng a ke ke a ba a itlhatswa teng a le mong; ke moo ho neng ho lokela tikoloshe feela. Chaka o ne a itlhatswa teng a le mong, hobane e mpa e le Chaka.[23]
>
> (At that whirlpool the water was pitch black, real dark. Beyond the river, opposite where he was, yet still in the water, there was a large cave, a gaping hole, dark hole, ending beyond human sight, right in the water, yet on an incline. That large deep whirlpool did not show its limits, i.e. one could not see the end of this great pool, because a little below, the river's lower ridges were covered with very dense reeds on both sides of the river and across; a thick forest covered the hill slope right down to the river banks. It was a dense forest forming a canopy. It was such a frightful scene even during the day that a person could not go to bathe alone. Only a tikoloshe (some mythical witchcraft creature) could go. Chaka bathed there alone, for he was Chaka. (Translation)

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[23] Mofolo, T.: Chaka, Morija, 1957, p. 19.

The above passage is full of synonyms which the author has accumulated and concentrated at one spot to intensify the eerie atmosphere. Note the use of "black--real dark, pitch black; whirlpool, real depth; beyond--opposite; large cave--gaping dark hole." One synonym runs into another for clarification.

Mofolo is fond of contrasting images e.g. "right in the water, yet on an incline;" "opposite where he was, yet still in the water." These stylistic features and Mofolo's detailed description of the scenery help to capture the mind of the reader. The above passage further demonstrates that Mofolo had mastered his writing skill. Tekateka observes that:

> ...in his last work Mofolo shows maturity. From the novels of contemporary, social, religious and domestic life, to the tale that seeks to give both a sense of terror and a sense of the past, Mofolo makes a startling transition. He now gives shape and form to his attitude towards life by means of the actions, thoughts and expressions of his characters. He resorts to the gradual unfolding of the inner man; and he possesses even the secret of making his historical characters vital and human.[24]

His characters are not mere statues and puppets in his hands. For example, he has recreated, and relived the experiences of Senzangakhona, Chaka, Dingaan, Dingiswayo and Zwide. The story unfolds with the direct involvement of

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[24]Tekateka, p. 97.

characters. Thus there is in Chaka a direct link and communication between the characters and the readers. The reader sees the characters placed in different situations and acting as would be expected under similar circumstances. As Tekateka rightly concludes, Mofolo's characterization "shows a remarkable development which must be regarded as a stage in the evolution of the genuine novel in our literature."[25] These lively and convincing characters are shown in relation to their environment. Thus Mofolo ranks with the greatest literary figures.

Chaka[26] was a tragic hero. He fell at the hands of his half-brothers, Dingaan and Mhlangana because of his inherent weaknesses. His unquenchable desire to become greater than any other monarch, and unreasonable desire for revenge. His anger was carried out on society. Mofolo has clearly demonstrated how a person's psychological make up can be affected by forces in, around and about him. We have seen Chaka developing from a brave and innocent young man, becoming a vagabond, running away from his father and society through his father's social evil, becoming bitter and desiring revenge against his tormentors, to a skilful

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[25] Tekateka, p. 98.

[26] Chaka's name has been spelt in many different ways by several writers. It has appeared as Tshaka, Tjhaka or Shaka, the latter being the proper Zulu name. We chose Mofolo's spelling.

wise and yet cruel ruler. As a tyrant Chaka's throne was not secure. He feared his offspring, popular generals and would-be pretenders to his throne. Thus these were mercilessly killed. Nandi[27] was killed for having tried to save one of Chaka's offsprings.

The human traits of Nandi, Senzangakhona, Dingiswayo and Zwide are clearly brought out. Senzangakhona is a timid man who is willing to sacrifice his wife and son to cover his own crime against society. Dingiswayo is a mighty and kindhearted ruler. He takes pity on a vagabond Chaka; he spares the life of his arch-enemy Zwide. Yet Dingiswayo is very wise. He can read people's minds. He is not easily deceived by Malunga's and Ndlebe's outward appearance. Nandi, like all meaningful mothers, works hard to protect her son medicinally and otherwise. She spends sleepless nights to make her son great.

Other characters in the book such as Isanusi, Malunga and Ndlebe are not real beings. Kunene and Tekateka are agreed that in these people Mofolo "has incarnated attributes and personality traits of Chaka himself. Chaka's confrontation with Isanusi in the wilderness is

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[27] It should be noted that it is a historical fact that Nandi died of diarrhea and not at the hands of her son. However, the author can modify his facts to suit his purposes.

Chaka's confrontation with Chaka--no more no less."[28] Isanusi merely reiterates Chaka's ambitions and desires. Malunga is the majestic Chaka himself. Ndiebe is the suspicious nature of Chaka, the tyrant who must seek or suspect plots against himself at all times. Tekateka indicates the importance of the supernatural in Chaka. These supernatural beings, as we have indicated, add to the horror, the dramatic movement and spirit of the book.

Understanding and representation of human characters is important in a novel. In his first two books, Mofolo's concern was to depict moral characters. Thus his characterization was determined by his concern for moral being. All his characters in these two books, it has been said, share in common moral as well as religious consciousness. Compare Mr. Katse and Fekisi, also Aria Sebaka and Alfred Phakwe. To them life was meaningful according to their religious beliefs--those of Mofolo himself. Inner conflicts are not satisfactorily resolved by Mofolo's earlier characters. Refer to Fekisi's problem and Alfred Phakwe's doubts about love. Yet in Chaka action, introspection, dialogue and very little authorial comments are modes of characterization that Mofolo employs.

In Chaka a further development of characterization

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[28]Kunene, D.: The Works of Thomas Mofolo, Occasional Paper no. 2, U.C.L.A., Los Angeles, p. 25.

is seen. Mofolo abandoned the outward and superficial descriptions for a more penetrating and meaningful revelation of the inner man. There is interaction between man and his environment. Therefore his portrayal was more realistic because it was a full development of personality. In this book Mofolo's characters unfold each others qualities, Minor characters come out clearly to build the hero. Tensions and conflicts in life are well portrayed. Therefore there is a dramatic self-revelation of characters through their actions and speeches. Daniel Kunene notes that:

> Chaka is much less of a sermon, much less of a propagation of the Gospel, than its predecessors, Moeti and Pitseng. Yet it has its own share of moralizing, and when Mofolo speaks of sin in this book, we know that he is speaking of sin in the Christian sense, and not of social sin in context of the social milieu which constitutes the setting for his story.[29]

But the reader still runs into moralising such as in the following passage. Mofolo intrudes in the story.

> Hana e bohloko hakaakang tholwana ya sebe, ha e le mona Senzangakhona a kgaohana le mosadi wahae eo a mo ratang, eo a mo nyetseng ka dikgomo tse mashome a mahlano a metso e mehlano, a bile a kgaohana le ngwana wahae Chaka, eo a qadileng ho bona mora ka yena, mme ho fetisa tseo a bile a tlamehile ho ba hlorisa.[30]

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[29]Kunene, D.: Op, Cit., p. 26.

[30]Chaka, Morija, 1957, p. 12.

(Oh, how bitter is the fruit of sin, for now Senzangakhona has to part with his loving wife, the one he has married with five and fifty herd of cattle; also, having to leave his own son, Chaka, his very first son, and above all, being forced to ill-treat them!)

Even in his fall Chaka is still great. His assassins run for their lives, even the beast of the veld cannot eat his corpse. Mofolo makes him the symbol of greatness. Kunene says:

> Mofolo's description of him in his last days, conveys this idea well. Even when he has become weak from lack of sleep and terror of his dreams, Mofolo still says of him with great admiration: 'He stood up, the lion of Zulu descent, the fearless beast of the wilds, but he stood up sapped of his strength, unable even to raise his mane. He stood up, the great elephant, but he stood up unsteady on his feet, deprived of his strength, breathing heavily.' And even when his body is already riddled with spears, when slowly and without anger he turns his face towards his assassins to speak with them, they run away, for he is still the lion, the elephant, of Zulu descent.[31]

Chaka's majesty is fully captured in the following passage:

> Chaka ha a utlwa marumo a kena mmeleng wahae, bakeng sa ho itwanela senna jwaleka Chaka, s reteleha butle, a tsoha borokong ba motshehare, ditorong tsa motshehare a ntse a tadimile. Ha a qala a reteleha, mahloko ahae a kgutsa, sefahleho sahae sa boela ya eba sona, mme Dingana le Mhlangana ka ho mo tseba ba pepetlolotsa, ba baleha.[32]

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[31]Kunene, D.: Op, Cit., p. 28.

[32]Chaka, Morija, 1957, p. 156.

(When Chaka felt the spears piercing his body, instead of fighting back like a man he turned around gradually; he woke up from his day sleep, from his daydreaming. The moment he turned, his pains ceased and his face brightened once more; knowing him so well, Dingaan and Mhlangana turned unceremoniously and ran for their lives.)

Mofolo is continually assessing Chaka and thus making the reader to do the same. Chaka is something more than a man. The king of the depths (Morena wa Madiba) coils himself around Chaka and strengthens him; his body turns green like the water-lord he had met; only strange powers communicate with Chaka. The questions Chaka embodies are universal. Was he great or notorious? Could he have respected humanity and still have remained great? What does greatness consist in? Cheryl Dandridge, in an unpublished term paper entitled "Observations upon Mofolo's Chaka," 1971, argues that: "By giving Dingiswayo as an alternative Mofolo seems to say yes, Chaka could have followed in Dingiswayo's footsteps. But Chaka's greatness is ironic, Mofolo expresses it even in the structure of his book, which begins with a broad, geographical, almost aerial view of the countryside. This is the symbol of the spaciousness and airiness found in the idea of Zulu--the heavens. It is also expressive of the ambition and far-reaching influence of Chaka. This beginning vista, spanning space, is balanced by the closing sentences of the book, which span time." (Cheryl Dandridge, Observations

upon Thomas Mofolo's Chaka, U.C.L.A., 1971, p. 5)

> Mazulu le kajeno a bokajeno ha a hopola kamoo e kileng ya e ba batho kateng, mehleng ya Chaka, kamoo ditjhaba di neng di jela kgwebeleng ke ho ba tshaba, leha ba hopola borena ba bona bo weleng, eba ba sekisa mahlong, ba re: Di a bela, di a hlweba! Madiba ho pjha a maholo! (Chaka, Morija, 1957, p. 156)
>
> (The Zulus even to this day, when they remember how they were once people, during the days of Chaka, how the nations were unsettled through fear for them, and when they remember their fallen glory, tears run to their eyes and they say: Change is bound to come! Kingdoms rise and wane!)

And so ended Chaka, Senzangakhona's son. Chaka was a complex being. In the above passage Mofolo employs proverbs, idiomatic expressions, a series of interconnected phrases to round off the tragic fall of a great figure and the nation he had built. Chaka's mental torture and nightmares in his last days remind the reader of Kurtz's horrors in Conrad's The Heart of Darkness. Like Conrad, Mofolo's description is intense, vivid and horror striking. Chaka is a classic.

In the following chapter we propose to study the works of Mofolo's contemporaries.

CHAPTER VI

MOFOLO'S CONTEMPORARIES AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOTHO PROSE FICTION

The works of Sekese, Segoete, Motsamai, Mangoaela and Mofolo are the basis of our modern Southern Sotho literature. In this Chapter we are going to analyse the literary form or forms adopted by the first four of the above mentioned Sotho writers. We are going to examine how these marks contribute to the development of prose fiction in Sotho. We have already learnt from Tekateka that the writings of these men heralded "the dawn of the new age, the real moment of birth of our modern literature," and also that "they are writers who have the barest rudiments of learning, and cannot boast of any literary ancestry." Indeed, these men "were beginning to shape the rough materials of their mother tongue into something like literary form for the various purposes of instruction and entertainment."[33] They were indeed the pioneers in the art of writing itself and literary creativity.

The life history of these early Sotho writers is

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[33]See Tekateka, quoted in the second Chapter.

adequately covered in Tekateka's dissertation quoted earlier, Mohapeloa's Letlole la Lithoko tsa Sesotho (1950) and also in Gerard's Four African Literatures, quoted here. We are not going to repeat their life history here.

Modern Sotho literature sprang from the humble beginnings of these men. Azariele Sekese became the first Southern Sotho writer when his Mekgwa le Maele a Basotho (Mekhoa ea Basotho le maele le litsomo) was published in 1893. The straight-forward narrations of this writer prepared him for a more humorous, captivating and penetrating style of writing in his second attempt Pitso ya Dinonyana (Bukana ea tsomo tsa pitso ea linonyana le tseko ea Sefofu le Seritsa) 1928. This satire is very revealing, in that we note the attitude of Sekese, the christian convert, to his traditional form of government, especially after it has been corrupted by the colonial officers. The people found themselves between two monsters--hundreds of petty and senior chiefs who did as they pleased with their subjects on the one hand, and some irresponsible colonial officers who neglected their jobs, on the other. Sekese's satire is aimed against procedure at the chief's courts. In this story which is presented in a dialogue fashion the stronger birds of prey represent the dominant rulers while the weaker and smaller grain-eating birds stand for the exploited and helpless subjects.

The birds called a meeting to protest against the cruelty of the birds of prey such as Phakwe (the hawk). Lenong (the vulture) was the chief and the supreme judge. Motinyane (tinktinkie) led the other birds. When the hawk was accused, he defended himself by referring to thefts of Thaha (the finch), leebe (the dove) and other grain-eating birds in people's cornfields. The other birds that do not live on grain also accused the hawk of cruelty. To cover his crime, the hawk became furious and had to be calmed down by many pleading voices. The partridge appealed to Phakwe to examine his heart; even though men may not see his crime, God sees. In the end Phakwe was acquitted because even those above him were not so free from guilt, thus they could tolerate a little cheating.

The book reveals the author's thorough understanding of human nature, the characteristics of birds, and the atmosphere, procedure, behaviour and formalities at Chief's courts. The birds are furnished with human qualities such that the partridge becomes the person to preach the newly found religion of Lesotho, to contrast heavenly justice with earthly justice; the judgement passed by Phakwe's superiors and the hypocrisy it stands for remind one of the connivance of the Colonial administrators at the incompetence and corruption of some Lesotho chiefs then. The author's dissatisfaction and sneering can be felt in the

sarcastic and humorous tone of the book. The bigger and stronger birds--read "the rulers and the privileged class"--make a mockery of justice. Decisions reached are for their convenience. Answering to his crime, the hawk (Phakwe) gave the most flimsy reason for torturing and killing the other birds--they had turned away from the original mountain dwelling of the birds. Yet the other birds of prey, in their guilty conscience, cannot judge their equal, Phakwe (hawk). Lenong (the vulture) and Ntsu (the eagle) summarize their opinion on the hawk's "guilt". The complainants are told by Ntsu that:

> Ditaba tsa kahlolo ya nyewe ena di qetilwe ke Lenong, kamoo a itseng babolauwa ba phuthehe mahwatateng, ba kgweletsehe dithabeng, Phakwe a tle a tsietswe ke dilomo, mafika le meru ya dithupa ho ba tshwara habonolo. Ho otlolla thupa e kgopamileng kgale-kgale, ha ho ya matla le ya bohlale ya ka e otlollelang ho lokeng; ke utlwisisa tsa sebui se phetileng jwalo....
> (Pitso ea Linonyana, Morija, 1955, pp. 44/45)
>
> (Matters pertaining to this case have been summed up by Lenong (vulture) when he said the victims i.e. the molested and killed birds, should gather from the plains and crowd at the mountain so that Phakwe (hawk) could be blocked or inconvenienced by precipices, boulders and undergrowth shrubs from seizing them easily. Straightening an old crooked stick--there is none who is strong or wise to bend it to goodness; I fully understand the orator who said that...)

In the above passage Sekese, a rather dull story-teller, maintains an even matter-of-fact tone. Yet the reader

cannot escape his (the writer's) contempt for hypocrisy and arbitrary justice. Sekese is not dramatic; he fails to rouse the reader's curiosity. Sekese's contempt and sarcasm can be felt in the judgement at Sephooko's (the owl) case. Lenong, passing judgement says to the accused:

> Le ahlolwa ka ho re le kgaotse ho bua haholo le Sephooko, ha a itsamaela bosiu ho ipatlela dijo. Re sitwa ho bua ka dinako tsa motshehare, hobane bokgopo ba ho kgopama ha lona, ba kgale-kgale, ha ho ya bohlale, ya matla, ya ka bo otlollelang ho lokeng! (Pitso ea Linonyana, p. 51)
>
> (Your judgement is that you should stop to question Sephooko when he goes around at night looking for food. We are unable to talk about day time, since your evil nature and crookedness of past times, there is none who is strong or wise, to straighten it to goodness!)

A repetition of the last sentence in the above quotation is aimed at exposing the hypocrisy and injustice of the superiors. The relatives qualifying this vague individual--ya matla ya bohlale, ya ka bo otlollelang ho lokeng (who is strong, wise or could straighten/correct it to goodness)--carry the writer's sarcasm.

Sekese's book does indicate that the writer's socio-economic-political conditions affect artists. There is a relationship between the political scene and literature. A study of conditions in Lesotho during Sekese's time will reveal the obvious relationship between the contents of his

satire and Lesotho's political machinery then. Sekese dug into folklore, yet his skillful design and manipulation of his material made his book exciting. Many years later Ntsane came up to develop Sotho satire further.

As far as Sekese's Pitso ea Linonyana is a satirical fable, it satisfies one of the disguised functions of some traditional fables--pointing out the evils of a community in times of tyrannical and oppressive governments. The fable was one of the most disguised means to voice complaints against injustice and arbitrary rule.

Another interesting feature of the book is Sekese's method of advancing his story. Kgwale (partridge) warns Phakwe about his arrogance. The story of Saul (St Paul) and Chaka, king of the Zulus, are intelligently incorporated in the main story. Lekgwaba advises Phakwe:

> Ho thwe, mohlorisi e mong ya neng a hlorisa ba rapelang modimo wa kwana, yare ka tsatsi le leng, a bile a se a neilwe matla le tokelo ya ho bolaya ka tumelo ya morena.....tseleng monghadi wa ba futuhelwang a mo beta, a ba a mo kgatlanya fatshe .....a tsoswa ke lentswe le mo bitsang....'O mang, morena?' Karabo ya re: 'Ke nna eo o mo hlorisang! (Pitso...., p. 18)
>
> (It is said that a certain persecutor who persecuted those who worshiped the god of that land, on a particular day, even when he had been given power, right and the king's permission to kill... on the way the guardian of those attacked overcame him and threw him to the ground.....he was awakened by a voice calling him....'Who are you lord?' The answer was: 'I am the one you are persecuting!')

Sekese continues Lekgwaba's advice with brilliant interconnected sentences:

> Hlwaya tsebe, Phakwe, o mamele papiso ya bobedi ya tseo ke o bapisang le tsona:
> Mehleng e meng e fetileng, lefatsheng le leng, ho ne ho le morena e moholo ya phahametseng setjhaba sahae le ditjhaba tseo a neng a se a di hlotse, jwaleka wena Phakwe ha o re hlotse. Hape morena eo o ne a ikentse mmolai wa batho bahae jwaleka wena le rona. Mme yare ha Senatla se re okametseng kaofela se se se bone hore a ke ke a ba le pako, kapa boikokobetso, le boinyatso diketsong tsahae.....sa rerisa maikutlo a ho mo bolaya dipelong tsa baena bahae, yaba ba mo bolaya. (Pitso...., p. 18)

(Clear your ear, Phakwe, and listen to the second parable of those things I compare you with: Some time in the past ages, in a certain land there was a great king who reigned over his nation and other nations he had conquered, just like you have defeated us, Phakwe. Also, that king had turned himself into a murderer of his own people, like you do to us. But when the great One reigning over us all had realized that the king lacked repentance, or humility, and conversion from his deeds.....He caused the feeling/desire to kill him in his brothers hearts and they killed him.)

Sekese's dramatized fable is a unit. Mokgotlo's (the bald ibis or wild turkey) non-confidence in the court--although this is hidden--already suggest the judgement which the biased judges would pass:

> ....lekgotla le ikgopotse ho tadima dillo tsa baqosi ba Phakwe bana tshwanelong e le tlamileng ho sebeletse toka ya setjhaba. Etswe ho na le tabahadi e nyedisang le e tlontlollang borena ha setjhaba se lla ka ho fokola ha baphahamedi ditabeng tse se tletlebisang....(Pitso..., p. 33)

(The court should remind itself to examine the complaints of these accusers of Phakwe in the light of the duty which binds you to work for the nation's justice. Also, there is one great matter that belittles and disgraces the sovereign if a nation complains about the weakness of the elders in the matters that dissatisfy it ...)

The author's moral lesson is evident in the summary of the book:

Motho ofe le ofe ya hapilweng ke temalo ya leeme dinyeweng, o jwaleka tshehlo e hlabang maoto a batsamai tseleng e sebeditsweng hantle.....mme motho ha a le jwalo, eba ke sera sa toka ya setjhaba sahabo. (Pitso....., p. 60)

(Any person who has been inflicted with the weakness of prejudice/partiality in cases, is like a thorn which pricks the traveller's feet in a carefully prepared road....and if a person is like that, then he is the enemy of his nation's justice.)

Moral lessons were a feature of the early works in Southern Sotho and still persist to this day.

Another great writer of Mofolo's time was Everitt Lechesa Segoete. A former teacher of Mofolo, Segoete was inspired by his pupil to write. His first book, Monono ke Moholi ke Mouoane (Riches are a haze, a mist) in 1910 was the precursor of the "Makgoweng motif." In this book the hero or the chief character, Kgitshane, narrates his life history to a wealthy, younger and godless neighbour Tim. Kgitshane experienced hardships. On several occasions he was robbed of his possessions. A man sells him a

horse and cart, and then later takes them from him; his merchandise is stolen; young men play a fool of him and he is left with a permanent scar that singles him out wherever he goes. The customs and laws of the whites puzzled and confused him. Thus Kgitshane found himself, more often than not, falling foul with the law. His equally bad friend, Malebaleba (Man of Tricks), misled Kgitshane. He was later charged with murder. After many serious hardships, Kgitshane was converted to christianity. Kgitshane returned to Lesotho being a cripple with a wooden leg and a sick person. However, Kgitshana seemed to have attained internal peace. One morning Tim found Kgitshane in a kneeling position next to his bed, dead. Tim realized Kgitshane's new faith after he himself had been rescued from a dark rock-rabbit cave, where he had been trapped for three days. Through fear and panic Tim was converted.

Kgitshane's plight is well portrayed by the author. However, Monono is an extended sermon. It has two different plots centered around Kgitshane and Tim respectively. Yet these are knit together in a unique way: The terrible experiences, anxiety and fear, are used as agents leading to conversion. Kgitshane is first broken down physically and crippled before he can embrace christianity; Tim has to be trapped in a dark tunnel before he can understand the significance of his old poor friend's message. The author seems

to suggest that man's pride and riches should be sacrificed before true and meaningful salvation can be attained. Segoete is not after portraying individual character. His creations are mere symbols of the message he is propagating--winning Basotho to christianity and showing the worthlessness of worldly possessions. However, Sekese's intention is to teach a lesson. The conflict in the mind of a man completely removed from his known cultural heritage and the numerous problems that confront him are well-portrayed. Monono is a valuable contribution to Southern Sotho prose fiction in that another attempt at writing a coherent story--although with little success--around a single theme, was attempted at that early age of our literature. Segoete attempted to unfold his story and the nature of his creations, Kgitshane and Tim, through dialogue, although this too is one-sided and Kgitshane holds the centre of the stage all the time, with Tim only digging for more information with his short unconvincing answers.

e.g. Tim: Jwale ha senyeha eng?
(Now what happened?)

Kgitshane: O tla utlwa.
(You will hear)

Tim: Kgele! yaba o etsa jwang?
(What! What did you do then?)

Often Tim's questions are unnecessary and out of place.

The story could continue without them. It is as if the writer is attempting to keep Tim in the reader's mind so that his story at the end of the book should not appear to be far-fetched. Also, it seems to suggest that would be the only way to allow Kgitshane to tell his story.

The individual sub-headings paraphrase the contents of each chapter. Monono is a simple unsophisticated story to convey Segoete's intended sermon.

Segoete's second contribution was published in 1913. This is Raphepheng, Father of Scorpion. Some critics such as Albert Gerard suggest that Mofolo's Moeti wa Bo-chabela prompted Sekese to write a defence on Sotho tradition, custom and religion. The author talks with pride and admiration about the natural grace, the beauty, strength and physical appearance of the Basotho; their beautiful customs and social practices; their healthy food, generosity and love; their riddles and games; their law and organization. Segoete would embrace the white man's civilization and religion, but he is not going to let anybody tell him that the Basotho, in their apparent simplicity, were wild savage beasts without law and order or a sense of values. There is a note of sadness in the author's tone when he sees the old beautiful customs and hospitality of the Basotho eroded by new things around. People no longer show that genuine love for each other. Strangers were often protected, given

food and shelter free of charge:

> Hape ke re, Basotho ba pele ba ne ba ena le mekgwa e metle haholo. Banna ba ne ba dula ba nnotshi ngalong ya bona, kgotla. Dijo di jelwa teng hammoho. Monna e mong o bitsa dijo ha hae, ngwanana o tla a bo rwetse ka mokekana, ke mokato kapa polokwe ya bohobe kapa hloho ya podi. Dijo ke tsa banna bohle, e mong le e mong o ja ka ho rata. Taba ena ya ho rekisa dijo ka tjhelete, e ne e sa tsejwe. Basotho bao ba ne ba sa tshwane le lona le jelang thoko le kwetse monyako. (Segoete, E.: Raphepheng, Morija, pp. 8/9)

(Again I say, the Basotho of old had good habits. Men stayed together at their own place, 'Khotla'. Together they enjoyed their food. A man would ask for food from his home, and a maiden would come carrying a calabash of liquor or porridge balls of maize or the head of a goat. The food was for all men, and they ate as they pleased. Selling food was something unknown. Those Basotho were unlike you who eat behind closed doors.)

The quick switch from the past tense to the present tense in the above passage is Segoetę's way of capturing the reader's mind to perceive the state of things in the past.

In his The Literature of Lesotho, G. H. Franz says this about Raphepheng:

> To one who knows Sesotho, this book is more than a scientific treatise. In this manner it is worth much more than a collection of customs and proverbs (Mekhoa le Maele) by Sekese, for here one has the atmosphere of Basotho of old reproduced naturally. It would be very difficult to translate the work, because so much depends on the manner in which everything is expressed, and

one has to feel, rather than understand, the significance of many passages.[34]

Raphepheng is not a broad representation of society, however. It is still one of the narratives of olden days-- a series of narratives describing the past. There is no main character except for Raphepheng, the voice from the past. There is really no further development, internal or external conflict involving any person; no evolution towards self-realizaition. Whilst Raphepheng is a good narrative, it is not a novel. Here we are dealing with a collection of narratives about the various aspects of the life of the old Basotho. Segoete is still a storyteller like his predecessors.

Raphepheng is old; the younger generation around him is changing rapidly, old values are either scorned or overlooked. He is lonely, yet his lighthearted nature allows him a broad smile when he talks admirably about the past. The old man is critical and bitter about the lost sense of values of his people:

> Basotho ba kajeno ha ba sa ratana, ha ba sa tlwaelana, e mong le e mong o se a dula tlung yahae le mosajana hae, ba se ba eja hloho ya podi ba babedi. (Segoete, p. 11)
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> (The present day Basotho no longer love one another; each one stays home with his wife; they eat the head of the goat alone.)

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[34]Bantu Studies, IV, No. 3, September, 1930, p. 157.

The Basotho of old helped one another in building homesteads, plowing, hoeing or reaping. Raphepheng is sad to realize that those good qualities are fast disappearing. The harmonious life of olden days was now replaced by selfish individuality. In the same article on the Literature of Lesotho, Franz concludes:

> Cast in this form, the book implies, rather than expresses, a severe rebuke against our civilization. We have overthrown nearly all that is Bantu and have given the people nothing in return. Our civilization has been a disintegrating factor in the lives of the Bantu, and today they are divided into two camps. Some cling tenaciously to the old, and consequently lag behind in the onward march. The great majority have outrun the old civilization and are running blindly into destruction. Raphepheng's voice comes like the call of the Mankoetlana (mourning dove) out of nature's hidden recesses, and calls in vain.[35]

Indeed, the so-called Western civilization has created a conflict in the minds of the educated black man, not only in Lesotho, but in the whole of Africa. They have become poor caricatures of the white men since there is a conscious attempt on their part to be more English or French than the English or French themselves respectively. This individuality and split personality are evident in many vernacular writings. The author wishes to free himself of his own

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[35]Bantu Studies, Vol. IV, No. 3, September, 1930, p. 157.

cultural roots, but the tragedy is that he fails dismally to acquire fully the culture he aspires to. One foot is deep in tradition and the other is holding precariously on alien value systems. From these contradictory aspirations the Black author has not been able to free himself, from the days of Mofolo and his contemporaries, to our day.

Edward Motsamai records the stories he had heard from his community in his Mehla ea Malimo (1912). The book is a collection of eighteen short stories about the dark past of Lesotho. Man lived in constant fear because of the wild beasts and cannibals that roamed about everywhere in Lesotho. Yet Motsamai also notes that even wild beasts could be friendly to man. This is noted in two of his stories such as 'Maria le tau'(the lion protected this girl against the Ndebele warriors), and the lion that befriended a man who had removed a thorn from its paw. This amazing relationship between man and the beasts of the veld has captured the minds of story-tellers of all nations and tribes throughout the ages.

Motsamai, despite his good language, was a poor story-teller. His narratives about men or women captured by cannibals seldom arouse the interest of the reader. G.H.Franz has this to say about him:

> In the telling of his stories, Motsamai preserves an evenness of tone, a matter-of-factness, which,

> although it holds the attention of the reader, does not rouse him. The stories lack climax, and what could be most thrilling moments pass by before one is aware of them. The cause does not lie in the story itself, nor in its plot, but in the peculiar style of the author. His sentences are polished and almost trite. Strangely enough for a Mosotho, there is a lack of figures of speech, especially of the hyperbole, simile and elliptical sentence, which characterize the Mosotho teller of tales....The stories, one feels, are probably summaries of longer tales.[36]

However, Motsamai's stories are important for their content. They reveal the view of a Mosotho convert of his past--a dark, ungodly, murderous period. Also, his very first story entitled Selinyane le Malimo, was a pointer to the extended story which became the business of later writers. This story about Selinyana's experiences and adventures among the cannibals, consists of three parts closely knit together. Motsamai uses ordinary everyday speech--an unassuming narrative tense, but the short, rapidly moving sentences following one upon another, help retain the readers' interest and allow the story to flow from one part to another. The opening sentences of parts two and three are the summaries of the concluding paragraphs of parts one and two respectively, thus giving unity to the whole story:

> Eitse ha ke re ke nka thipa, ke sa nanabeditse letsoho, lelimo la nthe qhau. Ke itse ke re ke leka ho itokolla, ke loma ka meno, eaba ke

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[36]G.H. Franz: The Literature of Lesotho, p. 165.

ipoleletse lefela. Lelimo le leng la tla le hahaba, le khasa ka matsoho; la fihla la ntsoara ka letsoho le leng. Ke entse mekhoa e le mengata hore kea itokolla, ka sitoa. (Mehla ea Malimo, Morija, 1954, p. 8).

(When I tried to take the knife, my arm still stretched out, the cannibal grabbed me suddenly. I tried hard to free myself, biting with teeth, all was in vain--I had told myself a lie. One cannibal came creeping, crawling with his hands; he came and grabbed me on the other hand. I tried many methods to free myself but failed.)

Note in the above passage the adverbial adjuncts that follow words that are already self-evident in meaning. Motsamai seems to be successful with this method to create an absorbing atmosphere for the readers' attention and interest. .....loma ka meno (bite with teeth). .....khasa ka matsoho (crawl with hands).

Part II of the story begins simply:

Re fihlile ka lehaheng la malimo. (We ultimately arrived at the cannibals' cave).

This simple, yet meaningful sentence takes off from the continued movement to the cannibal' home suggested in the closing sentences of Part I. The opening sentence of Part III of Selinyane le Malimo is a repetition, though with a different construction of the last sentence of Part II--a method to knit together the story.

In 1942 his second book 'Morena Moshoeshoe, mor'a

Mokhachane'--a biography-- was published. The book does not rise above a merely historical narrative. The author failed to bring out his hero and give him life. He gives only an external description of Moshweshwe.

A prolific writer of Mofolo's age was Zakea D. Mangoaela (1883-1963). In addition to the Graded Sesotho Readers, Lipadiso, Mangoaela wrote Tsoelopele ea Lesotho (1911), short stories in Hara Libatana le Linyamatsane (1912), and Lithoko tsa Marena a Lesotho (1924). The latter is a collection or record of Sotho praise poems.

Mangoaela was a lively and exciting story-teller. His figurative language, lively technique of telling a story and ability to create the required atmosphere for his stories place him above the dry narratives of Motsamai. Mangoaela succeeded in capturing the spirit of the original narrators of the stories he has recorded.

Mangoaela loved his country and was proud of the deeds of his ancestors. In his words he "wished to preserve for future generations the deeds and the life of our men of old."[37] Further, this exciting Sotho author wanted "to make a Mosotho love what is his own, and to arouse a love for books and for reading in our nation."[38] Mangoaela's short

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[37] G.H. Franz: Op. Cit., p. 150.

[38] Op. Cit., p. 150.

stories indicate his thorough understanding of the customs of his people, the wild life of animals and the terrain of his country. The author's admiration and love for his peoples' prowess, bravery and style of life are evident in the tone of his language. But Mangoaela was essentially a recorder of contemporary tales then.

Except for Lechesa Segoete, Mofolo's contemporaries were recorders of old and well-known oral tradition of the Basotho. Giving a broad representation of life or a close analysis of human experience, was not their ultimate objective. They lived and were part of a society that recognized the individual as part of a larger group, and not as a being pursuing his own selfish interests. Thus in their writings, as in the writings of modern Sotho authors, the individual's internal conflicts and concerns, are simply overlooked. The individual exists only in the larger group. Gerard suggests that this outlook towards life may have literary implications. The Sotho authors', in fact all Bantu authors', failure to portray convincing individuals may stem from this cultural conditioning.

> This weakness is of course due to an indifference to individual psychology which is built into the African tradition, and which is manifest in literary art, whether oral or written. This particular trait makes it difficult even for Europeans

> versed in the African languages to provide a balanced appraisal taking into account both the conscious purposes of the writer and his society's notion of the function of literature.[39]

Gerard is of the opinion that the African authors' societal outlook "drives them to turn character into type, so that the reader's response is one of moral edification rather than imaginative empathy.[40]

It should be noted, however, that Bantu society has been greatly influenced by European culture. Because of the new socio-economic conditions, the individual is gradually giving expression to his own individuality. More and more, his own interests and needs are placed above these of the group. This change in outlook may find expression in novels of the future in this community. African life is not static. Mofolo and his contemporaries, Segoete, Motsamai, Sekese and Mangoaela, have made a remarkable contribution to the development of Sotho prose fiction. These early works laid a solid foundation for Southern Sotho literature: they saved from oblivion much of past experiences of the Basotho. Their enthusiasm for the new religion, christianity, is evident in their stories which were told with some moral objective. Motsamai summed up these men's intentions with the closing

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[39]Gerard, A.: Op. Cit., p. 112.

[40]Gerard, p. 112.

paragraph to his Mehla ea Malimo when he stated:

> ...mesebetsi ea lefifi ke tsona liphiri tse re bolaeang, mme liphiri tsena li ka lipelong. A re li tsomeng hona teng, re li tebeleng, re li felise. (Mehla...p. 48)

(....the works/acts of darkness are the hyenas which kill/destroy us....and those hyenas/wolves come from our hearts. Let us hunt them right there, chase them/expel them, wipe them out.)

CHAPTER VII

WORKS PRODUCED IN THE FORTIES AND THEIR ARTISTIC QUALITIES

The attitude of some Paris Mission leaders to, and unfair treatment of Mofolo's Chaka, seem to have discouraged Mofolo and many other potential Sotho writers. After 1912 Southern Sotho creative writing declined and the Basotho lost their lead in vernacular literature. However, reasons for the decline which set in after 1912 should be sought also beyond Mofolo's Chaka controversy and the missionaries. Between 1914 and 1918, the War years, creative writing was disrupted in Lesotho. The Great Depression which followed in the twenties further dissipated missionary funds, so that almost nothing remained for printing. There was no incentive for authors and, in any case, there was no money available at the Printing Press at Morija. Another serious cause of decline in vernacular writing was the promotion of English as a language at school at the expense of Sesotho. The British school officials and missionary schools encouraged the English language and literature, and tended to play down or look down upon Sesotho. The school products began to lose interest in things traditional, their language and

culture, and aspired to become more English than the English themselves. It became fashionable to study the English language and literature so that one's education was judged by the quality of his spoken English and knowledge of English literature and history. This has, for a very long time, remained the hang-over of almost all Bantu. Their school education estranged them from their people and deprived them of their legitimate cultural lead.

In the early Thirties Bereng's Lithothokiso tsa Morena Moshoeshoe le tse ling, initiated the revival of Sotho literature. Bereng attempted to "modernize" praise-poems and bring new life to them, of course, with disastrous effects. A few South African scholars were beginning to gain interest in Bantu languages, and Bereng was encouraged to produce more books. Bereng, however, did not continue to write, yet his poetry was a pointer to things to come. Some more writers began to appear on the scene. Sotho literary development was thus saved from oblivion.

The late Thirties saw serious attempts to revive, encourage, build and sustain Southern Sotho creative writing. In 1935 the May Esther Bedford prize of £50 (R100) was set up in London by Dr. and Mrs. Mumford to encourage Bantu literature, music and other fine arts. This was an incentive, and it is interesting to note that Southern Sotho writers won the Prize on several occasions. On the South African

front too many factors contributed to the revival of creative writing in Sotho. Dr. Shepherd was instrumental in convening the Bantu Writers Conferences in 1936 and 1937 to discuss matters of common interest and problems facing these early pioneers of vernacular literature in South Africa. Thomas Mofolo, then the acknowledged Sotho novelist, did not attend the Conference; however, this did not imply that Sotho writers were less concerned about the problems facing Bantu writers then. Mofolo was fully aware of the stranglehold missionaries had on the content and nature of African literature. A further incentive to creative writing was the standardization of the practical orthography which improved and simplified reading and writing. The tedious and cumbersome characters were replaced by simpler symbols which made typing and printing easier.

Lesotho still remained the cradle of Southern Sotho literature. Certain factors made it possible. The growth of the Roman Catholic Church and the expansion of its educational system in Lesotho was important for Sotho literature. The Catholic Fathers established a Printing Press at Mazenod which was fully utilized as an instrument to preach the church's dogma. The healthy competition that ensued between the Protestant Press at Morija and the Catholic one at Mazenod increased the volume of books in Southern Sotho. The reading public was also enlarged since the competing educational

systems of the two churches--Roman Catholic and Paris Mission--increased the number of schools in Lesotho and therefore, literacy percentage. Many Southern Sothos, however, were in the Union of South Africa. Thus the South African Bantu schools became the market for Sotho books since Sesotho was also, and is still one of the major languages of South Africa. We shall refer later to the significance of the division of the Southern Sothos into two main streams according to the political boundaries.

Several important writers emerged in Lesotho in the Forties. Despite the fact that they were all products of the missionary schools, these writers were motivated by different factors to write, and were pursuing different objectives. Many writers of the Forties followed Mangoaela's example--to preserve the memory of the great deeds of the past. Thus Damane came with his Moorosi Morena oa Baphuthi (1948); Machobane with Mahaheng a Matso (1946) and Mphatlalatsane (1947); Moikangoa with Sebologi sa Ntsoana-Tsasi (1943). The latter began as a champion for the Catholic faith. His Lilahloane (1944) was Catholic propaganda calculated at winning more followers for his Church. It is important since it illustrates how the early missionaries relied also on the writings of their school products to propagate christianity in all its forms. Prose fiction, whatever its quality, would be printed as long as it upheld

christian ethics.

Yet Nqheku was quick to realize the contradictions created by economic factors in the South African scene. He began to concern himself with human relations, especially between black and white. His Arola naheng ea Maburu was such an attempt to draw attention to conflict, suspicion and distrust. Although Lenake[41] is of the opinion that Nqheku's Arola naheng ea Maburu is dangerous for racial harmony in South Africa, one should bear in mind that by choosing extreme examples among Basotho and Afrikaners, Nqheku intended to point out clearly the suspicions, anxiety, fear, perhaps hatred and meanness given expression or suppressed by many people of this part of the world. The story is simple and straight-forward. Arola left his homeland, Lesotho, to seek employment in the Orange Free State. There, he came across callous and very cruel farmers who assaulted him severely after a quarrel. Arola does not forget or forgive. He then adopts a hostile attitude towards Afrikaner farmers. The title of the book paraphrases its contents. The writer is going to narrate the adventures of Arola in the land of "Maburu," his stay there and return home. Events happen in a definite sequence, one upon the other. The structure of this book is aptly summed up by Professor P. S.

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[41]See Limi, no. 6, June, 1968, p. 77.

Groenewald of the University of Pretoria, in private correspondence with the present writer:

> The different incidents referred to may be compared to beads in a string. They appear in a chronological order.....Suspense is mainly guaranteed by the intrinsic value of the story and the matter-of-fact style. There is no drastic conflict to stimulate suspense.....The reader gets the idea of a "factual"movement without necessary motivation. (Private Correspondence between Prof. P.S. Groenewald and A. J. M. Moloi, March 23rd 1972.)

Nqheku employs the same devices employed by Sotho composers of old to give unity to their compositions. Like the old masters, Nqheku is straight and to the point in what he has to say; he explains fully circumstances surrounding his "hero"; the readers are addressed directly as the old story-tellers might have appealed directly to the sensibilities of the listeners; a repetition of words and whole phrases to recapture the essence of the message still appear throughout the book. The short and heavily punctuated sentences to facilitate progression, swift movement as to create suspense and tension mark Nqheku's work. The characters, like characters of fables and folktales, are types; i.e. they represent virtue or vice. For example, Maburu and Mazulu are very bad; only one Leburu and wife are very good. There is no doubt as to whose side the author takes. Arola's departure from home is justified, his encounter with

Maburu is that of the innocent unjustly treated by callous bullies. Yet the poetic intensity of his creation and its symbolism are not cheap propaganda or hollow sensationalism. The atmosphere created by the image central to the whole work, namely, the personal clash between white and black, or white and black economic interests, the economic interdependence of the two groups, and the inherent contradictions as a result of the clash of interests, are given life by the author. In the creation of the right atmosphere for his theme, Nqheku has emulated Mofolo. Note how Mofolo intensified the atmosphere of horror in Chaka by bloodshed, witchcraft, talking graves, actions of supernatural beings, general suspicion, anxiety, scheming and plotting. Nqheku ties his story together by a detailed description of the facts he deals with. If he has to deal with a bad Leburu, this fact is emphasized.

All incidents in this book are vital links in Nqheku's story. The out-ward form of the book is well-planned in as far as there is a definite relationship between the central theme and sub-plots. These are chronologically arranged like in a movie serial continuing at every separate show. The author has employed several techniques to rouse anxiety and tension which help to bind the book together. The expression is clear, the author is direct and economical with words since Nqheku does not need detailed qualificatives

for a matter-of-fact narrative. We do not come across fantastic achievements as in Mofufutso wa Phatla and Pere Ntsho, Blackmore or unconvincing escapes as in Nna Sajene Kokobela, C.I.D. or Moeti oa Bo-chabela, even Bao Batho, for that matter. Although the author has been very careful in his choice of incidents and detail, there has been some exaggeration and the author has pushed himself too much into his story. He makes himself Arola. This is true to this genre. Yet the exaggeration is always toned down by the passionate description of the kind Leburu and his wife. Despite this weakness the characters in the book are real, alive and richly portrayed. The reader can identify with their problems. This book should be judged as a work of art, and not what other quarters will not want to hear. Human experience is real. Tensions, and at times, irresponsible behaviour, are part of this experience. Arola demonstrates this.

Arola naheng ea Maburu further illustrates the early trends in Southern Sotho. The writers in Lesotho, secure behind British protection and fairly isolated from daily contact with economic factors influencing human relations daily in the then Union of South Africa, indulged, although for a short while, in some touchy topics which could not be tackled by their counterparts in South Africa. This could not go on for a long time since Sotho writers found their

best market in South Africa. Like writers here, these men found it safer to concern themselves with fairly harmless moral issues instead of the whys and wherefores of other important influencing factors like social and economic conditions or even human relations. The dichotomy which was evident in Southern Sotho--Lesotho and South Africa--is disappearing. Lesotho authors can no longer afford to involve themselves in what their potential big buyer regards as controversial issues. We suggest that there is a relationship between the development of literary art--or any other art for that matter--and political interests or control.

Arola naheng ea Maburu, unlike other unsophisticated compositions, has gone further by employing certain words as unifying factors and thus holding the reader in suspense. The reader is persuaded to find out more about the Leburu. Although dreams are still used as a developmental device of the story, Arola's dream merely provided his motivation for a return home. Arola naheng ea Maburu is a remarkable landmark in Sotho literature. It is one of the best,if not the best, of the unsophisticated novels.

Matlosa makes a mild reference to human relations in Southern Africa in the conclusion of his Molahlehi. This was a well-planned, well-conceived book, but the author digressed and missed his original intention. Briefly, the

story is as follows: Masene, a traditional Mosotho, leaves Lesotho to work on white farms in the Free State. He carries with him to white South Africa his traditional values, objects of his culture such as his knob-kerrie and his loin-cover (tsheya), in short, his philosophy of life. In the Free State, the white man's world puzzles him. He is considered to be naked with only the loin cloth around him. Thus he has to use a shirt and trousers; a bicycle replaces his horse. However, Masene still uses his tsheya under his trousers.

On a hot day he is sent to town on his bicycle. Masene carried his kerrie with him as he would have done in Lesotho. On the way he rested under a big tree, removed his trousers--leaving his tsheya--and slept. A white policeman came by, scolded Masene and took him to task for remaining "naked" during the day. The author made this a humourous scene. Masene did not understand Afrikaans. He misinterpreted everything the policeman said, attaching his own meaning to sounds that resembled Sotho words. Humor is one of the techniques Matlosa has employed to keep his story lively.

When he jumped on his bicycle to run away, Masene forgot to take his trousers. The policeman gave chase. Masene used his kerrie to "spur" on his bicycle--like he would have done on horseback. The old Mosotho returned to Lesotho

and vowed never to return to the cities. A clash between his culture and that of the white man had convinced him of the necessity to send his son, Molahlehi, to school, to learn the white man's language, culture and values.

Molahlehi is sent to school where he begins to team up with wayward boys who ultimately take him with them to Johannesburg. Soon Molahlehi falls into serious problems with the white man's laws and with scheming women. Botlenyana squanders his money and runs away with all his possessions; Sainyaka or Ethel, the new "wife", sends him packing as soon as he is without employment; Maria, a criminal, attempts to poison him, and has her equally notorious boyfriend, Sobende, harm Molahlehi. Molahlehi finds himself implicated in a murder he never committed. Because Molahlehi had disobeyed his father, the writer makes him suffer. Matlosa developed away from the originally complicated theme--a clash between traditional culture and the white man's world and culture. His digression now aimed at proving that a child takes after his name, as the Basotho believed.

Ultimately Molahlehi married Sainyaka (Ethel) who encouraged him to write to his parents and prepare to return. Despite the inner change in Molahlehi and a change of heart in Sainyaka, he would not write nor return home. Matlosa merely described his characters and did not probe into their

internal conflicts. Molahlehi's escape from prison and a possible death sentence are so mechanical and unconvincing. At every turn he falls foul with the law. His sudden death at the end of the book is an anticlimax and rather unconvincing. Sobande's confession is less dramatic and rather dull. A white man accuses him of stealing his fowl and fires a fatal shot at him. The writer seems to have planned to punish Molahlehi from the moment he disappointed his father.

Molahlehi is important for its contents. However, the book is not a successful novel structurally. Reference has been made to the author's digression from his original story around Masene, to Molahlehi--an attempt to preach his contention in the preface. Incidents in the story are arbitrarily arranged. For example, Molahlehi's episodes are poorly linked together, e.g. the less convincing acquaintance of Maria and Sainyaka; the mechanical rediscovery of Sainyaka's whereabouts and the subsequent marriage. Dreams still solve problems. Molahlehi has to dream first to decide what to do with Maria:

> ...a qala ho hlora haholo moyeng. A ba le mehopolo e mengata, e mo hlobaetsang boroko, haholo e le ya boiphetetso ba sebele ho babolai bahae, hara bohle kaofela, mosadi wahae.....Bosiung boo a lora a nkile thipa e telele, a re o kgaola mosadi molala ka yona....batho ba bangata ba fihla ba mo tshwara matsoho ka di thapelo tse hlomolang pelo, le yena

mosadi a ithapella...(Molahlehi, p. 30)

(...he began to worry greatly at heart. He had many thoughts that disturbed his sleep, mainly thoughts of complete revenge against his killers/persecutors, among and above all, his wife...That night he dreamt holding a long knife, trying to cut his wife's neck...many people came and stopped him (held his hand) with heart-touching prayers/pleas, his wife also pleaded for herself....)

The description of characters is still external, also the characters are either too good or too bad. Sobende is physically repulsive and his whole manners are evil; Sainyaka is a real beauty, physically and in manners. She excels in beauty, in song, in speech, especially the English language. Note her beautiful description by the author in the sub-division entitled Na ke nepile? (Have I acted correctly/Am I right?). Despite the fascinating descriptions in this chapter, the book does not impress the reader with these symbols of virtue.

Yet Molahlehi was another step in the development of the Sotho novel. Matlosa's logical analysis of situations and probing into happenings, especially from Chapter Twelve to Chapter Twenty Three, were a pointer to the compound compositions of Khaketla and Ntsane. Also the book was a preparation for a structurally better composition, Mopheme, by Matlosa. The latter book is well bound together, but the contents are shallow and almost ridiculous.

From Mazenod, Lesotho, in 1943, came an interesting

book by C. R. Moikangoa, Sebologi sa Ntsoana-Tsatsi (The Sentinel of Ntswana-Tsatsi). Mmaphunye is chosen by ancestors and goes to live with them for six days in their abode, Ntswana-tsatsi. She returns to earth with enormous healing powers. She tends to the sick, instructs and enlightens them on Ntsoana-tsatsi, the abode of the ancestors, and continues to do good wherever she goes. The writer is more of a narrator than a creator. He does not give an analytic or penetrating examination of character, rather, he is descriptive. Yet the work is interesting in revealing the writer's view of the Basotho. As if to oppose Mofolo's glorification of christianity in Moeti oa Bo-chabela, Moikangoa makes Ntsoana-tsatsi the abode of ancestors and not of God. He gives the ancestors the power of life and death, and he talks of the effectiveness and reality of Basotho herbs and doctors. However, this is historically one of the old Sotho tales.

Other Sotho creative writers like Machobane continued to look back to folklore and the past for inspiration. In 1946 Machobane's Mahaheng a Matso (The times/era of the Cannibals), based on the turbulent times in Southern Africa, especially Lesotho, was published. The writer gives a vivid description of unrest, warfare, hunger, anxiety, fear and cruelty in Lesotho during that time. Families and tribes were dispersed, always on the run from the cruel spears of

the attackers. Because of hunger some people became cannibals. The transformation was complete, both mentally and physically. The external appearance of the black cannibals is horrifying with long teeth, red eyes, overgrown hair and limbs, and filth on their bodies. Their callousness is shocking. They lacked law and order. One of the victims, who was spared and forced to become a cannibal because of his great speed, fled to Moshoeshoe, the peace-loving King. The cannibals blamed one another for the escape of Mokopela, and this began a terrible and bloody fight among them. Only one girl, Tselane, escaped miraculously. The author makes Mokopela to narrate the story.

Despite the graphic description of the author, his mastery of the language and ability to keep his readers in suspense, Mahaheng a Matso is not a good novel. One cannot speak of a clear cut plot as such or character depiction. The author does the talking most of the time and the individuals he often refers to by name are almost lifeless beings, waking up only to repeat the author's words. The sudden appearance of Tselane at the end of the book and her miraculous escape are weaknesses which detract from the book. Mokopela escapes from the cannibals whose cruelty he already knows. How can he suddenly return to the dark caves to fetch Tselane? Did the author inform him that the cannibals were dead and only Tselane had survived? The book

ends unexpectedly. Nobody knows whether Mokopela and Tselane reached Moshoeshoe's village.

Yet Mahaheng a Matso has its merits too. The graphic description of Lesotho in those days provides the necessary setting and atmosphere for Mokopela's story. Duplication of adverbial stems, repetition of nouns and phrases and contrasts by means of the conjunction empa (yet, but) in the following passage, prepare the reader for the casual statement of introduction:

> Ke hona mehleng ena ho hlahileng mohlankana ea bitsoang Mokopela, kamoo re tlang ho bona tsa hae kateng. (Mahaheng a Matso, Morija, 1951, p. 3)
>
> (It was in those days when a young man named Mokopela, about whose adventures we'll learn, was born.)
>
> Tlase-tlase ho lefatshe la Lesotho, tlase Bophirimela, hona moo kajeno ho dutseng motsana wa Mafeteng, mehleng eo matsha a maholo, matsha a tshabehang, matsha a methooto a ne a bonwa hohle-hohle sebakeng seo...Matsha ao.....a ne a le matle; empa ponahalo ya ona e ne e nyarosa mmele le kutlo ho ya bohileng. A ne a rateha; empa leihlo la motho le tshaba ho a bohela ruri. A ne a kganya kgotso, empa a tshabeha ka baka la lehlaka le a teetseng hare ho tloha tlase, hodimo, le ho isa hohle-hohle bophirimela, leboya, botjhabela le borwa.
> (Mahaheng... P 1, underlining and changed orthography, my own)
>
> (Right down below in the land of Lesotho, down in the West, right where the little village of Mafeteng stands today, there were in those days, large lakes, frightening lakes, flooded patches of lakes could be seen all over that region.... Those lakes....were beautiful; yet their appearance was frightening to the body and feelings of

one who was admiring them. They were loveable; yet one's eye feared to stare at them long. They shone peace, i.e. they appeared peaceful; yet they were frightening because of the reeds that enclosed them from below to the upper ridges, and also everywhere in the west, north, east and south.)

Machobane made some innovations in Sotho fiction, especially the unsophisticated novel. Earlier happenings in the book would account for later developments, thus giving unity to the book. For example, Mokopela's great speed after escaping from the Matebele, saves him from possible death once captured by the cannibals. He quickly wins the admiration and trust of the cannibals' leader, Ramajwe, because of his bravery and speed. Gradually the reader is prepared for the ultimate escape of Mokopela. Mokopela sees an old man among the captives on a later expedition; as the story progresses, the old man turns out to be Peete, Moshweshwe's grand-father. He dreams of a kind-hearted and peace-loving monarch. The dream is transformed into reality when Mokopela finds this idol of his dream in Moshweshwe. The more complicated story was thus beginning to appear.

Also, exaggeration, a feature of unsophisticated composition, is less evident in Mahaheng a Matso. Cannibals are engaged in an evil practice of man-slaughter and devouring; their outward appearance is filthy and fear-inspiring; yet Mokopela is saved by Ramajwe's considerateness. He is able

to escape later because Ramajwe decided, in spite of the other cannibals' objections, to listen to Mokopela's feigned illness when others left home to hunt. In an earlier attempt the cannibals would have been completely evil and callous.

Machobane does not seem to have concerned himself with presenting people in their real complexity of temperament and motive. He was satisfied with metaphorical and symbolic stories. His second book, Mphatlalatsane ea Sekhutlo (1946) was such a symbolic rather than a realistic plausibility. The story is about a fantastic snow-white bull with amazing strength. The bull's name was Maphatshwe, the calf of a captured cow, Kgalodi. Strange things happened when its mother was captured, when it was born and when Kgalodi died. This was a sign that Maphatshwe was marked for great things. Maphatshwe, the shining star of the valley of Kgapung, was owned by Chief Tau, ruler of the Bakwena and Basia at Kgapung.

The chief and his followers loved this amazing bull greatly. Tau would sacrifice everything he had rather than lose Maphatshwe. Surrounding tribes envied Tau and sent expeditions to capture the bull. Moholo, a travelling doctor, advised Tau to kill the bull before it brought misfortune on the village but Tau ignored him. Maphatshwe died; the Bakone of Malobela, still thinking that the bull was

alive, attacked and destroyed Kgapung. Tau, now a cripple, was the only survivor.

Mphatlalatsane ea Sekhutlo, like Moby-Dick, is "a moral fable...a book about the alienation from life that results from an excessive or neurotic self-dependence."[42] Tau, like Ahab, is "a great, doomed hero"[43] whose judgement is clouded by self-interest and pride. He is prepared to sacrifice his crown, wife and children, friends and subjects over whom he rules if only he can keep the beautiful bull:

> Kgomo ena ke o tlisitseng mona hore o e bone ke e rata ho feta tsohle tsa mehlape ya kgutlo sena. Le hohle lefatsheng leo nkileng ka tsamaya ho lona, ha ke eso bone letho le nkgahlang ho e feta. Ke e rata ho feta le mosadi waka Mma-Sebabatso, Mofumahadi wa kgutlo sena. Ke e rata le ho feta le bona bana baka. ho nna ho bonolo ho tela tsohle ha feela nka nna ka tseba ho rua kgomo ena. Na lerato lena le ntlhantshang nka le fokotsa jwang? ha o bona, kgomo ee e tswetswe ke poho ya kgomo? Hona, hore ke e sireletse, jwale ka ha ke sa rate ho lahlehelwa ke yona tjena, ke lokela ho etsa jwang?[44]
>
> (This bull I have brought you here to see, I love more than all the herds in this valley. Throughout the world where I have travelled, I have not seen anything that pleases me better. I love it more than my wife, Mma-Sebabatso, queen of this village. I love it even more than my own children. To me it is easier to sacrifice all, if

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[42]Richard Chase: The American Novel and its Tradition, Doubleday Anchor Books, N.Y., 1957, p. 108.

[43]Ibid, p. 94.

[44]Machobane, J.J.: Mphatlalatsane ea Sekhutlo, Morija, Lesotho, 1962.

only I could keep this bull. How can I reduce the love that turns me mad? According to your judgement, do you think this animal was born of a bull of the cattle group? Even then to protect it, as you have realized I love it best, what should I do?)

The above passage reveals Tau's vanity, pride, arrogance, ambition and a distorted sense of values. Moholo, the man whose advice was sought, advises that Maphatshwe belongs to the gods and should be killed before its fame brings disaster to Kgapung. Note the repetition of the copulative Ke mpho (It is a gift) and its effect:

> Ke pheta ke re kgomo ena ke mpho ya badimo, ke mpho ya lehodimo le hodimodimo.[45]
>
> (Again, I say this bull is a gift from the gods (ancestors), it is the gift of heaven, high above.)

He continues in his serious warning to Tau:

> Morena wa sekgutlo, nkutlwe hle! O Mosotho, ke Mosotho mme ke a o eletsa. Ke re e tle ere hoba kgomo ena, Maphatshwe, e etse manamane a bobedi feela, o e tlose lefatsheng. Metsotsong eo, botumo ba botle ba yona bo tla be bo eso tlale lefatsheng, mme he o tla qoba tsietsi eo e sa le hole. Ha o ke ke wa etsa kamoo ke o eletsang keteng, wena hammoho le tjhaba sa naha e ntle...le tla anya kgomo e tshwana...le tla shwa lebuba![46]
>
> (King of the valley, please listen to me! You are a Mosotho, I am a Mosotho, and I advise you. I say as soon as this bull has given calves the second time, you must remove it from the face of

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[45] Ibid, p. 11.

[46] Ibid, p. 11.

the earth (kill it). At that time the fame of its beauty will not have spread throughout the land, thus you will then be able to avoid misfortune in time. If you will not do as I have advised you, you together with your nation, will taste bitterness...you will die a horrible death.)

Tau is a tragic figure from the beginning since his sense of values is distorted. Moholo's metaphorical language passes before his eyes unnoticed, uncomprehended. The irony of it all is that he will sacrifice all valuable things in his life for the beauty he cannot save from natural death. Maphatshwe falls sick, and despite all the efforts of good doctors who have been called by Tau, it dies. Tau neither eats its flesh nor keeps its skin. The enemy strikes, everything perishes, only Tau remains alive. Only then does he understand the words of Moholo. Too late for tears. His kingdom has fallen, his wife and children have been put to the sword. He is forced by the enemy to unearth the stinking remains of Maphatshwe--now beauty stinks.

A sala moo a bohile tshenyeho ya motse o motle, a bohile dithako tse nyarosang kutlo ya motho, tsa matlo a tjheleng lore! A sala a bohile le tsona ditopo tse mpe tsa basadi ka bana ba bolailweng ka sehloho seo mahlo ahae a neng a qala ho se bona, sehloho seo motho a ke keng a se bona ka mahlo a moya, ha e se yena feela le Basarwa ba Kgapung.[47]

(He remained there witnessing the destruction of the beautiful village, watching the ruins that chilled one's feelings, ruins of houses burnt to

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[47]Ibid, p. 67.

the ground. He remained watching even the grim corpses of women and children butchered with such cruelty and callousness that cannot be imagined, except by himself alone and the Bushmen of Kgapung.)

The above passage captures the poetic language of storytellers of old. Note emotive value of repeated words: sala (remained); bohile (staring/watching) and sehloho (cruelty).

The proud one-legged Ahab died chasing the white whale, Moby-Dick. Tau remained in utter misery among corpses and ruins because of his distorted sense of values and stubborness. His punishment was greater than that of Ahab for he experienced it fully and it pained him:

> Jwale a fumana hantle hoba tholwana ya botle bo jwalo, e ke ke ya phedisa motho. Mme jo, pelo ya tshera, ya otla habohloka.[48]
>
> (Now he realized fully that the fruit of such great beauty cannot sustain a person. Alas! the heart despaired and throbbed fiercely.)

The use of synonymous sentences intensify Tau's sorrow and plight:

> Tau morena wa sekgutlo, ha a bona mme a fela a hopola tsena tsohle, a tlalwa ke pelo; ntho ya mo mathela pelong, a kwaleha moya, a akgeha.[49]

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[48] Ibid, p. 67.

[49] Ibid, p. 68.

(Tau, the king of the valley, seeing and remembering all these things, became sick at heart, something ran into his heart, he suffocated and fainted.)

It may appear presumptuous to compare a classic such as Moby-Dick with Machobane's Mphatlalatsane, yet what Richard Chase says about Melville, the author of Moby-Dick, seems to apply to Machobane, the author of Mphatlalatsane, although the two authors conceived their creations independently:

> What moves Melville most powerfully is the horror that is the violent result of making the wrong choice. He is moved too by the cosmic aspect of the spectacle, the absurdity of such a creature as man, endowed with desires and an imagination so various, complex, and yet procreative yet so much the prisoner of the cruel contradictions with which, in his very being, he is inexorably involved. Finally he is moved by the blissful, idyllic, erotic attachment to life and to one's ideal comarades, which is the only promise of happiness.[50]

Mphatlalatsane should be regarded as the most characteristic product of Sotho imagination. It is a meaningful fable. Its language, imagery and beauty are true to Sotho tradition itself. The Basotho speak in parables and in proverbs. Thus their profound meaning can be penetrated once these have been fully comprehended. Mphatlalatsane's

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[50]Richard Chase: Op. Cit., p. 107.

meaning is metaphorical and symbolic. Machobane has not suffered from the weakness of most Sotho writers--the meaning and intention that are too obvious from the very first page. This book is not concerned with character portrayal or immediate rendition of reality. The astonishing events herein have symbolic significance. They are not intended merely to arouse irresponsibility, curiosity or wonder. The apparent simplicity of the book and Maphatshwe's fantastic deeds, may obscure the meaning of the book to the casual reader.

Southern Sotho prose fiction was developed further in the Forties. Yet it was still in line with the early writings in its content and intention. The authors were mainly concerned with moral issues and less with factors that were already altering traditional society. But the writers during these years were not as open as their predecessors in advocating or propagating the christian religion per se. Now and then the church found ardent spokesmen. The Catholic Church at Mazenod found such a spokesman in Nqheku. However, this writer, as already noted in this Chapter, was not limited in his subject matter and depth of judgement. Also, breakthroughs were made towards compound compositions. Reference has been made to Mahaheng a Matso and Arola.

Eyes were also cast into the past to relive its

glory and experiences. Moikangoa's book is a case in point. Damane found inspiration in the history of his people, and the result was his Moorosi Morena oa Baphuthi. It is interesting to note that in the Forties, while Bantu poets like Mqhayi, Ntsane, Khaketla and others wrote poems on the atrocities, experiences, anxiety, fears and panic of the two World Wars, no war novels were produced. The historical novel did appear although it was not of the calibre of Mofolo's Chaka or Guma's works. The Basotho continued to stream to the industrial centres, yet no fiction dealt seriously with the migrant workers. Again, it was the poets who found a rich source of inspiration here. Compare Vilakazi's Ezinkompone (At the Mines/Compounds) and Ntsane's Ha re ya Lejwe-leputswa. Nqheku had made a start with his Arola naheng ea Maburu. Francis Nqheku, another Sotho writer, pursued this subject in the Fifties with his Tsielala--a colourful creation about the experiences of the miners in the goldfields. The writers of the Forties had not yet mastered their technical skill. The structure of their books was still loosely bound, characterization was rather poor and unconvincing, and the contents of their books showed a lack of intellectual depth. Despite these inadequacies the works of the Forties are a significant contribution to Southern Sotho literature and they laid a firm foundation for the Fifties.

CHAPTER VIII

DEVELOPMENTS IN SOTHO NOVEL WRITING IN THE FIFTIES

In the Fifties Southern Sotho fiction continued to expand, both in content, depth and technique. Basically the writers were still out to preserve the memory of the great deeds of the past, but innovations were noted in all fronts. Authors such as Simon Majara stressed the need for higher education and moral uprightness; truly modern short stories made an appearance; a detective story came into being; clashes between traditional culture and modern outlooks were portrayed, and many Basotho discontents were given expression by men like Khalala and Nqheku. These subjects will receive attention in the following pages.

The Catholic press at Mazenod, like the Protestant one at Morija, has always shown a keen interest in producing Sotho books. Mazenod encouraged authors of all denominations, hence it was here that the Organization of Sesotho Authors was founded in 1956. This organization appears to have stimulated creative writing in Lesotho in the Fifties. Cyclostyled manuscripts at Mazenod testify to this. Simon Majara's 'Makotulo appeared in 1955. The message of the book is obvious and the story is straight forward.

'Makotulo is an inconsistent and dissatisfied woman. She deserts her husband and family to seek excitement and fast life in the then Union of South Africa. But as a prostitute the woman degenerates further and falls into utter misery. Her life in Johannesburg and Matatiele is miserable. Misfortune follows her wherever she goes, and she is always on the run for her life, or illness and utter misery seem to be the punishment for her evil doings. She repents and at her deathbed the local preacher finds a good lesson for heathens. One can still hear the moral tales of Mofolo and his contemporaries in the tone of this book. As a work of art, 'Makotulo is mediocre.

Another book published by Majara in 1955 is: O sentse linako, (He wasted his Time/Opportunities), a story about a wayward boy who refused to obey his well-to-do father. Despite his father's efforts to give him a good education, the boy mixed with hooligan youngsters at Primary school. Finally he got a good chance to run away to the city when he went away to high school. However, he was disillusioned in the city when his lack of good education forced him into very low types of jobs with little pay, thus destroying all his dreams of riches and good life. In his frustration he plans to return to school, but he finds that because of his age he can no longer be admitted. Too late for tears, according to the writer.

Again, Majara's intention is obvious. He stresses the importance of education. City life is described merely to facilitate the story. He does not view the hardships in the city as a serious problem, resulting from a conglomeration of factors, but as problems existing because of people's lack of education. In his eagerness to achieve his objective, Majara punishes his hero severely. He should have obtained good education when his father sent him to school. Thus the author deprives the hero of a chance to make amends--say, find some way of improving his education. People are complex and changeable. Majara should have recognized this and made allowances for this reality.

Majara's settings--in Lesotho or cities--are authentic. Descriptions are lively and penetrating, despite the fact that the author seems to concern himself only with moral issues. The author's characters are simple--from beginning to end; they are the author's pre-conceived puppets, acting like automated machines. Events in the book follow each other mechanically. No particular attempt is made to knit the episodes in the book together. The name of the "hero" in the various sub-divisions of Majara's books seems to be the only way to maintain relationship in the book.

Many Southern Sotho writers are teachers by profession. Their concern for education and problems of youth at school can thus be understood. Ntsane's Masoabi in 1952

portrayed several school problems, some, the result of a clash between conservative, outdated, unchanging authoritarian school discipline, and real situation of modern youths. Mosoabi's clashes with school authorities demomstrate this. Despite Masoabi's fantastic achievements and rather exaggerated actions in the book, Ntsane's book is still interesting and amusing. Ntsane was still a youthful writer, yet his choice of detail and incident was very selective. He gives graphic descriptions of Masoabi's soccer skills and school children's activities and behaviour. Ntsane is economical, apt and clear in use of words. Ntsane is concerned with a changing Sotho society--in manners, customs, ways of doing things and general behaviour. There is really nothing exciting in Masoabi except for these changes that persuade the reader to read further. The structure of the book is simple and its outlines are clearly cut and well-planned. The incidents link well with one another, although in a similar pattern as in all unsophisticated novels.

An interesting booklet was published in Johannesburg in 1956. Strictly speaking, this narrative, Motwaitwai wa Lesotho (The Wanderer of Lesotho) is not a novel since there is no characterization or perhaps an attempt at a broad representation of life. However, this booklet is unique in that the writer, although assuming a propagandistic tone and method, deviated into such themes as Bantu leadership

and the problems confronting the Basotho with some unscrupulous whites. The determination of Thunthung to learn the true qualities of leadership, to alleviate the lot of his people, to free them from a foreign English government, the problems confronting him in this arduous task, and his fierce fighting with the ticket examiner in the train clearly demonstrate the new dimension Sotho fiction had reached. At least not all writers were blind to the sordid realism of Sotho experience. Khalala used a simple man, Thunthung, to voice his own national aspirations. Many incidents are fantastic and unconvincing, but these do not necessarily destroy the message of the book.

Motwaitwai wa Lesotho is a mildly angry but artistic expression of Basotho's discontent. We refer to it more for its content than form, for, structurally, the book is mediocre.

The Fifties were the years of innovation in Southern Sotho prose fiction. The first thriller in Sotho, Sekhukhuni se bonwa ke Sebatalali, by Ntsala, was published in 1954. The story is not involved. Khabele witnesses a murder which he does not report, and later he is accused as the murderer. Khabele is framed by evil friends, Pitsa and Senare, the murderers of Ramafa, and their deceitful witchdoctor Nkokoto who had been bribed. Koto, Khabele's cousin, overhears the murderers' evil conversation and scheming, and even sees the

murder weapon hidden, yet he does not report to Chief Leraha. Khabele is tried at the tribal court for murder and is found guilty because of the witchdoctor's false evidence. Koto goes to call the police who intervene and expose the real murderers Khabele is thus saved from execution.

This book has its weaknesses and good points. Ntsala employed various methods to create anxiety, fear, tension, and suspense. He allows Khabele to overhear the murder plot but to keep quiet about it; Koto hears the evil schemes and actually sees where the murder weapons are hidden, but he does not report. Tension, anxiety, and fear increase as Khabele is arrested and convicted. The reader--thanks to Ntsala's skill knows the real murderers. Eagerness increases to see the guilty parties punished. The readers are persuaded to pity Khabele. The readers are urged on to see what happens to Khabele. The author keeps his readers in suspense throughout Khabele's dark hours until he is saved from possible death at the end of the book. Yet the police intervention sounds hollow and artificial. The author was in a hurry to find a solution to his problem. Like in all other detective stories, justice triumphs over evil in this book. However, the author has failed to build enough evidence and reason to lead to the conclusion he draws. It appears that Ntsala wanted to poke fun at tribal justice

which relied on the witchdoctor's evidence. It is the whiteman's organization of justice which saves Khabele from execution. This could have been better presented if there had been a careful choice of detail and incident, and a proper relationship established between the various happenings in the book. Ntsala's handling of this theme is rather clumsy. It destroys the intense atmosphere he had hoped to create.

The author does much of the talking. Characters seem to be puppets controlled and directed by strings which the author uses at will. Ramafa is already dead even before he is actually murdered. The reader hears, sees and learns nothing from him, except what the author says. It is the author who lives in his corpse. Ntsala's character portrayal is poor, clumsy and unconvincing like that of most Southern Sotho writers.

Several books differing in depth and quality, were published in the Fifties. Authors such as Gabriel Manyeli found inspiration from other cultures. This is a logical consequence of Sotho and Western contact. His book, Liapola tsa Gauta, Mazenod, 1954, is such a mixture of fable and legends of the West and Basotho. It is a worthwhile contribution to Sotho literature in that a Mosotho could--and rightly so--look outside his culture for inspiration.

F. Nqheku's Tsielala is important in terms of its theme, expression and development. It is a colourful and far-sighted creation about the experiences and lives of the miners in the gold-fields. Reference has been made to A. Nqheku's and Francis Nqheku's skill and their attitude towards their subject matter.

The most important Southern Sotho writers in the Fifties were Khaketla and Mofokeng. The latter was born, raised and educated in the then Union of South Africa. A highly educated and cultured man, Mofokeng remained the most important innovator and experimenter in Southern Sotho literature. He initiated the practice of short stories. Leetong (On a journey) and Pelong ya ka (In my heart) are collections of true modern short stories. The latter volume of short stories, however, is inferior to the former in terms of skill, analysis, and quality of the material presented. Mofokeng had mastered his artistic skill. The essentials of a short story are present in everyone of his stories. Like in all successful short stories, Mofokeng's are well-defined, clear cut, to the point, original and easy to handle within a limited time. These are the essentials of a short story. Mofokeng did not plan to give a broad representation of life within a single story. The characters are real, richly portrayed, and their speech and actions are products of their personality; there are no irrelevent

references in his short stories. The expression is rich with Sotho idiomatic expressions and clear, and the author is able to keep his story together and maintain the reader's interest. An analysis of some of his stories in the following pages will demonstrate.

Through a careful selection of words and incident, Mofokeng is able to create the necessary atmosphere for his central message, namely, man is on a long journey; the beautiful things around him and those things he attaches much importance to, are but passing shows. Mofokeng was a sensitive artist. To him life had a purpose, but then true happiness and peace of mind were to be found beyond the grave--in the hereafter. The world is deceitful, spiteful, treacherous, vain, murderous, full of hate, and has everything that makes human life bitter. Man has to pass through this thorny road of life.

Human beings betray one another. Mona pela tsela (Here beside the road), one of the stories in Leetong, reveals this evil trait of man. An innocent man, Tumelo, is framed by envious fellow workers in a dagga racket. His whole life and future are ruined completely, people avoid him and he becomes a wanderer without a home. However, Tumelo, finds peace of mind beside the road, far away from his people:

> Rona re fumana kgotso metlotlwaneng ya rona empa Tumelo yena o ne a e fumana mona pela tsela, ka holimo ho yena marulelo ahae e le lehodimo le dinaledi tsa lona, ka mathoko e le dithaba mme ka mora tsona lehodimo hape...Mohlomong ho ne ho le jwalo hobane ka le leng o ne a tla fihla qetellong ya tsela, e mo tshedise dinoka, a yo fihla makgulong a matala, qetellong ya leeto, ya baleleri, hae ho mmae le ntatae, e, le ho NTATAE, Mmopi wa tsohle tse phelang, kgotsong e sa feleng.[51]
>
> (We find peace in our home, yet Tumelo found his peace here beside the road. The heaven and its stars formed his roof, on the sides his walls were the mountains, and beyond them, the heaven again...perhaps it was so because some day he would come to the end of the road which will place him beyond the rivers, to reach green pastures, at the end of the journey, of wanderers, home to his mother and father, yeah,to his FATHER, the Creator of all living things, to everlasting peace.

The above passage is simple, yet forceful enough to draw the readers attention to Tumelo's plight. The comparison and contrast between our comfort and Tumelo's position, and the graphic description of his situation in this passage give a rich conclusion and summary of the scene created in the opening paragraph of the story. There the reader met Tumelo waking up very early in the morning in the veld, completely without shelter. His longing--similar to the sentiment expressed in the above passage is captured in one slow moving sentence whose main clause and subordinate participial

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[51]Mofokeng, S.M.: Leetong, APB, 1954, p. 24. (I am using the official orthography)

clauses photograph Tumelo's mind clearly:

> O ne a nahana ntho e le nngwe, a bona ntho e le nngwe ha a thalatsa mahlo, o ne a nkga ntho e le nngwe feela ha a phefumoloha moya o phodileng wa hoseng.....TOKOLOHO. (Leetong, APB, 1954, p. 1)
>
> (He was thinking of one thing only, seeing one thing when casting his eyes around; he was smelling one thing only when he breathed in the cool morning breeze.....freedom.)

Mofokeng writes about simple people. According to him the pomp and ceremony of this world are but transitory things which mislead human beings. In their apparent simplicity, the common people find happiness and peace. But true peace is to be found in heaven. Simple people and their individual problems, experiences and longings are subjects in Ke toro feela (It is only a dream); Panana le Tamati (Banana and Tomato); Ruthe (Ruth); Setloholo (Grandchild); Bonnotshing (In Loneliness); Hae (Home) and Hosasa (Tomorrow/Early in the morning).

Mofokeng was a master at creating the necessary atmosphere for his stories. He was equally successful in captivating description of scenes describing human plight and deprivation. One of his successful stories, Hosasa, demonstrates Mofokeng's artistic skill. The story centres around a destitute man, Molefi, and his family. Before the reader comes into contact with Molefi, he is given a richly painted

image of "knocking-off" time and sunset in a large city. The traffic jam, the noise, the multitudes milling in all directions to their homes, their tired faces and the feeling of relief after a day's work are richly portrayed in the first part of the story.

The second part of the story opens in the same busy city at that busy hour, and the author's simple statement puts the reader face to face with Molefi:

> Hara batho ba tsamayang ka thoko ho seterata ho bonahala e mong. Ha motho o mo shebile e le hole ekare ke motho e mokgutshwanyane, empa ha a molelele. A ka be a le molelele hoja ha se ka ho kobeha ho bileng teng mahetleng ahae. Ka baka leo hloho yahae e hlile e siya mmele morao ha a tsamaya. (Leetong, pp. 89/70)
>
> (Among the people walking on the side of the street, one can be clearly seen. When seen at a distance, he appears to be a short person, yet he is not tall. He would have been tall had it not been for the stooping on his shoulders. For that reason his head leaves the body behind, i.e. leads the body, when he walks.)

In the above passage close qualification is by comparison and contrast, and the process of elimination. Note the effects of "e ka re ke motho a mokgutshwanyane, empa ha a molelele" (It is as if he is a short person, yet he is not tall); "A ka be le molelele hoja....." (he would have been tall had it not been for....) The author continues to give a vivid description of Molefi's physical appearance, his clothes and his thoughts--a real gloomy image. In the

third and fourth parts of the story Molefi's problems increase and become more complex. His wife is very ill, the children are hungry, he is in debt, he is assaulted and robbed. The picture darkens, misery piles up and the thought of tomorrow frightens Mma-Tsietsi, his wife.

Lefifi (Darkness) is the central image of this story. The story opens with sunset, the darkness in African townships, the "darkness" of poverty and hunger; the darkness in which Molefi has to walk, and the darkness that befalls his family after his serious assault. His wife cries in the dark when terrified by the thought of tomorrow:

> Lefifing meokgo ya tlallana ka mahlong.....a kgaleha....ho ntse ho duma lentswe.....le tlisang liqubu-qubu tsa ditsietsi....HOSASA, HOSASA. (Leetong, p. 110)
>
> (In the darkness tears gathered/filled up in the eyes....she slept.....still one voice sounding....(a voice) which brings loads and loads of misfortunes/distress....TOMORROW, TOMORROW.)

The central image gives unity to the story.

Another fascinating story in LEETONG is Ruthe. The reader is thrown straight into the heart of the story. Two old women, Mma-Mosa and Marie, were alone on the farm, Thabong. Marie, the servant, was working, while her friendly employer, Mma-Mosa, was reading outside. This happiness was soon destroyed or spoilt by the contents of a letter from Mma-Mosa's only son. Calves, bulls, dogs, ducks and turkeys

were making such painful noise as if they were foretelling the ill news Mma-Mosa's son wanted her to sell the farm and go to the city to live with his family. The two old women were to part company.

After creating this gloomy picture, the author takes the reader back to the time when Gert Snyman (soon to be called Chere and Mma-Mosa, respectively, by their Basotho employees)--a newly wed couple--first met Rasebolai and his wife Mma-Rasebolai (Marie), also a newly-wed couple.

Mofokeng was the first Southern Sotho writer to use this technique--as Professor P. S. Groenewald suggested in his first correspondence with the present writer, an interaction between the story time, i.e. the occurrence of the events, and the time when the story is being told. This implies a flashback to the climax of the story, and then the unfolding of the events leading to the climax. Mofokeng, as it will be demonstrated in the following stories, deals satisfactorily with this kind of a complicated plot. In fact Mofokeng, has the ability to create an exciting atmosphere to motivate his readers. The reader is always held in suspense to find out factors responsible for the situation presented by the writer.

The two families--one, master, the other, servant--began to love and trust one another. They had children who played together until their respective cultures taught them

to separate and discriminate. The master class children furthered their education, but Rasebolai's had to leave after Standard Three to help on the farm. The children grew; Chere's daughters were married and his only son was attracted to the city. Rasebolai's two sons also left home, never to return.

Old age came and the children were gone. Despair took the place of happiness and Chere died of a broken-heart. However, his faithful friend, Rasebolai, kept the fires burning. Rasebolai's wish when he and Chere first met was fulfilled when he also died:

> Re sa le batjha bobedi ba rona. Ke a tshepa re tla dula mmoho, re ahe metse ya rona mona, re phele ka kgotso, re be metswalle, re thusane, re tle re nne re hopole tsatsi la maobane ho fihlela re ba re theohela mobung o batang. (Leetong, p. 57)
>
> (We are still young both of us. I trust we shall live together, build our homes here, live in peace, become friends, help each other, always remember yesterday until we descend into the cold earth.)

These words shape the latter part of the story. Even after the death of their husbands, Mma-Mosa and Marie, did not desert each other. Mma-Mosa's son's plea put them to a test. The bible story of Ruth consoled Mma-Mosa and Marie. They realized how they belonged to each other, and Mma-Mosa took a stand--her son was replied that she could not desert her

life-long faithful friend, Marie. Once more they brightened and again, peace reigned all over the farm.

> Kgotso e ne e kgutletse le pelong ya Mma-Mosa. Kgotso e ne e bonahala hohle polasing hape.... dikgomo di iphulela jwang, le manamane....a sa lle...podi di ne di iphulela....makgantshi a leba nokeng.....Dintja...di phahamisa ditsebe le dihloho ha di utlwa mekoko e lla kapa kgoho e kakatletsa. Tsohle di bonahala....di boetse kgotsong, kgotsong e renang pelong ya Mma-Mosa le Marie. (Leetong, pp. 64/65)

> (Peace had once more returned to Mma-Mosa's heart. Peace could be found all over the farm again.... the cattle were grazing and the calves were not lowing...goats were grazing....geese were going to the river.....Dogs raised their ears and heads when they heard roosters crowing or a hen cackling. All appeared...to have returned to peace, peace reigning in Mma-Mosa's and Marie's hearts.)

Note how the scene described in the above passage contrasts with the turmoil, the bellowing of bulls, lowing of cows, crowing of roosters and barking of dogs, when sorrow, anxiety and indecision had befallen Mma-Mosa, Marie and the farm of Thabong. Mofokeng has succeeded to contrast happy and sad moments. Such flashbacks as given in the introduction to the second part of the story help to tie the book together. The story is contained and does not digress into irrelevent side stories. The biblical story of Ruth fits in perfectly and only serves to illuminate and enrich Mofokeng's Ruthe,

an original creation.

Mofokeng's prose fiction is treated with Southern Sotho novels because his short stories are closely knit together by one central theme as already described; the structure of each story is well-planned, original and a definite relationship exists between the main and sub-plots; his characters are real, complex and changeable; their experiences are true to human life. Thus the story of the message that flows from these characters is profound. Mofokeng communicates with humanity. His are character studies of profound depth. He is pre-occupied with human destiny in all his works. The central theme of his short stories is re-enforced in his lively drama based on an old Sotho legend Senkatana. His early death deprived Southern Sothos of a great artist. He had, as we demonstrated, moved Sotho fiction a step further.

Khaketla, a leading and prolific Southern Sotho educationist, poet, dramatist and novelist, published his Meokho ea thabo in 1951. The book was intended to portray a clash between traditional values and Western norms. The writer, however, failed to present a satisfactory solution to his engaging problem. Moeketsi, a school product, wishes to marry a girl of his own choice, but his uncle, a traditional Mosotho, untouched by Western culture, maintains

his right to choose a life partner for his son[52] according to Sotho custom. Moeketsi, rather than bow to his uncle's demands, leaves home for Durban. The conservative family does not change its decision. Thus a deadlock remains.

In Durban Moeketsi falls in love with Fumane who has also left home because her parents want her to marry a man she has never met. Fumane, like Moeketsi, is literate. Yet their education does not seem to be of benefit to them because, whenever problems confront them, they turn their backs without trying to resolve them. As it will be noted later, these two school products ultimately succumb to the wishes of their illiterate and conservative relatives. The two plan to marry. They decide to go home with their plea. Their parents insist that Sotho custom should be upheld. The lovers give in. By strange coincidence, the girl chosen for Moeketsi turns out to be his latest love, Fumane.

The quality of the sentiment expressed is immature. Moeketsi's first meeting with Fumane is too mechanical and unconvincing. In a dance hall, among many people, Moeketsi can tell that Fumane, a complete stranger to him, is a

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[52]The term uncle does not explain the relationship between a Mosotho man and his brother's sons. According to Bantu custom, he is their father without discrimination.

Mosotho from his homeland. His attempts at suicide are childish. Khaketla fails to penetrate the inner lives of his characters. They are mere machines responding to the author's commands or merely fulfilling his pre-planned scheme of things. Cheap coincidence, dreams and fantastic happenings do not solve complex life problems. The plot is weak; the story is a series of loosely bound incidents. Khaketla has failed to resolve the problem and arrive at a satisfactory and convincing solution. The arbitrariness and careless treatment of real problems reduce the literary stature of the book. A novel is something more than an accumulation of primary items or parts it consists in. There must be a stable relationship between these parts, items or elements. Any unsystematic arrangement or relationship destroys the total effect of the book. Southern Sotho novelists still have to learn their art and write something more than tall tales or childish escapes and meaningless talks they are given to. In this book Khaketla was still at the beginning of things, but that was a necessary preparation for his later and more mature work, Mosali a Nkhola.

Among the writers of note in the Fifties Jac G. Mocoancoeng is included. His collection of short stories and folktales, Meqoqo ea Phirimana (Evening Talks/Conversations), was published in 1953. Unlike Mofokeng's stories, Mocoancceng's are repetitions of some of the well-known

folktales. Yet Mocoancoeng's artistic skill and purposeful use of language have brought new life to these stories. The reader's interest is captivated throughout by the author's humorous tone and dramatic presentation. His essays and stories differ in artistic skill and depth. They range from moral lectures, discussions of traditional value systems, beliefs and superstitions e.g. Lipoko le Lithotsela (Ghosts and Zombies); Marena a Maliba (Kings of the depths/ Water Monsters), Litumelo tsa Mafeela (False beliefs/superstitions), Monna ea neng a thunye Molimo (The Man that shot God), Moruti ea neng a fofele Leholimong (the Parson who flew to heaven) etc. to creations like Ha khoeli e chaba (When the moon rises). Mocoancoeng is like the old story-tellers. He engages in direct conversation with the listeners, i.e. readers. He addresses them directly, asks them questions and warns them, "don't do this, don't do that." In Monna ea neng a thunye Molimo (The man that shot God) and Moruti ea neng a fofele leholimong (The Parson that flew to heaven), the author's moral lessons and warning are undisguised and direct. The reader is asked:

1. Na o ke o elellwe, mobadi...?
   (Do you often note/realize, reader...?)
   (Meqoqo...., 1953, p. 26)

2. Ha ke re, mobadi....?
   (Is it not so, reader....?)

The reader may be given some advice also:

> Ditaba tsena, mobadi, ke ikutlwetse tsona ho mots-walle....a ntlosa hodutu. Ha ke rate, ebile ke a tswafa hore o dumele hore ke tsa nnete.... (Meqoqo...pp. 35/36.
>
> (These happenings, reader, I heard myself from a friend....whiling away time. I do not like/want, also I am reluctant that you should believe that they are real....)

Although we cannot compare Mocoancoeng with Mofokeng in their artistic skill, we look at his attempts with admiration, and agree with Ntsane when he said, in his interview with Radio-Bantu in 1964:

> What there is now in the way of Sotho books, I and my late dear friend, feel is a personal contribution we cannot possibly feel ashamed of. It is meagre in many ways, but not too slimy. (See also Moloi, Op. Cit. p. 6)

Southern Sotho prose fiction in the Fifties showed a remarkable capacity for expansion and adaptations. Various literary forms were attempted with some measure of success. New themes were tackled, but in most cases, Southern Sotho fiction was neither self-conscious, sensitive nor satirical. Nqheku's works, although showing many weaknesses, are exceptions. Now and again, some writers presented a clear picture of Sotho society.

The introduction of vernaculars as media of instruction in the schools in 1955 encouraged the production of

more vernacular literary works. However, an increase in quantity did not always go hand in hand with improvement in quality. Some poor manuscripts that had been rejected earlier found their way to the press to increase vernacular school readers. This increase in the production of Southern Sotho books continued right into the Sixties. Literary competitions, especially since the establishment of the Republic of South Africa in 1961, have encouraged many more Sotho writers. It is hoped that there will also be improvement in the quality of the works produced.

Novels written and published in the Sixties will be examined in the following Chapters.

CHAPTER IX

THE UNSOPHISTICATED WRITINGS OF SOME SOTHO NOVELISTS IN THE SIXTIES

Dr. Emmanuel Obiechina in his Literature for the Masses, 1971, distinguishes between--what he calls--sophisticated (intellectual) and unsophisticated writers. The distinction is made on the basis of differences in the approaches of the two sets of writers to the "problem of a changing society in which the growth of new cultural elements has stimulated new desires, new attitudes and new values."[53] Both groups of writers attempt to articulate "these vast sweeping changes....to provide some kind of guidance and direction to the masses of people caught in the violence and confusion arising from the changes."[54], but here the similarities end. The former group is highly learned and delves deeper into the whys and wherefors of things, while the latter group, mainly because of a lack of sound education and wide experience, merely scratches

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[53] Obiechina, Emmanuel: Literature for the Masses: An analytical study of Popular Pamphleteering in Nigeria, Nwakwo--Ifejika and Co. Publishers, Enugu, Nigeria, 1971, p.7.

[54] Obiechina, E.: Op.Cit., p.7.

superficially on the basic problems. This latter group associates education, money, christianity and power with good living and success. Thus they preach the need for education, moral uprightness and loyal services for money. They do not ask questions such as "what kind of education to acquire, what to do with money, how relevant is it to human development, etc.?" The former group is more critical and is not over enthusiastic about Western civilization. One can almost draw a parallel between Southern Sotho novelists and the unsophisticated writers described by Obiechina when he says: "The pamphlet scene is teeming with comic, ridiculous and grotesque characters and incidents."[55]

However, we are not going to apply Obiechina's terms to Southern Sotho writers since some of these men showing every characteristic of Obiechina's unsophisticated writers are highly learned, widely-travelled and experienced men. Rather, we shall, as already suggested in the third chapter of this study, apply the terms "sophisticated" and "unsophisticated" to the works themselves. Our criterion will be How close or removed is the method of narration of a particular writer to oral traditions? Does the reader still feel he is listening to the story-teller of old? (We have discussed the techniques of the story-teller of old,

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[55]Obiechina, E.: Op. Cit., p.7

and have also examined the format of his story.) In this chapter we are going to examine the unsophisticated writings of the sixties, the works that do not indicate any mastery of the writing skill on the part of the writer.

It has been noted how the introduction of vernaculars as media of instruction in Bantu schools in the fifties encouraged the writing of several vernacular books. There was a notable increase in the volume of vernacular publications throughout this period. Yet many books produced during this period show spiritual poverty in their content, and the writer's skill leaves much to be desired. Many writers appear to be more interested only in the flourishing school market and winning some literary contest than in quality. Several poor manuscripts reach the press because of incompetent or less concerned book reviews. The weaknesses will continue as long as the artists are aware that there is no critic to scrutinize their work, sift the shallow from the more purposeful works, and fight hard to discourage poor workmanship.

Prose fiction in the sixties still evinces the same characteristics of prose in the fifties with regard to content. For example, there is concentration on the negative aspects of western culture and innovation, demoralizing city life, a desire to instil love for education -- regardless of its quality -- and virtue -- no matter

how abstract -- in the minds of school children; an unquestioning acceptance of things European and condemnation of traditional practices such as polygamy, medicine men and religious beliefs. The works are still politically harmless for they do not show critical review of the real life of the people, and the existing law and social order are never or cannot be questioned. Directly or indirectly the writers sing praises to western civilization and condemn Sotho customs and beliefs. This uncritical adherence to European standards is found even in the form of many Sotho literary works. In poetry, drama and the novel, Sotho artists, in fact all Bantu authors, still believe that their works can be enhanced by slavish adoption of European forms, regardless of their adaptation or otherwise to Bantu languages. Emulation of European literary forms is, therefore, for the most works, still very superficial. Many people who have aspired to make Englishmen out of the African, or the Africans themselves who have aspired to foreign acquisitions, have questioned the effectiveness of South African vernaculars as media of instruction. Their argument is often based on a false belief that European languages are superior to South African Bantu languages and therefore only these languages can be the languages of civilization. Arguments are also based

on less defined political objectives. These people do not seem to realize that by depriving people of their culture and language, their national identity and dignity, sense of direction and national aspirations are destroyed. They claim to detect a sinister intention of the government to throttle African minds by employing vernaculars as media of instruction. Mother tongue can and does bolster national pride and love for one's culture and tradition. However, let us not be naive to believe that in the hands of cynics languages can be used as a tool to halt the development of subject communities. Despite the less desirable aspects of government policy towards the Bantu or Bantu education in particular, mother tongue instruction has developed or encouraged a strong attachment to mother tongues and a strong feeling of belonging and identity with tradition. This has important consequences for ideals, ideas, desires, aspirations and plans of the Bantu in the future. Without their languages the Bantu will become nothing. To those who claim writing or teaching in the vernaculars is a drawback because writers are prevented from conveying the realities of African experience to the outside world,[56] the present writer states that the African writers are not interested in preaching European philosophy of life. It is not Their mission to write for the abstraction, the "world". They

[56]Gerard, Ibid, p. 382.

are writing for their people and are preaching life philosophy as their people experience it. True, too much emphasis on mother tongue may have undesirable effects of creating divisions and artificial barriers among South African Blacks, but responsible leadership can prevent this.

No doubt Sotho imaginative writing will benefit the moment the writers show insight and talent, realize the forces operating around them, become more discriminating in acquiring or emulating European culture, and probe deeper into the individual's emotions. The novel deals with life -- a broad representation of life, as Muir will say it -- yet it finds expression in individuals and their personal emotions and experience. It is a mirror through which an individualistic society sees, judges, chastises and praises itself. By its very nature, therefore, the novel is "foreign" to African societies which are cohesive, more group-oriented and less concerned with the individual. The purpose of African literatures is thus concerned with nation building or preserving society's culture, religion, past glory of kings and warriors and collective identity and dignity of the group. African writers, the products of such closely knit societies, fail dismally in portraying individual emotions and experiences. Yet African societies are not static. Present day economic factors are transforming the group-oriented societies

into more individualistic ones. The African author is gradually becoming aware of this change. Individuality is gradually becoming his acquired nature, and it is our belief that soon it will be given expression in more mature novels. Already writers such as Ntsane and Khaketla have turned to self-criticism and thorough examination of the Black man himself. Ntsane, especially, has ceased to find fault outside the Sotho community itself. His latest book, Bao Batho, despite its incoherence, improbability and unconvincing coincidence, reveals the Black man -- this time Basotho -- as his own greatest enemy. This book will be discussed later.

In the next two chapters we propose to discuss the works of Guma, Khaketla, Ntsane, Matlosa, Majara, Mahloane, Moiloa, Mophethe and Lesoro. These are not the only writers of the sixties, since there are scores of minor novelists like Thakhisi, Maboe and Lekeba, among others. The list we have selected is representative of real apprentices in novel writing and more experienced prose writers. The former group is represented by Lesoro, Moiloa, Lekeba and Mophethe, while the latter is represented by Khaketla, Ntsane, Guma and Matlosa. Mahloane's and Majara's works are representative of the development in Lesotho. It is rather unfortunate that politics should affect literary development. Southern Sotho feels it most because of the

two main and separate streams of Basotho -- the Basotho writers in Lesotho and those in the Republic of South Africa. Because of minor orthographical differences and trivial political jealousies, comparatively good creative productions are excluded on both sides, thus robbing the Basotho of worthwhile contributions on both sides of the political boundary.

In the preceding chapters we have observed that Ntsane and Khaketla are the greatest writers to have come out of Lesotho since Mofolo. However, other noted figures, even if their works are not popular in the Republic of South Africa, are Nqheku, Majara and Mahloane, among others. The past history and legends of Lesotho seem to have inspired the latter two Lesotho writers. Wars of the past, great deeds of the warriors, the hardships and success of the Basotho, form the main theme of Mahloane's Tsoana-Makhulo, Cyclostyle, Mazenod, 1964. Even if the book is a straight-forward narrative with no particular exciting characters and penetrating analysis of human experience, the language used is forceful and the reader is held in suspense by the graphic description of battles, surprise attacks and heroic defences. The book is of the class of unsophisticated novels discussed earlier.

Majara found inspiration in the life of Moshweshwe. His Morena oa Thaba (Mazenod, 1961) is a worthwhile his-

torical account of Lesotho under Moshweshwe and Difaqane which destroyed and scattered Southern African tribes. The essentials of historical novels are observed in the two above-mentioned books: the social organization, political institutions, beliefs, customs, laws, behaviour patterns, conversations and human relationships are true to the period discussed. However, the writers have not risen above mere story-telling.

A host of minor prose writers sprang up in the sixties. Interesting enough, these are the most prolific Southern Sotho prose writers today. Among them we shall discuss Moiloa, Lesoro and Mophethe. The latter two writers have won several literary prizes. A critical analysis of their prize-winning compositions will be most revealing. The reader will discover for himself the quality of the works allowed to reach the press and the standard of book reviews today.

Lesoro's Pere Ntsho Blackmore, the prize winning attempt in 1966, is a song of praise for the policy of Separate Development, founding of the Republic of South Africa, white leadership and peaceful human relationships, despite the title page. The story of the horse,Blackmore, is a loosely woven technique to give Monaheng, the school teacher, a chance to preach about what the Republic stands for. The author takes the centre of the stage in the form

of Monaheng to enumerate visible points of progress made since the establishment of the Republic in 1961: the introduction of Radio Bantu and the respectable place given Bantu languages, the Transkei experiment and what it promises for other language groups in the future, separate Black Universities, appointment of Black Commissioners,etc. There is no doubt that the author, through Monaheng, is selling a particular belief, ideology or doctrine:

> Empa ketsahalo ya bohlokwa ka ho fetisisa, ke katleho e kgolo eo naha ya Riphabliki e e tsotsitseng dipolitiking tsa lefatshe ka ho hlola nyewe ya Afrika-Borwa-Bophirimela Lekgotleng la Lefatshe kwana Den Haag, ho la Nederlane! Manti, Katleho ena e ka nkuwa e le sesupo se totobetseng sa hore leano la ntshetsopele ka karohano ke lona feela le ka kgonang ho qhaqholla mathata a naha e ahetsweng ke merabe e fapaneng. Habore le koro di ntle di arohane, nngwe e jetswe tshimong ena, nngwe e jetswe ho yane.[57]
>
> (Yet the most important happening is the great achievement of the Republic in world polotics by winning the South-West-Africa case at the World Court at the Hague in the Nederlands! Truly, this achievement can be taken as a clear sign that the idea of separate development is the only one that can solve the problems of a country inhabited by different nationalities. Hay (or cattle fodder) and wheat are beautiful if separated, each in its own field.

Study the logic in the above quotation. The South-West-Africa case and Separate Development are one and the same thing according to the author. Without any disguise whatsoever the author stretches his argument further. He waves

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[57] Lesoro, E.A.S.: Pere Ntsho Blackmore, Bona Press, 1968, pp. 101/102.

the flag and charges fearlessly at the alleged enemies of his country:

> Ntshetsopele ka merabe e kopaneng, ke taba ya molomo feela o jang bohobe; hase ntho e ka etsuwang ka katleho. Hona haeba leano leo le ena le hona ho sebediswa ka katheho, ho tlile jwang hore dinaha tsa Batho ba Batsho tse fumanong boipuso di se ke tsa le latela? Na ditho tsa paramente dinaheng tseo hase batho ba Batsho feela, ha ba Basweu bona ba lahlilwe qhobelele? Motho a se no bona phatsa e ka leihlong la ngwanabo, yaba o lebala tshiya e ka leihlong la hae![58]
>
> (Development through integration of different nationalities is mere talk; it is not something that can be attempted with success. If this idea can be applied with success, why do the Black nations that have achieved independance not follow it? Are members of parliament in these countries not Black people only, while whites have been cast out? Let one not see the splinter in another's eye and then forget the pillar in one's eye!)

Other than the celebrations and Monaheng's eloquence there is nothing forming a coherent whole in the story. Pere Ntsho, Blackmore, does not even provide a central theme of the story. The whole book is a simple narrative, intended to please the ears of Republican festival competition organizers. Lesoro's book is unique since the outright sermons of Mofolo's contemporaries. Lesoro preaches a political dogma while those men were out to spread the gospel. Yet those earlier sermons were artistically presented while Pere Ntsho, Blackmore, is mediocre.

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[58] Lesoro, E.A.S.: Op. Cit., p. 102.

As soon as Lesoro takes the stage to preach or become propagandistic, he ceases to be an artist. His Monaheng has no personality. He is a robot through which the author speaks. Even his sense of values is twisted. When Mmolotsi asks him about his qualifications, Monaheng goes into details to explain he has passed the B.A. degree, Cum laude, majoring in Sotho and English. Apparently his quotations from Oliver Wendell Holmes, Coleridge, Oliver Goldsmith and others will not be fully appreciated if it is not made known that he majored in English. The author himself is concerned about the many--most of them unnecessary--English quotations. To cover this, he makes Monaheng quote Ecclesiastes, Chapter Three:

> To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven....

He concludes, therefore:

> ...esitana le yona nako ya ho qotsa dithothokisong tsa Sekgowa e teng....mme ho nna ho fihlile nako ya hore ke qotse ho tsona![59]
>
> (Also, there is a time to quote from English poems...for me, therefore, the time has come to pick from them!)

Education is the only salvation according to Lesoro. Talking about the late Dr. H.F. Verwoerd and his relationship to the Non-whites, Lesoro quotes Oliver Goldsmith:

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[59]Lesoro, E.A.S.: Op. Cit., p. 18/109.

Thus to relieve the wretched was his pride,
And e'en his failings lean'd to Virtues' side.

Hlaodi, Lesoro's black sheep, is not over-credulous. He wants to understand things before accepting them. Thus he questions and even criticizes Monaheng severely:

> Batho ba Batsho ba fuwe ditulo tse phahameng hakalo tsa boikarabelo kahare ho meedi ya Afrika-Borwa! Ke tshomo feela ntho eno, mosuwe. Haeba ke ntho e ka etsahalang, e tla etsahala kgale mohla dipere di melang manaka![60]
>
> (Black people given such high positions of responsibility inside the boundaries of South Africa! It is only a tale, teacher. If such a thing will ever happen, it will be in the remote future, the day horses grow horns--impossibility!)

He goes further to observe:

> Mesuwe ka mehla ke batho ba buellang Mmuso. Ke re jwale ebile le nyolletswe meputso tjee, le tla hle le manamise leleme le ho feta.[61]
>
> (Teachers are people who always speak for the government. Now that your salaries have been raised, you will be diligent to let loose your tongues the more.)

Pere Ntsho Blackmore is a loosely bound book. Several unrelated episodes have been arbitrarily joined together to advance the author's intention. Fantastic achievements of Blackmore are annoying; the quality of the message is com-

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[60] Lesoro, E.A.S., p. 27.

[61] Lesoro, p. 27.

monplace. Lesoro does not seem to accept art for its sake; he is on the offensive to spread his gospel. Characters are lifeless. It is as if one is listening to a radio broadcast, a dull one at that. The only redeeming feature of the book is a dialogue between Monaheng and Hlaodi, which the author handled with skill and made it seem probable. This book is a grand digression, if not a poor political speech. Lesoro has not made his mark as a prose writer either. His Leshala le tswala Molora (Literal translation: A glowing coal begets Ashes) too can while away time for children at school. It is not mature, both in content and form. Lesoro is preoccupied with moral issues only. He does not seem to grasp the realities of life around him. Also, he has not developed some way of keeping his story together.

Mophethe's Mofufutso wa Phatla (The Sweat of the forehead) is another revealing Sotho book of the Sixties. In it the reader finds the personal conflict in the minds of many South African Blacks, their desires, anxieties, attitudes towards the socio-political environment personal image and concern or otherwise, given expression. For the most part, these revelations, on the part of the author, are unconscious. He seems to be more concerned with his story without realizing its full significance, and its revelation of the inner self.

Monaheng, the renegade from a circumcision school in Lesotho, is saved from certain death by one of the Voortrekkers, Landman. Landman is extremely kind while Monaheng's deeds are exceptionally good. He is diligent, trustworthy, obedient and patient. They become great friends and always laugh and probe into each other's past life like brothers. The master-and-servant relationship is completely submerged. Soon the two men realize that Monaheng and Landman mean one and the same thing; their customs, even if they may be interpreted differently, are alike. Therefore, they conclude, the Basotho and Afrikaners are very close to each other and related. These apparent similarities in names and customs, the author is trying to use as tying factors in his characters' relationship.

Monaheng excels in everything. He is physically attractive, kindhearted and successful; so are his wife, Mma-Tefo, and adopted son, Mothoduwa. He moves with the Landmans as a trusted family friend--far from being a servant--to Bloemfontein where he manages their very successful business venture. Everybody loves Monaheng and his family. They elect him the best Bantu citizen of Bloemfontein. Monaheng is given supernatural powers, for he sees visions of the dead and the living, the hidden things of tomorrow. He is informed in his trance about the future

success of Mothoduwa and the utter misery and shameful death of his wayward natural son, Takatso. Monaheng knows his exact time of death and he sees the happy faces of angels coming to meet him, the man who lived on the sweat of his brow, honesty and loyalty to his master.

In Mophethe's world people are happier if they are given free food and old clothes and also getting presents whenever they buy; they emulate the Europeans in their manner of speech and dress; things are of quality if they are labelled: MADE IN ENGLAND or MADE IN AMERICA. Under the careful guidance of the Europeans they become successful in life, and their success is measured by the big cars they drive and the large houses they live in.

> Ba ne ba sa reke dijo kaha ba ne ba tla le tsona Makgoweng; le diaparo ba ne ba tshohana ba di rekile, boholo ba ne ba di apolelwa. Batho ba teng ha ba bua ka "dikapoledi", ba hlomoha haholo. Ho ne ho sa tenwa bo--"riding breech", empa ha ba qhwetswe haholo ba ne ba tena di--"Oxford"; baki e ne e le tse mapheo, tse kang tsa tantshi kajeno.[62]
>
> (They did not have to buy food since they usually brought it with them from 'Makgoweng'--place of whites, the job-givers; even clothes they seldom bought, mostly they were given to them. When these people talked of "given clothes", they used to be affected greatly. At that time fashions were "riding breeches", but when they were really well-dressed they put on "Oxfords"; coats were slashes like those used at dances today.)

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[62] Mophethe, C.L.J.: Mofufutso wa Phatla, via Afrika, 1966, pp. 28/29.

The author gives a true picture of the Bantu with a conflict in identity. Unfortunately. Mophethe does not realize the import of his message. To him it is a normal situation and he does not comprehend the tragic situation of this confusion and begging attitude. Hence he offers unacceptable, childish solutions to a serious problem. Fanciful ideas, wishful thinking, fantastic achievement, pious, almost abstract characters, dreams, intervention of supernatural forces, artificial human relations, are not any solution to a problem of this magnitude. The author is concerned with healthy human relations and understanding, yet he loses sight of reality once he attempts to tackle the problem in this fashion. The quality of his message does not match this lofty ideal.

Mofufutso wa Phatla leaves much to be desired in the quality of its contents, analysis of human experience and the relationship of various aspects of the book. It is a tall tale, almost ridiculous. The author had a great theme which he messed up through lack of insight into its real meaning.

There is no real conflict to tie the book together. The various sub-divisions of the story are loosely knit together by Monaheng and Landman, or events revolving around them. However,there are beautiful descriptive passages such as the opening chapter, Botle ba Botle (Great Beauty). Here

the author has given a captivating description, a living image of Modulatshepe (Smithfield) and the farm Geloof-fontein.

Education and moral issues--the only pre-occupation of many Sotho writers--are central themes of harmless, almost "quiet" books such as Thakhisi's Tsha hase mele Poya, Lekeba's Gauta e ntjhapile, Moiloa's Paka-Mahlonola and Maile's Moiketsi.

Tsha ha se mele Poya is about the hardships of a school teacher among jealous, callous and tribalistic community; his perserverence, hard work and academic success. Gauta e ntjhapile is about Moferefere, Mahlaku's son, who leaves home to seek work in Johannesburg. Dikgetla finds employment for the unsophisticated Moferefere. There is a complete change in Moferefere's life. A love affair develops between him and Keromang, a domestic servant. Moferefere goes to live at Domestic quarters where he is raided by police for a "pass". Keromang disappears. Moferefere does not learn. He goes to live with yet another domestic servant, Mosela. She disappears with all the furniture. Moferefere falls into utter misery. He is fetched by his parents. At home he marries and lives happily thereafter--as most Sotho books will end.

Moiloa's Paka-Mahlomola and Maile's Moiketsi are about wayward children who disobey their parents and ulti-

mately end in misery. Moiketsi's punishment is death after a complete physical breakdown. Mahlomola repents and becomes a ridiculous meek lamb. He washes dishes, floors and the house in general, even when this is not expected of him.

The above-mentioned books have the same message, aim, execution, and they show the same weaknesses. The language employed is commonplace--the idiom, especially in Gauta e ntjhapile, is not always correct. The writers are more of narrators than creators. Characters are merely described externally. They are not living beings but the writer's abstractions. Many episodes, like the sudden change of Mahlomola, academic successes described, and Moiketsi's fantastic bravery and strength, are unconvincing. The character's responses are not motivated. They seem to happen for the amusement of an unexacting readership. The books are vague, childish and uninspiring. Maboe's Menyepetsi ya maswabi, falls under the same category as the above-mentioned books. It is a straight-forward pulpit sermon--a questionable one at that.

Books discussed in this chapter have one thing in common--lack of artistic organization of story material. They do not seem to have a basic principle which knits the various parts of the story together. The reader does not feel any development of the story, i.e. there is nothing in the preceding pages that seems to relate to what follows.

Every sub-division is thus a simple story in itself. Now and again a character's name crops up to keep the various parts "related". These books are paraphrased by their titles, and authors work hard to "prove" the truth" of their headings. Every sub-heading, too, is the summary of its contents. This feature is clearly demonstrated in Mofufutso wa Phatla e. g. Botle ba Botle (Great/real Beauty); Bitso (Name-sake); Ntata Mangaung (Father of Mangaung/Bloemfontein).

More mature works of the Sixties will be analysed in the next chapter. Perhaps a bridge between these two groups--sophisticated and unsophisticated compositions--is provided by Ovid Mofolo's Lesiamo le Ema. It is its form more than its contents, which places this book in that in-between position. The story centres around the unfulfilled and frustrated love of Lesiamo and Ema. The two are madly in love, however, a problem is created by the fact that Ema is already promised in marriage to Makhele, and, her father, despite his wife's plea on behalf of Ema, would not return bohadi (loosely translated: bride prize, or cattle given to a woman's people when she marries) lest the family is humiliated. Ema dies of a broken heart and frustrated love on the eve of her marriage to Makhele.

The story is simple throughout with simple and unchanging characters from the beginning to the end of the

book. Yet a significant change or development in the style is noted in the chapters where the author narrates Lesiamo's adventures in Durban, at the coal mines, and again at Ema's home. Manyeli begins with the climax of the story in the present and quickly flashes back to the past events that led to the present. This is an important development towards a more complex composition. Manyeli, however, does not always succeed in this style of writing which is so characteristic of Mofokeng's best stories. Refer to Ruthe or Hosasa. Another noted factor is Manyeli's attempt to present Lesiamo's thoughts to the reader after his parents have given him a lecture on true love, and also warning him against seeing Ema again. In this chapter the author penetrates Lesiamo's heart such that his own comments on Lesiamo's sensitivities appear to be the very thoughts and feelings of his character. A follow-up on this method in the future, may enhance the status of our prose fiction.

CHAPTER X

FURTHER DEVELOPMENT IN SOTHO NOVEL WRITING IN THE SIXTIES

In this Chapter we wish to give further attention to Khaketla's, Ntsane's, Guma's and Matlosa's books. We are already familiar with their earlier works. The present writer will like to trace further development in their works published in the Sixties. Guma's historical novels, Morena Mohlomi mora Monyane and Tsehlana tseo tsa Basia, reveal the author's thorough understanding of African, especially Sotho, customs, law, religious belief, political practices and social organization. The previous book provides a detailed analysis of kingship and laws of succession of the Basotho, Mohlomi's life history and travels, the customs and behaviour patterns of other South African tribes, political situation and intrigues then, and the power of medicine men. The account given saves much of Sotho tradition from oblivion. However, at times the reader has the feeling that the author is giving an objective historical account. A historical novel need not be a dry presentation of facts.

Morena Mohlomi opens with a brilliant description

of the country of Lesotho and its various peoples. This description provides a good background for the events in this book. The beauty and fertility of the land, peace and order among this diversity of people, and the widely-flung boundaries of Lesotho summarize the central theme of Mohlomi, the traveller-king.

> Naha e teng e tumileng haholo, eo setumo sa yona se ntseng se tswela pele le kajeno, ka ho ya ka diketso tsa baahi ba yona..Ke naha ya Lesotho, naha ya Basotho e ratwang ke Basotho bohle, ba phelang ho yona le ba sa pheleng ho yona. Ke naha ya makgulo le masimo, naha ya batho le dintho, ya dithaba le maralla. E kgabile ka thaba tsa yona tse sa lebaleheng, tseo ereng ha moditjhaba a di bona a le sebakana, a utlwe a ferekana maikutlo ke botle ba tsona. Di a bitsa; di a hohela. O ka fumana.....di thotse ebile eka di kobile dihloho sa poho di fatelana makwatsi; nqa e nngwe di be di tshwane le dipheleu--di batla ho kgorohelana. Botle ba tsona ke bo hlollang, bo sa lebaleheng ho ya kileng a di bona. (Morena Mohlomi, Shuter and Shooter, Pietermaritzburg, 1960, p. 1)

(There is a certain famous country, whose fame still continues even today, through the deeds of its inhabitants. It is the country of Lesotho, the country of Basotho which is loved by all Basotho who live there and those who do not live in it. It is the land of pastures and fields, a country of people and beasts, of mountains and hills. It is decorated by its unforgetable mountains, which when seen by a foreigner/traveller from a distance, he would be affected/touched emotionally by their beauty. They appeal; they are attractive. You will find them.....quiet and even appearing to be bowing their heads like the bulls wanting to fight, i.e.raising dust; at some point resembling rams eager to storm each other. Their beauty is wondrous, unforgetable to one who has seen them.)

The above passage is attractive because of the author's close and lively description which is realized by means of vivid similes e.g. the fighting bulls and rams, a repetition of words, especially after short, yet forceful copulatives such as Ke naha ya Lesotho....(It is the land of Lesotho...) and opposites balancing one another, e.g. Ke naha ya makgulo le masimo, naha ya batho le dintho, ya dithaba le maralla. (It is the land of pastures and fields, a land of people and beasts, of mountains and hills.)

The first six chapters are really a preparation for the introduction of the main character, Mohlomi. The village of Tebang and the customs of the Bakwena are fully described. The king's plight of not having children is presented as a possible problem to affect the theme of the book. Ngwepepe, a medicine man from the Bapedi, helps the queen with his medicine to bear children. The conflict is intensified when the queen bears twins, one of whom has to be killed according to tradition. Monaheng's people are split on the issue. Some like, Kgwapha and Kganyapa, the villains, want the law to be followed to the letter, while others, especially the queen, will do anything to save the children. Mokgeseng and Monyane are born and they live, but the Bakwena are split into faction groups. Mokgeseng, a reckless young man, was killed at war. Only in Chapter Seven does Guma relate the story of Monyane and the birth of his son, Mohlomi.

The author completes this chapter with a simple statement that Mohlomi is born and much will be said about him in the following chapters of the book.

The following chapters, which seem to be joined together by the concluding sentences of the preceding chapters, narrate Mohlomi's wonderful deeds, his wanderings and adventure among the various tribes, the customs of other people and the countryside in general. He helped the sick, bound together through marriage, several kingships and built his own nation.

> Mohlomi a qala puso yahae ka ho bopa setjhaba sahae a se etse ngatana patsi. Ntho ena a se ke a e etsa ka dikgoka kapa tshusuhlello; a e etsa ka ho ruta setjhaba molemo wa ho phedisana ka kgotso. (Morena Mohlomi, p. 93)
>
> (Mohlomi began his reign by building his nation, making it a firm unit, i.e. one bundle. This he did not do through oppression or force; he did/achieved this by teaching his nation the value of living together peacefully.)

The diversity suggested in the first chapter is united in Mohlomi, son of Monyane. Note the effect of the contrast in the last sentence of the above quotation:

> ...a se ke a e etsa ka dikgoka kapa tshusuhlello; a e etsa ka ho ruta...
>
> (...He did not do it through opression or force; he did it by teaching...)

Mohlomi advised Moshweshwe, the future nation-builder of

the Basotho, visited cannibals, dog-eaters and died shortly after his last journey among the Swazis. Guma presents all Mohlomi's wisdom gathered through his wanderings in a conversation with his wife, Mmadiepollo. In his vision he could see the new "light" for his people and also the rise of Chaka and his war expeditions. In his deathbed Mohlomi said to his wife and subjects:

> Ke ne ke ratile ho ka le tlosa mona, ke le ise moo le tla bolokeha teng hobane ke bona lerole le lefubedu le etla ka matla a maholo ho tswa Botjhabela ho tla kwano. Le tla re ripitla, re ripitlehe. (Mohlomi..., p. 140)
>
> (I had wanted to move you from here and take you where you will be protected because I see the red storm coming here with great strength from the East. It will annihilate us, crush us completely.)

It is not always that Guma made his characters more vital, probed into their inner lives and thoughts, turned upside down their personal conflicts, experiences, fears, anxieties, desires and schemes. The nature of the story makes us dependent on the author's description of his creations, except when they unfold themselves in their own dialogue here and there. However, the author's mode of characterization was effective because of the interlocking episodes and clear stage-setting by the author. Morena Mohlomi is a free moving an unfolding prose fiction, revealing the author's artistic skill and insight into this subject matter.

Guma's books, as already suggested are beautiful artistic creations. His attempt, Tshehlana tseo tsa Basia (Those fair/light-coloured Ladies of the Basia) is an entertaining, instructive and inspiring account of how the Batlokwa tribe was saved from dissipation and extinction by their brave and powerful queens, Ntlokgolo and Mmanthatisi during the many wars in Southern Africa which had begun with the Zulu monarchs. Guma delves deep into the social structure and political organization of the Tlokwa, as he had successfully indicated how Monaheng's tribe split into two because of disagreement over Dibabatso's twins--tribal superstition about multiple births. There is a definite relationship between cause and effect in this book as there is in Morena Mohlomi. The two queens, and later in the book, Sekonyela, are richly portrayed. Their complex nature is carefully analysed, and the existing tensions are fortified to develop the story. Guma's books reveal a genuine desire to penetrate the experiences of tribal authorities. Unlike many modern Sotho writers, Guma does not use witchcraft as an evil of olden days. Mohlomi is not condemned since the author recognizes the good he had been doing, healing the sick, wherever he went. Guma does not reveal the many contradictions so prevalant in many Sotho books. Tshehlana tseo tsa Basia is a successful analysis of factors influencing the evolution of political system of Basotho--a

section thereof, Batlokwa.

The first crisis in the story revolves around the birth of Montwetsana and Moepi. As in the multiple birth of Monyane and Mokgeseng, the tribe split into two. Things are done legally and logically within the tribe. The circumcision of Mokotjo at his uncle's home has precedent among the Batlokwa. The writer makes them to quote, as a way to make their action legitimate, the case of Moorosi, king of the Baphuthi, and his uncle, Nqe. Thus Mokotjo could be circumcised by the Basia. In the first half of the book, the queen, Ntlokgolo, had saved the crown for her infant son, Mokotjo.

The conflict intensified in Chapter eleven when Mokotjo dies, leaving the small boy Sekonyela. Treachery was brewing among would-be regents. Mmanthatisi, Mokotjo's wife, defied tradition and assumed the throne of the Batlokwa. Her amazing powers and ferocity at war are well portrayed. Describing the day Mmanthatisi assumed the leadership of the Batlokwa, the author says:

> Ba fihla ba kokota, ba kena. Ba tshoha hoo ba neng ba batle ba idibana. Yare ba eso hlaphohelwe ba sa ntsane ba tsielehile jwalo, ba iphumana ba se ba hlabile ka mangole fatshe pela hae, ba emisitse matsoho a bona a matona, ba re 'Morena!' ho yena. (Tshehlana tseo tsa Basia,1962, pp. 68/69)
>
> (They came and knocked and got in. They were frightened, frightened so much that they almost fainted.

And before their heads had cleared, while still puzzled like that, they found themselves kneeling before her, with their right hands raised saying, 'Your Majesty!' to her.)

Mmanthatisi had a strong personality, and the author observes that the frightened people--when finding her wearing their royal blanket which had not been worn for some time--thought her eyes were more piercing than the spear and her hands were specially created to carry war weapons and to tear apart the enemies.

...ba bona eka kotjana ena e tshwerwe ke matsoho a bopetsweng ho tshwara dihlomo le ho tamukanya batho ntweng...(Tshehlana...., p. 69)

(....they saw as though that short royal stick was carried by hands made specially to carry weapons and to crush people at war.)

Tshehlana tseo tsa Basia, like Morena Mohlomi, Mora Monyane, ends as if another story is about to begin. The conflict is further intensified. In the latter book, Moshweshwe, the future king of the Basotho is advised by the peace loving Mohlomi; also difaqane, wars begun by Chaka and continued and spread by Mzilikazi and Dingaan, are suggested by the allusion to the red storm rising from the East. Thus Morena Mohlomi ends where the reader is motivated to pursue, on his own, the follow up of Sotho history, either during the reign of Moshweshwe or the effect of difaqane. Tshehlana tseo tsa Basia also keeps the reader in suspense

towards the end. Sekonyela, son and successor of Mmanthatisi, and Moshweshwe, have met. Thus a new conflict is developing. The author merely announces:

> Poho di ne di le pedi tse kgonyang ka Lesotho jwale mme bobedi ba tsona di ne di sa tshepane, di sa batlane ho hang feela. E ne e le morena Moshweshwe mane Thaba-Bosiu, e se e le monna ya tiileng; e le Sekonyela, Jwala-Boholo, a sa le motjha haholo ha a baphiswa le Moshweshwe. Empa ntweng ho ne ho sa sebetse boholo kapa bonyenyane, ho ne ho sebetsa lerumo le kwakwa feela. Feela he motsotsong oo ba ne ba ituletse qhobosheaneng tsa bona, ba sa kgathatsane ka letho. (Tshehlana... p. 100: Underlining my own)
>
> (There were now two bulls bellowing inside Lesotho, and the two did not trust each other and hated each other very much. It was king Moshweshwe there at Thaba Bosiu, already a fully grown man, and Sekonyela at Jwala Boholo, still very young when compared with Moshweshwe. But at war old age or youthfullness did not work, only the spear and the battle axe worked. But at that moment they lived at their own strongholds, and did not bother/trouble each._

The image of the bull and the underlined sentence suggest strongly what the future would be like. Perhaps, the end of one Guma book could be the starting point of yet another, like in the works of Chinua Achebe in West Africa. One feels the echoes of Mofolo's ending of Chaka:

> Mazulu le Kajeno a bokajeno ha a hopola kamoo e kileng ya eba batho kateng, mehleng ya Chaka.... (Chaka, 1957, p. 156)
>
> (The Zulus even unto this day, when they remember how they had been people, in the days of Chaka....)

Guma ends his story:

> Re tje, re tje kajeno.....ka mesebetsi ya tshehlana tseo tsa Basia
>
> (We are what we are today....through the works/ deeds of those Beauties of the Basia.)

Although the reader sees the main characters through the eyes of the author, the background provided does illuminate actions and interaction among the various characters.

Matlosa, the author of Molahlehi, came up with his second book, Mopheme. This book seems to have followed on his major digression in the second portion of Molahlehi--the author was now pre-occupied with remedying social evils, using his book as a pulpit through which to preach sermons. This clouded his judgement, for Matlosa, as we shall observe later, was no longer concerned with the structure of his book i.e. he sacrificed artistic quality to give an unconvincing, doubtful lesson, warning, correction or direction to the Sotho society. Briefly, the contents of the book are as follows: Lesokolla, a wealthy man, yearns to have a male heir. He marries a second wife, Baratang, despite his first wife. Botle's warning that Baratang is only after his riches.

Botle says to her husband:

> ..Ke bona eka o nka ledinyane la marabe le hatsetseng, leo etlare mohla le futhumalang le boyane le wena. (Mopheme)

(...I seem to feel that you are taking a frozen young one of a snake which will turn against you the day it finds warmth.)

Baratang is humble and kind-hearted until she is married to Lesokolla. She begets children, then turns to insult Botle who has no children and refuses that her children should be sent about by Botle. Later Botle gives birth to a son Tshito (later to call himself by different names, such as Metsi (Water), Mopheme(the name of a South African kind of jackal), etc. Baratang is very bitter. She plots to murder Lesokolla, Botle and Tshito so as to retain all the livestock for her own children. She bribes her secret lover, Mokopu, Lesokolla's best, yet treacherous friend, to murder Lesokolla and his son. Botle died mysteriously and Tshito escaped death and fled to Mothusi's house. Mothusi and his wife (good loving Sammaritans) brought up the outcast Tshito.

Tshito, under an assumed name and identity, plans revenge. He begins to steal fowls and livestock in the whole village. These things are never traced in spite of thorough searches. Sheep, goats, fowl and cattle disappear under their owner's noses. Baratang is blamed as a witch because Tshito, who had disguised himself as a witch-doctor, pointed her and Mokopu out. They were expelled from the village. On the way they were robbed of their

remaining animals. In the new village men went out on expeditions to hunt Mopheme but without success. The chief's righthand man, Sekgahla, who loved glory and praise was humiliated on several occasions. He is said to have been a police sergeant in Johannesburg, but Mopheme's (Tshito's) tricks made a mockery of his intellect and powers of reason. Baratang and Mokopu fall into utter misery. Her sons who are so stupid as not to recognize Tshito and their livestock, work at Tshito's cattle posts. They ill-treat their impoverished mother. In the meantime Tshito falls in love with his arch-enemy's daughter Tlholohelo. They get married and live happily thereafter. He sends for Baratang, forgives her and returns her livestock, that of Mokopu and everybody in the village. Fantastic!

In this book Matlosa had hoped to reveal the 'evils' of sethepu (polygamy) such as hatred, jealousy, revenge, treachery, deceit, evil upbringing, envy and callousness. Baratang, the gold-digger, is a personification of these undersirable characteristics, Tshito is the victim. The author hopes society will learn. The solution he offers is forgiveness and love, repentence and humility, understanding and loyalty. However, the author's method is arbitrary, unsatisfactory and improbable. The story lacks coherence; improbable episodes of Tshito are humorous but childish, they appeal to the lowest sentiments of man.

Tshito, the main character, is highly imaginary. He is capable of fantastic achievements. Other characters lack intelligence. They cannot penetrate Tshito's disguises. The whole village is stupid. Even stolen clothes on Metsi (alias Mopheme, Tshito) are not recognized as those of Sekgahla. Sekgahla's wife cannot even differentiate between her husband and an impostor. There is no relationship between happenings and the environment, except when the author prepares the reader for Tshito's love affair with Sekgahla's daughter. The main story is supposed to take place in modern Lesotho; yet Tshito's hiding places are never found out. Even trained police like Sekgahla are baffled by Tshito, once an outcast. Many episodes in this book really underestimate the reader's intelligence. Molahlehi, with all its shortcomings, is still superior to a rather shallow attempt as Mopheme.

The narrative is still as uncomplicated and straightforward as in Molahlehi, yet the former story is still probable and less fantastic.

To conclude this chapter, we shall discuss the works of two of the leading contemporary Sotho writers, Khaketla and Ntsane. The former writer seems to have discontinued writing after Mosali a Nkhola, while the latter has come up with Nna Sajene Kokobela, C.I.D. and Bao Batho. Khaketla's Mosali a Nkhola is a great improvement on

Meokho ea thabo, his earlier attempt. The scene of the story is Lesotho at the time Basotho were beginning to send their children to school. A clash between Western innovation and tradition was becoming evident. One of the chiefs in Lesotho realizes, despite his lack of formal education, that the times have changed and that to meet the challenge, the new rulers must be educated--change with the time. He sends his son Mosito to High School where he completes the Matriculation examinations. He does not enforce traditional beliefs on his son. He is a strong protector of tradition, yet uses no medicine man; he does not choose a wife for his son, according to tribal custom, but merely advises him of royal families to visit first. Mosito is educated but he has a twisted sense of values. Sebolelo's physical beauty attracts him; no other characteristics are examined. He praises her teeth, complexion, smile, eyes and manner of style. His sincere friends Pokane and Khosi doubt this sense of values and also question her lack of formal education. Despite his friends' advice, Mosito marries the illiterate and superstitious Sebolelo. The seed of his downfall was thus planted.

After his final choice, Mosito still hears his father saying:

> Ho kgetha mosadi ho boima hahola, mme ho lokela hore motho a imamelle hona hantle. Haeba o fela o utlwa hore Sebolelo ke yena, ke yena, nna ke re ho lokile. Haeba o bona hore leha le sa lekane ka

thuto le tla nne le phele hantle ba babedi, ke tla ya mo nyala. Feela o tsebe hore ke wena o ikgethetseng, mme haeba ho ke ke ha eba kamoo wena o hopotseng kateng, nna ha ke na ho ba le molato letho.[63] (Orthography changed for convenience.)

(Choosing a wife is very difficult; one must be extremely cautious. If you feel Sebolelo is your choice, I accept your decision. If you feel that despite differences in your educational standards you will still manage to live happily together, all is well with me, I shall go to marry her for you.[64] Yet know that you choose for yourself, and if things do not go according to your expectations, I shall be completely innocent.)

These words of Lekaota are used by Khaketla to present to the reader the problem which will affect events in the book. Immediately the reader has a feeling that Mosito's involvement with Sebolelo will ultimately affect his future life adversely. This is one feature of developing the story further, employed by the writer.

Mosito married Sebolelo, but his father's words and those of Pokane and Khosi still pointed to the ominous future. The future becomes even darker when his friends suggest:

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[63]Khaketla, B.M.: Mosali a Nkhola, APB, Johannesburg, 1960, p. 13.

[64]According to African custom the parents negotiate marriage on behalf of the children. The young man's people, usually the mother's brother and other selected members, go to meet the young women's people. Certain ceremonial exchanges of cattle are agreed upon and the marriage can be solemnised later.

...ho nyala ngwanana ya sa rutwang ho tshwana le ho pana pere le kgomo kariking. Ha e nngwe e hulela kwana, e nngwe le yona e tla hulela moo e ratang, mme kariki e sitwe ho tsamaya, e be e qetelle e robehile, le baphalami ba yona ba tswile kotsi.[65]

(...to marry an illiterate girl is like inspaning a horse and an ox to a cart. When one pulls to one direction, the other pulls to the opposite direction; thus the cart cannot move. It will ultimately break down and its passengers get hurt.)

Note the dramatic irony in the above lines. Dramatic irony is Khaketla's effective technique throughout the book to present Mosito as a tragic hero.

Lekaota died and was succeeded by his son Mosito. Shortly thereafter the chiefs in Lesotho lost much of their powers. Evil forces began to play on Mosito's ambition and his lack of strong principles. He was reduced to a minor position. Thus Kgati, Sebotsa and Maime, Lekaoata's former advisors who were jealous of Pokane and Khosi, the educated advisors of Mosito, attempted to influence the chief to employ the services of a witchdoctor and commit ritual murders to "strengthen" his position. At the beginning the weak-willed Mosito resisted. The old "indunas" played on the sentiments of Sebolelo, Mosito's wife, and convinced her that her son Thabo would never rule if her husband did not strengthen his position according to traditional practice. Because of pressure from his wife, Mosito disregarded his friends'

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[65]Khaketlà, B.M. Mosali a Nkhola, p. 8.

good advice, his late father's, the commissioner's and the local minister's advice. He gave in to the evil advice of his illiterate and superstitious wife and newly found advisors, Maime, Kgati, Sebotsa and the treacherous witchdoctor Selone. The group murdered Tlelima. Certain parts of his body were removed from him, and the charms were prepared. The chief and his friends--although some, like Maime, betrayed him--were arrested, and after a lengthy trial were found guilty and sentenced to death by hanging. Mosito then realized his folly and thought of his sincere friends and their kindly advice. He blamed, not himself, but, his wife for the misfortune that had befallen him.

This book has its weaknesses, but it is certainly a worthy improvement on Khaketla's previous novel. The plot is well conceived and well-planned. There is interaction between events, places and characters, and nowhere does the plot appear unsound and unconvincing, except for the very bad irrelevant last chapter. Characters are well portrayed. The physical description of Kgati, Maime, Sebotsa and Selone suggest the danger facing Mosito. Their evil nature can be read from their mannerisms and facial appearances. His education does not seem to benefit him. He is spineless, hesitant and a weak character. Selone is treacherous, scheming and deceitful. Pokane and Khosi are upright and diligent characters. They stand for progress and good, while the

others are forces of darkness. All these characters present an interesting image. They seem to be the two sides of Mosito's personality. He is a man of the new light because of his education, but he is still also a man of tradition, a guardian of his people's beliefs and customs. Thus one foot is steeped in tradition while the other holds dangerously to the "new deal". Pokane and Khosi are the embodiment of his enlightenment and noble nature, whereas tradition and some of its darker aspects are represented by Maime, Kgati, Selone and his wife.

Yet Khaketla has his share of moralizing. The last few pages of the book are unnecessary moral sermons. The author's intrusion now and again in the personality of his creations is disburbing. He has not been able to resolve the conflict in the black mind--the existence of God and ancestors side by side. Lekaota is not a christian yet in his death-bed he extols christianity. At times it is not clear whether he talks of God or badimo, the ancestors. Khaketla cannot stand polygamy, hence even Lekaota, the custodian of tradition, should speak against it, witch-doctors and ritual murders are punished by death--even a man of high birth and learning like Mosito must suffer if he is guilty. The author's tone is very obvious; Lesotho must progress even if this may mean a reduction of hereditary chiefs. But Khaketla is not confused. He knows what

to improve or discard in his tradition and culture. To the hypocrites and less careful critics he says:

> Ke mang ya reng papadi tsa Sesotho ke ntho tsa sehetene? Ya buang jwalo o buiswa ke ho hloka tsebo e phethehileng, kapa hona hobane a eso di bone ha di etswa ke ba di tsebang, bao di leng mading ho bona ba di etsetsa makgetheng a di lokelang.[66]
>
> (Who said Sesotho games were heathen things? The one who says that talks because of a lack of thorough understanding, or simply because he has not seen them being done by those who know them, those in whose blood they are, and even then, performing them with grace that befits them.)

Khaketla is proud of his people, language, culture and land. Even in the darker pages of this book his pride is evident.

Mosali a Nkhola is well-knit together. Mosito comes home after completing his studies at school; he gets married; his father dies and he is installed as chief; the numbers of chiefs are reduced and Mosito receives all kinds of advice, including committing ritual murder, to fight for his birth-right. The conflict in Mosito is intensified by his strong-willed wife and the witch-doctor Selone. Mosito gives in, inspite of his faithful friends' pleas, and Tledima is murdered. He is arrested, tried and convicted--sentenced to death.

Certain parallels may be drawn between Mosali a Nkhola

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[66]Khaketla, B.M.: Mosali..., p. 3.

and Mofolo's Chaka, in the advancement of the story. Both Chaka and Mosito are of royal origin although of lower rank--thus ends the similarities in backgrounds. The two books probe into the lives of individuals; they are psychological studies of Chaka and Mosito. Other characters are used to illuminate the life of the hero. Thus, as Kunene found Ndlebe and Malunga to be different aspects of Chaka's character, it could be argued that Khosi and Phokane, on the one hand, Kgati, Maime, Sebolelo and Sebotsa, on the other, form different aspects of Mosi to 's personality. It has already been suggested that the first two characters mentioned are the nobler side of Mosito while the remaining ones represent the hold which tradition and superstition still have on Mosito.

Mofolo seems to offer Dingiswayo as an alternative for Chaka's personality. Khaketla contrasts Mosito with his illiterate yet wise father, Lekaota. In both works witchcraft and magic have been effectively used to stimulate suspense and to advance the story. Towards the end of the story Malunga and Ndlebe deserted Chaka, so do Letebele and Maime turn against Mosito at his trial; Chaka cannot sleep from his nightmares, Mosito is hysterical and has nightmares before his death. Selone mocks Mosito after deceiving him; Isanusi appears to be mocking Chaka, when he appears finally at Chaka's death to demand for his pay.

The last chapter of Mosali a Nkhola is irrelevent. It merely affords the author the opportunity to condemn witchcraft and ritual murders, and exalt education. It only re-enforces the moral Khaketla states openly when he says:

> Ha o jala mabele o kotula mabele; ha o jala poone o kotula poone; empa ha o jala tshehlo o ke ke wa lebella hore o kotule koro! Motho ka mong o kotula seo a se jetseng! (Mosali a Nkhola, p. 118)
>
> (If you sow corn/sorghum, you will reap corn; if you grow maize, you reap maize; but if you grow thorns, you cannot expect to reap wheat. Every person reaps what they have sown.)

Chaka also had its moralizing as it was revealed in the analysis of that book. Yet the most interesting story about the book Chaka is what the missionaries tried to do with it. We explained how the missionaries at Morija were displeased with Chaka, feeling that it exalted a pagan. The book was not published until the mid Twenties. But they could not suppress the book completely. Therefore they had to work hard to find moral lessons in it. The present writer was told by subjects he interviewed in Morija and the Roma valley some of those moral tales created around Mofolo's Chaka by the missionaries. The stories go thus: Chaka killed a lion and a hyena; other men like Samson of old had done it. He came from humble origins to build an "Empire". Did Christ not come from such humble origins,

yet surpassed any living man to create God's lasting kingdom? Chaka fell for God can humble a proud man. Saul, on his way to Damascus was struck blind; compare: it was put in the hearts of Chaka's brothers to kill that "monster". The above stories merely indicate how stories were over-stretched to find some religious connotation in them, and to mellow down Mofolo's creation.

Mofolo dealt with the world of the dead and the past. Thus his poetical style tended to mix fantasy and reality. Khaketla dealt with contemporary Lesotho, her problems and the realities around him. Therefore, he is direct and to the point in his analysis. Magic and superstition are not romanticised and given mysticism as in Chaka. Yet sentences in Mosali a Nkhola are interconnected and bear direct relationship to each other as in Mofolo's Chaka. The very opening sentence of Chaka describing South Africa, and the opening sentence of Mosali a Nkhola setting the time and place of Mosito's arrival, are identical in detailed description, close co-ordination and knitting of phrases together. Casually Khaketla announces:

> E ne e le Laboraro bekeng, le hora e le ya boraro, motsheare wa mantsiboya. Ka yona nako eo, lori e tsamaisang poso pakeng tsa Qacha le Matatiele ya fihla ya re butle kgekgenene, ka pele ho ntlo ya poso Qacha. (Mosali...., p. 1)
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> (It was Wednesday in the week, and the hour was the third in the afternoon. At this very time, the

lory/truck carrying the mail between Qacha and Matatiele, arrived and stopped carefully in front of the post office in Qacha.)

The slow movement of the mail truck is recaptured in the order of ideas in...ya fihla ya re butle kgekgenene (lit. translation:...it came and said gently/gradually "kgekgenene." It came and stopped gently/completely.)

Another patriot of Lesotho is Ntsane, the greatest Sotho satirist. Even though his novels are not as successful as his poetry, Ntsane still appeals to the reader's sensitivity. In Nna Sajene Kokobela (I sergeant Kokobela) Ntsane traces the consequences of injustices meted on the people of Iesotho by the former colonial government, civil servants--both white and black--and British deceitful treatment of Banotho soldiers. At government offices people met insults and humiliations, the police were savage and abused their powers. The story of the book begins with a young clerk, Kokobela, realizing these wrongdoings and he wishing to join the police force to remedy them. After distinguishing himself as a good and intelligent policeman, he was raised to the rank of detectives and position of sergeant. He is sent out to investigate a callous ritual murder in the mountain area. Lentswe and Tabola accompany him.

The murderer was Mafethe, a callous and cruel criminal who alleges that the corruption in his country made him

to scorn the law and despise those who stand for it. The conflict is provided in the different approaches, beliefs, convictions and opposing personalities of Mafethe and Kokobela. The story will revolve around these. Topisi's wife serves as the meeting point of these widely different characters. To get money Topisi's wife sold her own husband's head to Mafethe. Mafethe was feared by all villagers including the chief. When the police were hot on his trail he fled to the mountains with his hostages, Topisi's wife and Langwane. The former's hair was pulled out by the roots while the latter's ears were cut off by Mafethe. Kokobela pursued Mafethe to the caves. In the caves Kokobela and his men were trapped and Mafethe had a chance to unfold his bitterness:

> Le ikentse diphiri hara dikonyana, le thusa batho bao morero wa bona e leng ho senya setjhaba, ho se amoha ditokelonyana tsa sona le hona ho se fumanehisa, ho se tuba le ho se tlatlapa ka ditsela tse ngata? Le re ekaba dintho tsee kaofela di monate? Bosoleng kwana re ne re iswa moo ho tjhesang, kgabong ya ntwa, empa ha ho jewa menono, tholwana tsa tlholo, ditjhelete, re teelwa ka thoko, ho feta bo-Nyeo le bo-Nyeo, bao mosebetsi wa bona e leng ho itulela letsatsi lohle ditenteng mona, ba tsuba, ba eja, ba enwa ba ithabisa ka mekgwa e mengata.[67]
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> (You have made yourselves wolves among lambs, you help those people whose objective is to destroy

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[67]Ntsane, K.E.: Nna Sajene Kokobela, C.I.D., APB, Johannesburg, pp. 84/85.

the nation, to deprive it of its rights, to impoverish it by oppressing and exploiting in many ways? Do you think that all these things are good? In the army we were taken to hot spots, in the furnace of war, yet when enjoying the spoils of war, the fruits of victory, money, we were cast aside, only those with names passed by, those whose sole duty was to sit in the tents the whole day, smoking, eating, drinking, making merry in several ways.)

Mafethe continues with his bitterness:

> Empa ha no ntho e ntshentseng moya ho feta ha ntwa e letse, re kgutletse mahae mona. Re lwana ho thwe re lwanela toka, empa ke kae moo toka e leng teng? Di kae ditshepiso tsela tse ngata-ngata tseo re neng re di tshepisitswe...Masole ke dintja hona jwale...ha re tsebe seo re neng re se lwanela. Menato yohle, boiketlo bohle, ditokelo tsohle, di fumanwa ke ba neng ba le siyo ntweng...re re ka lla re lla, ha ho ya mamelang...jwale ke hona moo lona le ntseng le matha mona jwaloka dintja tsa ditsomi le re batla batlodi ba molao; ke molao o sireletsang mang ona oo?[68]
>
> (Yet there is nothing that made me more bitter than when the war was over and when we had returned home. We fought, we were told, for justice, but where is that justice? Where are the many promises we were given....Today soldiers are like dogs...we do not know what we fought for.All joy, comfort, privileges are for those who were not to war...our cry is never heeded...yet it is then that you run about like hunting dogs looking for law violators; law, protecting who?)

There is no doubt from the above quotation that Mafethe is a psychotic case. He has no mercy; he states that nobody should expect him to have any feelings, for the

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[68]Ntsane, K.E.: Op. Cit. p. 85.

world has no feelings. He is a brilliant man like Kokobela. He is aware of social evils around him; yet his reaction is abnormal. He does not meet the challenge like Kokobela; he feels the world should be corrupted further. Kokobela believes that crime does not pay. He does not give in until he escapes miraculously and takes Mafethe and others to jail in Maseru. They are tried and found guilty. To the end Mafethe remains convinced of the world's evil--especially in Lesotho.

Ntsame's story is exciting, but it is still spoilt by too many improbable achievements and escapes. For justice to triumph the author allows Mafethe to be taken prisoner. Yet earlier in the book we were told that he was an expert in binding ropes. Mafethe is a complete beast as opposed to the righteous Kokobela. Humour, suspense, tension, sarcasm, fear, irony have been successfully employed by the author to develop his story. The expression is typical of Ntsane, humourous, clear, rich in Sotho idioms and well balanced. Mafethe's callousness strikes terror in the hearts of many readers.

Nna Sajene Kokobela is written in the first person throughout. This is interesting because most Sotho books are indirect speeches of the author. Dialogue in the book is the key mode of characterization. The characters' thoughts are well rendered, although the reader is disappointed by

their mechanical reaction at times. Refer to the callous image of Topisi's wife portrayed by Ntsane and Langwane's fear.

Nna Sajene Kokobela is developed, although with little success, like a detective story. Unlike in the detective story, however, the plot of Ntsane's book is not well constructed. One would expect unchanging characters carrying out a well-thought out plot of the author without improbable episodes. Mafethe, Topisi's wife and Kokobela are rendered as very intelligent people. Their caution, suspicions and doubts are often used by the writer as points of development for his narrative.

Ntsane's latest book Bao Batho is inferior to all his works. The quality of the contents is commonplace. However, Bao Batho may be regarded as a satirical condemnation of the harmful behaviour of the literate Basotho who are struggling to escape their racial heritage. Ntsane's humour saves this otherwise empty booklet from becoming ridiculous. Petty jealousies, plottings, forgeries, drunkenness and irresponsible behaviour of people like Kobokobo, Tjhotjholoza, Hipo, and the meekness of Rasello and Teduputswa are the usual childish exaggerations of several Sotho books. It is unfortunate that in the third attempt at novel writing Ntsane should not show mastery of his art. Ntsane is a poet of great standing; perhaps he should con-

centrate in that area, Over-extending one's energies may have harmful effects.

In the Sixties Southern Sotho prose fiction still remained utilitarian in purpose. Moral aims completely subdue form in many cases. Authors like Maile were emotional and uncompromising in dishing out their sermons. The Sixties, therefore, still remained the age of the didactic novel. Very few works described striking situations and episodes. The stories still remained weak and incoherent. Several authors were not profound in their pronouncements. They seem to live still unconsciously in the present. Despite the hurdles to be overcome in the future, the Sixties were fruitful years for Southern Sotho literature. A firm foundation has been laid for a permanent Sotho creative writing. Guma's and Khaketla's books indicate the possibility of a further development of more complex and mature narratives. Khaketla's Mosali a Nkhola, especially, is an outstanding achievement indicating Khaketla's mastery of his art and a balanced, mature and farsighted view of life in Lesotho.

CHAPTER XI

THEMES IN SOUTHERN SOTHO PROSE FICTION AND THEIR DEVELOPMENT

Southern Sotho literary works studied in the preceding Chapters deal with a variety of themes. In this Chapter we propose to examine closer the wide fields in which Sotho authors find their inspiration, their prose subject matter, and their response to the different themes they treat. The various themes will be differentiated according to the contents of the novels. These novels have been carefully analysed in the preceding chapters. However, where necessary further analysis will be done for elucidation.

The themes deduced from the novels studied thus far demonstrate the impact that western civilization has had on the life style of the Black people in general, and the effect it has had on the individual minds in particular. It is interesting to note the wide differences between the responses of poets to their socio-economic-political milieu, and those of the novelists to their subject matter. These differences need explanation because some of the Sotho writers like Ntsane, Khaketla and Mopeli-Paulus are both novel-

ists and poets/dramatists. It must be explained why the same man responds differently to the same stimuli under, we presume, similar conditions. For example, Sotho poetry covers a wide field; the poet's personal experiences, their philosophy of life, response to nature and natural phenomena, social norms and values, great personalities, analysis of human nature. Although the poets differ greatly in their interpretation of the world around them and in their response to the various themes, there seems to be in their works many points in common regarding the purpose and function of poetry. Certain themes run through their poetry. The present writer, in his study of Ntsane's and Khaketla's poetry, has indicated that the main pre-occupation seems to be socio-political themes, custom, culture; effects of the contact situation between the Basotho and the Europeans, political changes and human relations within the existing socio-political milieu. The poets have a deep longing for the greatness of their nation. They are very articulate in their demands, complaints or praise.

Yet the same men display indecision in their novels. They do not seem to have any aspiration at all. Whilst their poetry is turned into an effective weapon to build and uplift the Basotho to teach, to purify, to reveal a real sense of values and to declare their inner satisfaction or disappointment, these men's novels bear very little relation-

ship to the genuine experiences of the Basotho today. They do not seem to appreciate fully the meaning of our cultural milieu. The works imply that we live, as it were, unconsciously in the present, outrooted and transported from cultural forces as if they do not impinge on our minds. There is a lack of depth and failure to recapture the essence of human feeling and thought, less ability and intellectual skill to interpret the world around us, and a general incompetence to explain and unfold the very being of human sensitivity. It may be argued that in the natural evolution of literature it is easier to write good poetry, hence Sotho poets, like their counterparts in older written literatures of the world produced "good" poetry; yet it should be remembered that by good poetry we often refer to the quality of the imagery and its effect on the readers, i.e., the quality of the content, more than the form or external embellishment of the poem. Thus with the Sotho novel one has to take into account also the quality of the author's message, i.e., the quality of the content of the book, in addition to the form that may be duplicate of the "conventional" novel, or its direct opposite. Certain factors account for the spiritual poverty of most Sotho novels. For example, it should be noted, that the Sotho novelist, like other Bantu authors, does not operate freely. He is chained to the sentimental tastes of the Bantu Education authorities and the financial

interests of the publishers. He is also a victim of poor book reviewers whose incompetent examination of books has eliminated many a good manuscript. His own inexperience too has affected his artistic work adversely. On the other hand, poetry is the language of the heart, and its very nature has made it difficult for incompetent reviewers to judge it severely. It has escaped uncontaminated while novels have not been so fortunate. Novels today evince a kind of 'stagnation' and spiritual poverty, while poetry has expressed a freer spirit of the Basotho and almost all Black South Africans.

One of the more common themes treated in modern Southern Sotho literature is the clash between the value systems of the Europeans and traditional culture. This clash is evident in religion, marriage, polygamy and related problems on love affairs. If we recall Khaketla's Meokho ea Thabo, Ntsane's Masoabi and Bao Batho, Matlosa's Molahlehi and Mopheme, we shall note that this theme, involving a serious clash between western civilization and traditional culture of the Basotho, is hardly dealt with satisfactorily. The present writer claims that life, as unfolded and interpreted in many Southern Sotho books, is not a complexity and an entangled puzzle to be resolved, but a fairly simple riddle whose solution may be found in dreams, wishful thinking, coincidence and intervention of the super-

natural beings and magic. A problem is not always pursued to its natural conclusion. There is no attempt to penetrate into the meaning of life and the core of the human spirit. We noted, for example, that in Meokho ea Thabo, a clash between traditional values and ideals and revised sense of values was suggested. The young school product, Moeketsi, rejects the idea of conservative relatives choosing a wife for him. The family would not give way and the young man turned his back against them when his ideal woman married another man. Therefore a deadlock remains. Then the author fails to resolve the problem and arrive at a satisfactory and convincing solution, he arbitrarily allows Moeketsi to succumb, and, by strange coincidence, the girl chosen for him turns out to be his latest love, Fumane. Even the first meeting of these lovers is too mechanical and unconvincing. This careless treatment of real problems reduces the literary stature of the book.

It appears that the dilemma facing the writers of Africa--black Africa--faces also the Southern Sotho writers. The dilemma is: What is right for the African? He has been stripped of his culture and his value systems, and appears to be blindly running to destruction, according to Mr. G.H. Franz; one foot is deep in tradition and the other is holding precariously to foreign values. Should the African adopt, without discrimination, Western values, should he reject the

West and fall back to his vaguely remembered values, or a combination of the partly understood Western values and the distorted traditional values would build a new Africa? What kind of a world will that Africa be? The black writers are undecided and the confusion continues. We do not suggest that literature should provide solutions to the life problems; yet we do believe that the artist, especially the novelist, should not remain insensitive to the problems of the day. His argument or his presentation of life should point the way or suggest some alternative. Mofolo, in Chaka, for example, does provide Dingiswayo as an alternative to Chaka's personality.

The Sotho authors fail dismally when they try to penetrate individual emotions, especially personal love problems. Gerard's suggestion that the African's societal outlook drives him to turn character into type, seems to explain the Sotho writer's inability to probe into the individual's inner self. A person is viewed as a member of a group and not merely as a selfish being existing independently of others and pursuing his own personal interests. We submit that this outlook towards life may have literary implications, but it should be remembered that African life is not static. Changes take place by the day. We have, in the preceding Chapters, demonstrated this. As of now characters are types in many Sotho books, but when an individ-

ualistic society has evolved, a different mode of characterization will make its appearance.

Coincidence is not a satisfactory solution of a serious problem. Khaketla's coincidence is of poor taste. This is true also for Matlosa's Mopheme, T. M. Mofokeng's drama, Sekhona sa joala (Morija) and Koote's Dimakatso wa Sekgutlong (A.P.B.). The quality of the sentiment expressed in these works is immature and unconvincing. The writers are trying to rationalize on the heart's contentment and satisfaction. The main characters in Khaketla's and Koote's books do not seem to benefit from their education when faced with serious problems they must solve.

The second theme depicted by Segoete in Raphepheng is the disintegration of African traditional society. This problem is related to the first one, however, it does not seem to have aroused much interest in the works of most Sotho writers. None of them, except in poetry, seem to regret this erosion of traditional social organization and values. It was claimed in the preceding chapters that Sotho authors express an uncertainty in their works regarding their true nature as people. The tragedy of the educated Black man is that he wants to live in two worlds at the same time. He has lost touch with his people because he makes a conscious attempt to become white in his behaviour. He has spurned things traditional and African. Thus in his dilemma,

the educated Black man belongs to no group. He is a new product of African society, the "White-Black" man, Kgowana-tshwana. This is, as we claimed earlier, a confusion or contradiction as the word which labels him itself. Most Sotho writers merely float in the air, failing dismally in portraying the genuine aspirations or image of their people. Contrary to general belief, we claim that the writer should not distance himself from his daily experience, the overall socio-political milieu. Man does not live in abstraction; he is in constant interaction with other people and forces or conditions over, above, in or around him. His literature must give expression to this life time involvement. Many critics have rightly claimed that literature is a mirror through which man examines himself in all aspects of his complex nature.

Segoete regrets the disintegration of traditional values. Through his creation, Raphepheng, Segoete speaks admirably and with pride about the olden days, the beautiful physique of the Basotho, their bravery, hospitality, high sense of morality and invaluable value systems. But Raphepheng sees these value systems disappearing. The world is changing very fast and nobody cares to pause and think about this disheartening state of affairs. We hear the disquieting words of Raphepheng:

> The present day Basotho no longer love one another; each one stays home with his wife; they eat the head of a goat alone.

This selfish individualistic attitude is foreign to the Basotho. The sooner the Sotho writer, indeed all Bantu writers, start thinking seriously about his predicament and presenting sincerely the experiences of his people, the better for the nation. People cannot live unconsciously in the present. Literature that has no spirit, i.e., no relevance to the true conditions of the people, is useless for any society. Writers, we have proposed, must, in addition to entertaining, give direction to the aspiration of their people. Good literature is entertaining, inspiring and instructive.

The haughtiness and arrogance of the former administrators of Lesotho and their Sotho clerks, arbitrary rule and exploitation of the illiterates, prompted Ntsane to compose his penetrating satires. These same reasons brewed hatred in Khaketla's heart and prompted him to expose the guilty party, and, in unequivocal terms, declared his dissatisfaction and bitterness. In poetry they came out clear and loud, yet in prose fiction these men are tame, harmless, almost ridiculous and childish.

Segoete was the precursor of the "Makgoweng motif" with his Monono ke Moholi ke Mouoane (1910). Since his day

many other Southern Sotho writers have taken up this theme almost slavishly. The pattern of these stories is the same. An unsophisticated Mosotho leaves home to seek a fortune in a large city. The white man's laws, customs and activities confuse and puzzle him. Being completely removed from known Sotho customs and values, the unsophisticated Mosotho breaks. He falls foul with the law and if he does not return home, he lands in jail, gets badly hurt or dies. He is never able to adjust to his new social environment. We are made to believe this in Moiloa's Paka-Mahlomola, Lekeba's Gauta e ntjhapile (A.P.B.), Maile's Moiketsi, Matlosa's Molahlehi and Nqheku's Arola naheng ea Maburu. However, the latter two books, as demonstrated before, are the more outspoken when dealing with the conditions with which Africans find themselves in the white man's world. Other Sotho authors merely concentrate on trivial issues and avoid so-called controversial ones. They seem to have been conditioned not to delve deeper into the true meaning of life in urban areas. The books do not reveal that the writers understand the causes of moral degeneration in the industrial cities. They choose only the negative side of urbanization and turn a blind eye to the other good features. The theme of 'Jim comes to Joh'burg' is treated in a very childish manner.

The Sotho writers appear to be unconcerned with the pressing social problems of the day. Social problems of

yesterday such as polygamy and complications in human relations resulting therefrom have received more attention in Khaketla's plays and Maile's. Hatred, disloyalty, scheming, distress, deceit, jealousy and murder resulted from polygamy. Tribes were torn apart and happy homes broken. This feeling is also suggested in Mopheme (Matlosa), Guma's historical novels, Morena Mohlomi mora Monyane, Tshehlana tseo tsa Basia and Mofolo's Chaka. Yet no Sotho writer has bothered to illustrate polygamy as a way of living in past generations or refer to its more positive aspects as a means of social regulation. The Sotho writer does not operate outside the latitude he is allowed. It has been suggested in the earlier Chapters that the spiritual poverty of Sotho prose should be traced also to the socio-political environment. The writers are superficial. They describe the problems, yet offer no solution. Maybe it is not for them to offer answers, but their understanding of human nature should be evident in their books. One other theme which is popular with most Sotho writers describe Sotho beliefs, value systems and superstition. Witchcraft and ritual murders have been described and analysed by Taoana in his play Obe and Khaketla in Mosali a nkhola. Despite the fact that these themes are challenging, involving and alive, the writers display indecision and personal conflict. Matlosa suggests there is no witchcraft, yet he concedes that a good medicine

man can combat it, like Makgaphela succeeded in killing the monster, Obe. Where does the writer stand? The book feeds the irresponsible curiosity of the reader because of its humour and hair-raising incidents. Yet the quality of the contents leaves much to be desired.

Khaketla, as we have observed, condemns ritual murders. Those who practise it, be they chiefs or commoners, must pay dearly for it. Mosito received a death sentence for his part in Tlelima's murder. This condemnation, however, is not a shallow emotional outburst on the part of the author. The reader is taken through the heart-breaking sorrow of Lipuo, Tlelima's wife, when her husband did not return from the feast and when she learnt about his death. It is the sorrow, grief and bitterness which these callous ritual murders cause which makes Khaketla adopt a stern attitude towards diretlo. Khaketla does not bring out clearly the personal conflict in Mosito, the dominant spirit and persuasion of Mosito's wife. The frightening atmosphere around the main character, his utter helplessness and painful personal conflict are not revealed forcefully to the reader as Shakespeare has done in Macbeth. Thus this reduces the tragic element in the book. The writer's prime aim in punishing the guilty party has clouded his judgment in giving exciting interpersonal relations, conflicting desires and ambitions, and captivating attempts at the realization

of these desires and ambitions. In fact, with all themes dealing with the personal conflict between black and white, the struggle for economic independence, the parental will for security for one's children, the guilt from infidelity with the accompanying self-punishment and conscience torture, our authors sound hollow and unconvincing. They are hesitant and lack the fire and drive to express themselves boldly and clearly. The Sotho authors evince spiritual poverty or cowardice in this respect.

The last but not least theme which excited the minds of many Sotho writers is their historical past. The life histories of Moshweshwe, Montwedi, Mohlomi, Mmanthatisi, Chaka, have inspired Mopeli-Paulus, Mofolo and Guma, to name only a few writers. By narrating the life history of many Sotho heroes, the writers have preserved the memory of the great deeds of the past. Historical novels, therefore, have taken over the function of oral tradition--the preservation of folklore, custom, beliefs, law, mores, political institutions. Majara's Morena oa Thaba (Mazenod, 1961), Machobane's Senate, Shoeshoe 'a Moshoeshoe are lively descriptions of Moshweshwe, Sotho political practice and institutions, customs and beliefs, yet these writers do not probe into the inner thoughts and feelings of their characters. The language used is rich and colourful, but descriptions are merely external. We have indicated that Mofolo's

Chaka is something more than just a mere historical narrative. In his historical novels Guma has given an excellent and close examination of the factors which have influenced social and political organization among the various Sotho clans. Tribal dissensions leading to splits and determined attempts to hold the group together and preserve it, have been clearly described and accounted for in Morena Mohlomi mora Monyane and Tshehlana tseo tsa Basia, respectively.

Sotho themes were broadened in the Fifties when Mofokeng composed his short stories on various subjects covering human experience, and when the first Southern Sotho thriller, Sekhukhuni se bonoa ke sebatalali was published in 1954. The latter book, as already indicated, is poorly developed and is very superficial in the analysis of events--the triumph of justice over evil. Mofokeng's short stories were the first truly modern and original compositions in Southern Sotho. Sotho writers have not come up with successful love stories or stories that probe into the individual's experiences, mind, life, desires or interests. Throughout all the books the individual is regarded as an inseparable part of the larger community. His interests are subservient to the demands of the whole community. We have noted how this view to life has limited character portrayal in many Bantu novels and has produced many stereotypes of un-

convincing characters. There is still a great demand for diversity in content and style in Southern Sotho prose fiction. One would still like to hear about large scale migrations to the cities, genuine experiences of the Sotho or Bantu as a whole in industrial centres and Sotho war heroes. We trust that writers will be encouraged to improve their artistic skill in the presentation of their works. In a popular American magazine James Z. Emmanuel quoted Langston Hughes' essay of 1926 entitled "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain" to express the assertive pride of Negro novelists:

> We younger Negro artists who create now intend to express our individual dark-skinned selves without fear or shame. If the white people are pleased, we are glad. If they are not, it doesn't matter... If colored people* are pleased, we are glad. If they are not, their displeasure doesn't matter either. We build our temples of tomorrow... and we stand on top of the mountain, free within ourselves. (Negro Digest, August, 1969)

The Sotho novel has a chance to survive if the quality of the contents and the technical skill of the writers will reveal them as men who know what they are about, or what they are doing when they settle down to write a novel, or any form of prose fiction for that matter.

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*In the U.S.A. the term Coloured (spelt colored) refers to the Blacks--all people of African origin and the offspring of mixed marriages.

CHAPTER XII

TOWARDS A PSYCHO-ANALYTICAL STUDY OF SOTHO PROSE FICTION

We have in the preceding Chapters attempted to examine closely the content and quality of Southern Sotho novels. It has become apparent that the theme and quality of Southern Sotho novels are closely related. The author's message in itself determines its value. What the author says, and the skill with which he says it, reveals his mental processes--indeed factors operating in his subconscious mind. The depth of his judgment is revealed in the content of his message and in the manner he manipulates his subject matter. It thus becomes very necessary to examine the forces that operate on the writer because, ultimately, these determine the quality of his work, which in itself is the product of his outlook towards life. The characteristics of his works and style, therefore, are for the most part shaped by the writer's psychological make up--in part, the product of his socio-political environment. A depreciated self-image or national pride of the author is often revealed unconsciously in many works of art. We claim that no writer will express something outside his true nature.

A fairly open society encourages literary forms that are true reflections of that society, and a controlled or subjugated community is seldom able to say openly its opinions, experiences or project its genuine image. The controlling power allows, out of necessity, those comments that are favourable to it or those that are considered to be harmless. This may cause "Cultural stagnation", that is, complete standstill in development or total collapse of a culture. If there is cultural awareness among the subjects, valuable aspects of of their culture may be saved.

Most Southern Sotho novels have been found to be incoherent, barren, hollow and unconvincing. Suggestions have been made why good quality was rare among these works. The lettered Basotho were products of the missionaries and with the mission schools who were mainly concerned with christianizing Lesotho. The effect missionary education had had on these men is evident in their works. From mere recorders of folklore and tales, the school products became the agents for the christian faith. The contents of their works were directed at converting the masses. Even fables had to be presented and interpreted in the light of the new religion. Their past was portrayed as dark, savage, god-forsaken and doomed, whilst the christian era was upheld as the age of salvation, hope and peace. Reference has already

been made to the contents of the early school Readers of Lesotho to illustrate this point. In a way, Sotho culture was checked in its development because the missionaries were eager to remove cultural objects and those aspects of Sotho culture they regarded as pagan practices.

It is understandable why Mofolo, in his Moeti ea Bo-chabela, built a holy and almost abstract character such as Fekisi who divorced himself from reality, his people, culture and beliefs because in them he found nothing good. He had to seek God and thus be saved from doom which was said to be hanging over his community.

By being over zealous about their new religion, the Sotho writers were unconsciously and unwittingly losing their roots--rejecting their real self. They were often negative towards things traditional and customary. Their sermonizing began to mar their narrative. The readers are directly told to do this or that, without respecting their judgment. The writer occupies the centre of the stage in delivering his sermon. Hell is the sentence imposed on those who still cling to their traditional heritage. The Sotho novels project the alleged inferiority complex on the whole community and not to attach much importance to traditional values. This in no way overlooks the good work done by the missionaries. The Basotho could no longer look confidently to their past--their history and cultural

achievement. Perhaps reading interest was killed in this manner. People cannot afford to read books that constantly play up their evil nature while playing down good qualities and achievement.

The socio-political situation in which the Basotho find themselves further intensifies their inferiority complex. For their food and means of survival they are dependent on the white man. Success is in most cases measured by the amount of loyalty a man can give to his European employer. If he is loyal, obedient and submissive, then he prospers, but if he falls foul with his master, sure failure and misfortune will befall him. This is the implication in many Sotho novels. Mofufutso wa Phatla (Sweat of the Forehead) by Mophethe projects this image. Writers are not always aware of this unconscious revelation of their subconscious selves. They have lost touch with live issues of their day.

This is the tragedy of the educated Basotho, indeed most educated Black men, that they have developed an inferiority complex. They have spurned what is theirs and they make conscious efforts to become white. Like programmed machines they have merely xeroxed what they learnt at school, thus becoming poor caricatures of the whites. The thoughts they express in writing are light weight. They are divorced from their cultural heritage and would like to

fit into white society. A personal conflict arises. They claim to be highly sophisticated, yet secretly they are practising their African beliefs and magic. This uncertainty and conflict in identity is evident in their works. A christian God and ancestors exist side by side. One is the complement of the other. Note the change in Mofolo's Pitseng where he finds it difficult to condemn everything that is traditional, or in Khaketla's Mosali a Nkhola. Perhaps Mofolo was beginning to review his new religion and judge it objectively. However, the contradictions existing in the minds of many Sotho writers have made their works to sound hollow and unconvincing.

In our educational system emphasis has slightly shifted from christianization, yet for a long time Sotho and other Blacks were taught European history, civilization and culture. Their own heritage was the "dark past", the age of wars, blood-thirsty tyrants and large scale massacres. Bantu rulers of past ages were portrayed as being dishonest, cruel and callous. Their achievement was often played down. Those who were acceptable to the Europeans were glorified. In this manner self-respect, confidence and national pride were destroyed. Armed with distorted history, the Bantu writers, with the exception of Mofolo, Guma and some Zulu historical novelists such as Dhlomo and Bhengu, produced poor historical novels that lack spirit and colour.

Inferiority complex has given rise to "white-Blacks", Bokgowana-tshwana or Umlungu-mnyama, as the Basotho and Zulus would call them, respectively. This, we have said, represents a confusion, a contradiction like the word itself, a conflict in identity. Most writers do not represent their genuine experiences. They do not speak the cultural and experience idiom of the larger community. Thus their works remain unread. They sound childish and shallow. The writers must speak clear and loud, and make their books an authentic representation of the lives of their people. A conflict in identity for most educated Blacks makes it impossible for them to become genuine representatives of their own people's thoughts. Their works are not a mirror through which the community can judge itself--find and analyse its faults, good qualities, achievement, trials and tribulations, happy moments or hope. Very few Sotho writers are an inspiration to their nation.

The Sotho writers are apologetic for what they are. They are not bold to express their true selves and they seem not to have realized that their experiences are real and meaningful. These men do not teach their people to lift their heads, borrow from other cultures to enrich theirs, and not to stoop in the process. They do not speak to their people to learn fast and guard against any forces that attempt to make them have depreciated self-images.

The writers themselves are not wary enough to select only those values that enrich their lives. One may suggest that their socio-political background is a hindrance to sound judgment.

The "Makgoweng motif" that has covered so many pages of Sotho books further reveals what image the writers have of themselves. Life in the cities, away from known cultural values, is depicted as not being peaceful and quiet. It is hectic--a real rush from dawn to dusk. The writers do not indicate their people's resentment of this state of affairs. They are mainly pre-occupied with showing a community that is after making a living and not worrying much about other aspects of life. In the world of our books, the city corrupts the Black people, and here they do not succeed. The negative side of city life is over stressed while the brighter aspects are mellowed down or passed over unnoticed. The writers tend to live unconsciously in the present. They have not yet shed the fetters of inferiority complex and attempt to rediscover themselves. Perhaps the socio-political conditions, or the powers that be, allow a description of things and not any treatises on the causes, effects or remedies. The Sotho writer, like other Bantu writers, blames nobody for his present condition but himself and the ignorance of his people. Even this self-condemnation is so unconvincing since it sounds as if someone

or some force, impels him not to try to find other reasons or sources for his present predicament. His works, therefore, emphasize the value of learning and religion, although he does not say what kind of learning and what its objectives should be.

Sotho writers are highly religious. The fact is drummed into the reader as if he is persuaded to embrace religion. Reference has already been made to the evident conflict in the religious lives of some of them. The "sermons" are often hollow because they are based on improbable happenings. Matlosa's Mopheme and Maile's Moiketsi are bull and cock tales that fail to penetrate human experience and understanding. Human life and experience are not examined as they should be.

Unless the Sotho writers abandon or modify their missionary zeal, their works are bound to remain nothing more than simple Sunday School stories intended for immature youngsters. The writers should be encouraged to be themselves. This is no easy matter since it implies a change in attitude, the removal of conditions which produce depreciated self-images, a more relaxed attitude of political powers dealing with their underprivileged subjects. All literature pleading for a more humane treatment of people and their self-realization, should not, without valid reasons, be condemned as subversive material. Qualified book

reviewers can be trusted in this task. However, most of the reviewers employed by the Publishers at present, and some members of Book Committees, have made hasty pronouncements on many a good manuscript from some of the most talented pens. They have made a monster of race relations and political reasons in passing judgment on manuscripts, even when the author's intentions were noble and not anywhere near cheap sensationalism and propaganda. What they want, as they have constantly told the present interviewer, is "material that can be read in our schools and not controversies." Their conflicting views on what controversy consists in force the present interviewer to conclude that there is no consistency in the selection of manuscripts for publication, and many potentially good writers are eliminated at the stroke of a pen because of incompetent reviews. Some of the prize winning books referred to earlier in this study are evidence of present day book reviews of Southern Sotho.

The present writer has hopes for improvement in Sotho literature. Recent political changes in South Africa have many implications for literary development. Self-awareness, national pride and confidence are encouraged by steps taken towards self determination. The sense of values of the Bantu will be radically changed. Self-realization is possible, and this zeal, we trust, will find expression in future literary works.

CHAPTER XIII

CONCLUSION

The early pioneers in Southern Sotho literature, Thomas Mofolo and his contemporaries, laid a lasting foundation for our literature. They carefully shaped the raw material of Sotho oral traditions into some form of creative art. The zeal for their newly found religion, Christianity, coloured the intended messages of their books most of the time, and they were more interested in warning the Basotho against unrighteous living, or converting them to christianity, than creating more secular and less didactic literature. The road was hard and steep since these men had no literary ancestry or masters from whom they could copy the art of writing. Their early efforts coincided with the beginnings of the written script in Southern Sotho. The evolution of Southern Sotho prose fiction can be traced from Mofolo's, Segoete's, Motsamai's and Sekese's works. They differed in both content and depth, and ranged from outright recordings of existing oral traditions, fairly simple original narratives, to the more sophisticated creative works. The development of Mofolo as a writer, especially, provides us with a clear picture of the development

of the more mature and sophisticated novel. He began with clumsy constructions such as Moeti wa Botjhabela and Pitseng, showing no coherence of events, poor arrangement of ideas, little or no probing into the inner self of portrayed individuals and free play of fantasy; yet later, Chaka, a well motivated, penetrating psychological study, was produced.

The later generation of writers including A. Nqheku, Ntsane and Khaketla developed the art of writing further. One can observe meaningful changes from Nqheku's straightforward yet well integrated narrative Arola Nahengea Maburu, through Matlosa's works, to Khaketla's Mosali a Nkhola. However, it has become evident that, for purposes of criticism, most of the Sotho works of fiction are far from being labelled good novels. With the exception of Mofolo's Chaka, Khaketla's Mosali a Nkhola, perhaps Segoete's Monono ke Moholi ke Mouoane and Ntsane's Nna Sajene Kokobela, C.I.D. and Nqheku's Arola Naheng ea Maburu none of these numerous works of fiction can be regarded as successful novels in terms of the technical skill of the writers and the quality of the contents. Some, however, like Matlosa's Molahlehi, Machobane's Mphatlalatsane, Mofolo's other two works, Khaketla's Meokho ea thabo, to name a few, are artistic achievements that cannot be easily dismissed as mediocre. It was observed that these too had their own

merits and demerits. It has been noted also, that problems to be overcome in literary skill are still numerous. We demonstrated in the preceding chapters that Southern Sotho writers have not yet mastered their art. For the most part events are not thematically tied together. They have not been successful in creating meaningful characters. Their characters are, for the most part, mere statues associated with improbable events. They are not living individuals who develop. Reasons for this poor character portrayal have been suggested. Yet the possibility that the Sotho societal outlook may suggest other modes of characterization not given recognition at present has not been dismissed.

There is too much attribution of moral qualities to the characters. These moral aims of the authors completely subdue the form of the novel. The attitude of the authors to their subject matter makes the Sotho novel utilitarian in purpose--to preach sermons. Thus characters are often presented as archtypes of virtue or vice. The novel should not be a pulpit or floor from which sermons are preached. The novel should be entertaining and stimulating intellectually. Critics such as Somerset Maugham believe that the aim of art is to please and to instruct. This does not imply that the reader cannot deduce anything from a book. It should be noted that a good book is always inspiring, in-

structive and entertaining. This is only a fair warning that the writer should not occupy the centre of the stage--his narrative--and point his finger about.

Many Sotho prose fictions are designed to teach moral lessons or to preach. This is undesirable. It should be remembered, however, that Sotho artists are for the most part unschooled in literary art. To them literature must serve a utilitarian purpose--to preach christian ideas or poke fun at all those practices of old which are thought to be old-fashioned and barbaric. It has been pointed out already that the writers seem to be apologetic about what they are. They fall for things which appear acceptable to Europeans, and in their attempt to shape their material to suit foreign ears, these men miss the true meaning and significance of their culture. Folklore was not faithfully recorded because of this interference with the original material.

The themes of Southern Sotho novels are not broadly human i.e. they are not widely interesting. Their local nature, and the fact that they are bound up with customs which writers misinterpret or present clumsily, makes them uninteresting, meaningless and dull to the Basotho themselves, and other peoples in particular. Yet Sotho art has at times risen to great heights. For example, Mofolo gained world renown with his masterpiece, Chaka, which has been

translated into several European languages. The life history of a historical character was turned by Mofolo into a brillant psychological study of a man, man struggling for self-realization, a soul reacting and responding to forces over, around and in him.

Episodes in our novels lack probability. Most of them do not grow out of the story, but they are mere development of theme. Life is never presented as a complex puzzle but as a simple experience whose solutions are found in dreams, coincidence and intervention of the supernatural beings. Fantastic escapes are often the known marks in many a Sotho book.

The Sotho novelists appear to be less concerned with the pressing social problems of the day. The reader is never given sharp pictures of the Basotho because the writers avoid, either deliberately or under pressure, daily experiences of the people. The present writer believes that literature should be a true reflection of the lives and experiences of the community that produces it. It should not be too dependent on the whims and frowning of Publishing Houses or indiscriminate book reviews. Strict supervision and censorship only destroy good authorship. The Department of Education, pursuing its own objectives and aims, seems to have left the author with very little choice in his book material. The writer can write on what

is "acceptable" only. Whether these books are of a poor quality or not, does not seem to bother anybody as long as the following directives of the Department are satisfied:

a. Are there any political tendencies in the book?

b. Is the book free of material that may be offensive to any section of the population?

c. Is the accepted orthography used?

d. Is the terminology of the language Committees observed?

A few other insignificant points are considered. For example, it is an open secret that some unscrupulous reviewers will recommend a book, regardless of its merits or demerits, if they stand to gain therefrom. No one is against certain rules or regulations being set up. Yet a narrow interpretation of rules is disastrous to the development of any literature, especially in a controlled community.

As already stated, book reviews are very poor. The "reviewer" observes the directives from head office slavishly without giving a critical analysis of the book. He either passes or rejects a manuscript depending on how the writer has adhered to these regulations. This superficial examination of the manuscripts has resulted in many a good manuscript being rejected and poor ones allowed into the schools--at present, the dumping ground of writings.

Authors are also dependent on many competing pub-

lishing houses which are, unfortunately, not even owned, directed or controlled by the Bantu themselves. These publishers are commercial bodies and are more interested in capturing the available market than publishing good literature. Before they can publish any manuscript their own terms or conditions must be met. These are:

a. Will the book be prescribed at schools?

b. Has the author observed conditions laid down by the Department of Bantu Education--which has the power to recommend a book for school use or reject it. Rejection of a manuscript by Bantu Education authorities means automatic refusal by the Commercial Publishing Houses.

The author finds himself split between these two bodies--the Publishers on the one hand, and the Education Department on the other. Without realizing it, the writer has become a kind of instrument through which some external forces speak for their objectives and money respectively. For future development in Sotho literature--indeed Bantu literature as a whole--these artificial barriers and the accompanying agonies should be removed or eased.

Sotho novels are rich in idiomatic expressions. These reveal the vocabulary wealth and unlimited range of expressions and profound statements in Southern Sotho. Yet these same books are dry and hollow in plot development. Writers are clumsy in relating incidents to one another.

Too many irrevelant facts, improbable episodes, moralization and poor characterization, often obscure the outlines of the main action. Thus the elements of a good novel are often loosely knit together and, therefore, bearing a poor relationship to each other.

To improve Sotho literature the Department of Bantu Education and the Publishers should collaborate to encourage good authorship and promote a wide reading public outside the schools. The authors should be allowed a certain amount of freedom and initiative in expressing their views, even on the so-called controversial issues. People want to hear about their true selves, and this may encourage more readers. No sugar-coating in a book may win the confidence of the public. The only way of destroying the fallacious belief that African authors do not have a broader view of life and therefore can write only for children--retarded ones for that matter--is to ease or remove man-made regulations which inhibit, surpress or discourage free expression and thought. The radio can be used to encourage a reading public. Good extracts from poetry, drama and novels should be well read and presented by specialists. Constructive criticisms should follow every presentation, and the public should be encouraged to send their comments to the organizers. Radio Bantu's efforts in this direction are greatly admired and welcomed. Increase in literacy is another hope

for wide-spread reading habits. Literacy is increasing yearly in South Africa. It will be a tragedy if reading habits are not cultivated by encouraging good and mature readers in the schools.

Subjects should not be arbitrarily selected. If themes are exciting and issues are pursued to their logical conclusions, even the adults will be keen to read what their own writers have produced. A language bureau--fortunately the authorities have thought of it--is of vital importance in the promotion of a reading public. However, this should not develop into another organ or instrument of censorship. People with national awareness and great love for their language development should be active in this language bureau. The initiative must come from the people. Unfortunately most Bantu seem to have withdrawn into their shells and avoid their own affairs.

The Basotho--indeed all the Bantu--must subsidize the books themselves. However, conditions should be created to make this possible. One is looking forward to the day when the Bantu themselves will control, direct and own publishing houses that would be concerned mainly with projecting their people's true image. As long as our people want things to be done for them, the Bantu will remain beggars, and it will be left to other peoples to project what they think to be the true African image--the usual stereo-

types given in some newspapers, sociology, psychology, anthropology and even some education textbooks. "Moketa ho tsoswa o itekang." True, help may be forthcoming for those who try to help themselves.

It is highly necessary that Sotho writers would improve their techniques and subject matter. The universities will have performed a great task by paying special attention to their literature programs. At the moment very little time is given to a real serious literary study in Bantu languages. False impressions are allowed to continue because of an indifference to literary pursuits. Grammatical abstractions alone cannot preserve the spirit of a language. Authors are a vital part of any community. They are the ones to give forth meaning and direction to the national aspiration of the people. If they divorce themselves from live issues of the day and what affects their people most, then the authors are dead, and the community they hope to lead is doomed. It is time that the Bantu writer expressed the aspirations and problems of his people genuinely. The works of the late Vilikazi and Mqhayi illustrate this point. Good literature must be encouraged, and good literature deals with genuine human experiences. People must be taught to appreciate their own literature. Without a wide reading public the development of literature is not conceivable.

The creative and the critical faculties must develop simultaneously. Reviewers should know what they are about. They should know what points to consider in judging a book. Serious literary critics are essential. Perhaps it is time the Bantu set up an Academy of Literature and Art, or some such body which should be financed by themselves, which will encourage and develop talent amongst themselves. Restrictions imposed on our writers at the moment are unnecessary and very destructive especially when they are so subtle.

The authors and the teachers do not seem to be aware of their duties and responsibilities. They seem to think that it is enough to impart knowledge only (no matter how slanted it is) and not to develop proper attitudes towards life in their pupils. The Black students seem to think that it is enough to write examinations, read books and pass. The fact that some nations are busy exploring space and making lasting contributions through their literature to humanity does not act as a challenge to our young men and women. Where does the fault lie? If this is all that we teach them, then we are failing. They must be taught to feel that they owe it to their people as a whole, to make contributions which will make other nations respect the intellect and ability of the Blacks in this country.

Writers for convenience i.e. for money, will be

eliminated if serious literature is promoted and meaningless red tape removed. Authors, as we suggested, should not be chained to the sentimental tastes of the Department of Bantu Education, and the financial interest of the publishers. Any serious literary criticism would not allow Mofufutso wa Phatla or Pere ntsho, Blackmore to be prize-winners in Southern Sotho. One-man, or part-time reviews must be strictly checked. Book evaluation is a serious matter that should be handled by experts.

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In conclusion we wish to state that the Sotho writers have a rich store of past and present experience to draw from. Yet it is painful to realize that they are still pre-occupied with kindergarten material. It is a pity that the dichotomy which was developing in Southern Sotho was nipped in the bud by socio-political factors. A separate and vigorous Lesotho Southern Sotho literature could have enriched and counterbalanced our impoverished, spiritually timid Republican Southern Sotho literature. Diversity could have enriched and given life and purpose to Southern Sotho literature as a whole. Lesotho writers have not been able to forge their way in their own direction since most of their readers are in the Republic. Thus forces operating on the Republican Sotho writers affect them also. The two Sotho streams seem to have merged into

one harmless school book production. The present similarities will remain as long as Lesotho writers remain bound to prescriptions beyond their boundaries. It is a matter of interest to point out that the economic dependence of Lesotho on South Africa seems to have established also a spiritual dependence. Lesotho writers have acquired the characteristic features of their South African (Southern Sotho) counterparts in their works. We are looking forward to the day when Sotho novels from both Lesotho and South Africa will evince the same political and social awareness so distinct and pronounced in our poetry; love and admiration for our people, customs and tradition; a sense of national identity and a pride in their cultural heritage, a recapturing and reliving of our history. Like Vilakazi so rightly said in his poem UShaka ka Senzangakhona, the black man must write and feel like a black man in his true experiences. He must not reject himself or condemn what is his own, or even use the white man's norms for assessing his capabilities:

> Nathi ngobeth' ubunyanga
> Sobhala lenganekwane
> Siyixoxel' abangane. (UShaka ka Senzangakhona)
>
> (Even we in our own artistic style and wisdom shall write this story and tell it to friends.)

The writer should not fear what belongs to his

people, culture and sense of values. He should be like Aggrey of Africa, receiving foreign education and instruction, and yet remaining faithful to his true nature and trying hard to strike roots in his native land. This was a great lesson to Vilakazi:

> Kawusukanga lapho wadela
> Lemibal' emnyama wena nami
> Esiphum' eziswini zawomame
> Simbeswe ngayo ngunaphakhade.
> .....
>
> ...Wapheduk' iqhalaqhala
> Uzibinya ngombal' omnyana
> Lona mina nabazelwe nami
> Esilwa sifun' ukuwususa,
> Ngokubhix' ibumba likamlungu.. (U-Aggrey Afrika)
>
> (You did not then decide to reject the black colours, you and I came out of our mothers' wombs, clothed with it by the Almighty. You became a hero that prided himself in his blackness, the very black colour which my friends and I wish to erase by smearing the white man's clay--creams.)

A genuine Southern Sotho novel should become the real successor of traditional prose. Like its predecessor, the novel should preserve Sotho customs, values, laws, afford the Basotho with a genuine means of self-evaluation and judgement. It should dispel any inferiority complex instilled in them by foreign acquisitions and indoctrination. Vilakazi had noted this timidity and lack of confidence among his people when he exhorted them with the following words:

Sibuke ngokungenqeni
Phakathi ebumnyameni. (UShaka ka Senzangakhona)

(...and let us look without fear, right into darkness.)

A commendable beginning has been made, the future is bright, the younger generation of Sotho authors should be diligent, willing to learn, improve and forge ahead. They need encouragement and guidance from worthy critics and a lively reading public.

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