

A STUDY OF SOME ASPECTS OF K.P.D. MAPHALLA'S POETRY

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CONTENTS

	Page
Dedication	(i)
Acknowledgements	(ii)
Abstract	(iii)
Summary	(v)
CHAPTER 1	1
1. Introduction	1
1.1 Literature review	1
1.2 The author and his environment	4
CHAPTER 2	13
2. Influence	13
2.1 Indigenous influences	16
2.1.1 The proverb as a source of influence	17
2.1.1.1 The basic structure of the proverb is retained	17
2.1.1.2 The structure of the proverb is altered	23
2.1.1.3 The proverb is alluded to	31
2.2 Exotic influences	34
2.2.1 Christianity as a source of influence	35
2.2.1.1 Choice of titles	36
2.2.1.2 Images of Biblical origin	38
2.2.1.3 World-view	44
2.2.1.4 The hymnal refrain	57
2.2.2 Conflicting influences	60

CHAPTER 3		65
3.	Imagery	65
3.1	Images associated with human experience	70
3.1.1	Images relating to the physical condition of man	71
3.1.1.1	Images relating to disease	71
3.1.1.2	Images related to pain and suffering	74
3.1.1.3	Images relating to vitality	77
3.1.2	Images related to African traditional beliefs	81
3.1.2.1	Images associated with witchcraft	82
3.1.2.2	Images relating to mythology	85
3.1.2.3	Images associated with the ancestral world	90
3.1.3	Images associated with violence	96
3.1.4	Images relating to the Western world	101
3.2	Images associated with nature	105
3.2.1	The animal world	106
3.2.2	Birds and insects	110
3.2.3	Images from the landscape	113
3.2.4	Natural decomposition	116
CHAPTER 4		
4.	Protest	121
4.1	Contradictions in life	121

4.2	Injustices	149
4.2.1	Discrimination	150
4.2.2	Oppression	160
CHAPTER 5		177
5.	Looking back	177
5.1	Recapitulation and findings	177
5.2	Possible future research directions	182
5.3	Concluding comment	196

(i)

DEDICATION

To my parents, Mokete and Mmamohlomi.

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ABSTRACT

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This study is an investigation into three aspects of K.P.D. Maphalla's poetry: influences at work in his poetry; the nature and significance of imagery employed; and the theme of protest as conveyed through poetic aestheticism.

Influence constitutes one of the main poetic devices which give amplitude to the poet's compositions. His imagery is a window through which the reader catches a glimpse of the poet's mind. The reciprocal relationship between the theme of protest and poetic artistry is also discussed.

Nowhere in Sesotho literary studies have the three aspects mentioned above been treated in the manner this study does. In this way the study breaks new ground.

9
We describe, analyse and interpret extracts from Maphalla's poetry by borrowing tools freely from the various literary theories. We do not tie ourselves to a particular theory.
Our approach can also be described as both extrinsic and intrinsic.

The study makes a contribution in three respects. First, it illustrates how a knowledge and understanding of some material from both oral tradition and Western acculturation can make a significant contribution to a proper analysis and interpretation of Sesotho poetry. Secondly it demonstrates how imagery also reveals both the poet's attitude towards his subject matter and his world-view in general. Thirdly, the study indicates that protest can be voiced through the dignified genre of poetry. In short, the study shows that whilst Sesotho poetry is functional in its thrust, it also preens itself with poetic aestheticism. We hope that this study will add to the existing universal principles of literary criticism.

SUMMARY

K.P.D. Maphalla is a relatively new poet in Sesotho but his poetry has already captured the attention of several Sesotho critics (cf. Swanepoel 1984; Ngcongwane 1985 and Chaphole 1985). In a review of one of Maphalla's volumes of poetry, *Fuba sa ka*, Chaphole says:

He is a poet of vision and hope.
His poetry looks far into the
infinity of the future. (1985 :
89)

His artistic skills, even in genres other than poetry, have earned him favourable comments from prominent scholars such as Swanepoel who makes this comment in a review of one of Maphalla's novels, *Tshiu Tseo*:

This prolific young writer has much
talent. (1984 : 61)

Although Maphalla's poetry enjoys a wide readership among Basotho, and Sesotho scholars, no in-depth study of his works has been made yet. It is our contention that a critical analysis of Maphalla's works will heighten the readers' appreciation of them and sharpen their ability to evaluate better other literary works - poetry in particular. This in turn could make a positive contribution towards further improvement in the quality

of the genre of poetry in Sesotho and, hopefully, in other African languages as well. We hope, through our study, not only to place Maphalla in his rightful place among Sesotho poets in particular (and Black poets in general), but also to add to the much needed tools of literary criticism for the proper analysis of Black modern poetry written in the vernaculars.

We shall confine ourselves to five volumes of poetry that have come from Maphalla's pen, viz. Mahohodi, Fuba sa ka, Kgapha tsa ka, Dikano and Sentebale. His sixth book, Tsielala, has been left out because at the time of this study the investigator could not lay his hands on it.

The study concentrates on only three aspects of Maphalla's poetry: influence, imagery and protest. However, this does not imply that these are the only features evident in his poetry.

The discussion is divided into five chapters. The first chapter, which takes the form of an introduction, provides the background to our study. The second chapter deals with indigenous and exotic influences that add to the poet's literary creative armoury. Chapter three aims to show how he selects images that

reveal the 'furniture' of his mind. In chapter 4 we concentrate on what the poet is actually conveying through the structures of expression he uses (including those dealt with in the two previous chapters). He is protesting through 'poetry'. The last chapter, the epilogue, is both a summary of our findings and a pointer to possible research directions, especially in African languages.

As we go about discussing and analysing some aspects of Maphalla's poetry, we shall bear in mind that we are constantly in search of its meaning and significance. We regard this as the thrust of literary criticism, irrespective of the theory applied. As Maclean observes:

All literary theories have to account for meaning whether as that which is communicated directly from author to reader (I.A. Richards), or that which is inherent in the words of a text (New Critics), or that which arises from its structure (structuralism).
(1985 : 122)

Our approach will be both extrinsic and intrinsic. Much controversy surrounds the relevance of extrinsic factors to the analysis and interpretation of a literary text (cf. Leavis 1963; Wellek and Warren 1985; Visser 1982). The opponents of the extrinsic approach argue that it is in fact a sociological study that should not

be part of literary criticism. Wellek and Warren put across this view more succinctly:

Though the extrinsic study may merely attempt to interpret literature in the light of its social context and its antecedents, in most cases it becomes a 'causal' explanation, professing to account for literature, to explain it, and finally to reduce it to its origin. (1985 : 73)

To this assertion Irele retorts as follows:

There can of course be no sensible discussion of literature that does not imply an awareness of the close and intimate reciprocity between form and content, between structures of expression and their significance in an outer world beyond the text... it might even be urged that significance of literature - fiction, poetry and drama above all - resides especially in its reference to a lived world that stretches from that of immediate sensation to that of mental vision, and whether there is any purpose in frustrating, as the current accepted writing in Europe consciously tries to, that tendency of words to achieve a correspondence to a concrete universe of experience. (1981 : 21)

Our view is that extrinsic and intrinsic factors should be seen in dialectical interaction with each other. That is, extrinsic causes condition the production of a work of art while, at the same time, intrinsic factors

also reflect external factors that condition the content and form of the work of art. This view is also upheld by Moody (1983) who maintains that the two approaches are not mutually exclusive. It is with this point in mind that we include Maphalla's biography in chapter one. Even then, we only make reference to those points we consider important for a lucid analysis and interpretation in this study.

It should also be noted that we shall not tie ourselves down to a particular theory of literary criticism. We shall borrow tools freely from the various theories such as structuralism and deconstruction. Moreover, we shall not stand or fall by the tools we choose to employ. Our intention is to try, as much as possible, to allow the works themselves to reveal their own aestheticism. After all, we are convinced that aestheticism is, by and large, culture-bound. In this way we hope to add to the pool of universal principles of literary criticism. It is our contention that African literature too can make a meaningful contribution to the so-called Western principles of literary criticism.

In the study, each time we refer to Maphalla or the poet, we actually mean the collective persona. He is a representative of those who share his existential experience. His 'I' embraces the 'we'.

With the above critical allusions in mind, we set out to analyse, describe and interpret some aspects of Maphalla's poetry.

CHAPTER 1

1. INTRODUCTION

Our concern here is to comment briefly on work that has been done in poetry written in the vernaculars. Secondly, to look at the environment that has produced the poet.

1.1 LITERATURE REVIEW

Early critics of African literature, poetry in particular, contended that it was unthinkable for Africans to have any sense of appreciation for poetry. The African's inability to compose poetry was refuted from several quarters (cf. Chaphole, 1984; Burton 1943). Misconceptions about African poetry were fuelled especially by the missionaries' unfounded pronouncements. Referring to Sesotho traditional poetry, for instance, the French missionaries made careless remarks such as:

In the eulogies, there is neither rhythm, meter nor rhyme, in other words, nothing that constitutes proper verse as we know it. (Kunene, 1970 : xi)

But then sober voices soon came to the fore. Van Zyl (1941) maintains that praises supply an interesting

study of the African's ability to observe the hard facts of life. He also notes that it is, among others, fear-inspiring persons or objects, mystery and cruelty that arouse poetic feelings. His study shows that the African is not only capable of composing poetry but he is also endowed with the sensitivity which triggers off the poetic reaction in him. Kunene (1971) shows that Sesotho praises also exhibit the African's creative skills.

Today there is irrefutable evidence that even modern African compositions are indeed poetry. Combrinck (1963) found that Mamagobo's poetry relates to the mystery of life and it is a protest against the disinheriting of the Blacks. He also notices that Mamagobo's poetry has been influenced by oral tradition. Moloto (1970) emphasizes the fact that the attitude expressed in African poetry is not just of approval but appraisal, not just of appreciation but depreciation too. In this way Moloto underlines the functionality of African poetry. This happens to be one of the fundamental differences between African and Western poetry. Perhaps Moloto's study could have been a much more valuable contribution had he not dwelt too much on the structural analysis of Setswana poetry.

Moloi (1973) and Mashabela (1979) point out that modern African poetry has been influenced by oral tradition. Thus the African poet composes on the basis of a long-standing tradition. (Cope 1968 and Msimang 1986, also discuss the influence of oral tradition on literacy and the Zulu novel, respectively). Mashabela goes on to mention that myths, legends and folktales are discernable modes of expression in Matsepe's poetry. However, both Moloi and Mashabela do not demonstrate clearly how African poets ingeniously infuse these traditional modes of expression into their creativity as a whole. This aspect surely deserves much more attention than it is given in their studies. It is our assertion that the presence of influences from oral tradition does not merely suggest the roots. It also provides the source for the poet's creative ability and world-view. Moloi only alludes to this fact when he observes that African poetry is a weapon the African uses in his struggle for reform and improvement of life in general. He does not elaborate on how oral tradition is skillfully incorporated into the poet's artistic devices.

The most recent studies on African poetry (cf. Lenake 1984; Ntuli 1984; Milubi 1988) lay more emphasis on its themes. Even where artistic expression is discussed,

it is done in such a way that the synthesis between expression and the poet's world remains blurred. The reciprocal relationship between form and content is not well elucidated. Even where influences are mentioned, no attempt is made to investigate the poet's expertise in infusing them into his creative skills as a whole.

This brief comment convinces us that there is a need to investigate the relationship between the poet's artistic devices and his poetic world. This we shall look into by concentrating on three aspects of Maphalla's poetry: influence, imagery and protest.

1.2 THE AUTHOR AND HIS ENVIRONMENT

Besides poetry Maphalla has tried his hand at other literary genres as well. To his credit he has one drama (Tahleho; 1985) and four novels: Tshepo le Metswalle, 1982; Tshiu Tseo, 1983; Tefo, 1984; and Kabelwamanong, 1987. The last novel won him the first prize in a literary competition for the best novelist in the seven Black languages that participated in the competition (cf. Shuter & Shooter, 1986).

Maphalla is undoubtedly the most prolific new author in Sesotho.

Kgotso Peter Maphalla was born in 1955 in a township called Bohlokong near a town called Bethlehem in the Orange Free State. Bohlokong is one of the black spots that were created through the promulgation of the Black Administration Act. No. 38 of 1927. This act has as its thrust the partitioning of South Africa into Black townships - specifically set aside for exclusive occupancy by Blacks - and White towns in which qualification for residence hinged on being classified as White.

Maphalla is the second child and the only son in a family of four children. His father, who had gone as far as Junior Certificate at school, was an ordinary labourer and depended on odd jobs for a living. He died in 1973 when Maphalla was eighteen years old. His mother is also a labourer at the Europeans' Hospital in Bethlehem. Although his father was not an active church member, he was a frequent church-goer. His mother is a devout christian. This seems to have passed on to Maphalla. He is not only a devoted member of the Dutch Reformed Church, but also a respectable church elder. His christian upbringing is evident in most of his poems: he has unflagging hope in the eventual intervention of his Creator in all his predicaments.

Life in his home was tough from the onset. The meagre earnings of both his parents were always stretched beyond their limit. He had to do piece-work after school and during the school holidays in order to give assistance to his struggling parents. These odd jobs led to his first real encounter with the White man. He came to know a White man as the 'baas' (boss), a White woman as 'missis', a small White boy as 'kleinbaas' (small boss) and a small White girl as 'kleinmissis' (small missis). He soon learnt that in the eyes of any White person he was regarded as a mere 'boy'. Thus his position of subordination became clear from a very early age. His dignity, if by then he still had any, suffered a permanent dent. It is not surprising then that Maphalla, through his poetry, seems to regard

his task as helping his society to regain
its belief in itself and put away the
complexes of the years of denigration
and self-denigration.

(Ngugi; 1971 : 6)

The inferior position to which he has been relegated since an early age as well as his thinly disguised protest against this unfair and uncalled for illtreatment, constitute the undercurrents in the poem 'Ke ikopela tokoloho' (I am asking for my freedom):

Ha ke kope ka dikgoka,
 Nna ha ke na matla,
 Ke kopa ke rotse katiba,
 Le ha ke sa gata mohatla.
 (Kgapha tsa ka : 50)

*I do not beg through violence,
 I don't have power,
 I beg with my hat off,
 Though I haven't wedged my
 tail inbetween my legs.*

He started school at the age of seven in 1962. Ten years earlier the Nationalist Government had passed the Bantu Education Act of 1953. In compliance with this act he had to be educated through the medium of his mother tongue and attend the school set aside for his ethnic group.

As Maphalla remembers, on the very first day he started schooling, he had to bear the pain of being separated from his friends who also had to go to their ethnic schools. His school was called Thabang Lower Primary School.

In 1966 he went to Impucuko Higher Primary School which catered for both Sesotho and Nguni speaking pupils. At this stage he became confused as to why he was separated from his Nguni peers in the first place, in the lower levels. This was to remain unanswered until he got to understand, much more later in his life, how the Black

man is governed by the White man. Perhaps this might be one of the reasons why he exhorts his eyes to wake up to the realities of this world, in the poem entitled 'Mahlo a ka tutuboloha' (My eyes open up):

Mahlo a ka tutubuloha,
 O lekole tsela lefifing le letsho;
 Fatshe lena ha se la difofu,
 Le kgantsha sekgukgu, ho tswedipana.
 (Kgapha tsa ka : 3)

*My eyes open up,
 Survey the path in the pitchblack darkness;
 This world is not meant for the blind,
 It boasts of secrets and zigzags.*

In 1970 he started with his secondary school education at Tiisetsang High School, still in Bohlokong. It was during those years when a Black child had to spend five years at secondary school, after spending eight years at primary school. His White counterpart on the other hand spent one year less at secondary school level. The discriminatory nature of the Bantu Education system, on the basis of race only, could not go unnoticed by Maphalla. This added to the frustrations and anger stored up in his chest (Fuba sa ka). His bottled-up emotions were to find an outlet sooner or later. As Guérard aptly observes:

Opposition to despotism creates in us a sense of daring, adventure, heroism. This is particularly welcome to the literary mind, which thrives on exaltation and loves attitudunizing... 'oppression' compels us to use finer tactics and keener weapons, the rapier of allusive irony rather than the bludgeon of blatant assertiveness. (1935 : 82)

It is our considered opinion that Maphalla uses his poetry to expose and censure the injustices perpetrated deliberately against him.

Whilst at Tiisetsang he developed a keen interest in Sesotho literature, especially K.E. Ntsane's works. It was as early as in Std 8 that Maphalla, together with three of his classmates, made an attempt at writing a novel. Although this early 'attempt' was never completed, Maphalla is quick to admit that even today he still draws material from this unfinished product which he still hopes that one day he will get a publisher willing to publish the 'novel' as is.

In 1975 he left Bohlokong for Witsieshoek (today called Qwaqwa) to study for his Higher Primary Teacher's Certificate, at Tshiya Training College. He arrived at Tshiya coming from a completely different educational background. Hitherto, he had been taught by Black

teachers only who came from the same township experience as his. The Black teachers had been as understanding and as caring as his parents and community. They could, for instance, understand why a school child came to school in rags or why certain children could not afford school fees. They were part of the suffering Bohlokong Township community. His only contact with the Whites, prior to 1975, had been at the level of master-servant relationship. But at Tshiya the environment changed drastically. The school principal as well as most of the teachers were Whites. The discipline too was totally different from what he was accustomed to. It was military discipline. There was no room for excuses or explanations if caught on the wrong side of the school regulations. But what really struck him was the fact that even here at a supposedly Black institution the White man was still boss. Discrimination against the Black teachers was blatantly clear. Basing his judgement on experience gathered before and right up to the training college days, he briefly outlines his views on the attitudes of Whites towards Blacks as follows: "Whites in general can be divided into two extremes. On the one extreme one finds the most humane ones and the opposite extreme belongs to the most wicked ones". But he is also quick to throw in a clangour: "But then even among Blacks you do come

across these extremes, although they are not as prominent as in the White community" (oral communication, 1986).

He completed his H.P.T.C. at Tshiya, in 1976. He started teaching at Tshibollo High School, in Qwaqwa, the following year. He taught History and English to the standards 9 and 10. His exposure to English literature, especially poetry, made him aware of one of the most effective means of giving vent to one's constrained anger in a dignified way.

He started writing seriously while teaching at Tshibollo. Initially he did not think of publishing his poems in a book form. He also did not have a particular theme in mind; he penned whatever he felt like saying.

Between 1981 and 1983 he taught Sesotho at Thabo-Thokoza High School in Bohlokong, his birth place. Thus his love for the language received a further boost. At the beginning of 1983 his first volume of poetry came off the press.

Towards the end of 1983, in September, he was recalled to Qwaqwa where he was appointed secretary to parliament in the Chief Minister's office, the position he holds to this day.

He admits that his present position has somehow affected his creativity: as a civil servant of a Government which is the brainchild of the apartheid policy, he has "to dot his eyes and cross his tees, lest he bite the hand that feeds him."

CHAPTER 2

2. INFLUENCE

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the influences discernible in Maphalla's poetry and to show how these influences have been ingested into his works. It is our view that influence does not imply an imitative relationship between the source and the influenced object. As Palmer would have it:

A reasonably fair statement of the position would seem to be that the African novel grew out of the Western novel,... (1982 : 6)

Palmer seems to regard influence as causation instead of perceiving it as a contributory factor to the emergence and shaping of a work of art. This does not mean that a work of art grows out of its influences, but is only tantamount to the admission that there are several factors that impinge upon the writer's mind in the creativity process. Looked at in this way, influence ceases to be a blight in a work of art, but it constitutes one of the forces that give both shape and sustenance to it. Bu-Buakei Jabbi (1979) compares African literature to a tree. To him all the circumstances surrounding its emergence and growth go back to its roots.

Our discussion of influences then should be understood in the context of Jabbi's rhetorical question:

Would it not be more fruitful perhaps, for tree and question alike, merely to try and assess the nature and extent of the way in which all historically valid backgrounds to African writing have respectively helped or can still help, to shape the new literature? (1979 : 112)
[Emphasis mine]

As Abiola Irele suggests, a mere recognition of influence is not enough. After recognizing this influence the reader or critic should develop

an understanding of what such an influence contributes to the vision of the African writer.
(1981 : 14)

To this we might add that the understanding referred to above also enhances the reader's perception of the writer's cannons of artistic expression.

The influences at work in Maphalla's poetry belong to two broad categories, namely: indigenous and exotic. By the former, we mean influences that are typical of African tradition. By the latter we refer to all those factors that emanate from outside the African tradition,

that is, those that are imported, as it were, from outside the African soil and experience. We believe that these also nurture and shape Maphalla's verbal style as well as his world-view. Both these two theoretical categories of influence are significant constituent elements of Maphalla's 'new culture' - a conglomeration of some of the aspects of traditional African culture and some features of the Western culture. Moreover, neither of the two cultures is a static or rigid entity. It is this new culture that also informs his artistic creations. Rosenberg, in an article on 'Literature and Folklore', makes this apt observation:

Writers mature within a culture;
they learn their skills and
their craft within that culture;
and so inevitably reflect some
aspects of that culture in
their writing. (1982 : 91)

Referring to the role this 'new culture' plays in the production of African literature, Emenyonu comments as follows:

If one is able to see African literature as a cohesive piece of study which is made more interesting by the changes that it undergoes in its complexion and emphasis as a result of the cultural, historical and social circumstances which act on its existence, then such

things, as the 'mixing of ancient and modern' would not be difficult to explain. (1975 : 3)

We propose to use Maphalla's poetry as a base of extraction; indicating and exploring the influences, and then discussing how they contribute to his poetry. We shall also identify the contexts from which these influences are most likely to have originated.

2.1 INDIGENOUS INFLUENCES

This category embraces all traditional oral forms such as proverbs, idioms, praise songs, folktales and myths. As Finnegan observes:

Even in a society apparently dominated by the printed word the oral aspect is not entirely lost. (1976 : 19)

In this work the only traditional oral form that will receive attention is the proverb. Our only reason for this apparent bias is that the proverb is the main oral form that has influenced Maphalla to a great extent. The other forms are very sporadic.

2.1.1 The proverb as a source of influence

Guma defines a proverb as follows:

A proverb is a pithy sentence with a general bearing on life. It serves to express some homely truth or moral lesson in such an appropriate manner as to make one feel that no better words could have been used to describe the particular situation. (1967 : 65)

Jones has this to add:

In Africa, even modern Africa, the spoken word still has an extraordinary power. It is not considered time wasted for a character to spin out a thought in a string of proverbs. This earns independent applause in a way that one suspects a similar passage would have done in Elizabethan England. (1981 : 61)

Proverbs in Maphalla's poetry appear in one of the following forms:

2.1.1.1 The basic structure of the proverb is retained. Let us focus our attention on the following:

- (1) Lena ke lefatshe la diretse,
fatshe la qhafutso,
Fatsheng lena phokojwe ho
phela e diretsana;
(Dikano : 27)

*This is a muddy world,
a world of swamps,
In this world the jackal
that lives is the one
splashed with mud;*

This proverb emphasizes the importance of working hard in order to live. In the extract, the proverb is preceded by the words "Fatsheng lena" (in this world or in this country), and these words change the meaning of the proverb from general to specific: hard work is a prerequisite for life in this world. In the first line the speaker portrays a picture of chaos and perpetual struggle: there is mud everywhere and everyone is wading in this mud. The proverb then implies that in order to survive in this world, one has to be as cunning and as destructive as a jackal. This, in turn, suggests that people who make it in this world do so through dubious and unscrupulous means. Thus the poet uses a familiar proverb in a context that adds a new significance to it. The speaker has ingeniously employed this proverb to express his deep concern for the moral turpitude he observes around him. People are faced with calamities everyday. They have to live by their wits, irrespective of whether their actions have dire consequences or not for their fellow human beings.

- (2) **Kwekwe ya morao e tloha le sepolo,
Phahamela mafogo dinthong tsohle;
(Mahohodi : 16)**

*The last quail gets the flail,
Rise above dust storms in everything;*

This proverb is didactic in significance : make hay while the sun shines. The line that follows upon this proverb paints a picture of turmoil in the world. It is as though everything is threatened by billowing dust storms that portend catastrophe to every living creature through choking as well as obstruction of vision. The proverb then alludes to impending disaster, troubles that endanger life, and also suggest a cause of action to be taken. Everyone has to pull up his socks and work hard in order to keep his head above the raging storms. In this way the poet uses a proverb to magnify the scene of chaos surrounding every individual in his community.

- (3) Lebelo le a fela thota e sale,
Ntsane o ile, thota e namme;
(Fuba sa ka : 10)

*Speed comes to an end but the
distance remains,
Ntsane is gone but the distance
remains stretched out;*

This proverb indicates that no matter how ambitious and industrious one might be, there are vast areas, of life, that will always remain unexplored. Furthermore, the poet, through this proverb, seems to create, in the reader's mind, a parallel between a human being's lifespan and the bottomlessness of life itself. That is to say,

life is like a plane of endless magnitude on which each individual makes his mark but never traverses it from one point to the other. At some stage or another a person's physical being is bound to give in and he goes the way of all human flesh - he dies. Evidently then the poet foregrounds the inevitability of death through a proverb that might otherwise have had a narrow and restricted meaning. He gives it a context that expands its significance. In addition to what it stands for, the proverb also alludes to the fathomlessness of life.

(4) Mosadi eo ka lebitso ke
Mmadiatheng;
Mosotho o itse **bitsolebe**
ke seromo,
(Kgapha tsa ka : 31)

*This woman is Mmadiatheng
by name;
A Mosotho said a bad name
is a bad omen,*

The above proverb encapsulates the traditional belief of the Basotho in the magical power a name has upon the character of its bearer. Although this belief might be regarded as fallacious, the fact that an individual is likely to be influenced psychically by his name is irrefutable, especially in a culture where a name normally carries a distinct meaning. The name 'Mmadiatheng' refers to a woman of despicable behaviour. The poet uses the proverb 'bitsolebe ke seromo' to accentuate the

meaning of this name. By so doing, he maintains the intensity and amplitude of his poem without resorting to unartistic verbiage. This proverb creates certain expectations in the reader and also foreshadows the incidents that follow in this poem. Instead of just stating a fact (the belief held among Basotho people), it has an added effect of contributing towards the development of the poem. It constitutes the axis around which the composition is built and it reverberates in the reader's mind as he goes through the poem. The poet has employed this proverb to express his utter condemnation for such despicable conduct as that embodied in the name 'Mmadiatheng'.

- (5) Di a bulwa di a kwala,
Motshehalefuma o a ipiletsa;
(Sentebale : 59)

*They are opened and then closed,
He who laughs at the unfortunate
people calls misfortune unto
himself;*

This proverb reflects the Basotho's understanding of life: every dog has its day. Maphalla uses this proverb to shed more light on the preceding utterance, 'Di a bulwa di a kwalwa', so that it is understood to mean that life is in perpetual motion: whatever is opened is bound to be closed again. The movement of life is constituted by a paradoxical relationship of constant

reversals. Through this proverb, he unfolds the anti-theses of life. He gives a warning to those who live under a false notion of contentment, for such a condition is but a fleeting moment. He also offers a word of encouragement and consolation to those in distress, for their painful position is also apt to change. In this proverb, with its ramifications throughout the whole poem, he captures, in a nutshell, the illusiveness of permanence, as this is not a realistic feature of life as it unfolds in front of us.

The foregoing examples illustrate, to a great extent, how influence has enriched Maphalla's poetic compositions. Although the proverbs have been used in their original form, his work cannot be regarded as mere transcription. What is abundantly clear is that these proverbs are, to him, a source of inspiration which fuels his original ideas and they serve as one of the vehicles of expression he employs with commendable effect. In this way Palmer's view that influence is causation, cannot hold. Around these proverbs, Maphalla builds and espouses a world-view that is not only consistent with the central significance of these proverbs, but which also mirrors his individual understanding and elastic interpretation of these 'homely

truths'. Referring to the inspirational force of proverbs among Swahili poets, Knappert comments as follows:

Probably the most important source of inspiration for the Swahili poets was the vast and lively stock of Swahili proverbs, a treasure of oral tradition hidden in the hearts of the village elders. (1979 : 45)

Maphalla draws upon this wealth and expands its significance by providing a new context for it.

2.1.1.2 The structure of the proverb is altered. This syntactical change results in a difference in the conceptual structure of the new form as compared to the original one. Referring to how the syntactical position of the parts that constitute a sentence affects its meaning, Langacker makes this point:

It is necessary to assume that the meaning of a sentence is greater than the sum of meanings of individual lexical items, the semantic representation of a sentence includes the configuration of these components, the way they are arranged with respect to one another. (1972 : 5)

Maphalla implements this technique - of changing the set structural pattern of Sesotho proverbs - not only for the attainment of a new verbal style that is congruous

with his poetic versifications, but also, as a corollary to this, to add another dimension to the primary significance of these proverbs. Let us consider these examples:

- (6) Nako o moromuwa ha a na nyewe,
 Dipha le dikenkeng o se di fanyehwe;
 (Dikano : 8)

*Time, you are a messenger who cannot
 be accused,
 Faults and abominations should not be
 blamed on you;*

The poet has effected a minimal change by using substitution. In the original form of the proverb 'moromuwa ha a na lonya' (a messenger has no malicious intentions as it is the initiator of a thing who must take the blame), he replaces the word 'lonya' (malice) with 'nyewe' (court case). This substitution highlights the folly of human beings: they argue endlessly about the malignancy (guilt) or virtuosity (innocence) of time as though time were standing accused in the dock, as though a court case were being conducted against it. The line succeeding the proverb attests to the fundamental importance of the word 'nyewe', because it can only be during a trial in court where an offender might be found guilty and punishment is meted out. But then a 'court case' is purely a man-made situation that the poet exploits in order

to convey, to the reader, a very serious idea. By pointing out that it is improper to blame time for any mishap normally associated with it (time), he seems to suggest that there is another force responsible for the perpetually insidious motion of life - he might be alluding to the Creator. The word 'nyewe' is introduced into the said proverb in order to stress the fact that the Creator cannot be taken to task by anybody as He is the alpha and omega, consequently even the movement of time is regulated by Him. The minimal substitution, effected in the proverb, generates an added significance that reflects a fresh perception of life: the meaning of the proverbs is stretched beyond banal issues and enters the sanctimonious realm. Another reason Maphalla could have made this substitution is to achieve rhyme, as 'nyewe' and 'fanyehwe' have some phonological features in common; but then this borrowed technique alone could not have enhanced his artistry. Heese and Lawton (1986) also stress that the mere presence of rhyme does not necessarily imply that the reader is in the presence of a poem. For this reason, and several others, we prefer not to dwell on rhyme in this instance.

- (7) Ba e lwana e mahlomafubedu banna ba lekgotla,
 Ba tshwara thipa ka bohaleng bomme dithapelong;
 (Mahohodi : 34)

*The church elders fought a fierce
fight,
The mothers held the knife by the
blade in the mothers unions.*

The proverb in its original form should be 'mma ngwana o tshwara thipa ka bohaleng' (a woman will expose herself to danger in order to protect her child). The poet resorts to both inversion and omission. The change from 'mma' to 'bomme' is quite insignificant as the latter can still be regarded as the plural form of 'mme', i.e. 'mma' without the possessive element '-a' (mme + a = mma). Of significance here is the fact that he omits 'ngwana', because the idea of a child is not of much relevance to his poem. Its subordination is further emphasized by rearrangement of word order. Instead of starting with the subject 'bomme', and then the predicate 'ba tshwara thipa ka bohaleng', he places the predicate first, and then the subject. As Langacker again observes, rearrangement of syntactic structure is of crucial importance as it is:

responsible for many of the striking
differences between conceptual and
surface structures. (1972 : 118)

By reversing word order in this proverb, the poet succeeds in highlighting the overriding importance of action as compared to the doer of the action. This is in harmony

with the real gist of his poem: he admires and extols the commendable deed of the people of Bohlokong. The people as such are not the subject of praise but their concerted effort is the central issue. The inversion of the proverb is made to introduce and amplify the motivating force of the poem, namely: the speaker's Christian outlook. In keeping with his new belief, a human being should not be regarded as a physical entity only, but his spiritual component should be seen as the real being. It is therefore not surprising that the women as physical beings have been subordinated in order to accentuate their spiritual contribution in the christian domain. Thus a proverb with a clear meaning in the context of Sesotho culture, acquires new significance in the context of christianity as well.

- (8) Kgomo ho Mosotho ke modimo o
nko e metsi,
O tshabela ho yona ha ho foka
wa Mmakgepheretsi.
(Dikano : 32)

*To a Mosotho an ox is an ancestor
with a wet nose,
He takes refuge in it when
the cold south winds blow.*

The proverb 'kgomo ke modimo o nko e metsi' (an ox is an ancestor with a watery nose), is extended by insertion. The inserted words 'ho Mosotho' introduce another meaning when understood in the wider context of the poem as a

whole. The unextended proverb would normally signify that an ox deserves respect, irrespective of its running nose that makes it appear repulsive, for it provides sanctuary in times of need: in most forms of ritual whereby appeasement with the ancestors is sought, an ox features prominently. But the words 'ho Mosotho' seem to introduce an element of subtle protest: protest against dispossession of land with its attendant problems. The Basotho, in particular (but the Africans in general), have been forced by circumstances beyond their control, to sell their livestock, and hence they can no longer comply with their customary practices with ease. As it were, they have been deculturated. The structural change made to the proverb suggests that the poet is not singing praises to an ox as a physical entity, but real emphasis is put on its social function. The denial of the privilege of land ownership has robbed the Basotho of their very essence of being - their ancestors.

- (9) Peseletsa kgutsana,
 A pshela o a bona;
 (Kgapha tsa ka : 13)

*Do persevere orphan,
 It dried up whilst you watched;*

In this instance the proverb is reduced. In full it should be as follows: 'hlapi folofela leraha, metsi a

pshele o a bona' (you fish, take haste towards mud, water dried up as you watched) which implies that in times of famine one should content oneself with whatever is at hand. The first portion of the proverb is discarded and replaced by words that are analogous to it in intention and meaning. These words are 'Peseletsa kgutsana'. Their intention too, just like 'hlapi folofela leraha', is exhortative. They urge the subject (hlapi/kgutsana) to take a specific line of action - they point out a new direction. Seemingly, the poet is struck by the similarity that exists between two apparently diverse conditions: that of a forlorn fish (because the water has vanished) and an orphan (parentless child). The tender care that parents give to a child is covertly compared to the homely environment the water provides for fish. The word 'metsi' has been discarded, but, the subject concord 'A' in 'A pshele o a bona' is referential to metsi. The poet has not only reduced a familiar proverb, but he has substituted the deleted portion with words that circumscribe the significance of this proverb. That is, it no longer has a general bearing on life, but it now relates to an orphan, which is the central concern of his poem. This reduction and substitution intensifies the reader's understanding of the thoughts and ideas expressed in the proverb. The desperation of an orphan as well as a word of encouragement from the speaker are conveyed through an altered proverb.

(10) Ruri mehla e a fetoha,
 Madiba ho psha a matala;
 (Sentebale : 34)

*Certainly times do change,
 Green pools do dry up;*

Here too the first portion of the proverb has been dropped, but it is replaced by its full interpretation. The complete proverb goes as follows: 'di a bela di a hlweba, madiba ho psha a matala' (kingdoms wax and wane, great pools do dry up), which signifies that everything is apt to change, for even the deepest pools do turn into small ponds with the passage of time. Probably the poet is aware of the obscure meaning of the first portion of the proverb, hence he interprets it in the line preceding the actual extraction of the proverb. This has the added effect of magnifying the exactitude of the partially reduced and interpreted proverb. The forcefulness of the interpretation is further emphasized by the inclusion of the word 'ruri' (certainly) that indicates absolute certainty on the part of the persona as regards the inconsistent nature of life. The structure of the proverb is therefore tempered with in order to dilate and illuminate more the very proverb. Thus the underlying notion of life is captured with ingenious brevity.

2.1.1.3 At times the poet merely alludes to well-known Sesotho proverbs. By allusion we mean what Abrams explains as follows:

Allusion in a work of literature is a brief reference, explicit or indirect, to a person, place, or event, or to another literary work or passage. (1971 : 8)

A discussion on the examples that follow will shed more light on our viewpoint.

(11) Empa kajeno ke mona lebelo
le fedile,
Meepa ya dithaba le maralla
e nqetile;
(Mahohodi : 10)

*But today fact is the speed
is finished,
Steeps of mountains, and
- stony hills have exhausted me;*

The phrase 'lebelo le fedile' reminds a Sesotho speaker of the proverb 'lebelo le a fela, thota e sale' (speed gets finished, the plain remains), which implies that physical endurance is shortlived whereas the distance which needs to be covered remains beckoning invitingly. The words 'lebelo' and 'fedile' have an allusive reference to this proverb. The allusion mirrors the speaker's feeling of helplessness evoked by the realization of the brevity of human lifespan as compared to the vastness of creation.

In his dejection he appears to cast a fleeting thought on the essence of this proverb; but he avoids mentioning it overtly as this might stir up his already turbulent emotions. He is fully aware of the fact that old age is indicative of the inevitable impending uncertainty - the ignorance of life after death. The allusion to this terse proverb, as it were, takes out the sting of its forthrightness.

(12) Re napa ditaba le dibokeng
tša dipabala,
Re phuthi tša ka meso, re
nena diphate.
(Fuba sa ka : 63)

*We hit the nail on head even
in prestigious gatherings,
We are early antelopes,
we dislike sleeping blankets.*

The words 'phuthi' and 'ka meso', by allusion, refer to the proverb 'phuthi e tsoha ka meso e anyese' (an antelope gets up early in the morning to suckle its young ones). This means that an industrious person rises quite early in the morning, completes his house chores in time and goes out hunting for food as, in the English equivalent of this proverb, the earliest bird catches the fattest worm. Instead of stating how an antelope acts in the morning, he employs a metaphorical shift which suggests that we the superior mammals have taken over the role of

the antelope. We have indeed become antelopes, so to speak. Through this identification with early morning antelopes, the idea that comes across vividly, into the mind of the reader, is that the good they have learnt from the deceased stars (distinguished people) is now internalized in them. They no longer just wake up in the morning, but it has now become their daily habit to do so. In other words, from the exemplary behaviour and deeds of these people, they have learnt diligence and punctuality. By simply using two words that suggest a specific Sesotho proverb, the poet succeeds in calling to the reader's memory such a proverb together with its associated meanings. The new significance given to this suggested proverb is that the commendable habit of being 'early birds' has now become a characteristic of the speaker and company too.

(13) Hopola o **ngwana e motona**;
Hopola o **kabelwamanong**,
(Sentebale : 29)

*Do remember you are a male
child;
Do remember you are to be
fed to the vultures,*

A common Sesotho proverb is shrouded in what appears like mere repetition. The repetition of 'Hopola o' creates the impression that two similar ideas are being linked together to form one idea. These are 'ngwana e

motona' and 'kabelwamanong'. What the poet does is simply to interpolate (by introducing 'Hopola o' and deleting 'ke') the proverb 'ngwana e motona ke kabelwamanong' - a male child is perpetually exposed to danger. The proverb is meant to give encouragement as well as advice to a young man to be prepared to suffer stoically even in the face of excruciating torture and to bide his time before pondering any decisive action. In the context of this poem this valuable advice is offered to all males (for they are the natural leaders of their nation). The problems they encounter in their endeavour to seek justice should not dissuade them from their calling as men. It is by defeating vultures that a man can prove his worth. In other words, the leaders should regard difficulty as opportunity to prove their real worth.

2.2 EXOTIC INFLUENCES

Under this category we include all forms of influence that are evidently of Western origin. Abiola Irele's insightful remarks are worth recalling:

It is perhaps not too much to say that if modern African writing has any value at the present moment, any significance, it is essentially as a function of the

comprehensive testimony it offers of the turns and patterns of an unfolding drama of existence in which we have been and continue to be involved. That drama has its source of course in our relation to the Western world, which has crossed our historical path and modified the relations of our life as well as our perspective upon the world.
(1981 : 2)

From among the innumerable Western forms of influence observable in Maphalla's works, we choose to focus our attention only on Christian influence as it is the most predominant form.

2.2.1 Christianity as a source of influence

Gunn, in an article on 'Literature and Religion' in *Interrelations of Literature*, writes as follows:

While much contemporary literature exists at an intellectual and emotional remove from orthodox religious traditions and while most modern scholars have little interest in turning their criticism into a medium of theological discussion, religious concerns and issues remain at the centre of much of the critical discussions today.
(1982 : 47)

The religious doctrine that has crossed Maphalla's historical path is christianity. Its impact upon the Basotho

dates as far back as 1833, with the arrival of missionaries of the Paris Evangelical Mission in Lesotho. The missionaries, as Janheinz Jann (1968) observes, provided the newly converted writers with a spiritual centre, a mission station and a publishing house. Maphalla too, like his predecessors, could not escape the tentacles of christianity. It is one of the roots that nurture and fuel his creativity. This new religion manifests itself in various ways in Maphalla's poetic compositions. Let us focus our attention on the following spheres in which christian influence is evident:

2.2.1.1 Choice of titles

There are several titles that are overtly christian in inclination. The following are some of the most conspicuous ones:

- (14) 'Tsatsi la Sabata' - *Sabbath day* (Dikano : 49) which obviously refers to Sunday, a new Christian concept.
- (15) 'Davida wa Iseraeleng' - *David the Israelite* (Dikano : 63), lifted out of the biblical story of David and Goliath.
- (16) 'Noka ya Jorotane' - *The river Jordan* (Fuba sa ka : 34), In the scriptures this river represents the boundary between earth and heaven.
- (17) 'Bitso la Jesu' - *Jesu's Name* (Fuba sa ka : 40). A direct reference to the Son of God.

- (18) 'Lehodimo Hodimo' - *Heaven Above* (Kgapha tsa ka : 12). This refers to heaven, the ultimate home of all righteous Christians.
- (19) 'Ebe o tla reng?' - *What will you say* (Kgapha tsa ka : 24). This is suggestive of doomsday, on which every person will have to answer for his sins.
- (20) 'Baruti ba Lentswe' - *Ministers of Religion* (Mahohodi : 24). These are christian missionaries.
- (21) 'Bokella Manna' - *Collect Manna* (Sentebale : 39). It has reference to manna given to the Israelites by God in the wilderness.

All these headings indicate that the religion Maphalla imbibed in childhood finds expression in his poetry. They situate him in the religious category to which he belongs. They bear testimony to his christian doctrine. As Williams observes:

In the republic of letters a man can live as himself, but in the bureaucracy of letters he must continually declare his style and department, and submit to an examination of his purpose and credentials at the frontier of every field.
(Writing in Society : 121) [Date of publication not reflected]

With the above titles, the poet seems to be declaring, maybe unintentionally, his christian moral fibre. This will receive further attention in paragraph 2.3.1.3.

2.2.1.2 Images of Biblical origin

Barnet, Berman and Burto define an image as follows:

Whatever in a poem appeals to any of our senses (including sensations of heat and pressure as well as of sight, smell, taste, touch, sound) is an image. In short, images are the sensory content of a work, whether literal or figurative.
(1977 : 411)

Some of the images found in Maphalla's poetry have striking similarities with the material found in the terrain of christianity. This reflects the amplitude of christianity upon his mind. Spurgeon rightly observes that the imagery the poet uses is:

a revelation, largely unconscious, of the furniture of his mind, the channels of his thoughts, the qualities of things, the objects and incidents he observes and remembers and perhaps most significant of all, those which he does not observe or remember. (1961 : 4)

A brief discussion of some of such images will serve to illustrate our point:

(22) In 'Sello sa ka' (My complaint) the speaker says:

La tshwele le mafome la tla la
mphuralla,

(Dikano : 5)

*The world, of moths and rust
indeed turned its back upon me,*

There is a remarkable resemblance between the above line and this extract from the Bible:

Do not store up for yourselves treasures
on earth, where moth and rust destroy,
and where thieves break in and steal.
(Matthew 6 : 19)

Through this covert biblical reference, the poet paints a visual picture of a world whose beauty is deceptive because it is transitory as it is bound to be marred and eventually destroyed by moth and rust that constantly feed upon it and corrode it, respectively. Yet this image appears paradoxical when perceived in the context of the poem as a whole: the speaker is complaining about the injustices perpetrated against him in this world, but, in the same breath, he says he does not care much for this delusive planet. What encapsulates this attitude is the fact that it is the world of moths and rust that illtreats him. This apparent paradox veils a mocking tone. The object of scorn is those who gluttonously amass all the riches of this world for themselves only, as though these riches

are durable. The poet uses an image that has biblical undertones to express his protest against injustices that are prevalent on earth as well as to level criticism at those responsible for such injustices.

In 'O ile K.E. Ntsane' (K.E. Ntsane is Gone) he says:

(23) Ihlo la lefu le feta la Kaine;
(Fuba sa ka : 7)

*Death's eye is larger than that
of Caine;*

This image alludes to the incident in the Bible where Caine had killed his brother Abel, motivated by nothing else but envy. His brother's offering had been approved whereas his had not. So he killed Abel. After the murder had been committed his eyes bulged with fear and he was also on the lookout for anyone who might be on his trail to avenge his brother's death. As a frightened man, nothing could escape his glare as he was suspicious of everything. The image of a watchful bulging eye of death, which resembles that of the originator of death (murder) Caine, casts death in a bad light: it is so watchful that its victim cannot escape its malicious attentions. Furthermore, this image reveals the poet's spiteful attitude towards death which, by implication, comes about as a result of unwarranted envy. Thus

death is regarded as both a scoundrel and an arrogant phenomenon that should be an object of scorn.

Another biblically inclined image is found in 'Ke ikopela Tokoloho' (I am Asking for My Freedom):

(24) Ke mpa ke kopa kananelo,
 Fatsheng lena la Ntate,
 (Kgapha tsa ka : 50)

*I am merely asking for recognition,
 In this world of my Father,*

The second line recreates the christian concept of Father (God), hence this word even begins with a capital letter. This is the Father figure found in the 'Lord's prayer', in Matthew 6:9: "Our Father who art in heaven..." Father in this context implies an omnipotent, supernatural power responsible for all creation. But then the speaker's fellow human beings hold him captive, restricting his liberty, as though this world is of their making. It is ironic for them to behave in this manner. What he is telling his tormentors is to leave him alone for they have no christian moral authority over him; he is their equal in the eyes of their Father. All he wants is recognition of this equality as it is a right given to him by his Father. This image embodies a subtle feeling of anger and resentment about man-made shackles that curtail his physical and spiritual freedom.

In a poem entitled 'Moleboheng wa Pabala' (The Beautiful Moleboheng), the speaker says:

(25) A tswa a hoshola Thapelo wa Batho,
Pelong a lelaeditse mahlo hodimo;
(Sentebale : 15)

*The pitiable Thapelo went out dejected,
Inwardly, lifting his eyes up to heaven;*

The second line reminds the reader of this line from Psalm 25: "To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul; in you I trust; O my God." These words are associated with the act of praying. The name of the individual involved in this act is Thapelo, which also means 'prayer'. The reader perceives a visual image of a man who resorts to prayer in order to win a woman's love. This image carries sarcastic overtones: Thapelo's folly is reflected in his act of praying for wordly pleasures - love between a man and a woman - instead of concentrating on worthwhile issues like love for his Creator and love among all human beings. His stupidity again lies in the wrong impression he holds about God: seemingly God takes an interest in the youths' courting. Maphalla has tactfully manipulated an image that has obvious biblical connections, to express his sarcastic attitude, which is also expanded by his use of the word 'pitiable', towards one of the personae in the poem.

Sometimes Maphalla's christian imagery is conveyed through symbolism. By symbolism we mean that:

He presents an object, x, and without his necessarily mentioning a further object, his way of presenting x makes us think that it is not only x but also is or stands for something more than itself - some y or other, or a member of y's; x acts as a symbol for y or y's. (Nowotny, 1968 : 64)

In 'Mohla a Tlang' (The Day He Comes) he employs symbolism:

(26) Tsatsi leo ke letsatsi la
karohano,
Tsatsi le talolang ba latotseng
sefapano;

(Mahohodi : 43)

*That day is the day of parting from
one another,
The day that exposes those who
denied the cross;*

The word 'cross' is symbolic of cruxifixion as well as Christ who was crucified on the cross. Thus the second line, in the above extract, reminds us of Simon Peter who denied Jesus thrice before the cock crowed when He was just about to be crucified. His denial of Jesus reflects his faltering christian belief. The impression created through this indirect reference to

the day of resurrection, is that those who bore their christian faith even under trying circumstances (unlike Peter), will gain entry into the Kingdom of heaven. The reader does visualize God sitting on his judgement throne, separating the christian from the non-christians and thus exposing those who denied his Son, the cross. In this line God's act, of exposing the non-christians, is transferred to the 'day', as though it is the day that will do His will. In short, the poet, through symbolic imagery, conveys his condescending attitude towards those who are not of christian stock for he fears for their fate.

2.2.1.3 World-view

Goldmann explains world-view as follows:

By world-view we mean a coherent and unitary perspective concerning man's relationship with his fellow men and with the universe. (1981 : 111)

He goes further to make this observation:

World-views are historial and social facts. They are totalities of ways of thinking, feelings which in given conditions are imposed on men finding themselves in a similar

economic and social situation, that is, imposed on certain social groups.
(1981 : 112)

It is our contention that although Maphalla's world-view is consistent with the socio-political situation in which he finds himself as well as the historical epoch in which he lives, it is, to a great extent, influenced by the christian teachings he imbibed from his childhood. These teachings manifest themselves on several planes of his thinking and perception.

(a) Conception of creation

His conception of creation is in harmony with an account of creation detailed in the book of Genesis. God created everything. This is evident in the majority of his poetic compositions. He stresses the sacredness of creation and chastises anyone who strives to take control over what was not created by Him. Let us consider these extracts:

(27) Tswalo lena ke le abetsweng ke
Ramahodimo.

(Dikano : 1)

*The conscience given to me by
Owner-of-heavens.*

This implies that his conscience is not his property, but a gift from the Almighty who created man as well as his conscience. The word 'abetsweng' (from 'aba', meaning to distribute or allocate) suggests that there are many of these consciences at the Creator's disposal and He allocates them as He wishes. The source of his conscience, the Creator, is of cardinal importance to him, for without Him he would not be in existence; hence it is only proper for him to succumb to the dictates of his conscience.

In Dinaledi Tseo (Those Stars), the speaker says:

(28) Di nkgopotsa botshabebo,
Boholo ba ya kaletseng maru.
(Kgapha tsa ka : 19)

*They remind me of solemnity,
The greatness of the one who
rides on the clouds.*

He does not focus on the stars as a physical presence, but on their Creator; He who is even capable of riding on clouds. The words 'ya kaletseng maru' - the one who rides on the clouds - accentuate the idea of solemnity and dreadfulness introduced in the first line and also indicates the mystical powers of God. He is not only the originator of creation but is, even literally too, on top of it. The insignificance and powerlessness of man

is also implied in these lines. The poet actually seems to be saying that creation, in its entirety, mirrors God's unequalled power. The same conception of creation is echoed in this line:

(29) Lehodimo la Ramasedi le kgabile
ka botalana;
(Mahohodi : 10)

*God's heaven is adorned in lush
greenness;*

Heaven, together with its marvelous beauty, belongs to God. This idea is also embodied in:

(30) Ramahodimo, kgabunyane la hao
ke leo,
(Fuba sa ka : 15)

*Owner-of-heavens, there is your
homeless servant,*

As the only owner of heavens, God is the only one who can permit the deceased and homeless Ntsane to enter His kingdom.

The poet also makes mention of the material man is made of:

(31) Nama e tla theohela fatshe
leroleng,
(Sentebale : 67)

The flesh will go down unto dust,

There is a close resemblance between this line and the curse cast upon Adam by God after he had partaken of the fruit of the forbidden tree:

... for dust you are and to dust you will return. (Genesis : 3 : 19)

It illustrates the weakness of the flesh of man and how it will return to dust one day.

(b) Attitude towards life

According to the poet, life is predetermined by God and it is therefore incumbent on man to fit into a set pattern over which he has no say. Man is inherently incapable of changing this situation. Among other pronouncements that reveal this attitude, are the following:

(32) Re abetswe dilemo tsa pallo,
(Dikano : 11)

*We have been prescribed a specific
number of years for our lives,*

The scriptures mention that man has been allotted only seventy years for his life on earth. It is beyond man's capabilities to prolong lifespan beyond this time limit. This is the reason why the poet again says:

(33) Nako ke lenqosa la Ramahodimo, Ntate;
(Dikano : 9)

Time is a messenger of God, our Father;

meaning that it is only God who regulates the movement of time. This ties up well with the previous mention of time in the proverb 'Nako o moromuwa ha a na nyewe', in example (6), which implies that time takes orders from its owner only, and that is God.

(34) Monna o phela ka wa phatla mofufutso.
(Fuba sa ka : 11)

Man lives by the sweat of his brow.

This line has the same ring as the punishment meted out to Adam:

By the sweat of your brow you will
eat your food. (Genesis; 3 : 19)

It indicates that the Almighty has ruled that man will obtain his livelihood through suffering and consequently all men toil for their bread. There is no choice.

- (35) Kgabane, bophelo ba hao o bo qetile,
Ha tshepe e o lletse o se dikadike;
(Kgapha tsa ka : 53)

*Fine man, you have exhausted your life
Once the bell has sounded your call,
stop dilly-dallying;*

The idea that is stressed further in the above extract is the inevitability of life's end - there is no escape from death's sting, hence dilly-dallying is of no use. But then in the face of this foreboding nature of life, the poet finds inner resilience from his attitude towards life and death: life is lent to him by God, hence he will not hesitate when his name is called up in heaven:

- (36) Le mohla le thonngwang kwana hodimo,
Mehaswana ruri nna ke tla jarella,
Le tumediso e ka nna ya hlokahala,
Hobane bitso la motho, ruri ke la
motho.

(Sentebale : 6)

*Even the day it is called up there,
Certainly I will carry my rags on
my shoulder,
I might not even have time to greet,
Because surely a person's name is a
person's name.*

He seems to recognize the fact that he has no say on his life; to an extent that he might even break his custom by not exchanging greetings with those he will be leaving behind when his name is called. This also magnifies the power his Creator wields over his entire being.

The above five extracts demonstrate clearly that the author's attitude towards life is greatly influenced by his christian faith. He seems to be preoccupied with the compelling need to please one's Creator on earth. This is one reason why at times the sordid actions of his fellow human beings drive him into a secluded world of his dreams:

(37) Ke fatshe leo ho lona ho sa
keneng ba kgopo;
Fatsheng le buswang ka toka e seng
ka ditebele, (Dikano : 25)

*It is the world into which the wicked
will gain no access,
The world ruled through justice and
not fists.*

The word 'ba kgopo' (the wicked) might mean sinners in a christian sense but its other meaning is reflected in the second line : to rule through injustice and physical oppression. Thus the speaker's conception of 'sin' is quite broad.

(c) Sense of justice

For the author real justice can be attained and maintained through unflagging respect and fear for the Lord:

(38) Le reng, "Ha o sa tshabe Modimo o tshaba mang? Hobane Ramahodimo ka diketso o a tshabeha."

(Mahohodi : 33)

You should say, "If you don't respect God whom do you respect? Because God, through actions, is awe-inspiring."

Maphalla's sense of justice is overtly christian. The two lines cited above seem to echo this christian adage:

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.
(Proverbs 1 : 7)

Furthermore, according to the persona, a modicum of self-righteousness might be achieved through a confession:

(39) Mophatlalatsi nkutlwele,
Phatlalatsa sefuba sa ka
ke sena;

(Fuba sa ka : 3)

*Publisher, please have mercy on me
Publish my feelings here they are;*

The feelings he refers to are his innermost thoughts that can be made public only by confessing. It is as though he is a sinner confessing his sins to a priest (the publisher) who is a mediator between him and his people. He cannot reach his people without the co-operation of the publisher. Apparently it is his very people he has sinned against through his indifference when they needed his guidance. This seems to be the reason why he goes on to say:

(40) Mophatlalatsi nkutlwele,
 E tle e re le ha ke se ke
 falletse,
 Ke siile mabele, ke thobile,
 Sefuba se rute mabewana nna
 ke thotse,
 (Fuba sa ka : 4)

*Publisher, please have mercy on me,
 So that when I am gone,
 When I have left sorghum behind
 without giving notice,
 The feelings should teach generations
 whilst I am quiet.*

The speaker's intention in these lines is to clear his conscience by confessing. A confession seems not only to cleanse him but also exonerates him from blame for failing to fulfil his obligation. What he hopes to accomplish appears to have the same desired effect as one would expect from a christian confession: emotional as well as psychological relief.

In short, the poet's sense of justice is sacrosanct and anyone who digresses from it commits sacrilege.

Again there is irony concealed in the statement 'Mophatlalatsi nkutlwele'. It is the publisher's duty to print and disseminate an author's ideas and not to censor or reject them according to his own whims and prejudices. By pleading with the publisher, the speaker indirectly reveals the publisher's recalcitrance. That the persona has to beg him to do his job without discriminating, is as ironic as it is quite revealing. We shall come back to this point in chapter 4.

(d) Sense of security or well-being

In an article on 'Tennyson's Religious Faith and Doubt', Jump (1973) observes that Tennyson finds repose in his religion. Maphalla too appears to find solace and sanctuary in his christian religion. Let us illustrate this with examples:

(41) A ke le mpontsheng haeso hae
 Jerusalema,
 Le ke le ntshupise motse o
 motle wa kganya;
 Le nna ke labalabela ho ya
 bina dipesalema,
 Ke tsetselela ho sutha
 fatsheng lena la difanya.
 (Dikano : 41)

*Please show me my home, Jerusalem,
Please point out to me the beautiful
town of glitter;
I also yearn to go and sing psalms,
I am whining to get away from this
world of detractions.*

The last line clearly indicates that the speaker would like to find refuge in heaven. When things go wrong on this earth, he yearns for the eternal bliss of heaven. This wish is consistent with his christian faith that fills him with the hope of immortality in which he finds ideal security.

(42) Kunutu la katleho ke mamello,
Ke ho tshepa Lehodimo, le ho
rata tshebetso;
(Mahohodi : 21)

*The secret of success is patience,
It is trust in Heaven, and to like
work.*

Evidently the poet perceives success in terms of God's omnipotence. It is a privilege that can be endowed only by Him. The speaker's well-being is subject only to God's wish.

(43) Ramasedi ha a robale;
Mookamedi mahodimong, hodimo,
O bona keledi tsa dikgutsana.
(Sentebale : 22)

*God does not sleep;
The Most High in heaven, above,
He takes note of the tears of orphans.*

In times of trials and tribulations he pins his hope on his christian belief. He has unwavering trust in his Lord for He is master of his destiny.

(44) Boroko a ko mpepe,
O nyolohele ka nna hodimodimo,
Kwana moo ho seng disuwa le mohono.
(Kgapha tsa ka: 9)

*Sleep, do carry me on your back please,
Ascend with me to the highest levels,
Where there are neither grudges
nor rivalries.*

His total dependence on the Almighty finds expression through dreams too. It is as though the poet would like to bail out of this world for fear of being overcome by its decadence, as his purity can only be guaranteed in heaven.

(45) Ha mathata a o hlwele setha,
- Tadima hodimo.
(Fuba sa ka : 41)

*When troubles are heaped upon you,
- Lift your eyes up to heaven.*

He advises those who might be experiencing problems to seek solutions in heaven. He is convinced that it is only through God's intervention that an individual can surmount his obstacles. An individual's safety from the dangers that surround him, comes about only through steadfast christian faith.

2.2.1.4 The hymnal refrain

Cox and Dyson (1978) describe a refrain as a repetition of a phrase, a line or series of lines at the same point in each stanza throughout the poem. In most of Maphalla's poems, refrains appear at the end of stanzas. Most of these refrains, whether they be at the beginning or end of a stanza, show a marked resemblance to some hymnal refrains contained in the hymns of the Dutch Reformed Church (Maphalla is an elder in this church) in their hymnal book entitled 'Hosanna'.

The similarity that exists between church hymns and traditional African poetry was long noticed by A.S. Gerard who made this observation:

A christian hymn, after all, is little else than a praise song to God, and early African writers were bound to find the genre congenial as it enabled them to put traditional literary taste and poetic techniques in the service of their new beliefs.
(1971 : 33)

In Maphalla's modern poetic compositions, the creative procedure referred to by Gérard is in fact inverted: he borrows with ease from existing hymnal forms. He takes over christian literary taste and uses it to

reflect his world outlook. Compare the following refrains found in his poems with those refrains or lines found in some of the church hymns:

- (46) Mohla a tlang,
(Mahohodi : 42)

The day He comes

compare with

Mohla a tlang - in hymn No. 97 entitled
'Mohla a tlang.'

- (47) Hobane ruri, le re hapile
(Fuba sa ka : 35)

*Because truly, it (the world)
has captured us.*

compare with

Ruri le re hapile - in hymn No 362 entitled
'Lefatshe le letle lela'

- (48) Ke mouwane, di a feta
(Sentebale : 8)

They are mist, they come to pass

compare with

Ba tshwana le jwang hosasa
 Bo phakisang ho palesa
 Mantsiboya ha bo helwa
 Bo phakisa ho omella.

*They are like grass in the morning
 Which quickly flowers
 In the evening when it is cut
 Soon dries up*

- in hymn No. 31 entitled

'Jehova Morena wa Rona'

(49) - Tswela pele!
 (Setebale : 10)

↳ Go foward!

compare with

Lelala o tswela pele

Look up and go forward - in hymn No 263
 with the title 'Lelala o tswela pele'.

These refrains however, are not mere appendages to Maphalla's poetry, which echo their hymnal counterparts. They are so ingeniously interwoven into his compositions that they enhance their amplitude and also lend these compositions that sanctity associated with the monastic order.

2.2.2 Conflicting influences

Thus far we have discussed indigenous (proverbs) and exotic (christian) influences separately; creating the impression that these are not found side by side in the poet's work. Fact is, they are often found side by side. In some instances there is even a clear conflict of influences that impinge upon the writer's mind, resulting in seemingly incompatible ideas. Such conflicting influences seem to suggest that the poet persistently straddles two cultures: his own and that of the Western world. As Moloi remarks:

From these contradictory aspirations
the Black author has not been able
to free himself. (1973 (a) : 93)

Maphalla strives to embrace the christian culture whilst his traditional culture has a stranglehold on him. He appears to be at pains to pacify the two contradictory worlds. This dilemma, manifest in his works, is characteristic of most Black writers and in turn, it reflects the complex problem Africans in general have to grapple with, namely, how to bring the two opposing worlds into acquiescence, for, as Ngugi says:

What has been is intimately bound up with what might be. Our vision of the future, of diverse possibilities of life and human potential, has roots in our experience of the past. (1968 : 4)

The following instances reflect some of these conflicting influences referred to above:

- (50) Tlerolang mabewana Ramohau a bokwe,
Tlerolang ho be ho utlwe le Thesele lebitleng;
(Dikano : 22)

*Shout, true men, let God be praised,
Shout loudly so that even Thesele
should hear in the grave;*

In these lines reference is made to both the christian God as well as to one of the ancestral gods (Thesele - the late king of the Basotho). The conflict is between christian and ancestral worship. The speaker appears to align himself with both.

- (51) Yaba ke tadima hosele ke hlapaola Satane,
Ka ba ka ikutlwa le ho mo tsoma ka koto.
(Dikano : 35)

*Then I looked elsewhere and swore at Satan,
I even felt like hunting for him with a knobkerrie.*

In these lines the speaker alludes to both christian and traditional practices. Satan, according to christianity, is the bearer of all things evil, but the method the persona would like to adopt in order to apprehend this menace, falls within the scope of traditional hunting escapades: killing the prey with a knobkerrie. Apparently the poet perceives Satan as a physical entity that can be eradicated through traditional secular methods.

(52) A ko nkutlwe Ramasedi, ke a rapela,
E tle e re ha ke se ke e tshetse
noka e ntsho,
O ke o nkabele motsotso wa ho hobela,
Mohobelo wa mangeloi, mabewana a
kgotso.

(Fuba sa ka : 35)

*Please do hear me God I pray,
So that after I have crossed the
black river,
You should allow me a minute of
dancing,
A dance of angels, true men of peace.*

Reference is made to God and the angels - both of them are christian concepts. But then the speaker also mentions 'ho hobela' (a traditional Sesotho dance performed at certain rituals and ceremonies only). Moreover, he associates this type of dance with the angels. His plea to God might be an indirect request to Him for tolerance to allow him to reconcile his traditional beliefs and actions (ho hobela) with his christianity. This reflects the conflict inside the speaker.

In 'Koduwa ya Ralebitso' (Ralebitso's Disaster), the poet makes two diametrically opposed statements:

- (53) A phahamela hodimo, haeng la Ntate
kganyeng.
(Kgapha tsa ka : 53)

*He rose up to heaven, God's glorious
home.*

and

- (54) O ka ba wa nahana hore o jele
phehla.
(Kgapha tsa ka : 54)

*You can even think he ate African
poison.*

The first statement suggests that the speaker is of christian stock and yet the second statement reveals his belief in witchcraft, which is supposed to be non-existent as far as christianity is concerned. In the poet's mind, there is a mixture of both christian and 'supposedly' heathen tendencies.

- (55) Diqhobosheane botebong ba lewatle,
Le paradeisi tlhorong ya Thabatelle?
(Sentebale : 35)

*Fortresses in the depth of the sea,
And a paradise at the summit of
Thabatelle?*

Contradicting influences embodied in the above lines seem to illuminate a deliberate intention. He is intent on expressing contempt for those who promised him both earthly (fortresses) and sacred (paradise) attractions, for they seem to confuse staid issues with banal issues. (We'll expatiate on this in chapter 4).

Our discussion thus far has centred around how Maphalla employs both indigenous and exotic material to enhance his literary communicative style. The two categories of influence help to convey and illuminate the poet's ideas and thoughts in such a way that these (ideas and thoughts) appeal to our senses of perception. In this way, the influences become an important constituent element of the imagery he employs with commendable effect in his poetry. Imagery, which we discuss in the next chapter, reveals other significant subcomponents of Maphalla's mind (just as both indigenous and exotic influences form an integral part of his mind).

CHAPTER 3

3. IMAGERY

The existence and significance of imagery as a literary communicative device has long been an acknowledged fact (cf. Downey 1929; Abrams 1971; Millar and Currie 1978). Images are mental impressions that symbolize in various ways the things and qualities of the external world in which we live. Put more graphically:

We enliven our scenes with sounds,
we enrich them with odours; we
experience all manner of temperature
and tactile and organic effects.
(Downey 1929 : 18)

The shift of emphasis from associating imagery with vision only, to perceiving it as a communicative device that appeals to the other senses as well is best enunciated by, among others, Millar and Currie. They maintain that nowadays the term imagery should be understood to mean that part of a literary work of art which appeals to any one (or more) of these senses: sight, hearing, touch, taste, smell and the kinaesthetic sense that relates to our sense of bodily effect.
(1978 : 63 - 64)

In addition to what imagery entails, Abrams also refers to its vehicles:

Imagery is used to signify all the objects and qualities of sense perception referred to in a poem or other works of literature, whether by literal description, by allusion, or in the analogues (the vehicles) used in similes and metaphors. (1971 : 76)

The term imagery, in this chapter, will be used in a general sense, to include both literal and figurative language used to appeal to any of our senses. What we mean by literal and figurative language is explained concisely by Grebanier:

Imagery is literal when the images are to be taken in their natural or strict meaning; imagery is figurative when the meaning is an extension of the image presented. (1975 : 53)

By figurative language we are not going to restrict ourselves only to those figures of speech listed by Heese and Lawton (1986), namely: simile, personification, metaphor and symbolism. We shall also include any figure of speech that evokes imagery, among others : alliteration, hyperbole and rhythm. Furthermore, we shall, by and large, use Cuddon's terminology to refer to

the different senses to which images may appeal. These terms are: visual (sight), olfactory (smell), tactile (touch), auditory (hearing), gustatory (taste) and kineasthetic (bodily movement and effect). (1984 : 323)

We should also bear in mind that an image may appeal to more than one sense at the same time, or it can also refer to one sense in terms of another sense, creating what Millar and Currie (1978) refer to as synaesthetic imagery.

In our discussion of imagery here, we shall not pay attention to idioms and proverbs as vehicles of imagery. Our sole reason is that these are indigenous expressions already pregnant with imagery. Consequently their potential to radiate images of commendable magnitude does not necessarily hinge on the writer's skills but on their inherent aesthetic nature. As Boadi points out:

... the varied emotional and intellectual reactions shown by native speakers to proverbs are conditioned more evidently by the aesthetic value of these proverbs - the quality of the imagery and the wit - than by their moral content or truth value. (1972 : 185)

Idioms too, are 'ready made indigenous labels, which may be tacked on to a given subject or subject concord, in

order to give it a typically Sotho ring', and in them 'abstract ideas and concepts are rendered in a more concrete and practical manner'. (Guma, 1967 : 67 - 68)

In this chapter we shall concentrate only on those other aspects that reveal Maphalla's artistry at evoking imagery as a significant literary communicative device.

Our objective in this chapter, as regards imagery in Maphalla's poetry, is two-fold:

- (a) First, to identify the various situations/fields from which Maphalla draws his images; to demonstrate how such a choice stimulates and illuminates the reader's imagination whilst at the same time, it gives one a glimpse into the workings of the writer's mind: his likes and dislikes; hopes and frustrations; the whisperings of his mind as well as the yearnings of his heart. Spurgeon substantiates this view as follows:

For, as has often been pointed out, best of all by Bergson, memory is not a storehouse, it is a selecting machine - a sieve - and the fact that our instrument of memory selects certain things or aspects shows that they have a certain

attraction for us, a certain suitability to our temperament. Or it may work the other way, and we remember things because they are especially repugnant to us. (1961 : 12)

- (b) Secondly, we shall also, parallel to the point in '(a)' above, discuss some of the techniques the poet employs to evoke imagery. It is our contention that besides the normal vehicles of imagery mentioned previously (metaphor and others) he ingeniously manipulates the Sesotho language in order to create illuminating images. As Spurgeon again observes, an image can be:

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

Our analysis and interpretation of Maphalla's imagery will be situated in the context of the images, that is, both the immediate (the line, stanza or poem) as well as the wider (his poetry as a whole) context. After all, every image gains clarity and significance only from its context. (Clemen, 1966 : 3)

Furthermore, some images will be better understood when viewed against the socio-politico-cultural backdrop. Kunene fully recognizes the cultural connotations some images might have, when he remarks as follows:

When, however, they are localized as to time and place, they reveal cultural traits which may be unique to the people who provide them with context, and specific culture-oriented attitudes to given phenomena begin to emerge. (1971 : 102)

This, however, does not imply that Maphalla's imagery is sometimes purely localized, but it means that at times the reader should first grasp its local significance before he can have a proper understanding of its universal implications.

His imagery is related to the existential situation of his fellow human beings. He draws images from the human experience as well as from the natural environment.

3.1 IMAGES ASSOCIATED WITH HUMAN EXPERIENCE

In this area we can make a distinction between four subcategories:

3.1.1 He builds images that relate to the physical condition of man - pertaining to disease, pain and vitality.

3.1.1.1 Images relating to disease:

- (1) Rato lena ke le jwang banna?
 Le iphetotse mokgohlane
 moyeng ho nna;
 (Mahohodi : 14)

*What kind of love is this
 men?
 It has transformed itself
 into a cold in my soul;*

The imagery evoked in the lines above is associated with disease. 'Mokgohlane' is a cold in the head and chest. Its effect on the victim is both painful and nagging. Even though it is curable, normally it takes time before the sufferer recovers completely. The persona's condition is exacerbated by the attack on his soul, which ought to be the seat of his very being. The patient is thus in a very precarious position; his very being is threatened. This image portrays the magnitude of the love that overwhelms the speaker. He finds it uncontrollable. He is incapable of exercising control over it. The origin of this love that attacks him is as enigmatic as that of 'mokgohlane' - a disease. It is like a self-propelling force that defies restraint.

Moreover, it appears to be involuntary, for it thrusts itself upon an individual just like a disease: its period of stay too is just as unpredictable.

- (2) Ke tla thothokisa metsi a
 molatswana,
 Ke tla pepesa mekgokgothwane
 le yona mefetshe;
 (Dikano : 1)

*I will sing praises to
 the water of the brooklet,
 I'll expose whooping-coughs
 as well as cancers;*

In the above extract, the poet combines different types of diseases to evoke imagery. He says, in the second line, his intention is to expose the maladies that grip the world. The intention to expose the diseases prevalent in this world seems to be what the poet regards as the tenet of his poetry. The two images in the second line (that of whooping-coughs as well as that of cancer) portray a repulsive picture of the world: it is fraught with malignant diseases. This analogous comparison suggests the decadence that pervades the world; the two diseases epitomize the dichotomy of the decay: some of the damage might be rectified (like whooping-coughs, it is curable) and the other is irreparable (just like cancer). The state of affairs portrayed by these

images is as undesirable and repugnant as the diseases themselves.

Images relating to disease are also found in these lines:

- (3) O pepese mekgokgothwane ke ena
e fetotse batho dikowa.
(Mahohodi : 32)

*Expose these whooping-coughs
that have turned people into
invalids.*

- (4) Malwetse a ke a lese ho nkgarametsa.
(Fuba sa ka : 4)

*Diseases should desist from
pushing me around.*

From the above exemplification, it is evident that Maphalla draws on kinaesthetic images associated with disease to give expression to his overt aversion for those abstract situations he illuminates through these images. By associating these situations with disease, he reveals a preoccupation with the maiming effect of disease upon the human body and spirit. The reader's body shudders at the mere mention of disease. The repugnant situations the poet equates with disease, seem to attack - just like a disease - his very will to live.

3.1.1.2 Images related to pain and suffering

- (5) Mophatlalatsi nkutlwele,
Phatlalatsa pobodi ke ena;
(Fuba sa ka : 3)

*Publisher please have mercy
on me,
Publish the groaning here it is;*

The word 'pobodi' conjures up, in the reader's mind, a mental auditory picture of a cry emanating from intolerable pain. 'Pobodi' elicits from the reader a mental reproduction, 'a memory of a past sensational or perceptual experience'. (Wellek and Warren, 1985 : 186 - 187)

This insidiously suggested cause for pain induces the reader's body to shudder and writhe as though this internal injury is being inflicted on him. Through deduction, the reader forms a mental picture of the speaker's tormentors: they should be people who take it upon themselves to torture others physically and spiritually. These can only be his adversaries - whoever they are. This image too, together with its ramifications, evokes exuberant compassion in the reader. He even feels like coming to the rescue of the speaker in this seemingly unprovoked strife; he wishes he could help the helpless victim out of his plight.

Images associated with pain are also evident in these lines:

- (6) Ho lebala motsotswana dihlabi
le matetetso.
(Kgapha tsa ka : 9)

*To forget for a second the
stitches and internal injuries.*

- (7) Matetetso a nkakata kgafetsa;
(Fuba sa ka : 4)

*Internal injuries strike me
repeatedly;*

- (8) La e nyanyabetsa kwena sefubeng,
(Fuba sa ka : 5)

*It (death) stabbed the crocodile
in the chest,*

- (9) Ke tla thobela dipobodi le
mefehelo,
(Sentebale : 67)

*I'll slip away from groanings and
sighs,*

The pain to which the speaker is subjected is definitely unbearable - see example (5). Apparently it is only the publisher, through publishing the speaker's groaning, who can ameliorate his burden. The covert implication is that the speaker can no longer endure the excruciating pain of being forcibly silenced through partial or

total censorship. He would like to shirk this burden. He earnestly wants an outlet for his feelings and ideas. These tormenting feelings that weigh heavily on his whole being are the source of his wail. The wanton destruction brought upon human beings by their fellow beings is the exact stimulus of his agony. The reader's sympathy is aroused by the vivid portrayal of the persona's pitiable situation: he finds himself helpless and he can only cry aloud in pain in order to alleviate his suffering.

(10) Fatsheng lena la matetetso.
(Kgapha tsa ka : 8)

In this world of internal injuries.

The image evoked in this line is also kinaesthetic and it is rendered metaphorically. This metaphor, as Hodgson observes:

is 'strengthened' by the possessive construction that follows it.
(1984 : 31)

It is as though the world is possessed by internal injuries. The implied suggestion is horrifying: the world is at the mercy of 'internal injuries' for they possess it; they have a legitimate right to its ownership;

consequently they can exercise their free will over it. Internal injuries, in turn, come about as a result of infliction of pain in one way or another.

In all the images associated with pain, the speaker paints a vivid picture of a very hostile world; a world whose inhabitants dish out affliction with unparalleled zeal. It is an inhuman world. His essential preoccupation with pain is indicative of his reasonable concern about the perpetual torture to which some human beings are subjected by others. These hideous images clearly concretize the cruelty and wickedness that characterize his poetic world.

3.1.1.3 Images relating to vitality

The two subcategories of images discussed in '3.1.1.1' and '3.1.1.2' portray the world as a sick place, tottering under a heavy load of severe pain and maiming diseases. It is therefore logical that a remedy has to be sought for such a disturbing situation. It is thus not surprising for the speaker to make use of images relating to vitality (good health and physical well being). They are indicative of his strong wish to get out of the terrible quagmire in which he finds himself. Let us focus our attention on these examples:

(11) Athe thothokiso ke setlhare,
e hlokolotsi,

(Dikano : 1)

*And yet a poem is medication,
it is precious,*

The image conjured up in the reader's mind is a visual one: he perceives a medicine man who dispenses his medicines with confidence. His patient is the powerless and helpless poet - he puts his trust entirely in the sagacious practitioner. As a patient the speaker has no option but to take whatever medication is prescribed for him. The treatment prescribed turns out to be that the persona (patient) will find a cure in the activity of composing poetry. It will provide him with the desired effect of offloading his burden because through it he will give vent to his turbulent emotions which threaten to tear apart his very chest. Through this subtly suggested concatenation of patient-medicineman-medication-poetry composition, the reader perceives a flicker of hope in the poet: the poet realizes that there is a way out of his predicament. This glimmer of hope is borne out of the trust he has in the cure at his disposal. There is a way in which he can shirk the burden that oppresses and depresses him. Although he seems to be wading in a slough, he is not hysterical; moreover he has no death wish. Thus his poetry is

neither an indictment nor vituperation of life in its entirety. Life is worth living, for there is still something that can ameliorate his suffering. This ray of hope is also expressed in this medical metaphor:

(12) Thothokiso ke masodi, menyepetsi,
Ke sona setlhare sa moya le
maikutlo.

(Dikano : 3)

*A poem is tear drops, tears,
It is medication for the
spirit and feelings.*

In the midst of the chaos that surrounds him, he finds solace in his poetry, for it gives expression to his insubordinate emotions. He seems to be fully aware of the inherently disastrous consequences of bottling up one's anger. He has to release the pressure valves in one way or another. It is the only way he can guarantee his vitality. He has to find a tonic to sooth his seething spirit and emotions. Poetry is the metaphorical medicine to him.

The image of poetry as a therapeutic tonic is also implicit in the titles he gives to his anthologies:

(13) **Fuba sa ka** - *My feelings*

In this collection of poetry Maphalla gives vent to his disturbed feelings.

(14) **Kgapha tsa ka** - *My Tears*

It releases the pressure valves to let out the pain in him.

(15) **Mahohodi** - *Alluvium on the banks
of a river*

The anthology urges the younger generation to take cognisance of the past so that they might get 'medication' (advice and exemplary behaviour) that will soothe their scars emanating from the present as well as those they might encounter in future.

(16) **Dikano** - *Oaths*

Wherein he pledges to tell the truth as is, for only this can reduce the burdensome feelings that weigh heavily on him.

(17) **Sentebale** - *Don't forget me*

In this collection of poetry he implores his Creator to bring him fortune and relief from his predicament.

All the above titles are related to the image of medicine (a cure) with all its ramifications. This in turn, points out to a steadfastly vibrant hope of redemption from the rot that feeds on the world and its human inhabitants.

In all the images relating to the human physical condition (disease, pain and vitality) Maphalla not only portrays a vivid impression of a world fraught with decay, but he also reveals his unflagging hope that something can still be recouped out of this muck. As it were, the poet is painfully aware of the degeneration of the human spirit - it is crippled by disease and tortured by pain - but, in spite of all this, the human spirit is inherently tenacious. His major concern seems to lie not (to borrow Nazareth's words) with the material reconstruction but the reconstruction of the soul of the individual as part of a larger community. (1986 : 172)

3.1.2 Images related to African traditional beliefs

Hodgson makes this observation about the nature of imagery employed by Ntsikana to convey his new christian belief:

In the background we have a traditional world-view and the meanings, images and symbols are being drawn from that. (1984 : 31)

It is our view too that some of Maphalla's images are mnemonic of his traditional world-view. They relate to witchcraft, mythology and ancestors.

3.1.2.1 Images associated with witchcraft

(18) Ke phekotswe ke siba la bongodi,
mosesetso.

(Mahohodi : 32)

*I have been cured by a writer's
pen, 'mosesetso'.*

The image evoked in this line is visual. 'Mosesetso' is a traditional drug rubbed into incisions made with a blade in the skin in order to fortify a patient. (This act is almost similar to vaccination in the Western world). Through this image the reader visualizes a witchdoctor (traditional medicineman), working feverishly on his gullible patient with all the confidence he can master. To the persona, the newly-found cure (composing poetry) seems to be as effective as the traditional way of healing the sick. In this way the poet exhibits a covert slight shift from somewhat strenuous traditional

practices of solving problems to new methods of fortifying a man's dampened spirits. The image he has used, and the context in which he situates it, alludes to his willingness to modify certain traditional practices of addressing problems.

(19) Jwale ke lla boko sa dinehella,
(Kgapha tsa ka : 1)

*Now I cry a lamentation of
bewitchment,*

The act of 'ho nehella' (to bewitch) is connected with witchcraft; only a witchdoctor can invoke the evil forces that can bring harm upon the intended victim. 'Ho nehella' involves sending an evil spell to someone at a distance. A spell cast in this way is believed to be well nigh impossible to cure. The victim usually suffers from it up to his grave. The poet suggests that his suffering has been cast upon him like this perilous magical spell. The spell is like a permanent curse to him. Thus, he evokes, in the reader, profound sympathy for his pitiable situation which is graphically conveyed through imagery. But the reader also feels utterly helpless as, with all the will in the world, he cannot help the victim because his condition is incurable. The reader's attention then shifts to the cause of the poet's demise. Revulsion wells up in the reader,

fuelled by the painful realization of his own insignificance and vulnerability in the face of witchcraft. One cringes at the mere mental vision of a witchdoctor prancing about with self-assurance, spitting malicious drugs out of his mouth, and waving his whisk (deeped in malicious potions) threateningly in one's direction with a menacing look on his face. Whoever is responsible for the persona's plight is, as portrayed through synaesthetic imagery that appeals to both the visual and kinaesthetic senses, a despicable witch. The poet's wail pierces through our hearts because it is intensified by imagery.

Witchcraft is again embedded in images evoked by these lines:

- (20) Le tlontlolla le dinohe hara batho.
(Khapha tsa ka : 10)

It (day) ridicules even diviners in public.

- (21) Le ipatile kae tidima tsa ho bolediswa?

(Dikano : 38)

Where are you hiding yourselves you great traditional doctors worthy of praise?

- (22) O mo phephethile ka phephetho sa letjhoba;

(Mahohodi : 41)

*He drove him away with a drug of
a whisk;*

Whilst Maphalla's images relating to witchcraft vividly illuminate situations and conditions he evidently has aversion for, his emphasis of the malicious aspects of witchcraft could be indicative of the distaste he has for it. As one of the converts to christianity, he seemingly finds it difficult to extol what is regarded as paganism from the christian point of view.

3.1.2.2 Images relating to mythology

It is not surprising that Maphalla also draws on images relating to African mythology. As Wright (in a review on 'Antoine-Roger Bolamba's Ezanso - Songs for my Country') rightly points out:

The poems are about African life.
They conjure up its scenes, suggest
its ways and its atmosphere.
There are also evocations of
Africa's mystery and magic.
(1979 : 261)

This evocation of Africa's mystery and magic is evident in the following examples:

(23) Ke rahe leqhamu lehlakoreng la
kganyapa;

(Fuba sa ka : 25)

*So that I should swim alongside
kganyapa;*

'Kganyapa' is a fabulous water snake. Murray (1980), found that Kganyapa is usually associated with fertility and revitalization. It is believed to possess magical powers to heal the sick and endow the 'bakoma' (people seized by divining spirits) with healing and divining powers. Furthermore, it is worth noting that the purported existence of such a snake is a significant pointer to the Basotho's conception of the world: there is also an underworld. Guma also notes that:

Unlike in Greek mythology where the underworld is radically different from that of the living, in that it is a dark and gloomy place peopled by untouchables, in Southern Sotho mythology it is similar to this world. The only difference is that it is a place of plenty, in which the various commodities of this life are found in abundance. The inhabitants of both worlds may even exchange visits... In this connection it may be added that a Mosotho in real trouble from which he would like an instant escape, usually says he felt like saying, "Lefatshe buleha ke kene" (Earth open up that I may go in). (1967 : 8)

In example (23) cited from Maphalla above, the poet portrays a peaceful scene of the underworld referred to by Guma. In that world he sees himself swimming alongside 'kganyapa' - a snake with potentially benevolent magical powers. Through this visual image of the underworld and the 'kganyapa' that swims majestically in the belly of the deep pools, he expresses his wish to be enveloped by the magical underworld. Apparently he would like 'kganyapa' to restore his verve for life so that he re-emerges into this world with a new zest for life.

(24) Jwale ekaka lefatshe le ka
petsoha, ka tsetelwa
(Dikano : 27)

*Now is as if the earth could
split, so that I be ensiled*

The idea of revitalization is implicit in this image too. If he is ensiled, like for instance fodder in a silo, he is likely to ferment, to be more mature and resilient. Such an occurrence is bound to endow him with the new vigour with which he can confront the vicissitudes of life.

(25) Lefatshe petsoha o nkepele lefaru,
(Dikano : 40)

*Earth, split and dig me a cleft in
a rock,*

The same idea of invigoration is embraced in the image invoked in this line. His wish to take refuge in a cleft dug in a rock is indicative of his major concern with his personal safety: he would like to be protected by something as solid as a rock. He does not want his capsule to collapse on him as he would like to return to this world - perhaps with more vim after enjoying the safe comfort of the blissful cleft in the rock. It is also possible that Maphalla could be combining the image of the underworld with the image of the 'Rock of ages' which is symbolic of Christ, in a biblical sense. But the idea that he would like only temporary refuge in the cleft of this rock militates against the latter interpretation.

(26) **Lemao la Phakwe** (Hawk's Pin) - Sentebale: 72
 is an extended mythical image through which the speaker makes an attempt at providing explanations for the puzzling wonders of creation. He explains why the hen is always scratching the ground as if in search of some lost item and why there is no blood lost between its offspring and the hawk. The hawk lent its pin to the hen, the hen lost it. The hawk has been furious since. It swoops down on the hen's young ones with unflagging vengeance. The hen in turn is persistently

looking for the hawk's pin to put a stop to this havoc. This visual imagery is intensified through personification (both the hen and the hawk are endowed with human qualities just like in oral folklore). It elicits pity in the reader, for the careless hen, and hatred for the inconsiderate and vengeful hawk. The mythical dramatization of this hypothetical incident lends an illusion of authenticity to the poet's explanation of the paradoxes of creation. Whilst such an explanation might sound puerile to some, to the Africans it is a reminder of the very essence of being: life is but a perplexity, it is a baffling mystery.

Maphalla's choice of images relating to African mythology is significant. It appears to be an unconscious way of resorting to his traditional heritage as a tool for disentangling life's problems and complexities. It is perhaps symbolic of a tempting desire in him to take a dip in the pool of his culture in order to sift out those aspects of his culture which might be relevant to the present situation - maybe the future included. It appears like a veiled wish to lean over backwards on them so as to draw the strength necessary to come to grips with the hostile and puzzling world around him.

3.1.2.3 Images associated with the ancestral world

That Maphalla also evokes images pertaining to the ancestral world is not unexpected. The fundamental reason for the importance of ancestors in the African world is best enunciated by Kuckertz:

Another reason for the ancestor's universal significance is that they are a means of interpreting certain negative events which occur in a person's life.
(1983 : 114)

What Kuckertz says about Mpondo ancestor religion appears to be also what is central to Maphalla's images which are associated with the ancestors:

(27) Fatsheng lena la melapo le
makgulo,
Ho ke ho rene kgotso, pula,
nala!
(Sentebale : 24)

*In this world of brooks and
pastures,
Let there reign peace, rain
and plenty!*

In the second line indirect reference is made to the ancestors. As Hodgson (1984), again rightly observes, the ancestors are essentially benevolent, but they can be moved to anger, especially over neglect of custom.

Drought and famine are some of the living examples of their wrath. Thus when the Basotho use the salute 'Kgotso, pula, nala!' they actually imply that if the ancestors are at peace with them, then there will be good rains and prosperity. The poet, through this image, unconsciously reveals his yearning for the restitution of the ties that bind a people to its culture, ipso facto, its ancestors. As it were, he is reminding his people that they have a culture in which they can take refuge in times of trouble. He seems to yearn for the peace that has become a slogan in his culture for what he perceives around him, is nothing else but utter chaos. After all, Gunn writes:

literature is no more than, as Charles Baudelaire said, a metaphysics made sensible to the heart and expressed in images - but its operation is more subtle than is generally supposed.
(1982 : 50)

It is our contention that the popular slogan 'kgotso, pula, nala!' has a subtle implication that conjures up the image of the ancestors. When understood against this background it turns out to be a solemn prayer to the supernatural who play a meaningful role in the life of an African. To the poet it is also a cry directed to the ancestors to bring fortune his way too. The poet, through the power of this image and the context

in which it appears, is presented as one who is in trouble from which only supernatural forces can bail him out. He has to seek help elsewhere. The salute that alludes to ancestors implies that their help is also needed.

(28) Ntsane, moholo o rongwa a eme,
(Fuba sa ka : 14)

*Ntsane, an elder is sent whilst
he is still on his feet,*

The poet makes use of the apostrophe. He addresses the deceased Ntsane as though he is within earshot, as though he is still within his scope of vision. Fact is, according to the poet's culture, Ntsane is not 'dead' but has just joined the world of the ancestors who are also purported to be omnipresent. This is the reason why the poet continues in the same vein:

(29) O boke dikgomo ho boMofolo
dikokonono,
(Fuba sa ka : 14)

*Do salute Mofolo and others,
the great ones,*

The implication is that Ntsane is about to join those who departed (died) before him, Mofolo and company.

Consequently, the message is intended for the ancestors from whom he expects showers of good fortune. This serves as an indirect reminder that as a people we do not have complete control over our lives. We can only appeal to the supernatural powers (ancestors in this particular instance) to take over where our human powers fall short. The image as a whole, together with its tentacles, touches the very core of our whole being as it exposes our insignificance in this world as well as our vulnerability without the watchful care and assistance from the supernatural forces.

Images referring to the ancestral world are also found in these lines:

- (30) O re phomolong ba bona ka paka
 tsa mabitla,
 O re mabitla a diphera tsa ho lekola
 dikgutsana.
 (Mahohodi : 25)

*It (custom) says in their places of
 rest they see through the slits in
 the graves,
 It says the graves have windows to allow
 them (ancestors) survey of the orphans.*

- (31) Ke tle ke orohele badimong ka
 dipososelo.
 (Fuba sa ka : 62)

*So that I return home to my ancestors
 full of smiles.*

(32) Di sehletse di re kopela tjhai
badimong.

(Dikano : 32)

*They (cattle) are toiling, asking
on our behalf for plentiful
harvest from the ancestors.*

The poet's images relating to the ancestral world portray, in lucid terms, the Africans' resources for their sense of security when confronted by calamities of this world. They also reveal a veiled hesitance to come to terms with the present and the future without the advantage of hindsight: they have a noticeable tendency to draw much needed strength from their past.

When Maphalla's images relating to the traditional beliefs of his people are considered as a whole, they reflect a dichotomy in his attitude towards these beliefs: witchcraft, just like the malignant situations he often associates it with, is undesirable and ought to be discarded. Mythology and ancestral belief, on the other hand, seem to be relevant to his very notion of being. When we consider that at times Maphalla also exhibits christian tendencies (see chapter 2), this apparent inclination towards the so-called pagan beliefs, especially belief in the ancestors, might seem to suggest internal conflict, in him. And yet we are of

the opinion that the posture he takes up relative to religion, approximates that of Ngugi as analyzed by Williams as follows:

He knows that religion can be meaningful to a people only if it relates to them in their daily lives, only if it rises out of the important aspects of their past and speaks directly to their experiences in the present. A religion which speaks only of religious ideals and moral truths, without touching on the concrete situation of man in his everyday life, can give to man nothing but emptiness. (1975 : 54)

As Williams again would say, Maphalla seems to realize that his 'life is inseparably bound up in the ways and life' of his people; 'christianity cannot be meaningful' to him if it has to meet him outside the boundaries of his people, outside of his life in the African community. Hence he cannot afford to become a cultureless christian, but he remains an African christian. It is only in this way that he can escape being a powerless victim of psychological and emotional tension resulting from building impregnable walls between what is typically christian (and acceptable) and that which is African (which warrants total rejection). This can only have dire consequences.

3.1.3 Images associated with violence

This subcategory reflects human temperament. They would fall into a class of imagery that Frye terms 'demonic imagery' which, in his treatise on 'Theory of archetypal meaning', he says is associated with:

... the world of the nightmare and scapegoat, of bondage and pain and confusion.... the world also of perverted or wasted work, ruins and catacombs, instruments of torture and monuments of folly... (it) is closely linked with an existential hell, like Dante's Inferno, or with the hell that man creates on earth... (1973 : 147)

In his imagery relating to violence, Maphalla appears to present the type of world portrayed by Frye's demonic imagery. Our examples will illustrate this fact.

(33) Fatshe lena le kgantsha "Ntjhape
ke o shape!"
(Fuba sa ka : 16)

*This world boasts of "beat me, I
will beat you too!"*

The image of violence is conveyed to the readers in its nakedness. The reader hears people casting threats at each other. Neither of the participants is prepared to

be rational. They seem to be ardent believers in the saying that violence begets violence. People are prepared to molest each other. It makes one shudder with fear, as though the hurtful blows are already landing on one's body. In the same poem, from which the above line is lifted, the image of violence is expanded further:

(34) Ho a ngwaptjwana ke basadi le basetsana.

(Fuba sa ka : 16)

*Women and young girls are
clawing at each other.*

This is a picture of utter chaos, in fact disaster. It is taboo for children to reciprocate a mere rebuke from an elderly person - not to mention corporal reprimand. That this is happening, can only be indicative of alarming disintegration, the centre can no longer hold. This vivid picture of violence is even punctuated by the shocking sight of blood:

(35) Fatshe lena le kgantsha madi ho phorosela,

(Fuba sa ka : 17)

*This world boasts of blood
gushing out,*

Herein lies a kinaesthetic image superimposed on the visual one. The reader's body contorts in convulsions at the sight of gushing blood. The goings-on in this world are despicable in the extreme. Our aversion for violence in all its manifestations is stirred up by the exceedingly revulsive imagery employed by the poet. What the reader finds most appalling is that there is perverse pride in all this violence as implied by the word 'boasts', as though this were something ornamental.

(36) A ko hlomele o felle,
O be kwakwa le lerumo;
(Sentebale : 40)

*Arm yourself to the teeth,
Take your war axe and
spear with you;*

This is an awe-inspiring picture of a warrior arming himself fully to go into battle where people are mercilessly killed and human blood flows freely as though it were ordinary water. The sound of clashing weapons also comes to our mental ear. The terrible moan of the injured and those who are gasping for breath is also audible. One shudders at the thought of corpses that will never receive a decent burial but are destined for the vulture's stomach. We are left dumbfounded by the villainous action of man upon man; moreso when we also hear, in the distance, the killers (the victorious)

rejoice in song and praises that extol their unparalleled skills in combat. Back home women and children bemoan the loss of their loved ones. The whole picture is dreadful indeed. The degeneration that seems to hold man hostage is conveyed to us through an image that makes it more vivid by making it perceptible to more than one sense of perception at a time. We realize that we are also willing collaborators in the decadence that pervades the world. In short, the poet employs imagery to point his moral attitude without superfluous comment.

- (37) O hle o hlomele o felle;
Phelo ba kajeno ke ntwā,
(Kgapha tsa ka : 5)

*You should arm yourself
fully;
today's life is war,*

- (38) Fatshe la kajeno ha le tshepahale,
Le kgarametsa dikwankwetla di
ikatetse;
(Kgapha tsa ka : 55)

*Today's world is untrustworthy,
It pushes violently even the
strong and watchful;*

- (39) Tahi e kgaba ka ho tabolela motho
malapi,
E kgantsha ho thulanya monna le
mosadi ka dihlooho.
(Dikano : 50)

*Alcohol prides itself in tearing
apart a person's clothes,
It boasts of dashing a man's
head against his wife's head.*

The poet calls up to our senses images associated with violence to portray the wickedness of the human heart and the painful consequences of such callousness. That he also selects images connected with violence is symptomatic of his major preoccupation with the paradox of life and death. He presents violence in its most repulsive manifestations to discourage the actions and situations with which he equates it. Such situations not only endanger life but are capable of terminating it - just like violence. Through imagery and its patterns we can see more of Maphalla the man and understand his context and frame of reference. It reflects his unified spirit: to him human life is always both precious and sacred; it deserves utmost respect.

3.1.4 Images relating to the Western world

There are very few of these images as compared to the three types discussed above. This might suggest that Maphalla chooses to remain largely within the confines of his culture. But then it is not unexpected for Maphalla to draw on images relating to the Western world for, as Jahnheinz Jahn rightly observes:

Since the African civilization had no written alphabet of their own until they came into contact with Islamic

and Western civilization, the African 'apprentice' learning to write, is also an apprentice to foreign cultural influences. (1968 : 89)

Some of these Western cultural influences constitute Maphalla's imagery:

(40) Baditjhaba ba mo tseba pene e seng
seemo;

(Mahohodi : 25)

*Foreigners know him by his pen,
not physical stature;*

The poet makes use of metonymy to create a visual image of socio-cultural development, literacy. The word 'pene' (pen) stands for Ntsane's literary works, which in turn presuppose his ideas and thoughts. Instead of mentioning these abstract concepts, the poet concretizes them by alluding to the association between them and their means of production - the pen. This image might also suggest that Ntsane's native language has also assumed a new form that is Western: it is no longer only heard but also seen in its written form. His ideas and thoughts are now enshrined in a visible form. His sphere of influence has also widened because of this innovation: writing has made it possible to disseminate information over a large area. Even foreigners who might have never cared to know Ntsane the man, find

themselves in the company of Ntsane as they find it difficult to ignore his works. In this way covert criticism might be directed at these foreigners who never took Ntsane seriously as a human being just like themselves. Through this image the poet seemingly extols this advantageous innovation brought about by Westernization. Whilst he expresses his grief over Ntsane's death, he is not delirious. He takes heart in realizing that part of Ntsane, his literary creations, remains a source of inspiration to all and it bears testimony, even to foreigners, to his greatness. That is to say, this component of Western culture gives a new lease of life to his people - and this is laudible.

At times the images drawn from the Western world are both satirical, and humorous:

(41) Pelo ke ena e tula sa watjhe
ya leqaqa,
(Dikano : 2)

*Here is a heart beating like
a leqaqa's watch,*

The image is basically auditory and it is based on simile. The sound of the heartbeat is of importance. But for the reader to perceive this sound distinctly, he has to be familiar with how a leqaqa's watch ticks -

and herein lies humorous satire. A watch is something new in Maphalla's culture. Its tick is fairly audible. 'Leqaqa' is a poor White. So if the watch referred to belongs to a poor White, it should be in a bad shape and in need of repair, for the owner can not spare any money to fix it. Therefore its beat should be irritating to the ear. This is humorous. The satirical implication is in the assumption that this White, as part of the innovating culture himself, ought to know better how to put a stop to this annoying noise. Thus the auditory significance of this image gains in magnitude. Maphalla's heart is giving him a rough time. It is supposed to be under his control, but it is rebellious. He cannot subdue it. Its involuntary antics frustrate him; moreover he cannot ignore them because they are irritating. His thoughts, concretized by his insubordinate heart, seem to be pumelling him, seeking an escape outlet. He can no longer endure their wearisome rhythmic persistence, lest they cleave his heart. He has no alternative but to give vent to them: he gives expression to them through poetry.

Of course Maphalla also draws images from the christian sphere of the Western culture. We have touched upon this in chapter 2 and it will not receive further attention in this study.

3.2 IMAGES ASSOCIATED WITH NATURE

Wauthier views the African conception of the universe as follows:

... all beings, people as well as things, are so many related forces which are all part of the ntu, the being itself, the universal cosmic force. This belief in a sort of intimate coherence of the universe enables the African poet to identify himself with the whole of nature. (1966 : 171)

Kodo Yahagi also expresses an opinion similar to that of Wauthier:

In old Japanese literature, Nature and life were not the two separate ideas that they were in Western literature. In Japanese literature, human behaviour as an embodiment of 'Life' was not a separate act from nature, but it was a part of nature. (1973 : 139)

Most of the images relating to nature in Maphalla's poetry reflect the fundamental identity he perceives between nature and life. This class of images will be discussed under four subcategories. However, the subdivisions are not mutually exclusive as the dividing line between them is often very tenuous indeed to such an extent that there is overlapping. Furthermore, images relating to nature are sometimes intertwined

with those that are associated with human experience (see paragraph 3.1). The distinction between the two is made solely for the sake of clarity.

The poet draws nature images from:

3.2.1 The animal world

Let us focus our attention on the following extracts:

(42) Lefu le harola nyene le bosiu,
(Mahohodi : 11)

Death devours day and night,

The cruelty and ruggedness of death is compared to that of a wild animal (perhaps a lion) that devours its victim by mercilessly tearing it apart. Death is personified in order to endow it with physical strength - it is a carnivore. Its destructiveness is exacerbated by its avarice: it stalks its prey day and night. What is more disconcerting is that the victims of this menace are human beings who leave behind scores of loved ones in grief. Through this dreadful image that sends shock waves through our bodies (a kinaesthetic image), death is portrayed as a scoundrel who earns our extreme condemnation. Furthermore, by associating

death with a merciless gluttonous wild beast, the poet unconsciously reveals his deepseated fear of death. It is wild and thus impossible to tame. Worse still, it never takes a rest from its awe-inspiring activity. Again, like in the images relating to violence, the poet seems to be struck by the paradox of life and death inherent in creation. (Of course death is not related to the animal world only but to nature as a whole.) The poet's images associated with death, portray a paralyzing fear he has of the inevitability of death.

(43) Phading sa lona re tjee ka
dikonyana.

(Fuba sa ka : 35)

*Under its (world) whip we are
like lambs.*

The dominating power the world wields over us is captured in this damnatory visual image. We are bound to feel ashamed of ourselves for succumbing to the dictates of this world like sacrificial lambs. Simile also magnifies the impact of this image as it establishes a direct comparison between the signified and the signifier. Ntuli observes that:

It is chiefly through comparison that the poets try to make meaningful communication of difficult concepts to their audience. (1984 : 151)

In example (43) direct comparison is made between human beings and lambs. A lamb, even from the christian point of view towards which Maphalla might be leaning, symbolizes meekness. Jesus is often referred to as the 'Lamb that removed the sins of the earth'. The lamb is so submissive that anybody can do as he wishes with it. It becomes worse if he is swaying a whip over it for it will cower or scamper in any direction he wishes it to take. It is an embodiment of extreme cowardice too. By equating human beings with lambs, the poet exposes their meekness and cowardice in the face of formidable challenges of this world. Man has surrendered his whole being to the malicious desires of this world - 'this world' can also be indicative of wordly pleasures. He is driven (perhaps by a malevolent wordly force) to despicable behaviour as though to satisfy his commanding and mean master. He seems to ignore the fact that he is endowed with a brain far superior to that of animals, not to mention lambs. He appears oblivious of his superior position in life relative to that of other animal species. This image engenders a feeling of guilt in us for being willing victims of such capricious malice. The poet seems to be engaged in a kind of introspection; trying to figure out his role in the vileness that pervades the world. He might be suffering from anxiety when he realizes that he is also a willing partner - a sacrificial lamb in the sordid situation.

Images relating to the animal world are also found in these lines:

- (44) Ke tlaletswe ke naha sa konyana
e lahlehileng,
(Dikano : 40)

*I am as dumbfounded as a lost
lamb,*

- (45) Poho tse ngata di tjhetjha di
gatile mehatla.
(Mahohodi : 38)

*Many bulls retreat with their
tails wedged in between their
legs.*

- (46) Le bopa sa poho e fata makwatsi;
(Sentebale : 55)

*It (the world) sulks like a bull
provoking a quarrel;*

- (47) Raqhwe tsa ikatametsa ho ngwana
wa ditjhaba,
(Sentebale : 14)

*Big baboons brought themselves
next to the foreigners' child,*

In all the images connected with animals, the speaker reveals his intimate knowledge and perception of these animals; his powers of observation are penetrative. But in all these images, there is a veiled tone of

mockery levelled at the human species which assumes that it is in the very nature of things for it to belong to a class of homo sapiens higher than that of ordinary animals; and yet, on close scrutiny, the similarities between man and these animals are startling. Man too is but an animal.

3.2.2 Birds and insects

(48) Ke re nna ruri ke lakatsa tokoloho,
Ke tle ke rure sa ntsu sepakapakeng;
(Fuba sa ka : 53)

*I say I certainly yearn for freedom,
So that I fly about like an eagle in
the empty sky;*

Emphasis is not on the bird (eagle) as such, but on its unhindered freedom to fly as it pleases in the empty sky (sepakapakeng). He sees freedom exemplified in the eagle's uncurtailed movements. He indirectly makes a subtle comparison between his situation and that of the eagle. The mere fact that he envies this bird, suggests that he finds himself in an invidious position; there are manacles that hold him in constraint. To the speaker then, the eagle ceases to be just a bird, but it turns out to be a symbol of his burning desire for freedom. The freedom he whines for is not idealistic,

but attainable, for it can be visualized in the concretized form of the eagle. His freedom is within reach but for restraining shackles into which he has been put by his adversaries.

(49) Ke ikopela tokoloho,
 Ho tswa mona ditlamong,
 Nke ke rure sa serurubele,
 (Kgapha tsa ka : 50)

*I am asking for freedom,
 To get out of this bondage,
 So that I float about like
 a butterfly,*

The choice of the two contrasting words appearing at the end of juxtaposed lines, 'tokoloho' (freedom) and 'ditlamong' (bondage), is as effective as it seems deliberate. The reader is tempted to make a comparison of the diametrically opposed concepts the two words express. The contrast in the meaning of the two words foreshadows that between the contrasting situations of the speaker and of the butterfly. Even though a butterfly might appear fragile and insignificant, as compared to him, it surpasses him in at least one important respect: it prides itself in its freedom. On the contrary, man, with his supposed superiority, creates fetters, not only for himself but for other men too. The power of this image compels man to make an introspection, to try

and ascertain as to where he went wrong; where he might have tempered with creation that endowed him with freedom as evidenced in other creatures. In a very subtle way, man is accused of flagrant irresponsibility.

The same idea of freedom is embodied in the images evoked in these lines:

(50) Ntsu nkadime mapheo ke tsebe
ho rura,
Ke rurele ka hodimo ho maru,
menateng.

(Dikano : 41)

*Eagle, lend me wings that I
may fly about,
Fly to the top of the
clouds, a place of lots of
enjoyment.*

(51) Molodi wa pina nkuke,
O fofe ka nna hodimo sebakeng;
(Fuba sa ka : 25)

*The tune of music take me,
Fly with me high in the sky;*

On the surface level, Maphalla appears envious of some of the birds and flying insects. He seems to begrudge them particularly of their flying skills. These skills are symbolic of their freedom. But the underlying significance of these images is that they are cues to his turbulent thoughts. He cannot find the reason why he has to live under man-made restrictions and yet all

living creatures, even birds and insects, have been endowed with freedom. To him this is the paradox he cannot accept.

3.2.3 Images from the landscape

(52) Hara meutlwa le hara ditshehlo,
O se ke wa nyahama;
(Sentebale : 10)

*Among prickles and among
thorns,
Do not be disheartened;*

He draws images from the flora of his landscape. Prickles and thorns are some of the common weeds found in his landscape. They grow out of xerophytic plants that flourish even under dry conditions. Their ends are sharp and needle-like. The image of pain portrayed through these weeds is not just visual but mainly kinaesthetic. The reader's body coils at the mere mention of these needles. The pain they inflict upon the one who inadvertently comes into contact with them is unbearable. If the pain they inflict is comparable to that which man is perpetually exposed to, then man should be in living hell most of the time.

(53) Tsela ke ena e sasametse,
Le mangope ha a itheke morwalo,
(Sentebale : 41)

*Here is the road stretched
out,
Even gulleys too are plentiful.*

The image in this line comes from the topography of the speaker's landscape. It is a visual metaphorical image. He perceives similarity between life's pitfalls and the gulleys in his terrain. After all metaphor implies, that is, the power to see similarity in difference. (Rosmarin, 1985 : 23)

Although the troubles of this world normally besiege us by stealth, the underlying danger they pose for us is concretized through our perception of the dire consequences of literally falling into a gully whereupon the victim might sustain terrible injuries or even die. These gulleys, in a figurative sense, parallel the pitfalls in life. Thus dangers that skulk in the shadows, stalking us all the time, are lucidly magnified. The hidden bitter side of life is brought to the fore in its nakedness. Life is not only a bed of roses, but even dangers abound.

These are some of the other extracts in which images relating to the landscape are evoked:

- (54) Pelong ya ka ke masupi, ho
dithako,
Kodiamalla tsa lefatshe lena
di hloka kgutlo.
(Fuba sa ka : 52)

*In my heart are ruins, deserted
places,
The dirges of this world never end.*

- (55) Kgapha tsa ka di tla tlala lewatile,
(Kgapha tsa ka : 1)

My tears can fill up the sea,

- (56) Masodi ke ana a entse lewatile,
(Dikano : 39)

*Here are tears, they have
formed a sea,*

- (57) Ruri, fuba sa motho ke bodiba,
(Mahohodi : 20)

*Certainly, a person's feelings
are an abyss,*

In all the images associated with the landscape, the poet seems to be struck by the fundamental identity that exists between the landscape and life in general. He is not only enchanted by the breathtaking beauty of the landscape before him, but he also recognizes spots of ugliness in it. What he perceives in it, like in life, is admirable beauty with all its concomitant blemishes. Again, the paradox of life is central to his imagery.

3.2.4 Natural decomposition

(58) Hlabula la maobeng, mofuthu wa
lona ho tsotwa,
Kajeno mahlasedi a ntahlile
lepalapaleng.

(Dikano : 40)

*Yesterday's summer, how admirable
is its warmth,
Today the sunrays have left me in
trouble.*

Summer is one of the best seasons of the year. It symbolizes vitality and contentment as every essential commodity is in abundance during this season. It is also symbolic of hope for what was cultivated in spring is expected to come to fruition in this season. But then the speaker's summer is pure reminiscence. It used to be there but it is no longer there, together with its warmth. The image is tactile. The warmth that used to embrace him is gone. He equates this warmth with the joy that used to fill his heart whilst his friend was still alive. Now that his friend has passed away, just like summer, the joy has also left his heart. He is now experiencing a new season - perhaps the chill of winter. The image of joy followed by sadness (the warmth of summer succeeded by the chill of winter) is analogous to the cyclical movement of the seasons which in turn also reflects the inevitable succession of life and death - winter (death) is sure

to follow summer (life). The moods of life change with puzzling consistency. Everything is bound to decompose.

(59) Jwale sea le bo tshela ho
 tlola tekanyo,
 Le bo kotjela ho be ho pute
 ka maleng;
 (Mahohodi : 9)

*Now an infant drinks it (liquor)
 excessively,
 It gulps it to the extent that
 its stomach becomes putrid;*

The olfactory image in the second line is nauseating. It suggests a mucky place where decay is in process. The stench that comes out of the infant's nostrils and mouth is reminiscent of death, for it is only when life has ceased that putrefaction sets in. The fact that even infants drink liquor to the extent that fumes indicative of decomposition characterize their breath, shows that even those who ought to be an embodiment of innocence and spotless purity are victims of the malice that rocks the world. Evidently then, the world is a rotten place: there is death everywhere, even in the very air we breathe. The reader is shocked and repulsed by this filth of which he is an integral part. As Wake (1979) would say, Maphalla makes effective use of imagery to point out his moral without comment.

(60) Fatshe la kajeno le nkg a ponyonyo,
 Dibodu tsa le ka kwano ha di na
 tekanyo;

(Dikano : 5)

*Today's world smells of ponyonyo,
 The rotten matter of this world
 is countless;*

Maphalla employs what Leitch (1979) refers to as a 'juxtaposition of images'. In fact one can even venture to say that the first image is superimposed on the second one. 'Ponyonyo' is an obnoxious smell from rotten milk. This evokes an olfactory image. This smell can also emanate from any rotten matter, which is the visual image suggested in the second line, in the above extract. In this way the reader is plunged into an offensive smell and a loathsome sight of rotten objects. The combined effect of these two images is revulsive in the extreme. Both images are meant to generate a distasteful attitude towards the moral and social degeneration that perverts the world.

Images associated with decomposition and immanent change are also embedded in these two examples:

(61) Ntsane o theohetse lebitleng,
 O siile lefatshe le nkg a
 ponyonyo,

(Fuba sa ka : 10)

*Ntsane has descended into the
grave,
He left the world behind
smelling of 'ponyonyo',*

(62) Tsohle ke mouwane, di a feta
(Sentebale : 9)

*Everything has no meaning, it
is mist, it passes by*

(63) Phoka la matahwa le ka o
nyekisa dibete,
(Dikano : 50)

*The stench from drunkards can
nauseate you,*

The images reflecting natural decomposition or immanent decay, portray the poet's concern about the decadence that pervades the world. He seems perturbed by the fact that he too, as part of the universe, is undergoing this process of change which has to end up with decay. This parallels life, for it too is nothing else but a prelude to death. Through this imagery we recognize the unity of all created things. Man is identical with nature.

Our foregoing discussion on Maphalla's imagery indicates that even though his imagery might seem diversified, it is a reflection of his unified spirit for, as Altenbernd rightly observes:

A man may have many moods, he has but one spirit; and this spirit he communicates in some subtle, unconscious way to all his work. It waxes and wanes with the currents of his vitality, but no more alters than a chestnut changes into an oak. (1970 : 658)

The predominant imagery in Maphalla's poetry is the one that reflects man's predicament: the pain and suffering to which he is perpetually exposed, the endless violence that torments his spirit, the illtreatment to which he is subjected. In fact the whole poetic world of Maphalla is engulfed in decadence. But then the poet is not just an observer displaying his mastery at description. He uses his imagery as a literary communicative device (just like the adapted Sesotho proverbs and christian concepts - see chapter 2) to express disapproval of this decadence. He is protesting against all things evil. He is the social conscience of the human species. It is this theme of protest we propose to explore in chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4

4. PROTEST

Opland makes reference to the socio-political significance of oral poetry. In his own words:

... but the social function of the Xhosa oral poet, his licence to comment outspokenly on political affairs and criticize with impunity figures of authority, his obligation to communicate the opinions of the ruled to the rulers, is strikingly absent in published books. (1986 : 136)

What Opland implies is that modern poets seem to shirk their social responsibility. The view held by Opland regarding the social responsibility of a poet, is also upheld by Chapman who regards a poet as a social man: 'homo sociologicus'. Chapman observes that in traditional African societies, poetry was to be seen not so much in autotelic as in utilitarian terms. (1982 : 16)

Nkosi too notes that:

the literature of Southern Africa is committed to the notion that certain tasks are the legitimate function of socially responsible writers. (1981 : 76)

Goodwin, among others, also recognizes that the African poet is not only the conscience and mouthpiece of his

community, but also a custodian of its values who gives expression to their needs and wishes through his poetry:

It is often asserted that African poetry by contrast with European, is spoken not by an individual but by the representative of a community, that its scale of values is community-centred, and that it gives symbolic expression to the community, and that it manifests a continuity of tradition from the past, through the present, to the future.
(1982 : 174)

The tradition Goodwin refers to can be traced back to the oral bards (diroki/iimbongi). It was carried on by pathfinders in written African poetry. It is also our intention to illustrate that this tradition constitutes what we regard as the livewire of Maphalla's poetry. Moreover, this tradition is abundantly clear whether one focuses attention on African literature written in English or that given expression in the vernacular languages.

Let us pay brief attention to a few prominent poets spanning the period 1898 up to the present, starting with those who wrote in English and rounding off with the ones who wrote in the vernaculars. We shall confine ourselves to Black South African poets only.

Tiyo Soga's poems appeared as early as 03/02/1898 in *Imvo Zabantsundu* (Chapman : 1981). A reading of one of

his poems, 'Santa Cruz - The Holy Cross', reveals that the persona is perturbed by the absence of peace and prosperity in the land, and he hopes that christianity might establish this much yearned for peace. Mrs A.C. Dube's poem entitled 'Africa My Native Land' appeared in *Ilanga Lase Natal* on 31/10/1913. In this poem she protests against the fact that Blacks are made to look like outcasts in the land for which their forefathers have shed blood. Sol T. Plaatjie's poem, 'Bars', published in *Umteteleli wa Bantu* on 24/11/23, is a strong repudiation of all forms of discrimination on the basis of colour. W.M.B. Nhlapo's 'Up! My Race, Up!' which appeared in *Bantu World* on 12/12/1936, expresses the persona's discontent with prevalent prejudice that pulls the various races asunder. On 22/01/1949, in *Ilanga Lase Natal*, H.I.E. Dhlomo published 'Because I'm Black' in which he expresses dissatisfaction over the inferior position a Black is relegated to, in the land of his birth. Can Themba's 'Ballad to the Coffee Cart', in *Drum*, February 1959, is expressive of the speaker's anger over the harassment of a Black hawker by big businessmen. In 'But O...', *Drum*, September 1969, Adam Small pronounces his disapproval of all the constraints placed on his liberty and eventually takes a vow that nobody can stop him from loving even his enemy. (Couzens and Patel : 1981).

From the 1970's up to date there has been a proliferation of poets concerned about the socio-political situation of Blacks in general. Some of the names that immediately come to mind are the following: Oswald Mbuyiseni Mtshali (Sounds of a Cowhide Drum, 1971); Mongane Wally Serote (Yakhal'inkomo, 1972); Sipho Sepamla (The Blues is in You in Me, 1976); Modikoe Dikobe (Dispossessed, 1983). Some of these writers' works have found publicity mainly through Staffrider magazine at some stage or another. Vaughn sums up the thrust of these Black poets' works as follows:

The place given to this genre within the magazine derives from the ideological concern to articulate the voice(s) of the people of the townships in the widest possible sense, and hence to include those voices - the voices of the oral cultures of the township. (1985 : 196)

When we cast our eye at those poets who wrote in the vernaculars, two names stand out prominently: S.E.Q. Mqhayi (1875 - 1945) - the giant of Xhosa literature and 'poet among poets'; B.W. Vilakazi (1906 - 1947) - is regarded as the forerunner of Black intellectual protest as expressed in Zulu poetry (Alvarez-Pereyre; 1984). Jahnheinz Jahn makes this comment on Mqhayi's apostrophe recited in 1925 when the Prince of Wales was touring South Africa:

One of the early writers, Mqhayi, even expressed his protest against colonialism in the style of a typically African praise and mocking-song. (1968 : 279)

Nkosi on the other hand has this to say about Vilakazi:

Vilakazi was not only the first vernacular poet in South Africa to bring to African verse a very acute sense of social conflict, deliberately spelled out in class terms... but he also injected into his poetry an increasingly rueful note of nationalistic protest, lamenting what he saw as the colonial spoliation of traditional cultures. (1981 : 144)

It should be borne in mind that we are by no means attempting to make a chronicle of Black poets whose poetry exhibits socio-political inclinations, for this certainly falls outside the scope of our work. Our main objective is, through fleeting reference to some Black poets (past and present), two-fold. First, to demonstrate and illustrate that African poetry is inherently socio-political in significance. Secondly, to place Maphalla in the broad context of African poetry as well as within that of Black poets among whom he deserves a rightful place.

In the Sesotho language the first poet to publish a complete anthology of poems was Theko Bereng (Lithothokiso tsa Moshoeshoe le tse ling, 1931), who makes an explicit social comment in these lines:

Morena mobung wa naha ya hae!
 Morena wa toka, e seng tshobotsi;
 Nnete, e seng leeme.
 (p. 26)

*King, in the soil of his country!
 King of justice, not influenced
 by appearance;
 Truth, and not bias.*

What Bereng would like to see is an honest king who rules through justice and fairness.

Makalo Khaketla also adopts a socio-political stance in a poem entitled 'Mmote' (Lark):

Re hlotswe ke wena Mmopi wa tsohle,
 A hlola Rantsho, a hlola Mmote,
 A hlola Lekula, a hlola Lekgowa;
 Dinotshi di jewa ke Tshweu ya mawatle,
 Rantsho o nyofa maratha a dilepe.
 (Dipjhamathe : 80)

*We were created by you Creator of
 everything,
 He created a Black, created a lark,
 Created an Indian, created a White;
 Honey is enjoyed by the White of
 the seas,
 The Black devours leftovers.*

In the above extract the persona is complaining about unfair distribution of wealth among the different races created by the same Supreme Being. Ntsane too is a homo sociologicus:

O ka kena lehodimong jwang, monyefodi?
 Wena o nyefolang fatere sepepenene?
 (Mmasapelo II : 79)

*How can you enter heaven, blasphemer?
 You who abuses the priest's name in public?*

The speaker levels criticism at those who think that they will gain automatic entry into heaven and yet they are sinners.

The sociological nature of African literature is also enunciated by Kunene when he outlines the aims and objectives of his research into vernacular literatures of Africa South of the Sahara:

It seeks to probe into the manifestations, within the literature, of psychological processes set in motion by the aggressive nature of the incoming culture - the attitude of the writers towards their own cultures whose validity was being challenged by the new culture.
 (1970 : 157)

Our objective in this chapter is to demonstrate that Maphalla is, just like most of his predecessors and some of his contemporaries in the field of African poetry (Sesotho poetry in particular), also a social poet.

It is also our contention that the main undercurrent constituting his poetry is protest. The term 'protest' should be understood here as it is defined in the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles*, that is:

To give formal expression to objection, dissent or disapproval.

In this way 'protest' is not confined to the political arena only, but encompasses all manifestations of dissent against that which perturbs or torments the human condition in general. Our discussion will focus attention on the different situations and instances he protests against. We shall also point out how this protest is conveyed through techniques that are typical of the genre of poetry in general and, in some instances, African poetry in particular. In the previous chapter we discussed one such poetic device, namely, imagery; and now our discussion will centre around devices other than imagery. In short, we set out to demonstrate that Maphalla is

protesting through what should be recognized as poetry. We concur with Ngara on how a work of art should be evaluated. One of the criteria he lays emphasis on is that:

The content value and aesthetic quality of the artistic creation as a whole, content and aesthetic quality being seen in dialectical interaction with one another. (1982 : 22)

However, it should be borne in mind that our understanding of the term 'aesthetics' also embraces Pio Zirimu's conception of the term where he is quoted by Brown as follows:

Aesthetics being the perception or even philosophy of beauty principally in art, but also in nature, is derived from people, from a people's way of life. (1982 : 50)

In short, not only the theme of protest will be explored in this chapter, but also the literary aesthetic qualities through which this theme is conveyed. It is also our intention to reveal the poet's tone and attitude towards his subject of protest. Under aesthetic qualities we shall also include what Enkvist (1971) terms intersentence devices, namely : 'topic' - features pertaining to the main subject of the discourse unit; 'focus' -

techniques for foregrounding; and 'linkage' - all methods employed for linking ideas and concepts.

Protest, as borne by Maphalla's poetry, will be discussed under two main categories: protest against contradictions of life (for instance good-luck versus misfortune) and protest against injustice.

4.1 CONTRADICTIONS IN LIFE

To the poet life seems to be a series of contradictions that bring about misery to humanity in general. He expresses his dissatisfaction over such painful contradictions. He is evidently against this paradox inherent in life. We shall demonstrate this with examples:

- (1) Basotho, bosoto ke bona bo mmaname,
 Bososelo la maobane le mphile
 mokokotlo.
 Maobane ke ne ke thenthetsa tsebe
 di qahame,
 Kajeno ke ponne, o ntimeletse mokorotlo.
 (Dikano : 38)

*Basotho, here is misfortune adhering to me,
 Yesterday's smile has given me its back.
 Yesterday I was prancing about with corky
 ears,
 Today I have wilted, I have forgotten songs
 of joy.*

This extract is from a dirge composed upon the death of the speaker's friend. The speaker is confounded by the cruelty of death; this is the reason why he even goes on to say:

(2) Ruri lefu le manyala baneng ba batho,
(Dikano : 39)

*Surely death is like filth to pitiable
human souls.*

For him to be on the verge of hysteria by using an emotional word 'manyala' (filth), is indicative of the strong protest he is expressing against this unfair enigma. Only filth (manyala), something worthless and therefore cannot recognize worth, could rob him of someone he held so dearly in his heart. The poet seems to be questioning why this had to be so. It is as though he finds it unacceptable that life has to be punctuated by death. This paradox annoys him.

In example (1) above the poet employs certain poetic devices to put across his ideas. The stanza opens with the vocative 'Basotho' as though he is calling everybody to attention. (The term 'Basotho' is usually synonymous with Blacks - it does not necessarily indicate the Basotho). The vocative 'Basotho' does not only cajole his target audience, but it also compels them to pay

attention to what he has to say. This vocative device also reminds one of a similar tact used in the recitation of heroic praises in order to draw the crowd's attention. Again, the fact that he is calling upon all the people might imply that what he has to say affects all. His experience of grief is not necessarily his alone but it should be shared. It has to be a communal feeling of grief so that the burden of bereavement should become lighter. After all his culture is basically communalistic. With this collective and vocative remark the persona apparently wants to engender a feeling of togetherness, that oneness, even in suffering. Furthermore it might be his intention to warn his listeners about the grief that might one day come their way too. The misfortune he protests against is bound to befall them too.

After 'Basotho' there is a caesura, a syntactic break inside the line, that not only strengthens the vocative amplitude of 'Basotho', but also foregrounds 'bosoto' (misfortune) that comes after it. The copulative demonstrative 'ke bona' (here it is) also serves to focus attention on 'bosoto' as now this misfortune is no longer something imagined, existing at a distance from him, but its proximity and real presence are concretized in this copulative demonstrative so that 'bosoto' is now perceived distinctly from a close range. The speaker's pitiable condition is further

complicated by the way misfortune clings to him: it is like a very sticky adhesive (bo mmaname).

The second line begins with 'bososelo' (smile) without its nominative prefix 'le-'. Finnegan noticed this tendency to drop the prefixes even in Sesotho praises:

prefixes and concords also appear in characteristic ways, with certain rare omissions of prefixes, and with contractions. (1976 : 131)

The word 'lebososelo' appears in its contracted form, part of it - the prefix - has been dropped. Contraction on the other hand enhances brevity and intensity of meaning. 'Lebososelo' is thus given prominence both by dropping its prefix and placing it first in the line. Now there are two contrasting words being foregrounded in juxtaposed lines, namely: 'bosoto' and 'bososelo'. What is also striking about them is the graphological similarity in their two initial syllables. (Perhaps another reason why the 'le-' prefix has been dropped is to create this partial graphological resemblance between the two words.) By giving equal prominence to the two contrasting words, the speaker accords them equal status in this stanza; that is, they are contradictory on the same level of significance: they represent and reflect two contradictory experiences

the poet felt with the same intensity. This contrast between experiences impinging upon the same speaker also signifies, through metaphorical analogy, the continual struggle between life and death, which is what the persona strongly objects to. He seems unwilling to acknowledge that life is but a paradox.

The contradiction he sees in life also creates tension in him. He appears unable to come to terms with himself. He overtly disowns part of himself: 'bososelo la maobane' (yesterday's laughter). It is as though the laughter was never his because now it belongs to 'yesterday'. It is difficult for him to visualize the vanished laughter as his. He is disgusted with life because it is not dependable, it has contradictory faces. This attitude is reflected in the last two lines of the cited stanza. The first of the two lines reflects extreme happiness whilst the second one expresses sadness of equal magnitude - he has wilted like a flower that has been trampled by the heat of the sun.

In short, the above stanza embraces the poet's protest against the enigmatic nature of life; but he also feels helpless and hopeless for he is incapable of doing anything to alter the situation. The only thing he can do is to express his grief that develops into a common experience

of all his people for, as a unit, they can help one another carry the burdens of life.

- (3) Lefu, ha o senatla,
o ntshunyakgare,
Mohla o fanyehwang,
ruri ke tla thenthetsa;
(Mahohodi : 2)

*Death, you are not a hero,
you are an intruder,
The day you are hanged,
surely I'll be delighted;*

The poet pinpoints what he regards as the plunderer of life, namely, death. He even addresses death directly, personifying it too, as though the poet and death are both involved in a skirmish. Chapman observes that direct speech:

can give a sense of spoken memory,
of distaste or embarrassment, of
detachment. (1973 : 41)

The persona voices his distaste for the boastful and bullying manner in which death treats human beings. He identifies it as the main culprit in the contradictoriness of nature. In fact it is a scoundrel that needs to be eradicated in order to give full meaning to life.

In the first line the speaker uses two antithetical concepts to refer to his interlocutor, death: 'hero' as

opposed to 'intruder'. This does not only reveal the poet's attitude of utter contempt towards death, but it also casts it in an extremely bad light for it behaves like a hero, and yet it is a charlatan: it destroys life in whose creation it made no contribution whatsoever. It is in fact both imposter and villain.

The word 'fanyehwang' alludes to the poet's christian moral faith. It is suggestive of the speech register associated with the christian field of discourse. The context in which it is used (implying the day of resurrection) evokes, in the reader, the idea of crucifixion of Jesus on the cross. This has oblique reference to the speaker's unflagging hope about the transitoriness of death: hope borne out of his christian upbringing. He will definitely be extremely happy the day death is crucified (hanged) 'on the cross'. He appears confident that on doomsday death's death will be pronounced as Christ died on the cross so that human mortals might eventually overcome death and live eternally beyond the grave. Although the persona protests against death, his christian faith fills him with hope of eventual victory over death.

(4) Satalla o sa phela,
 O tshware le ka meno;
 Bophelo ke lempetje,
 Bo fetoha le letsatsi.
 (Sentebale : 40)

*Hold on firmly whilst you
are still alive,
Grab even with your teeth;
Life is a chameleon,
It keeps on changing as
the days wear on.*

The persona does not only exhort the listeners to take heed of his advice, but his intention is also stark naked. By intention we mean what Richards refers to as:

the speaker's intention, his aim, conscious or unconscious, the effect he is endeavouring to promote. (1978 : 182)

He would like the listeners to take a particular line of action which he regards as a counter measure to frustration inherent in life (the fact that life is as unpredictable as a chameleon). They should work hard; they should be extremely industrious in order to survive. Moreover, they have to be very resourceful - go to an extent of even grabbing with their teeth when the going is tough. It is as though he is saying that life is a game of no rules and thus no holds are barred. Now that it is treacherous, at times one just has to be unscrupulous to ensure survival.

The use of the imperative 'satalla' introduces a sense of urgency into the stanza (even the whole poem). It is imperative that the listener act according to the sagacious advice given by the speaker lest he be overpowered by the paradoxes of life. The words 'o tshware le ka meno' (grab even with your teeth) reveal the magnitude of the strife in life. They also reveal the speaker's attitude towards this strife. A feeling of violence is aroused in him. He seems to realize that mere protest will not help, hence he commands everybody to stand up and fight the contradictions of life - fight tooth and nail if need be.

- (5) Ke ipotsaka dipotso ke sa qete,
 "Ebe morero wa Lehodimo ke ofe
 ka motho?"
 Ruri qaka ena nna e nkeme
 maqote,
 E pala leha ho se ho laotswe
 ka lotho.

(Fuba sa ka : 19)

*I ask myself questions endlessly,
 "What could be Heaven's purpose
 with a human being?"
 Really this problem disturbs
 me,
 It remains obstinate even after
 divining by lot.*

In this extract the poet uses what Belsey refers to as the 'interrogative text':

The syntax of which the self is seen as both subject and object, the assertions ('I am I') and the contradictions ('No-yes', 'I lie, I am not') all point to the disruption of a unified subject which is the source of meaning and action. (1980 : 88)

The poet is both subject and object in the stanza cited in (5) above. He splits himself into two by divorcing part of himself from the self. One part is the speaker who poses questions to the other part who is the interlocutor (or listener). This is the reason why he finds it possible to engage in internal monologue. The questions are introverted, for two sides of himself are in serious discussion, though the interlocutor is a passive listener. Maybe the lack of response from the interlocutor's part is indicative of the degree of difficulty of the question put to him. The speaker too admits as much in the last two lines: this problematic question has no solution; even diviners who use lots have no clue to the answer. All these features add to the magnitude of the problem.

The internal monologue is persistent, it keeps on recurring. The phonological features of the first line suggest and accentuate this recurrence : the alliterative effect of 'p' and 'ts' (in 'ipotsaka' and 'dipotso') as well as 'k' (in the two 'ke's and 'ipotsaka') contribute towards this reiteration. Brooks and Warren note that alliteration is used by most poets:

to give a line or a group of lines a greater unity, to support musical effects, or to emphasize the words alliterated. (1976 : 524)

The poet makes use of this alliteration to emphasize the monotonous regularity with which the puzzling questions that perturb him keep on coming up in his mind. The source of his puzzlement is the contradictory nature of life: man seems not to be fulfilling what his Creator meant him to; he appears to be at a loss as to what the purpose of his very existence ought to be. This is both unsettling and intolerable to the speaker. That is why he even goes to the extent of soliciting help from diviners who use lots. He cannot live with this dilemma. On the surface, the internal monologue the speaker is engaged in might seem to suggest a meditative posture he takes towards creation, whilst it in fact reveals the internal conflict in him - the problem of comprehending fully what his very human existence means, as life is fraught with enigmatic paradoxes.

- (6) Tshediseha nnake,
Fatshe lena le boima,
Le hlotse le dikokonono,
Le phoqile le ditidima.
(Kgapha tsa ka : 35)

*Be consoled my dear,
This world is burdensome,
It has defeated even
the mighty,
It has disappointed
even great doctors.*

This is encouragement to those who feel discouraged about continuing life's journey. Their grief should be made lighter by the knowledge that they are not the first to experience suffering as others, before them, have had their fair share of suffering too. Again, his advice seems to be based on the awareness that grief is shared in the African community. If the load of grief is shared, nobody is likely to despair, even in the face of formidable challenges. As it were, the poet appears to be of the opinion that one cannot put up a meaningful fight against the problems of life without standing united with other people.

The puzzling contradictions Maphalla disapproves of are also manifest in human nature. The despicable conduct of human beings is contrary to his expectations, and this he detests. Deceit is one of the human foibles he dislikes:

(7) Motswalle wa kgale, motswalle wa
dilemo,
Kajeno o nkotetse, ke hloka
molemo,
(Dikano : 44)

*An old friend,
a friend of long
standing,
Today he has driven
me back,*

The speaker expresses dissatisfaction over a friend's deceitfulness. The culprit pretended to be a friend

over a number of years, but today he shuns the speaker for he no longer finds him useful. He has turned the persona away from him just like a herdboys drives back a calf from its dam as it is being milked. This suggests that his friend denies him even those privileges he is entitled to. The only reason for this strange and unfair treatment is that he is no longer of any use to his friend. What magnifies this deceit is that it emanates from a person who pretended to be a friend over a number of years. This is tantamount to a stab in the back. The poet can only be perplexed by the complex nature of human behaviour.

The first line of the above extract is divided into two equal parts by means of a caesura, or what Brooks and Warren refer to as a 'strong internal pause' which

marks the end of a sense unit
(1976 : 511)

In this instance the caesura marks the pause between two parallel sense units. It also curtails the movement (rhythm) of the line, so that the tempo of the line is checked. The dragging tempo in turn reflects a mood of meditation. The speaker is reflecting, with tremendous difficulty, on his unfortunate situation. The two sense units are parallel because the poet uses similar syntactical slots with a similar meaning too. In the first part or 'cola', the idea of time is expressed without being

specific, for 'maobane' can mean 'yesterday' or simply 'in the past'; in the second cola the speaker is more specific : it is now 'dilemo' (years). Again, the repetition is in ascending order, from a single fragment of time to multiple and larger time units. This parallel repetition within the same line emphasizes the difficulty the speaker is having in accepting what has happened to him. His predicament has not only dampened his spirits but it has also broken him down. The vigour he lacks is even reflected in his manner of speech, he drags himself as he utters his nasty experiences.

In the second line the caesura juxtaposes two complementary sense units : the first expresses the unfair treatment he receives from his friend, the second pinpoints the reason for this type of treatment. It is as though it has suddenly dawned on his mind that his supposed friend has been misusing him for his own selfish ends. This he obviously resents.

- (8) Di kae ditshepiso lefatsheng;
 Ditshepiso tsa ntho tse kgolo,
 Diqhobosheane botebong ba lewatle,
 Le paradeisi tlhorong tsa Thabatelle?
 (Sentebale : 35)

*Where are promises on earth,
 Promises of big things (to
 come),
 Fortresses in the depth of
 the sea,
 Paradises on the peaks of
 Thabatelle?*

The whole stanza is an interrogative monologue. Apparently the poet is involved in a dialogue with the reader or listener. It is as though the reader is part of the problem that confronts him, and yet what he is appealing for is involvement in the experience he expresses. He would like the reader to identify any good that might have come out of the false promises made to him, in case he (the speaker) is being blinded by sheer prejudice. He appeals to an objective outsider to help him scrutinize these promises. Ultimately the reader, because he shares a common existential context with the speaker, tends to agree fully with him: the promises were never fulfilled. Because of the reader's participation in the whole experience of the poet, a feeling of dejection wells up in him too. Consequently the poet's anger is no longer confined to him only, but it spreads to his listeners too. It is no longer an individual issue but a collective one. We stand united with the poet in his rejection of and protest against deceit.

A string of questions posed in this stanza reflects the speaker's impatience. He has run out of patience. He has been waiting too long for promises made to come to fruition, but his waiting has been in vain. The repetition of the word 'tshepiso' in the second line foregrounds this word. It is repeated for emphasis as it is

the central issue. 'Ditshephiso' is the idea around which the whole stanza (and the poem as a whole) revolves. This might be the reason why in the third and fourth lines he expands on this concept by providing the listener with illustrative examples of what he means. The use of the word 'lefatsheng' gives his poem an air of universality; thus he transcends the locality and hovers above the common place. The word 'qhobosheane' implies, by metaphorical shift, a sense of security. If the fortresses promised are not there, then he should feel very insecure in this world. This is a very solid reason for protesting. Moreover, these fortresses were to be built in the depth of the sea where the enemy would find it nigh impossible to get him. The same idea of watertight security is repeated in the last line : a paradise (Adam and Eve's paradise) is a place of ideal comfort, it is trouble-free. His paradises were to be placed out of danger, at the summit of high mountains, like Thabatelle (literally a 'tall mountain'). This further accentuates the idea of maximum security from possible harm. But all these were empty promises. It is understandable then why the speaker is plagued by a feeling of insecurity in this world. He cannot help but voice his dissatisfaction.

- (9) Tsa Ramarato dikgarebe ke phiphitha,
 Di balwa ka mashome, ke letlaburu;
 Ho di qapolla ka diboko ho ka ntshita,
 Hobane ke mohlape di ka thiba maru.
 (Mahohodi : 5)

*Ramarato's girlfriends are a troop,
They are counted in tens, it is a mob;
To single them out by their totems is
impossible,
Because they are a flock, they can eclipse
the clouds.*

The speaker objects to deceit relating to love between opposite sexes. Ramarato is blamed for his deceitfulness, he keeps a string of girlfriends. The speaker's attitude of disapproval towards this bad tendency is conveyed by the name he gives to the culprit, Ramarato (one who loves indiscriminately). The despicable behaviour of this shoddy character is what is uppermost in the poet's mind, hence his name-tag. As Ragussis points out, the ontological validity of the magic a name possesses is not its claim to truth,

but its power in the significant
and signifying realm of human
intention and belief. (1986 :
227)

The poet's intention with the use of the tag 'Ramarato', is to express his revulsion over indiscriminate and pretentious loving. He also extends this naming device to signify deplorable behaviour as well as repulsive physical attributes he observes in Ramarato's girls. This is how he names some of them: 'Nkwapo' - a temperamental person; 'Mmaleleme' - an outright liar; and 'Mmantenya' - an extremely corpulent woman. The naming

technique extends the meaning of the poem without sacrificing brevity. Furthermore, the speaker uses hyperbole to foreground the morally contemptible behaviour of Ramarato: his girls are a troop; they are counted in tens, they are a mob that runs helter-skelter (letlaburu); he cannot even remember their totems because they are a big flock (of sheep - they are as stupid as sheep to be fooled by Ramarato). The persona purposely emphasizes their being countless in number so as to cast Ramarato in a bad light. His attitude towards his despicable behaviour is clearly condemnatory. Evidently, Maphalla:

analyzes the relations between men and women, (and the most puzzling manifestations of the human psych. (Culler, 1983 : 10 - 11)

(10) Ebe o tla nthata le hosane,
Ha tsa hosane e se e se tsa
kajeno?
Ebe o tla nthata le hosane,
Ha mathata a hlwele manolo hodimo?
(Fuba sa ka: 45)

*Will you love me even tomorrow,
When tomorrow's matters are no
longer like today's?
Will you love me even tomorrow,
When problems have overpowered
the carefree life?*

His questioning style is symptomatic of internal doubt. His experience in love affairs seems to be the source of his mistrust. What also lends emphasis to his doubt

is the repetition of the first line which also appears as the third line. This line is also repeated at almost regular intervals throughout the whole poem. It encapsulates the central concern of the speaker. Through repetition, his major concern reverberates throughout the whole poem to such an extent that its echo remains ringing in the reader's mind even long after he has heard the poem. Moreover, as Heese and Lawton observe, repetition:

creates pleasing echoes akin to
rhyme, without the restrictions
of regular end-rhyme. (1986 :
46)

By repeating this line at more or less regular intervals, the poet partly circumvents the problem of searching for end-rhyme as he only has to construct one more line with a similar ending, each time he repeats this line. Although at times his rhyme is perceptible to the eye only, like 'kajeno'/'hodimo', the repetition he employs gives amplitude to his doubt that embodies his objection to love founded on transitory earthy issues.

The upshot of what we have said thus far is that Maphalla objects to the contradictions inherent in life. He disapproves of the fact that life is contradicted by death; good life is opposed by hardships and honesty

negated by deceit. He dislikes the negative aspects of life whether they be seemingly natural or originating from man's complex nature. This is the reason why he is also appalled by injustices that pervade the world.

4.2 INJUSTICES

Maphalla protests against injustices perpetrated by human beings against their fellow beings. This protest is apparently motivated by an innate feeling of pity. He possesses an intense feeling of sympathy for the suffering people. As a Black poet he inevitably handles material that is fraught with racial elements, but, as we shall see, he does this with admirable poetic skill and amazing dignity. This poise and humaneness in Maphalla is parallel to what Drayton terms 'McKay's Human Pity' and he comments as follows about it:

As poet and man he must discipline himself, and this gives to his pain a dignity through which his verse sometimes transcends racial protest and becomes human protest. (1975 : 95)

It is our contention that although Maphalla's protest against injustices is incidentally borne out of the racial South African situation, he manages to perceive injustices beyond the racial blinkers that characterize

so many a South African. He protests about human ill-treatment which is, to a large extent, racially conceived.

The injustices the poet protests against will be discussed under two subheadings: **discrimination** and **oppression**.

4.2.1 Discrimination

(11) Jwale mona ditjhabeng ke tumme
 ka tshotleho,
 Ke se ke fetohile sesomo le ho
 dihole;
 Ke se ke bitswa hlaahlasolle e
 se tlholeho,
 Ke se ke le tlakala la metse,
 dithole.
 Ka tla ka ikgola ka rata bobalane,
 Ka hohelwa ke mabone a Tshwane
 Mabalane.

(Mahohodi : 17)

*Now here among foreigners I am
 reputed of suffering,
 I have even turned into an
 object of scorn, even to idiots;
 I am even labelled a vagabond
 although not created thus,
 I am now refused in foreign
 places, I am dust.
 I drew trouble upon myself by
 being attracted by a clerical job,
 I was enchanted by the lights
 of Pretoria, the beautiful plains.*

The above extract forms the last sextet of a sonnet entitled 'Ka tla ka ikgola!' (I brought misery upon myself). The word 'jwale' (now) marks the transition

from the octave to the sextet. The preceding octave embraces reminiscences of his blissful past. The word 'jwale' vividly suggests the sudden transformation in the quality of his life since he left his home. He used to be an honourable man but now the situation is totally different. The inversion of 'ditjhabeng mona' to 'mona ditjhabeng' is meant to foreground the locus of the new humiliating experience. What ought to be a postqualifier, 'mona', is turned into a modifier. The emphasis on the locus compels the reader to take an interest in this new situation as well as in the previous one. Inversion after all generates interest and it brings emphasis to bear upon the said. (Turner, 1986). In other words, the value of what is communicated is determined by:

the way in which a speaker or writer organizes the message, in terms of ordering, focus and emphasis. (Leech 1983 : 19)

The treatment the speaker receives at the hands of the foreigners is very inhuman indeed. It is extremely degenerating: he is an object of scorn, he has lost his respectability and manhood. To aggravate matters, he is mocked even by idiots who ought to be objects of scorn themselves. This is disgusting. Furthermore, he is labelled a vagabond whereas he was born at a specific

place where he was even headman (ramohlongwana). He is treated like dirt, he is refuse.

The poet's choice of words, which have both 'cognitive and affective significations' (Ullman; 1971), clearly reveals his attitude towards his tormentors. 'Hlaahlasolle' (vagabond), 'letlakala' (refuse) and 'dithole' (dirt) all carry emotional overtones on top of their referential significance. They all suggest something that is of no use and thus fit to be trodden upon or even be thrown out into the cold. The underlying implications is that the speaker's sense of pride has been obliterated completely; he is a nobody, he is nothing. This he cannot help but protest vehemently against.

The repetition of the words 'ke se ke' in three consecutive lines accentuates the sustained ridicule and illtreatment he is exposed to. It also magnifies the intensity of this derision. The reader can even detect a subtle emotion of anger welling up in the speaker as he repeats, through different words, the insults levelled at him. However, the crescendo of his anger is checked by his recognition of the fact that he is not faultless in the whole situation. This open acknowledgement of complicity is expressed in the last two lines of our extract. He contributed towards drawing this misery upon himself because he wanted what he thought was a

praiseworthy status (clerkship) and he mistook the bright lights of Pretoria for a signal to a bright future.

The work 'bobalane' is a derivative from the noun 'mabalane' (clerk), which is characteristic of the speech register of the Black miners in South Africa, and this word evokes the whole environment of the South African mines, where men live in dormitories, completely cut off from family and neighbouring communities. Seemingly the inhuman conditions in which his fellow human beings live, are the target of his protest. It sets him thinking about his reassuring past - how he once was a man among men in the past. As a Black foreigner, a migrant labourer, he is being discriminated against.

The whole journey from his traditional place of domicile (the dark and beautiful mountains, perhaps of Lesotho) to the bright lights of the urban areas (a product of Westernization through industrialization) might be symbolic of a journey within himself and its dire consequences. It is suggestive of the shedding of his traditional culture in an attempt to embrace the new Western culture. The scorn he is subjected to could be a result of his rootlessness, for he has decided to deculture himself. His poignant protest might flow

from his sudden realization that he has been a willing partner in the whole process of cultural pestilence. His reminiscences in the octave might be expressive of his burning desire to retrace his steps, to re-establish his cultural roots, mainly because of the dignity with which his culture bestowed him. As it were, the poet is reluctant to renounce his real self in favour of the new humiliating culture that denies him his authentic fullness.

(12) Bosoto ba ho phela hole le mmao,
ditjhabeng!
Jwale ke mona ditjhabeng molata
ke a kotelwa,
Ke jesetswa kgwebeleng ya leeme
ditabeng,
Ke sehlella kgosi tsa ho itjella
wa kebolelwa.

(Dikano : 31)

*The misery of living far from
your mother, among foreigners!
Now here among foreigners I,
an intruder, is driven back,
I am illtreated through introduc=
ing bias in all matters,
I toil for chiefs who reap
where they have not sown.*

The speaker bemoans his misery; hence 'bosoto' is foregrounded. But this misery catches up easily with him because he is far away from his mother. The term 'mmao' (one's mother) thus gains a new significance in this context: it is symbolic of filial love and protection against the impediments of life. It also suggests

his roots, his origin, his blissful place of abode. As Wauthier observes, there is a

defiant hymn of praise sung by
the African poets to the
grandeur and beauty of Africa,
their true homeland. (1966 :
151)

Among foreigners he is treated like a calf that has to be driven back as its mother is being milked. The implication of this metaphorical statement is that the natural resources monopolized by his adversaries are rightfully his. They belong to his mother - they are his milk that should feed him. Worse still, he is being illtreated for no apparent reason except blatant bias that is brought into play in all matters that affect his life. To crown it all, he toils like a slave for chiefs who are only too eager to reap where they have not sown. The word 'chiefs' is reminiscent of the poet's traditional sense of justice. In his waning traditional world the 'chiefs' are recognized traditional rulers who are expected to play a constructive role in the affairs of their subjects. The material benefits that go with their position have to be commensurate with their work input. In a very oblique way the poet draws a parallel between these traditional chiefs and his new 'chiefs' in the new situation of urban culture. The fact that

his new masters (chiefs) share the same colour of skin might be a significant clue to the hereditary nature of their status. The poet does not level criticism at the moral basis for this 'hereditary' master-servant relationship. What really hurts him is that these new 'chiefs' do not perform their duties as his old chiefs used to. They are interested only in the fruit of their subjects' labour. This he finds difficult to condone. Thus the word 'kgosi' (chief) in this context, assumes ironic overtones. Instead of indicating laudible attributes, it has a sting in the tail. The ironic effect is embedded in the double meaning this term has in this context: an acceptable and worthy leader of his subjects as opposed to an imposter and glutton who is only eager to confiscate what by right does not belong to him. In fact:

Double meanings can be used to
disguise adverse criticism
under the form of praise and
so wound more subtly and
ignominiously.

(Turner; 1986 : 223)

The poet criticizes his masters who behave like self-appointed chiefs but are unwilling to behave like true chiefs. The reason for the negative treatment meted out to him can only be blamed on his being a so-called foreigner. He is being discriminated against purely

on the basis of being different from these 'chiefs'. Maybe this 'profound' difference has something to do with his blood. He might be lacking the 'royal blood' that runs through the veins of his chiefs. This sheer accident of creation destines him to misery so long as he remains among foreigners. Perhaps the only way out of his misery is to retrace his steps - at least in a figurative sense - to his mother.

- (13) Jwale ke lla se pelotlhomohi,
 Ke llela mathata le bothata;
 Ke llela kgethollo le leeme;
 Ke phobolwa molomo kgafetsa,
 Empa ruri kgapha tsa ka
 Di ke ke tsa wela fatshe. -
 (Kgapha tsa ka : 1)

*Now I cry an extremely painful
 cry,
 I am complaining about
 troubles and difficulty,
 I am complaining about dis-
 crimination and bias;
 I am being slapped on my
 mouth repeatedly,
 But certainly my tears
 Will not flow in vain.*

The above extract constitutes overt complaint against discrimination, and the complaint is interspersed with tears. The speaker uses the reiterative subjective 'I' (ke), to express the intimacy that exists between himself and the subject matter of the poem. The experience he

gives expression to becomes subjective and this subjectivity magnifies the intensity of this very experience. The word 'lla' is used to denote both a complaint and a cry. In this way his complaint is transformed into a 'cry from the heart'. The suffering he is subjected to moves him to tears. Consequently his poetry ceases to be mere protest but it tends to be a genuine cry of pain. The pitiful cry also draws the readers attention to the source of the poet's pain. The poet enunciates the causes for his cry through repetition that moves through three stages. First, 'troubles and difficulty' - this is a general statement that does not pinpoint the real issue. Second, 'discrimination and bias' - this elucidates the first statement to a certain extent. Third, 'being slapped on my mouth repeatedly' - this compounds his problem. He is not only being discriminated against but he is also forcibly silenced each time he tries to voice his pain (his complaint). Repetition of the central idea (painful discrimination) has an incremental effect. It foregrounds the central issue whilst also being an artistic device that provides the aesthetic form of the poem (Scheub : 1975). As it were, the poet's repetition is pyramidal - starting from the general base and moving to the pinnacle or climax. Seemingly the speaker at first has a blurred view of his predicament but, as he makes a close observation of his situation, the actual prickles that torment

him assume a definite shape. He also uses 'hendiadys', an expression of one thing by means of two. (Turner : 1986), to give emphasis to key concepts: 'mathata le bothata' is one thing just as 'kgethollo le leeme' express one thing by means of two.

The mere fact that the speaker is even crying aloud is indicative of the depth of his suffering. It is as though he has borne the pain stoically for quite some time but now he has reached the end of his tether, the pain is just unbearable. The word 'jwale' (now) which opens the stanza, suggests the contrast between his present state and the former one. Apparently previously he did not complain (cry), maybe because the pain could still be borne or he was hopeful that things would change (his pain would be alleviated), but now he realizes that this is not forthcoming. He is left with no choice but to cry (complain bitterly). But what is remarkable about the poet, is his fortitude. In the midst of severe agony, he remains a sanguine man. This is evidenced by the last two lines in which he expresses his unflagging hope that definitely his crying will not be in vain. Maybe his adversaries will redress his complaints or some benevolent omnipotent force is sure to intervene on his behalf. The assurance with which he expresses his steadfast hope is also reflected by the

use of enjambment between these last two lines: the tempo is allowed to continue without being checked from the first to the next line. It is indicative of the resoluteness and vigour with which he expresses his hope.

Maphalla has also used:

the phonetic properties of language
to set up resemblances to a phenomenon,
so that the sound is felt
to express or enact the sense.
(Easthope, 1983 : 105)

The alliterative repetition of the 'l' sound in the first three lines adds to the sense of elasticity embodied in these lines. In Sesotho the 'l' sound is a continuant. Its prolonged articulation (as opposed to the short one of stop sounds) mirrors the sustained activity of crying. By repeating this sound in words other than 'lla' the persona foregrounds this sound, as well as the crying activity it resembles; consequently it remains echoing in the reader's mind even long after he has heard the poem.

4.2.2 Oppression

Gugelberger makes this appropriate comment on the themes of African literature:

Both writer and critic are convinced that the themes for the African writer should not be based solely on tradition, ethnicity and Africaneity because at the particular moment of time we live in politics and economics. (1986 : xii)

Maphalla is no exception. His poetry mirrors the socio-political condition of his fellow Blacks. He objects to the questionable position to which they are unfairly relegated.

(14) Ha ke kope diphetoho
Tsa madi le tsa tswalo;
Ke ikopela tokoloho,
Fatsheng lena la Rabohle.
(Kgapha tsa ka : 51)

*I am not asking for changes
Pertaining to my blood and birth;
I am asking for my freedom,
On this earth of the Almighty.*

The above stanza is divided into two couplets. Each is opened with the forceful subjective 'I' (ke) to foreground the intensely subjective experience. The first couplet is allowed free flow by employing enjambment as a linking device to unify the thoughts expressed in the two lines. This couplet is cast in the negative form. It is as though the speaker is reacting to a specific allegation which he would like to dispel by openly denying its validity. The second portion of this first couplet indirectly expresses this serious but false allegation. The fact that the couplet is allowed to run on reflects

the speaker's vehement denial : he rattles on his response without any hesitation. The words 'madi' (blood) and 'tswalo' (birth) are indicative of the very basis for oppression. But he refutes the erroneous impression that he has to be treated differently from the other races just because he differs from them. This refutation is elucidated by his other pronouncements in the same poem:

(15) Ha ke kope tshwarelo,
 Ha ke le seo ke leng sona;

 I don't ask for forgiveness
 For being what I am;

Evidently then the accusation the speaker seems to respond to in the first couplet of our extract cannot just be true, for he is satisfied with what he is. Moreover, he is proud of himself, and this he cannot apologize for.

In the second couplet of the extract in (14) he provides his imaginary interlocutor with facts. He openly declares that the only change he is asking for is to be delivered from bondage, from racial oppression. After this declaration there is a pause that is indicated by a comma, as though the persona takes a momentary pause to gather his thoughts. The pause also serves to foreground what comes after it, namely, 'Fatsheng lena' (On this world). He states

exactly where he would like to enjoy his freedom. It is as though he expresses his wish to enjoy freedom before death and not after. The word 'Rabohle' (Almighty, but literally 'Father-of-everybody') is loaded with sarcastic overtones. It is meant to wound those who hold him captive. His captors are the object of scorn for they behave as if this earth is theirs and yet it belongs to their (the poet included) Father. Thus nobody has the moral right to illtreat another human being. In short, the poet denounces racial oppression because it has no moral basis.

- (16) Ho neng maikutlo a rona a bipilwe,
 Ho neng re llela ditjhabeng; re
 qathotsa;
 Ho neng re fetohile bakopi, re
 utlwa ka bobare,
 Ho neng re nwellla mafiswaneng a
 metse, matsheladinokana!
 (Mahohodi : 30)

*How long have our ideas been stifled,
 How long have we depended on
 foreigners, begging;
 How long have we turned into beggars,
 relying on hearsay,
 How long have we drunk out of foreign
 vessels, eating pieces of meat from
 foreign villages!*

The poet castigates denial of freedom of expression. He leans heavily on rhythm to put across the idea of suffering over a protracted period of time. In fact

Rhythm, in speech as in other human activities, arises out of the periodic recurrence of some sort of movement, producing an expectation that the regularity of succession will continue. (Abercrombie, 1967 : 96)

Our understanding of rhythm in African poetry is best enunciated by Sam Uzochukwu where he cites Olatunde O-Olatunji as follows:

A rhythmic-unit which is synonymous with the line (and not the rhythm-segment which is synonymous with the foot) is therefore the basis of Igbo poetic rhythm. In Igbo, as in Yoruba, the rhythm of a poem is the cumulative effect of the rhythm of each line of the poem. (1981 : 37)

Hodgson (1984) also observes that rhythm in the Xhosa language can be achieved through parallelism and repetition as well as the cyclical form of Xhosa music where a single musical sentence is repeated at regular intervals.

What constitutes rhythm in the above extract is the parallel repetition of the words 'Ho neng' in the four lines. Its repetition creates an expectation in the mind of the reader: that it has to come up first before any new idea is added to the formerly expressed

idea. It is an expectation, in the reader, of a regular auditory rhythmic movement to which he has already been introduced.

It is our assertion that Maphalla repeats 'Ho neng' not only for rhythmic effect but also to stress a specific idea. He is protesting! His protest is expressed through a rhythmic persistence. He harps on what he objects to. The matter over which he is dissatisfied has been going on with monotonous regularity. He has suffered too long. That is why he repeats 'Ho neng' which alludes to a protracted time past that also casts its ominous shadow on time present. This catastrophic time past lingers on in his mind like the cyclical rhythmic repetition of 'Ho neng'. This pulsating movement suggests a gloomy atmosphere prevalent in the whole stanza: he has been forcibly silenced; he has been forced into begging; he has been denied direct access to valuable information; moreover, he has been compelled to eat what is tantamount to leftovers (matsheladinokana) from other well-laid tables. In the four lines 'Ho neng (re)' constitutes the contraction of the heartbeat, followed by the unpalatable experiences similar to the release of blood that pervades his whole body. The blood is the injustices that swamp his whole essence of being. Furthermore,

the action implied in the whole stanza is involuntary, unmotivated by the speaker (and company). He is on the receiving end. This reflects lack of choice on his part. What befalls him is as involuntary as the heartbeat. 'Ho neng' could also be suggestive of the persona's restiveness for he has been given no respite from his predicament. It expresses an indirect plea to those who have put harnesses on him to let him free for he has suffered enough. The use of the inclusive 'we' (re) is worth noting. The experience is not his alone, but the pinch is felt collectively.

However, the poet, true to his own philosophy of life, avoids being hysterical, even in the face of formidable odds. Life always holds out a glimmer of hope for him. This time it is in the form of 'Lesiba' (Sesotho Authors' Association) which he personifies (in the same poem from which our extract has been lifted) and showers it with praises normally reserved for warriors who perform heroic feats. He says:

(17) Bukeng tsa dikgalala Basotho ba mpe
 ba ngolwe,
 Ka baka la LESIBA lena, mosupatsela.
 (Mahohodi : 30)

*In the books of the great Basotho
 should also be inscribed,
 Because of this LESIBA, the path=
 finder.*

Evidently he is usually full of hope. He seems to regard difficulty as opportunity.

- (18) Ba ile bonnake, dikgutsana,
 Dikgorane di ba bolella dikate;
 Ba re siile mona mehaolwaneng,
 - Re alositse mabitla.
 (Sentebale : 69)

*They are gone dear ones, orphans,
 The rich shower them with
 unpleasantries;
 They left us here at 'mehaolwaneng'
 (traditional cupboards),
 - We are keeping watch over the
 graves.*

The speaker paints a pitiful picture of his fellow loved ones (bonnake) by calling them orphans (dikgutsana) - parentless children. This suggests lack of care, parental love and material possessions. These benevolent qualities are normally associated with responsible parents. Moreover these 'orphans' have no economic muscle, which is in sharp contrast with the condition of their masters who are rich and arrogant. Their masters shower them with insults simply because they are fully aware that the poor souls have no choice but to put up with their misdemeanour. Throughout the whole poem the plight of his fellow loved ones is given prominence:

(19) Moo ba teng ba kgaba ka ho
gedisa;

(p. 69)

*Where they are they pride
themselves in begging;*

(20) Kgabane di kgabisa malapa
asele;

(p. 69)

*The gentlemen adorn homes
other than theirs;*

In both these lines, (19) and (20), emphasis is on how poverty destroys one's dignity. His people have turned into beggars and instead of improving themselves and their lot, they are forced to consume their efforts in beautifying the homes of their masters. Obviously, their masters, who continue to grow richer and more presumptuous, deserve no compliment. They ride rough-shod over the poor orphans.

In spite of the speaker's unconcealed protest over this sort of dehumanization, he still takes pride in the legacy of his culture. They might be economically worse off but spiritually they are well to do because they have a culture. He rounds off his stanza - in

(18) above - with a symbolic statement: 'we keep watch over the graves'. These graves are a physical embodiment of his culture. In them lie his great predecessors who struggled against formidable odds to nurture and protect their culture. This has given the present generation a sense of pride and of being. This is the reason why he describes his place of abode (which might be figurative) in terms of his traditional artefacts. For instance, he says they are left at: 'diotlwaneng' (reeds forming an enclosure in front of an African hut), 'mekgorwaneng' (African huts wherein fire is made), 'mehaolwaneng' (traditional cupboards), 'mehlongwafatsheng' (huts made of branches planted in the ground) and 'metlotlwaneng' (small huts). All these are symbolic of his tradition established by his deceased predecessors over whose graves they now keep watch. By a slight metaphorical shift, they are not keeping watch over the graves as such, but they are jealously guarding their tradition. In a nutshell, the speaker seems to be saying that even though his people receive inhuman treatment at the hands of their masters in the labour market, fact is they are also human - they have a culture and national pride.

Consequently they also deserve a humane place in the sun. As Goodwin (1982) would have it, Maphalla's poetry manifests a continuity of his tradition from the past, through the present, and it indirectly makes an assertion that it is in relation with the two time segments that the future has to be conceptualized.

The speaker also foregrounds his dejectedness and a feeling of resignation through what Easthope refers to as protosemanticism, which he explains as follows:

A third and important form of iconicity uses the phonetic properties of language to set up resemblance to a phenomenon, so that the sound is felt to express or 'enact' the sense. The effect is not magic but can be explained in terms of protosemanticism. This term refers to the fact that some semantic potential attaches to even single phonemes and clusters of phonemes, so making them available for iconic exploitation. (1983 : 105)

The word 'ile' (gone) possesses this iconic effect. It enacts an eerie atmosphere associated with permanent departure or death. This word appears more than ten times in the poem. At times it is even given added prominence through repetition, like in:

- (21) Ba ile bonnake, ba ile,
(pp. 69 - 70)

*They are gone our loved
ones, they are gone.*

The fact that they have departed for the labour market is irreversible. Their departure leaves the speaker with gloom for he is painfully aware of the deplorable circumstances that are inherent in their new situation. What distresses him most is the fact that these people had no choice but to go out in search of work, otherwise they would die of poverty. They have to surrender their pride and expose themselves to exploitation. This is lamentable, and the protosemanticism inherent in 'ile' contributes to this atmosphere of gloom. But through his feeling of resignation and his lamentation, the reader discerns a questioning mind. He seems to

challenge the basis of racialism;
and therefore, to challenge the
basis of any philosophy which
suggests that certain qualities
are intrinsic to one race, and
other qualities intrinsic in
another race. (Moore, 1970 : 32)

- (22) Ka phofa hara bosiu ka fufulelwa;
Thesele a ntjheba hampe a thothelwa,
A ba a ntshupa ka monwana ka
thothomela,
A thwathwaretsa sa letolo a
nkgalemela,
A re, "lempetje, puo ke ya ka eo
ya Letlama,
Tloholwana tsa ka di se binelwe
ho fetlama!"

(Dikano : 20)

*I dreamt in the middle of the
 night and perspired;
 Thesele gave me a fierce look and
 got angry,
 He even pointed a threatening
 finger at me and I trembled,
 He thundered like lightning and
 reprimanded me.
 He said, "chameleon, this language of
 Letlama is mine.
 My grandchildren should not be
 taught to cower!"*

The speaker's protest against domination of one race over another (symbolized through language domination) is portrayed through creating a world of dreamlike unreality wherein one nightmarish image follows after another. Izevbaye (1981) notes that a dream may be employed by a poet as a means of seeking salvation. Nkosi also makes this comment on Rabearivelo's use of dreams in his poetry:

*In these poems meaning is secreted
 in a language of dreamy and
 shadowy fantasy in which the
 troubled figure of the author can
 be viewed as though through an
 opaque window. (1981 : 131)*

In the above extract from Maphalla, the ghostlike image of Thesele (King Moshweshwe who has joined the world of the ancestors), makes an appearance in the speaker's sleep. The visitation is frightening because Thesele is extremely angry with him: he points a threatening finger at him and his voice is like thunder as he

reprimands him. The cause of his anger is the lowly position to which his language is relegated.

Although the whole scene might appear unrealistic, fact is, it portrays a vivid picture of the speaker's condition. Through this dreamlike state the poet manages to externalize himself through being a participant in a dramatic performance whilst at the same time remaining part of the audience that witnesses the whole incident. In this way he can better recognize his own blunders as well as succeed in evoking a feeling of pity in his fellow audience. He extricates himself from the self for better clarity of perception and understanding. The audience can only wish for his salvation from this unbearable torture. But then the reason for his torment is valid. He is an active participant in the whole exercise of trampling upon his own language which he seems to forget that it also belongs to his ancestors; it forms a significant link between him and them. He is one of the enlightened few but he appears unwilling to let his light shine on the ignorant masses. Thus his protest becomes introverted. He questions his collaboration with those who oppress his people. As Moore again observes:

Africa's face is no longer just
towards the White world, but
towards itself; when the

hatred may be a hatred not for Europe but for other Africans, for what they do or don't do, or for what they do to each other. It may be a rejection of certain things which have taken root in the African society and not things which can be shrugged off as being imported by a colonial power.
(1970 : 39)

Viewed from this angle, Maphalla's dream acquires another significance. It turns out to be an introspection. He is engaged in an ongoing dialogue with himself, accusing himself and acknowledging his faults. It is basically a protest against his own ineptitude. The technique he employs with commendable effect is a dramatic dream.

In his poetry, Maphalla protests against what he recognizes as evil in all its manifestations: whether it be from an individual (himself included), a specific group of people or humanity in general. His protest is often free from rancour but intensely serious. This is why he says:

(23) Ke tla thothokisa metsi a molatswana
Ke tla pepesa mekgokgothwane le
yona mefetshe:

(Dikano : 1)

*I'll sing praises to the water of
the brooklet,
I'll expose whooping coughs and
cancers too;*

This is tantamount to his vow. He is bent on bestowing praise where it is due and unequivocally condemning what he regards as despicable. He sees his poetry as a legacy that should benefit even generations to come. Perhaps H.I.E. Dhlomo's letter cited by Visser and Couzens sums up Maphallas intention:

My creative writing is the best thing I can give to my people, to Africa. I am determined to die writing and writing and writing. And no one... can stop, fight or destroy that. It is the soul, the heart, the spirit. It will endure, and speak truth even if I perish... I have chosen the path to serve my people by means of literature, and nothing will deflect me from this course. (1985 : ix)

Indeed Maphalla's poetry is a symbolic expression of his entire inner self. As Moloi rightly observes:

Dithothokiso tsa Mosotho di bontsha botebo ba maikutlo a hae a moya le nama, le kelello ya hae e kgonang ho bopa; di sibolla, di senola makunutu le menyenyetso ya pelo ya hae.

(1973b : (i))

A Black's poems reveal the depth of his spiritual and physical feeling, and his mind that is capable of creating; they unearth and expose the secrets and the whisperings of his heart.

Above all Maphalla bears pain with poise and dignity. These latter two are borne out of his unflagging faith in the inevitable 'divine' intervention in his predicament. He seems convinced that one day love will reign over hatred and virtue will overpower evil. This innate resilience that characterizes Maphalla the poet and mouthpiece of his people is summed up by Junod as follows:

In his soul the Umuntu is great indeed. To anyone who has, as I have, witnessed the Umuntu facing death with his complete assurance of spiritual reality, and that the spirit is really the man; his fortitude in suffering, physical or moral; his faith in the Supreme Being ..., all this is proof that the Umuntu is a man and a divine soul... (1938 : 141)

In the next, and final chapter, we look back at what we have done thus far. Furthermore, we shall also suggest possible future research directions.

CHAPTER 5

5. LOOKING BACK

In the first part of this chapter we take a pause and look back on what we have done thus far. Our aim is to point out what we have achieved and to say what the contributions of this study are. The second portion of the chapter brings up suggestions regarding possible future research directions.

5.1 In this work we discussed three aspects relating to Maphalla's poetry, namely: influence, imagery and protest.

5.1.1 Influence, as it is evident in Maphalla's works, falls into two broad categories: indigenous and exotic. Under the two groups we discussed only proverbs and christianity, respectively, as they are the most predominant influences at work. In the literature we have analysed, the study has shown that these influences are not the source of the poet's creativity. In actual fact they constitute a significant aspect of his entire creative skills. The poet finds it difficult to ignore the power of expression latent in the African proverbs as they are the social charters of his community.

Their presence in his works is not surprising, for he addresses social issues. His artistry and originality is evidenced by the new significance he gives to these proverbs. He does not merely repeat them or alter them. He gives them new significance through creating a new context for them and ingeniously interfusing them with his other artistic devices. Christianity too does not only add to aestheticism in his poetic compositions. It reflects the extent to which the poet's traditional world-outlook has been influenced and modified by this 'external force'. Consequently, the poet's African world becomes consistent with the 'modern African world' which is a microcosm of conflicting but neighbouring cultures. Viewed from this angle, Maphalla artistically manipulates influence to enhance both his artistic and communicative style.

5.1.2 Imagery is the next aspect that came under discussion. Our main focus fell not only on imagery as a literary communicative device or on the diverse vehicles of imagery. We demonstrated that it is through the poet's selection of images that the reader is allowed a glimpse into the poet's mind. Through images related to the physical condition of man and violence, we come to realize that the poet is perturbed by all

the hazards that threaten human existence. Images associated with traditional African beliefs reflect a dichotomy in the poet's attitude towards them. Some beliefs should be discarded whereas others ought to be retained. Beliefs worth retaining constitute indispensable sanctuary that comes in handy during calamities. Images from the Western world reveal both praise and scorn for Westernization. This does not suggest any inconsistency, but it shows Africa's real relationship to Westernization which gave with one hand but took away with the other (Jahn; 1968). Imagery associated with nature reflects the poet's conception of the unity of creation. Man is an integral part of the cosmos, hence he is reflected, in his totality, by the very nature around him. The wonders and mysteries of nature epitomize man's existence. In short, Maphalla's imagery is not only an effective literary communicative device but a keyhole that allows the reader a vista of the fabric of Maphalla's mind.

5.1.3 We also discussed the theme of protest in Maphalla's works. This theme constitutes the underlying motive in most of his poems. His protest is not confined to the socio-political situation that characterizes his existence; but it embraces the universal dilemma of mankind. He even objects to contradictions inherent in

life. He seems to question the very essence of being thrown into being whereas he is not endowed with the power to determine his fate. He is baffled by the absurdities of existence. He also protests against man's callous behaviour towards his fellow beings. Maphalla's poetry is the conscience of humanity. Through it he censures and in an oblique way, suggests positive alternatives. Furthermore, the poet protests through what should be acknowledged as poetic aestheticism. He often speaks as though he were an individual and yet the subjective 'I' (Ke) is meant to concretize the abstract and make the general specific. He has the tendency of externalizing himself by using the interrogative and through creating a dreamlike world of reality. This technique elevates his poetry from the subjective hysteria to the objective level of authenticity. He also falls back on poetic techniques that normally abound in African heroic 'poetry', especially for emphasis and foregrounding. Some of the features adopted from heroic poetry include repetition, parallelism and rhythm. In short, both the syntagmatic and paradigmatic features of Maphalla's poetic style show his indebtedness to his African past. Whilst his poetry has a new freshness, he also composes on the basis of a long-standing African tradition. Thus his poetry establishes that valuable relationship with his past without which

the future (of African culture in general) could be hazardous. Maphalla's protest is void of vituperation but remains intensely serious. His poise is born out of his unflagging hope in the imminent divine intervention. Hence his poetry is neither a testimony of despair nor merely vehement protest. It also turns out to be a solemn pledge of the inevitability of evil succumbing to virtue. Maphalla's poetry is a source of inspiration for a suffering people. Conversely, it is a stern warning to those who perpetrate vice.

In our investigation we did not touch upon the weaknesses evident in Maphalla's works. This should not be misconstrued to imply that there are none. In fact the poet is at his worst especially where he makes a conscious effort to compose poetry along the lines of Western literary tradition. When he tries to stick to end-rhyme in most cases he writes doggerel. He falls flat when he tries to emulate the Western sonnets with their rigid rhyme schemes. His poetic compositions on subjects that are of no consequence to the African lack poetic depth. Poems such as 'Thoholetso ho sefate' (Praises to a tree) - Fuba sa ka : 60; 'Ngwetsi ya Raditladi' (Raditladi's daughter-in-law) - Kgapha tsa ka : 41; and 'Mokete wa pina tsa Sesotho' (A feast of Sesotho songs) - Dikano : 56; bear testimony to this fact. At times his poems are unnecessarily long because he has

the tendency of repeating himself verbatim. These weaknesses notwithstanding (and others which we lack the space to deal with), Maphalla is both a new and significant voice in the genre of Sesotho (African) poetry. We hope that our study of some aspects of his poetry will make a meaningful contribution to the tools of literary criticism needed desperately in the African languages. That is to say, as Brown (1982) maintains, principles of literary criticism should not predate the literature itself but should flow naturally from it.

5.2 POSSIBLE FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Maphalla, like any other author, has fed on, like a parasite, the work of other authors, especially his predecessors in the genre of poetry. Miller makes this significant observation:

The poem, in my figure, is that ambiguous gift, food, host in the sense of victim, sacrifice. It is broken, divided, passed around, consumed by critics canny and uncanny who are in that odd relation to one another of host and parasite. Any poem, however, is parasitical in its turn on earlier poems, or contains earlier poems within itself as enclosed parasites, in another version of perpetual reversal of parasite and host. If the poem is food and poison for the critics, it must in turn have eaten. It must have been a cannibal consumer of earlier poems. (1979 : 225)

We shall now, briefly, illustrate that Maphalla's poetry is inhabited by a long chain of parasitical presences, echoes, allusions, guests of previous texts, and how these parasitical presences feed upon the host and, conversely, how the host also feeds upon the guest. We hope that this will generate further research conducted along these lines. This type of study can also be referred to as intertextuality. As Culler puts it:

'Intertextuality' thus has a double focus. On the one hand, it calls our attention to the importance of prior texts, insisting that the autonomy of texts is a misleading notion and that a work has the meaning it does only because certain things have previously been written. Yet in so far as it insists on intelligibility, on meaning, intertextuality leads us to consider prior texts as contributions to a code which makes possible the various effects of signification. Intertextuality thus becomes less a name for a work's relation to particular texts than a designation of its participation in the discursive space of a culture: the relationship between a text and the various languages or signifying practices of a culture and its relation to those texts which articulate to it the possibilities of that culture. (1981 : 103)

We use the term intertextuality in its broad sense, that is, to include both proper intertextuality (where a text alludes to or redeploys an entire structure, a pattern of form and meaning from a prior text) as well

as simple allusion - where a text repeats an element from a prior text without using its meaning. (1981 : 104)

These are some of the texts or allusions to texts we find embedded in Maphalla's poetry.

(1) Ntsane, K.E. - Mmusapelo II

Satire, Ntsane's main weapon for reprimanding society, is found in abundance in Maphalla's works:

Ke re ha o tshaba o tshabe hwenene,
O tshabe le mosadi wa hiki, Mmanyao,
Basadi bana le ritelang hiki le baloi,
(Mmusapelo II : 67)

*I say you should fear liquor completely,
You should fear the woman who brews 'hiki',
Mother-of-so-and-so,
You women who brew hiki are witches.*

compare with

Kgabane di ketotswe ke hiki, mokankanyane,
Tjhefu ya tsoho la mosadi wa kgera.
(Kgapha tsa ka : 21)

*Gentleman have been dethroned by hiki,
an intoxicating drink,
Poison from a woman who brews a strong drink.*

Ntsane refers to liquor in several names as though it is worthy of praise. It is not just 'hwenene', but it

is also called 'hiki' and 'bodila'. These are names given to liquor by those who 'enjoy' it. The very object of their praise is the source of their misery. Furthermore, the very woman who is also a mother is the one who brews the poisonous stuff as if she does not know the pain of seeing one's child in misery. This is satire at its best. Maphalla also satirically elevates liquor to the same level as Ntsane: he too refers to it as 'hiki' and 'mokankanyane'. Moreover, he indirectly equates it with gentlemen who are also worthy of praise. The irony is in the fact that these respectable men are dethroned from their fragile pedestals by a stronger gentleman, liquor. In the last line Maphalla calls liquor what it ought to be called - it is poisonous stuff. Ntsane's text is embedded in Maphalla's but Maphalla's text has a more serious tenor than that of Ntsane.

Portrayal of doomsday is frightening in both texts:

Hodimo ka utlwa lentswe ho meketsa.
(Mmusapelo II : 84)

High above I heard a voice shout.

compare with

Ka utlwa lentswe hodimo le nthonya
ka lebitso,

(Dikano : 1)

*I heard a voice high above singling
me out by name,*

In both cases the voice is imaginary, as though in a nightmare. The voice Ntsane hears is the one that calls upon him to hurry up as he is being awaited at the entrance into heaven. With Maphalla the voice is calling him by his name in order to give him instructions relating to the responsibility he has towards his people. This voice too is like a voice that the poet expects to pass judgement on doomsday. The mysteriousness of the voice, in both texts, is meant to introduce a serious tone into the commands given. It is the mysticism that is characteristic of the dream and its signification in the author's culture. Maphalla, by feeding upon Ntsane, seems to carry on this tradition inherent in his culture.

Declaration of love for a young woman is made in more or less similar terms:

Ka re, ngwanana, ha ke o rate ke a petsoha,
(Mmusapelo II : 33)

*I said, maiden, I love you so much that
I can split.*

See Maphalla

Ka re ha ke o rate ke a shwa ngwana ditjhaba,
(Mahohodi : 45)

*I said I am dying of your love,
foreigners' child,*

This manner of declaring one's love for a young woman is typical of how, within the African culture, a young man puts across his proposal to a young woman. The magnitude of love is purported to put the young man's life in danger so that the young woman can develop a feeling of sympathy for him and accept his proposal. It also suggests the mother figure and the image of security associated with women.

Ntsane's texts embedded in Maphalla's texts clearly indicate how the host text can participate, through a perpetual reversal of parasite and host, in the articulation of various significations.

(2) Khaketla, B M - Dipjhamathe

The iconic potential of the Sesotho language exploited by Khaketla is evident in Maphalla's works:

Ba ile, ba ile, re boMolahlehi,
Ba ile, ba ile, jo motso qhalane;
(Dipjhamathe : 54)

*They are gone, they age gone, we are
Molahlehis,
They are gone, they are gone, alas!
the house has fallen apart;*

Maphalla says

O ile, o ile wa hlooho ya kgomo,
O ile, o ile ke setse lepalapaleng;
(Dikano : 38)

*He is gone, he is gone my bosom friend,
He is gone, he is gone I remain stranded;*

and

Ba ile bonnake, ba ile,
Ba tswile letsholo ho sela bophelo;
(Sentebale : 70)

*They are gone dear ones, they are gone,
They have gone out in search of a living;*

Both authors use 'ile' for iconic effect to create a gloomy atmosphere associated with death. Maphalla, on the other hand, also employs 'ile' to portray symbolic death - death relating to human dignity and the self. The iconic effect of 'ile' seems to gather more strength from Maphalla's poetry so that when the reader goes back to Khaketla's text, he has a better understanding of the eerie atmosphere evoked by this word.

Both poets cast extreme pain through the image of coagulated blood which clogs the heart:

Bohloko ba pelo, mohlohlwa-mahlwele,
(Dipjhamathe : 51)

*Heart's pain, stuffed with coagulated
blood,*

Maphalla says

Ke hlatse mahlwele a nkimetse pelo,

*So that I vomit blood clots that
weigh heavily on my heart,*

Khaketla uses the image of coagulated blood stuffed into his heart to portray excruciating pain emanating from the loss of his loved ones whilst Maphalla evokes the same image to convey the pain that originates from the illtreatment he is subjected to in life as a whole. Maphalla's image is conveyed in a more explicit way than Khaketla's, so that his image seems to shed more light on Khaketla's image, which remains somehow obscure until the reader has come across Maphalla's text.

Death is portrayed as a scoundrel and an extremely jealous phenomenon which takes delight in spoiling other people's enjoyment:

Mehala ya fihla re ile metjekong,
(Dipjhamathe : 58)

*Telegrams arrived whilst we were
at dancing parties,*

See Maphalla

Lalome sa ho inkela baena ho sa
qoqopelwa,
(Fuba sa ka : 8)

*The wild beast that takes younger
siblings whilst people are busy
dancing,*

In both cases the news of death of the loved one reached the personae whilst they were enjoying themselves; death put a sudden stop to their happiness. Death's sting is also compared to that of a traditional assegai (tsenene):

Tsenene ya lefu ha se le ho tjhora,
(Dipjhamathe : 60)

Death's assegai is extremely sharp-pointed,

Maphalla says

Hoja tsenene ya lefu e kgethelwa,
(Sentebale : 64)

*If only one could choose a victim for
death's assegai,*

Death is portrayed as a hunter whose spear is very deadly indeed; it never fails to penetrate into its victim, resulting in certain death. The pain that results from death is also felt deep inside the bereaved individual.

Both authors seem to be fully aware that some of the cultural practices of their culture can be employed effectively in the discursive process of their language.

(3) Mokhomo, M - Sebatatso

Mokhomo's anthology of poetry opens with a poem entitled 'Mopherathethana' (An unpalatable dish) in which she appeals to fellow authors to lend her support so that her dish should become palatable. In actual fact she seems to be in doubt as to whether her poetry will rise up to the expected standard. Maphalla also opens one of his collections of poetry, Fuba sa ka, with a poem entitled 'Bopepele ntlohele!' in which he voices his doubt concerning his own ability to compose poetry of good quality. He actually says the inherent tendency to speak badly should leave him alone. The similarity in the cherished idea in both poets is remarkable. One is aware that her poetry cannot be regarded as a finished product without assistance from other poets while the other is also fully aware that a good command of the language is a prerequisite for good poetry. Both of them appear to be apologetic about faults that might be evident in their poetry. This apparent apology is consistent with the preliminary remarks made by a

speaker at a traditional court (lekgotla) where a serious issue is under discussion: 'Mowakgotla ha a tsekiswe' - those who err whilst trying to make a meaningful contribution to a discussion are not supposed to be prosecuted. Both poets seem to perpetuate this long standing traditional etiquette of delivering a speech.

Furthermore, they both see an eagle as an ideal symbol for real freedom:

Ntsu, tsubella o nkuke, nna,
(Sebatso : 10)

Eagle, snatch me up, my dear,

compare with

Ntsu, nkadime mapheo ke tsebe ho rura,
(Dikano : 41)

Eagle, lend me wings so that I can fly,

and

Rona re tla fofa sa ntsu,
(Sentebale : 22)

We will fly like an eagle,

Perhaps both poets pluck a feather from the African mythology imbibed from their childhood. The mystical phenomenon of why an eagle is regarded as the king of all birds is explained in terms of its unparalleled achievement, in the world of the birds, to fly to phenomenal heights. Probably the yearning to be above, and not part of, the decadence that pervades the world, is best captured in the ability of the eagle to extricate itself from this repulsive rot. But then Makhokolotso would like the eagle to take her along to all the places of safety within its reach whilst Maphalla would like to emulate the eagle and fly on his own accord. Thus an explanation originating from African mythology is turned into an image that concretizes envisaged ideal freedom.

Both poets portray the evil prevalent on earth through putrefaction:

Topo di alame se-ka-makau,
(Sebatso : 9)

Corpses are brooding like ducks,

Consider Maphalla

Fatshe la kajeno le inkgela ponyonyo.
(Sentebale : 37)

*Today's world is pervaded by a putrid
smell.*

Whilst Makhokolotso paints a horrifying picture of corpses that multiply as though they hatch in numbers comparable to those of ducks' eggs, Maphalla simply perceives decadence all over the place. But then decadence is what both speakers portray in shocking images. This is in keeping with the African philosophy of life: if something is bad and deplorable then censure is expressed in no uncertain terms.

(4) Mofokeng, S M - Senkatana

Although Mofokeng is not a poet per se, he has written parts of the above-mentioned drama in verse form, so that it is not surprising for Maphalla to have fed upon him too:

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

(Senkatana : 1)

*Time is a river that is only rumbling,
and is wide,
It cannot be divided into bits and
pieces.*

Maphalla says

Bophelo ba motho ke noka e phallang,
(Mahohodi : 11)

A person's life is a flowing river,

The image used by Maphalla to portray the real nature of life can best be understood against the backdrop of Mofokeng's more elaborate image. The lucid meaning of Maphalla's statement hinges on Mofokeng's more elaborate exposition regarding the river's movements and how a river appears to simulate time. But then Mofokeng's image also gains more clarity from the new context in which Maphalla exploits its hospitality. Mofokeng refers to time as though it is an entity detached from life whereas Maphalla clearly indicates that what Mofokeng refers to as time is actually synonymous with life. Thus the parasitism, as we have illustrated above, can also be seen to be mutual; each text gains clarity from the other. What both authors could be perpetuating too is perception of time in the African world-view: it is reflected in nature - in the rhythmic changes and movement inherent in the natural environment around man. In this way it becomes perceptible to man's senses. Their culture is capable of communicating the abstract through the concrete. This transitoriness of time, also reflected in natural phenomena, constitutes both authors' basic philosophy of life: procrastination is the thief of time, for time and tide waits for no man.

5.3 CONCLUDING COMMENT

The foregoing discussion should not be seen as either an attempt at comparing Maphalla to other poets in Sesotho or an analysis of influence which we discussed in chapter 2. What we are concerned with here is that Maphalla's works could be available for a DECONSTRUCTIVE approach. That is, it is possible to show the materials out of which they are constructed. One way of doing this is through intertextuality which constitutes an integral part of Deconstruction. What we come to realize, through our brief exemplification of intertextuality, is the perpetual reversal of parasite and host. In as much as Maphalla's texts have 'eaten' from previous texts, these texts too have 'eaten' from his texts by gaining more clarity from their host-parasite. In other words, whilst the presence of those texts, in his works, is evident, the presence of his texts in those other texts cannot be denied too. This is what intertextuality embraces. However, an in depth discussion of this phenomenon falls outside the scope of this work. Let it suffice to state that intertextuality should not be seen as a blight as it lends resonance to the new text and also establishes that vital link in the continuation of tradition. As Norton says, time present is contained in time past, time past is present

in time future and time future contained in time present. (Ngugi; 1971). What is, and what might be, is ultimately bound to what has been. The significance and nature of intertextuality warrants further research in the literature of Sesotho and African literature in general. .

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