

Sophonia Machabe Mofokeng's *Leetong*: A Metonymy for Political Repression in South Africa

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Summary

Mofokeng's volume of short stories, *Leetong* [On a Journey], is traditionally read as satire on repression in general and on South Africa in particular. The title, *Leetong*, has become a part of the conceptual political lexicon of the Sesotho language to refer to the corruption of apartheid ideology. This collection of short stories constitutes a body of protest fiction based on inferences from situations rather than actual incidents. Collectively the eight short stories combine to form one voice in contention with the political dispensation of oppressed South Africans during a particular historical era of political oppression, known as the apartheid era. The dehumanisation of black South Africans has not stopped since the apartheid era because the dominant image of black South Africans continues to be that of heathens. This article postulates the notion that the scheme of the short story volume *Leetong* [On a Journey] has created a powerful metonymy, to the extent that whenever one alludes to the title, one conjures up images associated with oppression.

Opsomming

Mofokeng se bundel kortverhale, *Leetong* ["Op reis"], kan tradisioneel gelees word as 'n satire oor onderdrukking oor die algemeen en spesifiek in Suid-Afrika. Die titel *Leetong* het deel geword van die konseptuele politieke leksikon van die Sesothotaal en verwys na die korrupsie van die apartheidsideologie. Sy bundel kortverhale is 'n versameling van protesfiksie gebaseer op gevolgtrekkings uit situasies eerder as werklike gebeure. Die agt verhale vorm saam een stem in stryd met die politieke bedeling van onderdrukte Suid-Afrikaners gedurende 'n spesifieke historiese era van politieke onderdrukking, bekend as apartheid. Die ontmensliking van swart Suid-Afrikaners duur sedert die apartheidsera steeds voort omdat die oorheersende beeld van swart Suid-Afrikaners steeds dié van heidene is. Hierdie artikel maak aanspraak op die idee dat die intrige van die kort-verhaalbundel *Leetong* 'n kragtige metonimie skep, soseer dat die titel beelde oproep wat met onderdrukking geassosieer word.

Introduction

Mofokeng's short stories represent a subtle African world view. Mofokeng's mastery of Sesotho idiomatic expressions, proverbs, symbols and imagery and the use of these automatically contribute to the richness of the short stories. Through his use of figurative language, Mofokeng is able to hold his short stories together and at the same time to arouse the readers' interest. The structure of *Leetong* is similar to that of a novel, since the short stories are closely knit together by one central theme. Through the portrayal of his characters as well as the artistic selection of episodes, Mofokeng has managed to create and portray deep, moving thought for his central theme, namely that human life is like a long journey, one full of hardships. The journey in *Leetong* starts with the short story "Mona Pela Tsela" [Here beside the Road] and culminates in the last short story, titled "Hae" [At Home]. To Mofokeng life was very difficult during apartheid, particularly for black people, and through his volume of short stories he maintains that true or real freedom and peace of mind are only to be found in the ultimate home beyond the grave, namely heaven.

According to Steen (1994: 3), metaphor is seen by most linguists, philosophers and other researchers of language as a linguistic oddity of literal and metaphorical meanings. In metaphor, a descriptive word or phrase is transferred to an object or action different from, but analogous to, that to which it is literally applicable (Orden 2004: 4). Metonymy, on the other hand, is a word or phrase denoting an object, action, institution, and so on, which replaces a word or phrase denoting something associated with it instead. A distinction between metaphor and metonymy was first suggested by Roman Jakobson, who asserted that metaphor belongs to the selection or substitution axis of language, and metonymy to the combination axis of language (in Selden 1989: 62). For the purpose of this article, metaphor is understood as a statement that associates one thing with another by way of emphasising a likeness or quality; metonymy as an act of referring to something by a name of something else that is closely connected to it. Through the metonymic approach, readers learn to value literature written in Sesotho more highly, knowing that it is a tool to understand others better, especially those holding a world view different from theirs. It is important to analyse *Leetong* using metonymy because we have also realised that literature and life have depth and breadth and height and that they pose tough questions which we must answer in personal terms and such answers should be the underlying philosophy that influences thoughts, decisions and actions.

The notion that *Leetong* may be regarded as a metonymy for oppression is in accord with the ideas suggested by Lakoff & Johnson in *Metaphors We Live By*:

When we think of a Picasso, we are not just thinking of a work of art alone. In and of itself. We think of it in terms of its relation to the artist, that is, his conception of art, his technique, his role in art history, etc. We act with reverence towards a Picasso Thus, like metaphors, metonymic concepts structure not just our language but our thoughts, attitudes and actions. And, like metaphoric concepts metonymic concepts are grounded in our experience

(Lakoff & Johnson 1980: 39)

Metonymic concepts are like those in the above statement; they are systematic in the same way that metaphoric concepts are – they allow readers to conceptualise a thing by means of its relationship to something else. Even though *Leetong* may not be a place in the literal sense, it is a fictional construct representing a place.

The Survival of Protest Literature

After the apartheid years, taking stock of the achievement of black South African literature of those years becomes necessary. This is true with regard to the work most closely tied to its immediate social and political context, the committed writing generally known as protest literature. Now, as the politically oppressive conditions to which that literature responded no longer exist, is protest literature still necessary? Which Sesotho texts are likely to survive?

In my view, one writer whose work is substantial enough to survive in this post-apartheid era is Mofokeng, in his short stories in *Leetong*. His stories represent the dark side of the history of blacks. However, it remains the reader's prerogative to determine his/her own interpretation of events and personal complicity or lack of guilt, because ultimately as Schick puts it, "narrative plays a central role in the constitution and preservation of identity. It is a carrier of meaning, the channel through which an individual tells him/herself and others the tale of his/her place in the world" (1999: 21). For the reader or critic to understand Mofokeng's thematic concerns in *Leetong*, knowledge of some of the events that shaped the lives of blacks in South Africa during apartheid would be helpful. In most short stories, the writer alludes to these events directly because they form the ideology and dictatorship enacted by the white apartheid government. The apartheid government failed to improve the life of blacks in South Africa, and the racist government was unapologetically designed to create the cultural, political and economic hegemony of whites at the expense of blacks. The government was uncompromising in its endeavour to ensure that whites succeeded while blacks walked in the shadow of inferior employment and accommodation designed to keep them poor. Black farm- and mineworkers were exploited and dehumanised as they worked under unhealthy and

dangerous conditions. There was nothing better that blacks could expect from the apartheid government, except brutality. The Afrikaners saw blacks as slaves to be exploited, imprisoned or pushed into exile.

Even in the democratic era, oppression and dictatorship still exist. For instance, the *Mail & Guardian* (2001: 22) launched an attack against the ruling African National Congress (ANC) for its tendency to overlook the corruption of its party members:

Some South Africans are, indeed, more equal than others. It seems that if you manage to achieve a certain rank in the African National Congress ... the chances of your being pursued for inept or improper behaviour are minimal.

(*Mail & Guardian* 2001: 22)

Readers should be aware that political repression are acts both of the apartheid and the present regime as presented by discriminatory policies, human rights violations and stripping of citizens' rights, black's in particular. Blacks who were comrades during the apartheid era, are now becoming enemies of themselves.

Victims of Oppression

The black protagonist is portrayed as a victim of oppression, without the means to fight back, in all eight short stories in *Leetong*. In "Mona Pela Tsela" [Here beside the Road], Mofokeng is able to create the atmosphere for his central message, namely, under the apartheid regime man is on a long journey to freedom. The apartheid world is deceitful, murderous and contains everything that makes human life bitter.

An innocent young man, Tumelo, is framed by his colleagues in a dagga racket. He is arrested and sentenced to six months imprisonment. After his release, he is given a letter stating that he has been arrested for smoking dagga (cannabis). Poor Tumelo cannot read and wherever he goes, whites ask him to produce his "dom pass". He produces this letter and without any explanation he is chased away. Tumelo's whole life is ruined because wherever he goes people avoid him and he becomes a wanderer without a place to sleep:

Tumelo o ne a dutse ka thoko ho toropo moo mmila o moholo o kenang toropong ... O ne a nahana ntho e le nngwe, a bona ntho e le nngwe ha a thalatsa mahlo, o ne a nkgang ntho e le nngwe feela ha a phefomoloha moya o phodileng wa hoseng ... TOKOLOHO

[Tumelo was sitting outside the town where the main road joins the town. He was thinking of one thing only, seeing one thing when casting his eyes

around; he was smelling one thing only when he breathed the morning breeze ... FREEDOM.]

(*Leetong* 1)¹

One of the literary devices Mofokeng uses is repetition. This repetition emphasises the litany of decrees enacted by the white government during the apartheid era, which stripped Tumelo of his human dignity. Against such background, readers would do well to approach the stories on Mofokeng's own terms, without any preconceived notion of what constitutes sound aesthetics.

At last Tumelo finds a place to sleep beside the road, far away from other people:

Rona re fumana kgotso metlotlwaneng ya rona empa Tumelo yena o ne a e fumana mona pela tsela, ka hodimo ho yena marulelo a hae e le lehodimo le dinaledi tsa lona, ka mathoko e le dithaba mme ka mora tsona lehodimo hape ...

[We find peace in our homes, yet Tumelo found his peace here beside the road. The heavens and its stars formed his roof, on the sides his walls were the mountains, and beyond them, the heavens again ...]

(*Leetong* 19)

The above passage seems simple, but it is forceful enough to lead the reader to Tumelo's sufferings. The contrast between the reader's own comfort and Tumelo's position, and the place where he is sleeping, strongly emphasises how painfully blacks suffered under the white government. Readers meet Tumelo waking up early in the morning in the veld, without shelter, without food, without water to wash himself, and also without human dignity.

Another short story that parallels "Mona Pela Tsela" [Here beside the Road] is "Hosasa" [Tomorrow]. In this story, life is presented as a struggle. It is a payday and the end of a day's work. The people's tired faces are well portrayed by the author. Molefi's problems are escalating. He goes to Teboho's place to collect his debt, but unfortunately Teboho cannot pay Molefi. By the time he leaves Teboho's place, it is already past nine in the evening. He has a sick wife and children without food. On his way home he is badly assaulted and robbed of his identity document, tax certificate and all his money. After washing her husband, Mmatsietsi goes to bed thinking about the troubles of tomorrow. The narrator says:

E ne e le ka mora hora ya 11 ha Mmatsietsi a tima lebone ... Mmatsietsi o ne a lohotha ntho e le nngwe feela ... Hosasa ... Hosasa, Hosasa ka ntle ho dipasa, Hosasa ka ntle ho lengolo la kgafa, Hosasa ka ntle ho tjhelete, le ho

1. All references to *Leetong* (Mofokeng 1983) are indicated by *Leetong* followed by the page number(s).

ya mosebetsing; Hosasa, e mohlomong Hosasa ha Molefi a sa ye mosebetsing, Hosasa ha a lokela ho ya sepetlele ... Sehloho sa Hosasa se ne se hana ho tswa pelong ya hae. Lefifing meokgo ya tlallana ka mahlong, mme ya theoha ya ba ya potela ka ditsebeng!

[It was 11 o'clock when Mmatsietsi switched off the light ... Mmatsietsi thought of one thing only Tomorrow ... tomorrow, tomorrow without a dom pass, tomorrow without a tax certificate, tomorrow without money and going to work, tomorrow, yes, perhaps tomorrow when Molefi is not going to work, tomorrow when he is supposed to go to hospital The tragedy of tomorrow was not easy to get out of her heart. In the darkness tears filled up her eyes, ran down until they reached her ears.]

(*Leetong* 89)

“Hosasa” [Tomorrow] is the central image of this story. The repetition of “Hosasa” [Tomorrow] means that the misery piles up, and the thought of tomorrow frightens Mmatsietsi as she is worried about how they are going to survive while her husband is without an identification book, tax certificate, money as well as unable to go to work as he has to go to hospital. There is no money for Molefi to apply for a new identity document, and without an identity document during apartheid a person could find himself in prison. There is no money to take her husband to hospital, no money to buy food and they are all hungry.

“Lefifi” [Darkness] symbolises the darkness of their future – the darkness of waiting, of poverty and hunger. The underlying message of the story is that innocent people find themselves in the hands of monsters and criminals who do as they please with their victims.

The Laws of Government versus the Laws of Nature

Mofokeng's short story “Ruthe”, which is an indictment of some of the decrees enacted by the apartheid government to maintain the ideology of forced racial separation, sets itself apart from the other stories in its treatment of its theme, which is interracial relationships and the attitudes of society towards blacks and whites then.

Two old women, Mmamosa and her servant Marie, are alone on the farm. Their happiness is spoilt by the contents of the letter from Mmamosa's son. The son wants his mother to sell the farm and go to the city to live with his family. Mmamosa and Marie are very sad because they are to part ways. For a moment they become quiet: “Ba ne ba nahanang? Ba ne ba llelang?” [What were they thinking? What were they crying for?] (*Leetong* 44).

In a flashback to the climax of the story, the author takes the reader back to the time when Gert Snyman (known by his Basotho employees as Tjhere, and his wife as Mmamosa) met Rasebolai and his wife Mmasebolai who

became known as Marie. Tjhere asked Rasebolai why he intended to leave his former employer, Hans Scheepers, and Rasebolai replied: “Hantshi ha se motho, o bohale haholo mme le letsoho la hae le bobebe” [Hans is not a person, he is too bad-tempered and his hand is quick to slap.] (*Leetong* 45).

The narrator intended to point out clearly the suspicion, fear, hatred and meanness practised by many white farmers in South Africa during apartheid. Rasebolai left his employer Hans Scheepers to seek employment at Tjhere’s farm because Hans Scheepers was exploiting his farm workers. He was a very cruel farmer who assaulted his farm workers.

The two families, the employers, and the employees lived together as one family. Their children played together until their cultures separated them. We hear Tjhere saying:

Ke thabile ha o e tla ho nna. Re sa le batjha bobedi ba rona. Ke a tshepa re tla dula mmoho, re ahe metse ya rona mona, re phele ka kgotso, re be metswalle, re thusane, re tle re nne re hopole tsatsi la maobane ho fihlela re ba re theohela mobung o batang.

[I am glad that you have come to me. We are both still young. I hope we shall live together, build our homes here, live in peace, become friends, help each other, remember yesterday until we go down into the cold earth.]

(*Leetong* 40-41)

Even after the death of Tjhere and Rasebolai, Mmamosa and Marie did not desert each other. After Rasebolai’s death, Mmamosa’s son wanted his mother to leave the farm and come to live with them in town. He adopted a hostile attitude towards blacks because he maintained that his mother was alone as there were no whites on the farm, but people were there, blacks were there. His mother refused to leave the farm because she remembered the kindness of Rasebolai and Marie. Mmamosa took the Bible and read the story of Ruth and Naomi. The Bible story consoled them and they further realised that they really belonged together. Mmamosa took a strong stand and told her son that she could not be separated from Marie. Thereafter peace prevailed again all over the farm.

Victims of the Mine and the Farm

In the short story “Ke toro feela” [It Is Just a Dream], Molahlehi smiles as he remembers that it is his last day of working at the mine. He thinks that from the following day he will be free from going down the depth of the mine. It is the last day of his two-year contract at the mine. He is longing for his family at home but knows after some time he is bound to come and work again because without him there is no one to look after his family financially. The narrator says: “Ke yena ya emeng pakeng tsa bona le phiri

ena e bitswang tlala” [It is he who is standing between them and this wolf called hunger.] (*Leetong* 20).

The narrator explains that today Molahlehi is not as happy as he always is, as they usually sing when they go underground. Today he closes his eyes and says only five words: “Ntate o be le nna” [Father be with me.] (*Leetong* 21). On this particular day the mine shaft collapses, Molahlehi and his childhood friend Tatolo who now is his colleague are taken to hospital with injuries. On hearing that Tatolo has passed away, we hear his wife Mmatheko saying the following words while she is deep in thought:

Tatolo ha a sa le eo! Tatolo o timetse. Ha ke sa tla mo utlwa a bua! Ha a sa tla bona bana ba hae, ha a sa tla ngola mangolo.

[Tatolo is no longer with us! Tatolo has passed away. I am no longer going to hear him speak. He is no longer going to see his children, he is no longer going to write letters.]

(*Leetong* 24)

The negative impact of “... ha a sa tla ...” [... is no longer going to ...] is the central image of the story. The painful thought of Tatolo no longer being with them, means that the misery piles up. Tatolo died while his contract was still valid, but the mine authorities are not going to look after his children. Mmatheko is a widow, her children are fatherless and for them life is a struggle that they cannot win without Tatolo.

On the train back home, Molahlehi meets a very sick man who has been working in the mine. Through their conversation, Molahlehi realises that the man is suffering from phthisis. He was given very little money and dismissed so that he could go home and die. The narrator says:

A fumana hore jwale ka yena o filwe tjheletenyana e seng kae, mme o romelwa hae hore a yo dula teng ditshiu tsa hae tsa ho qetela.

[He realises that just like him, he has been given little money and sent home to spend his last days there.]

(*Leetong* 30)

The family is happy to see Molahlehi alive. Molahlehi’s mother is also happy but she is thinking of tomorrow because Molahlehi was the breadwinner. He is now crippled and unemployed. Here the narrator gives us the image of suffering experienced by black mine workers during apartheid in South Africa. After a serious mine disaster, Molahlehi returns home a crippled man, his left hand is left with only the little finger and the thumb, the rest has been amputated. Molahlehi considers himself lucky and he seems to have attained inner peace; he can do something better for his family. The other man is critically ill and there is nothing he can do for his family because he is awaiting death.

In the short story “Hae” [At Home], the narrator tells us about a certain man who hails from deep in Africa where he was living in peace with his wives and children. This man heard the myth about South Africa. When he learnt that South Africa was a place of milk and honey, he decided to leave his wives and children for a much better life. The narrator says:

Setumo sa Egepeta ena ya rona se ile sa mo fihlela hona teng motseng oo a neng a iphelela ho wona ka kgotso ...

[The fame of this Egypt of ours reached him even there in that village where he was living in peace ...]

(Leetong 107)

Mofokeng’s narration employs metonymy to portray South Africa during apartheid as Egypt. His journey to South Africa was full of hardships and it was also dangerous. On his way to Beit Bridge, he was no longer alone, he was accompanied by other people. They were the complete opposite of the evil people in Gauteng. People realised that they, being strangers, were not familiar with the area, thus they were robbed of their money by people pretending to be the police, in Germiston. The robbers gave them a note and directed them to the police station. The police mocked them:

Nina fikire rapha Johnsbek. Los’khathi nina fika rapha, nina vuka ... Manje lotsotsi yena thathile lomali kanina.

[You have arrived in Johannesburg. When you arrive here you must wake up ... Now the lawless men (tsotsis) have taken your money.]

(Leetong 114)

The police made arrangements with a white farmer known as Ramofubedu, who took them to his farm as farm labourers. They were not informed about the following issues:

Ba ne ba sa tsebe hore ba tla sebetsa mosebetsi o jwang, dihora tse kae ka letsatsi, ba dule kae ba je eng ... tsena kaofela ba ne ba tla di tseba pele.

[They were not aware what type of work they would be doing, how many hours per day, where to stay, what to eat ... they were to learn everything later on.]

(Leetong 114)

The poor farm labourers worked under unsafe and unhealthy conditions. These conditions cost that poor person his life. When he coughed, he coughed up phlegm mixed with blood; he had contracted tuberculosis and was taken to hospital. The poor man from deep in Africa wanted to go back to his original home. He always said: “Gong ma hom” [I am going home.]

By “home” he was referring to his country in Africa, but instead he returned to the real home – beyond the grave.

Mofokeng creates an atmosphere of fear, insecurity and despair. The fear-inducing images in the short story “Hae”, indeed throughout the whole volume of short stories, are typical features of Mofokeng’s metonymic style. There is the touching description of departure from South Africa back to the real home beyond the grave. Life is presented as a struggle and man attaining freedom in this world is a myth. Through the portrayal of his characters as well as the artistic selection of episodes, Mofokeng manages to portray and create deep, moving thought for his central theme, namely that a human’s life is like a long journey, one full of hardships.

Leetong can be described as a satire, but the important argument presented here is that it may be regarded as having evolved from political satire to metonymy. According to Lodge (1977: 97), metonymic writing eschews the obviously metaphorical, and for the distinction between metaphor and metonymy certain cultural phenomena are classified as either metaphoric or metonymic. Lodge (1977: 80) maintains that romantic and symbolist writing is predominantly meta-phoric, but that realist writing is predominantly metonymic.

Mofokeng’s style in *Leetong* is metonymic because his short stories are realistic in the sense that the events are narrated in a style of reportage. Mofokeng’s satire is aimed at the apartheid government. In *Leetong*, life is presented as a struggle, as a journey full of hardships for blacks in particular. Whites represent the dominant rulers while the weaker blacks stand for the exploited and helpless subjects.

Mofokeng was a creative writer of his time, the time when apartheid was having an effect on black people’s minds. He took a firm stand, a total rejection of oppressive practices of the Government on black people. Therefore Mofokeng projected the effect of oppression and dictatorship onto the feelings of his readers. He employs metonymy in his tone and style of presentation. Metonymy is a literary means which has been presented by many as a philosophical position, a political or intellectual strategy and a mode of reading. The new knowledge we emerge with after reading or interpreting the stories as metonymic is that metonymy itself brought a lot of changes and many questions on how to analyse and interpret Sesotho literature.

A Metonymy of Democratic Society

Mofokeng maintains that life is like a journey, and human beings are on a long journey. The journey begins in the short story “Mona Pela Tsela” [Here beside the Road] and ends up in “Hae” [At Home]. This long journey was full of hardships and difficulties, and true freedom and peace of mind

were only to be found beyond the grave, after death. Mofokeng foresaw that even after apartheid, people and blacks in particular would not get true freedom. He believes that throughout a person's life there is no peace and harmony, and that one will only live in peace and harmony beyond the grave. Mofokeng's *Leetong* serves as a mirror through which black South Africans must see themselves.

Leetong has such a wide appeal in the era of democracy in South Africa because it is relevant to the South African democratic society in general and to blacks in particular. It deserves political scrutiny and may be used to explore some of the major political questions of our present and future. Mofokeng's creative work survives because the political conditions and trends he foresaw threaten South Africans, particularly blacks, now more than before. After nearly 18 years of democracy and freedom, black South Africans are still not free. Those who rule in this country cannot change it. Even if their imaginations were capable of encompassing the concept of black freedom, this concept would live in their imaginations only as an illusion. Mofokeng's volume of short stories is a metonymy for the time and space in which we black South Africans find and lose ourselves as a nation.

When we look back, the pain of apartheid and the dehumanising of blacks were a heavy load to carry. But for blacks to suffer in the so-called democratic state is an unbearable pain because they suffer at the hands of those blacks who promised them a better life. During apartheid, Mofokeng's character Tumelo in the short story "Mona Pela Tsela", had no accommodation, no work and was crying for freedom. The African National Congress Freedom Charter of 1955, states: "All people shall have the right to live where they choose, to be decently housed, and bring up their families in comfort and security". Today, in a democratic society, our political freedom means nothing without visible improvement in the lives of blacks. The unemployment rate of blacks is too high, and most black people do not have decent accommodation. Recently Mr General Modise, aged 77, who had been waiting for his RDP house for fifteen years, complained about his mud house and how poverty caused him to fail building a house for his children. As he said these words holding his heart, he fell down and died (Mgchakela 2010:1-2).

The incidents of white farmers exploiting their black employees we read about in the short stories "Ruthe" and "Hae", are worse in our democratic society. White farmers are still exploiting their black farm employees and in the end they get away with murder. Not long ago a Parys white farmer knocked down and drove over his black farm employee with a tractor. A black farm labourer, Mbulelo, was injured in January 2010 by the white farmer Riaan van der Westhuizen. Mbulelo maintains that his employer drove straight at him and knocked him over with his tractor and did not stop to check the injuries he had caused. The white farmer only came when

another black employee told him that Mbulelo was injured and could not get up as his legs were numb (Moeng 2010a: 2).

The crime that a man from Africa experienced on his arrival at Germiston station in the short story “Hae” has until today not been solved. The crime that haunted Molefi in the story “Hosasa” is still escalating because today, in our democracy it is worse. The Freedom Charter states that the miners, domestic workers and farm workers and civil servants shall have the same rights as all others who work. Mine workers just like Tatolo, Molahlehi and the sick man in “Ke Toro Feela” are still being exploited. Moeng (2010b: 9) reports that miners are at risk of contracting respiratory diseases, and employers do not seem to care. Farm workers just like Rasebolai in “Ruthe” and the man from Africa in “Hae” are not treated as the Freedom Charter states. It is clear that blacks who work as farm- and mineworkers are still exploited and dehumanised as they work under unhealthy and dangerous conditions.

Mofokeng’s short stories in *Leetong* are very revealing. Mofokeng has pointed out the evils of the National Party government during apartheid. *Leetong* was and is still one of the most metonymic means to voice complaints against injustice and arbitrary rule. Corruption and dictatorship were the features of the apartheid government in South Africa and still persist to this day under the black-led government. Injustice is a continuation of the journey for blacks; they suffered under apartheid and they are still suffering today. Maybe Mofokeng was right when he emphasised that people and blacks in particular will get their real democracy and freedom only when they reach their destination which is *Hae* [At Home], beyond the grave.

In this situation we are not alone. Lessons can be learnt from America and the struggle of African Americans for equality, and need to be taken seriously in all spheres of life. Cose (1995), in his thought-provoking work *The Rage of a Privileged Class*, looked at the dissatisfaction and anger of middleclass blacks in America. Nearly eighteen years into our democracy and freedom, some of the main concerns of Cose are relevant to present-day South Africa. Cose begins his book by saying that a pact has been broken:

Despite its very evident prosperity, much of America’s black class is in excruciating pain ... the problem of the broken covenant, of the pact ensuring that if you work hard, get a good education, and play by the rules, you will be allowed to advance and achieve to the limits of your ability.
(Cose 1995: 1)

Cose (1995) tells us that those who invested in that American dream are angry because society is not colour-blind and has treated blacks differently and lesser than whites. He gives an example of a black and a white person applying for a job at a specific organisation and the white person getting the job while the black person gets turned away. Cose (1995) looks at the

experiences of middleclass blacks in a range of professions to show how they are treated and how they see themselves.

Part of his conclusion is that creating a colour-blind society on a foundation saturated with the venom of racism requires something more than simply proclaiming that the age of brotherhood has arrived. He argues that denial of this reality must end and that the gap can only begin to close if we recognise the reality we find ourselves in and why it exists.

Conclusion

Metonymies are based on concepts which are related to one another. Blank (1999: 173) sees these concepts as parts of greater conceptual networks which he terms "frames". These frames are static mental representations of typical situations in real life. Blank illustrates this by means of two frames.

The first frame contains concepts such as: toast; butter; milk and margarine. The second frame contains concepts such as: peas; steak; chips and pub. The two frames are contiguous when common concepts such as drink, salt and ketchup are linked together. The insight suggested by Blank (1999) is that these frames and their concepts are culture-dependent.

Applying these notions to *Leetong*, one may agree that the title constitutes a conceptual frame containing ideas which find resonance within a specific cultural setting. Taking Blank's notion of cultural specificity of frames, it must be noted that the title *Leetong* would not produce a similar response in all societies.

This article postulates that Mofokeng's volume of short stories, *Leetong*, has become a part of Sesotho political lexicon functioning as a metonymy to evoke a schema that can be mapped onto a part of a discourse. Lakoff and Turner (1989: 103) are of the opinion that in metonymy one entity in a schema is taken as standing for another entity in the same schema. The title of Mofokeng's *Leetong* can be taken as the schema of figurative political discourse as a whole and functions metonymically to evoke images of oppression. It is important to point out that there are critical texts on protest literature that one cannot place alongside Ndebele's (1988) criticism of South African literature. The main difference lies in the language an author uses because it determines the audience. Ndebele here goes beyond the borders of language, using a privileged medium. Amuta (1989) and Irele (1981) also engage this aspect. Moloji (1973) discusses Mofokeng's short stories in general but fails to place them in a South African context during the apartheid era. This article presents a dimension that was never sufficiently probed because oppression begets an oppressed mind.

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