

Review of Literary Features in the Short Story “Le Fa O Ka E Buela Lengopeng...”



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ABSTRACT

The short story typically has certain features that distinguish it from other forms of writing. For example, it has a compact plot; brevity is key. This paper examines how the author of ‘Le fa o ka e buela lengopeng’ structured the short story giving due consideration to aspects of the story such as its title, introduction, plot, suspense, characters as well as the theme in his book. It must be tightly structured; its language must be distilled and precise. The characteristics will be analyzed in ‘Le fa o ka e buela lengopeng’, and a determination made as to whether the author has successfully presented a well-written short story. The paper relies on the Narratology Theory. The author was able to reflect all the requisite essential elements of a short story in his work. The short story starts well with a provocative beginning and ends in a way that displays, depicts, and provides a solution to the problem shown in the introduction. The author was successful in writing his short story. This study contributes significantly to the body of knowledge by providing a comprehensive analysis of the structural elements and narrative techniques employed in the short story 'Le fa o ka e buela lengopeng'.

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INTRODUCTION

Synopsis of the Short Story - *Le Fa O Ka E Buela Lengopeng*

Making plans to visit Ga Rankuwa was something Makeketa had committed to, so she was unable to back out. Not wanting to let his concubine down was his goal. He was able to stay overnight at his lover's house thanks to the funeral. Malešwane's employers refuse to allow her to take time off for her aunt's funeral because they believe her to be a distant relative. Makeketa is encouraged to think her wife won't be able to make it to the funeral because of the difficulties she faces. This means he can visit Zone 16 and not have to stay at his marital residence. Notwithstanding their disapproval, his wife was adamant about going to her rakgadi Mma Kerileng's funeral. Making sure that word gets out in the unlikely event that he is unable to return in time for the funeral. He thinks that Malešwane was also not able to attend the funeral only to find that she attended and could even pick it up that her husband was not there. When the two meet back home, Makeketa tries to explain how the funeral proceedings went, not knowing that Malešwane was in attendance. He becomes a laughingstock to people who went to the funeral with Malešwane. *Le fa o ka e buela lengopeng*, is a short story that depicts that men can be dishonest at times, but women should have strong hearts to persevere the treatments meted to them by married husbands.¹ Also, no secret can be hidden forever.

¹ R.M. Malope, *Mmualebe, Hammanskraal* (Craft Press Babelegi (Pty) Ltd., 1992).

This study contributes significantly to the body of knowledge by providing a comprehensive analysis of the structural elements and narrative techniques employed in the short story 'Le fa o ka e buela lengopeng'. By examining the story through the lens of Narratology Theory, the research elucidates how the author effectively utilizes key components such as plot, suspense, character development, and thematic expression to craft a compelling and cohesive narrative. This detailed evaluation not only underscores the importance of these elements in short story writing but also offers a valuable framework for future literary analysis. Additionally, the study enhances the understanding of how precise language and tight structure contribute to the overall impact and success of a short story, thereby enriching the discourse on literary craftsmanship and narrative strategies

This study aims to determine the effectiveness, or lack thereof of the author, Malope's application and usage of the following components of a short story: title, introduction, plot, characters, suspense, and theme in his short story entitled: '*Le fa o ka buela lengopeng*'. It is not all short story writers who are able to successfully employ these features to create a well-crafted short story. The title of the short story is so attractive that people's curiosity is aroused. Questions start to build up in readers' minds. The very first question that comes to mind is 'who is concealing what?' A title like this is provocative and entices the reader to read the story. Other elements of a short story would be analysed and checked as to whether they have been successfully employed to present a good book.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The basis of this analysis will rely on the Narratology Theory. Narratology is the study of narrative structure and the ways that these structures affect our perception and interpretation of stories. Rooted in literary theory and semiotics, it examines the mechanics of storytelling across various media, including literature, film, and oral traditions. Key components of narratology include plot, character, setting, and point of view, as well as the relationships between time and narrative sequence. By analysing these elements, narratologists seek to understand how narratives are constructed and how they engage audiences. This field also explores the cultural, psychological, and philosophical implications of storytelling, shedding light on how narratives shape human experience and communication. Narratology theory is promulgated by pioneers such as Strachan, Genette and Groenewald, who state that narratology theory is fitting for use in the analysis of fiction.² The Narratology Theory was first propounded by Russian Formalists who were instrumental in the development of the theory of fiction that developed from then on.³ This is elucidated by Sebate who stated: "Russian Formalism has a good claim to being the most influential critical theoretical school of this century."⁴

Adding to this assertion, Scholes continues with the following statement:

*"Formalism is generally seen as the basis of modern literary theory. Formalist theory is adopted because it helps us analyse the writer's technical prowess and skill. Formalists have played a significant role in the evaluation of the structure of the narrative. They draw a distinction between fabula and syuzhet and state that fabula is the raw material in its original and natural order while syuzhet is seen as the arrangement of events through art devices."*⁵

According to Scholes "Structuralism is the way of looking for reality not in individual things but in the relationship among them."⁶ Therefore, structuralism is relevant because it examines the structural framework of narratives and examines the elements of their construction.

METHODOLOGY

This study used a qualitative approach. A qualitative approach is a research method focused on understanding phenomena through the collection and analysis of non-numerical data, such as interviews, observations, and textual materials. It emphasizes exploring the meanings, experiences, and

² G. Genette, *Narrative Discourse* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980).

³ B.I. Sebate, *Tshekatsheko Ya Tikologo Mo Go Matlhokomatlhoko Ya Ga R.M. Malope* (Pretoria: University of Pretoria, 2008).

⁴ R.J. Scholes, *Acoustic Cues for Constituent Structure. A Series of Experiment on the Nature of Spoken Sentence Structure* (London: The Hague, 1985).

⁵ Scholes, *Acoustic Cues for Constituent Structure. A Series of Experiment on the Nature of Spoken Sentence Structure*.

⁶ Scholes, *Acoustic Cues for Constituent Structure. A Series of Experiment on the Nature of Spoken Sentence Structure*.

interpretations of participants, aiming to gain deep insights into their perspectives and contexts. This approach is often used in social sciences to study complex social processes, behaviours, and cultural phenomena. A narrative analysis was adopted in reviewing literary features in the story under study.

Narrative analysis delves into the intricacies of how a story is told, focusing on elements such as plot structure, character development, setting, point of view, themes, narrative style, structure, and dialogue. In this study, the plot structure was scrutinized to understand the sequence of events, including the setup, conflict, climax, and resolution, while character development was examined to uncover the motivations, relationships, and growth of both protagonists and antagonists. The setting provided a backdrop that influences the narrative, encompassing the time, place, and sociocultural context. The point of view determined the perspective from which the story is told, affecting the reader's access to information and their connection with the characters. Themes were identified to reveal the central ideas and messages, often reflecting broader societal issues.

The narrative style, including the author's use of language, tone, and literary devices such as symbolism, metaphor, and irony, contributes to the unique voice of the story. Additionally, the structure of the narrative, through the organization of chapters or sections, was analysed for its role in maintaining coherence and flow. Finally, dialogue was assessed for its ability to reveal character personalities and relationships, and its function in advancing the plot. Together, these elements created a rich tapestry that allowed for a deeper understanding of the story's construction and the author's intent. There are three literary devices that this narrative analysis interrogated: exposition, description, and metaphor. This investigation focused on exposition. Exposition, according to Mahole referred to by Kekana is, "*ho hlaloša ke mokgwa wa go bontšha seemo go ba sebopego sa selo gore se kwešišege gabotse*" (Exposition is to illustrate the circumstances of something so that it is easy to visualise).⁷ One is more easily able to understand anything without effort, or more readily if it is well explained. This research is inclined towards the way short stories are set forth or elucidated. In his view, Kgatla also says, as referenced by Kekana that he concurs with what Malope propounds when he says *go hlaloša ke go fa polelo e e tseneletšego ya selo, gwa utullwa diphapantšho tša sona gore sebopego sa sona se sale nyanyeng, fao se ka bonwang bonolo* (Description serves to provide detail that makes the story readily understandable).⁸

DISCUSSION

The use of Literary Features in the Short Story "Le Fa O Ka E Buela Lengopeng..."

The link between the book title and its contents matters. The title of the book is the guiding light on what the book is about. Having said this, the author must take care not to get carried away and be so literal as to deny the reader the pleasure of the journey of discovery on the way to reaching the destination and ending of the book. The author must not lose sight of this and inadvertently divulge the conclusion of the story prematurely. According to Holman, the title is explained as '... a distinguishing name attached to any written production, a book, a section of a book, a chapter, a short story, a poem, etc.'⁹ In his perception, Selden states that the title is not just any name, arbitrarily chosen for a book. The author must make this choice with care.¹⁰ Some authors coin a title based on the characters in the book, often, the main character. The title may be derived from events arising from the actions of the story's protagonist or the conflict that arises from within it. The title distinguishes one book from another. It sheds light on the way the story will unfold. Sharing the same sentiments, Motlhamme concurs with Holman's observation that every book has a unique title.¹¹ In adding to this, Harmon concurs: "the chief distinguishing name attached to any written production or performance."¹² Nowadays, the title tends to be shorter than those that were used in the past. Holman has opted not to use a short title, rather has titled

⁷ B.F. Mahole, "Lenong La Gauta: Padi Ya Botseka" (University of Pretoria, 2002); T. S. Kekana, "Masetlapelo Dikanegelong Tša Sepedi" (University of Pretoria, 2016).

⁸ P. M. Kgatla, *Kgolo, Tswelopele Le Katlego Ya Kanelokopana Ya Sepedi (1951 – 1999)* (Pretoria: University of Pretoria, 2020); Kekana, "Masetlapelo Dikanegelong Tša Sepedi"; Malope, *Mmualebe, Hammanskraal*.

⁹ G. H. Holman, *A Handbook to Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 1972).

¹⁰ K. A. Selden, *Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory*, 3rd ed. (Kentucky: The University of Kentucky Press, 1986).

¹¹ Z.M. Motlhamme, "Tlhotlhomiso Ya Dintshontsho Tsa Lerato: LD Raditladi" (University of Pretoria, 2006).

¹² W. A. Harmon, *Handbook to Literature*, vol. 12 (Longman-Pearson Education, Glenview. Publishers, 2012).

his story “*Le fa o ka e buela lengopeng.*”¹³ The emphasis by Mahole points out that “Although modern titles are usually brief,...practise produced titles that sometimes filled a close printed page.”¹⁴ The title that is under discussion “*Le fa o ka e buela lengopeng*” sets the stage for the reader, preparing his mind for what is to be discussed in the story. The author opted to use a Setswana proverb whose meaning is that actions that are carried out under cover of darkness, or in secret, seldom remain hidden. Said differently, the truth will out and all will be revealed when the sun shines.

Although the title of Sebate’s short story is long, it is enticing.¹⁵ This kind of title keeps the reader in suspense and strings him along, unfolding until ultimately the end of the story is reached and answers to questions raised are resolved. For this reason, it is not easy for the reader to abandon the story before the ending is reached because there is this pull that calls the reader to continue reading until a satisfying resolution is reached because of the manner in which the story is laid out. The title begs the following questions.

1. Who is the perpetrator of the wrongs that take place in the story?
2. What is the reason for these actions; what is their spark?
3. What, exactly, is this bad thing that is done?
4. What is the motivation for doing this bad thing?
5. What will the outcome be?
6. Once the perpetrator is found out, what is to happen to them?

These many questions stimulate the love for reading the book in order to quench the thirst to find a resolution to these issues—all this sparked by the title of the story. By so doing, the writer has succeeded in drawing the reader into the book and making them want to continue to read. It is clear that there is a disaster in the making. These conclusions can be deduced from the carefully chosen title.

The introduction of a short story must necessarily begin by introducing the conflict that will be the core of the story. Explaining what this means, Sebate asserts, “The first paragraph of a short story is usually the most significant because it essentially exposes the problem situation.”¹⁶ When the writer of a short story begins the story by plunging right into the problem that is being confronted, the scene is immediately set for the reader for the unraveling or untangling of the message that the story is intended to convey. With the introduction, Harmon states, “The introduction is the opening of the piece of writing” and continues by saying “The introduction is the beginning of the beginning.”¹⁷ The author of the short story does not have the luxury to meander. Brevity is key. The selection of one word in place of many is key. The short story writer must also ensure that he does not reveal all the information at the onset of the story or he removes the suspense and intrigue that would keep the reader engrossed. If he fails, then the story falls flat, as the thrill of reading is denied the reader. To guard against this, the trick is to reveal only snippets of what the story is about at the start. From that point on, the reader must decipher for himself what is the source of the conflict and how it is going to be resolved. This tactic glues the reader to the words, holding them captive. Sebate explains this further:

*“The writer also defamiliarises the raw material or familiar actions he uses to build his story by slowing down, drawing out, or interpreting the sequential flow of original actions. In this way he creates suspense so that he is able to arrest the reader’s attention”*¹⁸

By drawing out the action, and slowing it down, chameleon-like, the writer builds up suspense, making the reader yearn to find out what happens next in the story. This is the lure of the short story that this author has excelled in achieving. In their view, Groenewald explains this in this manner: “...this tactic adds to the reader’s desire to discover the writer’s message.”¹⁹

¹³ Holman, *A Handbook to Literature*.

¹⁴ Mahole, “Lenong La Gauta: Padi Ya Botseka.”

¹⁵ P.M. Sebate, “The Tswana Short Story: From BD Magoleng to OK Bogatsu” (UNISA, 1999).

¹⁶ Sebate, “The Tswana Short Story: From BD Magoleng to OK Bogatsu.”

¹⁷ Harmon, *Handbook to Literature*.

¹⁸ Sebate, “The Tswana Short Story: From BD Magoleng to OK Bogatsu.”

¹⁹ P.S. Groenewald, *Thutadikwalo Ya Sesotho Sa Lebowa* (Pretoria: University of Pretoria, 1993).

A writer must tantalise the reader with a taste of what the core message of the story is, and continue to do this throughout its telling, skimming off the cream in carefully measured quantities, all the while conserving words. Done successfully, the reader is enticed to continue reading. Adding to this, Sebate places emphasis on this tool by saying “The modern short story is not only short because it is narrated in a few words; it is also short because it has a well-defined plot that includes one complete action.”²⁰ According to Sebate, the plot is the preparation of the sequencing of events that the writer has woven together in the story.²¹ It is self-evident that the subject is built by the sequencing and the interweaving of events. Some authors kick off their stories with conflict. Others are able to start the story with the ending. These different options heighten tension and suspense.

Plot is the sequencing of events or actions arranged according to cause and effect. This is expressed differently by Harmon;

*“According to formalists, the plot is not only the arrangement of events, but also includes all devices used to interrupt and delay the narration. These include devices such as flashbacks and foreshadowing.”*²²

A writer can formulate a plot in a number of ways. He can choose to foreshadow events or in other instances can employ flashbacks as a weaving together the story. The sequencing of these events is a key element in the narration. This is the definition of a plot. A good plot is one whose sequencing of events and actions takes place in a fashion that does not result in clashes. In addition, Sebate adds to this;

*The formalists are less concerned with the “story”, that is “fabula” and are more concerned with the arrangement of events that build up the “plot structure”, that is, “syuzhet”*²³

A well-crafted plot lays the foundation upon which a short story can be constructed, facilitating the ease with which the subject matter that the author wishes to discuss is carried out. This paper will illustrate how the short story under discussion has successfully woven this short story in a manner that makes it rendered in an orderly fashion, like the birth of twins, one after the other. According to Harmon, the plot is an “imitation of an action as well as the arrangement of incidents.”²⁴ These incidents are set out in a manner that ensures they are linked together, joined together by event.²⁵

The events need to be orderly like cows that are yoked together. As explained by May and Watts the plot is: “A plot is also a narrative of events, the emphasis falling on causality.”²⁶ These afore-going references therefore also confirm that the events need to take place in an orderly fashion so that they take place. Although the reader may find the events entertaining, if the plot is not well thought out, then this may be found to be a shortcoming in the story.

The plot used by Malope is well thought out, well planned, and tied together so that the reader is left satisfied with the story’s outcomes.²⁷ Had it not been so, the joy of its reading would have dissipated with its reading. If a short story is well written, it retains the suspense that is woven into the plot with the result that the reader’s interest does not wane but rather wants to continue reading. May and Watts add to this point with the following: “causality is when one event makes another happen...because without causality, there are usually no answers to questions like “what happens next?” and “how did we get into this mess?”²⁸

The causes and effects of events are critical when constructing the plot. Continuing, May and Watts explain further by saying: “A plot is like a knitted sweater-only as good as the stitches. Without the links, we have a tangle of wool, chaotic and uninteresting.”²⁹ This caution illustrates that the plot is

²⁰ Sebate, “The Tswana Short Story: From BD Magoleng to OK Bogatsu.”

²¹ Sebate, *Tshekatsheko Ya Tikologo Mo Go Matlhokomatlhoko Ya Ga R.M. Malope.*

²² Harmon, *Handbook to Literature.*

²³ Sebate, *Tshekatsheko Ya Tikologo Mo Go Matlhokomatlhoko Ya Ga R.M. Malope.*

²⁴ Harmon, *Handbook to Literature.*

²⁵ Groenewald, *Thutadikwalo Ya Sesotho Sa Lebowa.*

²⁶ S. May and N. Watts, *Getting Started in Writing a Novel* (UK: Hodder & Stoughtons. McGraw-Hill Companies, 2015).

²⁷ Malope, *Mmualebe, Hammanskraal.*

²⁸ May and Watts, *Getting Started in Writing a Novel.*

²⁹ May and Watts, *Getting Started in Writing a Novel.*

built through events and actions that must be intertwined and coherent and must be neatly woven together and supported by effects cause and effect.

In the plot of the short story “*Le fa o ka boela lengopeng*”, the author has taken great care to weave the story so that all its components work together in building the story from start to finish. The author has created suspense with precision. Building suspense is one of the greatest challenges that a short story writer must overcome. A short story writer uses this to draw in his readers right from the start of the story to the end. The author exposes the challenges, draws us in at the beginning, and throughout the journey, the reader is continuously questioning and asking how the mystery is going to be unravelled. The manner in which this tension is created strikes from the very start of the story with the following words: If it were you in Malešwana, what would you do with Makeketa? I mean, if you were a wife, married traditionally, with cows, a wife who was asked for in the proper traditional way, if you had been introduced to your in-laws in the proper manner, not in the way we see some women doing these days, being forward and without regard to how things are done, what would you do? This is what old lady Mma Mmualebe asks. This introduction calls on the reader to continue to read. The reader asks himself the following questions: What could it possibly be that Makeketa has done? And the wife who is being spoken of, what about her, what has she done? What it is that has caused old woman MmaMmualebe to tell Malešwana such things? It is interesting to unravelling this mystery that causes the reader to want to read and finish the story.

In describing suspense, Mogapi says ‘the follow me of the story’. Harmon describes suspense by saying “It is a major device for securing and maintaining interest.³⁰ The reader has no justification to abandon a story with such heat. The story has a pull that drags the reader in and makes you continue reading. The following questions arise: Why are such words being spoken? It is clear from the onset that Malešwana was keeping company with an unscrupulous individual. This is evident in the response that Morongwa gives by saying: “Nkoko, if it were me I would deal with him. I would take hold of him and break him up into tiny pieces, break every last bone in his body, one at a time, slowly, so that if he were to survive, he would never again repeat the same action, and if from that time on I did not instill such fear in him from that moment on, I...” This statement, puts into proper perspective, the enormity of the wrong that Makeketa has done because Morongwa shows the anger with which she would break the culprit into little pieces. Had the mistake been a small one, the punishment would not be so severe. So, because the punishment that was being meted outmatched the severity of the crime.

The author continues to stir the pot of conflict, thickening it like one would when cooking porridge. “Morongwa, by a grandchild, you are nothing”, interrupting her out of impatience. “This is not how things are done. When a man goes out to destroy and break apart his home in this way and then you too decide to do as he has done, further tearing it apart—unless of course, when you were sat down and given advice on how one conducts herself in a marriage, you heard nothing and were not listening...” The point that old woman MmaMmualebe was making she had listened to carefully and it had made her as angry as Malešwane.³¹ From this point, the author the manner in which he has woven the story glues the reader to the story. There is no one who would want to put down a book without finding out Makeketa was going to disentangle himself from the quagmire that he was drowning in and knowing exactly what Malešwane’s husband had done that had sparked such derision from those who were close to him.

The reader must continue reading to find out for himself what exactly had gone on before. What is paramount is to know, to know exactly how the matter pans out. This is a beautiful introduction. The writer, to borrow a Setswana idiom, has not excreted all the contents of the cow’s bowels. He has adroitly skimmed the surface of the story so that the reader forms his own questions and answers in his own mind. The majority of the answers become evident at the end of the story. These questions are the ones that burn the reader like a chicken frantically searching for an appropriate location to lay an egg.

Within the body of the story, the author slightly extends the wings of the story by sharing snippets of what was divulged by MmaMmualebe at the start of the story, but even then, the author does not divulge all the details, rather he sprinkles tidbits. Makeketa’s heart betrayed him; he failed to resist temptation and a goat, the power of choosing right over wrong is vested in the human being. Makeketa

³⁰ Harmon, *Handbook to Literature*.

³¹ Malope, *Mmualebe, Hammanskraal*.

let go of these reins and allowed the beast to run wild; the end result was that he was tripped up by his failure to be steadfast and loyal. Makeketa had a lover who resided in Garankuwa in Zone 16, close to the Odi district offices in Bophuthatswana. This is where he went when he needed respite from the problems of his home because the disagreements between two people who live together like pigeons nesting together are unending. In Zone 16, peace reigned. There were no arguments, only relaxation and happiness, even though at the start of the affair, Makeketa had thought it would only be a fleeting distraction to ease the problems that his marriage brought him.

Makeketa was completely engrossed in his dalliance, immersed in the joy of the illicit affair, at peace like one is when one's uncle has come home and hunger is satisfied! This is not surprising. These kinds of things happen, nowadays. The author is not writing make-believe stories that are not unbelievable, and that do not happen. On the one hand, it is not to say that one should behave immorally, and indulge in infidelity. The author spiced the pot and made it delectable. Men leave their homes and do exactly what Makeketa did—indulge in extra-marital affairs to relieve their boredom, and at times the sweetness of the affair becomes such that the adulterer becomes an astute liar. "Makeketa wished to have children, but he could not have them with his wife, Malešwane, something he had discovered through...." "Though this happened, the secret was not revealed. When Makeketa went to visit his amour, in Zone 16, he was on cloud nine, seeing children playing, but he had none. But his joy was shortlived. The unavoidable truth was that he had been denied thari..." When those in the know about this challenge could assist, it was possible that Makeketa could marry a second wife who would bear them children.

The author sets the scene of the happenings of the story by giving the reader a glimpse into the unease that exists when there is a death in the family in Ga Moseletsha. And so the seeds of intrigue are sown. The protagonist's shenanigans are unveiled after the death of MmaKedirileng's father's paternal aunt in GaMoseletsha. He died on a Wednesday. Since he was elderly and had been unwell for some time, the arrangements for his burial were not drawn out and the date of the funeral was agreed for the Saturday, much to Makeketa's dismay who endeavoured to have the funeral date moved forward to the following Saturday. His excuse was that he wished to ensure the family was given adequate time to accept the news of the demise of their relative. Of course, as readers, who are aware of Makeketa's extramarital activities, his request does not come as no surprise to the reader who already has insight into Makeketa's errant ways and the existence of his paramour in Ga Rankuwa. The author has planned his story well. By placing MmaMmualebe at the forefront of the events with her revelation of events that had already occurred using a flashback, that has been referred to be Sebate. The flashback is a means of setting out events that have occurred in the past that are linked to what is happening in the present. This literary device has the additional effect of introducing tension in the story. This way of using events that have already occurred (flashbacks) was used when the reader learnt of Makeketa's liaison in Ga Rankuwa. The protagonist is lying down, relaxed when thoughts of past events occur to him. He recalls a football game played by Orlando Pirates and Kaiser Chiefs. Looking at the TV he recalled that given that he had purchased it, he might as well enjoy the fruits of watching it. The author explains this in more detail by saying "Bits and pieces of his of the past flooded his thoughts, traveling back to Ga Moseletsha, where he imagined that the gravediggers must have finished digging the grave; he thought of cows that escaped being harnessed, he thought of his wife Malešwane in Mabopane, of the passing of his aunt." This writing style is beautiful. It veers away from attempting to neatly tie and not events together like one would do cows. This subconscious return to the past that takes place in Makeketa's mind brings to light a human element in him. Although he can be faulted for his actions, he has a conscience. It is pricked by the knowledge that although he is physically in Zone 16, he should be burying his aunt.

Malope successfully concludes this short story. The sub-plots also come together to complete the jigsaw puzzle in a satisfying manner. Recalling how MmaMmualebe first intimated about the problems at the start of the story suggested that it was the beginning of the story when in fact the true beginning was earlier. The events that preceded the events are where the story actually begins. The start of the story is actually when Makeketa and his wife, as a newly married couple come to the realisation that they will not be able to bear children of their own. Malope manages to tie together the events of this intricate short story with seeming ease. Efforts are invested in the attempt to find a way of conceiving a child. The death of a relative occurs right at the end of the drama. It is easy to be caught unawares by this, thinking that the genesis of the story is rooted in the untidiness that is taking place in Zone 16:

- Makeketa had committed to visiting Ga Rankuwa and was unable to escape these plans. He did not want to disappoint his lover. The funeral allowed him to spend the night at his lover's.
- Malešwane's employers deny her time off to bury her aunt, who they deem to be a distant relative. The difficulty she encounters encourages Makeketa to believe that her wife will not be able to attend the funeral. He will therefore be free to spend time in Zone 16, away from his marital home. However, his wife determined to attend her rakgadi MmaKerileng's funeral with or without their approval.
- Makeketa participates in preparations for the funeral and ensures that it is known that should he not make it back in time for the burial it will be justifiably due to exhaustion. With this plan in place, he heads to Zone 16. At his home, it is arranged for him to pick them up on the morning of the funeral.
- No doubt, he was so relaxed that he was unable to wake up in time to attend the funeral. He does not pick up his wife so they attend the funeral together. His wife, industrious, is able to attend the funeral where she learns that the culprit, her husband was last seen the night before. After the burial, the couple returned to their home. She was heartbroken at what had happened. But, she was a believer in better the devil you know and this was her husband after all.
- Malešwane is sorrowful and heartbroken. She actually thought her husband might be in some sort of trouble, but this was not the case. In fact, it was quite the opposite. In the morning at 6:am that is when Malešwane, Ntshebo and the no-good husband headed to Ga Moseitlha using public transport But this time it was not for the purpose of burying MmaKedirileng, it was on a journey to find where Makeketa was. Makeketa was relaxed, without a care in the world, lying down, shoes off. His friend is at his beck and call. His wishes were her command. He was treated like a god.
- Makeketa eventually returns to his home on the Sunday. In his deceitful mind, his wife had not been able to attend the funeral because of the difficulties with transport between Mabopane and Moseitlha. Makeketa informs his wife that he attended the funeral, and he conveys greetings to her from all who were there. Segataborukgwana tries to wink at him to keep him quiet because he is not amongst the people who attended the funeral. The wrongdoer is the one who is caught in the act, though. After concocting his story, his wife asked: "tell me, why it is that you betray me in this manner, in front of people who respect me, who treat me so well, when I am a role model that they would wish to emulate?" And then the tears poured out. "It would have been better for you to have kept quiet rather than exposing yourself like this."

Indeed, the care and excellence with which the author crafted this plot is commendable. The characters are the tools the author uses to propel the plot forward. These creations of the authors--characters, carry the story and propel it forward. The author uses characters to convey and communicate his own observations of life. As it has been seen in Mogapi, characters are fictional people, that reside in the author's imagination.³² They do the work and carry the story forward. Characters, as explained by Harmon are "the creation of imaginary persons so that they seem lifelike."³³ The actions of these characters are created by Malope following the path sown by the author.³⁴ The old lady MmaMmualebe, unravels like a thread that is woven as she recounts Makeketa's life. This is characteristic of old women. So, it is not surprising that she is longwinded in her telling of stories, speaking, as the idiom says, like a person who is having a tooth extracted. In this short story, Makeketa is immersed in problems. He is at the epicenter of the events. Whatever happens in the story revolves around him. He has no shield. He loses a relative in Ga Moseitlha. The lies Makeketa tells are exposed when he attempts to fabricate the details of the story of a funeral that he believes his wife did not attend. He is the main protagonist with the other characters playing less significant roles.

The theme is the core message that the author wishes to share with the reader. In explaining what the theme is, Mogapi says the following: "after reading the work, the reader asks what lesson she or he

³² K. Mogapi, *Tshekatsheko Ya Dikwalo: Motshameko* (Gaborone: Longman Botswana (Pty) , 1991); Harmon, *Handbook to Literature*.

³³ Harmon, *Handbook to Literature*.

³⁴ Malope, *Mmualebe, Hammanskraal*.

has learnt.”³⁵ Placing further emphasis on this, Phalime says “ theme is an idea or issue the writer is exploring,” continuing further by saying “ there may be more than one theme in a book.”³⁶ This means that the theme is the message that the reader gleans from reading the work. If there is no lesson that the reader learns, then this points to a failure on the part of the author to share or impart new knowledge to the reader that can be applied to one’s life. “Le fa o ka buela lengopeng” shows that people’s actions, underhand actions that one may think are hidden, can be exposed, leaving the doer completely exposed. In this way, Malope wishes to illustrate to his readers, that adultery, infidelity and promiscuity occur when a person has undertaken the commitment of marriage.³⁷ In clarifying this point, Zengethwa asserts: “ A study of Tswana short story provides ample information concerning love, admiration and pleasure it yields, the unfairness and adulterous behaviour in which partners become involved and the suffering it projects onto the caring spouses...”³⁸

The ending and opening of a short story need to be linked. The ending of the short story differs from the ending of other genres.³⁹ The conclusion provides a satisfactory closing to what was introduced at the start. Whatever conflict the narrative introduces, must by the time the story ends, provide denouement. According to Zengethwa, thematically, the short story ends with some authors ending the story on a cliffhanger, without unravelling the questions that the story presents.⁴⁰ It is picked out that May and Watts emphasise that “the variety of short stories is almost endless.”⁴¹ According to Mabuza, “...ending has a lesson...the promise of the title is fulfilled.”⁴² What this means is that the conclusion of the story responds to the titles of the story in some manner. Moloele states: ‘There is always a link between the introduction and the conclusion.’⁴³

The author wraps up this short story in the following manner. Morongwa is left disenchanted with the way Makeketa conducts himself, with MmaMmualebe saying the following to her: “Malešwane did not know, and in fact had no desire to know... You must do likewise. Do not seek to know, my grandchild. Do not copy a man’s ways.” This is what Setswana says. If you do as he does, you will be straying from our ways. Even if a man behaves baboon-like, eating with both hands, it is not that every time he steps outside, he is up to mischief. Most times, he is. It would not be right for him to burden you with his responsibilities. What is right and proper is for you to simply welcome him, without enquiring where he is going, on his departure and where he is coming from on his return. If it is for you to know, he will say. In this way, you will lighten his wrongdoing and let sleeping dogs lie. Your role is to learn to embrace this manner of behaving rather than pursue the unfulfilling need to know and to investigate.”

RECOMMENDATIONS

A short story should be written well. A successful short narrative must strike a careful balance between depth and brevity. The author does not have time to wander around and abound. It is recommended that when writing a good short story, one should start by developing an intriguing idea or premise that immediately draws the reader in. This is what is called suspense as it captivates the readers’ attention. Making an early impression on the audience is crucial, whether it’s through a compelling character, an alluring location, or an unexpected turn of events. Also most importantly, even with the limitations of a shorter format, authors should concentrate on giving their characters nuance and complexity. Every character should have unique goals, weaknesses, and motives that advance the story. This helps to propel the story forward. Remember as the writer of a short story to bring the characters to life with genuine speech and vivid imagery so that readers can identify with their setbacks and victories. A well-written short narrative needs strong characters, as well as crisp pacing and a clear framework. In a short narrative,

³⁵ Mogapi, *Tshekatsheko Ya Dikwalo: Motshameko*.

³⁶ M. Phalime, *Second Chances* (Cape Town: Pearson, 2013).

³⁷ Malope, *Mmualebe, Hammanskraal*.

³⁸ Sebate, “ The Tswana Short Story: From BD Magoleng to OK Bogatsu.”

³⁹ W.S. Zengethwa, “The Technique of Short Story Writing: An Analytic Study of the Modern Xhosa Short Story Genre.” (University of Fort Hare, 2014).

⁴⁰ Zengethwa, “The Technique of Short Story Writing: An Analytic Study of the Modern Xhosa Short Story Genre.”

⁴¹ May and Watts, *Getting Started in Writing a Novel*.

⁴² J.K.N. Mabuza, “Short Story in Zulu” (Johannesburg: RAU., 1988).

⁴³ R. L. Moloele, “Analysis of J.W.P Mashike’s Short Stories: Mpuru o Faretswe” (Johannesburg: RAU, 2001).

every word matters, so be careful with the word choice to keep the plot moving and the reader interested. To give the story more depth and intrigue, try experimenting with various narrative strategies like nonlinear storytelling or unreliable narration. Crafting a well-written short tale is a skill that demands meticulous consideration of multiple aspects, including storyline, character arc, locale, and central idea. The following methods will assist in creating an engaging short story:

- Writers of good and well-written short stories should begin with a strong idea: The foundation of any excellent short story is a thought-provoking idea. This might be an original take on a well-known subject, a compelling character, or an event that makes one stop and think.
- Spend some time exploring and coming up with concepts before deciding on one that really appeals to the reader.
- Drafting a well-written short tale is a skill that demands meticulous consideration of multiple aspects, including storyline, character arc, locale, and central idea.
- The ending of a short story must be something readers have not been expecting.
- The ending should unexpectedly pounce on the readers. The above narrative has show how the short story should be written.

CONCLUSION

The author has presented his short story in a satisfactory manner. He made it a point that all the elements of a good short story are featured in his book. The short story was started when MmaMmualebe posed a difficult question to Morongwa, trying to encourage and mould as well as showing her that certain behaviour patterns are likely to ruin relationships and marriages. Readers realise later as they read the story further that Makeketa went astray and failed to attend the funeral at Ga Mosetlha. Starting the short story like this entices the readers a great lot because they want to get to the gist and understand why this woman was softening a fuming Morongwa, trying to calm her down. This settled her down. In the end, the author wrapped the story well. All the questions that built up in the minds of the readers have been answered at the end. However, the readers were left in suspense so that they could deduce on their own how events unfolded. They were left to find answers themselves. This is such a brilliant technique. The author is applauded for the synergy evinced at the start and the ending of his short story.

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