

REFLECTION OF VIOLENCE, THREATS AND AGGRESSION IN A POLITICAL SPACE: A CASE OF THE POST-APARTHEID NOVEL *SEHLEKEHLEKE SA DEIDRO* BY V. MASIMA

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ABSTRACT

The article is set to examine violence, threats and aggression in a political space, using TV Masina's novel, *Sehlekehleke sa Deidro* ("An Island of Deidro"). The author of this article attempts to demonstrate how elements of folktales are incorporated into the works of modern writers. The article also aims to show how a character is in need of a living space, and how he/she responds to it according to socio-cultural norms; prescribed by the space. The theoretical aspects of violence, threats and aggression are discussed, followed by the definition of political space. Theory of space dominates the discussions, as it underpins the violent, threatening and aggressive behaviour of characters in the development of the novel. The findings reveal that the outer space (dangerous), as opposed to the inner space (safe), shows how characters depict the present state of affairs in the Southern African region today; where human life could be exterminated within a wink of an eye. The article argues in conclusion that corruption and mal-administration of resources by political leaders in the Southern African countries have corroded the moral fibre of communities, where evil has become the norm.

Keywords: interdiction; folktales; politics; space; violation; violence

INTRODUCTION

Elements of folktales have appeared many times in modern novels. Sesotho writers in particular, are thought to be inspired by traditional lore in their attempt to mirror societal problems that directly affect their communities. They use folktales to contextualise contemporary human issues such as violence, aggression, poverty, crime, betrayal; and murder to name a few. Violence, being the crux of this article, finds expression in the tales of *Dimo le Tselane*, *Senkatane*, and *Masilo le Masilonyana*. In *Dimo le Tselane*, Dimo instils fear in the hearts of people and uses violent methods to exterminate his victims. Senkatane, in *Senkatane*, is violently murdered by the people that he saved from the monster animal, Kgodumodumo. Masilonyana, in *Masilo le Masilonyana* is also violently murdered by his brother. In all these tales, violence is a bottom line on which the stories are constructed.

It is therefore, vividly clear that violence that is a feature of most folktales, connects modern trends with pre-literate societies. For this reason, the novelist Masima, in his novel *Sehlekehleke sa Deidro*, incorporates what he heard in folktales into his novel, in an attempt to teach his readers about the implications of violence on humankind. Therefore, the discussion that follows demonstrates the connection of folktales to novels, in terms of violence.

In the environment where violence is cherished, as is the case of regions in the Southern African Development Communities (SADC), the characters in that environment will come to perceive violence as an acceptable way of dealing with problems or challenges in life. For characters violence becomes the norm; and those who do not follow the norm, are dealt with mercilessly. Bal (1985, 95) in this regard, uses the notion of a thematised space to refer to the type of space that influences characters to behave in a particular way. On the basis of Bal's (1985) contention, the author examines in *Sehlekehleke sa Deidro*, the extent to which space facilitates what characters are, and can become, as a result of the conditions in which they find themselves.

APPROACH

The study applied a mixed methods approach to analyse how fanatical groups use aggression and violence to legitimise their views by instilling terror in the lives of the people. The research approaches of violence and aggression are underpinned by theory of space. The aim of applying two approaches was to foreground the spatial influence on the incidents of aggression and violence in the novel.

Violence is an extreme form of aggression such as assault, rape and murder. It has many origins including frustration, violence in the home or neighbourhood, and a tendency to perceive other people's actions as unsympathetic and uncaring even though they are not, as illustrated by American Psychology Association (Sa). Violence is a type of aggression that is intended to cause extreme harm that would require medical attention or result in death (Warburton and Anderson 2015; Whitley and Kite 2010).

Aggression refers to social behaviour and not a mind-set or emotional state. It is caused by frustration, but when the source of frustration cannot be challenged, the aggression gets displaced onto an innocent target (Nielson, 2012). It is evident from the definitions above that violence and aggression are concepts that can be used interchangeably to connote causing pain and agony to fellow human beings.

The second approach used to analyse the novel was the theory of space. Bal (1985, 95) contends that space in a story serves as either the place of action or an acting place. As a place of action, it does not have any impact on the character of the character so to speak, but functions only as the location where the action is taking place. When the space functions as the acting place, it communicates something about the circumstances of characters — it serves as a motivation in the activities that are performed by characters. There is a close relationship between space and other elements (aggression, threats and violence) which constitute the story, and form the crux on which the novel was analysed.

Every violent act occurs within a particular spatial context which has some influence on it, revealing it to public interpretation, shaping its form or influencing its interpretation (Carter, 2007). In looking at the spatial aspects of terrorism, or violence, researchers have argued that the importance of a place is a motivation for an attack, and that symbolic areas matter in offender decision-making (Onat 2016). It is for this reason that the study adopted mixed approaches in delineating political space, marred by political violence and aggression.

ANALYSIS

Prince (1982, 73) argues that we cannot conceive of any real thing, except under the conditions of space and time. The events of the story, *Sehlekehleke sa Deidro* take place in the countries which constitute the Southern African Development Community such as Africana, Basothonia, Swatinia, Namibia, Botswana, as well as the Island of Deidro, which is adjacent to the countries. The names of these countries are fictional, and in the real world situation, they are associated with the following countries, which we know exist in reality. Africana is South Africa, Basothonia- Lesotho, Swatinia Swaziland and Botswana Botswana. The Island of Deidro is also a fictional name and does not exist in reality. The time of the events is the period around 2000–2004, after almost every country in Africa had gained independence from the Colonial rulers. The space where the events take place, is riddled with corruption and mal-administration of resources by political leaders; and what follows is a conflict between groups of people; and this conflict is considered dangerous to the safety and peace of the Southern African Development Communities. The previous assertion that spaces are relevant to the production and construction of violence is supported by Carter (2016). The production of violence refers both to the causes as well as the forms of physical aggression.

The reader is introduced to characters such as Chikano, Zero, Ramaqiti, Biala, sister Ruth, Amanda, Katriena, and Mphafudu. Ramaqiti is the antagonist in the story.

His character is the bone of contention in the story. His expectations and aspirations in life cause disaster and chaos in all the countries that are members of SADC. His poor home background, in terms of resources as presented by the narrator affected his childhood life:

...Ramaqiti yena o ne a ena le batswadi ba futsanehileng ... e ile yaka tlhopheho ya bona ha e a ikgotsofatsa ka hore ba be le batswadi ba kollang ntsi hanong, hobane Ramaqiti ha a le dilemo tse leshome, lefu la be le ba amoha batswadi ba bona kotsing ya koloi (Masima 1998, 86).

(“...Ramaqiti had poor parents ... it seems that he was not happy to have the parents who were poor because when he was ten years old, his parents died in the car accident”).

Furthermore, the desire to live a luxurious life also contributed to his moral disintegration:

Le ha e le mona Ramaqiti a ne a sebetsa hantle mosebetsing wa hae, pelo ya hae e ne e labalabela bophelo bo monate le dintho tse ntle tseo a sa kang a ba le tsona ha a sa hola (Masima 1998, 87).

(“Even though Ramaqiti was doing his work accordingly, his heart craved for a comfortable life as well as precious things that he lacked when he was growing up”).

The two passages above imply that Ramaqiti experienced a painful childhood, which impacted negatively on his behaviour. The preceding assertion is supported by Nielson (2012) that children born in poor families as well as in deprived sections of society may express their bottled up frustrations and anger through violence. Therefore, Ramaqiti’s frustrations and lack of success in life, compel him to rebel against the unscrupulous government that promotes corruption and inequality in his country. Feelings such as anger, attitudes such as wishing the worst for another, and motivation such as the desire to control one’s environment may drive a person to behave in an aggressive manner, as Warburton and Anderson (2015) contend. Consequently, as a way of challenging the status quo, Ramaqiti forms the sophisticated organisation called *Bana ba Phiri* (“The children of the Wolf”), whose aim is to corrupt the world further by stealing, kidnapping, and extorting money from legitimate governments. The preceding contention reflects the space as a location, as Arefi (1999, 1) argues. This location puts more emphasis on the manner in which economic relations shape and affect the conception of space.

Thakgodit Lelebelo, whose intelligence code-name is Fernando Chikano, is regarded as the main character in the story. He is portrayed as a dynamic character whose mission is to infiltrate *Bana ba Phiri*, and bring them before the law for punishment. He is intelligent, and has a high degree of perseverance as illustrated by the narrating character:

O tsejwa ka maqiti a hae a hlolang, manganga a kang a moulo le leqoophe la tlou e tlatlapuweng (Masima 1998, 11).

(“He is known for his wonderful tricks, stubbornness of a donkey, and revengeful like a wounded elephant”).

The character of Chikano makes it possible for Zero, whose task is to protect the welfare of governments, to have confidence in him. It is because of his unique character, *maqiti a hae*, and *manganga a kang a tlou*, that Chikano is chosen to investigate the murderous gangster political party, *Bana ba Phiri*. The ball starts rolling when Zero tells Chikano to use his loyalty and intelligence to save the Southern African Development Communities from the moral corrosion that is engulfing the entire regions, and to protect the regions from the people who want to ruin them:

...re ke re tsepamise maikutlo a rona ho phenetho e sa tswa etsahala ya Mopresidente Gaofetoge wa Botswana ha mmoho le Moemedi wa rona ho lane la Swatinia. Ho na le pelaelo ya hore benghadi bana le nyamelo ya yona Thakadi eo di amana ka tselanyana e nngwe e itseng (Masima 1998, 14).

(“...our minds should concentrate on the recent assassination of President Gaofetoge of Botswana, and our diplomat in Swatinia. There is a suspicion that the disappearance of these gentlemen and that of Thakadi are closely related in some way”).

The above excerpt serves as the foundation on which Chikano’s quest to achieve a goal is based. He has been assigned the task of infiltrating *Bana ba Phiri*, and investigate their activities. In the process of his investigations, he comes into contact with Ramaqiti, who skilfully and cunningly sheds a light on the activities of the organisation:

...ekare ke mokgatlo o rekisang dithethefatsi tsa mefuta-futa jwalo ka yona eo ya diMafia ...ba utswa makoloi, ho kwetelwa batho le ho iphumantsha tjhelete ka mahahapa. Ka lebaka leo nke ke ka makala ha eba efela e le nnete hore ke wona mokgatlo ona o utswitseng Thakadi (Masima 1998, 29).

(“...it seems as if it is an organization that trades with drugs of different kinds, in the same way that Mafia operates ... they steal cars, kidnap people and demand money by use of the force. Because of that, I cannot be surprised by the fact that this organization is the one that has stolen Thakadi”).

The above excerpt portrays the character of Ramaqiti as a person who is crafty by nature, and his character was nurtured by his painful childhood experiences, which denied him the right to a normal life. It is clear that he knows about Chikano’s mission in Botswana, hence he sets a trap for him by divulging all the information about *Bana ba Phiri*. What becomes clear to Chikano is that the kidnappers are known, but cannot be identified. Their identity remains a mystery until it is uncovered by Amanda, who has information about *Bana ba Phiri*. The organisation uses sophisticated intelligence methods in the sense that they have informants in every place, who have a close watch on the activities of Chikano, and those who are suspected, are eliminated outrightly. Amanda is the first victim in this regard. She is viciously butchered while exposing the secrets of the syndicate to Chikano, and the reader is told:

Amanda a re o a phaphama a iphumana a se a tobane le molomo wa sethunya se ileng sa qala ho kgabola motjetje wa ntlo. Amanda a bonahala e le motho ya seng a fihletse bonono ba ho fofa moyeng ha ditholwana di mo hlahlamolla; di mo ruta tantshi eo a neng a qala le ho qetela ho e bapala—tantshi ya lefu le sehloho. Eitse hoba Amanda a we, sethunya sa boela sa bina pina ya sona ya mahlomola; sa e bina jwalo e le ha se fetola ntlo dihele tse nyenyane... (Masima 1998, 24).

(“When Amanda regains consciousness, she finds herself facing the barrel of a gun which started to open the roofs of the house. Amanda was like a person who has achieved the art of flying in the air when the bullets destroyed her body; teaching her dance lessons that were for the first and the last time to perform—the dance of a cruel death. After she had fallen, the gun started to sing its painful song; it sang the song whilst changing the shape of the house into the small hell ...”).

In the narrative, every place achieves its significance by virtue of its relations to an event, and influences the actions of the characters. The house in which Amanda is gunned down assumes a symbolic significance in that it serves as a monument that reflects the callous actions of the organisation. The previous statement is supported by Carter (2007) that every violent act occurs within a particular spatial context, which has some influence on it, shaping its form or manipulating its interpretation (Carter 2007). Therefore, this monument will remain vivid in the mind of Chikano, and will also serve as a reminder of the fact that Amanda paid a heavy price for revealing the secrets of *Bana ba Phiri*, an organisation that instigates violence and gets away with it. The criminal gangsters continue to operate with impunity, and the brutal killing of Amanda is a clear indication that the threat hanging over the states, compromises the safety of its inhabitants.

After the death of Amanda, this space turns into a dangerous zone for Chikano; having transformed into an outer space as Lotman (1977, 229) asserts. It is synonymous with cold and enmity for Chikano, and in Botswana, strange men are following him. What becomes clear to the reader is that both Chikano and Ramaqiti are intelligent men who are engaged in acts of violence and aggression towards each other. On the one hand, Ramaqiti has the bulk of resources to fight Chikano; that is he uses his men to eliminate Chikano, and on the other, Chikano is vulnerable; as he is without arms, and at the same time fights invisible forces. The fact that he is being followed wherever he goes, makes him conclude that Ramaqiti is the culprit in the callous deeds of highjacking and kidnapping. An attempt on his life in the city centre of Serowe, bears testimony to Ramaqiti’s evil tactics:

Ka pelepele koloï ya dinkge ya fihla ya ema mabapa le ya Chikano. Chikano a tshoha haholo ha a bona ho kang molamu ho hlaha fenstereng ya koloï e emisitseng pela hae mme a nyamella fatshe ka ho panya ha leihlo. Ketso ena ya hae ya phakisa ho arabelwa ke ho thwathwaretsa ha sethunya sa othommathiki. Eitse ha sethunya seo se se se hlenhlantse koloï ya Chikano ka ho anetseng, sa re nyele... (Masima 1998, 32).

(“Without any waste of time, the car of the strong men stopped next to Chikano’s car. Chikano became petrified when he saw something like a stick protruding from the window of the car that had stopped next to his car, and in a nick of time, he dived for cover. This action was

immediately followed by a thunderous sound of an automatic gun. When that gun had already damaged Chikano's car to the fullest, the sound stopped completely...").

Bal's (1985, 94) concepts of inner versus outer spaces, which imply protection and danger respectively, play a major role in Botswana. The inner space may be experienced as dangerous as reflected in the situation where Chikano finds strangers in his hotel room, and a fierce physical fist fight occurs:

Ha Chikano a fihla ntlong ya hae ... a bona batho ba dutse ditulong, mme pelo ya hae ya itutlatutla ke letswalo. Nnete ke hore batho bana ba ne ba hlile ba tshosa ka baka la dibopeho tsa bona ... a se a bile a lolomela monna enwa eo sebopeho sa hae e neng eka sehohwana... Chikano a makatswa ke matjato le mafolofolo a motho enwa eo sebopeho sa hae se neng se bonahala eka se ke ke sa mo dumella le ho dula fatshe. Le ha ho le jwalo, Chikano a mo nesetsa sefako sa ditebele tse matla ... (Masima 1998, 34–35).

("When Chikano arrived at his house... he saw people sitting on the chairs, and his heart began to beat as a result of fear. The reason for being scared was that the body structures of those men were really frightening... and he went for this man whose body structure was like that of an octopus ... Chikano was surprised by the eagerness and quickness of this person whose body was such that it would not allow him to sit down. Nevertheless, Chikano landed a barrage of powerful fists ...").

The outer space is also not safe for Chikano, making both the inner and outer spaces hostile towards him; and it is like he is walking on a time-bomb that can explode at any moment. The reader is not surprised by the sudden attacks on Chikano by the ruthless gangsters. The aim is to eliminate him so that the organisation can operate freely by perpetuating their evil deeds of killing and abducting people. What the reader realises about the character of Chikano is that he fought two battles within a short space of time, and these encounters create a feeling of suspense. Suspense is sustained throughout the novel and is defined by Bal (1985, 114) as a result of the procedures by which the reader or the character is made to ask questions, which are only answered later. In this instance, the reader's interest is stimulated because he/she wants to know whether Chikano will come out victorious, or that his enemies will kill him. What follows is that Chikano ends up being violently assaulted at the St. Paul Mission house by sister Ruth and her comrades. The church serves as a place of worship, where spiritual wounds are healed, but to the contrary, Chikano experiences it as an unsafe space that serves to humiliate and torture his spirit.

Zoran (1984, 319) contends that the movement of characters comes as a result of certain powers, which are imposed on the space, and these may be a desire, obstructions, and intentions of characters. Zoran's assertion suggests that as Chikano's life is in danger, he is forced by the circumstances to relocate to a space that is safe. The preceding assertion is echoed by Bal (1985, 96), that a person travels from a negative to a positive space, and the positive space is Basothonia, the country that is more stable. The reason for Chikano's move to Basothonia is for him to gather more information about *Bana ba Phiri*.

The reader is surprised to find that *Bana ba Phiri* is the sophisticated organisation that has power bases in all the regions of Southern Africa. They operate alone and cause a reign of terror, aggression and violence in the neighbouring states. Basothonia is the next country that the criminal gangsters target; its leader, President Ispia Monnafeela is kidnapped, and *Bana ba Phiri* take responsibility for the abduction. At one of the publishing houses, they leave the following message:

Dikgwedinyana tse sa tswa feta, re ile ra tholla ka tlhapikepe e bitswang Thakadi. Re na le pelaelo e matla ya hore Thakadi ena ke ya hona mona Africa. Re na le tshepo e felletseng hape ya hore mmuso wa naha o tla ba motlotlo ruri ha e le mona re ile ra ba le hona ho pholosa sekepe sena se kotsi hakana matsohong a ba babe... Re rata hape ho tsebisa mmuso wa Basothonia hore Moetapele wa bona, e leng Mopresidente Monnafeela, o kwano mona ho rona mme o bolokehile haholo ho seng motho ya ka mo fumanang ... (Masima 1998, 48–49).

(“A few months ago, we picked up the war ship named Thakadi. We have a strong suspicion that this Thakadi belongs to Africa. Again, we have an unwavering trust that the government of the country will be happy when they realize that we have saved this dangerous ship from landing in the wrong hands... Once more, we would like to inform the government of Basothonia that their leader by the name of President Monnafeela is with us here, and he is very safe to the extent that there is nobody who will find him...”)

As stated in the above passage, the two countries that are affected by the message are Africa, with regards to its warship, and Basothonia with respect to its leader, President Monnafeela. The kidnappers are known, but they cannot be pointed out. The fact that *Bana ba Phiri* is an illegal organisation cannot be disputed; because they have already taken responsibility to kidnapping and highjacking the leader of Basothonia; and the Africa warship respectively. The kidnapper does not stop here, but go further and terrorise the affected countries by presenting their demands:

Ka bomadimabe, re senyehetswe ke tjelete e ngata haholo mesebetsing ena ya rona ya pholoso. Leha ho le jwalo re tshepa hore mebuso ena e mmedi e tla re hlatswa mahlo ka diithapisonyana tse ka etsang dimilionenyana tse ka bang makgolo a mane a Diprotea. Empa erekaha dinaha tse kang Swatinia le Botswana le tsona di ne di tla angwa ke koduwa e neng e ka etswa ke Thakadi, le tsona di tla tshwanela ho kenya letsoho tjeleteng eo ke seng ke e boletse (Masima 1998, 49).

(“Unfortunately we have lost a lot of money in our tasks relating to safety measures. Therefore, we think that these two governments will financially help us with four hundred million Proteas. But, because countries such as Swatinia and Botswana were also going to be affected by the disaster that could have been caused by Thakadi, they are also expected to put a helping hand with regard to money I have already mentioned”).

It seems as if the organisation will continue to unsettle the states as long as they do not give in to their demands. There is no doubt that failure by the countries to heed the demands as stated will lead to the worst kind of destabilisation in Southern African states, as illustrated in the paragraph below:

... re tla phatlola e nngwe ya diqhomanane tsena e le sesupo sa ho se thabe ha rona ...Ha eba taelo ya rona e sa phethiswe ka moo re laetseng ka teng, Mopresredente Monnafeela o tla etswa dinthontho; mme o tla tshwarwa a tlohelwa ho fihlela mebuso ena e re, ntate ... (Masima 1998, 49).

(“...we shall detonate one of these bombs as a way of reflecting our unhappiness ...If our demand is not honoured in the way we have instructed, President Monnafeela will be subjected to a vicious torture; and many frightening things will be done on him until the governments say, enough is enough...”).

What the reader gathers from the passage above is that *Bana ba Phiri* are holding the governments hostage, and the techniques they employ portrays the organisation as being constituted by people with high intellectual skills; people who are able to manipulate the states for the attainment of their own selfish goals. The message is clear for all the affected countries; that failure to accede to their demands will only mean that the safety of the inhabitants is at stake. At this stage, Fernando Chikano is caught between a rock and a hard place and must use his intelligence to bring the culprits before the law, and change the space from a terrorist zone into a more habitable human place.

Chikano employs women to gather more information about Llizwe Mission Church, the church that serves to perpetuate the principles of *Bana ba Phiri*. In the previous investigations, he used Amanda, who paid a heavy price for divulging the secrets of the organisation—and this time he employs the services of Katriena to get to the bottom of the barbarous activities of the organisation. Katriena’s appearance on the scene reminds the reader of the merciless slaughtering of Amanda by unknown gunmen; this time the reader anticipates the worst to happen to Chikano’s new informant. The reader is not surprised by the sudden appearance of men who kidnap both Chikano and Katriena. Their abduction forms part of the obstacles that derail Chikano’s mission of uncovering the deeds of the organisation:

Ha a phaphama, a iphumana a le tlong e nngwe eo a sa kang a e tseba, mme matsoho a hae a ne a tlamelletswe betheng ka mahlahlela jwalo ka ha dikulane tsa hlooho di etswa dipetleleeng tsa bona. Eitse ha a shebisisa, a bona Katriena a mo shebile ka mohau, le yena a tlamelletswe betheng ya hae (Masima 1998, 62).

(“When he woke up, he found himself at a house that seemed strange to him, and his hands were tied to the bed with handcuffs like the way the psychiatric patients are handled at their hospitals. When he looked further, he saw Katriena looking at him pitifully, and she was also tied to bed”).

It is evident that the characters in the novel design their spaces in such a way that it accommodates their needs and make them live comfortably; the same goes for Ramaqiti. His childhood wishes have been to lead a prosperous and comfortable life, and he worked very hard to transform the Island of Deidro into what it is. The narrator provides the reader with the vivid picture of a space that looks like the little heaven. The lovely and luxurious atmospheres, the arrangement and decorations in the house were

all very attractive and symbolised power in all its forms. This type of space is the one that Ramaqiti aspired for after joining the police force. It represents mind and soul's liberation.

It is at this island that Chikano and Mphafudi are held captive by Ramaqiti. He opens up about his bitterness and confides in Chikano about the manner in which the world has changed his personality to be what he is today. He was born a normal person, but his personal life experiences damaged his character. What emerges from the speech of Ramaqiti shows that he is portrayed as being very intelligent; just like Chikano. He is quite conscious of the social ills that are steering the world into extinction; hence he feels that the world should be corrupted further. Ramaqiti is bitter about Chikano's insistence in arresting him; because the people for whom Chikano works; those that claim to be honest, are corrupt and prey on unsuspecting members of the public by extorting large amounts of money in the form of taxes. Ramaqiti worked very hard to be what he is, but according to him, Chikano and his superiors are hard on his heels to bring him down.

Ramaqiti displays some signs of wisdom. From his utterances, the reader is able to deduce that he artistically persuades Chikano to make a choice between being for or against him. He presents the corrupt Southern African governments as the boiling pots in terms of corruption. Ordinary people's feelings and privileges are disregarded and denied on a daily basis by those who claim to represent them. These Southern African countries are repressive regimes, where everything that seems to counter their evil schemes and exposes the corruption on the part of governments leaders is met with varying degrees of resistance; hence Chikano is used by the same corrupt leaders to protect their interests. Gullon (1975, 21) maintains that the reader is able to connect bits of information to construct the vivid picture of the environment in which characters find themselves. Through bits of information he assembles, he is able to visualise the life of people in Southern African communities. This picture compels the reader to share the pain of Ramaqiti; especially where he emphasises the fact that when one points a finger at another person, one must be sure that the three fingers are at the same time pointing at himself, and this assertion is illustrated in this way:

O itse hape nna ke mokwetedi, empa le wena mosebetsing ona wa bohhlwela o ne o rutwe ho kwetela, ho ntsha kotsi le ho bolaya bao o reng ke baferekanyi le dira tsa mmuso. Hommeng he batho bao o ba bitsang mmuso—bona ba o rutileng bohhlwela—ke bona batho ba ntseng ba lahlehisa setjhaba ka ho boledisa le ho ruta ka lerato la boena, tekatekanyo ya batho le ditokelo tsa botho (Masima 1998, 92).

(“You said again that I am a kidnapper, but in your job as a spy, you were trained to kidnap, to cause injury and to kill those that you call the wrong-doers and the opponents of the government—Therefore, those people that you call the government, those who trained you to spy on others—are the people who are misleading the society by propagating love, equality and human rights”).

What becomes clear is that Chikano was trained to kill and abduct those who oppose the so-called leaders. For him, the acts of killing and abducting do not constitute evil, but are regarded as a commendable job in these countries, where the laws of the land condone the killings of state opponents; and where endemic corruption, coupled with the soaring crime, are the order of the day. Ramaqiti's beliefs and opinion about life are his, and must be respected, as he continues:

Nna ke kgollwa tabeng ya hore ha batho ba bang ba ithabisa, le nna ke tshwanela ho ithabisa, mme ha ba nkganela ho etsa seo le bona ba se etsang, ebe ke sebedisa dikgoka ho fumana seo ke se batlang (Masima 1998, 93).

("I personally believe that when other people rejoice, I am also entitled to rejoice, and if they deny me to do what they are doing, I use force to get what I want").

The leaders of the countries instigate violence and get away with it. They claim to be democratic only in name, and not in deeds. They advocate a better life for all in the Promised Land, amidst the socio-political woes that translate into the violent crimes and robberies as performed by *Bana ba Phiri*, with resultant desperation amongst the poor. Therefore, according to Ramaqiti, all human beings must enjoy some degree of equality, and where this fails, force and coercion must be used to attain this goal. The reader understands that we are what we are as a result of being in a particular space; and that we must look at ourselves first, before we point fingers at other people.

At the end of this narration the reader is provided with an opportunity to make his/her own interpretation of the eventual outcome of the events, and he is able to judge for himself that it is not heredity that makes up man, but the environment that impacts negatively on him/her—hence Ramaqiti despises the law and condemns those that represent it.

CONCLUSION

It is evident from the foregoing discussion that elements of folktales have appeared many times in the interpretation of the contents of the novel. The novel, although it attempts to portray the modern world as it is, has shown to have a flavour of traditional folktales by its recurrence of violation and interdiction in the development of the plot. Violence, which is the cog of many folktales, and perpetrated by *Bana ba Phiri* in the novel, was discussed in details. The places of events have been described on the basis of inner space (safe) and outer space (dangerous) that reflects the present state of affairs in the southern African region today, where human life could be eliminated within the wink of an eye. In the end, a vivid picture is drawn, where the political space in the Southern African region serves as proof of the society's ruthless and lack of sympathy towards its members.

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