

## Tragic Expressions in *Lehlaba la lephako* (Pain of Hunger)

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**ABSTRACT** Many literary critics maintain that a novel as narrative should be analysed only on the basis of the be based on narrative or epic elements. However, many novels, among others *Chaka* by Mofolo, *Mosali a nkholo* (Woman deceive me) by Khaketla and *Nna Sajene Kokobela* by Ntsane involve dialogue as a dramatic communicative mode in the expression of tragic events. This paper demonstrates the occurrence of dramatised tragic events with a view to demonstrate the dramatic mode of presentation in the novel *Lehlaba la lephako* (Pain of hunger). The aim of the paper is to illustrate overlap in the use of narrative as well as dramatic elements in a novel. A novel does not need therefore not be confined to only a telling mode of presentation, but could also incorporate both the telling (narrative) and the showing (dramatic) modes of presentation. Textual elements such as character, plot and theme will be demonstrated as reflecting tragedy as presented within the context of dialogue. Furthermore, dramatized tragic events in a novel could be as effective to provoke pity and fear on the part of the reader as in any drama-text. Tragedy and the tragic (though they are different concepts) they *overlap* and are relevant to either novel (telling) or drama (showing).

### INTRODUCTION

The role of dramatic elements in the novel *Lehlaba la lephako* (Pain of hunger) is demonstrated in this paper. The aspects that are commonly found in a drama-text are discussed with a view to demonstrate this particular text *Lehlaba la lephako* (Pain of hunger) as a narrative that enshrines both the narrative and the dramatic features. Aristotle (quoted by Leech 2002:1) presents an observation that tragedy involves the main character as the man who is pre-eminently virtuous and just, whose misfortune is brought upon him not by vice and depravity, but by some error of judgement. Aristotle contends therefore that tragic expression suggests a change from happiness to misery on the part of the tragic character.

Baldick (2008: 226-227) defines tragedy as a serious play, or, by extension, a novel representing the disastrous downfall of a central character, the protagonist. The protagonist is led into a calamity by a *hamartia* (it is a human error that leads to total downfall) which often takes the form of *hubris* (excessive pride leading to divine retribution or *nemesis*).

In the same vein, Jafta (1996) points out the difference between tragedy and the tragic as follows:

*Tragedy is associated with a particular form in literature which has come to be accepted as drama or a play while the tragic extends beyond the confines of drama. The tragic is used to mean*

*a type of experience, a sense, a vision of some kind* (Jafta 1996:8).

It is then clear that Jafta (1996) maintains that the difference between tragedy and the tragic is that tragedy concerns structure (as expected in drama) whereas the tragic is not confined to any particular structure, as it can be found in the novel or any other literary genre such as poetry, the essay or the short story. It is in the light of this point that the article demonstrates the tragic expressions in *Lehlaba la lephako* (Pain of hunger) as a Sesotho novel.

Baldick (2008) brings about another dimension in articulating a meaningful discussion of tragedy. Baldick (2008) defines the tragic character in the classical tragedy as someone who has an influence on society as a whole. This implies that as the tragic character in the classical tradition experiences a tragic flaw, the entire society becomes rudely affected. He contends that:

*Classical tragedy represents the disastrous downfall of a central character, the protagonist. By central character, Baldick (2008) refers to a character of royal blood, a king or a princess. The character has a highly respected position in his society* (Baldick 2008: 226-227.)

Literary scholars and readers of literary texts alike expect dramatic elements to be central to a dramatic text. They also believe that dramatic elements should form an integral part of a dramatic text and serve as distinctive features thereof. They do not expect a narrative text to

include dramatic elements, as these would then violate the general principles which categorise that particular literary form of art.

The parameters within which authors of Sesotho narrative texts operate are such that authors are made to understand that the method of presentation within a literary text should strictly be the telling method (Rimmon-Kenan 2002:2) where only narrative or epic elements are deemed to be relevant. Unfortunately, this trend in the analysis of Sesotho articles culminated in quite a number of articles being rejected for publication. The reason is simply based on matters of classification in terms of the nature of the aesthetic elements that had been applied in those particular articles.

Many articles written in other African languages have already endeavoured to reflect on the roles and significance of epic elements in their target languages, but no article has ever been written in Sesotho language, in particular, on this specific subject. The question of the roles and the significance of dramatic elements in Sesotho novels therefore remains a void that has not been filled till so far.

### Aim of the Study

The focus in this article is on the text *Lehlaba la lephako (Pain of hunger)*. The researcher demonstrates dramatic elements available in *Lehlaba la lephako (Pain of hunger)* and examines the effects of those elements on the text. The dramatic elements that are used in *Lehlaba la lephako (Pain of hunger)* are examined with a view to establish whether this particular Sesotho novel can be said to encompass both the telling (narrative mode) as well as the showing (dramatic mode) technique in its literary approach. A showing dramatic mode may sometimes be used to supplement the telling (epic mode). The article suggests that dramatic elements should not only be confined to drama texts only but should be understood expected to be relevant feature even in a narrative text as demonstrated in *Lehlaba la lephako (Pain of hunger)*.

In the discussion of the various dramatic elements identified in *Lehlaba la lephako (Pain of hunger)*, the researcher will select only the three elements within which the article will be based, namely, the character, plot and theme. It should be pointed out at this stage that these particular textual elements are presented through dialogue

in this particular text. In discussing the tragic expression in *Lehlaba la lephako (Pain of hunger)*, the researcher therefore demonstrates the dramatic presentation of the tragic character, the unfolding of tragic events (plot) as well as the formulation of the final message (theme) in this particular selected text.

### Literature Review

Very few research works have been written on this subject. Zulu (1998) wrote an unpublished doctoral thesis on characterisation in selected Sesotho novels. The nature of the tragic character has been clearly explicated in this research work. The role of the tragic character in the expression of tragedy also becomes clearly stated in this research work. Jafta (1996) wrote her unpublished doctoral thesis on the tragic expression in Xhosa literary works. Unlike in Jafta's thesis where the scope of work is extended to other literary works, the author in this article merely focuses on tragic expressions in one Sesotho novel, namely, *Lehlaba la lephako (Pain of hunger)*.

Jafta (1996) seems to share a common understanding with Krieger (1973) with regard to the difference between tragedy and the tragic in her presentation of Krieger's views as follows:

*He maintains that tragedy refers to the totality of the work and considers the object's literary form that is associated with Aristotle's formalistic or structural definition. The tragic refers to the subject's psychology, his views as well as version of reality (Krieger quoted by Jafta 1996).*

We realise therefore that Jafta (1996) Krieger presents an observation that the distinction between tragedy and the tragic in a novel is that tragedy presents a structural difference whereas the tragic is thematic and typically contextual in line with the story.

### 4. METHOD TO BE APPLIED

The method that would be applied to discuss issues raised in this article will be based within the theory of Structuralism. As the theory addresses itself to the various elements of the text, and as elements of the text *Lehlaba la lephako (Pain of hunger)* would be discussed in this article, it is therefore vital to use as method of common focus, the aspects of the theory of Structuralism.

Structuralist narratology (Genette 1980; Bal 1978; Rimmon-Kenan 1983) issued here will be prudent to analyse some of the elements of a particular narrative text and to show how these elements are interrelated/ interdependent and combined and operate coherently to create a particular narrative text. The elements of a narrative text that will be examined here are character, plot, and theme. The paper will show how these components are realised by means of dramatic features in a written Sesotho novel and how the use of these dramatic elements change the intrinsic and aesthetic nature of the narrative. The basic inherent features of a drama text are the use of dialogue between actors, the non-availability of the narrator as the story-teller, as well as the *didascalies*, namely the stage directions and stage properties.

Within the limits of this particular paper, it should therefore be understood that the primary involvement of dialogue in a novel suggests a change of mode of presentation from telling to showing, as specified in the introduction. In other words, if there is no involvement of these dramatic aspects in a narrative text, then the mode of presentation remains the original epic mode. An extensive application of dramatic mode implies change of focus from telling to showing.

### Dialogue

The context within which the tragic expressions in *Lehlaba la lephako* (Pain of hunger) should be understood, is such that dialogue should be perceived as a parameter or framework within which these elements are presented. It is expected that in any narrative text, the story is presented by the narrator. The tragic character, namely Seabata, is an embodiment of all the events taking place in the story and actually creates the opportunity for the reader to build mental pictures regarding the interplay between characters, the events and the theme in the selected text.

Unlike in a narrative text, a drama text involves 'showing', that is, presenting the actors through what they say and what they do. There is no imaginary persona who embodies the elements of a given text. Dialogue would be perceived as a cornerstone of drama in the same way as it would be reflected that the entire novel is dependent on dialogue for its presentation of the specified elements, including time, space, events and the unfolding conflict.

Dialogue serves as the context with which all the elements of a drama text are identified. However, the article demonstrates that dialogue as a dramatic element is not only confined to drama but can be extended to a narrative text. In a stricter sense, any narrative text, in general, and *Lehlaba la lephako* (Pain of hunger) in particular, can be presented within dialogue to express the unity of all the various aspects thereof.

### OPERATIONALISATION

As part of the operationalization process, the three selected textual elements, namely, character, plot and theme are discussed with a view to draw observations and conclusions on them.

#### 1. The Tragic Character and the Expression of Tragedy in *Lehlaba la lephako* (Pain of hunger)

The tragic character can be explained in both classical and modern sense. Firstly, the tragic character in a classical sense is presented as the king or anybody who has great influence on society as a whole. His experience of tragedy impacts not only on him as an individual character but also on society as a whole. Tragedy in this regard is perceived to be of high social significance as it has reference to an influence on the entire society within which the tragic character operated.

Secondly, the tragic character in the modern sense is an ordinary character. Such a character who has no particular influence on society as a whole but only on the individual character. In *Lehlaba la lephako* (Pain of hunger), tragedy impacts only on Seabata as the individual character in question and does not necessarily affect society in any way. Perhaps, tragedy in this regard is brought about by the character's overemphasis of the self (individualism) at the expense of the collective majority (communalism).

The researcher is of the opinion that readers will feel pity and fear for the tragic character as the character never thought that the turn of events will eventually be bitter to him. It is tragic for the character to realise too late that he had been operating 'in darkness' without taking any advice from anybody. In this way the tragic expressions or the features of tragedy become obvious in this text.

Around this understanding, Seabata was an ordinary character who merely occupied a more

fortunate position at work in relation to other characters. Based on Aristotle's observation (quoted by Leech 2002:1), the main tragic character is a man pre-eminently virtuous and just, whose misfortune, however, is brought upon him not by vice and depravity, but by some error of judgement.

Seabata, the tragic character in this novel, had indeed an error of judgement. His formidable problem was that he exaggerated his father's advice by ill-treating his fellow workers with a view to appease his employer, Swanepoel, whom he refers to as Sepanapodi. It is, for instance, clear in the following statement that Seabata's father merely urged him to be loyal and exercise due respect to his employer. He did not, however imply that Seabata should necessarily do so at the expense of his colleagues at work.

*O ne a nthutile ntho e le nngwe ya bohlokwa hoye ka moo a neng a nahana ka teng: ke hore ke tshephahale ho monnga ka ke tla kgora, lelapa la ka le tla phela ha monate* (Mohapi 1999: 102)

(He taught me one basic moral lesson which in his opinion was good: that I should be loyal and honest to my employer in order to earn a wage to be able to maintain my family decently and happily.)

What was serious about Seabata's attitude towards other people was that he did not realise that through his negative treatment he undermined the existence of other characters. In this way, Seabata overemphasised his ego despite the fact that as a leader he was supposed to operate as a character among other characters. In this way, Seabata presented his tragic flaw which eventually leads his blessings and opportunities as a leader to culminate in miseries. As a leader, Seabata failed to comply with one fundamental leadership quality, namely, that one has to maintain sound relationships with one's fellow-men. It was this kind of attitude that caused Seabata not to heed advice from anybody. The fact that Seabata did not realise his flaws, served as a matter that reinforced tragedy in generating pity and fear on the part of the readers.

As if it was not enough, Seabata's tragic flaw developed through his tendency of being governed by suspicions. He suspected that other characters were jealous about his promotion as the fore-man on Swanepoel's farm. Because of suspicions and misconceptions against other characters, he continued to act blindly by assuming a negative attitude against them:

*O ne a utlwisisa hore batho ba kang boNketsi le ba bang ba mona hobane o ne a kgethilwe hoba foromane e fumanang vene, ntlo ya setene le ho ya toropong* (Mohapi 1999:4).

(He believed that people like Nketsi and others are jealous as he was nominated to be the foreman who enjoys opportunities of driving the *bakkie*, occupying a brick-house and having the opportunity to do the shopping in town.)

It becomes obvious therefore that Seabata caused himself to suffer through repulsive obsessive reactions to his perceptions. He retained an inhumane personality and as such invited a lot of criticism from other characters.

This kind of position was tragic in the sense that it was detrimental not only to himself but also to his own family. It was for this particular reason that Seabata could not even allow his wife to go to church. The reason had been that he suspected that the minister was not actually preaching, but trying to expose him by revealing his secrets openly to the entire congregation. The author maintains that when Mmabatho thought about the reverend:

*A sisimoha maikutlo ha a nahana ka moruti hobane Seabata o se a mo hanetse le ho ya kerekeng hobane o re moruti o ruta ka yena ...* (Mohapi 1999: 17).

(She became emotionally taken up when she thought about the minister as Seabata has already forbidden her to attend church services because he believes that the minister tends to gossip about him in his sermon ...)

Conditions of life in Seabata's family reflected his experience of tragic flaw. The danger of his tragic flaw, presented through jealousy and hatred, signify the spiritual and mental suffering of the entire family. Seabata lacks the fatherly qualities. He was not aware that he destabilises peace and happiness in his family.

Even though Reverend Nkgelwane endeavoured through thick and thin to empower Seabata through advice, moralisation and education, Seabata's problems were still outstanding. Out of age-experience and religious teachings, Nkgelwane introduced Seabata to the dynamics of human life. However, Seabata displayed his tragic flaw as captured in the remark by the reverend. Reverend Nkgelwane tried to empower Seabata but all in vain.

He further probed to convince Seabata that he (Seabata) should always associate himself with other characters. Nkgelwane further remarked that:

*Seabata o dikalaneng, hodimo, re sitwa ho o fihlella. Theoha hle o be le rona re tla ba le wena re o thuse, o ngwana borona ...* (Mohapi 1999: 84).

(Seabata you are too high for us. Come down so that we can be with you and so that we can help you, you are one of us ...).

In analysing this remark we realise that Nkgelwane was actually trying to instil the idea of *Ubuntu* or a sense of good personality in Seabata. He tried to monitor and shape harmonious relationships between him (Seabata) and other characters. Nkgelwane was sending a message through to Seabata that he may not be successful in life by boosting his own ego at the expense of his fellow colleagues. Nkgelwane even promised that they would support Seabata if he could be human enough and associate harmoniously with other characters. Nkgelwane actually guided Seabata towards good human relations and good working relationships with his fellow colleagues. Seabata, as a tragic character did not realise or subscribed to the typical African philosophy and world-view that:

*Motho ke motho ka batho ba bang* (Sekese 1975: 212).

(People tend to help one another).

In terms of the light of the stages of tragedy and to showing that Seabata was actually a tragic character, it is at this kind of situation level where literary analysts talk of *anagnorisis*. It refers to a situation where the character looks at life from one vantage point and as a result finds himself dumped into a tragic experience (Kershner 1997). It was tragic on the part of Seabata to realise, very late though, that other characters were genuine and honest in the advice they gave him but could not heed to the advice. It was too late for him to realise that he unnecessarily racked and ruined his life by living just for himself. At that point in time, other characters were rejoicing at his miseries because he did not care for them.

## **2. The Development of Plot and the Expression of Tragedy in *Lehlaba la lephako* (Pain of hunger)**

Serious tragic events took place in Seabata's life which that reflected the fact that his life was undergoing a process of change from good to bad. Tragedy, per definition, presupposes change from the positive philosophy of life good to

negative bad. Seabata has shown the traits of such a shift from benevolence to malevolence. In this regard, we check whether the development of conflict was based on one central issue or whether conflict emanated from diverse stimulants. The sole and primary issue here is that Seabata did not accommodate the needs and interests of other characters in his life. Events occur simply because on several occasions Seabata just superimposed his own personal interests on other characters.

The novel opens with an argument between Seabata and his wife, Mmathabo. Mmathabo tries by all means to advise her husband to change his negative attitude towards his fellow co-workers but all in vain. This is why Mmathabo reminded him that:

*Ke o jwetsitse kgale hore o se ke wa nyatsa batho, yaba o a hana* (Mohapi 1999: 2)

(I told you long before that you should not despise other people; but you refused.)

This statement signifies the turn of events from good to bad in Seabata's life as he even has clashes with his wife on an issue that he seems to be overdoing unwillingly so. The use of the name of Mmathabo (woman of the nation) and as opposed to Seabata's name (being cold the cold one) already suggests a controversy. Mmathabo is concerned about the welfare of other people whereas Seabata seems to be 'cold-blooded' to nurture as well as have a positive feeling towards other people's interests. He is self-centred, idiosyncratic and too individualistic. Events in Seabata's family situation signify a sudden transition shift from good to bad or from positive to negative.

Readers feel pity and fear on the part of Seabata in the sense that they understand that he, as a family man, tried to win a favour of Swanepoel for the sake of his family. He endeavoured to and attract promotion at work to make ends meet for the good of his dependents, but, unfortunately, at the expense of his fellow colleagues. This is the reason that he (Seabata) maintains that:

*Nna ke tlile sebetsa mona, mme monnga ka o mpeile hore ke be leihlo le tsebe ya hae mona. Ke tla sebetsa jwalo, ho seng jwalo re tla ja mabodi re sa hetla ka morao* (Mohapi 1999: 2)

(I only came here to work. My employer entrusted me to be his observer as well as his reporter. I will work in this manner like that, otherwise we will be forced to eat any rubbish.)

It is also tragic to realise that the very person Swanepoel that Seabata tries to appease and win his favour, does not necessarily care for him so much. Swanepoel did not even bother how badly Seabata treated his own people in his favour. When Seabata genuinely tried to encourage that Swanepoel take people to school for proper education, it was unfortunate that Swanepoel misconstrued that this genuine action as a subtle attack on him, and even confessed to his wife that:

*Seabata e se e le tsebanyane, o se a re re ise basebetsi boitjhorisong ba tle ba ithute ... ka tjhelete ya mang?* (Mohapi 1999: 96)

(Seabata thinks of himself as clever. He wants us to send our employees to the training college to learn ... with whose should that be?)

As a tragic character, Seabata appears to be the victim of circumstances. Due to poverty, Seabata fell into a trap by stealing Swanepoel's sheep. This action also served as a turn of events from good to bad in the life of Seabata. It is an action that could not go unchecked despite the fact that he was the right-hand of Swanepoel. It is tragic on the part of Seabata to realise that just because of this particular event, he is due to experience tragic changes in his position at work even though he, for a long period used to regard Swanepoel as his idol. Readers feel pity for Seabata but at the same time fear that they should not be exposed to such similar situation in their life. The statement below summarises the turn of events against Seabata as the tragic character in his relationship with Swanepoel who happened to be his ever-loving employer:

*Monnga polasi yena o ne a tjalaka seka yona nkwe hantle e patetswe ke ditshwene. O ne a bona nako yaho dula ha lekgotla ho ahlola Seabata e mo diehela hobane o ne a batla ho mo tshwara ka matsoho a etse ha e phetwe* (Mohapi 1999: 99)

(The owner of the farm was pacing up and down like a wounded tiger being attacked by baboons. For him the court case against Seabata was just too long to wait for as he aimed to brutally assault him.)

The statement above indicates that Seabata was in fact a tragic character in the sense that he never knew and never expected that the turn of subsequent events will be detrimental to him. He only focused on his opportunities but unfortunately did not realise that he needed to consider the interests of other people as well.

### 3. Theme and the Expression of Tragedy in *Lehlaba la lephako*

The entire life of Seabata seems to be a mechanism employed by the author in conveying his fundamental message to readers. In other words, it becomes clear that the attitude of Seabata towards other characters serves as the embodiment of the underlying message of this narrative text. The author applies Seabata through what he (Seabata) says and does, that his entire life constitutes the hidden, fundamental message that is central in this particular novel. Mohapi (1999) makes use of Seabata as the tragic character in presenting a moral lesson to his society. The moral lesson is simple, namely, that anti-social behaviour leads to misfortune or the ultimate setback in life.

While Seabata expected to secure for himself and his family a better life, it tragically ended in misery when (out of hunger strike) he resorted to anti-social behaviour against his fellow colleagues. Instead of his family leading a happy life, it was all in vain when their little son became sick and eventually died. The life of Seabata was again exploited as a moral lesson to all readers as he forfeited his job subsequent to his detention. In other words, the author seems to moralise by using as an example the human nature of Seabata that material things are never perpetual and therefore should not be the source of clashes people in any social situation.

Seabata is presented as being confused throughout his life. As a matter of consequence, he suffered at the end. From each form of suffering, we deduce that the author communicated a specific message of moral awareness. An event such as the one below, might have taught Seabata a moral lesson:

*Mohatsa Seabata o lahlehetswe ke mosebetsi* (Mohapi 1999: 99)

(Seabata's wife lost her job.)

It becomes an obvious moral message not only to Seabata but to all readers that anti-social behaviour culminates in great losses in life. Seabata sacrificed entirely and it was simply because of lack of cooperation with other characters. He added up by developing a negative attitude towards other characters. We learn once more about the losses Seabata sustained in the following statement:

*Rapolasi a dumela feela a re Mmabatho a kgaotse hona moo ho sebetsa ha hae* (Mohapi 1999: 99)

(The farmer just agreed and ordered that Mmabatho should immediately stop working at his house).

Losing a job was a blow against the development of Seabata's family. This particular event also complicated the life of Seabata and implicated the occurrence of tragedy at the end.

#### **4. The Various Levels of Torture Experienced by Seabata as the Tragic Character**

Seabata suffered in many ways in his life because of his tragic flaw. He suffered psychologically. He never had peace of mind as he was always reminded of the arrogant manner in which he treated other workers on the farm. His mental power and his rationale being in general had been rudely shaken.

The suffering of Seabata even affected his relationship with other people in his society. The respect and honour that people used to give to him diminished. People took pleasure in considering him as an ordinary person and a farm labourer. Seabata no longer commands any respect as he used to be perceived as a high-ranking person on the farm.

It is again tragic to realise that Seabata also suffered physically. Due to lack of enough mental rest, Seabata lost his weight and nobody could even associate him with the type of person who used to be so dearly favoured by Swanepoel. He used to be quite energetic but now he appears as a weakling who induces pity and fear on the part of other farm labourers. Psychological, Socio-cultural and Physical Suffering

Life based on sin is not only detrimental to social relations but also to one's physical being. Seabata suffered not only socially but also physically as indicated below:

*O ne a fokotse a bile a le mosehla ho bonahala hore ho ngongoreha ho mo sotlile* (Mohapi 1999: 101)

(He lost weight and also became pale and light in complexion. It was clear that anxiety and a lot of worries made him suffer.)

#### **5. Sin as Tantamount to Death Penalty**

As reflected in the Bible (Matthew 22: 35 as well as Matthew 8) that one should do to others what he would like others do to him, Tshediso Kgwaela has done to Seabata what Seabata used

to do to other characters. Being "cold-blooded" and less-sensitive towards other characters' future was the order of the day as caused by Seabata's negative attitude to them. However, he did not know that Tshediso Kgwaela was appointed by Swanepoel to spy on all other characters, including him. He got caught after stealing a sheep, as reflected in the statement below:

*O ne a qala ho utlwa mohlang oo hore o ne a bitswa Tshediso Kgwaela, setsetse. E ne e le sehlewela, mpimpi ya Sepanapodi* (Mohapi 1999: 101).

(He only came to know on that day that he was called Tshediso Kgwaela, the crook. He was a secret informer of Sepanapodi.)

Based on the observations in the analysis of the given literary text, it is prudent to realise that there is no water-tight rule that binds the narrative to the narrator. In other words, even though *Lehlaba la lephako* (Pain of hunger) is a narrative, it can as well be presented in terms of dialogue as a dramatic element in any drama text. As a result, it can then enshrine what Oscar Brockett refers to as "*the theatre of the mind*" where apparently there is dialogue between characters themselves. This implies that readers appear to visualise the unfolding conflict between characters as if it happens before them. Readers are actually made to realise the events in a novel in terms of the '*here and now*' principle or the '*immediacy effect*'.

The approach presented in this paper suggests that telling and showing are actually two approaches that can be applied inter-changeably in Sesotho literature. The two modes of approach are significant to analyse any written Sesotho text – be it a literary text or a dramatic text. The methods applied to illustrate the significance of dramatic elements in the novel *Lehlaba la lephako* (Pain of hunger) are integrated in the selected theoretical framework, namely structuralism in a Sesotho selected novel.

### **RESULTS**

This paper reflects on the three textual elements (character, plot and theme) to verify the overlap existing in *Lehlaba la lephako* (Pain of hunger) as it encompasses both narrative and dramatic means of communication. The unity that the three elements constitute in their application, characterises the text as monolithic in terms of its underlying message. As monolithic, the in-

terpretation of the events in this text qualifies it as simple and easy to interpret its one-dimensional message (theme). Unlike in other polyphonic novels, such as *Chaka* (Mofolo) and *Nna Sajene Kokobela, CID* (Moephuli) the theme may be presented as complex and very complicated.

By virtue of the fact that Seabata was an ordinary man who only appeared to be too ambitious, self-centered and having a weakness of maintaining only his way of thinking, this novel can be categorised as reflecting tragic qualities. His tragic flaw does not necessarily affect the entire society as in the case of the king in a classical novel. In congruence with the theme, the plot in this narrative text appears to be uni-linear. This is so because it concentrates exclusively on the Seabata's tragic flaw, its development and its tragic end.

In relation to other elements (namely character and theme), plot seems to be more emphasised or fore-grounded. But, the three elements are actually inseparable and constitute a meaningful whole in assigning the underlying message of the text.

## DISCUSSION

In line with the theory of Structuralism, that as it deals with textual elements in their exclusive relationship as well as their relationship with the text as a whole, only three elements of the text (character, plot and theme) were discussed. The following were the findings regarding the three elements:

### 1. Focus on the Character

Seabata as a tragic character has been presented as a flat character but appears to play a one-dimensional role in *Lehlaba la lephako* (Pain of hunger). Even though Seabata still generates fear and pity on the part of the readers in terms of his tragic flaw, the expression of tragedy would be more meaningful and emphatic if the author could have used a round character. Forster (1974) is convinced that only the round character can serve effectively as a tragic character (than a flat character) as he argues that:

*It is only round people who are fit to perform tragically for any length of time and can move us to any feelings except humour and appropriateness* (Forster 1974:77).

The criticism levelled at the use of a flat character in this text is that a flat character does not

convince the reader as in the case of a round that the text reflects on reality. Forster (1974) believes that flat characters are more relevant to comedy than tragedy. However, the author expressed the tragic in the text to the level of climax where Seabata realised his flaw and learnt a moral lesson to treat other people with dignity and respect.

The presentation of Seabata's life already presupposes dramatization as he moves from positive to negative good to bad, from bad to good and ultimately ends with a change from better to worse good to bad. This kind of change mirrors the dramatic element that we normally find in any drama text. It is on the basis of this dramatic kind of presentation that the researcher determines that dramatic elements are applied in this novel.

### 2. Focus on the Plot

The unfolding conflict also demonstrates the thesis and antithesis type of relationship that is embedded in this novel in order to capture the tension that is depicted in this novel. The dramatic presentation of the events as the story continues results in the 'dialogue' between positive actions as opposed to negative actions that are in question in this particular novel. It is apparent that the author deliberately emphasised more on the events (plot) than other elements in order to clearly reflect the tragic life experiences of Seabata. Plot is more significant to express tragedy as suggested by Kershner (1997) in confirming Aristotle's view that:

In his *Poetics*, Aristotle considers plot the most important aspect of a work, and he observes that plots have a beginning, middle and end (Kershner 1997: 112)

Taken from the above statement, it becomes clear that the tragic expression becomes more clearer and emphatic in what the character is doing (unfolding of events through plot) than in other elements in this particular text. However, it should be clear to the reader(s) that emphasis on these textual elements may differ from one text to the other. In one text the theme may be fore-grounded but in another the character may be fore-grounded and the other elements backgrounded.

### 3. Focus on the Theme

The function of theme in this narrative text is double pronged (that is, *dulce et utile* in Latin).



This means that it may be aimed to entertain and/or to educate. Within the context of this text, it becomes obvious that the author intends to give a moral lesson rooted in Basotho idiomatic expression “*motho ke motho ka batho*” (a person is a person through other people). Seabata violated this basic human relational principle by thinking only about himself and undermining other people.

Theme distinguishes itself as two opposing thoughts or ideas in the life of the main character, namely, Seabata. The dichotomy of aspects of morality as depicted in Seabata’s mental, emotional and ethical being qualifies presentation of theme as dramatic.

It is clear that dramatic elements are also central in the aesthetic presentation of a literary text. The three aspects discussed in the researcher’s findings confirm the fact that the mode of presentation in *Lehlaba la lephako* (Pain of hunger) is dramatic. It is also clear that the dramatic presentation tends to be emphatic and successful in presenting the flaw of the tragic character, the development of conflict in the plot structure as well as the formulation of theme. The tragic expression in *Lehlaba la lephako* (Pain of hunger) happens to be more evident in its dramatic presentation as reflected in this particular novel.

Tragedy in this novel has the characteristics of a modern tragedy. Seabata is an ordinary character without any significant position. His position is not compatible to the position of a king. Though he experienced tragedy, society is not greatly affected as it would be in a classical sense. From a thematic point of view, one’s development hinges on his relationship with other people. Man can never be all-in-one by himself. Man is *homo civis sapientiae* meaning that man is at all times expected to be in close relationship with other people in order to develop his personality and good human qualities. Seabata sacrificed his self-knowledge and self-respect as an African, only to appease Sepanapodi. This was the reason teacher Mohanelwa maintained that Seabata should be reprimanded and brought back to his senses as an African:

*Ntate Nketsi, ha re thuse monnaheso o lahlehile, o se a itebetse hore ke wa borona, mme re lokela ho sebedisana le yena hore re tle re be ntweleng tabeng tse re amang* (Mohapi 1999: 12)

(Father Nketsi, let us support our fellow man. He is lost and forgot that he is one of us and that

we should work together so that we secure consensus on matters that affect us.)

Seabata himself acknowledges that he committed grievous mistakes throughout his life. He has reached the stage of *anagnorisis* and confesses that:

*Ke ne ke le motshepuwa ke ratwa, empa kajeno ke raleshano ke lahluwe ... Ke ne ke etsa tsena tsohle ho ipatlela bophelo bo botle ke sa kgathale hore ke bo fumana jwang, mang o reng, ha feela ke kgotsofatsa monnga ka* (Mohapi 1999: 102).

(I used to be the trusted one and being greatly trusted, but today I am perceived as a liar and I am rejected ... I use to do everything in order to secure better life. I would not care how I attain it, who says what; but only if I can satisfy my employer).

This remark states clearly that this is a tragedy that demonstrates Seabata as the tragic character undergoing a change from good to bad. It is tragic because Seabata could not realise the weakness in him in time until he landed in trouble. With this turn of events in the life of Seabata in mind, the readers feel pity for him but at the same time fear that such unfortunate situation should not happen to them.

## CONCLUSION

The research paper has demonstrated that there is no binding rule that sets strict parameters to separate a narrative text from a dramatic text in terms of its mode of presentation. Tragedy and the tragic events can be expressed in the novel as in drama. A common denominator between a drama and a narrative is that they are both based on the plot. It is immaterial as to what mode should be used in any art-form. The article has also illuminated that it is entirely a matter of choice on the part of the author to choose a mode of presentation that will be effective and efficient to flag the underlying message of the text.

The paper suggests a review of broad thoughts about the current theoretical perspectives on Sesotho narratives in general, and Sesotho drama, in particular. The basic premise or starting point illustrated by the findings is that the story line is fundamental and its mode of presentation is actually of secondary importance. It is merely a vehicle to deliver the message.

The paper suggests to budding language patriots and language practitioners that there should

be no barriers for any literary artist to actualise his/her skill freely. Otherwise, authors are not governed by any guidelines when they present their expertise. They simply express their creativity without any restriction whatsoever. It is only at the level of literary appreciation where these works of art and creativity are classified in terms of their mode of presentation. Tragic expressions can either be presented epically or dramatically as based on the underlying story.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

There are four basic aspects that the researcher recommends to authors and literary critics. Firstly, the various literary art-forms are too complex and interrelated to be categorised merely in terms of their one specific mode of communication. There are a lot of overlaps and therefore elements such as character, plot and theme should not merely be presented in one form of communication but telling could be applied jointly with showing. In other words dramatization can reinforce telling in the narration of a story.

Upon completion of this paper, it is obvious that the article brings about a formidable discovery that a novel is not necessarily confined to the telling narrative mode. A novel can also encompass dramatic features. In a stricter sense, dialogue could serve as a prominent feature of a novel. As a matters of urgency, author should try to avoid stereotypes in terms of categorisation of genres in the writing and literary analysis of the literary texts.

Secondly, in their choice of characters, authors should decide on a round as he is a 'round' and an unpredictable character. This type of character should be preferred for this type of role because of the capacity to change his behaviour and attitude towards other characters at any time. The researcher recommends the rounded character to generate pity and fear on the part of the readers. The element of predictability could be related to a flat character and not a round character to justifiably express tragedy in the literary text.

In the tragic expression of a narrative, it is ideal to make use of a round character to be able to demonstrate the change from good to bad. In this way the dramatic element will be able to reinforce the narrative out of which the text would eventually distinguish itself as of high aesthetic value. In *Lehlaba la lephako* (Pain of hunger),

the author managed to express tragedy by using the Seabata as a flat and predictable character but it could have been more appealing to the readers if the qualities of a round character could have been given to Seabata as the main and the tragic character.

Thirdly, it is absolutely important to maintain and realise a display of the unity of the text in terms of harmonious application of its elements, such as character, plot and theme. Underlyingly, this will ensure coherence and logicity in the understanding of the novel on the part of the readers. The author managed to deliver a strong underlying message by maintaining the unity of the three selected textual elements in this text. However, the paper has demonstrated the possibilities of the tragic expression in *Lehlaba la lephako* (Pain of hunger).

Fourthly and finally, it is apparent that literary genres are interrelated and should be perceived and studied as such. The whole concept of intertextuality does not only apply to literary texts but even relates to literary genres as well. The article therefore recommends a broad holistic approach in the application of the relationship between genres with specific reference to intertextuality. So, an integrated approach of the relevant genre features is recommended in the analysis of a novel. Otherwise, this article has proven that there are tragic expressions in a novel within the context of an integrated approach to novel study.

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