Aesthetics of Sesotho Literature: The fiction of Thomas Mofolo, and the novelists who came after him

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Abstract

This thesis examines how indigenous literary aesthetics have been utilised in the Sesotho novel in the first century of literary writing in Lesotho. Through comparative analysis of the novels of Mofolo (1907, 1910, 1926) and Basotho novelists who wrote after him, the study presents interface between local aesthetics and forms on the one hand, and the novel on the other, with a focus on the intertextuality between the novel and Sesotho orature. The main objective is to analyse how Basotho writers have integrated oral literature and the novel for a unique literary expression, and how this by extension needs to inform literary criticism of the novel in Sesotho.

The first chapter, 'Introduction', gives the context and historical background of Sesotho literature and how Sesotho language usage provides possibilities for creativity and continuity (with local traditions) in Sesotho literature. The chapter presents the objectives of the project, theoretical framework, approach, and content of the thesis. It lays out a road-map for the undertaking of stylistic, technical, metaphysical and solidarity in resistance in African literature. This approach analyses techniques and styles that are immanent in the literature and its language, and by so doing facilitates critique of the novel that is localised and decolonial, in particular consideration to the predominant debates in African literature criticism.

The second chapter, 'Literature Review', looks at the relative absence of aesthetics in literary criticism of Sesotho and African novel and suggests new methods that take into account the instrumental role oral literature and indigenous aesthetics play in the novel in Sesotho. Mofolo, as I argue, decolonises the novel as a form by giving it a unique Sesotho Africanness strongly anchored in his language and culture. More importantly, his novels demonstrate that African literature criticism needs to go beyond the postcolonial and sociological debates which privilege politics over aesthetics, and combine both.

Chapter three 'Stylistics and Techniques of Sesotho Literature', undertakes a comparative analysis of Mofolo's *Moeti oa Bochabela/Traveller to the East* (1907), and Chobokoane's *Ke Lesheleshele Leo a Iphehletseng Lona/Chickens Come Home to Roost* (1992) to view how the novelists integrate the aesthetics of indigenous Sesotho orature into their writing. Focusing on stylistics, such as repetition, poetic inserts, symbolism, ideophones and the patterning of imagery, I present ways in which the Sesotho novel expresses continuity between the past and present in the literary expression, over about a century.

Chapter four, 'Metaphysics and Cosmology in Sesotho Literature', examines African philosophy, metaphysics and cosmology in the Sesotho novel and analyses syncretism between African spirituality and Christianity in the novels. The chapter examines Mofolo's *Pitseng/A Search for true love* (1907), *Chaka* (1926) and Majara's *Liate oa Mafik'a Lisiu/Liate of Mafik'a Lisiu* (1976), comparatively, to demonstrate how the search for the understanding of being and existence, and restoration, is expressed by the texts in their narrative expression of an African metaphysics.

The final chapter five, 'Mofolo's Poetics of Relation: Textual Decolonial Routes - From Lesotho into Africa with Chaka', analyses how aesthetics of liberation translate themselves into other African contexts. It examines Mofolo's role and his influence on other African writers through his use of orature. Through analysis of Lesotho's Khaketla's *Mosali'a Nkhola/A woman betrayed me* (1960), Léopold Sédar Senghor's "Shaka" (1958) and Wole

Soyinka 's *Ogun Abibimañ* (1976), adaptations of Mofolo's *Chaka*, the chapter presents resistance and creation of local and global African networks of solidarity and political activism. This thesis takes an aesthetic decolonial approach to the Sesotho novel, which considers the literature from within the language and culture in which it was produced, and extends its analysis to other African literary geographies. The approach provides deeper attentiveness to techniques of Sesotho and African literature which are crucial for an Africa-centred analysis, and for demonstrating continuity in Sesotho literary expression.

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...for Appa, and the deepest things he knows

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Orthographic symbols and their phonetic value

	Orthographic symbol		*I.P.A. symbol*
The vowels	a	pronounced	a
	e	”	ɛ or e or ɪ
	i	”	i
	o	”	ə or o or ω
	u	”	u
The consonants	b	”	b
	p	”	p
	ph	”	p^h
	d	”	d
	t	”	t
	th	”	t^h
	k	”	k
	kh	”	k^h
	f	”	f
	s	”	s
	r	”	r
	l	”	l
	hl	”	ɬ
	sh	”	ʃ
	g	”	x
	ts	”	ts
	tsh	”	$\underline{ts^h}$
	tl	”	tl
	tlh	”	tl^h
	j	”	dʒ
	tj	”	tʃ
	kh	”	kx^h
	bj	”	bʒ
	pj	”	pʃ
	pjh	”	$pʃ^h$
	fsh	”	fʃ
	m	”	m
	n	”	n before a vowel or an alveolar consonant ɲ before a palatal consonant ŋ before a velar consonant
	ny	”	ɲ
	ng	”	ŋ
	y	”	j
	q	”	ɕ
	qh	”	$ɕ^h$

nq ” ŋ!

1 Introduction

The question of an aesthetic that is African in African literature has persistently concerned critics and taken different forms in the latter part of the twentieth century. The preoccupation has tended to focus on proof and/or definition of what African literature is as European literature's opposite. African and some non-African critics have continued to formulate a range of approaches towards the study of the aesthetics of African literature that are Africa-centred and/or Afrocentric. Literary criticism methods have included suggestions of a decolonial approach that decentres Europe and sees African oral literatures as antecedents upon which the written literatures of the continent have built (Chinweizu et. al., 1980, Scheub, 1985), prescriptive stylistics methodology for African literature analysis which while rooted on African aesthetics could also make use of some European tools of criticism (Ngara, 1982) and focus on an African Marxist dialectic which considers the material living conditions within which the literature is produced (Amuta, 1989). Yet another aspect on the study of African aesthetics has involved debates on the language/s of the literature/s and which language could communicate best the identity of African literature/s (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 1986, Chinua Achebe, 1975). The language debate, as I should later demonstrate, also sits at the nexus between what African literature is and what it is not in relation to local or colonial language/s use. Wole Soyinka (1976, 1988) on the other hand has formulated, through Yorùbá drama and spirituality, a method and metaphysics that link African art and cosmology for aesthetic analysis. These writers and critics, in different degrees, constantly connect African written literatures with oral literatures as differentiating phenomena.

The relationship between oral literatures and written literatures at the level of narrative form, and as continuity, has been asserted more strongly by Isidore Okpewho (1992), Eileen Julien (1992), Abiola Irele (2009), and Ọlakunle George (2009), among others. The over-arching

drive for the search for an aesthetic that is African is articulated best by Julien (1992) who deviates from preoccupation with Europe and/or European literature as either the centre or non-centre and argues that, "it is surely a *quest for continuity* in African verbal arts which has brought researchers to comparative studies of this type: we have been working to challenge and dispel the widespread perception that written African literature is discontinuous with the oral" (1992, p.3, italics in the original). Julien's observation is crucial and brings analyses closer to the possibility of studying the literatures of Africa in their own right. However, and this is my study's point of departure, attention to what orality and/or indigenous aesthetics lend to written African literature and how this is shown by the texts is of equal importance.

This thesis analyses the aesthetics of Sesotho literature, particularly how they are instrumentalized by Basotho writers, as they have been given less attention in the critique of the Sesotho novel. I focus on the literature from inside the texts, employing a descriptive literary analysis and intertextuality to consider how a literature written by Sesotho authors primarily for a Sesotho audience stylistically delivers on the novelistic promise. My thesis views novels by the writers under study here as showing "an ongoing relationship of coevalness and simultaneity," and "interface" between orature and literacy (George, 2009, p.17), as I should demonstrate. Such a reading of Sesotho literature provides ways towards literary criticism that are closer to the indigeneity of the fiction, from within the language and culture. This approach attempts a decolonial literary analysis for, as Cabral notes, "the people are only able to create and develop … because they keep their culture alive despite continued and organised repression of their cultural lives" (1973, p.60). Decolonisation, in this respect, is instrumentalised by looking at how the literature itself decolonises the 'novel' as a form with the use of indigenous literary forms, and by also employing the same process that the novels use to therefore inform the literary analysis I propose in this study. The employment of different oral forms in the novel work to direct and shape the plot and narrative significantly, for example

a praise poem is inserted within the prose to move the plot dramatically at times – if it is emotion that needs heightening the poem works to intensify such an emotion. As will be demonstrated in chapter three on Mofolo's usage of the cow's praise poem to move his plot, the poem links the past through memory, lament, longing, to the fear of the future by the main character. The poem's beginning shifts the narrative markedly from its place and moves the character forward, which also propels the story forward, through shifts, symbols and layered associations whose effectiveness lie in the use of poetry. This use of poetry strengthens the aesthetic quality for while the reader appreciates the poetry, the prose also works through the poetry and the other way round, giving a double effect to text. Two modes of expression interchange and interweave to drive the plot effectively. I view the use of indigenous aesthetics in the Sesotho novel, as I should demonstrate, as political and liberatory, and continued self-reclamation of Sesotho literature.

The introductory chapter, chapter one, provides the historical context of Sesotho literature and the novel in the Sesotho language from the end of the 19th century to the end of the 20th century. Since this literature operates within other African literatures, and its critique has been affected and to a certain extent shaped by discourse on the African novel, African literature patterns of criticism will also be charted, here, to situate the study within broader frame of analyses. As Gikandi (1987), notes,

> the relationship between form and content has, in fact, been the subject of numerous debates in African critical circles. And yet in spite of these debates we do not seem to have advanced very far in the search for a literary method, an aesthetic, that is expediential to the representation of the African experience in fiction. (p.ix).

By looking at the Sesotho novel in close relationship with its other cultural literary forms, this thesis is as such a contribution to debates in the study of the African novel. Chapter one,

therefore, poses and addresses the following research question: How has the literary criticism of Sesotho and African literature, particularly the novel, overshadowed the aesthetic literary qualities of the works of Sesotho writers, and what significance does the consideration of these qualities yield to the study of the said literature? While this question will be further addressed in the second chapter of the thesis, the literature review, the first chapter sets out the basis for attempts to address it. The chapter is divided into the following sub-sections; the advent and continuity of written Sesotho literature, Lesotho's printing background and history, research questions, rationale and context, theoretical and methodological approaches that I will use as framework of the study and finally the outline of the thesis.

1.1 The Advent and Continuity of Written Sesotho literature

The writing of Sesotho literature began at the end of the nineteenth century, with the arrival of missionaries in Lesotho, and continued throughout the twentieth century. The earliest works of literature were first serialised in the then only newspaper in the country, *Leselinyana la Lesotho* (Little Light of the Basotho). Newspaper serialisation enabled the works to be read aloud, episodically, in family and/or group settings, which gave access to members of the society who could not read. In this way, the narration took oral form, a literary form that had been and still continues to be Lesotho's predominant mode of artistic expression. Azariel Sekese's play, *Pitso ea Linonyana* (Assembly of the Birds), was serialised in the local newspaper in the 1890s, to be later published in book form. In 1907, the first novel in Sesotho, written by Mokopu Thomas Mofolo, was published after newspaper serialisation. Thomas Mofolo was followed by a number of writers in Lesotho who continued to write and publish in the Sesotho language. There is controversy about a 1953 English novel, *Blanket Boy's Moon*, by a Mosotho called Mopeli Paulus, which is said to be "somehow translated/adapted/expanded by Peter Lanham" (Dunton, 1990, p.106). An English biography, another rare occurrence by a Mosotho, came out

in 1996 and was called; *Singing away the hunger: stories of a life in Lesotho*. This biographical work was dictated by Mpho 'M'atšepo Nthunya of Lesotho, who could not read or write, and transcribed/written and possibly translated by K. Limakatso Kendall, a visiting American scholar at the National University of Lesotho (N.U.L). A collection of short stories in English by Kendall's students at N.U.L, *Basali! Stories by and about Women in Lesotho*, was published in 1995. Collaboration/association with a foreign, English speaking, author, mark these scant Basotho works of literature in the English language in Lesotho. As autonomous artists, Basotho writers have been consistent in writing and publishing in Sesotho, from the 1890s to the 1990s. At the heart of Sesotho culture, and literature, lies orality, as I should demonstrate in this thesis. Written Sesotho literature draws on oral literature. There is an observable interface and exchange of literary techniques, styles and forms between Sesotho orature and written Sesotho literature as I should show in this study. Poetry, mythology and cosmological inquiry are some of the characteristics of oral literature which written Sesotho literature also carries to a great extent. I intend to explore the use of these indigenous aesthetics and forms of oral literature in Sesotho literature – taking a particular look at Thomas Mofolo's novels: *Moeti oa Bochabela/The Traveller to the East* (1907), *Pitseng/A Search for True Love* (1910) and *Chaka* (1926), and using Mofolo as the kernel of this thesis, alongside three other writers who wrote after him in the context of Lesotho, namely, Bennett Makalo Khaketla, Simon Majara and Chobokoane Chobokoane. While the focus of my thesis is primarily Lesotho and Sesotho literature, I also, in the final chapter of this thesis, look at Mofolo's influence on two writers from other African countries, Léopold Sédar Senghor of Senegal and Wole Soyinka of Nigeria who have adapted Mofolo's last novel, *Chaka*. The motivation for this additional segment is to demonstrate ways in which Mofolo established and created possibilities for an African "transnational and post-national solidarity of political activism" on the continent with his use of indigenous Sesotho literary aesthetics (W. Ouyang, 2022, personal communication, 8 June).

These examples from the rest of the African continent add emphasis on Mofolo's *Chaka* as an aesthetic of decoloniality, both in Lesotho or Southern Africa and the larger African continent, as I should demonstrate.

My research examines how Mofolo and those who came after him, from the 1930s -1950s, and the 1950s-1970s, ending with the 1970s -1990s, have treated these cultural, aesthetic and metaphysical elements in their narratives. The organisation of the chapters and authors will be thematic, for I intend to juxtapose each of Mofolo's texts against each of the writers who wrote after him, with a comparative analysis based on themes shared by the novels. The principle of organisation is therefore intertextuality. While I mainly study the usage and extent to which the styles and techniques employed by these writers work as narrative devices, a thematic, rather than a technical, organisation promises an examination of ways in which social realities have informed the literary cultural expression and how the expression developed within the first century of writing in the Sesotho novel, and therefore addresses continuity amongst the writers under study here.

1.2 Lesotho's Printing Background and History

Literacy was brought to Lesotho by three priests from the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society (PEMS), namely: Eugene Casalis, Thomas Arbousset and Constant Gosselin. The founder of the Basotho nation, King Moshoeshoe 1, had paid a Griqua traveller and hunter named Adam Krotz two hundred cattle to procure safe delivery of missionaries to his kingdom. Moshoeshoe had heard word from travellers that missionaries were different from other types of white people who were rumoured to be destabilising communities in the southern region of Africa during the eighteenth century. The oppression and aggression intensified in the nineteenth century as the Dutch colonial settlers moved deeper and began to settle in the interior of the sub-continent, which later resulted in the formation of the Republic of South Africa. This was

a fraught time amongst the Southern African peoples as they were still recovering from the gruesome *Lifaqane* wars (Wars of Great Calamities) which had ravaged the region. *Lifaqane* was "the military upheaval unleashed and sustained by Shaka, King of the Aamazulu between 1818 and 1828" (Machobane, 1990, p.1). King Shaka of the Zulu people had terrorised many ethnic groups, and the only way that the Basotho were spared from his attacks was that King Moshoeshoe 1 of the Basotho is said to have repeatedly sent Shaka gifts of cattle and ostrich feathers to placate the Zulu king. After the *Lifaqane* wars (Wars of Great Calamities), Moshoeshoe invited all the displaced and defeated chiefs and their people to come and live in peace in his Mountain Kingdom. Basotho people of Lesotho are largely a mixture of these defeated refugees and ethnic groups uprooted and dispersed by Shaka during the *Lifaqane* wars.

In the nineteenth century, the long-awaited missionaries arrived at the royal seat of King Moshoeshoe's kingdom in Thaba-Bosiu. After welcoming them, Moshoeshoe sent two of them to a plateau at the foot of Makhoarane Mountain, a site forty-four kilometres away from his royal abode at Thaba-Bosiu. Makhoarane was a location which the missionaries had chosen themselves. The king sent with the missionaries his first-born son Letsie 1 and his younger brother Molapo under the guidance of their maternal uncle Matete, with a group of their age-mates as it is customary in Sesotho culture for men of the same age who had been to initiation school together to carry out important missions in that same group. The youngest French missionary, Casalis, remained in Thaba-Bosiu, with King Moshoeshoe, for a while, keeping close company with the king and reading him stories from the Bible. Although fascinating to the Basotho king, these Bible stories did not convince him that the Christian God was superior. In spite of his enthusiasm for the missionaries and their education, King Moshoeshoe 1 never converted to Christianity in his life. It is said that one of the reasons why King Moshoeshoe 1 refused to convert to Christianity is that he could not understand why the Europeans' Holy book was so replete with violence, polygamy and sin which the missionaries were trying to

convert him and his people from. It seemed to him that the Europeans' God did not change human nature, for His people behaved the same way as Moshoeshoe's people did, they were all human.

The king's sons' team fed and cared for Arbousset and Gosselin upon their arrival in Makhoarane, as the latter started working rapidly on building the first church in Lesotho. The missionaries later named Makhoarane *Morija* after Mount Moriah in the book of Genesis – the place associated with the "sacrifice" of Isaac. Morija is the place where the first printing depot in Lesotho was later to be established.

With the arrival of missionaries in Lesotho, Sesotho gained writing of the language and the literature through a Latin orthography. Within six years of the missionaries' arrival Arbousset published *Seyo sa Lipelu se Khethiloeng Bibeleng ea Khalalelo* (Food for the Hearts: Selected from the Holy Bible), (1839). In 1844, *Lifela tsa Sione* (Hymns of Zion), with only the words of the music, was published. In 1861, Morija Book Depot was established. The first newspaper in Lesotho, *Leselinyana la Lesotho* (Little Light of the Basotho), was introduced in 1863. *Testamente e Ncha* (The New Testament) was published in 1868, the same year that a teachers' training college, Thabeng, was established (Makhema, 2021). In 1882, Morija Theological seminary was founded, with the purpose of training priests.

The earliest publications in Sesotho were concerned with Biblical content in the form of catechisms, children's readers and stories for the conduct of church services. The writers at this stage were either a collective of converts and the missionaries or individual literates Basotho. It was when the first newspaper, *Leselinyana la Lesotho* (Little Light of the Basotho), grew in popularity that more diverse texts were published. "The period of the 1890s was particularly fertile in this regard" (Kunene, 1977, p.156). Stories began to be serialised in the newspaper in the early 1890s. Sekese's play, *Pitso ea Linonyana* (Assembly of the Birds), mentioned earlier,

appeared in the newspaper in the 1890s in serialised form, and was later published as a complete book in 1928. Sekese's *Mekhoa ea Basotho le Maele le Litšomo* (Customs of the Basotho and Proverbs and Oral Stories) was also serialised before its publication in 1893.

The thirty years between 1890 and 1920 can be seen as the boom of creative and literary writing in Sesotho. This period fits Maake's poetic description, which proclaims that, "In the beginning was the word, and the word was made literature, and dwelt among the Basotho" (1992, p.158). During this period, both the missionaries and their converts were equally involved in the writing. Stories with Biblical content were published by Sekese, Sekokotoana (1890s), Casalis (1903), Mabille, Duvoison (1903), Marzloff (1904), Mofokeng (1906), Dieterlen (1908), Jacottet (1912), Segoete (1915), and others. It was during this period that Thomas Mofolo published his first novel.

Mofolo's predecessors and immediate literary contemporaries could be named as Jacottet, Segoete, Sekese, Mabille, Mangoaela and Moteane among others. Jacottet, Mabille and Segoete differ from Mofolo and the rest in that most of their writing was specifically concerned with stories from the Bible, perhaps due to the fact that these men were ordained priests. Mofolo was trained as a teacher at Thabeng, which is based within the premises of Lesotho's protestant church seminary, Morija Theological seminary and falls under the auspices of the church. Although Sekese did write texts related to the Bible as well, his contribution to Sesotho literature is significant for the documentation of Basotho history and his inventiveness and creativity in literature, which makes him the forerunner and the very first Sesotho literary writer.

Mofolo, on the other hand, is the first writer to write prose fiction, and most specifically the first novel in Sesotho. He has been called, "the most important African writer of the first quarter of the twentieth century" (Swanepoel, 1973, as cited in Shava, p. 40-41, 2016) and a literary

"giant" (Kunene, 1977). By the time Sekese compiled the customs of the Basotho in his *Mekhoa ea Basotho le Maele le Litšomo* (Customs of the Basotho and the Proverbs and the Oral Stories) in 1893, some contributors to *Leselinyana la Lesotho* (Little Light of the Basotho) were already submitting articles on Basotho customs. It is not surprising then that Jacottet's publication of *Litšomo tsa Basotho* (Oral Stories of the Basotho) (1908), which was compiled from numerous submissions from Basotho people from different parts of the rural landscape, was a great success. It came out during this creative outpouring of the initial Sesotho works of literature. Jacottet went on to publish the second volume of these oral stories in 1941. In the year preceding Jacottet's first volume of *Litšomo tsa Basotho* (Oral Stories of the Basotho) (1908), Mofolo's first novel, *Moeti oa Bochabela/Traveller to the East* (1907), was published.

Due to this strong link with the missionaries, Sesotho literature criticism has sometimes emphasised Christianity as the bedrock of the literature, with Kunene (1967) going as far as implying that Mofolo's first novel's protagonist is not a character but a "saint". This view, on the dominance of Christianity in Sesotho literature, sometimes sees the dominance as a result of colonialism, which may not be quite the case in Lesotho and Sesotho literature as I should demonstrate below.

Some of the strongest and perhaps the most significant critics of Sesotho literature such as Maake (1992), Kunene (1967, 1989) and Molema (1989) tend to see the didactic and moralising tendency in Sesotho literature as residue from colonialism and Christianity, especially in the works of earlier writers such as Thomas Mofolo, who is the main writer under study here. The second aspect of this critique which is related to the first is that literacy as a means to convert the African (the Mosotho in this case) was meant to present him/her with a new culture that automatically denounced the African's own culture to make them aspire or wish to identify with a higher or superior culture, the colonial culture. These two views, above,

collapse into one another in a kind of antithesis which has come to define postcolonial criticism to a great extent, the view that a stage comes/has come whereby the African/disenfranchised "other"/"subaltern" expresses himself/herself for the attention of the colonizer, reclaiming their own agency. The question to ask, with specificity to Mofolo and his predecessors, which I will attempt to address below, is whether Christianity cannot be separated from colonialism in cases such as Sesotho literature. Secondly, and most importantly, it is crucial to provide alternative lenses to view the agency of works of literature in Sesotho, and by extension the critique, and avoid the dependency on the notion of 'talking back to' colonialism – that is to say, how does Sesotho literature function and appeal to the Sesotho reader for whom it was written, without necessarily addressing an outside political power as its central theme and/or concern?

Against the first tendency, to interpret the Christianising in Sesotho literature as part of colonialism, it is important to reiterate that the French missionaries were invited to Lesotho by King Moshoeshoe 1 in 1833, as mentioned earlier. Lesotho later opened a Printing depot in 1863. In 1867, three decades after the arrival of missionaries, Lesotho became a British protectorate due to King Moshoeshoe's request from the British to protect his kingdom against the Dutch Afrikaners (assuming the British to be a lesser evil). At the basic level of observation then, Christianity and colonialism did not arrive hand in hand in Lesotho, as opposed to their arrival in other African countries that proceeded to write their written literatures in the language of the colonists. Furthermore, it would seem peculiar that the French would acculturate and literarily prepare an African community to later cede it to British culture and colonialism, without any pressure, as opposed to their own French culture and colonialism. While colonising empires have in the past sometimes shifted occupation in Africa and other previously colonised territories, causes have mostly been political and/or conflictual in nature as seen in the contest between British and Dutch colonists in South Africa for example. In erstwhile French colonies, there is residue of ways in which the French imposed French language at the demise of African

languages, literatures and their progression, as seen in countries like Senegal. Since the French missionaries were not directly performing duties for the French government's administration of colonies in the case of Lesotho, and secondly, since they were in this case invited, one could presume that France had no, prior, interest in Lesotho as a colony. This point needs to be demonstrated with caution, for even though at the time, the motive and mission to colonise Lesotho seems to not have been a priority for the missionaries or their country of origin, the missionary project is almost always somewhat colonial. One of the first missionaries to Lesotho, Eugene Casalis' diaries, from 1833 to the 1850s, begin with sentiments of a desperate twenty-one-year-old yearning to find a "tribe" so deep in heathenism and far from God so that the will of his God could be done through him, Casalis, and his missionary colleagues, (Casalis, 1965). The paternalistic attitude is observable even after he had been under great influence and admiration of the character of King Moshoeshoe 1. Other missionary writers who came to Lesotho after Casalis bore similar attitudes. In 1926, a missionary writer Edwin Smith saw the Basotho as "an African tribe … given the opportunity of developing sanely and securely along the lines of its own ethos, while gradually absorbing the best elements of … European civilisation" (Smith 1926, as cited in Murray and Sanders, 2005, p.16). While this attitude is colonial, it is not in itself colonialism proper, as yet, but perhaps an introduction and beginning for possibilities for colonialism, early roots of expansionist empire. As Serequeberhan notes, quoting Said, "modern empire requires… an idea of service, an idea of sacrifice, an idea of redemption. Out of this you get these great, massively reinforced notions of, for example, in the case of France, the '*mission civilisatrice*'" (2012, p.141). While, to a great extent, the French missionaries recognised and for a long time apparently assisted the Lesotho Kingdom in maintaining its autonomy against British-Dutch rule, (Thompson, 1975), European Christian culture and acculturation and preoccupation to 'civilise' remained steadfast in their mission.

Secondly, in two significant wars that Basotho fought with the Boers and the British, the Senekal War of 1858 and the Gun War of 1880-1881, Basotho defeated and resisted conquest by the colonial armies. In fact, as suggested above, the first missionaries were suspected to be working for King Moshoeshoe 1 as diplomatic advisors against white Dutch settlers and the British government in the Cape (Thompson, 1975). The only priest who has ever adamantly advised Basotho people to yield to the white government in South Africa is Adolphe Mabille (Chaka, 2016). During the final Gun War when the Basotho were instructed to surrender their guns to the British government, Mabille advised them to humbly hand the guns over to avoid punishment as no other group of Black Africans under British rule was allowed to possess guns. Some Basotho refused to hand over their guns and went to war with the British Cape army. Basotho defeated the British at Qalabane in the district of Mafeteng, during the 1880-1881 Gun War (Machobane 1990), a war Thomas Mofolo makes reference to in his second novel, *Pitseng/A Search for True Love* (1910), through his narrator who proudly recalls the Basotho defeating the British. As he says,

> Ntoa ea Qalabane, eo makhooa a sa e lebaleng. Masapo a sa le teng, kapa e leng a batho kapa a liphoofolo, teng ha re tsebe, feela masapo a ntse a le teng hona moo ntoa e neng e loaneloa teng, le libotlolo, e leng bopaki ba hore *ma-ja-tlhapi* a kile a fihla ka bongata, ka ha e le mofuta o ratanang le eona hahoholo. Ke motse o kileng oa thibelloa nako e telele ke Basotho ka Ntoa ea Lithunya. (Mofolo, 1987, p.103).
>
> The Qalabane War, that the English do not forget. Bones are still there, whether of humans or of animals, we do not know, but the bones are still there where the war was fought, and alcohol bottles, which is testimony that the English were once there in great numbers, as they are a type that is very much in love with drink. It is a region that was

> once defended for a long period by the Basotho during the Gun War. (Mofolo, 1987, p.103).

Basotho pride, from their triumphs against settler armies, as shown by the quotation above, can still be felt from stories retold over and over by old people in the villages and historians like Machobane (1990). This pride implies that, to a great extent, they did not see the colonial power as superior to themselves, at least not in direct combat. Their contempt and low regard for the British garrison can be gleaned from Mofolo's narration, above. As he says, "whether of humans or of animals, we do not know, but the bones are still there where the war was fought." Therefore, when it comes to colonialism and military conquest, Basotho people can be said to have, for a long time, related to the colonising powers differently. It is in their dedication to Christianity where this sense of national and cultural pride can be seen to wither and take a double identity in the people of Lesotho, and in their literature too, as Lesotho is predominantly Christian. However, this duality should not be viewed as total surrender unto European culture. As shall be demonstrated through the study of the literature, there is an occurrence of syncretism.

The last counterargument to present, on the perspectives that situate Lesotho's literature within a postcolonial criticism framework, would be that literacy was introduced in the Sesotho language in Lesotho. Basotho people, as a collective, never learned to read or write in French, and the missionaries themselves, learned, wrote and published in Sesotho. While written Sesotho language can be called a colonial enterprise, as also seen in its recording with European orthography, the language was then stabilised to fit Basotho people's sense of their language and to progress and develop their cultural expressions in different ways, such as the writing of the novel. Writing in Sesotho shows ways in which colonialism is not absolute, and also that liberatory acts do permeate different phases of colonialism. Articles were published in Sesotho

before the introduction of British rule and language in 1867 and significant works of literature continued to be written and published in Sesotho during British occupation and after independence in 1966. As such, one could argue that Basotho writers would have performed a mean feat, to "write back" for a French or an English audience *in* the Sesotho language, as the literary critique bent on postcoloniality suggests.

The flaw in postcolonial criticism, as Barber argues, is in the assumption that every work of literature, from former colonies, is the "empire writing back" (1995, p.4-5), a phrase originally used by Salman Rushdie in his 1982 essay, "The Empire Writes Back with a Vengeance" and which later gained popularity through Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's work, "Can the Subaltern Speak" (1994). As Young (1973) aptly asks, "Can a black writer not write merely for a love of writing, without thinking about 'writing back'" (p.680). Basotho writers wrote for themselves, for Basotho audiences. The importance of postcolonialism, in its creation and development of discourse on coloniality and the dominance of Western episteme in knowledge production and ways in which the formerly colonised peoples resist and reassert themselves, needs to be acknowledged. However, I am also of the same opinion that not all African literature is a form of "writing back". Lesotho might be a case in point.

The above circumstances, pertaining to Lesotho, need to be foregrounded so that the analysis of written Sesotho literature is clear of unnecessary trappings. This foregrounding is by no means aimed at obscuring the fact that the conversion of Basotho people deeply eroded some of their cultural expressions and arts, and their literature. The missionaries' transcriptions of Sesotho oral literature show lack of grasp of the nuances in the language, culture and the literature itself. An example of this erosion can be seen in the difference between Mofolo's summary of a Sesotho oral tale, "Moshanyan'a Sankatana" (The boy of Sankatana) in his *Moeti oa Bochabela/Traveller to the East* (1907, p.17) and the missionary Jacottet's transcription of

the same tale in *Litšomo tsa Basotho* (Oral Stories of the Basotho) (1908). One sees much greater engagement in Mofolo than in Jacottet. There is a great loss of artistic quality and technique in the transition/adaptation from oral story to the written/transcription by the missionary – at times caused by shortening repetitions in the oral story, so that the only remedy seems to be a complete re-transcribing of the Basotho oral tales. The effort at re-transcription has been undertaken to some extent by writers such as Mothibi in *Moririkhohlo le litšōmo tse ling* (Moririkhohlo and other tales) (1973) and Minnie Postma, a white South African raised and told oral stories by Basotho women who worked as her parents' domestic workers and labourers. Mothibi's knowledge and understanding of these tales shows itself in the written versions. Postma's *Litšomo*/Oral stories (1964) and *Tales from the Basotho* (1974), also translated into English, also capture the stories much closer to the Sesotho culture and language and the original Sesotho texts for she was brought up in this culture by the labourers.

My foregrounding, above, is also not an attempt to ignore the missionaries' views of Basotho as a lower culture (a colonial tendency), as they did, and their publications as seen in Casalis (1965)'s records show. Most importantly, it is also crucial to note the fact that in some African countries, even though missionaries were the first European arrivals, when colonial administrators arrived, the missionaries suddenly showed strong allegiance to European colonial powers. Colonial 'conquest' of Africa was facilitated by the Europeans' belief in their own superiority. It is worth quoting Serequeberhan at length, below, to demonstrate this attitude,

> Modern European colonialism – the subjection of non-European people designated as inferior and primitive, and their transformation for their own improvement and welfare – was grounded on, and derived from, a rather stuck-up and imperious altruism. For the longest time, this violent benevolence saw itself as the proper embodiment and

> manifestation of the humanity of the human in intercultural relations. A certain group of human beings, notably those with a lighter complexion, believed themselves to have a possession of the *true God* and to have discovered *the proper way* of organising human life on earth; and so they felt compelled to civilize the rest of humanity – to make it like themselves – and share their blessings. (2012, p.140-141).

Even when Africans faced possible assault and/or annihilation by European military assault, some missionaries saw European violence as just. Mabille, a missionary in Lesotho during the 1880-1881 Gun War is a demonstration of this missionary tendency, as mentioned earlier. Missionaries were also teachers in most African schools, and as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o observes,

> Berlin 1884 was effected through the sword and the bullet. But the night of the sword and the bullet was followed by the morning of chalk and the blackboard. The physical violence of the battlefield was followed by the psychological violence of the classroom. But where the former was visibly brutal, the latter was visibly gentle. (1986, p.9).

Although the "night of the sword and the bullet" was abetted by the Basotho, particularly during the Gun War, British colonial administration of the country was still brutal, with senseless taxation and the introduction of penal methods such as capital punishment. Therefore, Basotho might have narrowly escaped some of the most brutal military conflict, but the country was still impacted by British rule with among other things the use of "violent pedagogy," (Serequeberhan, 2012, p.142), as seen in the corporal punishment for speaking in the mother tongue in schools, which Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o refers to in his, *Decolonising the Mind* (1986), a phenomenon I also portray in my short story, "Sesotho Speakers" (Makamane, 2011). Although Lesotho is bilingual, English is the medium of instruction in schools. Despite this phenomenon, the written literature has for a hundred years remained almost completely in Sesotho. Therefore, the psychological violence did not happen primarily with a *total*

replacement of the local language with a colonial language, for "language was the most important vehicle through which that power fascinated and held the soul prisoner" (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 1986, p.9).

Lastly, where it is the case that African communities ended up writing their literatures mostly in colonial languages, as was the case with countries like, Kenya, Ghana and South Africa to mention a few, due diligence needs to be paid and the cultural ravages of colonialism need to be addressed. But it is equally important to be specific and to pay attention to the context and nuances in each culture and history and see how some communities were able to preserve and continue some of their cultural practices and artistic expression. British colonial administrators' accounts from Lesotho bear similar hallmarks in the description of the people and their customs and this study is not trying to gloss over such representations either.

Having differentiated Christianity and colonialism in the case of Lesotho, then, one needs to briefly consider how come Sesotho literature is so imbued with moralising, a trope that may be viewed as Christian. As Masiea observes, Sesotho oral prose narrative has a moralistic nature to itself, it is often about good versus evil (1985, p.611). He implies that contemporary Sesotho literature has carried over this moral-of-the story characteristic from the oral prose. This characteristic exists in both literatures and is therefore not troubling for a Sesotho reader who is also familiar with the moral-of-the story oral tales of the Basotho. As Molema aptly observes, in her later work, "this kind of moralizing is more blatant in translation into European languages than it is in Sesotho" (1990, p.49), for the language, one could point out, travels a long distance from its local use and appreciation, losing most of its aesthetic values, and the moralising can only be sometimes interpreted through a Christian tenet when read in European languages.

What I believe has been missed in the criticism of Sesotho literature is the possibility of a marriage between Sesotho culture and Christianity as shown in the works of literature by novelists/poets and playwrights from Lesotho. Sesotho literature, I argue, could metaphorically be seen in the following image, "Two Worlds: that makes two bewitchings; they dance all night and at dawn they crowd into the churches to hear mass" (Sartre's preface in Fanon, 2004, p.20), cosmologically and metaphysically traversing the two worlds. It is a literary syncretism in Sesotho literature, where "experiences which, until the event, lie outside the tribe's cognition, are absorbed … converted into yet another piece of social armoury … and enter the lore of the tribe" (Soyinka, 1976, p.54).

I argue in this study that it is pertinent to take an aesthetic approach towards Sesotho and African literature for, "Without aesthetics … there is no art: without specifically aesthetic values or perspectives, so-called art will merge with everything else – into a sea of consumer objects" (Rancière, as cited in Culler, 1997, p.130). My view is that for a Literature so rich with indigenous resources, it is impoverishing to ignore the aesthetics of Sesotho and African literature. And the best way to truly see the aesthetics in the Sesotho novel is reading in the original language.

1.3 Rationale and Context

The motivation for my research stems from an observation that African literature is seldom studied or written adequately about from the point of view of the aesthetics of the works. This is largely apparent in the critique of African literature in the past sixty to seventy years of post -independence Africa. Critics of the African novel like Ngara (1982) observe a shift, in the seventies, from discussions of form and literary style in African literature towards an excessively thematic analysis of African writing – bordering on sociology. While a thematic analysis of African literature is necessary, particularly in consideration to the past five-hundred-year history of the Africans under European oppression, an interchange between forms and styles indigenous to African arts is also worth studying for a fuller representation of African arts. Form and content are somewhat inseparable. There is "a need for critical thinkers to engage multiple locations, to address diverse standpoints, to allow us to gather knowledge fully and inclusively" (bell hooks, 1994, p.91). For a people whose artistic modes of expression and critique have been marred and, in some instances, eroded by persistent Eurocentric "cultural mummification" (Fanon, 1995), a wholesome approach to literary criticism is necessary, in attempts to reclaim African arts, their expression and critique. It is an act of decolonisation.

Decolonisation in the case of African cultures, begun by theorists such as Fanon (1963), Cabral (1973), Soyinka (1976) and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1986), needs to encompass a combination of numerous approaches of critique, as possible methodology of analysis. Decolonisation needs to also show "the indestructible character of the cultural resistance of the masses of the people when confronted with foreign domination" (Cabral, 1973, p.59). Literary style, form and content, which my study takes a closer look at, are of great importance in the analysis of African and Sesotho literature specifically, as they call for attention to the aesthetics of the works and

a deeper appreciation thereof of the said literature. These tropes and their evolving usage provide an understanding of how African/Sesotho writers have responded to the changes in time through cultural expression. A combination of approaches to literary analysis is crucial for decolonisation for, "interconnectedness is a *more* vital way of framing the discourse in that it serves as a constant reminder that we cannot change one aspect of the system without changing the whole" (bell hooks, 2015, p.xii). Since the time of Mofolo Sesotho novelists, like other African literature writers, have made consistent use of indigenous aesthetics and oral literature "to identify with the literary traditions of their people in terms of content and technique" (Okpewho, 1992, p.293). The aesthetic approach opens up possibilities to look at aspects of written literature that are often ignored, most importantly the characteristics it shares with oral literature and the language and speech within which it was produced. An appreciation of this interchange and cultural-linguistic reference also shows how cultural expression is not stagnant, it moves and reinvents itself throughout history, as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1972, 1986) observes.

The shift, towards too much sociology in the criticism of African literature decried by Ngara above, was due in part to the rapid changes and attempts at self-identification by African writers and thinkers of the sixties and seventies. Soon after the claim, "Black is Beautiful", by Negritude and its forefathers; Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon, and Léopold Sédar Senghor, followed a Marxist leaning identification among African writers such as Kenya's Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, Uganda's Okot p'Bitek and South African writers like Alex La Guma. The fast pace at which Negritude was subsumed into offshoots of African Marxist and sociological theoretical approaches cut short the possibilities of Negritude, for "Negritude itself was concerned, especially at its beginning, with literature as a medium for asserting the cultural affinities of the African spirit to a particular regional culture, and at the same time to other Africans in general" (Wright, 1973, p.12). Negritude, therefore, was concerned with a

recapturing of ‘lost’ and/or fragmented elements of African cultures, which slavery and colonialism and the Christianising mission had severed from the Africans and their knowledge systems.

However, Negritude’s appeal was short-lived as the ideology became increasingly overshadowed by its over-romanticism and essentialism of the African’s physicality and the landscape as symbols relevant and necessary for an African type of literature or artistic expression, as seen in works of writers like Léopold Sédar Senghor, for example. For Negritude, “precolonial Africa is … a happy world, a better world, a world of a priori goodness and harmony” (Julien, 1992, p.19). As Soyinka further argues, “creativity when limited to pastoral idyllism, as Negritude has attempted to limit it, shuts us off from deeper, fundamental resolutions of experience and cognition” (1976, p.156). Julien’s and Soyinka’s observations follow from Cabral’s much stronger commentary on Negritude intellectuals and poets as the “native elites” seeking to satiate their longing for reintegration into their Africanness. As he argues, “for this reason arises the problem of ‘return to the source’ which seems to be even more pressing the greater the isolation of the petite bourgeoise (or native elites)” (Cabral, 1973, p.62). Other writers have labelled Negritude intellectuals such as Senghor as “Westernized Africans” (Serequeberhan, 1994, p.142). Cabral’s and Serequeberhan’s cautions, above, problematize not only Negritude’s methods of decolonisation, but in addition the place of the cultural critic and academic researcher who after an education that is European, laments the loss of culture, and the need to “return to the source”.

The disconnection between the academy and the cultures studied is problematic and is still the bane of our existence as researchers, and one realises that as soon as the word decolonisation is uttered the people who the cultural expressions are most meaningful for will hardly have access to the studies conducted. As Msiska notes, “critical practice is ideological and critics,

as particular subjects are ontologically moulded by the ideological forces that impinge on their formation as intellectual and social subjects" (2011, p.72). However, such critique can be addressed in two ways: firstly, the dire need for this process for awareness in efforts to acknowledge other knowledge systems, or to decolonise, is mostly significant for our 'colonised minds' and the academic fields which are transmission sites for education. For decolonisation, the academy is an important starting point. Many people who eventually influence the public sphere in most African countries are intellectually bred and trained by academia. Writers themselves are a product of the academy. bell hooks argues that "our devotion to learning, to a life of the mind, was a counter-hegemonic act, a fundamental way to resist every strategy of white racist colonization" (1994, p.2). However, our efforts to decolonise literary criticism still need to be cognisant of readers and participants in the literary cultural expression and perhaps decolonisation as a process in academia needs to also connect with communities in which the literatures are produced and how they are received. As Kunene notes on the reception of the serialised Sesotho novels in the *Leselinyana la Lesotho* (Little Light of the Basotho) newspaper, readers of the literature "were engaged in full view of the reading public" (1977, p.159) through commentary and letter writing in response to the novels. This practice, although limited only to the serialisation period, is one example that demonstrates participation of the general reading public in the creation, shaping and discourse on the novel. Secondly, theory and theorising, as bell hooks (1994) further notes, is a process of living and questioning, and intellectual theorising is not necessarily foreign to the processes of dialogue and debate occurring in non-academic circles and communities. "To consider that we write about 'culture,' for only those of us who are intellectuals, critical thinkers, is a continuation of hierarchical idea of knowledge that falsifies and maintains structures of domination" (bell hooks, 1994, p.128). Academic discourse, then, although mostly confined within the walls of the 'ivory towers' mirrors other discussions on arts and culture that are

taking place in other spheres. This mirroring however needs significant effort from academic intellectuals to engage and involve other public intellectuals.

Negritude is significant for beginning this intellectual process, which allowed for an accommodation and/or expansion of theoretical methods to consider African cultures and their modes of expression and influenced the arts and their expression. Understood this way then, Negritude's contribution was significant to creative expression. However, Negritude's great promise of cultural and artistic appreciation was missed as soon as it was born, swept away in the rapid move towards a sociological Marxist reading and writing of African stories. Some theoretical and methodological concepts of Negritude have been reinterpreted and used by African Marxist critics and writers such as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o who is mostly Fanonist in his analysis.

The aesthetics of Negritude, the landscape included, as seen in Césaire's *Return to My Native Land* (1968), are still applicable and used by African writers from the continent, as seen in not only Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's celebration and use of the Kenyan/African landscape as narrative device but also in works of other African writers such as Yvonne Vera, Luís Bernardo Honwana and Ousmane Sembène in their stories. The Marxist sociological dialectic in African literature continued to be present in the eighties with the fiction of the South African humanist writer Es'kia Mphahlele and critics such as Chidi Amuta (1989), for example. Quayson (2003) cautions that,

> In the case of a study of African social imaginaries, however, the impulse toward a Marxian microsemiotic sociocriticism has to be qualified by a mode of analysis responsive to the fluid boundaries between creative, imaginative, and extraliterary categories that frequently overlap and are hardly ever stable. The extraliterary

> categories are particularly important, as they involve the wide-ranging expressive devices of orality. (p.32).

The combination of Marxist and sociological analyses of the African reality through literature is important to note for it not only affected literary criticism, but to a certain extent continued to influence the writing that has come out of the continent since then – leading to a repetitious circle of a writing feeding into a literary critical analysis and vice-versa. As Soyinka notes, "a literary ideology tends to congeal sooner or later into instant capsules which, administered also to the writer, may end by asphyxiating the creative process" (1976, p.61). The sixties and seventies and up to eighties rapid shifts in African writing and its criticism are in part due to the political historical movements of the time. While Negritudians were concerned with an assertion of their Africanness as beautiful, in response to and in confrontation with colonial racist views and stereotypes on Africans, post-independence African realities ushered in a new realisation, that Blackness or Africanness is not necessarily correspondent with total liberation and freedom of Africans. Africans were capable of oppression as much as their former colonizers, a point greatly lamented by Fanon, in *The Wretched of the Earth* (2004), on the elite African bourgeoisie's proximity to the colonial oppressor, both in thought and practice. In addition to the material living conditions of African people that the literature was responding to, discussions of African literature and the role of the writer in African society, such as the 1962 Makerere conference on African literature, whose legacies I discuss further in the Literature Review, below, not only further shaped literary criticism but also situated sixties and seventies literature as the dawn of African literature, particularly the novel (Wa Ngugi, 2018).

The post post-independence generation of the nineties and the early two thousands, with the likes of Dambudzo Marechera, Tsitsi Dangarembga, Yvonne Vera and Charles Mungoshi of Zimbabwe sought to address the duality and "double-consciousness", to use Du Bois' phrase,

of the previously colonised African, but still not veering too far from the discourse on class. In his *Souls of the Black Folk* (1994), Du Bois speaks of the "veil" blinding or covering the self-image of a colonised person, who for a long time exists in the world assuming that their identity is the same as that of the colonizer of the colonising race. As Serequeberhan (2012) observes, "Westernized Africans… having been formed by Europe's imperious gaze, understand themselves and their place in the world in these terms" (p.142). However, as Du Bois observes, the colonised is aware of the contradiction and a duality in their identity. Encounters such as anti-Blackness and/or racism unveil, completely, the identity of the colonised to themselves. In the case of African literature that deals with this double-consciousness phenomenon, characters are made to confront these identities, and their contradictions within, through encounters between urbanised educated elitism and peasantry, as portrayed by Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* (1998) and Charles Mungoshi's *Waiting for the rain* (1975) and to some extent by those of earlier writers like Wole Soyinka (1963), Chinua Achebe (1965, 1967) and Mongo Beti (1964), to mention a few. In other instances, the conflict is internalised within one character as they are made to travel through vast distances of the African landscape from the cities to the pastoral dwellings, a motif recurrent in works of writers such as Yvonne Vera (2002), or through dreams and visions as seen in Dambudzo Marechera (2009)'s stories. Through these techniques, these African writers expressed not only the failed dreams of post-independence Africa, but they also addressed the more serious problem of the "double-consciousness" of the colonised African character, what Gikandi has termed "a cultural half-caste" (1987, p.44). Although these writers wrote and some of them still write in English, their work and the critique of it is worth mentioning and considering in the study of the patterns of critique on African literature here, as these interpretations and patterns can sometimes be found in the works of Sesotho literature critics, who read in Sesotho, such as Nhlanhla Maake (1992) and Daniel Kunene (1967,1989). Language, or more precisely

literature in the mother tongue, does not seem to have impacted critique much, as I should further demonstrate in the upcoming chapter on the Literature Review of this thesis. However, literature in the mother tongue provides, as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1986) notes, liberation of the mind of the practitioner/writer, and this could by extension empower the reader and critic with the same resources, and more closeness and connection to the cultures (Guillén, 1993, p.7). This in effect could expand possibilities for critique and literary analysis from within the cultures in which the works of art are produced. This rootedness allows for a dialogue that centres the works in their own right, and limit and/or help avoid an external gaze on the literature. The external lens on African literature did not begin with written African literature.

It is crucial to point out at this stage the patterns of critique that written African literature has inherited from earlier anthropologists' views on oral literatures. Julien notes that, "we must recall that it was anthropology, more than history or political science or other disciplines, that dominated the study of African cultures. Thus, anthropological assumptions and paradigms led the way in the European appraisal of African life and art" (1996, p.11). Okpewho (1992) points to three stages that mark the progression of the critique of African oral literatures in the past. As he notes, some of the earliest ethnographers, championed by the likes of James George Frazer (1854–1941), were evolutionist in their approach to oral stories in Africa, looking at cultural expression as "survivals" of stories handed over from mouth to mouth over generations, without a clear ownership of authorship. Scholars like Finnegan (1970, 2012) would later refute this notion, in the seventies, showing that the oral storyteller, in cultures like the West African Limba people, tells a story their own way even if such a story is well known and told throughout the same community, the telling always differs. Okpewho further observes that, "the evolutionists were so obsessed with the concept of the development of culture and the history of cultural ideas that they lost the opportunity for appreciating" the art (1992, p.7).

Prior to evolutionism, which also came to coexist with it, was the diffusionist approach with the work of German brothers Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm whose main idea was that oral stories show that "two societies had some contact with one another" in the past, and that "culture can only spread from a superior to an inferior people" (Okpewho, 1992, p.7), a claim feeding into the illusion that cultural expression and storytelling amongst Africans must have had European influence at some point. The third stage that Okpewho points to is the critical approach which affected not only the analysis of oral literature in Africa, but as I argue, has somewhat spilled over onto discussions about written literature of the African continent. This is the sociological approach towards indigenous cultures and their artistic expression spearheaded by earlier anthropologists like Malinowski. Although this approach could be seen as the closest reading that had ever been undertaken on literatures from parts of the world outside Europe, the sociologists Okpewho argues, "have given far less time to illuminating and analysing … artistic properties" of non-European literatures (1992, p.11). African literature has been dogged by this legacy all the way from the oral to the written, a reluctance to accord African literature its own aesthetic value. African literature critics of African origin have also inadvertently been caught up in this latter approach, as seen in the form of literary critique that began in the sixties and the seventies with critics like Mphahlele (1974) finding value in African works of literature by comparing African writers with European writers, a form of validation for the African writer, as if the European writer was the measurement of artistry.

A refusal by African writers themselves to be analysed through a European lens which, according to Ayi Kwei Armah, "consists of the judicious distortion of African truths to fit Western prejudices, the art of using fiction as criticism of fiction" (1977, p.34), left African literature open to all kinds of critical analyses that purported to be an African reading. Achebe had earlier on echoed a similar sentiment to Armah in his essay, "Where Angels Fear to Tread", when he attested that, "The question … is not whether we should be criticized or not, but what

kind of criticism" (1975, p.3). These attempts, to carve a specifically African type of critique, although crucial for African writers and their autonomy, allowed for a plethora of forms of analyses of African literature during the sixties and the seventies, from, overly, sociological to psychoanalytical and political, which were understandably in tandem with the material reality of the African subject seeking independence from colonial powers such as Belgium, Britain, France and Portugal at the time. However, this has led to "too much discussion of non-literary matters, too much debate about general questions whose relation to literature is scarcely evident, too much reading of difficult psychoanalytical, political, and philosophical texts" (Culler, 1997 p.1). In her critique of the Black Arts movement in the US, bell hooks (1994) notes that prescriptive analysis and demand for black artists to express their art only in ways that clearly correspond to the political struggle for liberation and the black experience have limited artistic expression which is abstract or has other types of aesthetics. As Soyinka observes, "Revolutionary writing is generally of this kind, though whether or not much of the writing which aspires to the label is always literature is another question" (1976, p.66). While it is debatable as to what type of writing qualifies as 'real' literature, and it could also be argued that revolutionary and sociological writing can be aesthetically rich and that an aesthetic and a socio-political approach to literature are not mutually exclusive, as I should further demonstrate in chapter five, Soyinka's observations are important for the analyses, which also tend to affect the writing, of African/black literature for when a political and sociological approach take precedence then the literature and its aesthetic values could be ignored. These kinds of analyses, of African literature, as argued earlier, have found a new form of expression in criticisms such as the Postcolonial critique.

However, the political and the postcolonial approach to the African novel and other types of literature on the continent have halted, to a great degree, the consideration of aesthetics and broader analysis that could provide more concrete and easily applicable methods towards

decolonising African literature critique, methods which would afford African literature/s agency. As George (2003) posits, "the predominant way in which the idea of agency is being framed in contemporary postcolonial theory cannot allow a strong understanding of the epistemological implications of African literature and the criticism it spawned from about the middle of the twentieth century" (p.x). This kind of critique mostly concerns itself with the discourse on colonial power as the only method of reading and appreciating African literature, as if Africans exist only in response to colonialism, and that they have no other past, present, future and possible epistemological and spiritual existences as alternative times and mediums. As Julien (1992) aptly notes, "the paradigm of *rupture* ignores the lessons of history and cultural syncretism; it accords to Europe too much importance and to Africa too little strength" (p. 22). To move forward from this stagnation, there is a need to "not focus so exclusively on the trauma of genocide as to forget that there was life before the trauma" (Armah, 2006, p.253), and this life continued to be lived during and after colonialism. Critics need "to re-open the creative space that much of the black aesthetic movement closed down, it seems vital for those involved in contemporary black arts to engage in a revitalized discussion of aesthetics" (bell hooks, 1994, p.109). The same can be said of the African literature critique which responds solely to the post-independence novel and its concerns, without addressing the diversity of literary expression that came before colonialism, and continued during the colonial period and afterwards. Post-independence itself cannot be equated with postcoloniality, and also different erstwhile colonies were not colonised the same way and their 'independence' did not come about the same way, as Loomba (2010) demonstrates in her essay, "Situating Colonial and Postcolonial Studies". Therefore, countries' specific histories and contexts need to be considered to inform critics' views.

Advancing from the heavily sociological anthropological reading of African literature or a viewing of African literature as a direct mirror of the social, Quayson (2003) has introduced a

method he terms “calibrations”, a concept of reading for the social as opposed to reading the social into the novels. His approach, like those of bell hooks and Soyinka and others above, allows for coexistence between social realities and literature as opposed to total mirroring of sociological realities by African literature. The importance of Quayson’s study is the attempt to wean literary analysis from socio-anthropological dependency, to allow aesthetics observation and varied theorisations.

1.4 Theoretical Framework and Methodological Approach

This study uses the following theoretical approaches as framework and methodology; Leloba Molema’s “stylistics of transitions” for a deeper literary engagement and to trace and tease out indigenous and oral literature aesthetics in the Sesotho novel; Wole Soyinka’s concept of the “Fourth Stage” which interprets the process of creativity as a form of crafting whereby old gods beget new gods, to consider how Basotho myths and legends are used by the novelists to address metaphysical and cosmological questions of continuity; Édouard Glissant’s “Poetics of Relation” alongside Frantz Fanon’s ideas on decolonisation and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o’s *Decolonising the Mind* (1986). I combine these approaches to frame and pattern the chapters and themes under discussion in this thesis, for, as suggested above, “there can never be one critical paradigm for the evaluation of artistic work” and “a radical aesthetic acknowledges that we are constantly changing positions, locations, that our needs and concerns … correspond with shifts in critical thinking” (bell hooks, 1994, p.111).

Molema’s work lends a coherent and clear methodology to use as an anchor for my analysis of Sesotho literature, with an ear on the oralness of the literature, as “sound is extremely important in oral literature” (M. Orwin 2019, personal communication, 28 March). I should show that Sesotho literature carries to a large extent, this characteristic of oral literature, with Mofolo’s work showing great application of these aesthetic elements. The stylistic elements that I discuss

in this study, in relation to Sesotho literature, are mostly incorporated in the sound of the literature, as seen in the oral poetic inserts, ideophones and repetition. Sound is definitive of written Sesotho literature. “Much of Sesotho prose sounds as if it is being listened to rather than read. It is as if the author were sitting in the midst of a group of people and were telling them a story” (Molema, 1990, p.43). The pace of most the novels, the slow vivid descriptions, the poetic prose, could be said to deliver the stories in a manner that renders the audience arrested and captured in the listening activity that mimics the oral storytelling set-up. Even the novels that are fast-paced, like Chobokoane Chobokoane’s 1992 novel, *Ke Lesheleshele Leo a Iphehletseng Lona/ Chickens Come Home to Roost*, still render a reading that has a strong sense of sound and poetry.

Molema’s “stylistics of transitions” include praise poetry, which is an essential aspect of Sesotho cultural artistic expression. Praise poetry is performed for kings and chiefs, and also during feasts and gatherings in Lesotho. “Praise poetry is another genre of oral literature that the early Basotho novelists make extensive use of” (Molema, 1990, p.54). I shall analyse the poetic inserts in the texts under study in this thesis to evaluate how the writers use “poetry as narrative device” (Orwin, 2008, p.36). I should look at particular moments in the narrative at which the poetry appears and the experience that the poetry creates for the reader, and also what the author tries to achieve with such poetic inserts. Symbolism as well as “imagery is essential to this kind of poetry” (Molema, 1990, p.54), and these are the aspects of the poetry I consider in my analysis.

Of great importance too, for my analysis, is the use of the ideophone, a narrative device that requires from the reader “a participation in a happening” (Kunene, 1978, p.12). Kunene notes that, “ideophones ‘attempt to be vivid representation or re-creation of an event in sound” (1978, p.2), with a change in tone from the storyteller, “often accompanied by gesture and grimace”

(Molema 1990, p.46), for effect and intensity. The ideophone, observes Molema, "adds to the impression of Sesotho literature as being heard rather than read... The early Basotho writers could hardly avoid using it, it being in the nature of their language" (1990, p.46). This study analyses the use of ideophones by Basotho writers to understand the effect the ideophone has on the narrative.

Repetition is another element of Sesotho literature that also relies on sound, and its usage is equally strong in oral literature, as it is in written Sesotho literature. Repetition in Sesotho Literature, as Molema notes, can be repetition of "whole words", "syllables" and of "vowels". Length, quality, size and gravity of the thing described can be determined by the repetition. Repetition is often represented by a variation in tone and word-stress. The above aesthetic aspects of Sesotho literature will be brought out through a descriptive literary approach, using Molema's analysis as methodology.

My framing, which addresses literary styles and techniques together with an analysis of the use of African philosophy, and specifically cosmology, employs a decolonial approach to the Sesotho novel. This lends a more unified appreciation of the literature, if art and creativity are considered part of a philosophical, spiritual and artistic way of knowing and being. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o aptly notes that,

> As an African writer who believes in the utilization of African ideas, African philosophy and African folklore and imagery to the fullest extent possible, I am of the opinion the only way to use them effectively is to translate them almost literally from the African language native to the writer. (1986, p.8).

Decolonising the Mind by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o is apt for my theorising, for the aim of my thesis is to find ways in which literature and literary critique of the Sesotho novel could be

decolonised and reclaimed by first reading it in the Sesotho language, and secondly by analysing it from within the culture, with tools and techniques that correspond with its creation. Situating Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o as anchor to this method of theorising, in the same way that I use Wole Soyinka's work as theory for metaphysics and cosmology, attempts to steep my analysis within an ongoing conversation between African writers and their critics and also taking into consideration writers themselves as critics. Soyinka suggests, in his *Art and Outrage* (1988), that there should be no separation between art critique and the artists. As Kunene has also observed in the case of Lesotho in the beginning of print, the involvement of the readers with the texts, through the newspaper, "encouraged and facilitated criticisms and corrections by others before the author made a final commitment to publication" (1977, p.159). This put the writers and readers/critics in direct dialogue about the texts. Toni Morrison has also argued that, "criticism as a form of knowledge is capable of robbing literature not only of its implicit and explicit ideology but of its ideas as well; it can dismiss difficult, arduous work writers do to make an art that becomes and remains part and significant within a human landscape" (1992, p.9). Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o and Soyinka are not only crucial for my theorising as African literature critics who are seminal in the articulation and application of some of the main concepts that drive this thesis, using their works is in part connecting criticism of literature with both the creator and the reader to continue this literary dialogue on the African novel.

Wole Soyinka, as seen in his own creative work, explores the interchange between oral literature and written literature using Yorùbá mythology, with specific interest in the god Ogun, a kind of a doppelganger or twin-spirit/saint inspirer of the creative artist and writer. I use Soyinka's work for my analysis of African philosophy, particularly the use of metaphysics in literature for,

> Philosophy is … focused on sifting and exploring our presuppositions and prejudgements – the prejudices we live by – in view of the shared possibilities of our present. Consequently, it stands in very close proximity to history; it is the reflectively critical self-validation of its lived time – its historicity. (Serequeberhan, 1994, p.138).

Soyinka's work connects the African artist and writer to the gods in a cosmological realm he terms the "Fourth Stage", which is a stage of creativity, in addition to other life stages of the "African cosmology" such as the "unborn," the living, and the departed, a sort of philosophical "historicity" driven by art and literature in a cyclical process of life. In his *Myth, Literature and the African World*, (1976), Soyinka speaks of myth and ritual in drama as a desperate need and anguish in man, especially "traditional" man, to connect with and understand his place within the cosmological existence in which he exists. He views creative artists as those who cross over into the spirit world, or "the gulf" as he terms it, to find solutions and explanations for the community, for "life, present, contains within it manifestations of the ancestral, the living and the unborn" (1976, p.144). At other times this role is assigned to the protagonist, especially in Nigerian drama, by Soyinka. He takes the following view on works of African writers such as Ousmane Sembène, Yambo Ouologuem and Ayi Kwei Armah,

> When gods die – that is, fall to pieces – the carver is summoned and a new god comes to life. The old is discarded, left to rot in the bush and be eaten by termites. The new is invested with the powers of the old and may acquire new powers. In literature the writer aids the process of desuetude by acting as the termite or by ignoring the old deity and creating new ones. (1976, p.86).

I shall present Mofolo and other Sesotho writers, like the above writers analysed by Soyinka, in the fourth chapter on Metaphysics and Cosmology and the fifth chapter on Mofolo's 'Poetics of Relation', to be also bringing to life the acquiring of new gods, from the old and the new

alike, in their "carving" and crafting, using tools of the oral storytelling traditions combined with newer forms like the novel. As Armah says, on African literature and mythology, "We create our gods; we imagine our ideals, then we live up to them" (2006, p.257) through the writing. Literature, in this way, works as a vehicle for cultural progress and reinvention.

Although Soyinka uses drama as his example in most of the chapters in his *Myth, Literature and the African World* (1976), I shall use his treatment and observation of Yorùbá drama to approach my analysis of Sesotho prose fiction. While the three generally known stages, birth, life, death are cyclical in an "African metaphysical understanding," the "Fourth Stage", where humans and gods travel for change, for recreation and reinvention, Soyinka sees as less obvious in the interpretation of the metaphysics.

In the same way that Soyinka sees the process of writing and crafting as metaphysical, as inspired by the gods, or African religions and spirituality, he also makes allowance for man/writer to be the creator of the gods, as someone who creates possibilities in the characters/protagonists to cross over and return to the living, to effect change. In Sesotho culture, a similar spiritual parallel to what Soyinka calls the "Fourth Stage" is associated with the healers and medicine people. Using this philosophy of Soyinka and comparing spirituality or African religion to the process of making literature, my view in relation to Sesotho spirituality is that the protagonist or the characters could be interpreted as mediums who access the world in-between the dwelling of the living, the departed and the to-be-born/the coming. The writer himself/herself, understood in this Soyinkan way, would fit the role of the Sesotho diviner who interprets and makes sense of these worlds for the community of audiences. Thomas Mofolo usually frames his work and drives his narrative through characters potent in some form of spirituality, which can be likened to this approach by Soyinka.

Since the "Fourth Stage", as Soyinka implies, is accessible to artists and creative writers as some kind of "spirit mediums" and diviners to use Sesotho spirituality in tandem with Soyinka's approach, Soyinka views writers as partaking in the process where life constantly reinvents itself. The writer is seen as a societal interpreter and cultural custodian. Soyinka's concept provides a possibility to engage with newness in a creative writer's craft. This is necessary when one considers that not only does the writer, rely on the known myths and legends, as I should demonstrate, but also creates his/her own new myths, layering and recreating his/her stories in a form new to Sesotho cultural and artistic expression, the novel. I shall use this notion, the "Fourth Stage" to look at the use of myth, and also the revision and the making of new myths in the Sesotho novel, and to look at ways Mofolo and others pose cosmological and metaphysical inquiries with their characters, by sometimes using bizarre and logically unexplainable occurrences to tackle this inquiry. Using Soyinka's work for the analysis of metaphysics in the Sesotho novel is significant for my thesis, for "African philosophy can serve as a juncture for the differing discourses on Africa," (Serequeberhan, 2012, p.147) and the continent's literary analysis as well. In the fifth chapter, which connects Mofolo with writers from other parts of the African continent, I frame analysis with Glissant's concept of "Poetics of Relation." Glissant's notion of Relation shows ways in which creative activity connects writers from different cultures and allows them to relate. As the fifth chapter analyses Mofolo's influence in the rest of the continent, Relation is therefore important for "the only discernible stabilities in Relation have to do with the interdependence of the cycles operative there" (Glissant, p.92). Adaptations of Mofolo's *Chaka* by writers such as Senghor and Soyinka show the operative cycles and the conversation among African writers.

The above methodological and theoretical considerations are significant for my study of the Sesotho novel for they deal with a diversity of concepts relevant to the study of African

literature and by extension that of the Sesotho novel. Molema's "stylistics of transitions" is rooted in the study of Sesotho literature and her work situates written Sesotho literature within Sesotho culture as continuity of the literatures of the Basotho and this is important for my analysis for it seeks a methodology of closeness, mostly through sound, between verbal art and written literature. Soyinka's ideas are equally important for my analysis for they speak to creation of African literature as both an act and interpretation of the African's lived realities in a manner encompassing and connecting the African to their environment, material and spiritual. I aim to interpret these works of Sesotho literature with an awareness and appreciation of the culture and the cosmology within which the works were created. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's relentless efforts at formulating strategies in his theory of the decolonisation of African literature are also important as I extend his logic from emphasis on writing in African languages to interpretation of the existing literatures in African languages, such as Sesotho literature, and argue that critics need to seek ways of discussing African literature which are more correspondent to the works and their languages. This promises fuller cultural comprehension of the texts. Fanon's concepts on decolonisation, particularly the notion of violence as decolonial, together with Glissant's notion of "Poetics of Relation" will also be made use of in the fifth chapter, in the subsection focusing on anti-colonial violence and resistance as articulated by different writers in their reinterpretations of Mofolo's *Chaka* for their own contexts. These theories and methods are considered for a broader and nuanced reflection on the Sesotho and African novel and to address the following research questions that guide my thesis.

1.5 Research questions

This study is primarily concerned with indigenous aesthetics of Sesotho literature and how they are used in Sesotho novels. The following questions are core to the study:

1. How does Sesotho language usage provide possibilities for artistic and creative reinvention and continuity in Sesotho literature?

2. How has the literary criticism of the Sesotho, and African, novel overshadowed the aesthetic literary qualities of the works of Sesotho writers, and how can criticism advance new methods?

3. Which oral literature elements are recurrent in the Sesotho novel, and how do they work as narrative device?

4. How do Sesotho novelists deal with questions of metaphysics and spirituality through their narratives?

5. How can literary critique of African/Sesotho literature be employed for decolonisation?

1.6 Thesis Outline

The thesis will be broken down into five chapters. The first, introductory chapter, gives the context and historical background of Sesotho literature, and delineates the theoretical and methodological approaches to be employed in this study. It poses the research questions, and addresses the first research question: How does Sesotho language usage provide possibilities for artistic and creative reinvention and continuity in Sesotho literature. The chapter also provides the outline of the thesis.

Chapter two is a review and discussion of the literature related to the study, and advances discussion developed in chapter one to answer the second research question: How has the literary criticism of Sesotho and African literature, the novel in particular, overshadowed the aesthetic literary qualities of the works of Sesotho writers and how can criticism advance new methods? Mofolo, I argue, in this chapter, decolonises the novel form and gives it a unique Lesotho Africanness. More importantly, his novels show that we need to rise above postcolonial, Marxist and sociological criticism of the African novel, which privilege politics

over aesthetics, and devise a critical method that combines both. This chapter describes the roadmap for such an undertaking in the subsequent chapters of the thesis.

Chapter three 'Stylistics and Techniques of Sesotho Literature', examines how Mofolo and Chobokoane integrate the aesthetics of indigenous Sesotho orature into their novels, to answer the second research question: Which oral literature elements are recurrent in the Sesotho novel, and how do they work as narrative device? I demonstrate how indigenous epistemologies and aesthetics are liberatory and decolonial. Focusing on stylistics, such as the employment of repetition, poetic inserts, symbolism, ideophones and the patterning of imagery, I present ways in which the Sesotho novel expresses continuity between the past and present in the literary expression.

In this chapter, Mofolo's first novel, *Moeti oa Bochabela/Traveller to the East* (1907), which is in a form of an allegorical quest narrative, with elements of romanticism, will also be analysed together with Chobokoane Chobokoane's *Ke Lesheleshele Leo a Iphehletseng Lona/Chickens Come Home to Roost* (1992) for these two make use of stylistic elements such as poetry, repetition and the use of ideophones to a great extent in the treatment of their themes. Both novels are quest narratives that involve a search and travel from pastoral Lesotho to foreign lands. Inability to settle in a pastoral environment and escape are central to both narratives.

This comparative analysis is significant in consideration to the 85-year gap between the two writers' first novels. The length of time that passed from the publication of Mofolo's first novel and Chobokoane's is important for the consideration of consistencies and variations of the interconnectivity between oral forms and written literature in Sesotho, and how the writers have moved between the two modes as narrative devices in different historical times. I analyse motifs and themes taken from Sesotho oral tales and used in the novels for dramatic and plot

purposes, and most importantly to address historical and political shifts in the context of Lesotho in the past century. While the stylistic elements are observable in other novels, they will be systematically teased out in this chapter as methodological approach.

Chapter four discusses the use of African philosophy, metaphysics and cosmology to address the question: How do Sesotho novelists deal with questions of metaphysics and spirituality through their narratives? I examine the syncretism between African spirituality, metaphysics and cosmology, and Christianity as motif in Sesotho novels, to demonstrate how the search for the understanding of being and existence, and restoration, is expressed in the Sesotho novel. This approach, which uses African philosophy, localised Christianity and other African spiritualities, is significant for analysis that wishes to present linkages between African cultures, and for further decolonisation in literary analysis.

Most crucial in this chapter's discussion is the use of ritual and myth, oral literature and African traditional religious elements as incorporated into the prose by the authors for narrative purposes. Wole Soyinka's notion of the "Fourth Stage", will be used to discuss the transformation of the protagonists in the novels, for this chapter. This chapter also considers how cosmology and metaphysics are used by the authors to create dramatic tension and to drive plot.

Chapter five explores the pioneering role of Mofolo in the development of not only the Sesotho novel but also his influence on other African writers who came after him and as such the chapter takes stock of the proliferation of Mofolo's techniques. The chapter examines literary solidarity among African writers, taking Mofolo once again as the kernel of the analysis to discuss adaptations of his novel, *Chaka*. This chapter analyses Bennett Makalo Khaketla's *Mosali a Nkhola/A Woman Betrayed Me* (1960) against Thomas Mofolo's third novel, *Chaka*, written in 1928. Both novels are historical novels and the theme of power and violence will be

discussed in this chapter. This chapter also presents an analysis of literary aesthetics and their interchange between the writers for different environments and geographical landscapes. The use of human sacrifice, medicine and supernatural powers based on Sesotho and Zulu historical narratives and mythology, mixed with Christianity and its Biblical examples, as narrative device will be discussed in this chapter. Violence in the novels will be discussed in an attempt to view ways in which violence as resistance and/or nation-building, to borrow from Fanon's work, is portrayed in Sesotho novels and other African literary texts which are adaptations of Mofolo's *Chaka*. This chapter will have a subsection on Mofolo's influence on two African writers, Léopold Sédar Senghor and Wole Soyinka, under the same themes of resistance and also creation of African global networks of political activism which are transnational. The chapter views how these aesthetics of liberation translate themselves into other African locales. Mofolo, and the influence of his novel *Chaka*, anchor this chapter.

The final chapter is a conclusive chapter based on the findings of this study. It considers how significantly Sesotho and African writers have used indigenous aesthetics of oral literature in their works, in its summation, and it secondly makes recommendations on how approaches to the Sesotho and African novel from an aesthetics point of view could be used for future analysis of the Sesotho/African novel.

This study makes its contribution to discussions on the African language literature novel and calls attention to the richness of African language literatures, with a focus on the aesthetics especially the indigenous aesthetics and ways in which these are experienced, and how they have been sustained in the written African literature. It proposes a move towards taking a closer look into indigenous forms of oral literature, how these are apparent, in the works of African language literature writers as they are also applied, to a certain extent, in the works of African literature writers who write in non-African languages. As I argue, and should demonstrate in

this thesis, these literary forms are worth analysing in greater detail and appreciation in their own right and for continuity, for “the literature actively participates in the ongoing production of culture by mere fact of being the imaginative work of a segment of contemporary African … reality” (George, 2003, p.140).

2 Literature Review

The literature review of this thesis discusses literary critique of Sesotho literature together with that of the larger African literature. This approach aims to address Sesotho literary criticism within broader discussions of the continent's literatures for contextualisation, for, as argued earlier, African literature critique has somewhat influenced discussion on Sesotho literature and the novel in Sesotho. The predominant methods of analysis in African literature, which have to a great extent left aside deeper considerations of the aesthetics of the works, have also showed themselves in discussions of the literature of the Basotho. Therefore, this review addresses the thesis question: How has the literary criticism of Sesotho and African literature overshadowed the aesthetic literary qualities of the works of Sesotho novelists? I first discuss the study of oral literature by Sesotho literary critics, which written Sesotho literary criticism advances for the consideration of the novel. The discussions on the novel in Sesotho have also concerned themselves with Christianity as a major influence, as I should further demonstrate in this chapter. To situate the analyses of the Sesotho novel within the larger context of African literature, the study also discusses African literature critique with some of the predominant discourses such as the debate on the choice of language by African writers and questions on the origins of the African novel, orality/written literature interface and how these continue to shape analyses of the Sesotho novel. Finally, the literature review gives an overview of the novels under study here as primary texts.

2.1 Sesotho Oral Literature Forms and Content

Scholars of Sesotho oral literature, such as Guma (1977), look at "the form, content and technique of traditional Sesotho literature" through, among other things, myths and oral tales (1977, p.1). Although this intertwinement between orality and mythology has been acknowledged in discussions of Sesotho literature, an in-depth analysis of it has been carried

out by only a few critics. Among contemporary scholars, Manyeli, T.L. (1995) has approached the analysis of myth in Sesotho orature as literary device in the field of phenomenology and religion. Rakotsoane (1996) has also studied Sotho mythology for an analysis of Sesotho religious beliefs.

Literary criticism of written Sesotho literature has gone a step further than Guma, above, to emphasise that in addition to the presence of orality and its incumbent mythology, the written literature of the Basotho is laden with moralising, as mentioned before. Sesotho literary critique has mostly taken a thematic approach. Some see the moralising in the literature as direct inheritance from Basotho tales and fables, Masiea (1985), as mentioned in the introductory chapter. Masiea's observation of the presence of moralising in both oral Sesotho literature and the written is important to note so as to avoid pitfalls and assumptions that the moralising in the literature is a cause of a foreign phenomenon, such as Christianity, as suggested by critics of Sesotho literature like Kunene (1967).

2.2 Christianity's Influence on Sesotho Literature

Other critics go a little further than Kunene, and suggest that African intellectuals and writers, especially writers such as Mofolo have taken on Christianity and used it as a "yard-stick" for morality in their stories (Molema, 1989). However, this does not mean that oral Sesotho literature, before the arrival of written prose, was devoid of moralising, as argued above. One could argue, in addition to Molema's idea, that what then emerges, in Sesotho literature, is a possible amalgam of the two cultures, Christianity and Sesotho culture, as I indicated earlier in the rationale and context of this study, and this confluence deserves some attention. Molema's later work, "From Oral to Written Literature: The Stylistics of Transition" (1990), is perhaps the most important analytical approach as far as the aesthetics of the Sesotho literature is concerned, and I adopt her methodology to analyse the texts under study in the thesis.

The advent of Christianity is crucial for the beginning of literacy and literary Sesotho. According to Maake (1992), the "history of Sotho literature …cannot be divorced from the history of the missionary church" (p.158). The advent of Christianity should however not be seen as absolute disruption, but perhaps as also cultural contribution which Basotho writers have, to a certain extent, appropriated and utilised in their creative writing. Young (1973) argues that literature by African writers should not be looked at as separate from oral traditions. He compares the use of "oral literary tradition" in African literature to Senghor 's notion of "ancestor cult" whereby Senghor refers to "African patterns of rhythm and language" as necessary means to tell African stories (1973, p.26). On Mofolo's *Chaka* for example, Young points out that, "as a revelation of the profound possibilities of the oral tradition, *Chaka* must be said to remain in its way one of the most important works in modern African literature" (1973, p.28-29).

My own view is that it is not only the "profound possibilities of the oral tradition", that are at play here, it is also how much Sesotho itself as a language is steeped in orality, in its use of sound, repetitions and word-plays, which allows the written prose to keep reinventing itself with ease. The language creates this type of literature. "Shifting how we think about language and how we use it necessarily alters how we know what we know" (bell hooks, 1994, p.174). Writing in Sesotho gives the writers access to a certain kind of literary richness, for "it is the mother tongue that offers us the most intense access – the most secure and most intimate – to aesthetic emotion and …comprehension" Guillén (1993, p.7). As Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o argues, "The choice of language and the use to which language is put is central to a people's definition of themselves in relation to their natural and social environment" (1986, p.5).

2.3 African Literature Critique, from mother tongue to second language

The debate on language and the choice between writing in the mother tongue vs writing in a colonial language became pronounced after the Conference of African Writers of English Expression at Makerere in 1962, where African writers debated among other questions: What is African literature? Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o and Chinua Achebe had been in conversation (till the death of Achebe in 2013), in their polarities, about this choice of language for their entire writing careers since the 1962 Makerere conference. While Achebe defended the use of English in his writing, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o has argued that African writers can only truly express their African identity and that of their literature/s by creating fiction in their mother tongues. This debate is significant, perhaps primarily because of the question/s it does not ask, and secondly for language problems which cannot be easily resolved by writers on the African continent, language problems whose address is however pertinent.

To begin with the latter; fiction writers are a small group of mostly college-educated individuals writing for a group of people who can read and who have an interest in reading literature. The case of Lesotho is slightly different, from say a country like South Africa, because Sesotho literature books are studied in schools and read on the radio and can therefore be said to have a greater reach and larger audiences, nationally, than in African countries where literatures in the mother tongue are not part of the school syllabi. However, verbal art is still dominant and more easily accessible than the novel even in places such as Lesotho. To argue, as Irele does, that, "the novel has acquired today a cultural significance that was once the exclusive province of the oral literature" (2010, p.2) is to miss the difference between contemporary intellectual/academic debates' preoccupations and the use and reach of these forms. It would therefore be overly ambitious to expect that writers can transform the language coloniality and hierarchies of languages in African countries. As such, even though Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's

(1986) work is seminal on decolonisation, its central focus does not address ways in which colonial languages' hierarchies can be changed as mobility languages in education, health and legal frameworks, for example, in pragmatic ways. Therefore, in this respect, decolonising of languages in Africa cannot lie primarily with writers. The use of colonial languages for communication, conduct and administration of important state matters is the problem, not the literature writing per se. What the sustenance of literature writing in the mother tongue does, as has been the case in Lesotho, and as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1986) himself has also emphasised, is to express the literature and its culture and language in ways that carry the aesthetics of the language to the fullest, for as I should demonstrate in this study, these aesthetics are mostly bound with the language. While this in itself is a form of resistance and self-reclamation, it works better in continuity, not as a reversal of the status quo. Where writers have been writing predominantly in colonial languages and have found ways to carry their African experience and expression in a 'foreign' language, the reversal seems very difficult as Achebe (1975), and the proponents of his argument have shown in their 'ownership' and defence of the English language. It can be argued that Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o has followed through with his proposal and succeeded in publishing a novel, *Matigari*, in Gĩkũyũ in 1986 perhaps mostly because of the advantage he enjoys as an acclaimed African writer with a continuous publishing career in the English language, which began with his *Weep Not, Child* first published in 1964. However, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o proved his point with his mother tongue novel. Reading *Matigari*, even in translation as a non-Gĩkũyũ speaker, yields a lyrical narrative whose use of African aesthetics is more profound than in the other novels by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o which were written first in English. Taking these factors into consideration, for a continental discussion, it appears then that the reading and analysis of African language literatures can, at present, mostly illuminate the aesthetics and their use from the cultures that have enjoyed a continuous writing in the mother tongue. This illumination is also important where African literature aesthetics have

been reflected in colonial language literatures or in comparison for example, so that a reading of say, Thomas Mofolo's novel *Chaka* (1926) for example illuminates techniques and styles that, say, Ayi Kwei Armah uses in his post-independence novel, *Two thousand seasons* (1979) – a novel that reflects significant influence from Thomas Mofolo, with devices such as the use of the environment, landscape, oral history and spirituality as narrative devices in both works. Literatures written in African languages when read alongside literatures written in colonial languages might contribute to the provision of the literary analysis' missing link which Ngugi wa Mugoma attempts to address in his, *The Rise of the African Novel* (2018). However, it is still crucial to analyse literatures in African languages in their own right.

To address the former complication of the mother tongue vs colonial language debate, that is the question/s it does not address, one needs to consider the legacies of the literatures written in colonial languages. Firstly, these novels, which are mostly realist, tend to occupy the central position as the 'main' works of African literature. Literary analyses need not only attempt to link these works with African language literatures, as suggested above, but also search for what the works of literature which do not fit in this category, African independence/post-independence realism proper, yield. One of the reasons why the response to the post-Makerere novelists and the subsequent critique of their works gained traction lies on postcolonial criticism, referred to earlier in this thesis, as these works of African writers in the sixties and seventies confronted the colonial question, liberation and decolonisation directly. However, African language literatures such as that of Lesotho for example, and those of regions like the Horn of Africa, "a region where European languages never supplanted indigenous languages … with colonial languages becoming the language of power and high culture and 'vernaculars' associated with powerlessness and low culture never took shape" (Marzagora, 2015, p.5), do not fit neatly this postcolonial, independence/post-independence framework of the African novel. Criticism of African language literatures has therefore analysed most works

retrospectively, with colonialism and its response as preoccupation and the literary analysis from this period situating itself as the critique of the African novel.

African language literature compilers such as Gérard (1971) have managed to amass large quantities of the literatures for analysis at the expense of quality, specificity and correct historical dates, due to among other obstacles, lack of access to the language and an insistence on a particular postcolonial framework for analysis. As Maake (1992) argues, Gérard's greatest "shortcoming is dependence on secondary texts" (p.157), resulting in a compilation that is riddled with unnecessary spelling errors and faulty historical claims. For example, in his analysis of Sesotho literature, Gérard's suggestion that the church in Lesotho was not involved with the royal family and only interested in the salvation of ordinary Basotho people is flawed because the earlier missionaries were, as shown in the historical context of this study, in fact, King Moshoeshoe's possible advisors, and the church in Lesotho's closeness to the royal family still persists to this day as the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society (PEMS) missionaries are still referred to as Moshoeshoe's *own* priests, and a number of royal seats and palaces like Matsieng and old Makeneng have a church on their land. A number of kings that followed King Moshoeshoe are buried in church cemeteries. The church in Lesotho, was for a long time on the side of the Basotho against British-Dutch colonialism. The church was not neutral, it was political, but not in the political role that most African literary criticism employs, which is that of the church as the arm of the colonising empire. This nuance in colonialism/s and literary critique is significant for ways of seeing colonialism not as monolithic on the African continent. My observation is that Sesotho literature, for example, exhibits a hybrid of traditional and Christian beliefs, to a certain degree, partly because of this intertwinement between the church and the monarchy, the ultimate cultural custodian of the Basotho. Gérard's interpretation of Sesotho literature lacks what bell hooks has termed the "passion of experience" which is "a way of knowing that is often expressed through the body, what it

knows, what has been deeply inscribed on it through experience. This complexity of experience can rarely be voiced and named from a distance" (bell hooks, 1994, p.91). The assumption that one can analyse literature in a language they do not understand is greatly flawed. Analyses conducted from such a distance and lack of knowledge of the subject matter, by using secondary sources to analyse texts of literature, work against honest intellectual pursuit. It is no surprise then that such critique is preoccupied with summaries and concepts that are jarring and removed from the texts it purports to be studying, it is centred on secondary sources and not the novels themselves. Its guidance is mainly the predominant literary critique on the African novel. That analysis such as Gérard's was written in the seventies situates it further within the post-independence postcolonial literary tone of the moment.

The seminal compilation and engagement, to my knowledge, with African language literatures across the continent is the work of Andrzejewski et. al. in their *African languages: theoretical issues and sample surveys*, (1985), with Masiea's specific chapter on Sesotho language literature, both oral and written, showing thorough on-the-ground research and an understanding of and an engagement with the language, which has informed some of the concepts in this study. Language is not the only obstacle that African literature critique has faced, for although Gérard's know-it-all paternalism, above, may be an extreme case, it does not differ significantly from the attitudes of other Eurocentric critics who analyse African literatures written in European languages which they understand. This type of problem with African literature critique is also not only a problem with European views per se; it predominantly lies in the nature of literary critique that is used to analyse fiction works that are produced by non-Europeans. It is a problem with literary criticism itself as also seen in analyses by African critics and writers who find themselves trapped in this Eurocentric analogy and methodology.

In the introduction to his, *The Growth of the African Novel* (1979), Eustace Palmer says of African literature writing, that,

> For most African countries the experience of actually having writers in print is new and exciting and therefore a source of national pride. They can at last take their places alongside other nations who boast a written literature. Their writers therefore become national heroes almost overnight. (p.2).

Palmer does not only assume the role of African countries' spokesperson in announcing the excitement Africans feel about written literature, but he also shows a standpoint superior to that of other African readers and writers. He assumes that the 'culture of letters' is or should be as singularly valorised by Africans as it is in Europe. For Palmer, Africans can "at last take their places alongside…" others in the supposed writing Olympics he implies are taking place worldwide. "At last…" suggests that Africans had been waiting in thrall for Europe to appear and hand them a civilising pen to write the novel. Palmer's "At last…" also ignores the pertinent fact that African literatures, such as that of Lesotho, for example, were in print from as early as the 1890s, about a century before Palmer could 'utter' his dismay, above, in 1979. For Palmer, then, the Africans have been excited by the newness of print for a century. His critique belongs to the predominant African literature view which implies that African artistic expression and writing starts when the European interacts with it. Julien (1992) argues that "as late as 1960, the activity of writing in Africa – and especially serious, sustained writing – was generally assumed in the popular Western view and even by Africanists to have begun with the arrival of Europeans on the continent" (1992, p.7). According to Palmer's critique, above, Africans have had no literary heroes until the writing of the novel was delivered to them by Europeans during colonialism. To suggest that African readers and listeners turn any writer into a national hero, without erudite interaction and appreciation of quality artistry is elitist and

ignorant of the literary histories and their progression in African cultures. For this 'uncritical mass' the template for analysis is therefore Europe's external experience and gaze as internalised and shown by the likes of Palmer, in the quotation above. This ignorance is best addressed by the following statement by Chinua Achebe who argues that "most African writers write out of an African experience and a commitment to an African destiny. For them that destiny does not include a future European identity for which the present is but an apprenticeship" (1976, p.9). African writers, therefore, are not writing novels for the Western(ised) gaze and/or reader as their primary audience. The idea that Africans are, in their artistic expression, trying to emulate Europe and are therefore seeking acceptance into European canons is culturally imperious even from Palmer, whose analysis mimics a "colonialist critic, unwilling to accept the validity of sensibilities other than his own, has made a particular point of dismissing the African novel" (Achebe, 1976, p.23). As mentioned earlier, African writers such as Ayi Kwei Armah, Wole Soyinka and Chinua Achebe have cautioned against critique of African literature by critics who are Eurocentric in their analysis. These writers' counter-critique of Eurocentric literary analysis has been continued by African literature critics such as Chinweizu et. al. (1980) and Julien (1992) among others. Says Chinweizu et. al. that,

> The Eurocentric view of African literature as an appendage of European literatures manifests itself most forcefully in the preoccupation of Eurocentric critics with meticulously documenting the European pedigree of African novels. They spend an inordinate amount of time and effort insisting that a work by an African is patterned on some novel or other by Conrad, Dostoevsky, or Kafka, and when they cannot find a suitable European ancestry for a work, … they generate elaborate puzzles as to how the work should be classified." (1980, p.17).

Another African writer who perpetuates this type of critique and seeks European literature validation for African works is E'skia Mphahlele. For example, Mphahlele (1974) interprets Thomas Mofolo's novel, *Chaka*, as a mixture of "Tamburlaine and Dr. Faustus," (p.206), and goes on to compare the novel with Shakespeare's Richard III. Mphahlele does not differ from critics such as Bouteldja Riche (2010) who also compares Mofolo's characters and narrative structure in *Chaka* to Western classics like Faustus and Macbeth, without any analysis of Sesotho traditions and culture and therefore misses out on any links and ways in which Mofolo re-articulates Sotho/Southern African traditions and religious practices. Riche finally makes a conclusion that, "Mofolo's *Chaka* is Euro-centric in artistic principles" and that the writer has failed "in a bid for cultural rehabilitation," (2010, p.16), as though Mofolo had written his historical fictional piece with this purpose and/or promise to begin with. Most importantly, Riche himself fails to analyse or reconcile the text with its indigenous location and cultures or any relatable works of African fiction. His critique is the one that introduces European fiction characters into Mofolo's work, and not the other way round. As Julien (1992) argues, "Eurocentric views of African literature did not stop at intertextuality and affinity; they appropriated African literature and colonized it completely" (p.4). While works can and do share universality in themes, this thematic connection needs not always be European-focused or looking up to Europe as the basis and canon of literature, as if European art is the measure of art. This is not to deny that writers can be influenced by other writers, but "we can tell when the mere line of 'influence' has been crossed" (Soyinka, 1988, p.8). In their upbringing and education, African writers "were participants in several modes and genres of narrative and many call upon all these aesthetic experiences in their writing. Their work may be rich, indeed, precisely because these novelists have such a varied range of experiences upon which to draw," (Julien 1992, p.41), but singularly focusing on European influence shows lack of engagement with the works on the part of critics. The tendency to compare or attach African works to

European literary ancestry stems from a Western literary training which most scholars and practitioners of literature have been exposed to. In an absence of alternative techniques and methods of analysis, most critics trained in a European educational practice tend to automatically adopt this epistemology of an ancestry route through Europe and the European novel. It is a lack of exposure to the spectrum of African indigenous narrative techniques and devices, that African literature has largely utilised, which inhibits application of clearer, informed, relevant and Afrocentric tools of analysis, or a complimentary combination of literary critique. Some writers shed greater light on these debates, which helps situate African writing within its location. As mentioned in the theoretical framework of this thesis, literary criticism that involves writers as critics, may furnish analysis that is multivocal, although may not always be the case as seen with Mphahlele above. Novelist, A.C. Jordan, points out that,

> like other people of the world, the Africans gave artistic utterance to their deepest thoughts and feelings about those abstract and concrete things that came within their experience, to their speculation about the origin of things, including man himself and the universe; to their interpretation of the struggle between man and the mysterious forces that surrounded them. (1973, p.3).

African writers, therefore, like writers in other cultures ponder on their immediate realities from within their own cultures and societies and material conditions. This type of reflection needs to also inform criticism of African literature, for "the artist has always functioned in African society as the record of the mores and experience of his society *and* as the voice of vision in his own time" (Soyinka 1988, p.20).

This brings us to an important ongoing debate on the African novel and its origins. In their attempt to find Africa-centred critique of African fiction, writers and critics have also concerned themselves with the question of the origins of the African novel and/or major

influences that led to the African novel in different eras. Four interlinked pathways of discourse emerge from this origins-of-the-African-novel conversation. While the scope of this thesis limits and allows for analysis and expansion on only the last two approaches of this argument, the third and the fourth one, they are all worth discussion here to chart a diversity of intellectual efforts and attempts at resistance and decolonisation of the literary critique of the African novel and the larger body of literature from the continent.

2.4 Discourse on the origins of the African Novel

The first argument in this discourse is the assertion that the novel originates from Africa. The second one argues that extended African oral narratives gave birth to the African novel. The third one emphasises the continuity of African storytelling and argues that there is an influence of oral literary traditions in the African novel. The fourth approach, which my study takes as a point of departure, suggests that there is an ongoing interface between oral forms and written forms.

Proponents of the first argument, that the novel was first developed in Africa, expand discussions from works of writers such as Cheik Anta Diop's *African Civilization, Myth or Reality* (1974), Théophile Obenga's *African Philosophy: The Pharoanic Period: 2780-330BC* (2004), Miriam Lichtheim's *Ancient Egyptian Literature* (1973, 1976, 1980) and Alan Gardiner's *Egyptian Grammar* (1927), among others works. These works, and their proponents by extension, situate Egypt among the first literate and literary traditions. In his *Eloquence of the Scribes*, (2006), Armah studies Ancient Kemet poetry to provide analysis of the sophistication of the literature of ancient Egypt. Another proponent of this debate is Harold Scheub (1985), who argues in his analysis of the three thousand years of ancient Egyptian literary tradition that "the assumption that the novel form evolved in the West and was transported to the rest of the world is as blind as it is arrogant, especially when one considers

that the novel was vibrant some three or four thousand years before workers went to factories in Europe" (1985, p.46).

In his analysis, Scheub considers Egyptian prose texts such as *The Story of Sinuhe* and *The Story of the Eloquent Peasant* from the Middle Kingdom, and *The Story of the Shipwrecked Sailor* (c.1900 B.C) as novels. Quoting Lichtheim, Scheub regards *The Report of Wenamùn* (c.1075 B.C) "a sort of minor *Odessey*" (2015, p.21). He also argues that "the story of Anupu and Bata, which combines in a single story two narratives of different provenance: the rejected lover motif (later to appear in Greek oral tradition in the Phaedra and Hippolytus tale in the Hebrew tradition as the story of Joseph and Potiphar's wife …) with two parts, one realistic and one mythical" (2015, p.20-21), are novelistic in realisation.

This argument, above, is important not primarily for whether the novel in its current form originates from Africa or from Europe. Its significance lies mostly in the suggestion of the malleability of the novel as a form. This analysis of the novel as flexible and accommodative has also been suggested in other contemporary literary criticism by critics such as Bakhtin, in his *The Dialogic Imagination* (1981). Bakhtin emphasises the importance of the different oral forms which eventually resulted in the novel in Europe. He suggests that the newness of the novel is demanding for literary theory, it unsettles it, as the novel is in constant mutation and development. The novel is malleable and can easily adopt and adapt characteristics of other older genres. According to him, the novel responds to change easily, for it is itself always changing. The workings of these forms in the novel are re-articulated by Scheub, in his analysis of the African novel. As he argues,

> In its beginnings in Egypt, literature sought to carry to a logical end the predisposition for complexity that is a part of the oral tradition – it is what enables the riddle to become lyric, the lyric to become heroic poetry and tale to become epic. This impulse towards

> complexity … a characteristic of the oral tradition, not only persist in literature, it is what makes possible the writers' explorations of literary possibilities in the materials they have inherited from the oral artists. (1985, p.16).

The novel's characteristics, historical time of conception and the material conditions underlying such a development in literature have resulted in another predominant discussion in literary debate, that of the hero's journey.

The journey of the novel hero can be analysed from travel. This travel can be figurative or realistic as it can also be spatial and/or temporal. Scheub (1985) argues that the oral tale and the epic hero are not always easily assimilated into the African novel hero in their narrative journey. He shows as example Achebe's hero in *Things Fall Apart*, Okonkwo whose eventual alienation from his community leads to suicide, as a failed transposition of the oral story hero into the novel. Okonkwo's suicide in his Igbo culture is the utmost abomination which excommunicates an individual from the culture and lineage of ancestors, and the community refuses such a person a burial as rite of passage, as seen in the case of Okonkwo. Scheub argues that it is the protagonist's journey that fails to be smoothly adapted into novel form, which riddled Achebe with the difficulty of resolving his main character's fate. In this way, Achebe's hero, Okonkwo, is unlike the epic hero who travels outside their community and returns transformed by experience and knowledge to transform his/her society with wisdom. Since Okonkwo, the protagonist, was trying to transform a society that was being rapidly transformed by colonialism, his experience and knowledge and plans while in exile contradicted the changes his society was going through in his absence, according to Scheub. It was a modernity discrepancy between what the character wanted and what was realistically achievable. What Scheub misses in Achebe's hero of *Things Fall Apart*, however, is that Achebe is articulating the difficulties colonialism presented for continuation of the fictive Igbo village cultural life of

Okonkwo's people, in this way it might not matter whether the hero lives or dies. His death is symbolic of the rupture of his society, a point Achebe might have wished to emphasise. The suicide of Achebe's hero can also be seen as resistance, a refusal to accept the new status quo by Okonkwo and the rapid changes in his Igbo village. Where society is stable, this supposed adoption of the "culture hero" appears to work, as seen in Mofolo's *Chaka* for example, which Scheub also discusses as a successful transition of the oral story/epic hero become novel hero. The main difficulty in this analysis, however, is whether the hero in *Things Fall Apart* or any other African novel should always be interpreted as an adaptation of the oral story or epic hero.

The journey of the novel hero, as Julien (1992) has demonstrated with works of Hampâté Bâ, begins with ordinary circumstances. The protagonist can be conceived from ordinary roots, unlike that of the epic whose birth determines the destiny. Character and the environment shape the hero in the novel. Sometimes, the birth and early life of the protagonist is surrounded by difficult circumstances and obstacles in the novel. Mofolo's hero, Chaka, in the novel of the same name, is an example in point in this regard, as Chaka the boy is constantly taunted and shunned by his community members. This societal rejection is used by the author to advance the plot as the character is seen struggling for communal acceptance and reintegration through his own assertiveness. Chaka's growth into a fearsome fighter is nurtured by adversity. To achieve the highest level of acceptance, even dominance, Chaka uses the only tools he possesses, wit, stealth and strength. These breed power and eventual tyrannical rule. His travel and subsequent return from his exile aid to propel his community into military might.

The journey or travel as a characteristic of African narrative has been problematised by Julien who asks, "if heroes do travel, how can we know that the voyage is everywhere necessarily reminiscent of an oral tradition" (1992, p.34) that is African, since novels from other cultures have travel as motif as well? It can be argued that perhaps travel alone should not be taken as

solely interchangeable between the heroes of the two forms, but the process of the journey and the return. For the culture hero travels with a purpose to bring tools and skills back to their society. As Soyinka posits, "If however we elect to return, like Tutuola's hero, wise only from the stress of experience it will not have been a totally valueless journey" (1988, p.11). The choice then for the hero or the hero-maker is to return, if the writer has an oral form hero in mind, wisened by "experience" as the heroes return in oral poetry and the oral tale and the epic. How the novel treats all these elements is significant because the novel has the ability to present itself in multilayers for its flexibility and does not strictly adhere to the strict forms of oral tradition. I argue that an intertextual analysis between oral story heroes and those of the novel, and how writers treat these motifs, could provide discussion that is not totalising and presenting the African novel as mimicry and/or neat linear continuation of oral stories rather than sharing interchangeable narrative devices with oral forms. Julien further views the discussions of the origins of the African novel as situated in the ancient Egyptian literary development, particularly Scheub (1985)'s analysis, as problematic for in his enthusiasm to assert that the novel originates in Africa, Scheub defines the novel itself in Eurocentric terms.

Scheub (1985)'s argument, although it situates the conception of the novel in a different time and location, by virtue of defining the novel as "human psychology, individual experience," (Julien, 1992, p.29), centres the very description of the European novel as the "esteemed novel", and therefore perpetuates the same logic that he is attempting to dispute which is that the European novel is superior and therefore its characteristics should be emulated. As Julien further argues, "'psychological development' of characters is an attribute that has no *inherent* literary value. If it is a matter of discerning effective from ineffective books, all that can be asked is that characters fit the overall conception of the work in which it appears" (1992, p.37). Secondly, by defining the novel as the ultimate destination in the growth of the riddle becoming lyric and subsequently poetry and oral tale to the epic and then eventually to the novel, Scheub

(1985) follows a linear progression of oral literature into the novelistic form. This way of analysing contradicts his assertion of a cyclical process between these forms of literature in ancient Egypt. Julien advises that it is not important as to where or when the novel emerged, rather how it emerges in societies. While Scheub (1985)'s method of interpreting the journey of the novel might exhibit Eurocentric tendencies, the historical analysis which he presents have some importance. In attempts to find and combine ways of decolonising literary analysis, careful attention needs to be paid to contributions of African cultures, and historical times need to be provided, for African history is not fixed and locked in the past five hundred years of European oppression of the African people. In presenting this argument on the origins of the novel on African soil, I therefore take into consideration Armah (2006)'s concern that the study of African literature preoccupies itself predominantly with two eras, the timeless 'precolonial' and the 'concrete' postcolonial. Armah argues that this tendency is limiting to an appreciation of African literature and its history. He introduces four periods of African literature that he wishes for critics to consider. Starting from the current backwards, he lists these periods as: "1. Contemporary African literature; 2. Feudal Oral traditions; 3. Migratory traditions and 4. the Scribal traditions of Kemet (ancient Egypt)" (2006, p.145). This process, as he argues, proposes an approach to African literature that does not centre the colonial experience as the definition of African history. While such analysis is beyond the scope of this thesis, it is important to mention it here and to consciously situate the contribution of this thesis and the study of the Sesotho novel into a larger literary culture of the African continent that does not singularly view colonialism as responsible for African literary arts. However, I am also, at the same time, cautious about analysis that is steeped in a linear process as Lesotho demonstrates different ways that the oral and the written interchange. As Julien aptly observes, "comparative studies of oral and written texts are still plagued by notions of progress and by linear thinking" (1992, p.21) and decolonial attempts need to avoid linear framing.

The second direction taken by the discourse on the origins of the African novel suggests that "in the case of the African novel it is important to realise that its indigenous antecedents should be sought in the continent's traditions of extended narrative" (Chinweizu et. al., 1980, p.29). Like the first argument, above, this argument emphasises that the African novel has its roots in Africa. This argument, as has been championed by the likes of Chinweizu et al. in their *Toward the Decolonising of African Literature* (1980), considers both the extended African narratives and presence of literacy and writing in some 'precolonial' African societies as evidence that the African novel could have been produced without the arrival and/or the rupture/s by colonialism. As the authors argue,

> Long before Caesar led his Roman legions to bring civilization to barbarian Gaul, to Celtic Britain, and to the Druidic German tribes of Vercingetorix in the 1st century B.C., the African Nile Valley civilizations of Pharaohnic Egypt, Nubia, Kush, Meroe and Ethiopia had literate cultures – in territories where Sudan, Ethiopia and Egypt are today located. (1980, p.26).

The statement above is important, like the first argument by Scheub, for providing historical context. While these facts, in the above quotation, are indisputable, the connection between indigenous sources and the novel as a form are tenuous in the critique of Chinweizu et al, as I should demonstrate below. As they further insist, "since there are these pre-European African narratives, both written and oral, there is no reason why they should not be considered … antecedents out of which the African novel might entirely have evolved, without hybridization by the European novel" (Chinweizu et. al., 1980, p.27).

Texts of some of the earliest novelists such as D.O. Fagunwa's 1938 *Ògbójú Ọdẹ nínú Igbó Irúnmọlẹ̀*/*Forest of a Thousand Daemons* echo African orature in their seamless interpretation of and weaving of oral story style and techniques with the novelistic form, with episodic

narration that compares to African epics such as *Sundiata* and *The Ozidi Saga*. The suggestion that positions the novel as an outgrowth of oral narratives has been disputed by critics like Irele (1990) who argues that "in no instance could one speak of a gradual transition from oral to written literature, or suggest that written literature inherits from that of oral literature" (p.61-62). In a similar vein, Mudimbe (2013) has proposed a shift from looking at African literature as an "indigenized imitation" of other forms of literature. These arguments need to be expanded and analysed closely. While "inheritance" or a linear progression of oral literatures into written African literature might be problematic, literature as storytelling needs to be situated within a historical movement and growth. This movement might not be linear and should not be viewed as moving one direction only, that is from oral to literate. However, orality and written literature have co-existed in African literary expression. With specificity to Lesotho, these forms of expression have moved forth and back for a century, which shows that "cultures are neither entirely and exclusively oral nor singularly literate" (Julien, 1992, p.22). As demonstrated earlier, the audience of the Sesotho novel was predominantly made up of people who could not read during the advent of print, between 1839 and the 1890s. As newspaper serialisation allowed shared reading, the printed took oral form. Later, in the 1970s, the novels in Lesotho were read on the radio. The audience, whose literacy had significantly increased at this stage, heard again these literary texts being read. This audience engagement through orature and reading shows connection with the performance and reception of the two modes of literary expression. Certain characteristics of the oral narrative and its styles flow easily into the written, as the written itself can sometimes be easily framed as oral storytelling.

At one level Irele (1990)'s rebuttal, above, is problematic for even if the novel, the realist novel, was arguably believed to be a European development, European critics such as Bakhtin have also pointed out ways in which the European novel assimilated into itself oral forms, particularly the epic. Chinweizu et al. argue that,

> Critics who recognize, in the case of European tradition, that Europe's extended narratives, both the oral and the written, whether in prose or verse, were the antecedents or prototypes of the European novel, seem reluctant to search in the analogously appropriate area for whatever African antecedent to the African novel there are. (1980, p.29).

Therefore, to a certain degree viewing the novel as responding to its time, while at the same time still relating to narratives that precede it and which are still in circulation during writing and print cultures does hold water. However, the main problem with Chinweizu et al.'s assertion that the novel in Africa grew out of oral forms is that the authors do not offer ways or stages at which the 'precolonial' writing African societies could have either assimilated their oral forms with their writings and how these could have resulted in the creation of the form of the novel, or if those writing societies would have produced the novel, or something completely different. If any suggestion is made by their argument, it is perhaps the idea that these oral narratives, without colonialism and intensified printing, could have moved beyond the epic as the longest oral prose narrative and developed into some type of novel. However, the novel is a written piece. The structure, plot, narrative, theme and style are couched within the written language. The process of writing itself differs in composition from that of creating and performing oral narratives such as the epic. Just because the European epic is understood to be antecedent to the European novel does not necessarily mean that the African novel would have been conceived the same way. Additionally, literacy does not seem to automatically produce the novel. In their examples of the literacies of "Nubia, Kush, Meroe and Ethiopia" Chinweizu et al. (1980) do not furnish evidence on how these cultures were in the process of creating the novel. As Julien also argues, "in Africa as elsewhere printing, reading, and writing were material preconditions of the novel, but the rise of the novel can hardly be considered a consequence of literacy" (1992, p.22).

Abiola Irele (2009) makes his contribution to the discussion on the origins and/or presence of literacy and writing on the African continent and also attempts to trace the beginnings of the novelistic form back to African society, using ancient Ethiopia as premise. Unlike Chinweizu et al., Irele starts with literature writing itself. In addition to the Arab/Muslim and Christian religious texts' influence on African literary expression, Irele situates his observations a thousand years before the contemporary African novel, in the European middle-ages and Renaissance period. He notes that,

> the earliest works of fiction by writers either native to or associated with Africa predate the introduction of literacy in Arabic in the early millennium, and as the defining cultural mark of a Western inheritance, also predate the introduction of literacy in European languages. The beginnings of the novel in Africa go as far back in fact to the formative period of Western literature itself, with works related to Africa constituting part of its early corpus of canonical texts. Of the works that have survived from this period, two in particular have an immediate bearing on the practice of fiction in Africa: the Greek masterpiece, *Aethiopica* by the Hellenic writer Heliodorus, and *The Golden Ass* by Latin author, Apuleius. (2009, p.2).

Irele tests and proves his assertion above, on the basis that, firstly, *Aethiopica* centres Ethiopia and "highlight the military brilliance of the Ethiopian general" (2009, p.3) and therefore has in it implications of an African writer/storyteller origin among other things. The second one, *The Golden Ass* apparently exhibits characteristics of African magical realism as shown by works of Amos Tutuola, Kojo Laing, Ben Okri and Pepetela, and could be considered an "antecedent" of these works. However, both texts' links to African literature appear as conjecture. The first narrative could have been penned by any one historian or historical novelist, who presents events as honestly as they occurred, or who is driven by their time's popular belief about a

particular nation's military brilliance. The second conclusion also does not correspond with its formulation. To begin with, other cultures have produced magical realist fiction. For example, writers like Gabriel García Márquez of Columbia and Juan Rulfo of Mexico have produced works of magical realism and while their Latin-American roots might have had African influences, works of magical realism are not necessarily all connected to an African origin. Other cultures' mythologies can and have produced magical realism in the form of prose fiction, as seen in German works of writers such as, Adelbert von Chamisso and Franz Kafka whose works could also be studied alongside traditional Norse mythologies to understand the phantasmagorical or magical realist elements. Therefore, Irele (2009)'s evidence, and contribution to this debate, is cursory.

This second strand of the African origins debate does not make a clear connection or help develop informed methodologies towards finding ways in which the said African literacies could have contributed to written literature, and the novel itself specifically, other than the fact that novelistic narrative has in itself some of these other earlier precedents. If the African novel bears no "hybridization" of the European novel, then the indigenous narratives to which the African novel owes its development also need specific mention and they need to be clearly demonstrated and shown at work, from inside the literature itself. "Fictional narrative often, necessarily, tells us more than the criticism that seeks to explicate it or theories that claim to speak for it" (George, 2017, p.175).

To conclude, from these arguments above, that the novel therefore originates in Africa seems like a stretch. It is not enough to assert the autonomy of African writing and locate it within time periods that precede European writing. Analyses need to also show how these writing cultures together with their oral narratives were practiced by Africans, stylistically and technically, and how they continued and are still expressed by the diverse literatures of the

continent. This task seems more feasible and also necessary, and would help to establish the functions of this interconnectedness to show progress and interrelationship and not only nostalgia and attempts to prove European ideas wrong. If for example Armah's historical analysis of the literary periods of Africa could be followed, from the Scribal traditions of Kemet (ancient Egypt), to the Migratory traditions and the Feudal Oral traditions and finally Contemporary African literature, one sees possibilities of linkages and most importantly continuity of African literary forms. For historical purposes, and revision of imperialist views and approaches this line of argument is significant. As Diop argues, "it is evident that, if starting from Nubia and Nubia-Gulf of Benin, Nubia-Congo, Nubia-Mozambique, the course of African history would still have appeared to be uninterrupted" (1974, p.148). Perhaps future archaeological findings of Kush, Meroe and Nubia, as literate civilisations mentioned by proponents of the African origins of the novel form above, will produce some forms of written literature that is closer to the novel as we know it. The assumption, therefore, could be that writing on the African continent, without colonial rupture, could have organically progressed towards the novel. As to whether that development would have produced the novel it is not certain. The important question to ask along this vein, which I attempt to address below, is why the search for the roots of the novel form, as opposed to the search from inside the novel itself for methodologies which could yield Africa-centred critique?

The discussions about the novel are made more complex by the suggestion by general critique that the novel is the most important genre. On the other hand, it is perhaps the fact that the novel is viewed an "esteemed" genre that these discussions are recurrent, not about the literature and its quality but about the novel as a measurement of creativity and progress and/or 'civilisation' within societies. Julien argues that the contest about the value of the African novel stems not from the idea of Africans asserting themselves, but this self-assertion is done in opposition to something external to whiteness and imperial superiority. This is why analyses

which chart African cultural critic and expression, in the postcolonial era, start with Negritude and Pan-Africanism. While these ideologies are highly significant on African discourse, the inertia was propelled by the angst, anguish and resistance to white oppression. As Julien argues, "if we have been made aware of the way in which early definitions of 'African' were less a matter of self-definition than definition of Europe's opposite, then the orality/writing-literacy antithesis is another facet of that definition by contrast, which we have perhaps ignored" (1992, p.22). It is this fixation with Europe as the centre that Armah (2006) cautions against and argues that the "trauma" of colonialism does not define Africans, for as he further suggests, and as mentioned above, there are other ways of critiquing African literatures with reference to the other periods of literary development on the continent. I go further and argue that if literary critique could see verbal art and writing as interconnected, the process then is to tease out what makes African literature and the novel in particular work, and how it works. As Julien aptly observes,

> speech and writing are modes of language, and both modes are ours when we have the means to produce them. When we look at their interaction in literary genres, it therefore should not be in an effort to prove or disprove cultural authenticity but rather to appreciate literature as a social and aesthetic act." (Julien, p.24).

The third approach to the African origins of the novel has been strongly advocated for from the study of African oral traditions. A leading scholar in the field of myth and oral literature in Africa, Okpewho's "aestheticist" approach to literature which sees "myth as a creative resource from which the larger cultural values are derivative" (1992, p.32) is an important contribution in the discussion of the play of indigenous aesthetics in both the oral and the written literatures of the African continent. His work is also essential for my study and the way I interpret the texts I have chosen. In his study of oral literatures Okpewho (1992) also analyses oral

literatures of the African continent with tools and methodology which are also applicable to written African literature. These include devices such as repetition, ideophones, proverbs and imagery and symbolism, some of which I use to analyse Sesotho literature in this thesis. He also draws linkages between oral literature and written literature, with an understanding of ongoing interchanges between the two forms of literature, and shows that "it is futile exercise to insist on establishing a hierarchy between orality and literacy, based on their 'intrinsic' qualities" (Julien, 1992 p.14).

Okpewho addresses the style of using myth by African writers and asserts that not only do they borrow old traditional myths and oral tales, but they also invent new myths, this is a style of writing also championed by contemporary writers like Ayi Kwei Armah. Armah's analysis of oral literature and myth in his *Eloquence of the Scribes* (2006) is also important and informs my analysis to a certain extent, especially his view that African myths direct African authors and their African readers towards self-knowledge, and the knowledge of the continent. "The study of our myths, along with a serious immersion in our history, is a path to self-knowledge" (Armah, 2006, p.251). Armah speaks of "fragmented" pieces of African history which he implies lack of whole-picture-framework, which disables them from becoming proper historical narratives. This is what Diop (1974) calls "specific narratives." General narratives on the other hand, as advocated for by Armah, come from a larger assemblage and engagement with the "fragments" for analysis and help to draw a fuller picture in discussions of African literatures and histories.

The analysis of works of fiction by writers like Mofolo links the critic and reader to these African knowledges. bell hooks cautions that while acknowledging the richness of African heritage and the past, "critical reflections on static notions of black identity urge transformation of our sense of who we can be and still be black," (1994, p.20) and/or African. It is also crucial

to acknowledge that most of the "fragments" Armah speaks of are in use in contemporary African literature. Therefore, the past is here in the present. The process is cyclical. For the analysis of works by a writer as inventive as Mofolo, the work of Wole Soyinka, and his concept of the "Fourth Stage", as shown in the theoretical approach of this study, will be shown to provide greater insight into ways in which writers constantly rearticulate these "fragments" of their histories.

Soyinka's "Fourth Stage" is a bridging of the distance between the past, the present and the future which the writer tasks himself/herself with through the process of creation and recreation, which then yields a literature that is rich with indigenous forms of aesthetics, because of the timelessness of the engagement with the process of writing itself from the writer's point of view. Historically and philosophically then, the storyteller/writer is engaged in the progressive creation and recreation of cultural life. The creation of literature Soyinka calls, "the sublime *aesthetic* joy" (1976, p.143). This "sublime aesthetic," I argue, is what is available in the works of Thomas Mofolo and other Sesotho writers and can be seen through a literary engagement that is focused on the aesthetics of the literature and the richness of the language in constant continuity. As Soyinka notes, "There is no good and no evil, however, only concepts of continuity – what works for society and what does not. And this knowledge, this magic is achieved from within society itself," (1988, p.12). The "Fourth Stage" by Soyinka is in sync with the fourth approach to the African novel analysis, which emphasises interconnectivity between oral narratives and written literature.

Among African literature critics, especially literature that comes from Anglophone African countries, Barber (1995) provides critique that sets her apart from most scholars. Barber sets example by employing a thorough analysis of the Yorùbá fiction of Ọládẹ̀jọ Òkédìjí, with focus on the use of orality in the text, an approach my study also employs in the analysis of Sesotho

literature. Barber's success is in part due to the fact that she looks at the writer's narrative techniques from within the original language, Yorùbá. As she observes, "the oral tradition and its 'values' and 'wisdom' are often left unanalysed" (Barber, 1995, p.8). When one delves into African literatures in their original languages what emerges is writing that is mainly concerned with the lives and the realities of the writers' own people, and not primarily concerned with 'writing back to the centre', and this Barber has proved through a meticulous literary approach to the work of Ọládẹ̀jọ Òkédìjí, which considers the work in its own right. As Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o notes, "written literature and orature are the main means by which a particular language transmits the images of the world contained in the culture it carries" (1986, p.15). These images, the symbolism and meaning they carry, when deliberately employed for aesthetic purposes in verbal art and written literature create and stand for artistic texture and strength, primarily because the language itself carries and drives these techniques and styles. The move away from criticisms such as the postcolonial, and towards decolonisation, is important for a reengagement with literatures of the African continent. As Guillén argues, "Literary systems exist; so that writers can differ from them, or break with them, or push them aside" (1993, p.9), and one could argue the same needs to apply to critique.

It is important to expand the ideas contributed by some of these African literature scholars, above, and continue "the debate over language and form" and "the search for the most appropriate narrative style and aesthetics" (Osei-Nyame Jnr. 2001, p.262) criticism in African literatures. This study uses some of the above ideas to inform and guide its analysis of the primary texts under consideration here.

2.5 Sketch of the context of the chosen primary texts

The current Morija Book Depot Archives in Lesotho houses about five hundred books written in Sesotho. Of these, about one hundred and fifty are prose fiction; novels and short stories, plays and poetry. Masiea's 1985 biographical notes and list of Basotho novelists mention about seventy novelists and short story writers from the time of Mofolo to the early eighties, although the writer cautions that his list does not cover all the novels published in Sesotho. His list also does not cover the late 1980s, 1990s and 2000s, periods which seem to have a broader spread of publications between Morija Book Depot, the Catholic church printing depot, Mazenod Book Centre, and newer publishers such as Macmillan Boleswa and also South African printing presses such as the J.L. Van Schaik in Pretoria with about ten of the Sesotho novels in the Morija Book Depot archives having been published between 1979 and 1989 in South Africa. Although there is talk of ownership change of the Morija Book Depot and possibility of this affecting the writing production, about thirty years ago, more research is needed to determine factors responsible for this shift in the printing presses, and what it has meant for Sesotho literature writing and printing, which is beyond the scope of this thesis.

From about the 1930s, after Mofolo's last novel publication, well into the 1960s the prominent writers were either proof-readers at the Morija Book Depot before becoming writers, like Mofolo, such as Jacob James Machobane, or historians such as Mosebi Damane who taught history into the 1990s at the National University of Lesotho (NUL), and teachers, such as Benett Makalo Khaketla – who is under study in this thesis, and other educated Basotho such as Kemuel Edward Ntsane who pursued postgraduate education at the University of London. The writing seems to have ranged from historical novels on the monarch and different sub-strata of it, contact with Dutch settlers in South Africa and morality stories on subjects such as marriage, a theme which shows itself throughout different eras of Sesotho writing.

In 1965, Ntsane penned the first thriller in Sesotho, *Na, Sajene Kokobela CID* / *I Sergeant Kokobela of the CID [-Criminal Investigation Department]* (Masiea, 1985, p.616).

The 1960s and 1970s themes appear to be more pre-occupied with travel out of Lesotho, with Machobane's *Pere e ntsho*/*Blackmore* an ode to a horse, a favourite mode of travel in rural Lesotho, and Majara's travel destinations, in the novel under study here, for example, as overseas countries such as Syria and United States. The late 70s and 80s also show a huge outpouring of grammar and educational books for schools. This focus might also have affected the writing of novels, as Basotho writers' main audience are school pupils and students. Therefore, the national curricula design has bearing on the writing focus. Fiction writing appears to have ebbed from the late 80s into the 90s as educated Basotho poured their energies onto the writing of grammar books. Chobokoane Chobokoane's fiction in the 1990s, therefore, arrives in a period – the 1990s and 2000s where Sesotho literature seems to have taken a hiatus.

Future research is needed to also search for correlations between the growth of Sesotho oral music, which from the late 80s to the current time has increased exponentially in recording and performance, and occupies central debate, disagreement and dispute in the current Lesotho public sphere, and written literature activity. This growth, while it could have corresponding causes internally, is also marked by labour movements from Lesotho to South Africa, with a certain form of praise poetry, *lifela*, gaining more popularity and socio-cultural influence on the Basotho, inside and outside the country. A study of the *lifela* genre among Basotho mine labourers in South Africa has been conducted by David B. Coplan's in his *In the Time of Cannibals: the word music of South Africa's Basotho migrants*, (1994). Radio Lesotho's broadcast of the novel, whose listening is still a staple in the rural areas, need to also be examined for further study into ways that both text and orature work at specific times for Basotho audiences.

The texts chosen for this study represent themes and sub-genres that are repeated throughout Sesotho prose, such as the historical novel, travel, and marriage. These themes pre-occupied Lesotho's first novelist, Mofolo, as much as they came to interest his followers. The writers themselves are chosen based on the great quality of their writing, and especially for the skill with which they present coevalness between orality and written literature. While writers such as Damane, Machobane, and Ntsane and Paulus have had great recognition in literary discussion and also deserve great study, I chose the writers, here, for their impact and ways in which their work most exemplifies the orality written literature relation which my study views as significant for literary analysis of Sesotho and African literature.

2.6 Primary Texts

My study looks at six Sesotho novels, as primary texts, three by Thomas Mofolo, and one by each of three of the writers in Lesotho that came after him, namely Bennett Khaketla, S.N. Majara and Chobokoane Chobokoane. I also include, in the fifth chapter, analysis of adaptations of Mofolo's *Chaka*. This comparative method will be carried out by theme, using Mofolo as the main writer who has passed the baton on to other writers. The quest, by the protagonist through trials and tribulations, drive some of the plots in these novels. The landscape, and man's battle with cosmic elements are some of the themes that these novels explore. The stories make use of praise poetry, with praise poetry for the cows by the herder predominant in the case of Mofolo and Chobokoane's first novels, and the praise poetry in Majara's work as poetry in praise of women, and in Mofolo's *Chaka* as heroic poetry for the main character, Chaka, and other oral literature characteristics that allow for inquiry into indigenous aesthetics of Sesotho literature. The theme of violence as literary device for decoloniality will be addressed in discussions of Khaketla's *Mosali a Nkhola/A Woman Betrayed Me* (1960) and Mofolo's *Chaka* (1926) respectively, while resistance and political

activism will be examined in discussion of Mofolo's *Chaka*'s adaptations. The novels are summarised below.

2.6.1 Moeti oa Bochabela/Traveller to the East (1907)

Mofolo's *Moeti oa Bochabela/Traveller to the East* (1907) is a novel delivered in a form of an allegorical quest narrative. It begins with an agitated protagonist, Fekisi, who is anxious to leave behind the 'evil' world of men and women in his village and the neighbouring villages who are still immersed in their old traditional practices. Practices such as circumcision and initiation schools, polygamy, excessive drinking of traditional beer as seen in Fekisi's neighbour, Phakoane, fill Fekisi, the main character, with abhorrence. Fekisi is a sensitive, meditative herd-boy obsessed with metaphysical and cosmic questions about life. He regards the surrounding nature in bewilderment as the seasons change and the earth takes different forms and shapes. The sun, stars, rain, lightning, thunder, the eclipse of the sun, animal activity and the splendour of wild flowers all torment him with questions about life's origins and the forces behind all that he sees while out in the veldt looking after his cows. He has a deep consideration for nature, the springs oozing out of the mountains, the aromas of wild plants, wild animal activities and the falling rain all affect his senses greatly.

Fekisi always defends weak herd-boys as bullies/principal herd-boys and unreasonable village men beat them in violent games Fekisi disapproves of. His neighbour, Phakoane, the antagonist, is a drunkard who always beats his wife violently after heavy drinking, which ends with Phakoane accidentally killing the wife later in the narrative. Fekisi has a great desire to avenge Phakoane's wife, and another man killed senselessly by the chief's henchmen, but village men stop him.

Very early in the novel Fekisi decides that the best solution would be to leave his home and people behind and to seek a place with a community that is pious. He constantly engages in conversation with older people to seek wisdom about the beginnings of life on earth. The eclipse of the sun becomes a catalyst for his final departure. On the night of the eclipse he also dreams about a place he ought to seek. Fekisi makes the final decision and embarks on his journey, leaving all behind, his beloved cows included, and heads for a place of Basotho origins, Ntsoanatsatsi, which is also made to represent heaven in the novel, for "real and imaginary movement is another element in the allegorical quest" (Gikandi, 1987, p.4). Along the way he is met with people who are no better than his own people - the Basotho, in that alcohol and violence rule their actions. He travels through deserts and forests, and eventually reaches Ntsoanatsatsi where he finds people with long silky hair living harmoniously. After reaching Ntsoanatsatsi, Fekisi is welcomed and attends a church service led by the men with silky long hair, and then in the middle of the church service he dies in euphoric exaltation.

The use of oral literature, such as the poetry that Fekisi composes and recites for his cows shows not only his observation of the world, but also his skill at crafting and communicating these poems/*lithoko*. While most herd-boys can sing poetry/*lithoko* to their cows, there is always attention given to the one who is considered highly skilled, and Fekisi fits this group to a Sesotho listener. Some Basotho boys (now men) who learned these poems/*lithoko* in primary school, from Mofolo's novel, still recite it up to this day for it has great appeal in Sesotho. Fekisi also relies on old storytellers to inform him of the world and answer his metaphysical questions. His questions and engagement with old wisdom to a Sesotho reader shows great wisdom and reflection in a person, and in this character specifically.

As a novel, *Moeti oa Bochabela/Traveller to the East* delivers on the novelistic three dimensionality; "experience, knowledge and practice/future" (Bakhtin 1981, p.15), (see also

Culler 1997). A closer look at the stylistic expression of the novel reveals a great use of oral literature expression.

2.6.2 Ke Lesheleshele Leo a Iphehletseng Lona/Chickens Come Home to Roost (1992)

Chobokoane's novel, *Ke Lesheleshele Leo a Iphehletseng Lona/Chickens Come Home to Roost* (1992), was written eighty-five years after Mofolo's *Moeti oa Bochabela/Traveller to the East*, yet the novel bears some resemblance to some of the works of Lesotho's first novelist.

Ke Lesheleshele Leo a Iphehletseng Lona/Chickens Come Home to Roost begins by setting the mood for the entire story. The description of the cold winter, and the traditional praise poetry sung for the cows starts the novel on a melancholic arch, presenting the cows themselves forlorn and sombre due to the weather. When a human character, Ramahlelehlele, enters the novel, he only lives on four pages and dies tragically in the bad weather as he struggles to control the cows through the pasture and falls into a donga by accident. His wife, 'Mamahlelehlele is left with their baby boy Mahlelehlele.

Although 'Mamahlelehlele is described as a beautiful woman in the beginning of the novel, she begins to wither from the problems that she faces as a single mother without any means to sustain herself. All her attempts at business fail through bad luck. She raises the son in abject poverty and difficulties. The son also tries to live a fruitful life when he begins to mature but fate and his bad decision-making always lead him to failure. Mahlelehlele is constantly hired out as a herd-boy, by his mother, throughout his young life. This is the only means to generate an income for the family. Mahlelehlele starts school very late in his life, which isolates him from the other pupils and he also faces difficulties in integrating into the school system. He is subsequently expelled from school as he cannot be acculturated into school mannerisms and

decorum and respect for authority and/or tolerance for corporal punishment without fighting back. This sends him back to cattle-rearing for wealthy cattle farmers.

During this second phase of herding, the protagonist, Mahlelehlele experiences several difficulties with settling down. He is constantly on the move from cattle owner to cattle owner, incurring debt from negligence and hubristic attitudes and actions. He eventually runs away to the South African mines after beating up a man and leaving him for dead. In this period of disappearance he only sends his mother money orders by post without revealing the sender or his location. In South Africa, he is lured into gangs and abandons his mining job. Eventually he is injured in a fight between his gang and a rival gang. While hospitalised in police custody, he makes a plea bargain and reveals other gang members' activities and secures safe return back to Lesotho. He returns to his mother's house and settles down, or tries to. He marries and divorces two times. Eventually, his third wife poisons him and he dies.

In Chobokoane's novel, the protagonist, Mahlelehlele's death is portrayed as his own fault through the choices he makes in life. His background and upbringing are set to also provide strong psychological framework about one's environment and how much it can affect and shape one's response to life's challenges. Sesotho spirituality is made use of extensively in the last arch of the novel, with all the main characters visiting diviners and making use of witchcraft to outsmart one another. Dreams are also used extensively in the novel to foreground events to unfold. Chobokoane's use of landscape, praise poetry, narrative structure, the use of dreams and Sesotho spirituality show significant influence from Mofolo's works. Although Chobokoane's writing uses Sesotho cultural practices and shows a move away from Christianity, it still has the strong elements of moral-of-the-story nature that Sesotho oral tales and Mofolo's works have.

2.6.3 Pitseng/A Search for True Love (1910)

Mofolo's second novel *Pitseng/A Search for True Love* (1910) is a novel about love and marriage, and also about nature and the environment. The novel straddles both romanticism and realism in theme and style. *Pitseng/A Search for True Love* painstakingly describes the landscape in its opening, which is done in long sprawling paragraphs as Mofolo vividly captures the scenery and natural environment of the Pitseng region with its rivers and rugged mountains. When the characters do enter the novel, it rapidly moves to man's battle against nature and the elements. A young priest and his wife and child are travelling to Pitseng against the coming snow. As evening approaches, they decide to seek shelter in a cave. It must be noted that snow in the mountainous highlands of Lesotho is usually catastrophic and often ends with fatalities. In the novel, after seeking shelter in the cave, the priest then goes out of the cave to rescue a lone man he had seen struggling on the cliffs as the snow began to fall. As evening arrives, the inhabitants of the cave hear a dog howling in the night. The young priest suspects that there must be another person stuck in the snow, but out of fear that the others will stop him from braving the harsh weather he hesitates and waits for them to fall asleep. He later steals into the night and finds and rescues three men caught in the blizzard.

The rescued men's people arrive in the morning from their villages and are awe-struck by the sacrificial acts of the young priest. This endears him to them. The villagers welcome him with gifts and food. They also help him build a home and settle into their community. There, the young priest opens a school and a church. He has an introspective quiet manner and extreme compassion for his new community. As a school principal he is liked by his pupils as he is an exemplary leader. The pupils nickname him Katse (Cat) for he wears a cat-skin hat. Among his pupils are Alfred and Aria whom the teacher harbours hope to one day see as husband and wife. Alfred is a good student who takes Katse's advice to heart and tries to emulate his

teacher's behaviour in his own life. Aria, on the other hand, is a disciplined adolescent girl who has a beautiful singing voice. Mofolo's narrator uses Aria's singing, in her mother-tongue, Sesotho, to emphasise the importance of one's language and culture. Through the female character, Mofolo reimagines and laments Sesotho culture and its beauty. Both Alfred and Aria, are individually disturbed by how their fellow pupils and Basotho people in general disrespect love. Katse encourages his pupils to live ethical lives. Mofolo reminisces about courtship and love in the olden days and insists that love has lost its value in the young, Westernised generation which prefers multiple lovers.

In *Pitseng/A Search for True Love*, Mofolo constantly moralises about love through the characters of Alfred and Aria. The novel also presents Sesotho cultural aspects in its excessive use of dreams. Dreams are important in Sesotho culture as they are in the Bible and in particular the *Old Testament*, as revelation of events to come, as seen in the foretelling of Katse's death, in Alfred's dream, by placing Katse's name in one of the vessels held by the twelve men. The twelve men could be seen as representing the twelve apostles of Christ, the implication therefore being that Katse would soon join the holy men in heaven, as a pious man. In *Pitseng/A Search for True Love*, Mofolo continues to blend the two cultures with ease. This usage of dreams, having begun in his *Moeti oa Bochabela/Traveller to the East,* would continue through Mofolo's work as also seen towards the end of his third novel *Chaka*.

The journey as motif is also used extensively in *Pitseng/A Search for True Love* as the main character, Alfred, travels throughout the southern African region for adventure. The novel ends back in nature, with the landscape abloom with wild flowers after the rains. After Alfred and Aria's wedding, the betrothed run into the fields of wild flowers with joy.

2.6.4 Liate oa Mafik'a Lisiu /Liate of Mafik'a Lisiu (1976)

Majara's protagonist, Liate, in *Liate oa Mafik'a Lisiu/Liate of Mafik'a Lisiu*, is female and her role of a culture heroine, as also characteristic of Sesotho oral stories, is used to bring about needed change in the community. Majara's narrator "begins his narrative not with the notorious situation but precisely where stories of epic heroes always begin with the place, time, and mysterious circumstances of their birth:" (Julien, 1992, p.53). Liate's story is told from her birth which is surrounded by unheard of fecundity and plenty in that the season is spring and it is portrayed in its lushness and great yield in the fields. Liate's father's animals calve in twins and triplets and some even quadruplets. The fellow villagers are in awe of such abundance, and as Sesotho culture in its naming of children responds to the circumstances surrounding the birth, the child is given the correspondent name, Liate, which means 'let them grow/increase/multiply', a name that defines prosperity and abundance.

While other neighbours believe her birth to be a blessing, others believe that such unheard of plenty portends ill-fortune. This confusion and suspicion amongst the neighbours slowly seep into the mind of Liate's father, Manti, and sees him travel from village to village in search of the best traditional healer to cure the child, primarily since the middle of the child's head is not seen to be pulsating as is normal for babies. This presence of the supernatural at the child-hero's arrival on earth also mimics African epic framing, as Julien (1992) notes on Wangrin's birth in Amadou Hampaté Bâ's *The fortunes of Wangrin*. Ritual after ritual Majara's Liate's head remains still and unmoving. However, there are no other signs of ill-health in the baby, Liate. The father gives up the search for a cure after strenuous travels and too many experiments on his child and follows the advice of his own village healer who had initially said that some children do not show throbbing in the centre of the head yet they grow to normal age, and it would be best to leave the child to grow naturally.

From as early as her birth, throughout her childhood, Liate is portrayed as a peculiar child. She is potrayed as extremely compassionate, as seen in one incident where her close school friend, Ntsoaki, takes ill with prolonged fever and cholera. Liate travels to Ntsoaki's village to take care of her, making sure Ntsoaki's surroundings and food are clean. She nurses her friend back to health, with the aid of the advice from her school teacher in the Health and Hygiene class, stubbornly staying by Ntsoaki's side even when the adults tell her to take a rest.

Liate goes to nursing college eventually, and even before she qualifies as a professional nurse she sets herself apart from her fellow students in the care of the patients she sees for her practical placement at the hospital. She chooses to care for patients other student-nurses avoid; those with severe injuries and wounds. As a nurse, she is also an example of care and healing as she is very attentive to her patients' needs and monitors their recovery steadily as they recuperate. After graduation and a few months of work in one of the biggest hospitals in the neighbouring country, South Africa, Liate is soon promoted to the position of staff-nurse.

Soon after her marriage to her primary school principal's son, Sera, who is also an exemplary young man in the community, Liate's husband travels out of Lesotho to join WWII on the side of England and the Allied Forces as a Commonwealth troops member. Sera disappears during the war and is believed to have died from an avalanche near Syria or sunk in the ship bombed by enemy troops in the Mediterranean Sea. Liate's grief consumes her and depletes her strength with a resultant mental break-down.

Upon recovery, Liate throws herself full-heartedly back into her work as a nurse. She has some faint hope that her husband, Sera, might still be alive somewhere in the world. Two years pass in the narrative story, after which Liate begins to wonder if it would not be wise to give a chance to one of the many suitors asking for her hand in marriage. She writes to the one, she believes she might begin to love with time, a letter of promise, with the condition that they wait

for six months, after which Liate would make the final decision, if the suitor, Hoko Mlanjeni, is willing to wait. Hoko Mlanjeni agrees to wait.

Two months before the agreed six months expire Liate is fetched from the hospital to travel home to her village where she arrives amidst torrential rains and then told to wait in a family hut where, as she waits in confusion, her in-laws enter, followed by her husband, Sera, who has finally returned from the war. Liate faints in shock, and when she comes to, Sera explains to her that he had joined American soldier friends at the end of the war and travelled to America to visit and due to illness and difficulties with travel documents he was delayed in America and was only lucky to be smuggled onto a ship to Cape Town and that is how he came back home to Lesotho. Liate welcomes her wandering husband without question. Liate serves others to sacrificial extremes, always without consideration to her own needs. She is portrayed mostly as an instrument of service, a perpetual embodiment of society's restoration. Majara's novel, by prioritising the needs of the community as the hero's journey, adheres closely to the hero in Sesotho oral culture.

2.6.5 Chaka (1926)

Chaka is Mofolo's third and most acclaimed novel. Mofolo's *Chaka* has had a wider reach and influence than his first two books. Through this book, Mofolo has had influence on writers from Lesotho and other African writers such as Senegal's Léopold Sédar Senghor who wrote the poem "Shaka" (1958) based on Mofolo's novel. Nigeria's Akin Euba's composition, "Chaka - an opera in two chants" (1970) is an interpretation of that poem. Mali's Seydou Badian Kouyaté's *La mort de Chaka* (The death of Chaka) (1968) - a play in five tableaux, was influenced by Mofolo's novel. South African poet Mazisi Kunene's "Emperor Shaka the Great" (1979) could also be interpreted as a response to Mofolo's original text. Ghanaian writer, Ayi Kwei Armah, has not only been influenced by Mofolo's use of oral narrative devices but he

has gone as far as borrow names of Mofolo's characters from *Chaka* and used them in his *Two Thousand Seasons* (1979). Wole Soyinka has also connected the character of Chaka to Ogun, the Yorùbá god, in his *Ogun Abibimañ* (1976).

Mofolo's *Chaka* is a historical novel and a psychological narrative. It fictionalises the life of Shaka, the king and founder of the Zulu people, who is called Chaka in Sesotho. The novel begins with the conception of the hero, Chaka, out of wedlock between chief Senzangakhona and Nandi. This conception marks Chaka's future. While his father had initially celebrated his birth and treated Nandi as his favourite wife, since his first wives had not yet given him an heir, the birth of male children in the chief's senior houses introduces conflict in the chieftaincy as the senior wives begin to clamour for recognition of their sons as rightful heirs to the throne. This results in Senzangakhona turning against his favourite youngest wife, Nandi, and her son Chaka and showing favouritism towards his senior wives. This move is also driven by the threat of exposure of the chief's deeds as Chaka was conceived out of wedlock and the wives threaten to expose Senzangakhona. Chaka, the young boy, is therefore expelled from his village and home and goes to his mother's village where he grows up. His growth is tumultuous as he is constantly taunted by other boys. This harsh environment turns him into a strong fighter for he always has to defend himself without support from a male guardian and as an outcast whose life circumstances are the result of the acts of his parents.

Throughout his growth and journey Chaka connects with traditional healers for protection. By sheer stealth and wit Chaka rises to a village hero and a brave agile hunter of game. Intense competition between his brothers and himself ensues, for Chaka's fame has now reached his royal home. Chaka's ostracization leads him to run further away, from home, to an uncle of his father's who is a king of the region, King Dingiswayo. On the journey to Dingiswayo's kingdom Chaka meets a traditional healer, Isanusi, whose power slowly decides Chaka's

trajectory and advances the plot of the novel. When Chaka reaches Dingiswayo's kingdom he is treated with respect and love and grows into a great warrior in charge of Dingiswayo's army regiments. He marries Dingiswayo's sister Noliwa. With the help of his powerful traditional healer, Isanusi, Chaka's strength and wit gradually turn into insatiable lust for power. When Chaka's father, Senzangakhona, dies Chaka returns to his father's house, defeats his brothers and takes over the throne. Chaka goes to war with and conquers neighbouring ethnic groups. There seems to be no amount of battle that can satiate Chaka. One of the sacrifices demanded by his traditional healer, Isanusi, is the death of Noliwa, Chaka's first and favourite wife. After sleepless nights, Chaka chooses the possibility of more power in exchange for Noliwa's life. Eventually Chaka meets his own death at the hands of his brothers. Chaka's last words to his brothers and assailants are, "You kill me with the hope that you will be kings…, it is not to be, because the white man is coming, and it is him who shall rule over you, you are only his servants" (Mofolo, 1977, p.166, my translation).

Chaka is a novel that delves into Sesotho traditional beliefs although the novel is about the Zulus, an approach by Mofolo that has confused many critics, which will be given further analysis in the third chapter on Metaphysics and Cosmology and the fifth chapter on Violence as Decolonial tool in literary analysis in this thesis. In *Chaka*, Mofolo showcases African traditional religion as narrative device. In the same way that Chaka's progression and life stages are triggered by supernatural powers they also mimic some Biblical examples from the *Old Testament*. The offspring of Chaka that is rescued by Nandi could be seen to resemble the story of Moses who was supposed to be killed, but was rescued, as a child, in the Bible by the Pharaoh's daughter. The sacrifice of Noliwa, Chaka's wife, is also similar to the sacrifice of Isaac that God demanded of Abraham. In the same way that David sends Joab, the husband of Bathsheba, to the battlefront after David has fallen in love with and impregnated Joab's wife, Chaka sends army generals that he is suspicious of to the most difficult battlefronts. Secondly,

since Mofolo incorporates narratorial commentary as he writes, the moralising of the novel is mainly in the narrator's commentary where he laments the outcomes of sin, which takes a Christian tone. This aspect of moralising with Christianity could be seen as strategy and/or self-censorship in the final draft of the novel that was published by the missionaries after great difficulty for Mofolo to publish the novel due to refusal by missionaries due to the 'pagan' nature of the text. As Armah notes on Mofolo's misunderstood genius in *Chaka*, "his missionary publishers, of course were utterly unprepared to see his work in this light. Their failure on insight, and Mofolo's existential helplessness before them, meant that his intelligence and immense talent were placed at the mercy of men who had little of either" (2006, p.159). Even under extreme missionary censorship and control, and possibility of having cut significant chunks of the material, Mofolo in his only surviving manuscript has managed to use traditional beliefs in a unique creative way as narrative device.

2.6.6 *Mosali a Nkhola/A Woman Betrayed Me* (1960)

Khaketla's novel, *Mosali a Nkhola/A Woman Betrayed Me*, opens in medias res with a prince, Mosito, and his friends alighting from a bus and mounting well-groomed horses to head home into the highlands of one of the most remote and spectacular districts of Lesotho, Qacha's Nek. Mosito, the protagonist, is returning from college in South Africa and his urbane mannerisms make him stand out from the local villagers, but his kind demeanour and calmness and patience endear him to the people. Early in the novel he is sent out to another paramount chief's home, further away from his own home, to find a wife amongst the beautiful daughters of that chief. The girl he has his eye on, also falls in love with him in return. His two companions and friends also find future wives in the other sister and a cousin.

When Mosito's father passes away, it is Mosito's turn to reign, which he does with great wisdom and diplomacy. However, a change in the national bureaucracy structure of chiefs by

the then ruling Queen ‘Mantšebo together with British government severs many paramount chiefs from their salaried royal status. Mosito, like many other chiefs, has to fight to be recognised and to be reinstated. His attempts and appeals with the government and the house of the National Council of Chiefs in the capital city, Maseru, fall on deaf ears. At his lowest moment, the old men who used to be his late father’s advisor advise Mosito to seek powers and “strengthening” from a medicine man. Mosito can resist the old men, but when they appeal to him through his wife, he then yields and consults the medicine man, against the advice of his two friends from college. The medicine man’s methods of regaining power for Mosito go to the extremes, and Mosito ends up authorising a ritual murder to “strengthen” himself with human body parts. When he is arrested and about to be hanged, he blames his wife. This ritual murder practice is recorded to have risen in Lesotho with the arrival of British rule and administration in Lesotho. The local chiefs, usurped of all their power and dispossessed of any cultural relevance, began to seek ways of re-empowering themselves. Ritual murders became rife in the country (Machobane, 1990, p.229). These resulted in capital punishment, the most famous one being that of a number of royals including the son of Lesotho’s paramount chief, King Griffith Lerotholi, Bereng Griffith in 1948, a period which coincided with the then British queen’s first visit to Lesotho. Khaketla’s novel, *Mosali a Nkhola/A Woman Betrayed Me*, is framed within this period in Basotho history. Its depiction of a son of a chief alludes to the King Griffith’s son Bereng Griffith’s involvement in ritual murders and his subsequent hanging, which the protagonist, Mosito also goes through.

Khaketla’s novel uses praise poetry, dreams and medicine and traditional healers. *Mosali a Nkhola/A Woman Betrayed Me* is not only comparable to Mofolo’s *Chaka*, but also pays homage to Mofolo, through the lines of the protagonist, Mosito, for example, who wishes he knew a man such as “Isanusi”, the traditional healer who turned Chaka into a great king in Mofolo’s novel. This reference to Mofolo’s strategic plot and its drive presents a significant

moment of dialogue and interchange between the two writers. At a very crucial moment of indecision about following the advice of a traditional healer in partaking in the ritual murder, Khaketla's protagonist, Mosito, like the protagonist, Chaka, in Mofolo's *Chaka*, hears the voice of his dead father. However, the novel also at times reads like a deliberate parody of Mofolo's work, with diametrically opposing settings at times, character development and the resolution of sub-stories in the arches of the narrative.

Khaketla presents a future king born and raised in a genteel environment, who is moral, strong-willed and wise, whose only weakness and undoing is his love for his wife. Mofolo's protagonist, Chaka, as mentioned above, is conceived and raised in an antagonistic environment. Although Chaka loves his wife, he sacrifices her for greater power, while Khaketla's Mosito is so blinded by the love of his wife that he agrees to a decision that is portrayed as abhorrent to him. This, Adam and Eve, portrayal of the woman as the one who leads the husband to sin is not the only presentation of Christianising in the novel. Khaketla weaves in sermons, Christian advice, and prayers throughout his narrative.

Through a study of the novels, above, this thesis intends to make its contribution to discussions on the African language novel and calls attention to the richness of African language literatures, as shall be demonstrated in the upcoming chapters, with a focus on the aesthetics and ways in which these are experienced, and how they have been sustained in written Sesotho/African literature.

3 Stylistics and Techniques of Sesotho Literature

Written Sesotho literature makes use of Sesotho language orature and its stylistic elements, such as, Repetition, Oral poetry and Poetic inserts, Ideophones, proverbs, imagery and symbolism. The ease with which these techniques are reflected in the novels and their recurrence, with greater application in Thomas Mofolo's novels, particularly *Moeti oa Bochabela/Traveller to the East*, as I should demonstrate, shows how interrelated and interconnected Sesotho written literature is with oral literature.

This chapter analyses the stylistics and techniques of Sesotho literature, as applied in Thomas Mofolo's *Moeti oa Bochabela/Traveller to the East* (1907) and Chobokoane Chobokoane's *Ke Lesheleshele Leo a Iphehletseng Lona/Chickens Come Home to Roost* (1992), to answer the third research question of this thesis: Which oral literature elements are recurrent in Sesotho literature, and how do they work as narrative device? "Stylistics … involves the three profound steps of identification and interpretation of the stylistics, rhetorical and other devices in the text," (Olateju, 2012, p.65). The choice to juxtapose the two novelists is informed by both the writers' styles which mirror each other, and secondly the 85-year period that passed between the publications of these two novels. Looking at the ease with which both writers make use of orature in their novels, as I should demonstrate, provides clues into the interface between orature and written literature in Sesotho. This could provide answers as to how literature of the Basotho easily moves back and forth between these two modes which also lends validity to the study of the indigenous aesthetics within the works as possible methodology for literary analysis of Sesotho literature. The use of sound in the telling of the stories in both novels will be considered to a great extent in this chapter. This chapter presents an analysis of verbal art in the novel, repetition, landscape as device, praise poetry and poetic inserts and their symbolism

and imagery, and the use of ideophones in the novels of Mofolo and Chobokoane, using Leloba Molema's "stylistics of transition" as methodology.

3.1 Verbal Art in the Novel

Sesotho orature is an integral part of Sesotho culture and art; it occurs in both formal and organised settings and can also be heard in everyday speech with the use of riddles, proverbs, aphorisms and poetry; praise poetry, love poetry and divining poetry. Sesotho praise poetry, for example, can be heard at formal gatherings with dignitaries such as chiefs or the king and queen in attendance, or at ceremonies which mark and observe rites of passage such as initiation, and at times more spontaneously from a herd-boy returning home with his herd of cattle as the sun goes down and the herd-boy sings praises to the cows.

The organised settings include, for example, a setting for the telling of tales which usually happens in the evenings around a fire, particularly in pastoral dwellings. This form of evening storytelling is usually preceded by riddles and riddling to excite and prepare the minds of the audience for the fantastic worlds of the stories. Children also tell one another similar stories or tales during the day as they play, but they must cut sticks of dry grass and stick them in their hair lest they "grow horns" for telling oral stories before the sun sets, as legend and the elderly caution. Also present in the family and the home setting, in rural villages in particular, is the telling and the recitation of totems which are a form of praise-chants for the family's and lineages' totem animal. The school environment, from primary to high school, also provides and continues exposure to these diverse facets and forms of Sesotho literature through the teaching of Sesotho as a subject, and Sesotho literature from different genres such as, plays, poetry collections, short stories, collected oral tales and novels. Observing orality's entry into the school curricula in the case of another dialect that belongs to the same family as Sesotho of Lesotho (Southern Sesotho), Northern Sesotho from the Lebowa (in the current Limpopo

province) region of South Africa, Isabel Hofmeyr (1994) points to some of the difficulties literacy wrought on oral stories and their performance. Problems such as the loss of the sacredness of the stories around home fires, and the rigid formality which school reading and reciting brings, for example, meant that pupils had two storytellers and modes of storytelling vying for their attention and/or conviction, the teacher and the grandmother at home. Some of these concerns can be observed in the case of Sesotho of Lesotho as well. In addition, as also mentioned earlier, the French missionary transcriptions of the tales with choices to cut out repetitions for example made the written stories sound very distant from the oral story one would hear in the home environment. One other difficulty in Sesotho of Lesotho is that different versions from different regions of the country ended up in the two volumes of the oral stories, which makes the young readers, using my case and that of former classmates from my region as reference, to at times mistrust the written story and take it for an imitation of the 'home' original. However, with all these complications, the availability, and the structures of the settings for oral literature can be said to contribute to the artistic and cultural growth of a Mosotho child, which to a large extent could explain and provide an understanding of written Sesotho literature by Basotho authors.

Written Sesotho literature is, to a certain extent, similar to other African literatures in its use of indigenous cultural resources for storytelling. As Okpewho observes, "there has … been an increasing tendency on the part of modern African writers to identify with the literary traditions of their people in terms of both content and technique" (1992, p.293). While this might be a deliberate act for writers such as Wole Soyinka and Ayi Kwei Armah, as exemplified by Armah's statement that, "old art offers resources and experience that the innovative are free to use in the making of new art" (2006, p.154), and while the creative process itself in African writing can be argued to mostly follow the logic or the synthesis of old and new, it is also worth observing that Sesotho writers, like Mofolo and Chobokoane, have operated within a

storytelling culture so heavily couched within oral literature that the use of these cultural resources could be seen as inevitable in the context of Lesotho. What is of utmost importance, therefore is to observe closely how these techniques and styles become tools and narrative devices in the crafting, and what this process of creation yields for the narration of written stories by the modern Sesotho storyteller, through the analysis of the materiality, crafting and application of this language to its verbal arts.

As Okpewho says of oral literature, and as indicated above and earlier, "oral literature makes its appeal first through the sound of the words that reach the ears of the audience" (1992, p.70). Repetition, Ideophones and Poetry in written Sesotho literature are techniques which mostly carry the sound of orature, which give the narrative a strong element of being heard in the prose.

3.2 Repetition

Repetition, as Guma (1977) observes in his study of Sesotho Oral Literature, is highly utilised by oral narrators in all forms of Sesotho oral storytelling. This technique is also a characteristic of other oral literatures in the world, and particularly African oral literatures. Repetition is used for "variety, … musical feeling and … vividness and rhythmic beat, and development of plots," Okpewho (1992, p.73), to enhance narrative in a story. As Okpewho further states, repetition provides "emphasis to a point that needs to be stressed" (p.71). As a literary device it can also be used to show "distance covered … and dramatic length" (Molema, p.72). The following examples show the usage of Repetition in Mofolo's *Moeti Oa Bochabela*/*Traveller to The East* (1907).

> *A le talima, a le tali-i-ma a le talimisisa*. (p.26)

He looked at it (the sun), he loo-o-ked at it, he looked at it intently, (p.26, my translation).

On this particular day, when the main character, Fekisi's obsession with the sun is at its highest, the eclipse occurs. Repetition here increases Fekisi's action, it is used for emotional purpose and foregrounding. First, he looks at the sun, then, as the narrator says, he *loo-o-ks* at it, then he looks at it thoroughly or inspects it intently, with great purpose or focus. The repetition of his looking action at the sun is surrounded by introspection and questions about the nature of the sun, its power, purpose and origins, as shown in the novel. Here, Mofolo's narrator emphasises Fekisi's fascination with the cosmos and his surrounding environment, and the character's place in it thereof. The sun, for Fekisi, is a source of life and light both for illumination of daytime and also as a life giver to plants, animals and all of nature. Mofolo's narrator also anchors Fekisi's presence, and by invitation that of the reader, in the scene as he foregrounds the dramatic change that the sun is about to go through. The narrator provides the listener/reader with an appreciation of the movement of the sun, and also paces the reader through the day with the character as seen in his continuation of Fekisi's observation of the sun's movement, below:

La phahama, la phahama, tsa tloaela makhulo. (p.26)

It rose (the sun), it rose, they (the cows) befriended the pasture, (p.26, my translation).

Through the use of repetition, Mofolo provides a sense of movement and time; time covered from morning onwards, and as such also presents "successive stages" of the narrative and the character's fixation with the sun thereof, raising expectation in the reader, (Okpewho, 1992, p.73). The eclipse is then narrated in even more dramatic repetition. Two paragraphs from

Fekisi's awe at the sun the narrator unfurls the occurrence of the eclipse with skilful use of repetition as a device, as seen below:

> *Empa kapele, bofubelu boo ba tloha, ba nyamela. Kapele-pele la fetoha, la e-ba letšo, ea ka hoja le likella nthong e 'ngoe, kapa holimo. La e-ba lenyenyane; la 'na la ea joalo, la ba la re fi. Tlhasenyana ea ho fela eaba ea re lore.*
>
> *Ha e-ba lefifi, hare tšo-o-o. Lefifi le fetang la bonka-ntjana; lefifi leo motho a sitoang ho bona seatla sa hae, kapa kobo ea hae; lefifi le reng tšo. Likhomo tsa bokolla, tsa phaphatheha, tsa ea oela. Tsa Fekisi tsa bōkana holim'a hae, li sa 'mone, li utloa ka monkho oa hae feela*. (p.26-27)
>
> However, quickly, the redness disappeared, it vanished; quickly-quickly the sun changed, and became black, as if it dissolved into something or into the ether. It became small; it continued like that, until it said *fi* (extinguished). The last spark said *lore* (became ashes)
>
> All was darkness, it said *tšo-o-o* (it became pitch-black). Darkness greater than the darkness that took little dog. Darkness in which a person cannot see their hand if they raised it, or their blanket; darkness that said *tšo* (it became pitch-black). The cows wailed, they ran haphazardly, to their fall. Fekisi's gathered around him, without seeing him, they could only smell his scent. (p.26-27, my translation).

Mofolo introduces the beginning of the eclipse with just the repetition of key words, as seen in the first line of the first paragraph with the word *kapele*/quickly. When the root of this word is repeated, in Sesotho, the perception is that of an increased sense of speed. When the narrator says, *kapele-pele*, in the second line, it could be translated as 'very quickly' or 'rapidly' but that would be somewhat inadequate as, 'very quickly/*kapele haholo* or rapidly/*ka potlako* in

Sesotho denotes a less fastness than the doubling of the word itself, and the doubling of the word also indicates extremely rapid action in a successive manner. In this regard, 'quickly quickly' works as direct translation and captures the extremity of the quickness, it also keeps the repetition intact and much closer to the original and the sound of it in the Sesotho language. Since the narrator is conveying rapid change and transformation at one and the same time, the rapidness also fast-paces the development of the scene and the story. At times the writer uses different words that mean the same thing to lend colour to his description. Still employing repetition as technique, Mofolo ties the end of the first paragraph to the beginning of, and the building up of the next paragraph and its dramatic development through the rhythmic patterning of symbolism and imagery, with the use of *fi,* the root-word for '*fifala*/becoming dark'. Mofolo then follows this with variations of repetition with other stylistic devices to describe the event of the eclipse in its fullness in the subsequent lines.

Lefifi, which means darkness is repeated in many different ways; alternative words and phrases are interplayed for variety, rhythm and emphasis. The key word '*lefifi*/darkness', which concludes the first paragraph and opens the second paragraph, is sometimes juxtaposed against ideophones, (the characteristics and uses of which will be discussed in detail in the upcoming sub-section of the same title), to give a "sense of fullness" and atmosphere. The ideophone increases intensity by its ability to embody action, sound, and gesture/mime all in one breath. Besides the juxtaposition of repetition against ideophones, Mofolo also uses metaphors and Sesotho language proverbs to narrate this scene.

In the first sentence of the paragraph; *Lefifi*/darkness is partnered with the ideophone *tšo*/pitch-black, but the o vowel is repeated or stretched in this particular word; as *tšo-o-o,* which marks "dramatic length" in this instance. *Lefifi*/Darkness is repeated again in the sentence following that one, however, this time it is the darkness darker than midnight (sometimes proverbially

referred to as the darkness that took little dog/*bonka-ntjana* in Sesotho, as seen in Mofolo's usage above). This intensifies the imagery and colour as darker shades of the darkness are progressively built into the event. He repeats *lefifi*/darkness for the third time, still building up the narrative, steadily, tightening the drama with simile and metaphoric expression. The third time he uses this word, *lefifi*, he compares the darkness with the kind of darkness in which one cannot see their own hand if they raised it, or their own blanket - which they are presumably wearing; a very specific cultural reference as Basotho are known for wearing blankets in the Southern African region for protection against the wintry highlands weather. A Mosotho listener/reader knows that Mofolo is talking to them. It situates the local reader within the story as it is representative of them and their identifiable cultural signifiers and experiences and geographical location. The fourth time, Mofolo's narrator goes to the extremes and suggests that this darkness exceeded the darkness of closing one's own eyes, and then he wraps it up eloquently with the precision and vividness of the ideophone in the fifth sentence;

> *Lefifi le reng tšo.* (p.26).
>
> The darkness that said *tšo* (pitch-black darkness!) (p.26, my translation).

This is a pithy closing of this dramatic event. The dramatic length that Mofolo traverses and covers in the second paragraph example above is effective for a number of reasons: The images of the darkness are collapsed onto one another with successive descriptions as the drama of the eclipse progresses and grows. The narrator uses these devices, compounds them together and sometimes varies them, interchanges them, with great control and balance for emotional intensity, to build drama, to intensify and drive the scene to its climax. Through the use of repetition, Mofolo is able to achieve his purposes. The listener, if they speak Sesotho, is convinced, sees it as dramatic as it is. The closest one can come nearer to, and grasp and see

the aesthetics and appreciate them in Mofolo, and other Sesotho writers is reading in the original language.

Mofolo also employs the use of ideophones whose meaning is similar to the key word, but since ideophones are expressions which use sound to convey the feeling, the "sensual illusion," of being present in the action or event described, the narration of the eclipse therefore mounts in gravity. Even when he is using the ideophone, Mofolo finds creative ways to play with both the ideophone and repetition, and performs the repetition right inside the ideophone itself by stretching and as such giving the vowel a repetitive sound and feeling, which gradually increases the enormity of the occurring event, taking the sense of darkness to extremity. And it works.

Just when the listener/reader thinks it could not become any darker than already described, Mofolo goes further and deeper into the Sesotho language and its richness to find similes, metaphors and proverbial utterings that convey a sense of this darkness, as seen in the expression, "*Lefifi la bonka-ntjana*/Darkness that took little dog." This proverb is well known in Sesotho, although its origins and coinage are not clear, or have possibly been lost throughout history and the development of the language. However, native speakers of Sesotho know that it means it is beyond pitch-black dark when this expression is used, there is no moon and stars and one cannot see where they are going if they dare venture into such a night. They might have to feel the way with their hands lest they knock or bump into something or someone, which is exactly what happens to the wailing scattering cows. Fekisi's own cows surround him tightly, which Mofolo's narrator refers to as, "they heaped on him/*tsa bōkana holim'a hae*." Mofolo then wittily reaches the finality of the description of this darkness with a pithy sentence whose volume only an ideophonic expression could capture. "Event in literature is experienced according to its scale of treatment" (Soyinka, 1988, p.92), and Mofolo shows this, above.

This poetic style of storytelling is also reminiscent of praise poetry or panegyric in oral literature whereby sometimes through the use of parallelism in repetition the building up of imagery and theme is intensified as the drama intensifies. It shows and relies on the storyteller's mastery and feeling for the language and Mofolo's crafting in such examples shows his witty exploitation of the Sesotho language.

Mofolo also makes great use of repetition for emphasis, and to communicate emotional intensity of an event. This can be seen, for example in the way the narrator associates the emotional state of Fekisi's cows with wonder and astonishment after the occurrence of the eclipse of the sun in Mofolo's novel and the catastrophic aftermath with reactions that shake the character's village. He says of the cows and their bellowing,

> *Ea lla, ea bohla, ea hlomoha, sello sa eona sa kena pelong tsa banna hae, eare ha e tšoinyana e thōla ea amohela e pulutsoana, ea amohela ka le lesesane, le phefa, le monate empa le soabileng haholo, ea lla joale ka khomo e shoetsoeng ke namane, ea lla sa motho ea mahlomoleng ha a nša poboli, sello sa eona sa fapana haholo le sello sa eona sa mehla*. (p.28).
>
> It bellowed, it burped, it became morose, its bellow reached deep within the hearts of the men at home, when the black and white one quietened it received (the cry/bellow) – the grey one, it received (the cry/bellow) with a thin voice, a loud-pitched melodic voice, but heavily sad. It bellowed like a cow whose calf has died, it bellowed like a person overcome with grieve when he/she moans. It bellowed melodiously, but with a low bellow, its bellow differed greatly from its usual bellow. (p.28, my translation).

This poetic telling of the cows' bellowing happens immediately after the eclipse of the sun, and after Fekisi's short prayer and appeal to his God to withdraw His wrath. Mofolo repeats "*lla*/cry

or bellow" to first indicate what the cow did, then once again he carries the repetition from the basic description of the scene, and takes the narrative higher though the dramatization of the upcoming sentences as he uses metaphors. Fekisi, the herd-boy, is at this moment leading the cows home. To communicate the anguish and pain in the aftermath of the eclipse, Mofolo's narrator also delivers the intense emotions through Fekisi's cows. The forlorn emotions that overcome Fekisi are shared by the people in the village he is approaching with the cows, as seen in the following line, "*sello sa eona sa kena pelong tsa banna hae,/*its bellow reached deep within the hearts of the men at home." This image of men absorbed and consumed by the forlornness that the lowing of the cows elicit is vivid in the line above. In the same manner the reader is also drawn in to understand, feel and participate in the event. The men at home, like Fekisi, are moved by this behaviour of the cows. By repeating certain phrases, such as, *Ea lla* (it bellowed), which also translates 'to cry' makes the state of the cows central in the message.

In the last section of this rendition of the cows' bellowing Mofolo uses metaphors of grief to build up the greatness of the emotion. When his narrator compares the bellowing to that of a cow whose calf has died or a person who is overcome by grief, moaning, the reader is given a full sense of the immensity of the moment, the utter emotional heaviness and the effect thereof. As the cows are bellowing, Fekisi is singing praise poetry to them, at the same time making them part of the storytelling, making them participants as the addressees, confirming their place in the narrative. The herd-boy is partnered with the cows, their identity inseparable. The way in which they navigate the landscape, and react to the cosmos, the way in which the landscape is brought to the ears and eyes of the listener/reader is through this bond with the cows.

The cow bellows again, moving the men from their houses to the chief's kraal to start singing praise poetry for the cow. This action, this movement to the chief's kraal in itself is a very potent act and denotes seriousness and gravity of the matter at hand. Men move or go to the

chief's kraal for a purpose in Sesotho culture, for meetings and serious gatherings or when there is a matter of dispute or disagreement among villagers. Going to the chief's kraal is serious business in Sesotho culture, so that if a father, an uncle, a brother, grandfather or head of the family says to his family, "I am going to the chief's kraal," this usually fills the other members of the family with panic and dread and anxiety and anticipation for it means that something serious is going to be discussed and they hope things are all in order with their respective family, and the community, and that whatever the matter might be, a solution should be found. They entrust their entire wellbeing and livelihood in the person that is being summoned to the chief's or the king's kraal at that moment. And, therefore, when Mofolo's narrator makes this announcement, that the men move to the chief's kraal, to sing praise poetry – the only ceremony being the coming home of the cows, he is conveying the idea that the men are deeply moved. The narrator is able to move the listener/reader to the highest level and understanding and appreciation of this event and its catalyst. Since its significance is apparent to native speakers and those very familiar with the culture, the bellowing of the cows accompanied on this particular occasion by the herd-boy with his wind instrument, which then move the men that deeply, has resonance thereof.

Sound in repetition is also used to convey and provoke emotional feeling of an event. For example, the cows' bellowing, mentioned above, works primarily from the different sounds and effects such sounds have on their herd-boy and by extension the listener and/or the reader. The way the cows bellow/cry, the close relationship between the herder and the cows is rendered through sound. The cows as characters serve as transitional motif throughout great sections of the novel. This is also shown by the manner in which they interpret the emotions of their herder; whether he is troubled by cosmological questions, questions and appreciation of the sun, the changing of seasons and all the internal strives and change of emotions he is going

through. The cows are participants in his day. In a way his days could be said to be the days of the cows too.

Another example where Mofolo uses repetition for emphasis is in the way Fekisi calls his cows,

> *O li bitsa ka mabitso a tsona butle, oa hoeshetsa. Ke re, o li bitsa ka mabitso a tsona, hobane line li mo tseba, li mo utloa.* (p.10).
>
> He calls them by their own names slowly, he whispers. I say, he calls them by their own names because they knew him, they heard him. (p.10, my translation).

The repetition of the whole sentence, above, provides "emphasis to a point that needs to be stressed" (Okpewho, 1992, p.71), which is the point of knowledge and familiarity which Fekisi shares with his cows. For believability and conviction Mofolo's narrator emphasizes the second time he mentions Fekisi calling the cows with, "*Ke re*/I say". In spoken Sesotho, when a teller asserts in the telling that, "I say," they command authority and certainty about a statement. It also emphasises the excitement with which the teller is telling the story. It is almost as if the telling is asking for special attention, for the listener to listen attentively and hear properly what is being said. For the reader to appreciate the comfort, the knowledge and familiarity with which Fekisi lives with and talks to his cows, Mofolo's narrator establishes this special relationship in the above lines. This works effectively to influence and direct the movement of the plot as well, for in a few pages from this establishment of the close relationship between the herd-boy and his cows, the narrator then gives the cows real palpable emotions that easily transfer to the human character and the reader.

Another important emphasis of this relationship is when the narrator says that Fekisi calls the cows by their "own" names. This telling is direct and impactful. To call a thing by its *own* name is to know and claim it and bring it close to the knower. He could have said, 'He calls them by

their names/*O li bitsa ka mabitso*.' While this sentence almost means the same thing, *own* name adds a sense of a special bond between the herd-boy and his herd.

The writer exploits his language and its treasures for his storytelling with ease and comfort, using his skills with the language to the fullest the way great storytellers do in the tradition of orature. Mofolo also manages to marry his language and its techniques with his chosen medium, the novel, by allowing the literary form to allow him to do new things in new ways, while still very steeped in the cultural and artistic expression and sensibilities of the Basotho. He couches the novel within Sesotho verbal arts and aesthetics. "The umbilical chord between experience and form," (Soyinka, 1976, p.64), is still very intact in Mofolo's writing. He tames the novelistic form with his eloquent use of Sesotho. It can be argued that Mofolo has a sharp ear for both the oral literature and spoken Sesotho, as demonstrated in the examples above.

Of his cultural and oral literature stylistic aesthetics, repetition is the one Mofolo uses, exploits, plays with throughout his first novel, with such tremendous control and a sense of forward-moving sense of direction. It is also through his mastery of repetition as a stylistic device in many of its variations that scene after scene the reader is taken through the landscape of Lesotho, and Mofolo changes it ever so slightly except when the seasons themselves change and there is a dramatic change in nature and the surroundings but the narrator drives the story through the same landscape. Mofolo's unique crafting fills the listener/reader not with boredom from the same landscape but an anticipation and yearning to see, feel and dwell in that landscape more in the coming scenes.

3.3 Landscape as Device

The cows are ever so present and leading the story, in Mofolo's *Moeti oa Bochabela/Traveller to the East*. We see the story from the point of view of the cows at times. The way in which

they navigate the landscape, the way in which the landscape is brought to the eyes and the ears of the listener/reader is through this bond the herd-boy shares with his cows. The landscape transforms itself throughout the seasons; the narrator tells the story not only through the eyes of the herd-boy but also with the manner in which the cows themselves respond, the fervid excitement with which the cows enter spring's verdure; in the way the winds of autumn are announced in proverbial sing/song by the narrator as is also the case in Sesotho culture and Basotho people heralding the arrival signals of winter. Mofolo's narrator uses the following Sesotho proverb to announce winter and the eminent change in the environment and the landscape,

> *Khoeli ea bo-Moshanyana se llele ho lisa khoeli tsa hau tsa ho lisa li sa tla*. (p.10).
>
> The month of – O little boy don't weep and cry to go out herding in the veldt, the months for your herding they are still way too far ahead coming. (p.10, my translation).

However, Mofolo makes an interesting invention here, an invention that is revised and corrected by a writer who will be discussed later in this chapter, Chobokoane Chobokoane, who would come into writing a century later than Mofolo. Mofolo places winter in August/*Phato* and gives the winter praise poem/proverb to August/*Phato*. The poem rightly belongs to June as June/July are the coldest months in Lesotho. Snow usually falls in June/July. Therefore, the poem is recited as such:

> *Khoeli ea Phupjane, Khoeli ea Moshanyana se llele ho lisa, nako tsa hao tsa ho lisa li sa tla, tsa bo-Loetse le bo-Mphalane.*
>
> Month of June, Month of – O little boy, do not weep and cry to go out herding in the veldt, your times to herd are still way too far coming, the times of September and October.

This re-invention and dislocation of the months works smoothly in Mofolo's narrative because he makes a bold claim that in those days (the time in which the novel is set), August used to be the coldest month in Lesotho. It is believable. This is the balance with which he carries his crafting, one example that shows the novel way in which Mofolo integrates the novel into Sesotho arts. His storytelling is convincing and well-contained, framed and narrated, so that *Phato*/August melodiously carries this poem for June as if it is possible that at a certain unknown distant past the poem was truly recited for August as the winter month. Winter is also described by the narrator, as the time during which the cows start to thin and weaken, and only a remarkable herd-boy, like Fekisi, is able to find some morsels to feed and sustain his own, which still look fit throughout the harsh season.

Spring, and the landscape changing into green while the novel has been dragging the reader through the cold storms of winter, is felt and seen in the zeal with which the cows run wildly into spring's lush green, as shown in the line below from one of the praise poems for the cows by the main character, to be elaborated and analysed further in the Praise poetry section of this chapter;

Ka tala e lahla balisa selemo.	With spring's verdure in its (the cow's) sights it loses the herd-boys. (p.35, my translation).

Spring, with wildflowers in bloom, the aromas of the flowers and the scent of the rain on the soil, is presented vividly, enchanting and enticing through the cow's point of view and its losing of its herd-boys. The brilliance of the sun with clear blue skies, the oozing springs of the mountains of Lesotho – all these are communicated poetically in the narrative through the liveliness of the cows.

Summer and its abundant rains, the playful activity of nature, seen and heard in the birds with their melodious birdsong, the prancing and pronking of springboks and other wild animals, and

the leisure with which the cows graze and drink the fresh waters – this marvel is not only observed and told to the listener through Fekisi's eyes as the main character but he himself is juxtaposed against the existence, activity and delight which he observes the seasons and their changes through his cows. This characteristic, this tendency to link very directly the landscape with its inhabitants/the characters, is a style and technique of African storytelling, in riddles, tales, and epic forms such as *The Mwindo Epic*, whose hero, Mwindo's survival and fighting scenes and sequences are anchored within the landscape and environmental response. Observes Okpewho that, "much of the nourishment of traditional African art derived from the nature of the surrounding landscape and the concomitant throb of animate company within it" (1975, p.19). The character is often thrust into the landscape and either responds to it or the landscape creates challenges and sometimes influences and drives the plot. Man is part of the landscape. In a similar manner, Mofolo works the landscape into the narrative as an element as important as the characters themselves in the story.

With his skilful pen, Mofolo renders these experiences carefully, methodically, in great control and balance to drive the plot and his narrative throughout the story. The reader becomes very familiar with the setting of the story. The reader comfortably inhabits the landscape and is carried through the pace and life of the community of Fekisi's village. This celebration and incorporation of the landscape, in a pastoral African setting, in a story that also uses African oral literature aesthetics and narrative devices as plot-driver is a powerful technique in African literature, as seen in works of other African writers such as Daniel. O. Fagunwa and Amos Tutuola, and also contemporary writers such as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o. While Fagunwa is quite distinct in that he plunges right into the oral storytelling narrative style through his framing, for example with the placing of the scribe inside the novel itself and the instruction to the scribe thereof to write the story as it is orally narrated and by so doing giving the reader the impression of or placing the reader in the framework of the oral story setting, Mofolo and Ngũgĩ use the

landscape as device to drive the plot and the narrative in the novel without framing. Their skill lies in the ability to interweave elements of the oral story into the novel with ease and control. Critics have argued that a writer like Tutuola's usage of the oral storytelling techniques and expression is mainly due to his low level of education. Of Tutuola who uses oral literature resources for his prose as well, Okpewho says, "owing to Tutuola's limited schooling, it was inevitable that when he came to compose the story he should adopt structures of expression familiar to him from his mother tongue" (p.309). Basotho writers on the other hand, and Mofolo to a great extent, though somewhat comparable to Tutuola and his usage of indigenous resources, have had extensive schooling. The mother-tongue and its expressiveness is what perhaps creates this comfortable link as Okpewho partly observes above. Interestingly, Tutuola did not write in the mother-tongue, per se, he wrote in English; in an English that was mimicking or that attempted to bring his language, Yorùbá, closer to the English he wrote in. Mofolo on the other hand was an educated college man but the mother tongue and its cultural routes stayed with him with his constant use, and gave him more latitude and ease to travel between indigenous strorytelling and prose writing.

Although Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o writes in English, as opposed to writers like Mofolo, his marriage of the novelistic form to the African oral mythology and storytelling shows great skill and synergy between the art forms and is also testimony to how the African novel can and does to a great extent use indigenous aesthetics in its realisation. In his *Petals of Blood* (1977), in particular, Ngũgĩ employs the same motif of the landscape as instrumental in the development of the narrative. The main character, Munira, takes endless trips into the pasture with his school pupils. The children bring back nature and its life into Munira's despondent heart. In fact, Ngũgĩ skilfully reveals the title of novel, *Petals of Blood*, through the inquiry and observation of the children that one particular flower's petals are so red they are petals of blood. The children's questions about nature's processes invite the reader to not only reflect on the events

in the novel, but also work to move the plot forward, as seen in the following lines, “He was pleased with himself (Munira, the protagonist). But then the children started asking him awkward questions. Why did things eat each other? Why can’t the eaten eat back?” (1977, p.32).

These questions, above, bode very well with the narrative theme of the novel, that is, why is capitalism and greed for wealth eating up small community people’s futures? Why are the rural and the poor townships stifled and denied participation in a full life? It makes the question of revenge possible and guides the direction of the plot, so that later in the novel when the prostitute character, Wanja, who rarely has clients steals from the arrogant big-truck man it does not come across as immoral and ghastly for the reader, the children’s questions about nature have already at this point in the narrative planted the seed that maybe the eaten could try and eat back one day. This subtle foregrounding comes from skilful ways in which writers like Ngũgĩ, and Mofolo as well, use the surrounding nature and the landscape to set up a type of moral-of-the-story device and motif to set the scenario. Mofolo uses nature for a different kind of foregrounding, however.

Mofolo’s prose in *Moeti oa Bochabela/Traveller to the East* creates an attachment and bond between the landscape and the herd-boy and his cows, a bond which the listener/reader becomes part of, so that the departure of the main character, Fekisi, from this landscape, which rends his heart, is also deeply felt by the listener/reader of the story. The reader is almost wishing Fekisi does not leave, because although for his own soul he feels compelled to take the journey, all the familiarity that the narrator has created thus far feels like the ideal setting of the story. By familiarising the reader with the landscape, the reader is then made to share in the state of confusion, and turmoil that the main character goes through as he is about to embark on his journey. The main character’s departure creates a disturbance as the reader has to very

late in the story acclimatise to a new landscape, that of the journey and the unknown future of the character in foreign lands. The listener/reader is reluctant to let go of the initial landscape, its rhythm and poetic descriptions, and to embrace a new setting for the main character to inhabit.

3.4 Praise Poetry

Praise poetry is predominant in Sesotho orature. It is also a feature in written Sesotho literature. As Molema observes, “Praise poetry is another genre of oral literature that the early Basotho novelists make extensive use of” (1990, p.54). It is presented in the form of chants, songs and recitations. Through these oral expressions; heroes, hunters, warriors of the past are remembered and revered. The present-day poet takes over past heroisms and embodies them in the present moment and foretells a future from that strengthened heroic position. Some of these poets are Sesotho traditional musicians, while others perform their praise poetry at culturally significant gatherings. The poet may recall a shared history and therefore bring forth the community into his poem, he may also point to and recite lineages of warriors and hunters who are his personal relations and ancestors and by so doing further confirm and affirm his own individual strength, greatness or wisdom, while still located within Sotho society. Hunters and warriors of the past would also be recalled in names of fearsome animals they would have apparently hunted, behaved like in fierceness, and/or killed. This can also be metaphorical.

Poetic performances occur spontaneously at feasts and large celebrations among Basotho people, mostly in rural areas and villages, as earlier mentioned. There are sacred cultural moments where praise poetry is part of ritual, for example during initiation school training and when boys return from initiation school/*lebollo*. Still clad in red ochre clay and red blankets they go around the villages where each member of the group originates; at each family the villagers gather to hear the boys reciting their poems as the sun sets amidst great feasting. These

praise poems by the initiates are mostly about women, most importantly about a sister or a female cousin to the initiate. The initiate would have also had an-depth instruction of Sesotho culture, on his clan's origins, his ancestors and on his totem, during initiation period, and would therefore crown himself with glorious coinages of his lineage. Sometimes the poetry is dedicated to their favourite cows which they would have longed to see for months while away in the mountains at the initiation school, usually in the cold winter months. Herd-boys in Lesotho generally compose poetry and recite and sing it for their herds, as mentioned earlier and as seen in the poem below. On the night of his departure, Fekisi the herd-boy, in *Moeti oa Bochabela/Traveller to the East*, is torn and tormented by a quest/journey he has to take, leaving his family cows behind. Although he is determined not to be seen as he steals into the night, he cannot help but stop by the cattle-kraal, to say his last goodbyes to the cows, his companions with whom he has been travelling the land to the veldt and back to the village on a daily basis. He sings a few praise poems/*lithoko* to them, one of them for Tšemeli, his favourite cow;

Tšemeli e tšoinyana, konotetsi,	O Female Butcher bird, with black and white hide, finest and strongest!
Ka tala e lahla balisa selemo,	With spring's green in its sights it loses the herd-boys,
Hoja li e-ja pilo-ntšo naheng,	As if they were eating the black bread,
Balisa ba tsona ba le mahlo-matšo,	Their herd-boys' eyes turned black with intensity,
Pholo li le makhethu a ho sōla	The bulls still with tufts of incomplete shedding of their fur
Na ha u lahleha tjee, ngoan'a Khotso,	O when you get lost like this way, child of peace,

Balisa u batla ba joang?	What kind of herd-boys do you yearn for?
Tšemeli tšitoane ha tlola-tloloe,	O Female Butcher bird, the wild plant Hebenstretia cooperi cannot be besmeared with,
E tloloa ke baroetsana naheng,	It is only the virgin girl-initiates in the veldt who besmear themselves with it,
Bale ba etsa'ng ha ba tlola phepa?	Female initiates what are they doing when they besmear themselves with white clay?
Ho-ea-ha-e-ee, Ho-ea-ha-e-ee:	*Ho-ea-ha-e-ee, Ho-ea-ha-e-ee:*
Thotaneng mola ha bale ba khiba,	There on the high flat ground when the female initiates sing on their knees and dance with their shoulders,
Mona 'mampoli o pheha khatsele;	The "principal herd-boy", '*mampoli*, cooks the colostrum of the cow that has just birthed a calf,
Bashanyana, le se 'ne le ingoaea,	Boys, stop scratching yourselves,
Khatsele ea tl'a phonyoha ho oa motona.	The colostrum will slip from the boss,
Mafutsana re ichebile linala,	We the poor we gaze at our nails,
Lipotsanyane tsa rōna ra li tela.	Our baby-goats we give up on them,
Mohla u hlōlang monn'a khang, Kholoane.	The day you defeated the stubborn man Kholoane,
Kholoane o n'a re tsena tsa habo,	Kholoane had said his own herd,
Tse nang le Tšoanyane le Mochesi,	The ones with the black and white forehead one and Mochesi,

Ha li mathe, lia papaela,	They don't run, they bolt,
Tšoinyana ka phatla Tšemeli,	The one with black and white forehead Tšemeli,
Khomo e hanang ha le sekama,	The cow whose mood changes when the sun sets,
Ere ha e lla e etse haholo,	When it bellows, it does it with such great magnitude,
Sello sa eona sa phohomela se phohomele,	Its bellow loud like tremendous echoing lamentations,
Se e'o kena hae khotla li sa le hole.	It reaches the royal abode while the cows are still far.
Tšemeli, ha u lla hakalo, u lekisa mang?	Tšemeli, when you bellow this way, whom do you emulate?

Ba tla r'eng motsenag ha ba utloa ba moreneng? What will they say when they hear at the royal abode,

Khom'a ntate e nkhopotsa tsa khale.	My father's cow it reminds me of things bygone.
E nkhopotsa mohla li eang le lira,	It reminds me of the day the enemy had raided them,
Khomo ha tsejoa moo li leng teng,	The cows it became known where they were,
Ka sello sa hao, Tšemeli,	With your bellow Tšemeli,
Ea lla, sa ea utloahala Matebeleng.	It bellowed, and its bellow was heard in Matebeleng.

(p.35-36, my translation).

Fekisi's poem/*thoko*, above, starts with a celebration of the cow's beauty. He personifies the cow and addresses it directly, in a vocative form, a characteristic in this kind of praise poetry – the praise takes centre-stage. He describes the emotions that the cow provokes in the herd-boys, with their eyes turning red (which is usually described as eyes turning black) with intense feeling. The poem then moves to the cows' activities, and the landscape and the veldt populated with the herd-boys apparently in intent observation of this particular cow, rendered in a voice melancholic and full of lament. It alludes to spring's lush greenness to evoke memories of the spring Fekisi had been awestruck by in a few pages earlier in the novel by presenting the spring in present tense for effect and immediacy and for an effective time leap. Fekisi also makes reference to the richness of the colostrum and how the rest of the herd-boys just stare at their fingers as the *'mampoli*/the "principal herd-boy," who is usually a bully, cooks and eats the colostrum by himself. The poem also makes reference to virgin-initiate girls who reside in the veldt adorned in white clay for months on end, who are rarely seen by the public (that is until their initiation rites are complete and they can start walking around the villages) and even when seen, during this period of seclusion, are not approached for they could apparently club a herd-boy to death with their sticks in protection of their sacred rituals and medicines that an average villager 'could spoil or disturb' according to pastoral legend. The imagery portrayed in this poem is strong and paints vivid scenes of pastoral life. It also makes reference to rituals that are sacred like the girl initiates' initiation period, and juxtaposes these untouchable initiates against spring's verdure which drives the cows wild with appetite, bringing about a visceral appreciation of the scenery and situation to the reader. There is a play between what is rich and exciting to the senses; to the eyes, taste and yearning; and the forbidden, the untouchable; the possible joy and pleasure and denial and restraint, and fear and desire. These varying emotions and sensations echo and portray the turmoil the main character is going through at leaving the known world behind and the promise and desires and possibilities of the unknown future he is

running into, which promise to liberate his spirit and give him everlasting joy and salvation and a life utterly different from the one he leaves behind. It is in this in-between realm, where the longing for what he is about to leave behind is coupled with the longing for what the character's heart desires the most, his future life, which is rendered in the mixture of fear and desire. Through symbolism and imagery the poem thrusts the reader into the scene, and lets them experience it from the herd-boy's eyes, to sense and see through the poetry the forbidden and dangerous to the herd-boy, the rich creamy colostrum, the girls clad in white clay and dangerous to even look at, and that which also draw his cows to extreme senseless running and the losing of the herd-boys, the lush green. All this is brought close to the reader with vividness through the poem. The tense of the poem also makes the participation between the poet/*seroki*, Fekisi, and the listener intimate. The present tense delivery acts as a reliving of the experience the poem delivers. It is as if it is spring once again, and the flashbacks feel immediate.

Towards the end of the poem, Fekisi remembers a time of pain when cattle-reivers had stolen the cows, and the cow he is singing to above, Tšemeli, had bellowed such a cry that the family and the village instantly knew where the cows were. In this memory, Fekisi shows his pride and fondness for this particular cow. What is extremely crucial at this stage is the urgency of Fekisi's departure. To sense his turmoil and the loss that he already feels against the backdrop of the anxiety of leaving creates an atmosphere for the reader that is intense. The reader is markedly aware that the protagonist will never be one with this environment as he was throughout the preceding pages, and therefore his former life. Although the leaving behind of his cows could be read as individualistic as he seeks his own salvation at the expense of everyone else in his family and his village, and also as a characteristic of the European novel in its primary focus on the lead character as an individual interested in individual pursuits, as writers like Chaka (2016) suggest, there is however, a way in which Mofolo's narrator through the use of praise poetry shows the sorrow and the torn-ness of his character, which shows that

the character leaving all behind is deeply saddening to him. In his leaving, Fekisi, as a character, does not deviate significantly from the oral tale and epic character who most of the time has to exit his immediate familiar environment and community to travel to other lands to seek a solution to an impending situation and return wiser. Through the use of praise poetry, the reader is drawn closer to the interiority of Fekisi's world. The reader is drawn closer to Fekisi's sadness. Even when Fekisi later consoles himself that even the cows will find a good enough herder in due time it comes off as a short flat sentence and does not compare to the magnitude of the poem that communicates his deeper feelings. He eventually leaves the cows behind, with great trepidation, to search for an unknown God and a salvation for his spirit.

3.5 Ideophones

Ideophones are stylistic language tools of expression that dramatize and intensify action. They operate in the same way that verbs do, albeit to the extreme. The ideophone could best be described as a sort of exclamatory expression. When it uses sound, the sound makes it possible for the listener to visualise an action. One word/sound can carry suggestion of an action, reaction or movement. Because of this dramatic effect, ideophones are used in Sesotho speech to communicate intensity, as if speech itself, or a descriptive sentence in its lengthiness could weaken the intensity of the action and not convey vividly the emotion and immediacy of the effect. For example, if a person falls on the ground – an ideophone such as -*bu*! communicates the fall in a more dramatic way than say a sentence such as, 'He/she fell on the ground.' The sentence alone would not carry the nature of the fall. However, the word/ideophone/exclamatory sound -*bu*! denotes a dramatic fall. -*Bu*! is formed from the root-word, *burama*/to fall down, or to sit down carelessly. "The effectiveness of … ideophones lies in the root verbs from which they have been formed" (Okpewho, 1992, p.93). The root of the

verb, in most cases, is turned into a sound denoting the action that the subject in a statement/sentence apparently uttered, performed or said.

Mofolo opens his first novel, *Moeti oa Bochabela/Traveller to the East*, with the following ideophonic expression,

> *Lefifing le letšo, le reng tšo*. (p.1)
>
> In the darkest darkness, that said tšo (pitch-black darkness). (p.1, my translation).

This is the time which Mofolo suggests was dark among the Basotho, in which the story of his novel is set. These dark times are used in reference to 'heathenism,' and the idea that before the advent of Christianity the African, and therefore the Mosotho, was living in darkness and sin. The opening ideophone, *tšo*, immediately thrusts the listener into an imaginary dark place. It is into this kind of darkness of 'immorality' that the reader is dramatically plunged into at the very opening of the book, to feel and understand how devoid of Christianity and its promise of salvation the Basotho were at the time of the happenings of the story. As is typical of Christian theology which claims to enlighten, this historical reference of a time that predates Christianity and conversion works to elucidate for a Mosotho listener/reader (who is presumably baptised and Christian by faith as Lesotho is ninety five percent Christian) the 'harrowing' state of heathenness that the Basotho people of the past and of the story were. To achieve this dramatic opening, Mofolo uses the ideophone as a stylistic and narrative device.

3.6 Characteristics of Ideophones

Ideophones in the Sesotho language are mostly preceded by -*re*/'it says-' (meaning that it *does* this). This indicates what a particular thing or person did, the doing becomes a saying/voicing

of the event. The event/subject 'speaks' the action so to speak. An example of a verb turned into an ideophone works as thus,

> *Letsoalo la mo re <u>he</u>*! (p.37).
>
> Fear struck him it said *<u>he</u>*! (to cut viscerally)! (p.37, my translation).

The verb *hehema*, which means to cut with a sharp instrument, is the root of the ideophone, *he*, above. This is Fekisi's feeling when he finally leaves his village. The ideophone formed from a verb, as shown above, takes the root of the verb and places it into dramatic action and renders the action with immediacy. As Kunene notes, the ideophone is characterised by its "aloofness from the syntax" (1978, p.12). Ideophones are, however, not always made from root verbs. They can also take different word forms, as shown in the following examples and descriptions, starting with an example formed from an adjective root,

> *Lijalo li re <u>tšo</u> - <u>tšo</u> - <u>tšo</u> ho bonahala e tla ba selemo se nala.* (p.24).
>
> The crops said *<u>tšo</u> - <u>tšo</u> - <u>tšo</u>* (black - black - black) showing that it was going to be a year of green. (p.24, my translation)

The above is the description of a great spring arriving and describes the lushness of the crops. The ideophone, *tšo*, comes from the adjective *ntšo* which means the colour 'black', which is also used to refer to a rich dark green of crops or grass when the rains have been abundant, and the land is covered in green, as shown in the above quote. Once again, in the example above, Mofolo plays with the ideophone and repetition together to emphasise the greenness, by telling us that the crops 'said'/*-re,* green-green-green/*tšo - tšo - tšo*.

This *-re* can change into an *-itse/*'it has/had said-' in the perfect form, as seen in the following,

A eme ka lithlako, a itse rao! (p.42).

He was standing on hoofs, he had said *rao*! (Meaning; he was very tall). (p.42, my translation).

The ideophone *rao* is formed from the verb *raoha/*rise/stand up. By describing a tall person as if they are on hoofs and in a standing up manner describes not just a lanky person, but a person whose posture is upright. This is how Mofolo describes his main character, Fekisi.

Another example of the -*re/*'it says-' in the perfect tense can also be seen in the following sentence;

Limela kaofela li itse sipho! (p.13).

All crops had said sipho! (The crops had all emerged in sheer abundance) (p.13, my translation).

The above is Fekisi's observation of the landscape when winter changes into spring and nature's life returns to crops. The ideophone, by intensifying the event, momentarily transports the reader to the scene and the visualisation and experience is made vivid. The ideophone increases dramatic intensity in the storytelling. At other times the ideophone can work on its own, without the aid of -*re*/'it says-'. For example,

Likhomo refo! (p.33).

The cows *refo*! (Meaning the cows suddenly *rose up*). (p.33, my translation).

The act of standing up or rising, above, is rendered with immediacy. While other ideophones are formed from root-words or verbs, some are stand-alone sounds which do not owe their existence to any word. Their function however is still that of a sort of a verb in extreme

application. The action encapsulated in the verb is re-experienced in the telling. The action is made to be felt, through the ideophone. The following example demonstrates the ideophone formed without a root of a word or a verb;

Lialuma tsa khutsa tu!

The thundering sounds quietened, *tu*!

Tu is one of the ideophones which are not built from a root-word. It also functions in verbal speech as a gesture to command silence. Its sign/gesture is somewhat common in other cultures and languages as well, which involves the placing of the index finger on the mouth, which can be translated into *Shh* in English. The above is the description of the still silence that suddenly occurs at the end of the eclipse, which is presumably brought to an end by Fekisi's prayer. In Sesotho, *tu* is also sometimes accompanied by the closing of the eyes. Sesotho has other ideophones that work in this manner, for example a person might drop themselves on the ground to demonstrate the ideophone, *sihla*/fell down, as Kunene (1978) also notes. As mentioned earlier, most ideophones involve the use of sound and miming at the same time.

Ideophones can be used alone, or they can be accompanied by gesture, as shown above. At the same time, the use of gesture alone is sometimes sufficient, especially in oral storytelling, or any other recounting of an event, message or a story where the teller and the audience can see one another. This invites the audience to participate and share with the storyteller in the act, by illusion, through the facial or physical expression, or a sound.

Sometimes the ideophone can be used in running commentary of an event occurring in real time, as Kunene (1978) also notes in his description of the ideophone in the Sesotho language. Whether used to tell a story about an event that occurred in the past, present or a future event, the function of the ideophone brings the action in feeling and sensation directly and closer to

the listener. In a way, the ideophone is a speech function in Sesotho and other African languages that transcends time and vivifies the said event, in a tangible way in the now, with incredible immediacy. An example of this is demonstrated in the following sentence from *Moeti oa Bochabela/Traveller to the East*, mentioned earlier.

Letsoalo la mo re <u>he</u>! (p.37).

Fear struck him *he*! (p.37, my translation).

At this juncture Fekisi is on the outskirts of the village after walking a little while from his cows' kraal after singing them praise poems in whispering tones, and the listener/reader appreciates the gravity of his leaving everything behind to seek God. It is in the dead of the night. All about him is silent, even the dogs are not barking. The manner and "disconcerting" quiet with which his cows eyed him earlier, at the kraal, as he sang them his last poetry, some of which is narrated above, is still weighing on the main character's heart. At this point he stops momentarily on the edge of the village, and terror suddenly strikes him. The ideophone *he!* as explained above, suggests a smarting to the senses akin to a piercing of a sharp knife. This ideophone is, therefore normally used with another verb that is synonymous with cut/slice/splice with a sharp object, (-*seha*), as in the following,

*Letsoalo la mo<u>**seha**</u> la mo<u>re</u> <u>he!</u>*

Fear cut him and said <u>*he*</u>!

Fear or terror is said to cut a person thus. The verbal dramatization of the word *he!* invokes true terror in the listener. The listener/reader shares in this feeling of terror and fear of the unknown, unchartered world into which Fekisi is entering. The preceding build-up of things and the people he is leaving behind, such as his sister, mother and father and his cows, and his

emotional attachment to them is portrayed through the use of an ideophone to convey the immensity of his situation. This also works to propel the plot forward. In fact, immediately after the intense terror felt by Fekisi, he starts running. The plot not only moves forward structurally but the character is physically speeded forward into motion, and his journey. This is the one use of the ideophone which encapsulates the feelings of the character, heightens them, brings forward to the audience that experience, so that the character's feet lifting off the ground to run are read and felt by the audience as a response to his preceding feeling of cutting terror. The audience is brought closer to Fekisi.

Ideophones capture an action, a movement and the intensity all at once. Their function replaces other elements of speech whereby words alone cannot convey a particular sentiment, movement, atmosphere, taste and sound itself among other things. As an aesthetic technique, an ideophone involves the audience in the activity, event and/or occurrence of an action in a more direct manner than normal speech could ever do. Ideophones call for direct involvement of the audience by catapulting their senses right into what is being described.

The above examples of the application of the ideophone continue to show Mofolo's "sensitive feeling for the language, a deep sensitive attachment to sounds and their power of vivid suggestion or representation" (Okpewho, 1992, p.96). The use of an ideophone as a stylistic tool creates fresh, effective and resonating appeal in the listener/reader's ear. It is this ability and skill with language that lends Mofolo's prose the rich sound with which he delivers it. As mentioned earlier of Basotho Sesotho writers, one can argue that their prose is rendered strongly in sound. One hears the echoes of the oral stories of the Basotho reverberate throughout these narratives, through the authors' play with the language and its sound.

Mofolo harnesses his local cultural resources to create prose that is stylistically rich. Even with his barrage of commentary on Mofolo's work, particularly on *Moeti oa Bochabela/Traveller*

to the East, Kunene's only sentence of acknowledgement of the writer's skill is that, "the language and style are excellent" (1967, p.8). This is the crux of the matter. That excellence of "language and style" is what makes Mofolo's novels. The writer understood and mastered the novel. Regardless of whatever missionary or Christian leanings he had as an individual, Mofolo set out to pen the novel, and that he did consistently as will also be further demonstrated from his two subsequent novels, *Pitseng/A Search for True Love* and *Chaka*. He has continued to influence writers right into the 21st century, as demonstrated in Chobokoane (1992)'s novel, below.

3.7 *Ke Lesheleshele Leo a Iphehletseng Lona/Chickens Come Home to Roost* (1992)

Like Thomas Mofolo, Chobokoane Chobokoane, who began writing almost a century after the first Sesotho novelist, shows an interesting connection to Sesotho oral literature in his prose. To a large degree, his first novel could be argued to be in conversation with Mofolo's own first novel, *Moeti oa Bochabela/Traveller to the East* (1907), for his choice of theme and literary style.

Chobokoane's novel, *Ke Lesheleshele Leo a Iphehletseng Lona/Chickens Come Home to Roost* (1992), starts in medias res with the characters already in action, in the drama of the day. It is a snowy day on which men and older (initiated) boys are obligated to take the cows out to the veldt. Regular, younger, herd-boys usually stay at home, with the rest of the family around winter fires, on such days, until the seasons change and become warmer, which is strongly articulated at the very beginning of the novel as,

> *E ne e le ka khoeli ea Phupjane, khoeli ea moshanyana se llele ho lisa…* (1992, p.1).

> It was in the month of June, the month of – O little boy don't cry and weep to go out herding in the veldt… (1992, p.1, my translation).

The sentence, above, can be said to be very telling an opening, even on its own. By starting the story as thus, it is expected by a reader who understands Sesotho culture and language that the teller of the story or the narrator promises to talk about how *cold* it was. The opening gives a sense of time. As mentioned earlier in the section about Mofolo and his inventive placement of the poem for June in August while in fact this is a poem for June and winter, opening with this poem works to situate the reader in wintertime. The writer couches his narrative in Sesotho lore and proverbs at the very beginning. As he continues with this Sesotho proverbial poem to show on which months the said little boy is allowed to go out after the cows; "the months of September and October/*tsa bo Loetse le Mphalane*" (1992, p.1), he situates his planned narrative well within the verbal expression and cultural references of the Basotho. This ode to June works in the same way that proverbs in Sesotho work, "to teach, advise and guide; to illustrate important points in an argument" (Molema, 1990, p.51). The proverb, above, in its basic application is also a lesson in patience as the young boys are being taught to wait for the right months. While this poem is a well-known proverbial poem for June with its symbolism of hazardous conditions, using it in a prose narrative, in a novel, makes the narrative familiar to the reader who has the background of the language and the culture. It also fits the novel structure by setting the atmospheric setting and providing a device that easily hastens plot in the beginning of a narrative which opens in medias res, for by nature such a novel promises to and needs to therefore move forward in a particular pace, a pace often set by the opening.

The style of writing in Chobokoane's novel is very poetic in its description and narration, particularly in the first four pages. Chobokoane's prose, in the opening pages has a staccato pace – of riddles or songs in oral stories. The sentences are short descriptions of the landscapes,

rendered in an almost breathless layering of the scene, which quickly advance into praise poetry. Sesotho songs and/or riddles have the same pace and melodic rhythm. This poetic essence mimics praise poetry, in the sense that the foregrounded idea then easily links with ideas that follow, with reliance on imagery and symbolism. The landscape, and the immediate surrounding locale and setting of the opening, which is a typical pastoral Lesotho homestead, is captured in vivid imagery. Like a praise poet, Chobokoane points to objects, animals and birds and describes them in lyrically and lively rendition. The combination of these two forms of art; the oral poetry and prose, yield an opening couched in a presentation and style that could be said to be poetic prose. For example, this is how the narrator describes the day,

Moea o hlahile Boroa,	The wind has come from a direction southerly,
kantle lehloa le ntse le re fahla fahla,	outside the snow falling; *fahla-fahla.*
Mane lithabeng ho se ho le hosoeu ho re bja!	Yonder on the mountains white, it has said ***bja***! (bright white)
Naha e apere kobo e ts'ehla,	The land clad in a yellow (white) blanket,
E se le nakoana e hlobotse eane ea Hoetla,	Been time now since it has sloughed off its Spring blanket,
E hohelang mahlo,	The one that draws in the eye,
Ka sakeng Khaloli e bokolla e sa tsoa	In the kraal the cow Khaloli bellows a haunting
bokolla,	bellow,
E bontša ho hloka khotso, kaha kajeno,	Showing signs of no peace, for today

ho tsoha, hole hobe,	we wake up to a day bad,
Moea ho hlahile oa 'Makhepheretsi	The wind messily wintry
Namane mane mosehhlelong, e ithaburanya,	The calf jumping up and down at its tether,
E itosolla e e-ea koana le koana.	Pulling itself and jumping about.
E lapetse ho nyanya, e khamotsaka 'Malitlhofa,	Hungry to suckle, to suckle with great appetite from 'Malitlhofa (a cow with copious amounts of milk),
Khomo ea se hangoa hore menoana e be e khathale,	The cow that is milked until the fingers are tired,
Khomo ea se tlatsa likhamelo, mafiso le mafisoana,	The cow that fills milking pails, big and small clay pots,
e ntoo siela molisana masokots.	and then still leave some second drawing of milk for the herd-boy.

(p.1, my translation).

Chobokoane moves from the chill of the southerly winds, to cast an eye on the mountains covered in snow, using ideophones and similes, making reference to the blanket (a cultural Basotho symbol) which is now covering the mountains and the mountains having just shed their attractive green spring blanket. He then moves closer to home, to the kraal and now captures the sound of the cow in a combination of praise poetry technique naming the cow, and then giving it sound in its lowing, and then swiftly attaches this different bellow of the cow to the mood and the weather, using the cow's lowing as a foregrounding just before moving to how sad a day it is. He then moves to the calf and its agitation and its hunger and longing for the milk of the mother-cow and describes the cow with abundant milk which the milker milks until the fingers are exhausted. This rendition is not only poetic in its prose, it follows the oral poetry technique of joining and developing ideas from preceding ideas and building up the recitation. The swiftness with which the narration moves from feeling, coldness, to the imagery and sound and the action and activity throws the reader into the scene with immediacy. In its sound, the way it reads alound it carries the rhythm of Sesotho poetry as well, he uses similes rich in imagery and symbolism in his description of the mountains. He points to the mood of the cow first before moving on to describe the mood of the day. The author's style is slightly different from Mofolo's style in that Chobokoane's rhythm is paced much faster than Mofolo's. Secondly, while Mofolo inserts poetry into his narrative with a specific framing of placing the poet/herdboy in a position and platform to sing poetry to the cows, Chobokoane ropes together poetic rendition with prose without framing, so that the beginning of the younger writer's novel could work in the same way as oral poetry works was it to be sung and performed. The narrator delivers the poetry and the prose entwined. However, since it does not uniformly follow a praise poem but is a description in a novelistic form, it could only work in the sound and rhythm whereas the thematic linkages would be wanting as the sentences and the beats of prose are too

sparsely spread throughout the scene. It works in the novel as a combination of both prose and poetry and as such gives the novel a reading that reads like a live performance.

This sense of imagery is profoundly utilised in the opening pages of the novel, so that the reader is drawn in not only by the sound quality of the oral story and technique, but also by the speed with which the layers of the said technique are superimposed onto one another in the crafting of successive prose sentences. The essence, flow and sense of speed and running-on rhythm in the narrative can be seen in the following lines which further capture and elucidate the atmospheric mood among other drivers of narrative and plot,

> *Banna le bahlankana ba tsohile e sa le ka malungoalungoana, phoka li sa rotha; ha likhoho li theoha likalaneng, lirobele li phurusetsa matlung, nonyana tse robalang lifateng, ha linonyana li tlatsa marata. Ha mafube a akarelitse ka Bochabela, ho etella Morena pele, ho pakahatsa ho tla ha Morena, ho bonts'a hore Morena o se a le haufi, letsatsi, Morena ea mosa ea mohua, ea tlisetsang lefat'se le libupuoa tsohle tse ho lona, e seng khanya feela empa le mofuthu, motho esita le lihloliloeng ka kakaretso, liphoofolo, linonyana, lihahabi le limela ka mefuta ea tsona*. (p.1).
>
> Men and bachelors had awoken very early, dew pouring on the ground; when the chickens landed from their perches, sparrows leaving their nests, birds that sleep in the trees, when the birds filled the atmosphere with their loud birdsong. When the auroras filled the East, to pave way for the king; to announce the coming of the king, to show that the king is near, the sun, merciful king of kindness, who brings the earth and all its inhabitants, not only light but warmth as well, for human and all creation, animals, birds, reptiles and plants in their diversity. (p.1, my translation).

This almost breathless recounting of the minute details of the unfolding of the day, punctuated mostly in commas, imitates oral poetry in its rendition, in the way things, signifiers and symbols are juxtaposed with time and meaning, through the usage of sound and imagery.

Towards the end of the page and this opening, this promising invitation of the sun as the king, the life-giver and life-force for all beings, when Chobokoane's narrator laments the absence of sunlight on this particular day, it is a lament that transmits a sense of sorrow and perhaps foreboding that foregrounds the occurrences to come, and also situates and balances the opening narrative within a frame and an expectation that this longing sadness about the sun, its refusal to shine, is ominous and portending something macabre. The narrator personifies the sun in an endearing manner, so that when he withdraws the said sun from the scene that comfort associated with the sun is thus affected. In his attempt to connect the reader to the doom and gloom rendered by the sun's refusal to emerge from the clouds, the narrator uses the following Sesotho proverb; "*O bonahala a koentse telu"*/ "He (the sun) looks as if he has swallowed a beard." This idiom describes someone who is extremely angry and unmovable in their anger, unforgiving. The author uses this type of proverb-speak and personification of the sun, so that when he withdraws the sun from the scene, the reader feels that withdrawal. The portrayal of the sun's anger also shows the helplessness of the inhabitants of the land, and sets them up to face the elements with their bare strength and all available resources. This is particularly true for human beings who are responsible not only for their survival but also that of their livestock. This type of storytelling borrows from oral stories this sense that nature and the environment are part of human characters' existence; they have to battle not only obstacles that are human, spiritual or super-natural, the land itself has and shows characteristics and moods that have to be contended with for survival. The personification of the sun and the descriptions also draw

from Mofolo's descriptions of the sun in his novel, *Moeti oa Bochabela/Traveller to the East* (1907).

Chobokoane's novel *Ke Lesheleshele Leo a Iphehletseng Lona/Chickens Come Home to Roost* (1992)'s beginning sets the mood for the entire story. The description of the cold winter, and the traditional praise poetry sung for the cows, mentioned earlier, start the novel on a melancholic arch, so that when a character, Ramahlelehlele, enters the novel, with an immediate announcement of the birth of his baby boy, this celebration is short-lived.

The writer uses stylistic techniques such as the ideophone and repetition to show how bad and dangerous the weather was, as seen in the following examples;

> *Ho thibane ho itse ntii.*
>
> It was overcast, it said *ntii*.
>
> Direct translation: The skies were tightly shut, they said *ntii*. (p.1, my translation).

The expression above shows that the clouds were black, as if the skies themselves were sealed or tightly shut off. This is further showed by the following repetition of black clouds,

> *Maru ho phethesela a matšo-matšo, a phethesela a e-ea holimo le tlase*. (p.2).
>
> Black-black clouds were going forth and back, going forth and back, going up and down. (p.2, my translation).

Against this intense traffic of black clouds, young men are then projected forward, to centre stage as seen in the following,

Bahlankana ke bana ba eme khotla, ba emetse bashanyana ho tla li puputa tse phatšoana. (p.2).

Here are the bachelors at the men's gathering place by the kraal, they are waiting for the boys to come milk them much the black and white ones. (p.2, my translation).

By projecting the older/presumably 'circumcised' bachelors who are already considered grown-up men with responsibility by tradition and culture since they have been to initiation school and graduated, Chobokoane's narrator further communicates the seriousness of the day and its business. The expression provokes presence in the scene, creating a strong sense of immediacy and urgency. The presence, alertness and readiness with which these older boys or bachelors are presented, shows their cultural significance and role in taking the lead in times of emergency and striving. This kind of emergency is similar to battle, for these young men are at this stage in their maturity ready to protect the community. They replace younger boys in the herding in extremely bad weather, in the battle with the elements. The writer plays with culturally specific practices, language of urgency, styles and techniques of the Sesotho language to drive the story forward with intensity into the action and drama of the day.

His description of the cows only by their colours shows or creates an intimacy with the herd of cows and the families and community members who own these cows. He refers to the cows fondly, as the black and white ones. He does not need to tell the reader that the black and white ones are cows, not only because the reader is already aware that he is talking about the cows, but primarily because aesthetically referring to cows as thus is common is Sesotho spoken language and oral poetry for the cows. This also heightens the telling by making it more poetic as opposed to just plainly saying, 'the cows'. This also carries a fondness with which a familiar person to the livestock would talk of the cows. It holds cultural significance since in Sesotho,

particularly in pastoral settings people communicate their feelings about the environment through their livestock. Their expressions would praise or state what the animals did or how they behaved in difficult situations with pride, as if in their understanding and appreciation of calamity Basotho's animals take centre stage. And then the writer adds drama to the action,

> *Ba tsoe baraha mekoallo*.
>
> They exit kicking the wooden bars of the enclosure. (p.2, my translation).

The men's action of kicking the wooden gates or the bars used to close the entrance of the kraal shows might, toughness, intent and seriousness of their course. The purpose and the aim are to show them going into the stormy weather as if charging at it. They act like warriors ready for battle and pursuit. They could not care to pick up and place by the side these bars with care as usual, for the eminent weather conditions are more demanding of their attention. They therefore kick the bars, which hastens the scene and narrative forward.

Chobokoane's novel is a quest novel, with sub-journeys at different sections of the novel, which mark both transition in the story and growth of characters. After the announcement of the birth of his first-born son, Ramahlelehlele leads the cows into the pasture with other men and the bachelors. He only lives on four pages of the novel and dies tragically in the bad weather as he struggles to control the cows through the pasture and falls into a donga by accident, amidst piling snow. His wife, 'Mamahlelehlele is left with their baby boy Mahlelehlele.

The mother and son live in poverty and the son has to be hired as a herd-boy from an early age, as aforementioned in the novel summary. Mahlelehlele's life is characterized by constant fleeing. He eventually relocates to South Africa, after a fight with a villager, who he injures seriously and flees with the belief that the man is dead, finding employment in the coal mines.

In the South African mines he joins the notorious gang called, 'The Russians', who are famous in Lesotho and South Africa to this day for ruthless massacres of their enemies and their entire associates. While underground working on a shift, the walls of the mine collapse on top of him, near death and having lost all hope for survival his dead father visits him in a vision, introduces himself as his father, and asks him to mend his ways and remember his mother. He is rescued from this accident and is hospitalized for months, after which he writes his mother a letter and sends her money without revealing his address and identity in case the police are still on the look-out for him for killing a man in Lesotho. In actual fact the man had not died, he was resuscitated in hospital. When Mahlelehlele is released from hospital in Johannesburg after the mining accident, he is again lured into the gang, mainly because once a member of 'The Russians' it is apparently impossible to leave. Another gang ambushes his group on the way to another township and all his friends are killed, and the gang members leave believing Mahlelehlele is dead too. When he regains consciousness he finds himself in police holdings and decides to confess to the police and oust all the other gang-members in exchange for a fake death announcement, and he heads back to his country where he discovers that the man he had thought he had killed did not die, and his former cattle-owner employer had taken care of the cows he owed him as payment and they had increased in numbers. He fetches his mother to start a new life of wealth and contentment. He then decides to marry, and his first marriage ends in desertion as his wife cannot withstand his brutality and domestic violence. The second wife deserts for the same reason. It is only the third wife that stays longer and bears him a son. However, the violence between the mother, 'Mamahlelehlele, and Mahlelehlele's wife, Sekhametsi, ends with both the wife and the mother trying to kill each other. The wife succeeds, and Mahlelehlele loses his dear mother. After consulting diviners Mahlelehlele becomes suspicious of the wife, and begins to neglect her and takes to heavy drinking and goes back to his violent ways. The wife tries to find a medicine that softens a violent husband, called *phehla*

in Sesotho, from the traditional doctor. This potion ends the husband's life. The wife's life ends the same way as she later eats the same potion trying to soften the second violent husband. Their son is left the sole survivor, marries and lives a happy normal life.

Chobokoane and Mofolo use the same technique to drive their narratives in their first novels. *Ke Lesheshele leo a Iphehletseng Lona* has strong echoes of Mofolo's *Moeti oa Bochabela/Traveller to the East*. Whether deliberate or by chance, Chobokoane corrects Mofolo's usage of the proverbial poem/ode of winter although as noted earlier Mofolo's disclaimer that in the days of the story he is telling August used to be in winter work smoothly for believability. The novels are also similar in theme as the main character is a herd-boy. While the two characters have similar characteristics of fierce strength; Chobokoane's lead character, Mahlelehlele, is stubborn and his tendency to violence is unprovoked in his battles. Mofolo's character, Fekisi on the other hand, fights only when he is pushed beyond his thresh-hold and most of the time he protects the weak and the innocent.

The two novels also follow the pattern and form of a quest novel as the two characters both leave the idyllic pastoral landscape which is the original setting. While Fekisi, Mofolo's lead character, leaves his village to seek God, Mahlelehlele, Chobokoane's lead character leaves the village and the idyllic environment as an escape as he is running away from responsibility and punishment.

Mofolo and Chobokoane show great use of indigenous Sesotho forms in their prose. Their artistry and mastery of the language and its richness yield narratives which are not only powerful thematically, but are also aesthetically rich. Argues Julien that, "The exchanges, allusions, and self-reference that we take for granted among written texts exist across modes of language and narrative art as well" (1992, p.26). There is a coherent continuation which I

argue is very observable in written Sesotho literature as demonstrated by the analysis of Mofolo and Chobokoane, above. Choice and deliberate effort by a writer might be additional elements. That the storytelling thread moves and meanders through these indigenous resources whilst also incorporating new ways, like a river receiving other rivers through tributaries in the course of its flow, seems like a natural flow of historical literary journeying as demonstrated by these authors' texts, in spite of the length of time that has passed between the two writers' novels.

4 Metaphysics and Cosmology in Sesotho Literature

This chapter analyses the use of African philosophy, metaphysics and cosmology in Sesotho literature to address the following research question: How do Sesotho novelists deal with questions of metaphysics and spirituality through their narratives? The discussion of myth is central to this chapter. It is the significance of myth as literary device that is of great importance here for myth finds its expression in Sesotho culture mostly through the different forms of the literature. Sesotho literature, through the use of myth, ritual and characterisation, particularly the characterisation of the protagonist, shows a constant search for the understanding of being and existence, as I should demonstrate.

I use Soyinka's concept of the "Fourth Stage" to discuss development of characters and plot in Mofolo's three novels, *Moeti oa Bochabela/Traveller to the East*, *Pitseng/A Search for True Love* and *Chaka* and Majara's *Liate oa Mafik'a Lisiu/Liate of Mafik'a Lisiu*, together with Sesotho myths and rituals. Soyinka sees art and literature creation as attempt to address and assuage the anguish and the questions of being which humankind is troubled by. As he observes, "man is grieved by a consciousness of loss of the eternal essence of his being and must indulge in symbolic transactions to recover his totality of being" (Soyinka, 1976, p.145). Creating art is one of these attempts at restoration. I use this interpretation of African metaphysics in literature for the discussion of metaphysics and cosmology in Sesotho Literature. As I argue, an analysis and an understanding of the other forms of African literature, and in this particular case of Sesotho oral forms, together with the written literature, from within the culture and its practices as given symbolism in the literary expression with an echo of and close relationship with the rituals, myths and customs, further advance the critique of the prose and situate written Sesotho literature within a literature culture that has had and still

bears strong influences on the technique, style and thematic considerations of the authors. This approach, which is centred on African indigenous resources, and African philosophy, as expressed in the cultural metaphysics of the arts and through literature among other expressions, is significant for an articulation, comprehension and appreciation of the literature of the Basotho and "intellectual decolonization," of its literary critique. As Serequeberhan argues, "intellectual decolonization," needs "to destructure the symmetry of images, ideas, and concepts that today, as in the past, underlie Western hegemony" (2012, p.147). The use of African philosophy in the study of Sesotho literature, therefore, provides concepts about the literature that correspond closely to the literary works of art, for "African philosophy can serve as a juncture for the differing discourses on Africa" (Serequeberhan, p.147). This chapter will be divided into the following subsections: Myth in Sesotho oral literature, the "Fourth Stage", a discussion of a set of ethics and metaphysics inherent in African and/or Sesotho life, such as the relationship between humankind and nature, animals, other human beings, and rites of passage.

4.1 Myth in Sesotho Oral Literature

Myth has been given specific attention by contemporary Sesotho scholars in the fields of Religion (Manyeli, T.L. 1995, Rakotsoane, 1996), History and Anthropology (Sekese, 1893, Ellenberger, 1975), Linguistics (Mokitimi, 1997) and Literature (Guma, 1979, Kunene 1967, 1971, 1978, 1989), as indicated earlier. Some of the earliest mentions of myths in Sesotho culture appeared in the first Lesotho newspaper, *Leselinyana la Lesotho* (Little Light of the Basotho), for example in the 1889 January issue with a certain "Daniele Methusala's account of his visit to Ntsuanatsatsi, *golimo e ntso* (Ntswanatsatsi, the black heaven), Ntswanatsatsi being, according to Basotho mythology, the place of origins where in the beginning all living things came out of a bubbling spring in the ground" (Kunene, 1977, p.152). Basotho myths

have been given attention by Sekese in his *Mekhoa ea Basotho le Maele le Litšomo* (Customs of the Basotho and Proverbs and Oral Stories) (1893) and D. Fred. Ellenberger in his *Histori ea Basotho/Basotho History* (1975). Manyeli, T. L. notes that myths are "an undifferentiated literary genre which is simultaneously theological, philosophical, historical, heroic, poetic and rich in describing events remote from ordinary life" (1995, p.198). There is no other area in the Basotho people's culture where this search for the meaning of life through myth is as explicit as it is in their literary arts, as I aim to demonstrate. "By means of myths, Basotho have travelled a long way in their endeavour to seek the Infinite in all that existed, lived and moved" (Manyeli, T. L, 1995, p.209). Although Manyeli, T. L. classifies Sesotho myths into myths of faith and those of action and argues that those of faith occur in stories while those of action are found in rituals, one can argue that myths as stories and myths as action and practice and ritual are equally depicted in storytelling. This, therefore, makes Sesotho literature the main vehicle through which the recalling, the re-enactment and the bringing to life of the myths and rituals occur. Ritual and verbal art co-exist. As Thorpe notes, "rituals in African cultures are meaningful not only because of their stated, overt purpose – to purify or to facilitate a change in status – but also because they are rich in symbols. They express a community's beliefs, not so much in words as in acts and art forms" (1991, p.121). Myth and ritual therefore embody artistic performance and literary expression among the Basotho. This can be seen in the way Thomas Mofolo, for example, makes great use of ritual in the making and development of his protagonist Chaka, in his novel *Chaka*, whose stages of growth and transition follow rituals such as the ritualistic bathing with herbs in the river which culminates in, the main character, Chaka's meeting with the great water-snake – which I discuss later in this chapter, an encounter that tests and bolsters the protagonist's courage and bravery and foregrounds Chaka's eminent role as a future leader of great fearsome regiments. Through art, and particularly literary art in Sesotho, a metaphysics of the people and their culture becomes visible.

4.2 The “Fourth Stage”

The making of art and/or artistic expression is part of a metaphysical process in African cosmology according to Soyinka (1976), which is employed in search of meaning; an interpretation or an attempt to understand the environment, both human and natural, within which humankind finds itself. Creativity, understood in this Soyinkan way, is the bridging, and the bringing forth to life and a revelation thereof of the unknown worlds of the gods and the non-living to the living, a meeting place of re-creation, reinvention, and rebirth through crafting. Creative writing of fiction, then, like other forms of artistry in this African sense is the meeting of the god-substance with the living.

Well-known in African metaphysics and cosmology, as Soyinka points out, are the three stages namely birth, death and the afterlife. “Less understood or explored is the fourth space, the dark continuum of transition where occurs the inter-transmutation of essence ideal and materiality. It houses the ultimate expression of cosmic will” (Soyinka, 1976, p.26). The “Fourth Stage”, or the “fourth dimension”, according to Soyinka, is where humankind through repetitive mythical ritualistic feats tries to connect to the worlds of the gods and the ancestors for resolutions, for redefinition and for the constant necessary rebuilding of African society. According to this philosophy, the process of crafting, creativity, is the bringing to life of the old gods through the hands of the new gods, the artists who work as ‘mediums’ between these worlds and stages of the African metaphysics. It is the borrowing from the old to create the new and the future, and the maintenance of continuity in the community. “By bringing the gods within this cycle, a continuity of cosmic regulation involving the worlds of the ancestor and the unborn is also guaranteed” (Soyinka, 1976, p.18). Literature, then, is crafting and creating in fellowship with the African gods and the godly realm of the ancestors. It is part of a philosophical process within African culture/s.

Art and especially literary art, therefore, in this African context and seen through Soyinka's lens lies in the essence of myths, stories and rituals renewed and relived, these being the artistic acts and the re-enactments of the processes of the gods. This "mythopoetic" essence of the African literary arts is not static and only dependent on old myths. New myths can be created but they are linked to a process in African literature and storytelling which is inseparable from the African's myths and myth making; a practice that is always old, new, and also becoming as the community changes and grows. In his treatment of Yorùbá drama, Soyinka centres the protagonist as the embodiment of these efforts to bring about change and regeneration in society. In literature, the protagonist, like the artist, is also by extension an embodiment of this god essence. This role of the protagonist as viewed and discussed by Soyinka in his *Myth, Literature and the African World* (1976), is used in this chapter to apply to the storyteller/writer and also to a great extent the lead character and his/her characterisation and role in Sesotho literature. This application is close to Soyinka's application and analysis of African metaphysics through the arts. His expansion and extension of this notion of the "Fourth Stage" encompasses not only drama but other forms of literature as well, as seen in Soyinka's own interpretation of the first Sesotho novelist, Thomas Mofolo's novel, *Chaka* in *Ogun Abibimañ* (Soyinka, 1976). Soyinka's interpretation of Mofolo's lead character Chaka, from the said novel, and the adaptation of that protagonist into a poem further connects Chaka the protagonist with the Yorùbá creative god, Ogun, who is understood by Soyinka as the inspirer and doppelganger of the artist and the protagonist, "Ogun the creative urge and instinct, the essence of creativity" (Soyinka, 1976, p.141).

Armah (2016) goes further and links Thomas Mofolo directly with Soyinka himself as African authors who have found and sourced creativity from the same "soul-place," the interactive place of the gods and the artist, the ancestral sphere, a place of creativity and creative

inspiration, a place highly suitable for a storyteller deeply rooted in African philosophy and cosmological understanding. Of this "soul-place" of the African ancestral inspiration, Armah says of the two authors, Mofolo and Soyinka, "Soyinka, writing much later, called the same region the fourth dimension. Mofolo shows it to us as a region of creation and destruction, a venue of beautiful promise as well as of terrible possibilities of loss" (2006, p.167).

In Sesotho culture and tradition the practice of healing and medicine, through its resourcefulness for the community, is the direct way, spiritually and religiously, which connects the community and brings about this "chthonic" connection to the afterlife, to the unseen and the unknown world of the gods and ancestors and the spiritual powerhouse which have the ability to change life and restore the individuals and the community in the same way the "Fourth Stage" or "soul place" work. Basotho writers, and especially Mofolo, make use of Sesotho spirituality as the place of transformation for the narrative and the characters, as also indicated by Armah's observation of Mofolo's fiction above. My discussion connects Soyinka's analysis of African metaphysics through artistic expression together with Basotho religious and spiritual beliefs as mostly symbolised by the myths and the rituals and as predominantly expressed through Sesotho literary expression in this section for the analysis of African cosmology in the novels under study here.

4.3 Ethics and Metaphysics inherent in African life

4.3.1 Humankind and Nature

The constant search for humankind's place within the cosmos, through literature, has links to the land and historical memory, albeit fragmented by oral literature's retelling and the possible intermingling with other cultures through migrations. Armah notes that "if you seek African history and philosophy, you will find it twinned with literature" (2006, p.132). The above phenomena are indistinguishable in African and/or Sesotho literature, and an analysis of them from a literary perspective aid mostly as a glimpse or an effort to bring together the practitioners and artists and storytellers in the culture with the audiences within the social and the material world that surrounds them. Basotho's literature carries these facets, the philosophical, the poetic, the religious, aesthetically driven, shown and communicated with the people, the audience, in structures and forms that are highly stylised and familiar while still adhering to the strictness of the forms even in their artistic manipulation of the different forms of literature. Fragmentation, absorption and recreation are the continuum through which the myths and legends are renewed, kept alive with freshness while the core essence of the mythologies remains intact from generation to generation as the culture reimagines itself through its arts. This can also be seen in the exploration of the myths within the novel as a form. The fragmentation is the rebuilding, the recontextualization and the new breath given to the stories as seen for example in Mofolo's usage of the Basotho myth of origin, Ntsoanatsatsi, first textualized in 1889 in the country's local newspaper as mentioned earlier.

In his first novel, *Moeti oa Bochabela/Traveller to the East* (1907), Mofolo sets the protagonist's destination as Ntsoanatsatsi, the legendary place of Basotho origins. The purpose of the journey or the quest in the novel is a search for spiritual enlightenment and possible blissful fellowship with human beings who are not as 'morally depraved' as the village

community of the protagonist, Fekisi, as portrayed by Mofolo's narrator through the eyes of Fekisi. It is the search for the essence of the gods and/or God. Although the tone of the message and its encompassing theme is laden with Christianity and its symbolism, as seen in Mofolo's portrayal of Ntsoanatsatsi as a heavenly place, it is important to look at the application of this myth in the novel from the Basotho cultural context, for in its roots lie the significance these people associate with the place of their origins. The absorption of Christianity itself, although it affects the myth, allows the author to expand the myth without destabilising its essence. Its symbolism and significance remain unaltered. Such a view and approach help to grasp the meaning of Ntsoanatsatsi, the place of Basotho origins, in its metaphysical nature.

One can argue that within the purpose and quest of the protagonist Fekisi's journey lies the search for regeneration and renewal, a plea for rebirth. Sesotho oral stories are replete with this thematic quest. This, in Mofolo's first novel, can be seen in the way in which Fekisi reflects on both nature, wild animals, his own cattle and the acts of the people around him, and keeps asking where life begins, where all things originate. Of nature's miracles the protagonist is obsessed with the sun and its rising throughout the novel which symbolically links his search and desire to Ntsoanatsatsi, translated 'the place where the sun emerges', with the power of the sun. This obsession with the power of the sun mounts throughout the novel to the event of the eclipse, discussed in the third chapter above, to portray the potency of not only the sun itself but by association the place where it 'comes' from, Ntsoanatsatsi of the Basotho, referred to by Molema as "Sunhill" (1989, p.x). As Molema posits, "the dwelling place of the Supreme God of the Basotho is Ntsoanatsatsi" (1989, p.x). This place is understood to be surrounded by plenty of water and reeds. Water is symbolic in Sesotho culture for birth and change in the lives of individuals and the community. Reeds are also used to signify new life. This myth, therefore, when applied to literature as Mofolo does bears most characteristics of most myths in Sesotho;

leaving the home only to return to it later, renewal/rebirth through the waters as symbol, and possible re-entry into life and the community as I shall show in the myth's historical understanding by the Basotho, below.

While earlier studies by missionaries like Jacottet (1895) considered the place Ntsoanatsatsi to be somewhere in present day South Africa, it is now believed to be geographically located further up the continent in the easterly direction, around the Great Lakes from where Basotho people could have migrated southwards during the seventh century, (the Great Lakes region encompasses Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda, parts of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Tanzania and Kenya). Rakotsoane argues that, "Basotho are part of the Bantu-speaking people found in Southern Africa and who are believed to have come from the eastern part of Africa (Tanzania)" (1996, p.19). He further posits that the specific place is around Lake Victoria, and suggests that Ntsoanatsatsi is somewhere in East Africa, an argument he emphasises based on archaeological interpretation supported by his analyses of Sesotho oral stories and secret initiation songs (*likoma*) with their incumbent myths. Manyeli, T. L. (1995), on the other hand draws comparisons between Basotho religious belief as communicated by their myths and rituals and those of the Shona people of Zimbabwe, and those of the Rwandese people and of the Mende of Sierra Leone, and as such draws possible connections through these Bantu groups. If these analyses, above, could be interpreted as showing some indication of the said Bantu groups' interaction through the centuries, then the consistent link, although myth cannot be called history per se, is the direction towards the Great Lakes in East Africa, where Basotho people could tentatively be said to have come from, and further beyond towards Western Africa and the Cameroons where Bantu people are said to originate. A combination of archaeological findings and religious practices aid in suggestions of the cultural connections.

Mofolo's lead character in his final destination reaches the East African coast which points to the same direction that Basotho Bantu seem to have come from as a formed cultural group. Although Mofolo's work is fictional, it can be argued that the studies mentioned above and Mofolo's novel, through his protagonist, situate the place of the Basotho supreme God and their initial home as a people somewhere around East Africa. Mofolo's work is poignantly marked by historical references and a deep attachment and connection of the protagonists to the land and the African soil, as shown by his three novels under study in this thesis. His characters travel the land, as seen in his three protagonists; Fekisi in *Moeti oa Bochabela/ Traveller to the East* (1907) whose ultimate journey in search of God is the main arch of the novel which leads as far from Lesotho as East Africa, and Alfred in *Pitseng/A Search for True Love/A Search for True Love* (1910) who travels to South Africa for his studies and spends his college holiday breaks travelling around the Southern African sub-continent and its diverse cultures and landscapes, and *Chaka* (1926) who through battle not only reaches great expanses of the sub-continent's landscape but also reconfigures the environment through battle. The characters observe the land and connect it to their lives. They speculate about the land in connection to human life, they observe the land and its features and the changes in the seasons. Their land is therefore their home in the immediate sense. They are connected to their environment. Ntsoanatsatsi, in Mofolo's first novel, therefore, can be said to symbolise a return to the original home from which the Basotho presumably migrated eleven centuries before the writer penned the story, although the place is presented in the form of heaven.

Some of the African Bantu migratory deposits and cultural exchanges can be observed in oral stories of the Basotho which have similar themes with other African oral narratives. Others can be observed in rituals. In some instances, both the oral narratives and certain rituals of the rites of passage, in their respective performances, can be said to echo other African cultures through

which the Basotho have possibly sojourned in their migrations south of the African continent, as portrayed by oral narratives. Such oral narratives are used by researchers in efforts to remap or imagine the roots of the Basotho as an ethnic group, as seen above from Manyeli, T.L. and Rakotsoane's works. Written Sesotho literature uses these indigenous resources for both aesthetic and meaning/tellebility purposes in their stories.

4.3.2 Humankind and other humans: Characterisation

Character in Sesotho language and culture is important for it embodies a human being's relationship with others. Words such as beauty and humaneness or humanity define a human being who in Sesotho is humane and compassionate to others. A person's humaneness is called *botho* in Sesotho, and *ubuntu* in other Southern African communities. The word *botho* is derived from *motho*/human or person, as is characteristic of Bantu groups which have the root *-ntu* for person. *Botho* is, therefore, the humanness of the person characterised by acts of consideration to others, it is being human in very symbolic ways. Sesotho culture places great emphasis on the person's humanness/*botho*. Other Southern African cultures also regard this way of being as the only way to co-exist. For example, *ubuntu* was the model of reconciliation that the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) operated on in 1996 to address atrocities of the Apartheid regime in the country. A person in the community, a person who can be called truly human is the one whose character reflects characteristics such as kindness, caring, compassion, resoluteness in virtuous acts and one who sees their destiny as bound with the destiny of others. Where individuals have been harmed, *botho*/*ubuntu* approach allows for avenues for redress and forgiveness. As the Basotho saying goes, '*Motho ke motho ka batho*/A person is a person because of other people.' This philosophy is very important for conduct and the definition of a person and interpersonal relations with others, as further demonstrated by Ramose's *African Philosophy through Ubuntu*, (2005) and her essay,

'Reconciliation and reconfiliation in South Africa', (2012). In Sesotho literature characters who lead the narrative are constructed along this design. A hero in oral literature has qualities that represent personhood or humanness as conceptualised within the cultural understanding of what an exemplary human being stands for and the ways s/he carries the community's aspirations and the potential realisation of them. As Chaka notes, "a person becomes motho by accomplishing visible acts of compassion towards members of the society and outsiders" (2016, p.73). This notion of *botho* in Sesotho culture does not mean that a human being with these desired qualities is infallible, in fact it is by overcoming or working towards achieving these qualities within the constraints of human folly that a person's true humanity can show itself. The hero/heroine is heroic in Sesotho culture in spite of human folly for they rise above it or perform acts of compassion and kindness within their own human limitations.

Character conceptualisation and the characterisation of the protagonist in Sesotho literature, both oral and written, is represented in heroic terms. The individual lead, to be later taken up by the novel as the main narrative and plot driver, is chosen and given the role of the hero in the oral tale, in the praise poem and in the epic, even when such a character is supported by influential secondary characters. "These narratives have made thematic, technical and formal contribution to the African novel," (Chinweizu et. al., 1980, p.27), as indicated earlier. Evident in these forms is the compassionate and sacrificial nature in the character of the hero, discipline and dedication to the duty of helping the community in its struggles and transformations, which then form the essence of his/her *botho*/personhood/humaneness and/or humanity. The oral story's hero/heroine helps maintain balance in their respective fictive communities; a philosophical outlook similar to other African cultures and also expounded by, among other African writers and theorists, Soyinka in his conceptualization of the hero in poetic drama, in that, "powerful natural or cosmic influences are internalised within the protagonists," (1976,

p.43), in an overarching attempt from the culture to seek the balance within humankind's existence and/or co-existence with everything on earth. These forms of literature and their continual influence on newer forms of literature work in the way African storytellers and griots work in the continuation of cultural memory and re-creation. As the griot, Mamadou Kouyaté, says, "We are the vessels of speech, we are the repositories which harbour secrets many centuries old. The art of eloquence has no secrets for us; without us the names of kings would vanish into oblivion; we are the memory of mankind…" (as cited in Armah 2006, p.172). The hero/heroine, being an extension of society and all that it stands for, as the "vessel of speech" which also extends to the character of the artist/writer; the creator of protagonists and other symbols and images of art which link African and Sesotho humanity with its environment, has to be well endowed with certain desirable virtues. The Sesotho novel uses Sotho society's notion of character as representative of the culture in somewhat similar ways to the other forms of literature, particularly the oral tale and the epic.

It has been argued that the movement towards the novel from oral forms has confounded African artists/writers with the novel's main character's 'individualism', a concept foreign to African culture and philosophy. For example, Chaka notes that, "Mofolo's heroes are always forced to make firm individual choices about their destinies" (2016, p.81). Such a reading of the novel echoes the Bakhtinian notion that the novel's hero is an "ideologue" (Bakhtin, 1981). Although this description could be true of the novel in its European formulation, when dealing with African literature such as that of the Basotho, "the reader and critic should be sufficiently made aware that they are reading a work in which the conventions of the narrowly realistic novel have been suspended" (Chinweizu et. al., 1980, p.27). The hero, therefore, makes sense in the consideration of these works as a construction most of the time that follows structures of African oral narrative. I wish to interrogate the culture hero embryonic to oral literature and

his/her image in Sesotho novel as a possible reflection and extension of the technique in oral forms. I read these characters with an ear on the notion of the "culture-hero" (Okpewho, 1983) in the oral story and the "community hero" (Chaka, 2016, p.75) in the novel, a hero whose purpose or mission is to exert his/her energies in search for solutions for the community.

In Sesotho poetry, for example, the hero lauds and adorns himself with words pertaining to acts of virtue and heroism, by naming himself and associating his person, with great use of imagery, symbolism and metaphor closely representative of the land, the environment and its elemental forces, with familiar symbols of greatness. The hero might attach himself to greatness through the greatness of others and the acknowledgement of their great deeds. This is done in remembrance, celebration and reverence of other great heroes of the past. Poets also laud others equally with poetry and words of admiration and praise; their leaders and kings, their beloved, and their favourite animals. The hero/heroine, therefore, in Sesotho culture does and does not have individualism. The hero's individualism is seen and understood as connected to that of the community without which the hero does not exist, as shown in the Sesotho proverb that a person *is* because of others. The main characters in the novels under study in this sub-section will be looked at within this cultural-artistic framework of the hero's character, and the essence and significance of the protagonist, both from Sesotho culture and the African metaphysical understanding, as articulated by the culture and its art.

Mofolo's protagonists, in all his three novels, *Moeti oa Bochabela/Traveller to the East*, *Pitseng/A Search for True Love* and *Chaka*, begin their narrative quests with efforts to change their fictive societies, or to live in a society that has undergone significant transformation. Fekisi, Mofolo's protagonist in *Moeti oa Bochabela/Traveller to the East*, yearns for change in morality as does Katse in Mofolo's second novel, *Pitseng/A Search for True Love*. Morality and ethics in these first two novels are seen through a Christian lens and value system. In his

third novel, Mofolo presents a protagonist who changes his society and environment from a peaceful community into a war-machine, so that the Zulu men of Chaka at the height of his reign are pre-occupied with nothing else but battle and warfare. The hero, as transformer of his community, is captured vividly by Lesotho's first novelist. Armah argues that Mofolo created, "heroes able to contemplate and create social identity through deliberate, thought-out planning backed up with daring individual and group initiatives, the creative use of experimental knowledge of the constant renewal of society" (2006, p.159).

The notion of *botho*/humanity is echoed throughout the works of Mofolo as desired for the hero. Even in *Chaka* whose main character develops into a tyrant, it is primarily Chaka's gradual loss of *botho*/humanity that sees the character take the trajectory that he does in the narrative of the novel and the protagonist's eventual demise and death at the hands of his two brothers. Chaka, the protagonist, is assisted by the traditional healer Isanusi and his two henchmen in his becoming which eventually see him go on a downward spiral of war and pillage. Isanusi symbolises a turning point or a point of no return in Chaka's destiny. Armah argues that Isanusi "is the rational, goal-oriented, efficiency-seeking aspect of Shaka's personality given full literary space in the guise of a whole character interacting with the central hero" (2016, p.168). By providing this psychological device in the form of the traditional healer and his aids, Mofolo also demonstrates the way in which a community, even one whose ethics run contrary to the character's community, is instrumental in the hero's make-up. In the end, Isanusi, the influential traditional healer, is inseparable from Chaka. If this notion of *botho*/humanity could be translated into the saying, 'It takes a village to raise a child' then it also takes a village to undo a person, to a certain extent and with specificity to Mofolo's *Chaka*.

Novelists who came after Mofolo such as S.N. Majara and B.M. Khaketla, among others, followed with lead characters who embody this notion of *botho* and this formulation of the

protagonist as society's main changer in ways that echo forms of oral literature, with a marked difference in the latest writer, Chobokoane Chobokoane, who wrote in the nineties, a century after Mofolo, whose conceptualisation of the protagonist produced a character whose interests concern only his immediate person as an individual. The demise of the protagonist, Mahlelehlele, is portrayed by Chobokoane as Mahlelehlele's own doing and a result his lack of *botho*, his hubris, haste and brute force and temper and his disregard for others. However, it could still be argued that Chobokoane's Mahlelehlele's formative years of impoverishment and abandonment through the death of his father nourished a hard individualistic survival instinct in the character limiting and/or negatively affecting his *botho*/humanity. In this manner, as is also the case with Mofolo's last novel, *Chaka*, the person or character who does not have the characteristics of *botho* is bound to lead to a regrettable life as understood by Basotho and Sesotho culture and as portrayed by the two novelists in their respective works. The virtues and values of Sesotho culture such as compassion, generosity, moral guidance, protection of others by the hero/heroine, and kindness are strongly emphasised in the novels as central to human existence and co-existence.

These values are seen in Fekisi, Mofolo's first novel's protagonist who protects the weak herd-boys against bullies, in Katse, Mofolo's second novel's lead character who feeds the poor during a famine, as also seen in the secondary characters who work as the heroes' helpers. Analysed closely, these characters also show traits that are characteristic of the healers in the Sesotho traditional religious or belief system in their roles as binders and society's restorers, and as individuals who cross the limits of life to reach realms inaccessible to ordinary members of the society. They reach and cross the "gulf" of human life, to use Soyinka's concept of the "Fourth Stage," on society's behalf.

In *Moeti oa Bochabela/Traveller to the East*, the main character, Fekisi, is portrayed as deeply caring for his fellow herd-boys and as an adept stick-fighter when he defends weaker herd-boys against bullies, particularly against the principal herd-boy who in pastoral communities wields absolute power and control over the weaker and the younger herd-boys. Although one of the main themes of the novel is non-violence and the narrator berates 'brute force' against the vulnerable throughout the narrative, Fekisi's violence is portrayed as that of a righteous man. He resorts to violence only when he seeks justice for those who are bullied and defenceless, as seen in the following lines

> *Molamu oa ka oa otla, oa bolaea. Thebe ea ka ea thiba, ha ho ntho eka e phunyang. Lerumo la ka lea hlaba, lea bolaea, hobane pelo ea ka e hloekile.* (Mofolo, 1907, p.8).
>
> My fighting-stick hits, and kills. My shield shields, there is nothing that can pierce it. My spear stabs, and kills, because my heart is pure. (p.8, my translation).

In this regard, in the defence and protection of the young and the weak, Mofolo's narrator justifies fighting in pursuit of justice. This character of Fekisi also fits the description of the god-inspirer-doppelganger of creators and artists and protagonists, Ogun, that Soyinka (1976) refers to in his "Fourth Stage", for when Ogun arrives "it rains blood". An Ogun arrival, in Yorùbá mythology, is for balance, for restoration of peace within human society.

Fekisi's righteousness is also narrated through his acts of compassion towards the bullies themselves as he forgives them and appeals to them to please cease to fight those who are defenceless, after he has defeated them. He helps them carry their wounded home with care as they leave. Mofolo's narrator concludes with an admiration of Fekisi's adeptness at stick-fighting as if it is a tragic drama for justice. He points out that if one was to witness Fekisi stick-fighting one's jaw would drop, "*U ka ahlama*" as the narrator says, directly translated as,

"Your mouth would be agape" (1907, p.9). To use Soyinka's analysis of African metaphysics, Fekisi acts as retributive mediator and resolver in the imbalance in the harmony of herding. I also argue that in Sesotho specifically, Mofolo's character, Fekisi, could also be seen as an amalgamated being, an embodiment of Sesotho spirituality albeit wrapped and delivered by the author/creator of the novel in a Christian 'blanket' which at a closer look could still possibly bear markings and designs of a 'Basotho blanket'.

Fekisi shows attributes of strength and virtue and achieves mediation between human beings and brings about solutions and restitution. Fekisi goes into that "abyss" of violence like a Soyinkan actor in ritual Yorùbá drama where only the protagonist can reach. As Soyinka notes,

> There is only for the protagonist the certainty of the experience of this abyss – the tragic victim plunges into it and is redeemed only by action. Without acting, and yet in spite of it he is forever lost in the maul of tragic tyranny." (1976, p.146).

This is the constant melancholy of the protagonist, Fekisi, the culture-hero who like other protagonists of Mofolo and the other Sesotho novelists is like that of a seer who sees when there are looming problems or strife in the society. He tries to mitigate, as also seen in the way Fekisi wants to go and fight his drunkard neighbour, Phakoane, who beats his wife repeatedly. Fekisi's family and neighbours stop him from intervening and fighting Phakoane for as an unmarried young man this role of protector of married women is above him. However, he is constantly tormented by suffering of any form and always feels compelled to act, to plunge into the situation head-on regardless of the danger to himself. As a hero and understood within the tenets of Sesotho oral stories culture-heroes, he is aching for restoration and balance in the community. His vision is, as it should be, that of reconstruction. The protagonist constructed and understood within this African and Afrocentric metaphysics works as the old-age healers

and diviners of Sesotho society, the mediators and mediums between the world of the living which humankind sees with immediacy and from which it understands its helplessness without the intervention of the superior powers of the chthonic realm, without the bringing forth of some godly strength and force, or without one in the society who acts with sacrificial bravery and certainty which the hero has in his character and essence.

Like Mofolo, S.N. Majara designs his lead-character as a healing force in the immediate community of her village and society at large. From her very early age Liate, the protagonist of *Liate Oa Mafika-Lisiu/Liate of Mafika-Lisiu*, is seen as an extremely stubborn youth whose first act of rebellion is against her group of friends in the village who, together with Liate, in their pursuit of fun and games bind a donkey's eyes with cloths so that it would not wander off into corn fields and eat the villagers' crops while the girls occupy themselves with games. Eventually, parched from thirst, the donkey wanders off in a different direction and falls into a gulley in search of water, and ultimately dies. The girls make a pact never to tell the truth, but Liate betrays them and confesses to the adults that it was her idea to blindfold the donkey and therefore her fault that the animal perished, although it had not been her idea. She betrays others and protects them at the same time. This stern courage develops through the character until she chooses a career in nursing whereby unlike the other nurses she chooses to treat the most distressing patients with severe injuries and maladies. Her restorative nature is shown in the way she follows the healing progress of each of her patients, so that they begin to know her as a person and trust her belief in their ability and capacity to recover. Majara's Liate and Mofolo's Fekisi as culture-heroes in the novel, therefore, show compassion, kindness, generosity, moral guidance, protection of others and the community, virtues central to their *botho*/humanity in their role as heroes. The writers emphasise the necessity of *botho* in human character throughout their narratives. This can be seen as didactic as some commentators such as Kunene

(1967) and Maake (1992) have observed of Mofolo's work and blamed the didactism on Christianity. However, this is also characteristic of Sesotho oral forms such as the riddle, the proverb and the moral-of-the story short fables. To instruct and emphasise desirable qualities is not only part of the theme, technique and style in these forms, it also has direct bearing on the audience and members of the community, who are usually younger than the storyteller. The seasoned storyteller in Sesotho culture is often a grandmother or grandfather. As the oral story forms in Sesotho are usually told to a direct audience then the didactism is part of the culture, to impart discernible advice and guidance, to continue communicating ways of being and a philosophical outlook that is considered reflective of Sesotho culture. As Chaka observes, *botho* and "the recurrence of this value in Mofolo's fictive societies … makes the notion of human compassion a cultural resource that remains invariable despite epochal changes," (2016, p.72), as seen in Mofolo's character depiction of Fekisi in *Moeti oa Bochabela/Traveller to the East*, below,

> … *motho; e seng motho sebopeho, le ho tseba ho bua feela, empa motho lipuong, motho liketsong, motho mekhoeng eohle; motho sephiring le pontšeng, motho bohlokong le thabong, boiketlong le bothateng, tlaleng le naleng*. (Mofolo, 1907, p.1)

> … a person, not only in physical appearance, or the eloquence of speech, but a person in words, a person in deeds, a person in all his manners; a person in private and in public, a person in grief and in joy, in good fortune and in hardship, in hunger and in plenty. (p.1, my translation).

Through the acts of *botho*, humanity, Mofolo's and Majara's protagonists are presented as the gods or ancestral incarnates in their essence. This is not to suggest that they are presented in the 'perfect' image of the Christian God. These characters are three-dimensional characters

with individual weaknesses. Their gods/ancestral essence is only depicted in their role in societal restoration, to use Soyinka's notion together with Sesotho spirituality in its understanding of the role of healers, as I should further demonstrate. The writers show "the continuity of the evolution of tribal wisdom through an acceptance of the elastic nature of knowledge as its one reality," (Soyinka, 1976, p.53), by going into their cultural resources and metaphysical understanding of being, shared and understood by their audiences and community, served or realised at a heightened moment of creation in a writer's crafting, evoking a sense in which "time past, present and future are subsumed in the single moment of epiphanic understanding . . . the peak to which African poetry, traditional and modern aims" (Nwoga, 1976, p.627). The culture-hero in Sesotho oral stories is then reinterpreted into the novel as protagonist and serves within the fictive culture the same essential role of rising above obstacles to restore, recreate, heal and mediate where the community is in strife. Even though Mofolo's Fekisi's essence as a character and his sense of morality and values are Christian, his outlook is based on Sesotho concepts of compassion, helping others and overall kindness towards fellow human beings, the work of the gods and the healers. Says Chaka (2016) that "Christianity becomes culturally meaningful only when it strikes a chord with the community's cultural principles" (p.74), as in Mofolo's novels for example.

Beauty is applied in similar terms to a person in Sesotho culture, in that physical features on a person are beautiful in as far as they correspond with a person's attributes of *botho/*humanity. Both Mofolo's and Majara's protagonists are described as beautiful people. The adjective *motle*/beautiful in Sesotho means beautiful in reference to a person and is not gender specific. *Motle*/beautiful originates from *botle* which means beauty, with the *-tle* as the root word for beauty which then adds *mo-* to make *motle*/beautiful in first-class nouns such as persons. To describe a person as '*e motle/*the beautiful one' can be interchanged between physical features

and character. Both protagonists of Majara and Mofolo, Liate and Fekisi, are described as beautiful at length by their respective narrators. Liate's beauty is described in Sesotho poetry, as shown earlier. Liate's actions, twinned with her physical beauty, anchor the Sesotho meaning of beauty in acts and character in respect to this character and add to her *botho/*humanity. In the same way, Mofolo emphasises Fekisi's physical beauty as inseparable from his character. These elaborate descriptions of the characters endear the protagonists to the reader. The play with this word *botle*/beauty and character is similar to the way Abiodun (2001) plays with the word *ewa* (beauty) and *iwa* (character) in his analysis of Yorùbá art. As he argues,

> It is important, therefore, that the artist possess the attributes of iwapele (the foremost iwa) in addition to his own iwa. With the attributes of iwapele the artist can demonstrate qualities such as poise, avoidance of brute force, composed gait, grace, thoroughness, calmness, calculated patience, insight, endurance, and fulfilment through artistic expression in his work. A critic's familiarity with these and other components of iwapele are basic to his ability to recognise ewa (beauty) in Yorùbá art. (2001, p.22).

Character as beauty works similarly in Sesotho culture and its concept of the hero, the creation of the artist. The play with words referring to beauty and character which encapsulate the essence ideal of the artist and which I extend to the protagonist as well, is important to my analysis of Sesotho literature. This is relevant to the way writers like Mofolo and Majara build their characters, with patience, appreciation of the other forms of literature, and importantly to later task their characters with the enduring trials in their quests to fight for justice and balance in their fictive communities of the novels, to embark on journeys akin to that of the healers, since,

> Only one who has himself undergone the experience of disintegration, whose spirit has been tested and whose psychic resources laid under stress by the forces most inimical to individual assertion, only he can understand and be the force of the fusion between the two contradictions. The resulting sensibility is also the sensibility of the artist, and he is a profound artist only to the degree to which he comprehends and expresses this principle of destruction and re-creation. (Soyinka, 1976, p.150).

Mofolo's Fekisi and Majara's Liate meet their trials through challenges presented to them mostly by human beings who suffer at the hands of other human beings or whose suffering is caused by nature such as through injury and illness in the case of Liate as a nurse in Majara's novel. Liate's ultimate trial which leads to mental breakdown is caused by the disappearance of her husband in WWII. The heroine, in this incidence, is tried and tested at a personal level and the suffering that she experiences is also the suffering of the culture-hero for culture-heroes are not infallible to personal strive and difficulty. In fact, it is through her suffering and recuperation that Liate becomes more accessible and human as a character. As Soyinka observes, above, the hero's strength shows itself when the hero has been tested in tremendous ways, psychologically and otherwise. The return to her life presents Liate as a complete human being, whose completeness after personal collapse is similar to those she has cared for and helped. Return from the brink of life, a service she has constantly provided to others, is what she receives as well. The novel ends with her recovery as partly beneficial for the return of her husband too. Perhaps in this portrayal Majara succeeds in making the community-hero of service to others slightly more than to herself, so that even when tried and tested, her renewed strength is the renewed strength of the community.

Mofolo's character, Fekisi, on the other hand is tried and tested constantly through fighting and defending the defenceless. Both characters in the two respective novels are troubled by the

nature of life and being; Liate by the processes of life itself in the physical disintegration and recuperation of the human body. Fekisi is troubled by human nature and behaviour, the elements and nature's processes with the animals and the surrounding environment's response to the change of the seasons.

Considered against the tenets of Sesotho culture and religious beliefs, Mofolo's Fekisi and Majara's Liate could be seen as what Basotho call; '*Ngoana'a-hlooho-ea-balimo*,' which translates; 'One-with-the-mind-of-the-ancestors.' Such a person in Sesotho culture, as is also the case in other Southern African Bantu cultures such as the Shona of Zimbabwe as analysed by Thorpe (1991), is understood to be afflicted by the ancestors and the spirit-world and is also gifted with talents of a spirit medium. In Sesotho culture this idea extends to individuals who are very sensitive to turmoil in the family unit and/or in the community, and tend to foretell a possible solution to the difficulties. Such sensibility is often linked to ancestral presence in a person, as though such a person is both in this world of the living while in company of the ancestors or also simultaneously dwelling in the ancestral realm. However, such a person does not necessarily have to enter the 'calling'. It is only if the ancestors persist and demand of such a person to become a healer through dreams and visions that training and the correspondent rituals and special conduct would need to be followed. A person who has a definite 'calling' would also be marked by healers' dreams, or particular visions where they are shown medicinal herbs which the community identifies as healing herbs or roots, as I should further demonstrate below in the subsection on the transformation of Christianity by Sesotho culture.

Characterisation, therefore, in African and Sesotho art is a phenomenon and technique deeply embedded within the culture. Human character, what is expected from it, is somewhat similar to the expectations and framing of the hero, the artist and the writer alike. These are the gods of expression in the people's artistic works. The idealisation of the protagonist in African

literature and by extension Sesotho literature makes sense, if we consider art and its creation to be a metaphysical process that Soyinka describes, or the role of the protagonist, for "it expands the immediate meaning and action of the protagonists into a world of nature forces and metaphysical conceptions" (Soyinka, 1976, p.43).

4.3.3 Humankind and Animals

The forces of nature which the protagonist encounters can also be fearsome creatures, monsters or animals. For example, in *Chaka*, Mofolo uses the 'deep river snake' mythology, reminiscent of the Sotho, Xhosa, Ndebele and Zulu and other Southern African countries cultural myths, to mark one of Chaka's rites of passage. In Sesotho culture this mythical deep river creature is said to dwell in rivers or lakes, and it is called Khanyapa. Describing this creature, and associating it with Basotho religions, Rakotsoane posits that,

> This *Khanyapa* is said to be a very huge snake-like beast which is believed to inhabit big lakes, rivers or seas. It seems to have very special relationship with almost all bantu-speaking people. However, such relationship is blurred by secrecy in which it is surrounded… African traditional healers, especially *sangomas*, have very special relationship with this kind of beast. (1996, p.1).

Basotho, like other Southern Africans, refer to this creature, Khanyapa, as responsible for hurricanes. When the weather is stormy with torrential rains and whirlwinds, Basotho lore says that this Khanyapa is migrating from one water abode to another, and it leaves havoc in its wake. A similar creature in Malawian mythology, Napolo, is also associated with the weather and the elements. According to Msiska (1995), "when the serpent is unhappy it causes climatic and geological change" (p.73). As Rakotsoane suggests, above, traditional healers say that they

are going to be under the tutelage of this Khanyapa when they go for their training by other more experienced traditional healers, or when they go to the healers' retreats – which almost always take place near water bases. In *Chaka* Mofolo takes this mythological big river snake and places it in direct encounter with his protagonist Chaka.

As Chaka bathes in the river at dawn, the huge river snake-like creature appears amidst a storm and towers over him. Chaka freezes in fear. However, he does not call for help or alert his mother who is hiding in the bushes nearby, in time. By the time he releases the signal whistle, as instructed by his first traditional healer - the woman who had warned him to only whistle if in absolute danger when bathing so that his mother could come to his aid, the creature is towering above him in such majesty that Nandi, his mother, appears and retreats back into the bushes in fear. The huge creature wraps itself around Chaka while most of its torso still remains in the water. It then licks him, emitting breath so deathly foul. Chaka's only movement is to touch and hold on to the hair at the centre of his head which is always left unshaven for that is where his protective medicine is placed. When the snake has finally retreated into the water, two distinctive voices, one following the other, serenade Chaka with heroes' songs, as seen in the final voice utterance below,

> *Ahe, ahe! Lefatše lena ke la hao, ngoan'a motho oa heso;*
> *U tla busa lichaba le marena a tsona.*
> *U tla busa mefuta-futa ea batho,*
> *U tla be u buse le meea ea lifefo tsa maoatle,*
> *Le maliba a linōka tse kholo tse tebang;*
> *'Me tsohle li tla u utloa ka kutlo ea sebele,*
> *Li khumame tlas'a maoto a hao!*
> *E, oi! oi! Empa u tsamaee ka tsela ea teng*. (Mofolo, 1926, p.26).

Ahe, Ahe! This world is yours, child of my kin;

You shall rule nations and their kings.

You shall rule races of people,

You will even rule the stormy winds of the seas,

And deep-pools of big deep rivers,

And all things on earth will hear truly,

They will bow beneath your feet!

E, oi! oi! But you should walk the way. (Mofolo, 1926, p.26, my translation).

This encounter works as the first test and marks the beginning of Chaka's development into a brave man. The confrontation with danger and possible death symbolically bestows Chaka with powers of traditional healers who are the only cultural/spiritual custodians who are ever said to meet with the said great mythical big river snake. This is strongly suggested in the final line of this song, which cautions Chaka to walk the *way*. This suggests that there is a sacred path of warriors that Chaka has been exposed to and there is a particular way to walk it. The depiction and symbolism of this deep-water-snake-creature mythology also alludes to the "Life-Death-Life cycle" myths that Manyeli T.L. analyses in study of the *Phenomenological Perspectives of the Basotho* (1995), which I should discuss below. The encounter with the fearsome water creature also means that Chaka's initiation period with the first healer, the medicine woman to whom he was sent by his mother Nandi, has come to an end. Chaka is ready to meet and be counselled by the medicine woman's own doctor, a much more powerful Isanusi. This technique does not only work as development of the protagonist in Mofolo's *Chaka*, it also works as plot device. It introduces the possibility of new characters into the narrative, Isanusi and his henchmen who would later become Chaka's assistants, his 'ears and eyes' as the novel calls them. It figuratively transports Chaka to higher levels of power and its quest, spiritually

and mentally. It also in itself foregrounds the hero's journey out of his community to not only encounter Isanusi the great healer on his journey, but to also direct Chaka towards another kingdom, that of Dingizwayo, a greater king than Chaka's own father, who would train Chaka in military strength and aptitude and facilitate in his journey towards being a great king.

Mofolo easily situates this serpent mythology into Zulu culture, even though it can be argued that he had learned of it from his own culture, the Sesotho culture. Since, as Rakotsoane suggests above, Bantu speaking people of the African continent share some mythologies and oral stories, the mythology works in sync with the Zulu culture within which the novel narrative is based. Other African writers, in their novels, have also used the serpent as spiritual appearance or guidance, as seen in writers like Laye Camara's *Dark Child* where a serpent works as a godly/ancestral guide. The following lines, spoken by the serpent that Camara's father keeps in his blacksmith warehouse, demonstrate this spiritual guiding trope, "Lo, I am the guiding spirit of thy race, and it is even as the guiding spirit of thy race that I make myself known to thee, as the most worthy. Therefore forbear to look with fear upon me and beware that thou dost not reject me, for behold, I bring thee good fortune," (Camara, as cited in Nnolim 2010, p.92).

Haring (2015) makes mention, as an example of African continental stories' connections, and in particular the oral story of the beautiful girl who refuses all suitors and ends up marrying a monstrous creature from whom she has to be extricated by a family member. Such a story in Sesotho oral literature has a few versions, all of which symbolise the monstrous creature in a form of a serpent. Worth mentioning here are the two most popular in Sesotho oral narrative and whose theme has also been adapted into novel narrative by Sesotho writers. In one of these versions, a monstrous creature, Monyohe, who cannot be seen in the early stages of the marriage and eventually appears to have a serpentine form which becomes evident throughout

the chase sequence after the girl has escaped him, is killed by the creature's own mother. The name itself, Monyohe, is formed from the noun *noha*/snake. Monyohe therefore means 'snake-like' or 'one-who-is-of-snake-form.' The creature had followed the girl to her village and hid in the chicken coop. Monyohe, the creature, is, however, brought back to life, through a sacrifice of a black ox, and an anointment of the pot containing his ashes with an ochre ointment. He then emerges back to life, transformed into a handsome husband who the girl happily accepts. In another version he is killed by the girl after the escape and the ensuing chase. His mother, in this version, then arrives, burns his remains, wraps the ashes in the hide of a black ox and throws them into a lake. He then emerges from the lake a handsome man. In both versions the girl re-marries the monstrous-creature-turned-into-handsome man. Manyeli, T.L. analyses this oral story under the "Life-Death-Life cycle" myths and hypothesizes that,

> this complicated process might be an indirect way of explaining how the sources of the invisible Monyohe can be the source, assisted by the skin of the slaughtered ox, the pot, and the red ointment, of new visible life and existence for Monyohe. (1995, p.177).

One other explanation or interpretation of this myth, besides its suggestion that marriage or human union between man and woman as understood by the Basotho is a form of rejuvenation, could be based on the cyclical nature of life as believed by the Basotho and other African cultures in their metaphysics and as Manyeli T.L.'s classification, "Life-Death-Life cycle" also suggests, though his analysis of the myth does not ponder thoroughly this notion. In writers like Thomas Mofolo, as mentioned of Chaka above, this 'life-death-life-cycle' is realised and maintained through one protagonist's life, by bringing the protagonist close to death and providing possibilities of a new transformed life upon survival. Mofolo does this through the powers of traditional healing and medicine, and motherhood, in his text. The idea of the monster is also used to juxtapose Chaka, the boy who the community had shunned and therefore

turned into a subhuman member to be taunted and tormented, against the 'real' monstrous creature of the waters. However, on another level, by overcoming his fear of this initial monster, Chaka is portrayed to be progressively, throughout the novel, becoming a tougher tyrannical human being himself, this time mostly by his choice. Therefore, the character is constantly reborn in the narrative, with his humanity/*botho* constantly at stake and/or challenged. This is a "metaphysics of the irreducible: Knowledge of birth and death as the human cycle" (Soyinka, 1976, p.53).

The Monyohe oral story, above, has been given new life and expression by Manyeli, G.C. in his novel, *Liapole Tsa Gauda/Golden Apples* (1977), whereby a ferocious blue hyena is eventually transformed into a handsome husband for the protagonist's sister. The theme of transformation from creature into human is consistent in both oral and written form of this myth. This adaptation and others of myth into novel narrative by Sesotho authors shows then that "myth is a 'quality of fancy' or a creative resource, available just as much to the writer as to the oral narrator" (Okpewho, 1983, p.158).

Mofolo's example and that of Manyeli G.C. above carry both the potential for the recontextualization of the oral tale and its mythology, and the reimagining, and also most importantly the possibilities and flexibility within these cultural literary forms to be communicated in new forms of literature while retaining the core essence. Observable in Sesotho literary arts is an artistic expression that is African in its philosophical consideration, in that the act of creation and recreation is both godly and human. The African essence of the gods is not remote from human beings. An important point that Manyeli, T.L. (1995) points to in his analysis of Sesotho mythology and phenomenology is the fact that in Sesotho culture a woman is sacred. In the case of Monyohe the creature of the oral story narratives, such an interpretation can be enhanced by a consideration of the role the monstrous creature's mother

partakes in the act of bringing back to life her son through the sacrificial ritual with the slaughter of an ox in the original oral story, a crucial aspect which the adaptation into the novel by Manyeli, G.C. (1977) leaves out. This performance imitates the acts of the gods or of God in creation and recreation, and has links to the sacred role accorded a woman in the culture. In his encounter with the deep-river-creature Chaka's mother, on the other hand, is the only witness. Instead of rescuing him, she goes back into hiding and gives him up for dead. Chaka's rebirth then, happens from the point of view of his mother, who has given birth to him in the first place. While the mother in one version of the oral story, above, directly kills her son, in *Chaka* the mother allows for the possibility.

The doubling of women characters is both significant in both the oral and the written. In the oral, the two women are the bride of Monyohe and Monyohe's mother, both interested in the new life of the man-creature and participating towards this end in different ways. The bride escapes the monster. The mother, frightened and/or ashamed that Monyohe has revealed himself, is propelled to end the secret serpentine nature of Monyohe. She then chases both Monyohe and the bride until she finds the son hiding in the chicken shed and performs the ritual of rebirth. In *Chaka*, the first double, the healer and the mother are aiding each other, albeit indirectly, towards a rebirth of Chaka as a stronger man. The role of the two women, the mother and the healer – who has led Chaka to this particular destination, is crucial for Chaka's initiation into the next stage of his life. In *Chaka* the novel, Chaka's mother plays a significant role in allowing or participating by absenting herself in the 'rebirthing' of Chaka. By not interrupting the visitation of the deep-water-snake-creature to Chaka, the mother, Nandi aids the purposes of the medicine woman in giving Chaka a new life of strength. In *Chaka*, the two women, Chaka's mother and the medicine woman, accompany Chaka, the protagonist, in his first rebirth. However, this initial rebirth is followed by progressive "subordination" and

annihilation of women characters, and therefore, the role of women needs to be considered carefully as presented by Mofolo, particularly in this last novel. Soon after this 'emergence' of Chaka from the river, a report arrives at his home that his woman traditional healer has died. As the novel progresses, particularly in the third arch of the novel, a second doubling occurs as both Chaka's mother, Nandi, and his wife, Noliwa are killed by Chaka as they are considered obstacles to his march towards absolute power. Noliwa is the sacrifice that Chaka has to make between love and greatness and fame, while Nandi is killed for concealing a pregnancy and a child born by Chaka. Regardless of how much his conscience and the tormenting feelings of guilt trouble Chaka, he chooses greatness over the death of loved ones, a point I elaborate further, with example, in the section on the transformation and stabilisation of Christianity in Mofolo's prose, below. As George (2017) has remarked on writers such as Fagunwa's *Forest of a Thousand Daemons* (1982), the male character's coming of age seem to 'require' the woman to be subordinated in texts that chart African modernity and which have Christian influence. For Mofolo's protagonist, Chaka, "self-realization and self-subordination to the cause of nation-building are figured as urgent imperatives that require mobility and the 'manliness' to plod through" (George, 2017, p.122). This is where the novel differs significantly from the mythologies and the oral stories, with the former only significantly portraying the woman's agency at the very formative stages while in the latter she is seen instrumental throughout the narrative, as not only the one responsible for birth and rebirth but for a complete life arch.

The rebirth of the male character happens at a water abode, the lake in Monyohe's case, and the river in Chaka's case. Water is a strong symbol for birth in these narratives, as it is in Sesotho culture, as I should show in the upcoming subsection. The reinterpretation of the deep-pool-snake-like creature, as seen in the above examples, has moved and been realised in

different versions in the Sesotho novel, through mixtures with other African cultural mythologies, such as that of the girl who marries a monster, to the traditional religious considerations of the Basotho and the initiation of traditional healers and taken into novel forms and given new interpretations while still centred on the tenets of the myth and its symbols. In these literary reinterpretations, mythology from cultural beliefs, such as the belief in the essence of the deep-pool/river serpent which is understood to be responsible for severe climatic change is interspersed with the oral stories such as that of Monyohe the serpent which also has its echoes in other African oral tales and deployed as motif in the novel. Basotho writers, particularly Mofolo, have interpreted this mythology in its varied forms for character development, psychological drive of the narrative and also drama and tension in the movement of the plot. The vibrancy and vividness of Sesotho verbal art is married with the novelistic expression in ways that enrich the prose. The beauty of these techniques is ageless. As Soyinka notes, African literature operates "in a culture where the mystical and the visionary are merely areas of reality like any other," (1976, p.65), and it is in this merging of the mythical with the real that African literary stories such as those of the Basotho find expression, as I should further demonstrate in the two remaining sections of this chapter. These "areas of reality" are suitable for the novel as a form, for "the novel . . . has no canon of its own. It is, by its very nature, not canonic. It is plasticity itself," (Bakhtin, 1981, p.39). It is malleable and can easily adopt characteristics of other older genres. "The novel is a 'catch-all genre,' one can do so many things with it," (Egejuru, 1980, p.10). As such, the novel's writing can be said to be an obsession with the "creation of something new," (Okpewho, 1983, p.168), a creation of new lives, bringing the acts of the gods from the "gulf" beyond life into the artistic creative process. To use Soyinka's definition of African metaphysics, this is the process of artistic creation and expression as new gods creating old gods or using timeless tools, techniques, and resources of the gods and the ancestors to continue creation. Through the mind and hands of the novelist

then this process can be glimpsed at. Sesotho writers show this continuity of myth throughout the ages. As Soyinka further posits, “the creative man is universally involved in a subtle conspiracy, a tacit understanding that he the uncommissioned observer, relates the plight of man, his disasters and joys, to some vague framework of observable truths and realities” (1976, p.44). The novel’s flexibility therefore allows it to carry this transitive role and also mix different oral forms while reworking their themes and techniques in the same way that new cultural influences such as Christianity and its imagery and symbolism can be easily absorbed and used in this form.

4.4 Transformation and Stabilisation of Christianity by Sesotho culture and literature

As mentioned earlier, Mofolo’s work, like those of the Basotho writers who came after him, is characterized by hybridity between Christianity and African/Sesotho beliefs, and it has been argued by Kunene (1989), Molema (1989) and Maake (1992) that the influence of Christianity limits and compromises the authors’ narratives. Maake remarks, on Sesotho literature, that, “the beginning of creative writing was incidental to the missionary crusade, which was to spread the word. As a result these works could not wean themselves from religious writings” (1992, p.24). What needs to be considered, however, as mentioned earlier, is that both cultures and religious beliefs, Christianity and Sesotho religious beliefs, merge to produce a complex character in the literature, a syncretic sensibility that still bears strongly the hallmarks of the people’s own traditional beliefs. This can be seen as a double-edged sword in that Basotho writers, especially the earliest ones like Mofolo, were already converted and it would be difficult for them to write stories that only showed or reflected Sesotho cultural beliefs. If conversion is contagion, then, they were already marked by that dangerous influence of Christianity. However, the important point to stress is how the supposed ‘heathen’ in them

never perished, how its character emerges in apparitions through the literature. At a closer look, the traditions and culture are not quelled or silenced by conversion to Christianity. The works show a paradoxical Fanonian double-dance of the "natives" rituals at night and mass/church on Sunday morning (Fanon, 2004) as aforementioned. This duality, in Mofolo in particular, can be appreciated more deeply by an analysis of the tug of war between Christian morality and values and Sesotho beliefs in his novels.

In the same way that the Sesotho myths themselves in the oral stories have been re-versioned, restaged and redeveloped and renewed by adaptation, the meeting with Christianity shows potential for fragmenting and rebuilding, readjusting of a people's view and outlook with the times, hence Ntsoanatsatsi as the place of the origin of the Basotho takes the form of heaven in Mofolo's first novel. The cyclical cosmological perception of the Basotho people, during the time of conversion and afterwards, adopts new names while the symbolic essence remains the same, so that Ntsoanatsatsi represents heaven with the destination, as Mofolo shows, still located in the East of Africa where Ntsoanatsatsi is believed to be, geographically. Through narrative, therefore, Mofolo incidentally brings and locates heaven on earth. Traditionally, and before the advent of Christianity, for example, Basotho people used to bury their dead facing the East, with seeds in their hands, knees bound with rope close to the chest (in a squatting position so that the new ancestor could rise up and start work immediately in the new world of the afterlife). The seeds were for planting and prosperity in the ancestral world as Basotho believe in the continuation of life after death, an unbroken link to life which according to Soyinka's discussion of African metaphysics is part of the four stages of life's cycle. In *Moeti oa Bochabela/Traveller to the East*, Mofolo alludes to this Basotho burial practice in reference to Ntsoanatsatsi, followed by his recreation of a Sesotho dirge that takes a form of a Christian

hymn, in the novel, which further shows the syncretic nature of the literature born out of converted people,

Re siiloe kantle,

Re siiloe le lillo,

Re siiloe le mahlomola.

O, holane le 'na ka nkeloa leholimong!

Ke hloka lipheo ke'ng, nka be ke ikela teng;

Holane khoele e teng e leketlang,

Ke ne ke tla itšoarella ka eona,

Ke nyolohe ho ba heso boiketlong! (1907, p.3-4).

We are left outside,

We are left with tears,

We are left with sadness.

O, if only I can be taken to heaven!

Why do I not have wings, I would go there;

If only there was a string hanging from the heavens!

I would hold on to it,

And rise up to my relatives who are in comfort and happiness. (1907, p.3-4, my translation).

The idea of wings, flight and going upwards to heaven, above, is already incongruent with the idea of the Basotho ancestors and their gods as located under the earth and it further shows the influence of Christianity and its skyward God in Mofolo's writing. One does not fly to the underworld which is connected to the world of the living through the waters and the ground,

and therefore would not require wings to access such a place. The human form is completeness in itself in Sesotho cosmology and physical transformation even if it takes another form always needs to return to human form, as shown by myths such as the creature who re-emerges from the lake a handsome man, and it can be argued that otherwise the ancestors would struggle to recognise and receive a human being into their abode who arrives clad in wings. Sailing on the water and/or entering it, (as indicated by S.N. Majara's portrayal of the journey of one of his characters on return to his homeland, Lesotho, in his novel *Liate Oa Mafika-Lisiu/Liate of Mafika-Lisiu* (1976), which will be analysed later in this section), is perhaps the closest to Sesotho cultural beliefs as communicated by Basotho myths as the means of travel to the dwelling place of the people's gods. Some form of immersion into the substance of the earth is required, and for the Basotho water seems to have always been the most plausible and preferred as testified by their cultural myths, rituals and belief system. These people were born of the earth's elements, on earth itself and their myths, particularly the myth of Ntsoanatsatsi, adapted and reinvented by Mofolo in his *Moeti oa Bochabela/Traveller to the East* (1907) reflect this and connects them and their ancestral realm directly to the earth and earthly habitation. This realm is populated by a community of lineages related to the living, as Mofolo still shows a link to the Sesotho belief in ancestors, as seen in the 'relatives' or the bereaved person's people referred to in the last line of his dirge, above. The ancestral and/or the spiritual realm is also communicated in Mofolo's works through the use of dreams.

Mofolo's Fekisi's dreams and visions mimic the afflictions visited upon a spirit medium or a diviner to be, by ancestors. Fekisi dreams of the rising of many suns. He dreams of the place of Basotho origins, Ntsoanatsatsi/Sunhill. He dreams of a passing shadow amidst mist. The fact that the dreams and visions are recurrent and do intensify throughout the novel would have possibly been interpreted in Sesotho spirituality without the presence and influence of

Christianity as a sign of Sesotho traditional 'calling'. However, Fekisi also dreams dreams that have Christian imagery and symbolism. He dreams or has a vision of a Christ-like floating figure with the length of the hair reaching the floor. As a Christian, Christ is one of his ancestors.

The phrase, '*ho bitsoa*/to be called' is also the exact phrase that seminarians at the Morija Theological Seminary, the oldest seminary in Lesotho, use to explain their decision to enter and train to become priests for the protestant church, Lesotho Evangelical Church (LEC). Mofolo's education and teacher-training as mentioned in the introduction of this thesis was on a teachers training college very close to the seminary, Thabeng, which also belongs to the LEC and he would have also taken some of his courses at the Seminary. His later work as a proof-reader at the Morija Printing Depot and attendance at the same church with the seminarians and the instructing priests puts him in close proximity with the theological tutelage and general administration of the church and fellowship with the general community under the LEC church as this is a closely-knit community up to the present day. Signs of a troubled person, whether by a calling for the Christian mission or the Basotho healing journey, seen in this framework easily lend Mofolo's character Fekisi a 'calling,' therefore, to serve a mission for a Christian God. Fekisi's desired piety is also somewhat similar to that of the type of Christian that Paul in his epistles, especially the letters to "Timothy 1 and 2", and "Titus," encourages. Mofolo would have been familiar with Pauline ideology as one of the first books to be translated into Sesotho was the *New Testament* in 1868, and Mofolo himself could have taken instruction at the Morija Theological Seminary as part of his teacher training.

One can argue that it is not that Mofolo had forgotten Sesotho traditions and their patterns and symbolism, but rather that Sesotho traditional religious beliefs and their vocabulary and articulation have entered the current religion of the Basotho, Christianity. The traditional

healers in their practices still use these signs and symbols and the word, 'calling', signs which have permeated the Christian faith, showing that culture learnt, lived and known for a long time, alive in the social memory of a people absorbs new forms of life and expression and shows itself anew, as faces of the old gods on the new ones, as "the means to our inner world of transition, the vortex of archetypes and kiln of primal images …. The ritualised experience of the gods," (Soyinka, 1976, p.36), regardless of what religious banners the gods come bearing. The new spiritual expression, both at the seminary where Mofolo would have taken some of his instruction as a teacher in training a century ago, and also in the characterisation of his main character, embody "a type of knowledge, which without transgressing the canons of logic come in an inherent, intuitive manner" (Nwoga, 1976, p.621). Mofolo's literature and that of other Basotho novelists can be said to operate in a culture where as Thorpe (1991), notes, "the entire African world view, which is often expressed in forms of art …, is rooted and grounded in an African religious approach to life," (p.6), or the writer/s could be understood to harness these forces, elements and the dwellings of the sacred and the magical to craft the works of literature.

This link Mofolo would come back full-circle to embrace fully in his third novel, *Chaka* (1926), a novel so deeply rooted in African metaphysics and cosmology that the missionary publishers of Mofolo's work initially rejected for publication. In *Chaka*, Mofolo makes links that allude to Christian Biblical stories. Read very closely, *Chaka* plays with and reverses/juxtaposes Christian mythology with the writer's imagination of the most grotesque acts by the protagonist – which, rendered without the Christian possibility of redemption, build tension and aid the psychological unfolding and the transformations of Chaka the hero/anti-hero. Christian symbolism is recurrent in several places in the novel, as seen in the reverse trinity of Chaka's traditional healer Isanusi and his two assistants, Ndlebe the one who sees and hears everything

and Malunga the warrior who strengthens Chaka's armies with medicines and herbs. Chaka's killing of children born by him in each of his 'wives' household to avoid heirs and their ensuing squabbling once the king dies also has Biblical echoes of the Pharoah who orders male children in every Hebrew household to be killed in fear of the coming of the messiah. In continuation of this symbolic Pharaonic story as presented in the Bible, Mofolo makes Nandi hide a pregnancy by one of Chaka's 'wives' and facilitates a birth that occurs far away from the kingdom. Like Moses in the Bible, the child is hidden until Nandi out of longing secretly brings him back to the kingdom, where the rumour reaches Chaka who watches his mother's movements closely until one day he finds her carrying and playing with the child too affectionately and as is characteristic of Chaka, he stands over the child to see if the child would die when the father's shadow falls over him. The sudden death of the child proves to Chaka that the child is his, and as such he decides there and then that his mother would keep betraying him and trying to keep his progeny, and decides that she has to follow his child in death. In this novel Mofolo also invokes the Biblical choice-between-a-greater/higher mission or power-and-a-loved-one scenario akin to the sacrifice of Isaac demanded by God from Abraham. Like Abraham, Chaka agrees with Isanusi the great traditional spirit/healer to offer Noliwa, his wife, as sacrifice. The difference being that, in the Bible, God changes his mind and provides Abraham with a lamb for the sacrifice, while in *Chaka* Isanusi subtly insists on Noliwa as the ultimate sacrifice for Chaka to perform. Mofolo then mixes the African/Sesotho traditional after-life notion with the Christian heaven to create tension, and to entice and provide further motivation for Chaka, as seen in this speech by Isanusi,

> *Motho ha ho thoe o shoele, o'a be a sa shoa, a mpa a fetohile feela, moea oa bophelo o tsoile lekokoaneng lena la nama, o ile lefatšeng le leng le khanyang ho feta letsatsi… Kamoo le uena hanyenyane u leng paki, hohane u ne u ikutloele lentsoe la*

> *ntat'ao le bua le uena… Ea sebelitseng haholo lefatšeng lena o tla fumana kotulo e kholo teng; ea sa etsang letho ha a fumane letho teng…* (Mofolo 2014, p.124).
>
> When they say a person is dead, s/he is not dead, they have only changed, their soul has exited the flesh, they have gone to a world that is brighter than the sun… In a small way you yourself bear witness to this, because you once heard your (dead) father's voice speaking to you… He who has worked very hard on this earth will reap greatly in that world, he who did nothing will find nothing there… (Mofolo 1926, p.124, my translation).

In Southern African cosmology, and especially in Sesotho traditional belief – when a person dies they pass onto another world of great abundance as indicated by this speech of Isanusi above. However, there is no judgement in the Sotho or Zulu afterlife, death in itself is believed to absolve and restore everyone, righteous or wicked, hardworking or lazy. What Mofolo does, therefore, is to fuse characteristics of the Christian afterlife with the African (Sotho and Zulu) ancestral existence for his narrative purposes.

From within a literature that is so potent with religious symbols, Mofolo, as other Sesotho writers, effortlessly builds and develops the characters of Fekisi, Katse, Alfred and Chaka and makes them drive the narratives in a convincing manner. He uses earlier forms of his culture and couches them in new forms of art to tell his stories. However, Mofolo does not succeed completely in this dance, particularly with Fekisi in his first novel. Although Fekisi leaves his community for spiritual quest and fulfilment, to attain a higher level of consciousness or to increase his own heightened consciousness and sensibility to his surrounding environment and community, as the healers in Sesotho culture do, Mofolo leaves out a crucial device in his narrative structure. He shuts the door on the community, Fekisi knows that he is leaving his

community never to return as shown at the very beginning of his journey when he reaches the edges of the village at dawn and contemplates the fact that he is leaving his community for good. A spiritual medium must, according to Sesotho culture, return in one way or the other, like the culture hero in the oral narrative does. The door for re-entry is always open. This is one case where Christianity cannot be completely rehabilitated and joined smoothly to traditional African beliefs which are cyclical. Christianity's sense of finality in regard to life on earth affects Mofolo's narration in this novel. Fekisi is thrown too far into the world of foreign spirituality, out of the realm of the Basotho. He cannot find his moorings. His ending is in exultation that does not resolve itself to a final bridging and complete understanding of his life, of his role, of his connection to his role as a culture and community hero for a culture-hero at this moment of exultation, after his meeting with the god-substance in the African sense, would be in a position where,

> he, the actor, emerges still as the mediant voice of the god, but stands now as it were beside himself, observant, understanding, creating. At this stage is known to him the sublime aesthetic joy, … in the distanced celebration of the cosmic struggle. (Soyinka, 1976, p.143).

However, in Mofolo's *Moeti oa Bochabela/Traveller to the East* this sublime euphoric exultation yields to the finality of Christianity that entraps the author, as seen in this moment experienced in extreme visionary symbolism in both Fekisi and also Katse in Mofolo's *Pitseng/A Search for True Love* when he is about to die, the extreme lighting, the imagining of heaven and its pillars of light. This is usually the moment where the culture-hero sees the connections, the solutions, the powerfulness that lies between the human realm and the godly realm, the culture-hero and the healer in Sesotho cultural beliefs has to be returned to the community to serve more dedicatedly after this exposure and experience. This is the step that

Mofolo in his texts, touched by Christianity and its ideology, misses in the syncretism of his crafting and yields to a faith that does not have the final rebirth in its imagination. The quest, the journey in Sesotho cultural beliefs, is only the beginning. Return is necessary, as Majara has shown in his *Liate Oa Mafika-Lisiu/Liate of Mafika-Lisiu.* Importantly though, Mofolo does make his characters travel to this place, spiritually and physically, and therefore the journey itself makes his narratives potent with African spirituality.

Armah connects Mofolo, particularly in Mofolo's writing of *Chaka* closely to African cultural techniques of narrative, by noting that,

> the venue Mofolo chooses for these transformative encounters with hidden aspects of the hero's self is the standard soulplace of African transitions: the dwelling place of the ancestors, the meeting point between the worlds of the living and the dead. In fictional form, this is a profound insight into the nature of the sources of creative inspiration. (2006, p.167).

It is not only through the invoking of spirituality and mythologies and connection with the 'ancestral' world that writers like Mofolo build narrative, it is also through an aesthetic that is spiritual, so that a frame opens into that world and events that are other-worldly have direct bearing on the plot. Melvin B. Rahming has termed this way of writing "spirit-centred text" and further posits that, "the primary function of a spirit-centred text is the evocation and dramatization of spiritual conditions and spiritual activity; and the ideological and aesthetic features of such a work combine to expose the spiritual agenda latent in everything within its conceptual reach" (2013, p.36). Mofolo and the other authors who came after him make use of Sesotho and/or African cultural resources, especially myth, in varying degrees. For example, in its literary application as seen in Mofolo's usage in his narrative, the Ntsoanatsatsi myth

which in Mofolo's work is embodied by the characters, is the reworking of the "culture hero" who, Okpewho (1983, p.178-179) argues, in traditional African life and as portrayed in the oral story genres, has to go out of the community to seek resources and wisdom for the community for expansion of knowledge. The "culture hero" in Mofolo's Fekisi is weakened and does not completely fulfil the cycle Okpewho describes above for among other things his journey and the plot are trapped by what Soyinka terms the "dogmatic finality of Christianity," (1976, p.54) and argues that African writers cannot fully create within such frameworks. As indicated above, the tug of war between the personality or the character of the 'heathen' and the Christian forms the double-identity of Fanon's psychotic in *The Wretched of The Earth* (2004), who at the beginning of treatment sees or hears whispering demons and eventually begins to hear angels – the stage Fanon calls irredeemable madness. At the stage where Mofolo's character reaches the East of Africa and is welcomed by heavenly beings and experiences euphoric exultation, the finality of Christianity which Soyinka cautions against becomes a reality as the character dies in sublime exultation. Nonetheless, it can still be argued that Mofolo in his first work reappropriates the Basotho myth of Ntsoanatsatsi and contributes to the literary expression of the Basotho with their language and its aesthetics while keeping the foundational elements of the myth intact.

In Sesotho literature, myths of origin, myths pertaining to rites of passage and those that bear a syncretism between traditional beliefs and Christianity can be observed. The ones portraying Christian symbols and ideas tend to be more predominant in the written literature than in oral genres as shown by Mofolo's work. While "myth-making" and remaking appear to be non-linear, the advent of Christianity which has contributed not only literacy itself but the subsequent documenting of Basotho myths and oral stories in written form; albeit poorly due to the early missionaries' lack of complete appreciation of nuance and the totality of each text

with the accompanying repetitions, refrains and songs, has also brought about an expansion and a duality in the perceptions of the Basotho and their cosmological considerations. With such an influence then some of the myths have come to bear both religious beliefs, as seen in Mofolo's treatment of the myth of Basotho origins, Ntsoanatsatsi.

4.5 Rites of passage: Through the waters

Water is the main symbol in most of the transitional processes in Sesotho as also echoed in the myths, as indicated above, and as such a prevalent medium through which human transformation takes place in the literature narratives as well, as Basotho believe that human beings or the Basotho themselves originate from a place full of water and reeds, Ntsoanatsatsi.

One cultural practice of the Basotho which symbolise Ntsoanatsatsi is the birth of a child whereby the hut or the house in which the mother and the new-born stay is marked by a reed or two stuck into the front of the roof for the community to see and respect, and for males not to enter, as such a dwelling is considered sacred for the first few months after a child is born and only women and girls can enter it. This practice is still carried out in pastoral villages to the present day. In Sesotho lore, babies are said to be from the river, or the lake, depending on which is closest to the village, and as reeds are known to grow around rivers and lakes, the reed therefore symbolises new life from the water. In the same way that the place of Basotho origins is symbolised by a body of water, the birth of a child as a rite of passage has water as symbolic transformative agent.

Guma (1977) calls for special attention to the Basotho "under-world" as a place of plenty with the presence of water in his study of the forms of oral literatures of the Basotho. In his analysis, he discusses the oral story of Thakane the heroine who takes upon herself the responsibility to travel the land, passing great rivers and lakes, singing in anguished song and melody, looking

for a special breed of the mythic animals *linanabolele* for her brother, Masilo, who refuses to come out of initiation school and graduate without clothes and weapons made of this particular animal's skin. When Thakane finally reaches the lake that is the abode of these animals, an old woman hears her song of plea and emerges from the lake and helps Thakane travel through the water into the underworld and the dwelling of the *linanabolele*. These creatures are said to be ferocious with extremely heightened senses of smell, hearing and intuition. In fact upon their arrival from their hunting they are agitated and asking the old woman who is their guardian about the strong scent of human they can smell – which means that they can sense Thakane even though the old woman has hidden her safely. The two women through calculated wit and courage eventually manage to outwit the *linanabolele* and capture and slaughter one old *nanabolele* whose skin Thakane takes for her brother and escapes the underworld with the help of the old woman.

Reference to this story and female heroine bravery is made repeatedly by one of the authors under study here, S.N. Majara (1976), in his description of his protagonist, Liate, in the novel *Liate Oa Mafika-Lisiu/Liate of Mafika-Lisiu*, whose discussion is further expanded below. The earth, and/or precisely the place underneath it, is considered the dwelling place of the ancestors, the place humankind returns to repeatedly to seek mediation in times of strife, as shown by the example above, and in other works of Basotho writers. This is also symbolised in Sesotho culture, by among others, the pouring of libation on the ground, an act of atonement or appeal, an attempt to at times placate the wrath of the ancestors who have the power to affect the lives of the living negatively and who have a direct link to the Basotho supreme God, Molimo, and who have to be constantly appeased. The ancestors themselves are gods, as seen in the plural of the word *Molimo*/God which is *Balimo*/ancestors, with the *ba-* replacing the *mo-* in all first-class nouns, human nouns, in Sesotho, so that in plural form the name of the supreme God

becomes the same name for the ancestors. Basotho ancestors are in the ground, or under the earth, the dwelling place of the gods. When Basotho refer to their gods, the ancestors, they respectfully say, '*Ba fatše*/Those in the ground or under the ground'. The Basotho chthonic realm is therefore not skyward but connected to the earth, as shown above. Basotho writers like S.N Majara strongly show the Basotho's link to earthly gods/God essence, in their creative work.

Majara's female protagonist's role, as is also characteristic of Sesotho oral stories heroines, is to bring about needed change in the community. The character description in the very early stages of the novel allude and make references to a "culture-hero" from Sesotho oral stories, Thakane, whose bravery is equated to S.N. Majara's lead character, Liate by the novelist. This Thakane is the same heroine that Guma (1977) discusses in his analysis of Sesotho oral forms as mentioned above. As Majara's narrator says of Liate, the Protagonist in *Liate Oa Mafika-Lisiu/Liate of Mafika-Lisiu* (1976),

> *A (tichere) ba a bona e-ka; ka mohua le lerato le tukang; o se a bona Thakane oa tšomong, khaitseli ea Masilo a ntse a theosa le maliba 'me a ntse a bolella koena-boliba hore Masilo oabo o hanestse Mophatong 'me o mo batlela thebe ea nanabolele, le setipe sa nanabolele, le lieta tsa nanabolele, le kotjane ea nanabolele… E ne e le eena Thakane o abo Masilo.* (Majara, 1976, p.36-37).
>
> He (the school teacher) saw as if; with the kindness of her (Liate's) burning love; he is seeing Thakane of the oral story, the sister of Masilo moiling and toiling down banks rivers and lakes, telling the crocodiles of the waters that her brother Masilo is refusing to come out of the mountains from initiation school, and she is searching for him a shield of nanabolele skin, a cape of nanabolele skin, and shoes of nanabolele skin, and

> a staff made of nanabolele skin… It was her the Thakane – Masilo's sister. (Majara, 1976, p.36-37, my translation).

The character Liate's personality, especially her compassion, and role is constantly compared with that of the oral story heroine throughout the novel. The cyclical process of the metaphysics of the Basotho can be observed in great recurrence in the interchange between the Thakane oral story and S.N. Majara's work. Majara's writing, which he began about four decades after Mofolo wrote his last published novel, *Chaka* in 1926, has brought female protagonists to Lesotho's literary landscape in ways that echo stylistics and methods of the oral tale. This, Majara began with his first heroine, 'Makotulo of the novel of the same name in 1961, the novel whose inter-textual story-within-a-story framing device follows the setting of the oral tale as the narrative voice changes between that of the novel's narrator and the old woman character, 'Makotulo, who is telling her story to her granddaughters. This setting and style, as earlier indicated, has also been used by other African writers such as D.O. Fagunwa (1982) in the *Forest of a Thousand Daemons*. It situates the storytelling of the novel within the African oral story setting by invoking and creating the element of a tangible participatory audience. In Sesotho, in particular, the choice of the old woman as the storyteller is very correspondent to the pastoral setting where grandmothers tell stories to their families and grandchildren in the evenings around the fire.

Majara has followed this female protagonist trope with his heroine, Liate in *Liate Oa Mafika-Lisiu/ Liate of Mafika-Lisiu*, with a setting, theme and style which still use, to a great extent, Sesotho cultural resources such as oral story myths, thematic references and poetic expression deeply rooted in the verbal arts of the Basotho. The intertextuality and oral story narrative inserts shows a consistent connection between the verbal art and the novel in Sesotho writers. This link, started by Mofolo in 1907, continues progressively through to the sixties and

seventies with works such as that of Majara. The female protagonist is depicted in both inner beauty (acts of courage and compassion) and physical beauty, in a manner that renders these qualities co-dependent and inseparable.

Liate's beauty is described by the narrator in poetry and symbolism of the Sesotho poetry which invoke the landscape and its wild blooms, and in connection with the beauty of wild game that dwells in such landscapes, as seen in the following lines,

> *Liate a bososela, …banana ba bona ntho e ntle ka mokhoa oa mohlolo, namane ea hata marameng a Liate, 'me ea e-ba bottle ba khili … Ba fumana lefahlanyana la tšephe le ipapallang har'a mehalalitoe e thuntseng har'a botalana, haufi le matša.* (Majara, 1976, p.33).
>
> Liate smiled, … the girls saw a beauty so miraculous, a newly born calf gently stepped on her cheeks (*meaning that her dimples showed*) and her beauty was more astounding, they (*the girls watching her smile*) saw the twin of a gazelle playing among wild lilies abloom in lush green, near the lakes. (Majara, 1976, p.33, my translation).

This type of poetic description of beauty is recurrent in Sesotho and African literature. One sees similar poetic descriptions of women's beauty alongside the fauna and flora of the landscape in African writing from other regions. For example, describing a girl in a bar-scene in Osu in Ghana, Kofi Awoonor's narrator says, "Her eyes were a steady pool on which there was a water lily each not yet in flower, (1992, p.97). These type of poetic descriptions of beauty, as also seen in Majara's narrator's description of his female protagonist, are often accompanied by bravery and stealth and stubbornness in a female character.

Liate's compassion and sense of ethics are accompanied by extreme stubbornness. She always goes against the norm, or agreements with her friends to dupe the adults, as shown in the example where her friends' games had let to the death of a donkey they were supposed to be herding. The character's compassion and service to others is further explained by her acts of kindness, healing and restoration in her work as a nurse.

Although Majara succeeds with his centrering of female protagonists, his portrayal of Liate falls victim to the patriarchal Sesotho notion whereby women are expected to wait in solitude for the husband, regardless of the reasons and/or time duration the husband might be gone for. As a contemporary Sesotho saying goes, and Majara panders to this idea in his book, '*Monna ke mokopu o'a nama, Mosali ke k'habeche o'a ipopa*/A man is a pumpkin crop he grows and stretches, a woman is a cabbage she self-moulds tightly.' This limitation, in understanding both man and woman as equally decisive and independent in their movements marks the novel's final resolution and the ending. The ending is unsatisfactory in relation to the rest of the story which is told in convincing narrative prose and thematic arches, a story whose tellebility is otherwise concrete and believable till the final arch. It compromises Majara's celebration of the female protagonist. Liate, therefore, through that strength and stubbornness becomes the typical loyal Sesotho wife who refuses all suitors while awaiting a husband whose absence and silence appear to have mostly been for adventure. This adventure Liate denies herself, like the culture-hero of the oral story whose needs the story almost always never articulates. Liate serves others to sacrificial extremes. The protagonist, Liate, in the same way that her creator and writer, Majara constantly compares her to the legendary culture-hero Thakane of the Basotho oral stories, who in great bravery travels the land in search of a special coat, shield, shoes and staff covered with leather from the mythic animal, *nanabolele*, is the community-heroine of the modern novel.

Water, ever so present and symbolic in Basotho myths of birth, transition and change, is employed by Majara in similar ways stories such as the one he compares his protagonist do. Majara refers to the *Linanabolele* story's Thakane in his novel as having similar traits to his protagonist, Liate whose name bears the notion of plenty and abundance received from plenty of rains. In the third arch of the novel, Liate's husband who has gone overseas to join WWII disappears and is believed to have drowned in the ship that was bombed by enemy artillery, or possibly been overcome by an avalanche of snow as was reported of another group of the Allied Forces with members of the African Commonwealth troops as told by the novel's narrator. Water, and immersion in it, is also symbolic in this possibility of the death and rebirth of the main character's husband, Sera. An avalanche of snow, downing and water travel and return to his home-country on a ship to Cape Town also work in alignment with and in correspondence with Sesotho symbols of water as signifying birth and rebirth. When Sera re-emerges and appears in the village rain is used as a symbol by Majara's narrator, and further symbolises rebirth. These processes in Majara's novel, therefore, show the cyclical metaphysics and cosmological understanding of the Basotho people in the birth-death-rebirth cycle. The recurrence of water as a symbol of abundance, fecundity and recreation as shown by Majara in his novel also works within the framework of myths of remembrance and return to life or home.

Sotho mythology is contained within particular oral stories, adopted and retold within the new tenets of fictional prose, always "defined-by nothing less than the infinite cosmos within which the origin of the community and its contemporaneous experience of being is firmly embedded" (Soyinka, 1976, p.43). The cyclical process of the metaphysics of the Basotho can also be observed in great recurrence in the interchange between different forms of the people's literature, as seen in S.N. Majara's *Liate Oa Mafika-Lisiu/Liate of Mafika-Lisiu* (1976). The mythology works mostly as a retelling, a revival and a cultural 'remembering' and a constant

linking process, or an attempt thereof to connect to a place of origin, or to speak of rebirth in symbolism that invokes or imitates return to such a place. Sesotho myths "represent a driving force to maintain the existence of the individual and society of the Basotho" (Manyeli. T.L, 1995, p.207). They are a constant recreation of the people's identity and their coming into being, as also exemplified by their use in narrative. This is evident, for example, as mentioned above, in the destination the first Sesotho novelist, Mofolo, sets for his protagonist in his first novel, *Moeti oa Bochabela/Traveller to the East*, as Ntsoanatsatsi the place where Basotho legend say they originate.

Mofolo brings back water as a symbolic sign and site of creation and rebirth in his last novel *Chaka*. Key transformations are always associated with water, Chaka's bathing ritual which has to happen at the river every morning exposes him to his first meeting with the deep-pool-river-monster, an encounter which significantly changes the trajectory of his life as he becomes unbeatable in fights. Even at the very end of his life, which is the end of the novel, Chaka's nightmares reveal how even water which symbolises purification rites has been contaminated by Chaka's insatiable desire for blood-shed, as the well near his village in which he has thrown too many of his people whom he has killed turns into a lake of blood, pure waters contaminated with human life and its substance. This symbol indicates how sacrilege Chaka's obsession with human destruction has been. In this last example of water in Mofolo's work, water has ceased to symbolise the spiritually nurturing aspects it is associated with; plenty, abundance of luck, the birth of children, return to ancestors and binding rituals.

Sotho mythology is also a re-enactment of cyclical processes of life, as seen in the examples above, from a possible reinterpretation of the tale of Monyohe the creature and the girl who refuses suitors and ends up marrying the monstrous creature, Thakane the heroine of the *Linanabola* tale who travels in search of the special animal skin for her brother, and the

Ntsoanatsatsi myth, and the adaptations of these myths and oral stories into novel form. Sotho mythology works through rites of passage such as birth, marriage, death and the afterlife, and also rebirth and they are sometimes accompanied by or expressed through ritual. Myth and ritual expression in Sesotho culture and Sesotho literature, therefore, show the people's connection to the land, be it land left behind centuries ago or the land they inhabit and their immediate surroundings, as "human beings whose occupation and environment are elemental and visceral," (Soyinka, 1976, p.50), whose changing art forms and modes of expressions move with their life circumstances and contemplations in a constant inquiry and vocalization of their struggles on earth. As Soyinka further notes, the "gulf" between all stages of life, the "gulf" of humankind's desperate need for recreation and restoration "must be constantly diminished by sacrifices, the rituals, the ceremonies of appeasement to those cosmic powers which lie guardian to the gulf" (1976, p.144). Artistic expression falls under these acts of appeasement in Soyinka's view, and this thesis' interpretation of African metaphysics in the novels.

To conclude, it can be said that oral stories, poetry, riddles and proverbs are timeless in their telling in that they have been passed on from many generations. It is possible that their phrasing, themes and characters have been re-versioned as one can observe in different versions of the same tale, as seen in the example of Monyohe and the girl who refused many suitors, and the story of Thakane who travels the land in search of the mythic *linanabolele* for their beautiful skin to make desirable paraphernalia; shield, shoes and so on for her brother, above, and their adaptations into novel form. These processes seem to be attempts by a culture through its arts and artists, to understand, appreciate and define its reality, from myth to its dramatization through poetry, ritual, song and the oral tale. These different oral forms are a fusion of this timelessness and in their rendition past, present and future are embodied, encapsulated mainly through the process of 'myth-making.' As demonstrated in this chapter, myths "are a source of

Sesotho culture and religion, they are a source of a peculiar way of thinking and 'contemplating' the world and of combining what meets the eye" (ManyeliT.L, 1995, p.209). This attempt at self-inquiry, communal and societal inquiry, back and forth through time, holds and links African and Sesotho verbal arts together. It is the perpetual inquiry into being, into the cosmos. The Sesotho novel embodies this metaphysical search and timelessness by incorporating different oral forms into the narrative together with rituals, legends and most importantly myth and presents them in a longer sustained narrative. This feat the novelists attempt with "the urge to explore the two extremes of time and so resist a bondage to either of them," (Okpewho, 1983, p.210), is also a skilful play between past and present to achieve the realist promise of the novel.

5 Mofolo's Poetics of Relation: Textual Decolonial routes – from Lesotho into Africa with *Chaka*

Of the three novels by Thomas Mofolo, *Moeti Oa Bochabela*/*Traveller to the East*, *Pitseng* and *Chaka*, *Chaka* is the one that crosses the borders of Lesotho in most significant ways. The novel, although written in Sesotho, uses Zulu language extensively in poetic inserts and phrases, and situates its fictive world in present day Kwazulu-Natal in South Africa. Mofolo's *Chaka* has also been received and reinterpreted through adaptation beyond the borders of Lesotho and its languages. *Chaka*'s influence is not only recognizable in Sesotho texts of writers such as Bennett Makalo Khaketla's *Mosali a Nkhola/A Woman Betrayed Me* (1960) – a novel whose overarching motif of power and power struggle is reminiscent of *Chaka*, as I should show, Mofolo's influence has also continued to show itself in the works of other African writers.

As previously mentioned, in the thesis outline, Léopold Sédar Senghor, Ayi Kwei Armah and Wole Soyinka, among others, have adapted *Chaka* or significant elements of the text. The appeal of Mofolo's novel has been largely due to his extensive use of indigenous literary aesthetics such as oral poetry, myth, metaphor, song, symbolism and African spirituality and metaphysics. These oral literary aesthetics have been reinterpreted by each of the writers, under analysis in this chapter, to meditate on their own historical times using their local cultural myths or African metaphysics, as I should further demonstrate. The writers who adapted Mofolo's *Chaka* read the novel in translation, resulting in translation as creation rather than 'untranslatability', and rewriting, imitation, revisioning and a bringing forward of multilingual receptions of the novel. I examine how *Chaka*'s reception works and how these writers demonstrate resistance and solidarity through their literary texts.

This chapter examines Mofolo's *Chaka*'s influence on Lesotho's Khaketla. It also expands the geographies touched by *Chaka* to analyse the proliferation of Mofolo's text across the African continent. The chapter's objective is to highlight literary solidarity and activism among African writers through the multilingualization of Chaka, culturally, politically, linguistically and intertextually. I therefore use the concept of the 'Poetics of Relation' as guideline to put the different authors' texts in dialogue with Thomas Mofolo's *Chaka* – situating Mofolo as the kernel of my examination as in the previous chapters. Glissant defines Poetics of Relation thus, the "main themes of such a Poetics: the dialectics between the oral and the written, the thought of multilingualism, the balance between the present moment and duration, the questioning of literary genres" (1997, p.35). I examine adaptations of Mofolo's *Chaka* using this key comparative framework. Other critics have also charted similar approaches to decolonisation and their ideas will also be used to shed light on the intertextuality between the chosen texts as have been applied in the previous chapters of this study. As earlier argued, decolonial approaches to literary criticism need to encompass varied approaches because recognition of interconnectedness help us to address all aspects of a whole that need transformation (bell hooks, 2015, p.xii). Cabral reminds us that the African masses have been engaged in decolonisation throughout colonial history, their cultural expressions are a form of resistance (1975, p.59). Fanon's conceptualisation of decolonisation as signified by violence will also be applied to interpret historical phenomena in regard to the anti-colonial and decolonial movements as expressed by literary texts in Lesotho and the larger African continent, as will some Negritudian ideas on the notion of 'return to the source'.

Tuck & Yang have cautioned against an all-encompassing decolonisation approach, arguing that,

> when we write about decolonization, we are not offering it as a metaphor; it is not an approximation of other experiences of oppression. Decolonization is not a swappable term for other things we want to do to improve our societies and schools. Decolonization doesn't have a synonym. (2012, p.3).

However, the theoretical journey of decolonisation, I argue, has largely required combination of multiple efforts. While Tuck & Yang's emphasis cautions against co-option and sanitation of resistances, it is also important to note that colonial oppressions are varied and as such require application of different mechanisms for the betterment of our societies. In regard to Africa, the earliest proponents of decolonisation, such as Fanon, have suggested a multi-focal approach to dismantling human oppression. As Fanon aptly notes, "all forms of exploitation resemble one another… All forms of exploitation are identical because all of them are applied against the same 'object': man" (1970, p.62). Contemporary Africanist critics such as Kehinde Andrews (2018) argue for subversion of Western epistemological tools in our attempts to create new meanings and to reimagine our societies and to seek total liberation. Decolonisation, therefore, I argue, needs to be anchored in Relation, for as Angela Davis notes, "we lift as we rise" (1995, pp.96-303) in our multiplicities and their theorisations.

This chapter is couched within the following key-themes: history, colonialism, anti-colonial moments and movements, and Poetics of Relation as guiding framework. These themes facilitate analysis that encompasses both spatial and temporal considerations of Africa's motion in text, and the significance thereof of Mofolo's *Chaka*'s reimaginations and adaptations across the continent. Although these themes will be addressed and presented chronologically, interchanges and intertextualities between different eras and landscapes will be demonstrated in cyclical movement back and forth – which demonstrate non-linearity. For example, even though Soyinka's adaptation of Mofolo's *Chaka* was published in the 1970s (a period largely

considered postcolonial on the African continent), its central theme is anti-colonial within the context of South Africa (whose independence was only achieved in the 1990s). The chapter's structure will therefore be tabulated in historical periods, while discussion is anchored in notions of: the search for autonomy and self-reclamation and self-rule; liberation; return and belonging; and reinterpretations of 'Africa' which shift Africa's meaning/s and deal with diversity and particularity at the same time.

I will start with an examination of Mofolo's context of the 1920s which will be read against the author's historical narrative period of the early 1800s, the period of King Shaka Zulu's reign. The second section will examine Khaketla's *Mosali a Nkhola/A Woman Betrayed Me*, against Lesotho's 1940s anti-colonial angst, and the internal violence Khaketla's novel charts, in conversation with Mofolo's *Chaka*. The chapter will then move on to examine interchanges between Mofolo's *Chaka* and Senghor's "Shaka" (1958), produced in the 1950s period of the Negritude anti-colonial literary movement and written in French. The English adaptation of Wole Soyinka's, *Ogun Abibimañ* (1976), which addresses the anti-colonial/pre-independence moment of unfreedom in Apartheid South Africa, during the 1970-80s uprisings will also be juxtaposed against Mofolo's original novel. Analysis of Soyinka's adaptation of Mofolo's *Chaka* will engage with notions of 'return' which read against Glissant's notion of "detour" – suggests that 'return' can function best for restoration and self-reclamation if it is applied to the historical moments of resistance. I will, therefore, show moments of decolonisation as possibilities to reimagine roots as not fixed in both location and time but in continuous "entanglement". This examination advances Negritudian approaches of say a writer like Senghor who attempts to find roots that are original through his poetry and drama, as decolonial praxis. Using Glissant's concepts help to understand how the text that was originally situated in South/ern Africa as its geography, allows for circulatory reimaginations and also 'returns'

to the same but changed location, historically and geopolitically, about two centuries later. As such, the text does not 'return' home so to speak, (for home is no longer home as was), but forms the idea of home in sites it occupies across the African continent and reimagines Africa conceptually. This consideration shifts Southern Africa and Africa itself and makes these signifiers fluid and accessible to varied metaphysics and literary expression/s. Africa then becomes pluriversal while still particular to each location. I will conclude by showing how Mofolo's *Chaka* has, therefore, provided possibilities of global networks and a "Poetics of Relation" and contributed to literary activism and solidarity on the African continent. I use this connecting framework which yields varied possibilities of roots, roots that are constantly being formed in a style of a rhizome to use Éduoard Glissant's (1997) concept of a Poetics of Relation at work, and "to see the creative product as a phenomenon that transcends its immediate borders" (Soyinka 2011, p.252).

5.1 Mofolo's *Chaka*

Mofolo's *Chaka* is a historical novel set in the 1800s Southern African Zulu Kingdom. It depicts King Shaka Zulu's reign in which large masses of the groups of people and clans in the Southern African sub-continent were dispersed during Shaka's *Lifaqane Wars* (Wars of Great Upheavals), 1818-1828. These wars largely resulted in current compositions of ethnicities populating Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Eswatini, and different groups in South Africa. Mofolo is said to have conducted extensive research from local Zulu oral storytellers on multiple trips to Kwazulu-Natal (Kunene, 1989). *Chaka* as a literary text demonstrates Mofolo's greatest use of orality and its fusion with the novel, as I further demonstrate below. Mofolo portrays his protagonist Chaka/Shaka, as an anti-hero who gradually moves from the role of community protector and grows into a fearsome strategic military commander. Armah says of Chaka that, "in the transformative process he found happiness in inflicting pain, not in enduring it. The

taste grew into addiction, and he made a lifetime career of the pursuit, perfection and use of violence as ultimate arbiter in human affairs" (2016, p.159). Mofolo's Chaka destroys not only his adversaries but his community and family as well. This is the context the novel yields on its first reading.

Critics have mostly read and analysed *Chaka* as the story of the Zulu people and their king, and about Zulu history and culture (Scheub 1985; Young 1973; Wright 1973), and not closely considered permeations and permutations the novel makes with other cultures and/or languages. This could be partly due to reading the novel in translation which renders the language and hence the experience of the text monolingual. It was Armah (2016), who once he took the trip to Lesotho, in his 'search for Mofolo,' and studied the landscape and topography of Lesotho began to suspect and suggest that the way in which people in Lesotho conceive of distance has much to do with confinement due to the mountainous landscape which makes pointing to far away distances impossible. As such, Armah has understood Chaka's traditional healer, Isanusi, on his first meeting with Chaka to be communicating the length and distance between his land and Chaka's land, by pointing upwards to imply that where he comes from is as far away as the skies. As to whether Armah's analysis holds water or not is not as crucial as its reading of landscape understood from its inhabitants and how language and/or description of certain phenomena in Mofolo's *Chaka* shifts the roots of the writer's experience to significantly different geographies. The author and his text therefore inhabit more than one place at the same time, making landscapes conjoin and identities relate. As Glissant notes, in Poetics of Relation, "we are not prompted solely by the defining of our identities but by their relation to everything possible as well – the mutual mutations generated by this interplay of relations" (Glissant 1997, p.89). This could also be said of texts such as Mofolo's *Chaka* which encompass both individual and pluriversal African identities. I demonstrate below, how a

closer reading of the writer's own context and environment, against the novel, yields possible intertextualities and multilingualism between not only orature and the novel but of two possible significant geographies in the narrative.

A closer analysis of *Chaka* demonstrates an interaction of Zulu and Sotho cultures, as I will show. Mofolo's depiction and rendition of Zulu practices, historical events and spirituality puts Zulu and his own Sotho culture in conversation with each other, as demonstrated with the example of cultural practices and traditional religious beliefs discussed in the previous chapter, on metaphysics and spirituality. The 1920s historico-political context of Lesotho also makes slippages into the Zulu 1800s context that Mofolo narrates. For example, as Chaka's elder brother (that is to say, brother from a wife senior to Chaka's mother and not by birth), Mfokozana, tries to win over the hearts of the people as competition for the throne and in contestation to Chaka, Mfokozana starts to, among other things, reduce and ease community labour on the royal fields (Mofolo, 1977, p.69). This labour example is similar to one of the key issues that Mofolo in Lesotho in the 1920s period together with other political activists were chiding the then ruling Lesotho government for. The political activists, among whom Mofolo "was the most political of the writers in the 1920s" (Machobane 1990, p.126), were disenchanted with the Basotho king and the local chiefs for labour exploitation in *matsema*, the practice of making large numbers of commoners cultivate the royal fields for free while their own fields were left unattended for long periods. This example is significant in understanding not only the measures that Chaka's opponent, Mfokozana, was willing to take to soften the hearts of the people in his favour and therefore defeat Chaka, as portrayed in Mofolo's novel, but also in understanding what value the writer, Mofolo, places on labour justice among other concerns, in both his activism and creative practice. The issue of land and its ownership and cultivation had been pressing in Lesotho from 1919 onwards. The activists were fighting (in

newspaper articles) against the then Lesotho reigning monarch, King Griffith Lerotholi, who had failed to petition King George of England to return Basotho's land 'stolen' or 'conquered' by the Dutch Afrikaners in the neighbouring Orange Free State in South Africa, which was at the time under British rule.

Land and labour, therefore, are somewhat central to the writer's activism and his environment, and they make an appearance in the text in the form of political action. To take Quayson's calibrations approach, which suggests that "literature be seen as variegated series of thresholds and levels. All of which determine the production of the social as a *dimension within the interaction of the constitutive thresholds of literary structure*" (Quayson 2003, p.xvi, italics in original), Mofolo's context and creative practice are in conversation with the social. "In *Shaka*, Mofolo presents the epic as if it were, in part, a rather exaggerated vehicle of social and political legitimation" (Armah, 2016, p.157). The writer's social context then extends to other social dynamics and creates a "totality of all possible particulars" (Glissant 1997, p.32) as his ideas and deepest concerns traverse the Southern African landscape through his text.

Critics such as Ọlakunle George (2003) have cautioned against a "reflectionist" reading of African literature. George argues that literary acts which are essentially "acts of language are no more than acts of language, that literary structures cannot be conflated with social structures" (2003, p.186). However, intertextuality requires at some level an examination of the writers' works alongside social dynamics. While fiction cannot be expected to represent sociohistorical phenomena accurately, and consideration of literature as an aesthetic act of language on its own is important, the two spheres are not mutually exclusive, as I will further demonstrate. I argue that, read against Lesotho's history and political climate of the time, Mofolo's *Chaka* presents mechanisms of power and its oppression which also correspond with

the novelist's environment. The use of the two languages, Sesotho and Zulu in the novel, also shows interchange between two cultures.

The economical manner in which Mofolo translates some of the Zulu phrases while leaving the major praise poems for King Shaka untranslated, which I will analyse against Soyinka's own Shaka praise poem in the fourth subsection of this chapter, also provides possibility that the 1920s Sesotho reader would have possibly understood the Zulu language. As this period was the beginning of the colonial era, and when nation-states were not as yet concretely bounded and bordered, an "ubuntu translanguaging" argument for African multilingualisms would suffice in that, pre-colonial Southern African peoples of different ethnicities were able to converse with one another easily and that, "no one language is complete without the other" (Makalela, L. and Mkhize, D. 2016, p.iii). During this period, although indigenous Africans knew where their land ended and where their neighbours' lands began, (Al Badwawi, 2021), these territories were not demarcated, and cultures flowed into one another fluidly. The cultural exchange that Mofolo demonstrates in his use of the two languages further indicates a Poetics of Relation at play, for "relation … is spoken multilingually" Glissant (1997, p.19). Mofolo's exercise and play with the two cultures and their languages show how a Poetics of Relation is expressed through, not solid concrete particulars but in malleability and expansions and extensions of the literary cultural expression, which present cultures not as solid and closed but as open and interactive, sharing meanings and signifiers and in constant revision of these markers. As Glissant further notes, "the cultures of the world have always maintained relations between themselves that were close or active to varying degrees" (1997, p.19). The novel is couched within multilingual expression and also creates possibilities for reception that is not anchored in notions of nation and the incumbent monolingualism. *Chaka*, therefore, provides cultural and linguistic fluidity between Sesotho and Zulu. African writers, including Lesotho's

Bennett Makalo Khaketla, have reinterpreted Mofolo's *Chaka* for their different historical moments.

5.2 Mofolo's *Chaka* and Khaketla's *Mosali a Nkhola/A Woman Betrayed Me* [Lesotho's 1940s]

Khaketla's novel, *Mosali a Nkhola/A Woman Betrayed Me* 1960), was published three decades after Mofolo's *Chaka*. Within a decade of *Mosali a Nkhola/A Woman Betrayed Me* (1960)'s publication, Lesotho gained independence from British rule. Therefore, although the novel's fictive events portray 1940s Lesotho, the mood of the novel demonstrates the hope and fervent signalling possibilities of independence. For example, the theme of self-rule is repeated throughout the novel. This is not to suggest, however, that in the 1940s Basotho did not show signs of resistance to colonial rule. On the contrary, the events the novel depicts are reminiscent of some of the most significant historical occurrences in Lesotho's colonial history. The 1940s decade is remembered for the atrocious practice of strengthening one's power through ritual murders, which were at a record high in Lesotho then; "between 1938 and 1949, the period of great Reforms and the establishment of the National Treasury, the number was 81" (Machobane, 1990, p.229). Therefore, while the 1960s period of Khaketla's writing showed enthusiasm and hope for independence and self-rule, the 1940s demonstrated despair and tendencies to resort to extreme measures of violence among the locals. As Fanon argues, "the colonized subject will first train this aggressiveness sedimented in his muscles against his own people. This is the period when black turns on black" (1963, p.15). Freire (1970) also observes that, caught up in the circle of oppression the oppressed sees their self-actualisation in the image of the oppressor. Reveberations of oppression can arguably therefore be experienced by the oppressed through participation as well. While caution is required, lest colonialism is conflated with all actions by locals, which might deny them any agency whatsoever, it is also important

to assess a people's history or history-making against domination as factor. Lesotho's 1940s unrest is dramatized by Khaketla in his play *Bulane* (1958) and his novel *Mosali a Nkhola/A Woman Betrayed Me* (1960) more than by any other writer in Lesotho.

Khaketla's *Mosali a Nkhola/A Woman Betrayed Me* depicts a Lesotho chieftaincy in a remote district, Qacha's Nek, whereby a young regional prince, Mosito, succeeds his father after the father's sudden illness and death. Chieftaincy, or the monarch and succession and ruling destiny, are the focus of Khaketla's novel in a manner that echoes Mofolo's *Chaka*. The young chief, Mosito, in Khaketla's novel, unlike his father and most locals, is an educated man. The novel therefore takes up the issue of modernity and pits it against traditional life. One of the key issues the villagers in Khaketla's fictive village constantly discuss is WWII and the lives of the Basotho who enlisted on the side of Britain. The loss of these lives is a grave concern for the characters of *Mosali a Nkhola/A Woman Betrayed Me*, as the compensation of two pounds per month to the widows of the war is seen as inadequate. Besides this immediate concern, the discussion at the chief's court takes a tone of sport matches as the men wonder and debate whether Germany would win or lose the war in a somewhat jovial manner. The war is therefore presented as a far-away event while its effects on the locals are lamented at the same time. The war updates are provided by the educated chief's right-hand men, Pokane and Khosi, who read the newspaper for the other village men.

In the first section of the novel, it seems that there is a semblance of coherence between education/modernity and traditional life, particularly the chieftaincy and public regulation. At the level of dialogue and characters' interaction, education and ability to read are presented like a different language which can be translated to the other locals. Although there are subtle differentiators of identities, observable for example in the choice of wives from respectable families, who are also literate, for the educated men, these subtleties do not alienate the

characters from one another nor disturb the larger community interdependencies. Progress is, therefore, seen as somewhat complementary to traditional life. However, a key event introduced by the 1940s reigning Queen ‘Mantšebo Seeiso, with the help of the British high commissioner, shakes this supposed harmony in Khaketla’s fictive village.

In the second narrative arch of the novel, a decree is issued which would introduce the formation of the Lesotho National Treasury which would then allot payment to regional chiefs from the treasury, as opposed to the chiefs themselves levying taxes and fines. The chiefs’ salaries are to be decided on their region’s populations and the amount of tax their populations equate. This decision affects Khaketla’s fictive village chief, Mosito, as he falls under chiefs whose tax-payers are under 800 – which is the minimum population number for adequate salary for the chief. In this second arch of the novel, the problems ensue: the village traditionalists want the chief to travel to the royal palace at Matsieng in the capital city, Maseru, to appeal to Queen ‘Mantšebo. The educated advisors of the local chief see the treasury implementation as progressive, and argue that their chief, Mosito, could sustain himself through the selling of wool from his big flock of sheep and gradually rise up to the level of properly salaried regional chiefs through his great deeds. From this section onwards, Khaketla’s novel begins to borrow from Mofolo’s *Chaka* quite significantly, in plot, dramatization, style and motifs and intertextual dialoguing.

Khaketla’s *Mosali a Nkhola/A Woman Betrayed Me* uses the same trinity structure that Mofolo uses in situating his main character within a trio as aiders and enablers of the narrative, especially with the use of Isanusi (the traditional healer in *Chaka* and his two henchmen, Ndlebe and Malunga). Khaketla’s *Mosali a Nkhola/A Woman Betrayed Me* begins with young Mosito already grouped with his two friends, and advances to later create another trio whose actions echo the actions of Mofolo’s instrumental trio in *Chaka*. These two trios are in

opposition to each other. The first trio in Khaketla's *Mosali a Nkhola/A Woman Betrayed Me*, Mosito, the chief, Khosi and Pokane – his friends, is a force of ethics, morality and goodwill. Their advice to each other, particularly to Mosito, is always reflective on what moral good would result in any decision the chief takes for the public and his community. When Khaketla advances the tension in the second arch, whereby the traditionalists begin to argue against the introduction of the national treasury, the novel brings forth another trio, which is both traditional and 'immoral/unethical' in their meddling in the chief's conduct of public affairs. These are Maime, Khati and Sebotsa, the old men who were Mosito's father's advisors during his life. The physical features and characters of the traditionalist trio are described as unattractive. In this section, the narrator advances the plot by associating tradition with unattractiveness, both physically and in personality, and progress and education with goodness and attractiveness. While Mofolo, in *Chaka*, describes the physical features of the most influential characters in the narrative, Isanusi's henchmen, as grotesque, he however describes Chaka himself as a handsome man. His traditional healer, Isanusi, is also described as a likeable man, except for his eyes which change from peaceful to devious in an instant. The trope, however, of associating physical features with personality is instrumental in both writers' narrative strategies and to advance plot.

Very early on in Mosito's confusion about whether to listen to the traditionalists or his educated friends, the main character starts making reference to Mofolo's novel's plot driving devices, such as the traditional healer of *Chaka*, Isanusi, whose reference by Khaketla's narrator is mentioned earlier in this thesis' description of primary texts, in chapter two. Khaketla's protagonist, Mosito's recalling, and wish to know a man like Mofolo's Isanusi, therefore, immediately puts the two novels in dialogue. Much further in *Mosali a Nkhola/A Woman Betrayed Me,* when Khaketla's narrator informs us that Mosito had read broadly and he had

also read *Chaka*, and Mosito himself proceeds to say in an internal monologue, "*Ke joalo ka Chaka, … Ke tsoetsoe ke le Morena, empa ka baka la batho, kobo eo ea borena ke lokela ho e hlobola*," / "I am like Chaka, … I was born a Chief, but because of some people, this royal robe I have to take off," (Khaketla, 1960, p.111, my translation), this comes not as a surprising revelation, for we have already seen adequate references to *Chaka*, such as the one recalling by name and role one of the central characters of Mofolo's *Chaka*. This Isanusi character is then duplicated in Khaketla's *Mosali a Nkhola/A Woman Betrayed Me* by the introduction of the character of Selone, a traditional healer and traveller who arrives in Chief Mosito's village unexpectedly. What makes the traditional healer's arrival mundane is the knowledge by the reader that Mosito is a type of educated man who does not believe in traditional religion, and as such the traditional healer holds no significance for him, at least at the time of his arrival.

By the time Selone arrives in the village, the debate is already heated at the chief's court and the visitor is roped into this debate through dialogue between the men as they ask him if he has heard of this treasury thing brewing in the capital and how people in his own village feel about it. A wisened traditional healer that he is, Selone can already sense the pressure the traditionalists are putting their chief under, and he therefore boastfully informs the men that not only are his fellow villagers, where he comes from, outraged by the introduction and possible implementation of the national treasury, but his village chief, who as he says is "not a boy" (Khaketla, 1960, p.47), is already on his way to the royal palace in Matsieng to appeal against the treasury and its aims. Like Mosito, Selone's own village chief has been excluded in the list of highly salaried chiefs as the character informs the listening men. Selone, as a lone traveller, is the responsibility of the chief, Mosito, who then houses him until such a time when he would resume his travels out of the village. But Selone stays a while.

What then follows this tripartite structuring is the use of Sesotho traditional healing. While Mofolo's narration and narrator believes and makes the reader believe in the power of traditional medicine in *Chaka* and only uses narratorial side-commentary to reflect on the effects of traditional medicine when used for unbridled evil, Khaketla constantly contests the practice, through Christianity and/or education as equivalents of reason and morality, through his very character design. Morality is important here since Khaketla creates the binary between morality and traditional practices in his narrative. As George argues, "as subject-positions, the tribalism and the Christianity can effectively anchor identities that exert their hold, not at the cerebral level, but in the visceral core of the self" (2003, p.183). Khaketla's juxtaposition is sharply marked by the polarisation of differences even at the level of physical description of the bad characters, compounded by their lack of ethics and facilitated by the introduction and arrival of a traditional healer in the village immediately after the disturbing announcement of the treasury, so that sensibility to or recognition of a code of ethics or loss of it is felt deeply and help separate the characters' identities and roles, into good people and bad people, beautiful people and ugly people. Traditional practices are invoked in the narrative for non-reason, lack of progressive thinking and excesses associated with heinous acts, as I should further demonstrate. Khaketla also gradually situates women in tradition and vice versa, and subsumes tradition with women's 'characteristics' – including man's downfall, as is euphemised in the novel's title *Mosali a Nkhola/A Woman Betrayed Me*. The implied reader is supposedly of the same view as the narrator in 'his' regard for women.

Khaketla's women characters differ from Mofolo's women characters. While Mofolo's main women characters in *Chaka* begin as life givers, and continue as nurturers and sustainers of life, whose character growth ends with victimization and death when they are understood to deviate and/or obstruct man's self-realisation, as seen in the killing of Noliwa, Chaka's wife

and Nandi, Chaka's mother, by Chaka himself, Khaketla's *Mosali a Nkhola/A Woman Betrayed Me*, on the other hand, presents two important women characters whose main role is to control men. These characters are Queen 'Mantšebo Seeiso, who in real life ruled as regent for her stepson Moshoeshoe II from 1941 to 1960 in Lesotho, and the protagonist, Chief Mosito's wife 'Mathabo. Queen 'Mantšebo is one of the few women rulers in Southern Africa, and the only woman who has ever ruled Lesotho. Her reign is mostly memorialised and characterised by fierceness.

Khaketla's text does not describe Queen 'Mantšebo as a character within the narrative per se, it only alludes to her and most significantly to her power through the issuing of decrees such as the National Treasury formation. Therefore, she stands for the law of the land, or representation of British law, as the other characters constantly complain about British domination and rule. As such, while real power and its tangible mechanisms of control are understood to be within the hands of the British commissioners, the judge and other administrators, Queen 'Mantšebo is represented as the final maker of the laws, an unseen character whose majesty is only felt and staged on the text. However, the characters do acknowledge that she's second to the British monarch/s, and/or that she is in alliance with the Brits, which makes her power the more repulsive to the locals.

The protagonist, Mosito,'s wife, 'Mathabo, on the other hand is central to the narrative and its plot and drama. While she is first introduced and presented as an outstanding girl in mannerism, beauty and chastity at the beginning of the novel, her character gradually reveals traits that are manipulative, coercive, self-interested, calculating with emotional blackmailing and outright cruel as a wife. Mosito's wife is the person who the three traditionalists slowly befriend in their bid to encourage the chief to contest the treasury. They ask 'Mathabo to 'sweet-talk' the chief and show him how his decisions will not only affect his own safety and comfort, but also that

of ’Mathabo and their son, Thabo, if the chief insists on his refusal to contest Queen ‘Mantšebo’s treasury decision to exclude him. It is from the moment in the novel that ’Mathabo speaks to Mosito at night that he begins to believe he has every right to travel to the Matsieng royal palace and appeal Queen ‘Mantšebo’s treasury measures.

Accompanied by one of his right-hand men, Khosi (who is against the journey and the appeal to begin with), Mosito embarks on this journey after which he returns to his village in Qacha’s Nek without success as the reigning queen refuses his appeal. Upon his return, the traditionalists convince the wife to approach the chief again, this time with the suggestion for him to strengthen his powers with traditional medicines, a practice that Mosito abhors, owing to his Christianisation and education. Upon his refusal, the wife constantly coerces the husband to use traditional medicine for power.

The novel then continues to present Mosito as gradually not only becoming a new believer in traditional medicine but turning into a total devotee from his wife’s persuasion. The progression of Khaketla’s protagonist into traditional beliefs ingratiates Mosito to his wife, and the narrator informs us that nothing pleases a wife more than total agreement and obeisance from the husband, as seen in how ’Mathabo welcomes her husband’s agreement to use traditional medicine as a sign of warmth towards her. As the narrator says, “*A utloa hantle hore joale khocheletsanenyana eane ea mofuthu, e pelong ea mohats’a hae, empa eoo e leng khale a haneloa ho lula ho eona… kajeno o e buletsoe, e tla bae a hae ho isa khale*” / “She felt very strongly that that little corner of warmth in her spouse’s heart, which had been refused her for a long time… today it is opened for her, and is would be hers forever” (1960, p.93, my translation).

Mosali a Nkhola/A Woman Betrayed Me then proceeds to Mosito gradually isolating his educated advisors and friends, Pokane and Khosi, and embracing his wife and the traditionalists. Eventually, the traditional healer, Selone, divines that the utmost strengthening portion that Mosito needs would need to come from a fresh human liver. In this instance, although Mosito refuses and finds the suggestion abhorrent and cruel, his wife again insists that this is the only way to regain his power. When the husband refuses, 'Mathabo threatens to take her own life, and then takes the husband's gun and fires at herself but fails to kill herself as the gun's dummy bullet fires in the wrong direction. Mosito is shaken by this attempt and agrees to consult the traditional healer and new village arrival, Selone, who has at this stage made a name for himself amongst the traditionalists and other villagers with a few divining miracles. These divinations, the narrator sets in such a way that the reader together with the narrator can see beyond their revelations. For example, a few days before Mosito's wife makes an attempt on her life, a mamba snake is found curled on Mosito and 'Mathabo's bedroom window. Mosito beats the snake with a stick but realises that it had already been dead for quite some time. The snake's belly looks quite bloated. For some reason, Mosito decides to keep the dead snake locked in a tin-can and does not throw it away. The foregrounding passages to the discovery of this dead snake show Selone, the medicine man, perturbed and plotting to regain respect from the traditionalists after Mosito had quelled his attempts of divining for him.

When Mosito then consults Selone under pressure from his wife, the medicine man divines a mamba snake within the vicinity of Mosito's sleeping area and asks him to bring it to him. Selone then dissects the snake and finds the 'royal stone', which is traditionally a stone or medicined river pebble that kings and chiefs apparently pass on to their sons. Selone convinces Mosito that his late father had owned this river pebble and that it was stolen after his death by people who did not want it to be passed on to Mosito and who wanted to destroy Mosito's

power, hence powerful people like Queen ‘Mantšebo and the commissioners do not respect him. This is the first time Mosito believes in traditional medicine and the power of divination. Since the reader, guided by the narrator’s hints, is aware of the possibility of the traditional healer planting this evidence to be discovered by Mosito and to be deciphered by Selone himself, and since Mosito’s education has up to this point been equated with absolute rationality, the tellability of this section does not work strongly. Nonetheless, the shift in the plot hinges on this divination as Mosito himself is now convinced that Selone’s divinations are precise. Once again, Khaketla dialogues with Mofolo in structure and plot as we see Mosito eventually visiting his late father’s grave in the middle of the night, the event in which his father reveals himself to Mosito through Selone in a somewhat similar manner that Mofolo’s Chaka hears his own father speak through his traditional healer, Isanusi, from the grave on a similar night visit. After hearing that his father wants him to be a great ruler, Khaketla’s Mosito is then totally converted into Selone’s religion. The situating of the plot’s dramatic change in the ancestral realm and within African spirituality is significant in both Mofolo’s and Khaketla’s novels.

When Mosito has finally agreed to the ritual murder of a young man in his village, the wife applauds him thus, “*U buile joaloka monna oa ‘nete, ea ithatang, ea boulelang bophelo ba hae le ba bana ba hae… Joale ke ea kholoa hore u fela u nthata*.” / “You spoke like a real man, one who loves himself, one who guards jealously his life and of his children… Now I believe that you truly love me” (1960, p.111, my translation). This chilling congratulatory dialogue with Mosito for agreeing to kill another human being for power presents the protagonist’s wife as equivalent of utmost cruelty and callousness. A young man, Tlelima, is then chosen by the traditional healer and he has to be kidnapped during Christmas festivities for the murder, which

eventually leads to the arrest and the capital punishment of Chief Mosito. Khaketla's women are shown as wielding maniacal control over men.

The representation of the two women in Khaketla's novel, while it gives women power, only differs from Mofolo's in its extreme binary. In Khaketla's novel, woman is presented as mostly responsible for man's undoing, with "attributes which make her a threat to the destiny" of man (George 2017, p.122), and the archetypal Adam's Eve who betrays man for his downfall. Khaketla presents his women characters as hysterical, irrational, self-absorbed and devious, stereotypes often accorded to uncontrolled and/or uncontrollable women. In Khaketla's *Mosali a Nkhola/A Woman Betrayed Me*, the woman's existence and acts result in unbridled evil or the suffering of man. In Mofolo's *Chaka*, on the other hand, the women are potential obstruction which have to be eliminated. The two novels, even in their polar extreme representation of women characters, end with the same analysis, if a woman does not nurture she can only deter man from his path or lead him astray. Both *Chaka* and *Mosali a Nkhola/A Woman Betrayed Me* present woman as existing only in relation to man and not as a character with her own needs and narrative journey.

Khaketla's novel bases itself on several historical cases in Lesotho where chiefs were 'obsessed' and/or preoccupied with strengthening themselves and their aura with medicinal potions mixed with symbolic human parts such as livers and hearts as these were understood to symbolise strength and bravery. This resulted in 81 ritual murders within a decade, as mentioned above. Women who appear in these historical local memories, are presented as power-wielding forces that make men partake in abominable acts. One historical example which corresponds very closely with Khaketla's chief Mosito in *Mosali a Nkhola/A Woman Betrayed Me*, is that of Lesotho's Prince Bereng Griffith Lerotholi, who was in contestation for the crown in Lesotho in 1938-39 after the death of King Griffith Lerotholi.

Prince Bereng's brother, Prince Seeiso Griffith Lerotholi was chosen with the help of the British high commissioner as heir and king in succession to his father in 1938. King Seeiso Griffith was the husband of Queen 'Mantšebo Seeiso, mentioned above. The sons of Griffith had been in such fierce competition that within a year and a half of Seeiso's reign (June 1939 – December 1940) he died on Christmas Day, presumably from poisoning. The rumour among old people at the Old Makeneng Royal Palace is that his brother, Bereng, had encouraged one of Seeiso's wives, Agatha, to poison Seeiso on his Christmas eve visit, as documented in the film *Ho Llela Borena*/*A yearning to Reign*, by Ret'sepile Makamane (2016) and mentioned by Machobane (1986). Agatha had been the two brothers' father's, Griffith's, favourite wife and as it was then customary practice in Sesotho culture, that sons of kings could 'inherit' their father's youngest wives, in a practice called *ho kenela*/ 'to enter for'. Therefore, Agatha was Seeiso's lover and recognised as one of his wives. One royal rumour tells of how the brother, Bereng had enticed Agatha with the possibility of being his 'senior' wife, and therefore the main queen if Bereng became king. Other people argue that it was Agatha herself who enticed Bereng to fight for the crown and offered to poison Seeiso in return for a place in Bereng's possible kingdom, because Seeiso had neglected her and not made her one of his senior wives. Upon the death of Seeiso, however, Seeiso's senior wife, Queen 'Mantšebo Seeiso refused to give the crown to Bereng. She decided to be regent for Seeiso's eldest infant son until such time that he would be old enough to take his father's position as Lesotho's king. Therefore, both Bereng and Agatha's ploy failed. Apparently, Bereng decided to participate in ritual murders at this point, with the belief that he would be much more powerful than Queen 'Mantšebo and take over the crown. Bereng was eventually tried and punished with capital punishment in 1949.

Khaketla's Mosito, in *Mosali a Nkhola/A Woman Betrayed Me* represents, to a large extent, Basotho chiefs who were prosecuted for ritual murders in the late 1940s. The theme of the battle for recognition of a chief echoes both Lesotho's 1940s history and Mofolo's *Chaka* in its narrative on succession and desperate power hunger. Khaketla's representation of his women characters, with Queen 'Mantšebo characterised according to local 'memory' as fiercely wielding power and the protagonist's, Mosito's, wife possibly representing Agatha, Griffith's youngest wife who poisoned her lover/husband Seeiso, Griffith's son, recalls Lesotho's history and also somewhat presents echos of Mofolo's significant women characters and how they had to be killed before leading the main character away from his destiny to rule. Khaketla's novel seems to suggest that left unchecked women will bring disaster to man and by extension nation-building.

My discussion of women's characters as represented by Khaketla is not to suggest that women are incapable of cruelty. However, it is significant to recognise when women are represented as sole influence and/or bearers of atrocities and men as innocent participants in the narrative, only led by women to their demise. The singular representation of women also refuses the characters opportunity to act as fully rounded human beings with other attributes and different motivations or characters that evolve for their own sake or who shape history on their own and not as appendages to men. Khaketla's novel and oral history, for example, do not memorialise Queen 'Mantšebo's choice to rule Lesotho as a choice that shows a woman's autonomy and strength, but only as a ruthless leader. Historically speaking, ritual murders did not rise with the reign of any king of Lesotho during colonialism. It could therefore be argued that Lesotho regional chiefs' violence towards their own people were a response to the reforms that Queen 'Mantšebo introduced, but also perhaps most significantly that these radical reforms were

brought in by a woman leader, and male leaders felt emasculated which made them wish to usurp her power by all means.

Khaketla uses his historical moment to shed light on Mofolo's novel and its motif, and also borrows Mofolo's devices to develop the plot. In Lesotho's 1940s history, Mofolo's fiction can be said to have foretold and/or imitated future reality. Khaketla's reference to Mofolo is not only a dialogue with his predecessor who had passed on the baton to other Basotho writers, but also with *Chaka* as a novel which mirrored violent events which would also engulf Lesotho in three decades from Mofolo's publication. Mofolo's protagonist, Chaka, presents insatiable hunger for power in a similar manner that some Basotho chiefs showed desperation for power. Reading Mofolo's *Chaka* alongside Khaketla's *Mosali a Nkhola/A Woman Betrayed Me* shows closer similarities with Lesotho's 1940s history and the Zulu 1800s history. Both writers engage with violent historical events that have shaped their locations, Mofolo with King Shaka's reign and the larger Southern Africa, and Khaketla with Queen 'Mantšebo's reign and the horrific ritual murders accompanying this period in Lesotho. Both novels are texts rooted in their historical contexts in conversation with each other on power, violence, and the formation of kingdoms/nations. They also demonstrate intertextuality between the use of Sesotho traditional beliefs and the advent of Christianity. While Mofolo's novel focuses on Southern Africa and present intertextuality and multilingualism between Sesotho and Zulu and orature and the novel, Khaketla links a Lesotho village with events as far abroad as the event of WWII. Khaketla also articulates the multilingualism of his moment and his local through interaction between tradition, education, reading and the importance of text as vocal and endowed with power, as seen in the decrees that change the lives of the locals. Colonialism and its lived experience are also recurrent discursive trope/s in Khaketla's novel.

Khaketla's *Mosali a Nkhola/A Woman Betrayed Me*'s publication in the 1960s is significant at the very dawn of independence to connect with key events during colonial rule. As Fanon further notes, "The colonized are caught in the tightly knit web of colonialism… The muscular tension of the colonized periodically erupts into bloody fighting between tribes, clans, and individuals" (1961, p.17). Liberation, therefore, can be understood from Khaketla's narrative as not only liberation from an external colonial force, but liberation from the self as well, for in the dark hour of oppression, his own people have inflicted unimaginable atrocities upon one another. Therefore, the novel hails the dawn of independence to signify possibilities of total liberation. Other African writers have carried forward this textual solidarity transnationally, with Mofolo's *Chaka*, in their reimaginations of an African identity and resistance, as I demonstrate below, for "rejection of a transnational and transcultural identity frustrates the hopes of the open-ended dialogue of cultures" (Chaka, 2016, p.69).

5.3 Mofolo's *Chaka* and Léopold Sédar Senghor's "Shaka" [Negritude Cultural Movement: 1950s-1960s]

Mofolo's *Chaka* was first translated into English in 1931, and into French in 1940. The French translation made it possible for French-speaking writers such as Léopold Sédar Senghor to access the novel. It was about two decades after *Chaka*'s 1940 translation that Senghor penned his response and tribute to Mofolo, in his own "Shaka" (1958). Senghor's "Shaka", which I read from its English translation for this chapter, has therefore already travelled through four languages, Sesotho as main language of the original, Zulu as interspersed throughout the original text, French and then English. Some of the differences in the text, as will be demonstrated below, are possibly due to this journey of language and transmission. As Glissant notes on his comparison of a Poetics of Relation to the Tower of Babel, "it is possible to build

the Tower – *in every language*" (1997, p.109). Language in its transitions has, therefore, yielded possibilities of a somewhat new Chaka in reception and interpretation. *Chaka* then creates "polyvalent oscillation between multiple markers of identity and subject position: ethnicity, nationality, and, for want of a better term, 'Africanness'" (George, 2017, p.172).

Senghor's "Shaka" casts Shaka as a hero who confronts imperialism, as shown in its opening lines which are spoken by a "White Voice". As one of the main founders of the Negritude cultural movement, Senghor must have found Mofolo's *Chaka* in correspondence with Negritude's anti-colonial use of indigenous African literatures and orality's techniques and devices. Mofolo's *Chaka*'s extensive use of African metaphysics, Southern African mythology and praise poetry whose panegyric symbolism and imagery recalls the African savanna and the strength and majesty of fierce animals such as lions, leopards and elephants in Mofolo's poetic metaphors of Chaka, must have resonated and appealed to Senghor and the Negritudians greatly. Negritude's aims were to find and use literary styles within African orature and metaphysical expression/s to connect African peoples and their cultures to sustain continuities in these cultures that have been partly subjected to "cultural mummification," to use Fanon's term, by colonial disruption and its ravages. As Simon Gikandi notes,

> In the tradition of Negritude, the anti-colonial writer concerns himself with his character's inner state of being and existence, he is armed with *the totality of the black race* and its uniqueness. This kind of writer is inevitably obsessed with the identity of the black man within a colonial situation whose mechanisms present themselves as emblems of white supremacy. (1988, p.42. my italics).

Resistance to colonialism is Negritude's main focus. Affirmation of the Black identity is central to Negritudian writing. Negritude in its very beginnings, sought to legitimise African literary

expressions as valid forms of literature by Africans, which had been and could continue to be built on. Negritude writers' literary exercise merged, sometimes too directly, print and oral forms. Hence Julien says, "Senghor thus aims – with what might be called 'une volonté de transparence ['willed transparence'] – to situate his poetic practice vis-à-vis oral traditions and to guide the reception of his poems" (1992, p.5). Senghor also makes great use of oral poetry's imagery and symbolism in his adaptation of Mofolo's *Chaka*. The response to new forms of literature – such as print – was also refusal by African adherents of Negritude to adhere to the logic that before the arrival of Europeans on the African continent Africans did not possess artistic expression. Negritude literature was in its very conception resistance literature. "The event of Negritude was at once cultural and political" (George, 2017, p.33).

Senghor's interpretation of Mofolo's *Chaka* recognises and pulls specific indigenous elements from the original text and treats them to the extremes. For example, while Mofolo uses the ancestral realm as a "soul place" of transformation, Armah (2016), and in specificity to plot and change in the characters themselves, Senghor situates his entire dramatic poem, "Shaka", in the afterlife. The main character, Shaka himself, speaks from the ancestral realm. In Mofolo's original text, the only character who speaks from the afterlife is Chaka's father Senzangakhona. He speaks very briefly to Chaka through the medium of Isanusi, the traditional healer, as mentioned above, for Mofolo intends to make this scene particularly impactful by shrouding it in mystery and also to show the power of Zulu traditional medicine, and its power to bridge the world of the living and the ancestral realm. Senghor's dramatic poem is a dedication "to the Bantu Martyrs of South Africa" (Senghor, 1991, p.90) as mentioned in the poem's beginning. The choice to situate it within the afterlife is therefore understandable in consideration to the text's dedication to the martyrs.

If ancestral belief and its sacred nature and the potency of rituals associated with it are significant in African spirituality, Senghor makes use of these to heighten tension in his piece. Senghor's Shaka, therefore, acts like an ancestor, who can also be said to represent the gods in ritual drama and its mythology. In this type of drama, as Soyinka notes of the protagonist in the "gulf" of the ancestral realm, then "steps forward the eternal actor of the tragic rites, first as the unresting mouthpiece of the god, uttering visions symbolic of the transitional gulf, interpreting the dreadful power within whose essence he is immersed as agent of the choric will" (1976, p.143). For Shaka to represent the will of Africa for liberation in totality, Senghor employs African metaphysics and spirituality as his sole landscape of the drama. This totality can present problems of passivity on the part of Africa as will be demonstrated in the concluding analysis of this section.

Senghor's "Shaka" is a dramatic poem in two songs. The first song opens with funeral drumbeats, as the only stage direction, and a voice the text names the "White Voice", a significant character change on two fronts considering that Mofolo's original does not have European characters. The introduction of a white character or voice is first important as continuity to the original text's suggestive ending. Mofolo's Chaka's final words signal the approaching storm of colonial rupture in Southern Africa. As Chaka's body is riddled with spears from his assassins, his brothers, Dingaan and Mhlangana and the army general, Mbopha, Chaka turns to them with a peaceful facial expression and says, "*Le mpolaea ka tšepo ea hore le tla ba marena ha ke se ke shoele; athe le lahlehile, ha ho joalo, hobane umlungu oa tla, 'me ke eena ea tla le busa, lōna le tla ba bahlanka ba hae*" / "You kill me with the hope that you will be kings when I am dead; but you're lost, it is not to be so, because the white man is coming, and it is him who is going to rule you, you are going to be his servants" (1977, p.166, my translation). The opening song of Senghor's poem presents Mofolo's protagonist, Chaka's

vision in future/present reality, future as a leap from Mofolo's novel, and present as the 1950s writing moment of the dramatic poem. In fact, the drama takes the reader back in historical literary time, for the White Voice addresses and ridicules Shaka while he is still riddled with the spears as also seen in Mofolo's closing, quoted above, as if time has not passed, and the curtain only closed in Mofolo's *Chaka* stage to be re-opened with Senghor's dramatic poem's presentation. However, while these two Shakas might be the same they also show differences.

The literary stage that Senghor presents is also imaginatively the same while different at the same time. Its geographical location, as I will show, could be anywhere in Africa. The writer also presents a cyclical metaphysics of African spirituality whereby the afterlife and present life are interchangeable, so that the reader and the audience acknowledge that although Shaka has passed on to the afterlife he is still a part of the here and now. Senghor's dramatic poem, therefore, immediately helps situate the two texts side by side and collapses time.

The ending of Mofolo's *Chaka* as beginning of Senghor's dramatic poem also has suggestions of Christian sensibility. Senghor's White Voice character's words, in *Shaka*, say, "nailed to the ground with three spears" (1991, p.90). It is significant to observe the usage of Christian imagery, particularly the passion of Christ, in this opening phrase. The usage of "nailed to" as opposed to being stabbed with spears echo Christ's body itself and the three nails in his two hands and bound feet – nailed to the cross. Since Mofolo's original text was translated into French and adapted in French and then translated into English, Mofolo's stabbing scene could have also become Senghor's nailing-to-the-ground scene, through translations. However, Senghor could have also deliberately situated Shaka's death within Christian mythology to emphasise association with Christ's death. Senghor's White Voice continues to say to Shaka, "This is your passion" (1991, p.90) which continues to present Shaka as martyred, or sacrificed, as the dedication, mentioned above, also implies. From the implied ancestral stage and use of

sacrifice then Senghor launches into his Negritudian poetic dialectics. As George has observed, "African literary texts do not just deploy sacrifice as theme but also reflect critically on it" (2017, p.16). The comparison with Christ and sacrifice and/or martyrdom present Shaka from the very beginning of the poem as a saviour and his people's hero.

The use of Christianity, and Christlike imagery is also significantly recurrent in Mofolo's *Chaka*. In the scene where Mofolo's protagonist, Chaka, returns from his father's grave at dawn, after hearing his father's voice, which is the final rite of passage into Chaka's powerfulness, the way Chaka enters the village is reminiscent of Christ's entry into Jerusalem, the final entry he makes before he is tried by Pontius Pilate and eventually crucified. Mofolo's narrator says of Chaka's entry or rather re-entry into the village, "*Ba 'moneng ha a kena hae ho sa le lerotho ba re, Chaka ha a khutla lebitleng la ntat'ae o tlile a kalletse pitsi e boea bo thellang"* / "Those who saw him arriving at home in the faint light of dawn say, when Chaka returned from his father's grave he came riding on a horse with smooth mane" (1977, p.86). The narrator is self-conscious, in the passage after this, of the fact that there were no horses in Southern Africa in the early 1800s and makes this observation in jest. The only horse/colt, pony or donkey which Mofolo's text employs intertextually is presumably Biblical, the messiah's donkey or colt. Christlike imagery and symbolism are, therefore, used by Senghor in his interpretation of Mofolo's *Chaka* as the original text also does. It is important to note that both writers were Christian. Jerusalem and the scene of Christ's final days are, therefore, brought to the African landscape, and in Senghor's text this landscape is expanded to accommodate any or all parts of Africa, as mentioned above.

The very first utterance from Senghor's Shaka himself expands and situates Africa beyond national borders, and presents Shaka's greatness as representative of the continent, as seen in Shaka calling himself "the lion of Ethiopia" (1991, p.90). While intertextuality with Biblical

themes can still be detected with phrases such as ‘lion of Ethiopia’ as opposed to the Biblical ‘lion of Juda’ who is Christ, Senghor is not only substituting Christian script with African name phrases or reinterpreting Biblical imagery for an African background as Mofolo did, he is also going back to history to celebrate African civilisations, as places such as Kush, Meroe and Ethiopia are said to have had the first scripts in Africa. (Chinweizu 1975; Irele 2009; Scheub 1985). Senghor then swiftly moves to draw the reader’s attention to African landmarks and traverses the entire continent and connects its different cultures with Shaka’s spirit and voice, from Ethiopia, to Kilimanjaro, and to the Zambezi River. Senghor’s Shaka then speaks to and for all of Africa. These images, these landmarks belong to and symbolise Shaka’s sense of Africanness anchored in the Negritude essence. When Shaka ultimately says, “Uranium mines in the depths of my Negritude,” (1991, p.92) to declare his love for his lover and fiancé Noliwa, spelt *Nolivé* in Senghor’s text, Senghor is portraying the weight of Shaka’s Negritude symbolised as erotic love. Negritude then is equated with Shaka’s love for Nolivé and symbolised with the weight of uranium. By juxtaposing Shaka’s love for Nolivé with Negritude, Senghor also presents Shaka’s love as the character’s love for Africanness or Blackness of all Africans. It is first through placement and ownership of different Africas that Senghor seems to be showing adherence to the pre-independence pan-Africanist view of no nations no borders, and that Africa belongs to all Africans. Africans in this view are not differentiated by pigmentation, and as such Negritude’s pan-Africanist Black African identity encompass Africans from South to North and from East to West Africa, and the African diasporas. Africa’s location and fixedness is problematised by Senghor’s “Shaka”. This Africa, at the time of Senghor’s writing in 1958, was largely under colonial rule, and against that background then this vehement reclaiming of the land/s as inseparable from the people seem appropriate. Senghor’s decolonial task then disrupts the colonial maps. As Fanon argues, “decolonization, therefore, implies the urgent need to thoroughly challenge the colonial

situation" (2004, p.2), and Senghor tasks himself with this responsibility. By making Shaka inhabit the whole of Africa, both culturally and geographically, Senghor implies that African cultures can speak to one another at one level. The intertextual dialogue between him and Mofolo expands beyond Southern Africa for intercontinental participation. The two writers show "a Poetics that is latent, open, multilingual in intention, directly in contact with everything possible" (Glissant, 1997, p.32).

On the second front, Senghor attempts, by placing the White Voice at the beginning of his dramatic poem, to put imperialism, embodied by the White Voice, in direct confrontation with African metaphysics, and to present his Shaka as the African promethean symbol of resistance. This strategy, as I demonstrate below, in fact tends to work in reverse and can usurp the strength of this apparent majestic protagonist and the text. The poem then continues to debate, between Shaka's voice and the White Voice, power, ethics and morality in particular regard to the killing of Nolivé, which the White Voice keeps reminding Shaka that it was Shaka's own doing. While Shaka reasons that for the love of his people, for the building of a strong nation, he had to make sacrifices including the sacrifice of emotional love on the one hand, the White Voice is on the other pre-occupied with individual morality and ethical choice. Shaka laments the subjugation of African people whose suffering he says he saw in his visions. At the end of the first song, the White Voice is the last one to speak; about suffering and forgiveness, saying, "Those who have suffered much will be forgiven much…," (Senghor, 1991, p.06), implying that Shaka will be forgiven. There are no stage directions after this line, whose unfinishedness inadvertently suggests the voice's continuous presence.

The poem then re-opens with the second song, whose only characters are Shaka and the chorus accompanied by upbeat drumbeats. Shaka addresses his lines to his lover/fiancé, Nolivé. Shaka is supposedly, through the act of his death, going to be reunited with Nolivé. In the second song

of the poem, Shaka seems to rise into a new world, into another life and a new self. The leader of the chorus is astounded by Shaka's beauty and blackness, as is characteristic of Negritude's insistence that, 'Black is beautiful.' The leader of the chorus chants, "And how handsome he is! It is the moment of rebirth" (1991, p.97). Shaka is in some euphoric state chanting poetry for Nolivé. Looking at this second song and the rising of the character alongside Negritudian dialectics, the character can be said at this stage to have found his 'godhead'. The world presented at the beginning of the poem, as Gikandi notes of Negritudian character development, is,

> a world neatly balanced between dream and reality, a world which, as advocates of Negritude have insisted, cannot be explained simply in terms of common sense. Understanding this world is indeed one of the obstacles the character must overcome before he attains his godhead. (1987, p.9).

In Negritude literature, a character is often placed in a dreamy state at the beginning of the narrative, to then make the journey to self-discovery. Senghor's Shaka, therefore, moves from the dreamy state of 'death' or post-death as also signalled by funeral drums, in the opening song to rise with his Negritude as completion of the self in the second song. When a character has achieved his/her Negritude, then life is possible. This strategy seeks to steer towards African metaphysics to articulate the liberation of the mind, and to pose death as possibility of rebirth. Death in this case is metaphoric and is compared to colonialism or colonisation of the mind. This is also somewhat similar to Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1986)'s description of the colonial condition as the head detached from the body. The Negritude character has to relive the state of distress caused by the colonial condition, only in this type of writing the inducement of the dream-awake state couches the character's transition and allows them to experience possible regeneration through African spiritual and cosmological connections. In other examples of

Negritude literature such as Aimé Césaire's *Return to My Native Land* (1968) and Camara Laye's *Radiance of the King* (1965), the narrator/protagonist starts off their narrative journey in a state of debilitating delirium and gradually grows into self-awareness, self-realisation and finally self-articulation.

Senghor's adaptation of Mofolo's *Chaka* then presents an important experiment for the writer as he then uses African metaphysics to couch his entire dramatic poem. The character does not need to be framed/induced into a delirious or dreamy state since Mofolo's *Chaka* ends with the protagonist dying, and therefore provides possibility for Senghor, in adaptation, to take the story from that stage and continue it. As mentioned above, the suggestive temporal tightness between the original text and Senghor's adaptation works seamlessly within African metaphysics. Senghor's Shaka therefore can be reborn. To be reborn as a full human being is the desired state of completeness by Negritude literature. When Negritudians coined the phrase, "Black is beautiful," they were not only celebrating the Black/African body, they were in essence looking inward to affirm and reassert their humanity and reject and discard stereotypes employed by Europeans to define the African. Senghor's "Shaka" attempts to confront and reject colonial discourse on the black body and mind, which is why in the second song, the song of the rising, the White Voice (which can be interpreted to represent colonialism) 'disappears', and Shaka is left with the chorus. However, this binary either/or conception has its own problems, as I will show below, and the disappearing without any stage directions signalling exit nor the completing of the final line with a full-stop, only makes the presence of the White Voice linger.

Throughout the second and last song, the chorus sings praises to Shaka. Senghor's recurrent Shaka praises, "Bayété Bâba! Bayété O Zulu!" (1991), are slightly different from Mofolo's praise greetings to his own Chaka, in the Zulu language, "Bayede Nkosi! Bayede Baba! Bayede

Zulu / “Hail King! Hail our father! Hail Zulu!” (1928, p.119) at a closer look. While Senghor’s praise lines only signify Shaka as the father/bâba and Zulu/nation, Mofolo’s praise line starts off with Nkosi/King then calls Shaka Baba/father and also Zulu (the Zulu nation and/or the skies as Shaka named his people the people of the skies greatness – the Zulu people in Mofolo’s text). The greatness Shaka associated himself and his people with is not only of the skies when they are clear but as mentioned in Mofolo’s text, Shaka names his people after he sees lightning and hears thundering in the skies. The greatness of his people is therefore associated with thundering skies. These praises are a form of greeting and/or agreement to Chaka when he speaks publicly in Mofolo’s original text. As is characteristic of praise poetry, particularly for a king, a praise is usually a long panegyric. Hence Mofolo first informs the reader that Chaka created a name for his people, the Zulu, and a new greeting for himself, and then renders the poem, which is a long poem that ends with the above lines. The poem will be transcribed in full in the upcoming subsection in comparison with Soyinka’s Chaka poem, as mentioned above. Mofolo, therefore, creates a frame by informing the reader that Chaka invented praise poems for himself in accordance with the name of his nation. With this, the writer frames the use of verbal artistic expression within text, as this type of poetry is normally performed in front of an audience. The final lines above, then, are recurrent throughout Mofolo’s novel whenever Chaka addresses the Zulu people or after his speeches to his army in preparation for battle. Without the frame, Senghor’s rendition of the praise through the chorus seems repetitive and does not seem to serve any purpose except for theatrical affect. Although drama is also performed for an audience, Senghor’s dramatic poem is not as intimate and/or as intense as oral performance – which Mofolo’s text is much closer to. Senghor’s chorus also chants the praise in response to the leader of the chorus, and not directly to Shaka, so that the praise and its immediate association and directness to Shaka is lost.

Since Negritude is anti-colonial in its approach, Senghor found it necessary to pit a powerful historical figure such as Chaka against European might in the form of a White Voice/colonial character. For Senghor, assertion of Africanness appears to mostly be effective if it is in direct opposition to Europeanness. His "agenda of alterity remains locked within the oversight of the monster because alterity always requires its antithesis – the alien monster – to constitute itself" (George, 2003, p.33). The character, Shaka, for example, justifies the killing of Nolivé, his fiancé, by an attempt to evoke morality that is African and that differs from European morality. However, this evocation of the dialectics of ethics and morality instead tampers with the believability of the narrative, particularly in recollection of Mofolo's *Chaka*, for the motif of power and lust for it is lost in Senghor's pre-occupation with discourse on whiteness and the questioning of its legitimacy and judgement of 'the other'. The very basis of the first song as centred on ethics and morality is skewed in discussion of colonialism, for colonialism occurred within ethics and morality of Europe and Christianity. By situating the two debating voices within an already corrupted morality, to borrow from Césaire's *Discourse on Colonialism* (1995), Senghor's dramatic poem begins on a dead-end. This discursive template already limits navigation for the character of Shaka. The only way to move forward from that standpoint leads to caricature and unbelievable self-realisation of the African character, for it is futile to attempt to bring about the realisation and autonomy of the self of Africans or other groups racialised as non-white as mainly existing in difference from whiteness. Senghor's dramatic poem, therefore, centres the White Voice while it tries to decentre it. While Mofolo, in his text, sets power, survival, military tactics and African metaphysics as combination of psychological drivers of the plot, Senghor removes the motifs and renders a hero who is fixated with the rhetoric of African liberation without logic and plausible motif. Senghor's Shaka appears to be a singing African poet who knows all the historical facts and is troubled by them, but in seclusion and in perpetual search of some lost love.

The narrative strategies of Senghor's "Shaka" echo other works of Senghor which have made critics associate Senghor with the infamous Sartrian description of Negritude, in Sartre's essay, "Orphée noir" / "Black Orpheus" and preface to Senghor's *Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie nègre et malgache de langue française* (Anthology of new Black and Malagasy poetry of French language) (1948), which argues that African is rhythm and intuition while European is reason (Julien 1992; Soyinka 1976). Senghor's Shaka's justification of his atrocities do not convince, primarily because the character is set to be defending himself against the disembodied White Voice of reason, morality and ethics. While the strategy might have been to create a generic white voice to represent all colonialisms, Senghor's device on the other hand works to present the white voice as omnipresent and colonialism as everywhere totally flattening. Even if the poem's stage could be anywhere in Africa, the premise would still be weakened by the fact that places like Ethiopia have never been colonised and therefore the supposed "lion of Ethiopia", Shaka, would not be answerable to a white voice on an Ethiopian historical stage. While in actual history, King Shaka is said to have traded with Portuguese traders in Delagoa Bay and Mofolo does, in his original novel, hint at this trade by making his Chaka send one of his greatest army generals to Delagoa Bay to find and buy a particular special stone to sharpen spears, (which could be hinting at the trade of gun-powder between Southern African kings and Portuguese merchants), King Shaka himself or Mofolo's Chaka has not been represented as answerable to a White Voice larger than himself.

My argument is not to suggest that Senghor needed to stick to Mofolo's original directly. While every writer can interpret any text to their own creativity and situate it in their time, Senghor's strategy works to present white Europeans as omniscient and omnipotent, for the White Voice of Senghor's is not only judging over history with all the knowledge of facts, morality and ethics, the voice cannot even exit the stage with the help of stage directions. Senghor's White

Voice then inadvertently mimics the voice of God lording over the entire African continent, even over those who do not practise Christianity or any other monotheistic Abrahamic religion, or who have never been colonised.

It is also important to note the totality of Africa which Senghor and his Negritude encapsulate. This vision of Africa as a whole can sometimes run the risk of seeing all African cultures as completely destroyed or severely affected by colonialism, hence the need for cultural resuscitation by a return to the origins. These origins are first symbolised with the use of drums at the opening of the two songs in the poem. While drums are significant in some African cultures, not all African cultures use drums to signify rites of passage or for communal callings and announcements. Traditionally, in Lesotho, for example, the horn has been used for most rites of passage and calling people for gatherings. While drums are used in Lesotho now, with their introduction from Xhosa traditional healers in the 19th century, their symbolism and significance has not been as instrumental as in African cultures whose drums have had a longer traditional use. Therefore, the use of drums as the only stage direction signifies a certain Africa, and not all Africas. As also noted earlier, in the Rationale and Context of the opening chapter of this thesis, European colonialism did not affect the African continent similarly, so that in addition to different styles of colonialism amongst erstwhile Portuguese, Spanish, French and English colonies, there is also the urban rural divide which exposed Africans from different locations to differentiated proximities to colonial rule and culture. The understanding of African cultures as totally decimated by colonialism risks presenting Africa as totally passive to colonial rupture, conquer and the resulting rule. I reiterate this analysis for an understanding of Negritude and its writers such as Senghor, to situate their discourse or counter-discourse within a frame that makes allowance to see other ways African culture/s resisted colonial pressure not only periodically, that is to say, at the beginning of colonialism or at the end of it

in the sixties and seventies. To see African arts and culture as in constant resistance throughout colonial rule helps to read Senghor and Mofolo's textual conversation within progressive resistance. If Negritude can be said to imagine an original idyllic African past to return to, critics like Cabral have further cautioned against such a search, for,

> The question of a return to the source or of a cultural renaissance does not arise and could not arise for the masses of these people, for it is they who are the repository of the culture and at the same time the only social sector who can preserve and build it up and *make history*. (Cabral, 1965, p.60).

Cabral, here, is making reference to the rural Africans, who continued with their cultural expression/s and languages as mediums of expression. Lesotho's case, for example, as established earlier, also presents its particularity and can be read in similar ways that Cabral reads rural Africa, in that literacy was introduced to Lesotho in the Sesotho language, by the French missionaries, and writing continued as such from the 19th century throughout the 20th century. As mentioned earlier, the local printing depot in Lesotho was established in 1863, and British rule was made official in 1867. Mofolo, as one of the earliest writers, was not only raised in rural Lesotho and therefore well-versed in Sesotho oral traditions, his first novel also came out after Lesotho's Sekese's *Mekhoa ea Basotho le Maele le Litšomo* (Customs of the Basotho and Proverbs and Oral Stories) (1893), and just a year before the missionary Jacottet's *Litšomo Tsa Basotho* (Oral Stories of the Basotho) in 1908. Mofolo, therefore, wrote in the period when Sesotho traditions and tales and myths were the main focus of the Morija Printing depot which published his work. Rural and urban Africa are also not mutually exclusive. Mofolo's writing, particularly his novel *Chaka*, does not return to the source, it is formulated within the source, and as demonstrated in the introductory section of this chapter, Mofolo's source speaks to other sources, such as Zulu language and cultural practices and expands

literary expression by going back and forth in history while linking his creative practice with present moments. Senghor's adaptation of Mofolo's novel, *Chaka*, then, read against the backdrop of French arrival and interaction in Senghor's country, Senegal, since 1677 and that of Lesotho which occurred about two centuries later, in 1867, presents a dialogue between the two writers that show not only the differences between Negritude's fascination with origins but also the two centuries time difference between the two writers' cultures colonial interaction and experience.

However, it could perhaps be argued that Mofolo's *Chaka* worked to influence Senghor's *Shaka* significantly, primarily because of these differences and similarities the writers have. What was perhaps linguistic cultural norm of exchange for Mofolo worked to further encourage writers like Senghor that fluid Africa is possible as it has existed in recent history. While Senghor's adaptation has also been strongly criticised by African writers such as Ayi Kwei Armah (2016) and Wole Soyinka (1988) for its weak representation of Chaka and the watered-down rendering of the themes, it can still be argued that one of Senghor's greatest contributions to transnational dialogue among African writers is his attempt to use Mofolo's historical novel, or the symbolic character and legend of Chaka as direct confrontation with colonial rule. This is a significant way Senghor's reinterpretation of Mofolo's *Chaka* served one of the most crucial literary movements for Africans, Negritude. In the 1950s/60s Senghor looks back to a type of beginning, to a possible time of colonial rupture and returns his moment to the past for the imagination of a liberated future. One of Negritude's vehement critics, Soyinka, would later acknowledge the significance of the Negritude cultural movement. As he notes,

> The essence of that movement was not confined to dry textual pages on the bookshelves however. For a people of memory, endowed with a creative impulse, it led, inevitably

> to – celebration. Celebration of a racial essence in music, poetry, painting, sculpture, and narratives. (Soyinka, 2011, p.255).

Mofolo's *Chaka* therefore, served Senghor with this opportunity to imagine Africa as autonomous through the person of Shaka Zulu, possibly because it was difficult for Senghor to find examples of literary expression in his own language Wolof. However, Senghor as the first president of Senegal on the other hand promoted the use of French literacy as opposed to that of Wolof. Says Fanon in his sharp criticism of Senghor the political leader that, "…words of Senegalese patriots on the maneauvers of their president, Senghor: 'We asked for the Africanisation of the top jobs and all Senghor does is Africanize the Europeans" (1961, p.10). The Senegalese first president's privileging of French over Wolof could be understood in the same vein. In this regard, it would seem that Senghor the artist sees the past, indigenous languages and their literature/s as more significant for anti-colonialism than Senghor the politician sees fit for post-independence Africa. These contradictions, as George observes, are important in the decolonial journey. As he notes,

> Resistance can only proceed on the very ground of the categories being resisted: the oppressed can most tellingly contest their oppression by getting hold of the categories wielded by the oppressor. Truth, …, can only unfold in the tower of babel, and the task of thought is to work through 'conformism' in order to reach 'non-conformity" (George, 2017, p.33).

Senghor's resistance literature can be said to therefore demonstrate the first stages of self-autonomy by the African, whose template, language and expression still has remnants of that which he/she is working to repudiate. Senghor created his own Shaka for anti-colonial literary expression for an Africa without borders and constraints of nation, and by so doing imagined

African pluralities in significant ways. The adaptation of Mofolo's *Chaka* by Senghor, although riddled with contradictions, continues to show ways in which African writers connect with one another and make great use of African indigenous forms of literature as literary sources and for significant political cultural movements and activism. Glissant's observation that, "Relation is learning more and more to go beyond judgements into the unexpected dark of art's upsurgings. Its beauty springs from the stable and the unstable, from the deviance of many Poetics and the clairvoyance of a relational Poetics" (Glissant, 1997, p.139) is important in the appreciation of Senghor's "Shaka". Senghor's adaptation of Mofolo's text, then demonstrates ways in which both intertextuality and contradiction are part of a Poetics of Relation.

5.4 Mofolo's *Chaka* and Wole Soyinka's *Ogun Abibimañ* [Anti-colonial Moments in post-independence: 1970s-1980s]

Wole Soyinka adapted Mofolo's *Chaka* into a long poem, *Ogun Abibimañ* in 1976. The poem is a dedication "for the dead and the maimed of Soweto", as written on the dedication page. In 1976, South Africa was engulfed in youth uprisings by pupils from Soweto who took to the streets in rejection of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction. These uprisings were also continuous response to South Africa's apartheid regime and its brutality, particularly the historic abuse of lives and rights of indigenous people in that country. The second page makes reference to Samora Machel of Mozambique and his stance against the British government of Rhodesia - current day Zimbabwe. Soyinka's poem, therefore, situates its narrative in Southern Africa of the 1970s and the turmoil of colonial clashes between the local peoples and European rule, from Zimbabwe to Mozambique to South Africa, with South Africa as its primary focus.

Soyinka's adaptation of Mofolo's *Chaka* shows great use of orality's aesthetics operating as liberatory devices. The poem is steeped in African metaphysics and to a great extent continues

to demonstrate Soyinka's own intellectual and creative application of Yorùbá ritual drama, as is characteristic of most of his creative work. In his *Ogun Abibimañ* (1976), Soyinka partners Shaka with a Yorùbá god, Ogun. Ogun is the Yorùbá "God of creativity, guardian of the road, god of metallic lore and artistry. Explorer, hunter, god of war" (Soyinka 1976, p.140). In this process of partnering, Soyinka takes Mofolo's hero to the levels of the gods, since the gods are understood to create life and therefore history, and the writer also suggests that they can change history. Soyinka's long poem, in three parts, therefore, brings Shaka and Ogun together in response to the plight of South Africans. The second word, Abibimañ, in the title of the poem is an Akan word meaning, "The Black Nation; the land of the Black People; The Black World; that which pertains to, the matter, the affair of, Black peoples" (Soyinka, 1976, p.23), according to Soyinka's glossary. Ogun Abibimañ therefore could be understood to mean, in this poem, the god Ogun's land of Black people. In its very title then Soyinka's poem interprets and concretises South Africa as belonging to the Black Africans.

Soyinka's creative process can be likened to Senghor's interpretation of Mofolo's *Chaka* in the use of metaphysics and conceptualisation of Africans and Africa. However, Soyinka chooses his own cultural Nigerian Yorùbá spirituality and immediately links Shaka with and consecrates him within the Yorùbá Ifa pantheon. The specificity of the two regions shows a writer who understands his location as relevant and applicable to other "significant geographies", to use Laachir, et. al. (2018)'s phrase. The two regions, West Africa and Southern Africa are metaphysically conjoined in the purpose of liberation from colonial oppression. The majority of African countries, including Soyinka's country, Nigeria, were independent from colonial rule by 1976. Soyinka is not only in solidarity with fellow writer Mofolo, intertextually, but he takes Mofolo's work for purposes that go beyond Mofolo's original exercise, for sympathy with Black people of South Africa and to express outrage and

encouragement for the people to continue to resist and revolt. By bringing Ogun into the narrative, Soyinka then intimates a call to battle, a joined struggle. The poem can be said to participate in the revolutionary moment that is Soweto, South Africa.

The first part of the poem, *Ogun Abibimañ*, "I Induction" introduces the god Ogun and his role to the reader, with symbols and references to steel and iron and craftmanship, and in direct reference to South Africa's Sharpville township massacres of 1960. These earlier atrocities in South Africa are referred to for lamentation of the failure of dialogue with the inhumane apartheid regime. Soyinka then makes comparison to the coming of Ogun, who according to Soyinka's Yorùbá mythology had constantly refused to join and be king of the people of the city of Ire, and eventually pressed by their persistence and suffering joins them to win their wars. Says Soyinka of Ogun that,

> He ventures forth, a refuge of the down-trodden,
> To rescue slaves he unleashed the judgement of war
> Because of the blind, plunged into forests
> Of curative herbs, Bountiful One
> Who stands bulwark to offsprings of the dead of heaven
> Salutations, O lone being, who swims in rivers of blood,
> (Soyinka, 1976, p.142).

Shaka's militancy and craftmanship at battle, mentioned earlier, fits the Yorùbá mythology god, Ogun. Although Mofolo, in his original, presents his Chaka as addicted to battle for self-glory and power to only grow the might of his nation, the Zulu, Soyinka brings the two characters together as equal and almost identical in their quest. Soyinka's Shaka is therefore presented as a revolutionary spirit who, like Ogun, liberates the down-trodden and not as the

tyrant of Mofolo's text. The only weakness that Ogun has is that when inebriated he does not stop fighting until a time when he cannot differentiate between friend and foe. This weakness to palm-wine is almost similar to Mofolo's Chaka's battle thirst – whereby, as demonstrated by Mofolo, Chaka turns to his own people when there is no one left to fight.

Shaka is brought into the second part of Soyinka's poem, "II Retrospect for Marchers: Shaka!" with an immediate connection with "the restless dead" with their "dialogue of skulls and bones, and set the clangour to the fortressed walls – *Sigidi*!" (1976, p.9). *Sigidi* is "Shaka'a war cry" (1976, p.24) as Soyinka notes. This war-cry is the association with the sound of spears as they cut the enemy, and Soyinka uses the war-cry to mean that every time Shaka spears an enemy to death he says, "I have eaten"/ "*Sigidi*" that is to say his spear has eaten someone. Thus, Shaka would scream, *Sigidi*, each time he felled his enemy. With Ogun's god essence then Soyinka rouses Shaka from the dead, as seen in the following lines,

> …as Shaka, roused,
> Defines his being anew in Ogun's embrace,
> And worlds encounter to the founding cry –
> Replete in act of repossession – *Sigidi*! (1976, p.9).

The four lines above demonstrate a meeting of Shaka and Ogun in the "gulf" or the "Fourth Stage" in African metaphysics, which Soyinka sees as the realm of reconstruction of human society, the stage traversed by heroes of the tragic drama of the Yorùbá. The "Fourth Stage" is, "the stage of transition . . . the metaphysical abyss both of god and man" (Soyinka, 1976, p.149). The numinous embrace of Shaka by Ogun, in the above quoted lines, work to situate Shaka within ancestral and godly life-force. So that Shaka rises in the might of a god as great in battle as himself. A being of the earth meets with a powerful spiritual being in the afterlife. The two have comradery and their language of battle is the same, and therefore, not only would

they appear to understand each other but the reader can see parallels in their strength and aptitude in battle. These two characters then are returned, couched in African Yorùbá metaphysics, into the world to alleviate human suffering of the South Africans. Soyinka's "specific refashioning of the traditional Yoruba myths and archetypes emerges as, on the one hand, a theory of historical being and the often brutal adventure of the social, and on the other, of literature as witness to both" (George, 2003, p.146). This duality of characters is significant in the interpretation of Mofolo's *Chaka*, as Mofolo's protagonist's psychology is mostly dramatized by the presence of a traditional healer with tremendous powers, Isanusi. In his version, Soyinka merges the essence of the god Ogun with that of Shaka for dramatic intensity.

Soyinka's narrative in the first and second sections of the poem views and presents the situation in South Africa in the 1970s as so dismal that only the gods can intervene, in unison. The people and their gods need one another to arm themselves for the battle of repossession and self-liberation from colonial oppression. South Africans, as presented by Soyinka, also need a combined solidarity from other Africans, and their gods, to confront their subjugation by the Dutch Afrikaner apartheid regime. Soyinka then ends this stanza with Shaka's war cry, *Sigidi*! which seems to suggest that the time for armed confrontation is now. Seven stanzas after this numinous embrace, Shaka speaks to Ogun the god, as seen in the following lines,

> Where I paused, Ogun, the bladegrass reddened.
> My impi gnawed the stubble of thornbushes,
> Left nothing for the rains to suckle after.
> – Sigidi!
> Sigidi Baba! Bayete!
> Our histories meet, the forests merge
> With the savannah. Let rockhill drink with lion

> At my waterholes. Oh brother spirit.
>
> Did my dying words rise echoes in your hills. (1976, p.11).

Shaka seems to be giving a report of his earthly deeds to the god, Ogun. To the god of war this report seems fitting. The two characters demonstrate a spiritual brotherhood forged through the land and experience. Soyinka's Shaka recounts and connects the geographies of Africa through historical encounter. The geography or tangibility of Africa and its interrelations are presented as political and spiritual will. There is a sense of duty with which Soyinka connects Africans and their liberation, which is presented as incomplete as long as the rest of the continent is not free from colonial domination. His pan-Africanist vision has echoes of Nkrumah's assertion that the people of Ghana are not free unless and until all of Africa is free (Nkrumah, 1957). Soyinka's Shaka's connection with Ogun as representatives of two regions, one independent, and one still partially oppressed, demonstrates the responsibility required of free Africans to participate in efforts to free South Africa and the South Africans in the 1970s.

The African savannah is symbolised as a bridge through which the characters of Shaka and Ogun meet. The last quoted line, above, on Shaka's dying words echoing in Ogun's hills, is significant for it demonstrates that in his anguish of death, Shaka had hopes that other Africans and specifically the gods such as Ogun would hear him and come to the aid of his South African people. Not only are language and voice important here, but so is the call to solidarity. If Ogun has come to consecrate Shaka into the great Yorùbá Ifa pantheon, then the suggestion that Ogun heard Shaka is significant at two levels. First, there is symbolic suggestion that Africans hear one another's cry of suffering, or that they need to, and that human suffering for one is human suffering for all.

The application of a cyclical African metaphysics and of the "Fourth Stage" as the place of binding and restoration, rebirth and possibility of societal regeneration is apt in this last line of the stanza to demonstrate human solidarity and call to activism. Secondly, the literary suggestion could also be that the two writers, Mofolo and Soyinka, who are in dialogue through their texts are presented as calling and hearing each other, with Mofolo sounding the first call, and with Soyinka's text as response. This suggestion links the two writers to oral story devices such as the call-and-answer technique. The two writers, therefore, if Soyinka's implication could be stretched to correspond with his analysis of the creator of literary expression together with their protagonists, could be understood to work as the mouthpieces of the gods. These gods are also the gods the writers create with their own literary expression, so that Soyinka's notion of literature as recreation of new gods from old gods is also applicable. This process of literature as recreation is seen more vividly in Soyinka's exercise of adapting Mofolo's novel and using Mofolo's styles and techniques to apply to both his cultural mythologies in correspondence with the reality of South Africa.

Soyinka also makes great use of praise poetry in his adaptation of Mofolo's *Chaka* into his long poem *Ogun Abibimañ.* Aesthetic techniques of praise poetry such as comparison of greatness to great wild animals such as lions and elephants are applied similarly by Soyinka to the praises of Shaka as in Mofolo's original text. While Soyinka's adaptation of praise poetry to Shaka could be compared to the use of it by Senghor, analysed in the previous section, Soyinka however steers closer to praise poetry as he composes whole sections in praise of Shaka. Senghor, on the other hand, used only one line of the main praise poem for Chaka, which could not adequately hinge on the panegyric built up of symbolism and imagery. Soyinka goes further than Senghor, and his rendition works more closely to Mofolo's exercise as I demonstrate with the comparison of the two writers' poems, Mofolo's and Soyinka's, below.

Mofolo's Chaka Poem in Zulu	**Mofolo's Chaka Poem Translation**	**Soyinka's Shaka Poem**
Bayede, baba, Nkosi yamakhosi! *Wena ngonyama, Ndlovu-ayiphendulwa!* *Wena, owakhula si libele,* *Bayede, baba, Nkosi yezulu!* *Wena omnyama, owavela wasiphatha ngetahu,* *Wena ongangendlovu,* *Wena onzipho zinjengezebubesi!* *Wena ongangezulu eliphezulu,* *Wena Zulu, siphathe ngetahu!* *Bayede Nkosi! Bayethe baba! Bayede Zulu!* (Mofolo 1928, p.119)	Hail to you father, king of kings! To the lion, honourable who ought to be respected! To the one whose upbringing we forgot about/we didn't pay attention to, Hail to you father, king of heaven! To the dark one, who from birth ruled us with Tahu! To you who is equal to the elephant! To you who have/eat men as for a meal! To you who has claws like the lion! To you who is the same size as the heaven above the skies! To you Zulu, rule us with Tahu! Bayede! Hail to you father. Hail to you, Zulu Bayede Zulu! (Mofolo 1928, p.119, 'Mamokuena Makhema translation, June 2022)	Shaka built nations, forged a new sense of being But see what strikes home from the pit Of night to sleep in Shaka's shadow – A dark hyena, such a prowl In execution over the condemned, proudly tearing flesh From victims in the bonds. Is Shaka's world Rebuilt from limbs of his defenseless sons? Bayete Baba (Soyinka 1976, p.16)

Soyinka's opening line of the poem above resonates with Mofolo's opening line in their indication that Chaka/Shaka is king and nation-builder. However, Soyinka with his focus on the 1976 situation in South Africa, sees along the symbolism of great animals, the oppression of Black South Africans by Dutch settlers – who he presents as hyenas, for hyenas are scavengers who feed of the spoils of other animals' labour, like colonialism and imperialism. The difference between the opening lines of the two poems and the final lines, "Bayete Baba"/ "Hail to you father" is marked by history and experience. No longer can Shaka in Soyinka be praised for the sake of his greatness alone. His greatness requires juxtaposition to the South African situation and to carry the message and need for continuous resistance.

The third and final section of Soyinka's long poem is the *Sigidi* war cry itself, "*III Sigidi*!" In this section, termed in the visceral tone of war, Soyinka reconciles the past with the present. He connects his African metaphysics with that of Mofolo's text for a land on which the original text was situated. The final part of his long poem is lyrical in its incantation. It brings forth history. It ushers in past traditions, with healing and restorative rituals such as the pouring of libation, "asserting … political strength but, simultaneously, the rhizome of a multiple relationship … and basing every human community's reasons for existence on a modern form of sacred" (Glissant, 1997, p.16). This cry of war is a cry for restoration in the last part of the poem. In this part Ogun is brought home to the ground and compared with average man and woman, as if Soyinka recognizes the contribution of each of the maimed, the survivors and the dead who his dedication goes to at the beginning of the poem. The writer's African metaphysics then are an equalizing metaphysics as he calls and recognizes the revolutionary in each one of the inhabitants of South Africa, as shown in the following lines,

> … Ogun is
>
> That black mendicant you met whose bowl

Was raised in silence, lowered

In shame and emptiness (1976, p.19).

The gods are finally brought to the streets of Johannesburg and equated with every woman and man. The poem rises to make a call to life and calls the clans to gather as Soyinka situates the hill of Ogun amongst the hills of Johannesburg and presents a gathering of masses from hill to hill and Ogun himself astride, attentive, observant in his Abibimañ, his black world, with the cry of war now a cry of restoration and binding. Feet of the masses are stamping the floor, chanting *Sigidi*! Shaka's war cry. Soyinka makes "utterly human intensive uses of language to advance justice" (George, 2017, p.18). He makes the moment of resistance itself the moment of life's celebration.

While Mofolo writes his novel, *Chaka*, in the 1920s and brings Chaka's memory from the 1800s to fit his own time and the understanding of Zulu praise poetry (which can be said to be also to show equivalents to Sotho praise poetry for kings), Soyinka, in 1976, at the height of Apartheid, looks back and connects and juxtaposes Shaka's might with the South Africa of 1976. By joining Shaka with Ogun, Soyinka also suggests that the South African modern battleground needs not only the might of Shaka but combined resistance. Mofolo's original and Soyinka's texts are significantly different in that Soyinka takes the most relevant aspects of *Chaka* and relates them to South Africa. By choosing the specificity of his Nigerian Yorùbá metaphysics for his interpretation, Soyinka links the two regions and African cultures into a dialogue for resistance. Soyinka's interpretation of Mofolo shows how, "the words of griots and storytellers … still endure" (Glissant, 1997, p.104). These two writers, Mofolo and Soyinka, demonstrate the continuity of literary forms. They fuse together aesthetics of oral literature with different eras and political climates to address material realities, and most

significantly demonstrate interconnectedness between their significant geographies through text.

In conclusion, Mofolo can be said to represent a sort of father of African aesthetics who established a model, to merge very effortlessly elements of African literature aesthetics into new forms such as the novel, written poetry and poetic drama across the African continent. He created a piece of literature which, in its engagement with the historical and social context in which it was made, along with the aesthetic creativity and richness, had such an impact, even through translation, that it spurred others to engage with it and take something of its mode in their own literary creative responses. It spoke to other African writers for whom responding to it, was a way of responding to the situations they wished to address, as Africans.

As demonstrated in this chapter, African writers have interpreted Mofolo's *Chaka* to articulate political resistance in their own cultures and literary movements and also connected their immediate struggles not only with Mofolo's original text's themes and motifs, they have also connected different parts of Africa to communicate their anti-colonial efforts. The writers demonstrate an intertextuality and multilingualism in their definitions of Africa, through their texts. These "African writers are themselves engaged in 'reckoning' with Africa as signifier of many things, some of which would include geography, reconfigured identities and poetic abstraction" (George, 2017, p.56).

In this chapter, I have argued that Khaketla has interpreted Mofolo's *Chaka* to reflect on a different political time in Lesotho, and to demonstrate the upheaval of colonial confrontation which sees liberation as liberation from both external and internal oppression. Senghor's "Shaka" is a Negritudian hero who stands for all of Africa and its necessary total liberation during the 1950s into the 1960s. While Senghor's "Shaka" shows contradictions I have argued

that in conflicting and/or contradictory expression, Poetics of Relation dwell too. As Fanon notes,

> Decolonization, we know, is an historical process: In other words, it can only be understood, it can only find its significance and become self coherent insofar as we can discern the history-making movement which gives it form and substance. (1961, p.2).

Senghor, therefore, is remarkable for his contribution to the history-marking and making moment of Negritude. Soyinka's Shaka is brought into and equated with the Yorùbá Ifa pantheon god, Ogun, for the resistance of South Africans in the 1970s. His call for a joined resistance in the name of South Africa was the more compelling in the late 70s as majority of African countries were post-independent while South Africa was still mired in colonial oppression. These writers, as I have demonstrated, have carried the baton on from Mofolo and continued to speak to varied times and locations of Africa. "They have contributed to a history that predates them and continues on after them. In this unfolding history, 'the African' is text: signification, not unmediated being" (George 2017, p.103).

What Mofolo established and made possibilities for is an African transnational and post-national solidarity. He created possibilities for global networks of political activism on the African continent through a demonstration of coevalness of African literary forms. Mofolo's work is a creative work of such strength, novelty and originality it shows those who have the skills to reflect something of his genius a way to respond to their experience. In making the work that he did as a piece of literary art, it is in its aesthetic and creative originality that the model lies for others.

6. Conclusion

This thesis has examined how indigenous literary aesthetics of Sesotho have been instrumentalised in the Sesotho novel between 1890 and 1990. An aesthetic approach to the Sesotho novel is important for it provides criticism that considers the literature from within the language and culture in which it was produced. This approach, as demonstrated in this study, is significant for it provides possibilities for intertextuality between different forms of Sesotho/African literature and allows the texts to first theorise themselves and present techniques and styles that are immanent in the literature and by so doing facilitate critique that is decolonial. The approach also provides deeper attentiveness to techniques of Sesotho literature which are crucial for an Africa-centred analysis ... and for demonstrating continuity in Sesotho literary expression. Through comparative analysis of the novels of Mofolo and Basotho novelists who wrote after him, namely, Khaketla, Majara and Chobokoane, I have presented the interface and coevalness between local aesthetics and forms and the novel, with a focus on the intertextuality between the novel and Sesotho oral literature. The thesis analysed how the use of African indigenous metaphysics, cosmology and spirituality in Sesotho/African literature also decolonise the 'novel' as a form, and how literary criticism needs to be advanced in correspondence with indigenous aesthetics as employed by the novel itself, for the study of Sesotho literature in its own right.

Basotho writers, particularly Mofolo as the kernel of this study, I have argued, demonstrate a closeness to oral forms in their novels. I have also analysed Mofolo's influence on other African writers such as Senghor and Soyinka, for an examination of literary solidarity among African writers and to see how their texts demonstrate intercontinental global networks and a "Poetics of Relation". The motivation to include analysis of adaptations of Mofolo's *Chaka* in other

parts of the African continent was to view ways in which Sesotho and other African indigenous aesthetics can and do borrow from one another. This expansion of the analysis, in the final chapter of thesis, was undertaken to further see how an African aesthetics in dialogue has been made possible by the texts of African writers in significant undertakings such as the anticolonial moments and movement on the African continent. In this way, indigenous aesthetics have been shown as instrumental for activism. As the study has demonstrated, African literary criticism has concerned itself with opposition to European colonial attitudes, which has resulted in, among other things, the pre-occupation with African origins of the novel as a form. Other concerns have taken a sociological, and, at other times, a Marxist approach which emphasise the need for class analysis in the African novel. Others still have focused on the language/s of expression of the African novel and other forms of written African literatures. These debates, as my thesis has argued, have overshadowed the very object of their analysis, the importance of African literature or the African novel and how it functions in its narrative, as text or as cultural expression. The main objective of this study, therefore, was to advance criticism of the Sesotho novel and by extension that of the African novel by studying the application of oral literature styles and techniques and narrative devices employed in written Sesotho literature. The study began by contextualising literacy, printing and literary writing in Lesotho to provide background for the study, and also to situate the study within a historical framework, in its first chapter. Presenting the rationale driving the decolonial focus of the study, this first chapter described the roadmap for such an undertaking in the subsequent chapters of the thesis, situating concepts of Molema, Okpewho, Soyinka, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, Glissant and Fanon, to shed light on the discussion.

The second chapter charted debates in the African novel, particularly the language debate which has for a long time been central in the critique of the African novel, from the sixties,

seventies and eighties post-independence discussion of African literature. Some strands of this debate, which strongly align with postcolonial notions of "writing back" have affected the critique of Sesotho literature, as I have shown in my analysis. My study has presented how we need to rise above postcolonial criticism of the African novel, which at times privileges the socio-political over aesthetics, and devise a critical method that combines both or more approaches to the criticism of the African novel. As suggested in this thesis, critique which combines an understanding of the social dynamics together with the aesthetic approach yields possibilities for decolonial approaches to African literature, for the aesthetic in the creative process is as important as the social for a deeper study and self-knowledge of African literature. As demonstrated in this thesis, these two phenomena, the social and the aesthetic are not and need not be mutually exclusive in our study of cultural expression, particularly literature. As Soyinka notes, "a work of literature is, at a recognisable level, an act of symbolic affirmation, and nowhere is this truism more effectively manifested than in those works of literature that represent or provide a symbolic key to one's map of existence" (2011, p.271). A combination of an aesthetic and social approach provides not only a 'key to the map of existence', it also links African cultural expression in a continuous manner which resists the logic of literary colonial dependency, either through writing back, and/or defensive arguments of origins and implied 'authenticity'. I have demonstrated ways in which the language debate on African literature leaves out possibilities of intertextuality and coevalness between African oral forms and written literature. I have argued that while this debate is important, its focus on the realist novel of the independence moment as the sample African novel ignores possible comparative possibilities between the literary expression of African writers, which encompass both the earliest novels in Africa languages and interchanges between African language literatures and European language literatures through different times.

Some of the difficulties from the need for self-assertion against European colonialism among African critics have made it difficult for critique to move beyond self-reclamation. I have discussed pre-occupation amongst African literature critics with the origins of the African novel. My discussion of these debates has presented how most of the arguments, although keen on the origins of the novel in Africa and/or the links between the African novel and oral narratives as possible antecedents of novel fail, however, to tease out the characteristics of orature that they are vouching for from inside the novel to provide analysis that shows such aesthetics at work. Careful attention to the techniques of orature and their application is extremely crucial for the benefit of critique that is Africa-centred and which sees the African novel in its own right. As I argued, examination that teases out these techniques and styles and that analyses their function helps us read the Sesotho/African novel more closely, more in correspondence with the culture from within which the literary text was produced. I demonstrated this approach, by example, in the third chapter on 'Stylistics and Techniques of Sesotho Literature,' by examining the use of repetition, landscape as device, praise poetry and poetic inserts and their symbolism and imagery, and the use of ideophones in the novels of Mofolo and Chobokoane. Recognition of the characteristics and function of such techniques are crucial in the advancement of the criticism of Sesotho literature. Close study of these techniques, as my study has shown, furnish an engaged methodology which shows the richness of the Sesotho novel and how the novel in Sesotho works.

The fourth chapter, 'Metaphysics and Cosmology in Sesotho Literature' presented the transitive role of myth in Sesotho literature. Through an examination of the intertextuality of myth, ritual, Sesotho orature and the novel, I analysed motifs and themes taken from Sesotho oral tales and used in the novels for dramatic and plot purposes. This chapter has further demonstrated that there is an interchangeability in all different oral arts in Sesotho, there is a

coherence and time itself is not a determinant, in that an era, a period and its mode or storytelling is not what necessarily prevails. Stories are ageless, one cannot put a date to their conception and/or formulation, especially if they are in oral form, and they can still be used in new forms of literature such as the novel. As shown in this chapter, Sesotho oral tales that carry an element of communal or family strife, and the eminent resolution, carry or rather symbolise the link to the ancestral place. This may be done through water for example; by direct travel through a water passage, be it a river, lake or torrential rains, as demonstrated in this chapter. They make use of the "functions of myth, which is to transmute reality into fancy through the medium of symbolism" (Okpewho, 1983, p.212). The Sesotho novel absorbs and employs these techniques for plot development, symbolism and the characterisation and development of the protagonist, among other narrative devices. I examined the syncretism between African spirituality, metaphysics and cosmology, and Christianity as motif in Sesotho novels, to demonstrate how the search for the understanding of being and existence, and restoration, is expressed in the Sesotho novel. This approach, which used African philosophy, localised Christianity and other African spiritualities, was significant for analysis that presented linkages between African cultures, and for further decolonisation in literary analysis.

By analysing adaptations of Mofolo's *Chaka* by Soyinka and Senghor, in the fifth chapter, 'Mofolo's Poetics of Relation: Textual Decolonial routes – from Lesotho into Africa with *Chaka*', this study has not only demonstrated Mofolo's proliferation beyond the borders of Lesotho, but also showed ways in which Africa to Africa exchanges, translation, interpretation and interrelationship are possible. This examination, as shown in this chapter, shows how Africans have been influential on one another and have provided canonisation of themselves amongst themselves, so that the periphery is itself the centre without necessarily 'writing back' to an ephemeral centre. The writers' concerns of liberation rely on their own canons to imagine

total liberation of the people, and not only liberation from colonial entanglement. As Charles Nnolim observes, "what unites our writers of the political novel is utopia – their single-minded quest for a just and egalitarian society free from oppression and exploitation by both external and internal masters" (2010, p.63). Each of Mofolo's novel adaptations confront oppression and imagine a liberated possible utopian society of equals. The oppression each writer addresses depends on their political and material reality of the time. Although adaptations of Mofolo show contradictions, not only in interpretation of the original novel itself but also of confrontation to colonialism, the significance of the adaptations lies in the articulation of Africa as variegated in its meaning/s. This process, as analysed in chapter five, provides a solidarity of Africa in many cultures which build the Tower of Babel in multiple languages. These varied approaches to the idea of Africa, help to re-emphasise this thesis' contention that for renewed criticism of African literature, a combination of approaches is significant. "Quarrying ever deeper into one's own resources, but in knowledge – or even curiosity – of others, we unavoidably plunge into a pool of universal archetypes where, despite the infinite distinctions that mark the cultural expressions of any given place, we discover that there are indeed crossroads of the human voyage, crossings that unify experiences of, and responses to phenomena" (Soyinka, 2011, p.262). Mofolo has created a work of literature which is distinct and in that distinctness has allowed it to be a model for others in Africa to engage with issues in the same, or in analogous ways, while responding to him too.

Through the analysis of Mofolo's novels, and of the writers who came after him, both in Lesotho and the larger African continent, I have demonstrated in this thesis how indigenous epistemologies and aesthetics are liberatory and decolonial. My thesis makes a contribution to Sesotho and African literary criticism that sees African literary expressions as both rooted and

continuously making new roots in connection with other literary cultures, in the style of a rhizome (Glissant, 1997), while still considering the specific literature.

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