

Names and their cultural identity in Maake's novel, *Mme*: A psycho-cultural perspective

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African names exhibit far greater creativity than it is seen in European cultures because the important thing in naming is its meaningfulness. Among Africans and the Basotho in particular, names are not arbitrarily chosen or fortuitously given. Their meaning encapsulates a person's cultural identity. Cultural identity is the set of personal traits by which a character is recognisable as a member of a group. This paper examines the use of literary names in Maake's novel *Mme*, as they relate to social phenomena. "What is the meaning in the name?" is the question Africans ask when referring to what ultimately concerns them. A name is the key to reading their souls. It is the signpost to an individual's self-understanding, to the dreams which an individual aims to realise and to the aspirations an individual has set for him- or herself. A psycho-cultural framework underpins this study. Character names in both the title and text of Maake's novel *Mme*, offer the researcher the psycho-cultural key to discussing the Basotho cultural heritage.

Introduction

Every person has a name or names by which they are addressed. In African culture, a person's name is very important. Hanks and Hodges (1990, vii) maintain that a given name is one that is bestowed on a child by its parents at birth, as opposed to an inherited name or surname. Naming a child is a very important practice among Africans, hence names are not arbitrarily taken or chosen.

People used to name their children after certain incidents, like wars, and that were part of their culture. For example, we have a person called Bambatha, who is named after the war of Bambatha that was fought against the introduction of a poll-tax. The purpose of this name was to keep a record of history.

Ngcongwane (1986, 13) in *Di monate ka ho Phetwa*, says:

Ka mabitso a marena motho o tseba hantle hore ho ile ha etsahala eng ka nako tseo morena eo a neng a busa ka tsona. Ke taba e makatsang empa ke nnete. Mabitso a ka hlalosa dintho tse kgolo ruri!

Through the names of kings, one can know what happened during the reign of that particular king. This is amazing but it is true. The names can really mean a lot of things!

It is worth noting that the Basotho believe in the power of names, thus a person given a name such as "Moshweshwe" (the great emperor), means that people expect that particular person to emulate the life of King Moshweshwe by showing respect, as the owner of the name did.

Asante (2004, 19) had this to say about the importance of names in teaching history to children:

Never allow your children to forget the names of our heroes and heroines. Teach the truth and rewrite the collective history of South Africa according to our oral narratives, traditions and sense of values. This is the job of the intellectuals.

As Asante asserts, literature is a very important part of human culture and of humanity's dialogue with itself. It records, reflects and transforms culture. Literature helps us to understand ourselves, other people and our world. Naming among South Africans has certainly not been neglected in the literature. Several publications have investigated naming in African societies, such as those by Dickens (1985), Koopman (1987), Thipa (1987), and Herbert and Bogatsu (1991). These works provide the background for this article.

My aim in this article is to critically evaluate how Maake (1995) employed the names of the characters and symbols in settings in his novel *Mme*. In order to achieve this, evaluation of the data will be done for purposes of grounded reasoning and to provide an informed conclusion. According to Grieve and van Deventer (2005, 10), critical evaluation means that one considers all the options and various explanations for something and one does not merely accept one point of view or the explanation that suits the critic. For the purpose of this article, the researcher is not going to analyse all the characters' names found in the novel, instead the focus will be on ten characters and four settings as typical of the researcher's theme.

The concepts of image and cultural identity: A psycho-cultural framework

A brief survey of a psycho-cultural framework is required in discussing the importance of human names as they give persons their cultural identity. Adler (2002) maintains that "the concept of cultural identity can be viewed in two different ways. Firstly, it can be used as a reference to the collective self-awareness that a certain group embodies and reflects". According to Dombeck (2006) "the cultural identity of a society is defined by a certain group and this group is distinguishable from other groups with whom they share the physical environment that they inhabit".

Secondly, Adler (2002) emphasises that the concept of cultural identity can resolve the "identity of the individual in relation to his or her culture. In other words, cultural identity is the functioning aspects of individual personality, a fundamental symbol of a person's existence". Adler (2002) emphasises the fact that "cultural identity takes the shape of names which both locate and differentiate the person".

Sampson (1999, 14) says that "[n]ames have to be strong, memorable and capable of standing the test of time. And they should not mean something rude in any language".

A name is very important, which is the reason why parents take time to think about a suitable name to bestow on a child. The name must have significance and meaning to parents and relatives and the community. Dombeck (2006) maintains that

[t]he deeper structure of cultural identity is a fabric of such images. At the centre of this matrix of images is a psycho-cultural fusion of biological, social and philosophical motivations. The core of cultural identity is an image of the self and the cultural intertwined in the individual's total conception of reality.

From the above statement, it is quite evident that names express a being's place in the universe. As such, names are the means of acknowledging the fact that beings differ from one another in many ways and they must be identified by means of names.

For the purpose of the article, psycho-cultural theory will show how the meaning of the character's name and deeds correspond with the cultural identity of that particular character. For settings, the theory will show how the name of the setting as a symbol, corresponds with the cultural identity of the character associated with that setting.

Application of names to characters in Maake's novel, *Mme*

A person's name is important because it is a person's most valuable possession, because in African culture the name is the only thing that can survive death. Among the Basotho, a name is also of a particular significance because it is the characteristic by which a person is recognised.

It is impossible in the limited space of an article to do justice to a novel which is so rich in the meanings of characters' names. For the purpose of this article, I would like to focus only on a few names, mainly names of characters, settings and symbols.

Dikeledi

The author introduces us to a character by the name of Dikeledi, whose name means "tears". Most of the time the author places Dikeledi in a situation where she cannot escape without shedding tears. She has been brought up by her aunt (Rakgadi) in strict accordance with the Sesotho custom. The narrator says: "...*Rakgadi a mo otlala batla nnete ena e be e tswe...*" (Maake 1995, 15) [...Rakgadi thrashed her because she was expecting her to tell the truth...]. Dikeledi receives a letter from her boyfriend Tsekiso, and the message is short and to the point, the silver cup is broken. The narrator says: *Jwalo ka bitso la hae, keledi tsa theoha jwalo ka diphororo marameng* (Maake 1995, 26) [As her name suggests, tears streamed down her cheeks like a waterfall].

Dikeledi is disappointed as she looks into the future when she will be married to Thollo and not to Tsekiso, her former boyfriend. The day before the wedding day, Dikeledi left, unannounced, and ran away. Long before the wedding, the narrator gives us a glimpse into Dikeledi's ambitions to become a teacher or a dentist. The narrator tells us that Dikeledi is determined to flee to a place she does not even know. The narrator says: *A matha jwalo, ngwanana, a sa tsebe moo a yang...O baleha lenyalo* (Maake 1995, 61) [The girl ran in that way, not knowing where she was heading to...she was fleeing from marriage].

Dikeledi is insistent on rebelling against her marriage with Thollo because she foresees the road to such a marriage as one full of obstacles that she has to overcome. She departs with the intention of coming back after the time of the wedding. It was dark and silent except for the howling of dogs, her eyes were weak and tired from crying so she could not see properly. She passed through the long dark grass where she met a strange woman with a cold voice.

The author chooses the graveyard as a place that shapes Dikeledi into womanhood. This is the initial step on the road to marriage. On her way to nowhere, she meets a woman with a cold voice. Her meeting with this woman is symbolic of change in her philosophy of life, from the child world to the adult world. We hear the woman with a cold voice asking Dikeledi: *O hlalathela hara masiu tjena o ya kae, mosadi?* (Maake 1995, 62) [You wander aimlessly in the middle of the night, so where are you going woman?]

Dikeledi answers her uncertainly: *Ke ya ka mona ka Evaton* (Maake 1995, 62) [I am heading in the direction of Evaton]. Dikeledi denies that she is running to nowhere. The following morning, she wakes up on top of the grave and flees back home where she has to face the marriage. On her arrival at home, the narrator says:

Yaba o a se hlaba sa mmokotsane...Ha Dikeledi a re o bula molomo...a utlwe dikgapha di se di theoha se ka diphororo mahlong a hae... (Maake 1995, 66).

She then cried bitterly...When she opened up her mouth...she felt tears falling down like a waterfall from her eyes...

Mme dies in Dikeledi's (Mmateboho) house. The narrator says: *A mo kwala mahlo, mme a qala ho lla sa mmokotsane* (Maake 1995, 96) [She closed Mme's eyes and started crying bitterly].

As Mme is buried, people are crying and the narrator says the following about Dikeledi:

Mmateboho o ne a lla ha bohloko eka ho hlokahetse mmae wa nama le madi, ya neng a hlokahale a sa le monyenyanane haholo, e le lesele le sa tsebeng letho. O ne a lla jwalo ka mohla ho hlokahetseng rakgadiae, eo e leng yena ya mo hodisitseng... (Maake 1995, 93).

Mmateboho was crying bitterly as if the one who passed on was her own mother of flesh and blood, the one who had passed away when she was very young, when she was an infant who knew nothing.

She was crying just like that on the day her aunt passed away, the one who had brought her up...

The narrator further says: *Mosadi wa batho, botshwana ba hae bo ne bo se bo fifetse ke ho lla, mahlo a ruhuile, mme a le mafubedu a re tlere!* (Maake 1995, 101) [The beautiful dark complexion of this poor woman had faded because of crying, her eyes swollen and blood red].

There is a link between the meaning of the name Dikeledi and her cultural identity, because Dikeledi is a warm-hearted person and whenever she is hurt, she cannot avoid crying.

Later in the narrative Dikeledi becomes Mmateboho. The prefix "Mma-" refers to the mother of someone. The name Teboho is derived from "ho leboha" which means gratitude or thankfulness (Mabille and Dieterlen 1983, 268). The name Mmateboho (mother of thankfulness) refers to her nature. She bore a son named Teboho. The name Teboho becomes an extension of the thankfulness people receive from her. At one point in the story, Mmateboho prepares food for Mme, she could not let Mme go without getting something to eat. Another sign to indicate that the daughter-in-law is a warm-hearted person is that she serves food to strangers too.

The name Mmateboho reflects a new stage in her life because she is now a daughter-in-law. Mmateboho has an identity of her own but her nature and behaviour serve as a commentary upon Mme's nature and behaviour.

Before Mme's arrival, Mmateboho and Diseko were not on good terms. As her name suggests, Mmateboho knocks at Diseko's door because she wants Mme to be accommodated. She could not leave Mme to go nowhere as she once did. She even accompanies Mme to Diseko's place. Mmateboho is the incarnation of thankfulness and love. She sacrifices money and love to bury Mme. The love between her and Mme is kindled by her kindness. The development of a character is reflected in Dikeledi's name change when her cultural transformation takes place. This idea is supported by Deluzain (1996), saying that the "name given at birth is only the first of several names a person will bear throughout life".

Tsekiso

Tsekiso is in love with Dikeledi. According to Mabille and Dieterlen (1983, 561) "Tsekiso" means a contest. The *Essential English Dictionary* (1988, 165) defines a contest as a "competition or game which people try to win". Tsekiso is also in love with *Ngwanana wa Sharpeville* – the girl from Sharpeville. This girl is immoral or unscrupulous, thus the author does not give readers her name. The author caricatures her by nicknaming her *ngwanana wa Sharpeville*, implying that the Sharpeville boys possess her. The girl belongs to many, if not all Sharpeville's boys. The author reduces her to a state of unimportance as if her purpose in life is to indulge in unacceptable behaviour, in order to warn girls of her age to stop behaving in an immoral way. After having sex, she is always seen coming out of the bushes with Tsekiso, and Dikeledi has been told about this girl. Dikeledi and *Ngwanana wa Sharpeville* are

competing for Tsekiso. The name Tsekiso, fits well in this definition because he is like a game prize that Dikeledi and *ngwanana wa Sharpeville* are trying to win.

Masitha

School nurtures the habits and abilities to study so that the community can survive. Masitha is derived from the verb stem “sitha”, which means to roll up (Mabille and Dieterlen 1983, 463). The *Essential English Dictionary* (1988, 689) says: “If you roll up something flexible, you wrap it several times around itself until it is shaped like a cylinder. If you roll up your sleeves, you fold the edges over several times, making them shorter”. Masitha is a symbol of dedication in a school environment that encourages respect for teachers, creating and maintaining a learning atmosphere in which teachers can teach and learners can learn. In this regard Rambiyana (2001, 42) contends that “discipline and the possibility of effective teaching go together”. Masitha is a dedicated teacher who is prepared to roll up his sleeves to help learners learn to study so that they can be prepared to handle matters with competence and to be ready to take over tomorrow’s world. He is very observant. He values knowledge and can apply it with skill. He can see if something is not understood by a learner and he helps. Masitha is a real teacher in the classroom as well as in public. In the event where a boy is holding a girl and she wants to go free, she will just say: *Titjhere Masitha ke eo o a tla* (Maake 1995, 23) [There comes teacher Masitha]. The boy will run away even if Masitha is not around. There is a link between the name and Masitha’s characteristics because Masitha is associated with respect, dedication and discipline in the community.

Lekena

Miss Lekena is a young teacher at Lekwa-Shandu school. She is not yet married. The narrator says: *E ne e le motho ya bonolo...* (Maake 1995, 29) [She was a person with a kind heart...]. Miss Lekena consoles Dikeledi and puts an end to her sorrows. Lekena is derived from the verb stem “kena”, which means to go in or enter (Mabille and Dieterlen 1983, 184). She enters between Dikeledi and her sorrow of being rejected by her boyfriend Tsekiso. Lekena intervenes with the following advice: *Sesotho se re se nkganang se nthola morwalo...* (Maake 1995, 26) [Sesotho says he who rejects me, unloads my burden...]. Lekena’s words encourage Dikeledi and the narrator says: *Ho Dikeledi mantswe ana e ile ya ba kgothatso e kgolo...* (Maake 1995, 26) [These words became a great encouragement to Dikeledi...].

Lekena is not only sympathetic to her, but also empathetic, as she is able to put herself in Dikeledi’s position and feel what she is going through. Lekena also intervenes between Dikeledi and the two girls, BoThabisile, on realising that the morals of these two girls are bad. She warns them against their allusion to and mockery of Dikeledi. She says to them: *Ha nka ba ka le bona, kapa ka utlwa le monyenetsi hore le ile la buisa Dikeledi hampe, le tla ntseba hantle* (Maake 1995, 29) [Should I see you or hear that you verbally abused Dikeledi, you will regret it].

Dikeledi is happy and satisfied to have a person like Lekena on her side, but Lekena is disappointed to hear that Dikeledi is about to enter into marriage. News about Dikeledi’s marriage spread like wild fire. Lekena is disappointed since she wants to know whether Dikeledi has been forced to enter into marriage, and who is intending to marry her. Dikeledi refuses to discuss her marriage with Miss Lekena. The author says: *...Dikeledi ka pelong o ne a ntse a re, ‘Ke a kgolwa o batla ke be lefetwa jwalo ka wena...* (Maake 1995, 53) [...In her heart Dikeledi was saying, “I am convinced that you want me to be an old maid just like you...”].

According to Basotho culture, the parents negotiate marriage on behalf of their children. The young man’s relatives go to meet the young woman’s relatives. A certain number of cattle is agreed upon and the marriage can be solemnised at a later stage. From the Sesotho idiomatic expression,

ho kena ditaba ka sehlotho [To interfere in affairs which do not concern one], one might be correct to say that Lekena interferes in affairs with which she has nothing to do because she is not even one of Dikeledi's relatives.

Lekena is devastated to hear that Dikeledi is about to be married. Psychologically Lekena feels that she must convince Dikeledi not to enter into marriage, especially at her age. Through the name Lekena, the author has shown readers the two different meanings and identities of this character. In the first instance, she acts as a mediator (*monamodi*), but in the second, she is a meddler. Both identities are reflected in her name.

Mpuse

Mpuse is Dikeledi's schoolmate and best friend. The name Mpuse is derived from the verb stem "busa" meaning to "return to or for" (Mabille and Dieterlen 1983, 44). *Ho busa pelo* is to take the right decision. Mpuse is also a short form for Puseletso. There is a strong friendly relationship between Mpuse and Dikeledi. Dikeledi accepts the advice from her friend Mpuse. Mpuse is a firm friend of Dikeledi. She guides Dikeledi into taking a good decision.

On realising that the person intending to marry Dikeledi is Thollo, she is not happy. She expects Tsekiso to be her husband. Dikeledi says to Mpuse: *Ho boima, ka nnete* (Maake 1995, 46) [It is really tough]. Her friend Mpuse advises her to enter into matrimony with Thollo. Mpuse says to Dikeledi: *Nna ha ke bone e le mathata...Ha ba bangata batho ba fumanang lenyalo...Amohela lenyalo lena...* (Maake 1995, 46–47) [I do not see marriage as a problem...Not many people get married...Accept this marriage...].

Mpuse's advice allows Dikeledi to make a right decision to marry Thollo. The narrator says the following about Dikeledi's response to Mpuse's advice: *Leha a sa ka a bolella Mpuse...pelo ya kgolwa...hore enwa motho o bona dintho ka ihlo le tjhatsi* (Maake 1995, 48) [Even though she did not tell Mpuse...she believed in her heart...that this person sees things with a clear eye]. The meaning of the name Mpuse and her cultural identity is expressed through this character's good advice to Dikeledi for her to take the right decision and enter into marriage with Thollo.

Thollo

Thollo is a middle-aged man who originates from Matatiele. He left his wife in Matatiele because he is in Gauteng to work. The name Thollo means a smooth round thing used as food (Hlalele 2005, 287). Thollo is grain or millet that does not germinate when soaked. This means that Thollo is a character who is very secretive and hard to understand. It is the utmost form of irony that Thollo, the man who experiences life through marriage, is unable to express his feelings for the school girl verbally even when he has the chance to do so. Thollo never proposes love to Dikeledi. He does not tell Dikeledi that he has left a wife in Matatiele. Thollo's people (usually the mother's brother or the father's brother or relatives) are not the selected members that negotiate the marriage on his behalf. He opts rather for his friends. Thollo's family and relatives in Matatiele do not know that he has married Dikeledi.

Thollo stopped visiting Diseko's place because they were no longer on good terms. He has not paid his last respects to Mme. The narrator says: *...a hana ho ya bona mofu...* (Maake 1995, 89) [...he refused to go and see Mme for the last time...]. He refused to sprinkle the soil over Mme's grave. He did not allow Mmateboho to further her studies. The association between the name and its identity is that Thollo is a very difficult person to understand. The meaning of the name Thollo and the character's characteristics, as expressed through his actions, identifies him as a man who is also difficult to handle. He is a man who does things in an unfamiliar way. He is just like the millet that does not germinate when soaked.

Mme

Maake (1995) introduces to readers a woman called “Mme”. *Mme* is also the title of the book and if this title is viewed from the denotative perspective, it could lead to misinterpretation. *Mme* means mother, and the *American Heritage College Dictionary* (2000, 890), defines mother as:

- (1) A woman who holds a position of responsibility similar to that of a mother.
- (2) Used as a title for a woman respected for her wisdom and age.
- (3) Maternal love and tenderness.

The name Mme carries many associations – warmth, love, comfort, security, etc., because people feel strongly about their mothers. The name “Mme” is used in connection with other things about which we are expected to feel strongly – our country, motherland, mother city.

Mme is a peace-loving and socially responsible person. She does not hide her feelings if she feels something is wrong. Readers encounter Mme saying these words to Diseko:

Butle ho harolaka bana tjena. Ha o bone hore o lehlohonolo...ha ba rata ho bapalla mona ha hao? Bana ke batho ba se nang molato... (Maake 1995, 109).

Stop mauling children in this way. Don't you see that you are so lucky...that they like to play here at your place? Children are not guilty people...

Mme feels uncomfortable or unhappy about Diseko ill-treating the innocent children playing near her property. She feels guilty if she does not intervene to help children against Diseko. Mme feels pity for little infants belonging to the people of Sebokeng. She therefore doctors and nurses them. She is able to cure “kokwana”. The narrator says: *Motho enwa o ne a ratwa ke batho hle...ka baka la mosa le molemo wa hae* (Maake 1995, 74) [This person was so loved by people...because of her mercy and kindness].

The narrator employs “motho” (human being) for Mme. Mme is a human being with compassion and social responsibility. She deserves to be called “motho” in the midst of all other people who do not care about other human beings. The cultural world into which the child is born is initially impenetrable and its meanings must gradually be revealed to him or her by means of care. The cultural identity expressed through Mme's words and actions identify her as a person who represents motherhood and motherly love. She is loved by children and parents in Sebokeng. Through her educative and healthcare guidance, the world appeals to the children of Sebokeng who want to discover its meanings. Mme narrates folk tales for children. She is a symbol of motherly love for children. She even goes to the extent of going to primary schools to teach children how to knit mats.

Lesole

Lesole is a truck driver and his name means “soldier”. The *American Heritage College Dictionary* (2000, 1295) defines the soldier as “[a]n active, loyal and militant follower”. The main duty of the soldier is to protect the people and the country. The narrator says the following about how Lesole received his name:

...monna wa ho rehellwa ka Ntwa ya Bobedi ya Lefatshe, eo ntatae a neng a ile a ya fihla naheng tse kang Egepete ka yona (Maake 1995, 7).

...the man who is named after the Second World War, which caused his father to reach countries such as Egypt.

Lesole's father was a soldier, therefore he felt compelled to name his son Lesole. Moeketsi (1990, 6–7) had this to say about the principles to follow when naming children:

...it becomes clear that one of the principles that guide the Basotho in giving names to their children is the event, the occasion, the experience and/or the emotion prevailing at the moment of birth.

Mmateboho does not have accommodation for Mme and she therefore thinks of her cousin, Lesole, and his wife, Diseko, who can give Mme accommodation. The narrator gives readers the reason why Mmateboho thinks that Lesole will accommodate Mme:

O ne a tseba hore Lesole...ke motho ya pelo e ntle, ya molemo le mohau. O ne a tseba hantle hore motho enwa wa batho o tla amohela, ebang o na le tjehele ya ho lefella bodulo... (Maake 1995, 5–6).

She knew that Lesole...is a warm-hearted person, who is kind and merciful. She knew very well that this kind person will be accepted as long as she has money to pay for accommodation...

Lesole gives Mme a place to stay while Diseko is not at home, and on her arrival, he let her know about his decision. Lesole says the following to Diseko: *Ke a kgolwa hore ha ho lebote ha a ka tla dula mona lapeng...* (Maake 1995, 7) [I am certain that there is no problem if she can come and stay here at home...]. Lesole would feel unhappy if he did not help Mme. Because of his leadership qualities, he becomes the real father because he took a right decision by giving Mme accommodation. Lesole could not change his wife Diseko into a mother, let alone a good one, but Mme did so.

Diseko's ferocious dog was attacking and chasing people away from Lesole and Diseko's house, but Lesole manages to chase the dog away. The link between the name Lesole and its identity is clear. Lesole's deeds identify him as a warm-hearted person who helps people and protects those that need protection. He protects children playing near his house by chasing Diseko's dog, which is chasing children away.

Lesole is protective towards his cousin Mmateboho. Thollo's relatives accuse Mmateboho of Mme's burial at Thollo's house. The narrator says the following about Lesole:

Lesole le yena o ne a se a tsohile molota, tsebe di qahame sa ntja e batla ho ya tsoma...o ne a se a ikemiseditse hore o tla lwana molamu wa hlooho ha ba leka ho hlokoatsa kgaitsediae (Maake 1995, 105).

Lesole too, was ready for action, ears were raised like those of a dog that wants to go hunting... he was prepared to fight strongly if they try to torment his sister.

The meaning of Lesole and his cultural identity as expressed through the character's actions, identify him as a kind person who does not want to see other people being mishandled and abused.

Diseko

The name Diseko is derived from the verb stem *seka* which means to "lance", implying an instrument or action that hurts. The second meaning is that of tears gathering in the eyes (Mabille and Dieterlen 1983, 401). The name reveals Diseko's disassociation from herself, emphasising the fragmentation of her psyche. Her husband tells her about his decision to give Mme a place to stay and the narrator tells us the following about Diseko: *Diseko a dumela...empa pelo e sa kgotsofala* (Maake 1995, 7) [Diseko agreed...but with an unsatisfied heart].

The use of the description of Diseko's physique has much to do with her dominance in the house. The narrator says: *O ne a eme ka ditlhako, tlhafu tsona a kgantsha tse ntle...* (Maake 1995, 6) [She was tall and proud of her beautiful calves...]. The physical description of Diseko is extended by the narrator who ridicules her with the phrase: *...moo eta ho llang sa hae qha!* (Maake 1995, 6) [...at the place where she is the boss].

The above phrase portrays Diseko as the head of the family. In African culture, a good woman is the one who respects her husband, not the one who wants to be in control. Diseko is metaphorically represented as her dog. Her behaviour is also of a beast, for beasts eat each other: *Butle ho harolaka bana tjena* (Maake 1995, 109) [Stop mauling children in this way]. “Harola” means to devour or tear into pieces. Diseko’s dog nearly tore one boy to pieces. Her cultural identity, as expressed through her actions, identifies her as an unscrupulous person because she is cruel and treacherous. Diseko is portrayed as her dog because she is tearing children into pieces. For instance, not only does she chase away children playing near her property, but she does not welcome people with a warm heart. Her behaviour is compared to that of her dog.

Mme’s death marks a new beginning in Diseko’s life. She is no longer that Diseko who said to Mmateboho: *...ha ke batle hore motho enwa wa hao a tlo shwella mona ha ka...* (Maake 1995, 94) [...I do not want this person, your guest to die in my house...]. She is confident that she has more years ahead of her than those gone by. She is concerned with Mmateboho and Thollo’s relatives’ affairs. She scolds Thollo for allowing her relatives to put the blame on Mmateboho. Diseko’s feelings are complimented by the narrator who praises her with the associative eulogy *Diseko wa Mmadiseko* (Maake 1995, 103) [Diseko, the daughter of Mmadiseko].

At a later stage, Diseko says the following words about Mme: *Mme enwa o tliseditse lapa la ka seriti...* (Maake 1995, 102) [This mother brought dignity upon my family...]. *Motho enwa* and *Mme enwa* [This person and this mother] are different. Now Diseko is referring to Mme as *Mme enwa* [This mother]. *Ke motho tjena ka kajeno ke ka baka la Mme...* (Maake 1995, 108) [Today I am the person I am because of Mme...]. This view is corroborated by Mbiti (1975, 14) when saying: “I am, because we are; and since we are, therefore I am”. Diseko’s words identify her as a changed person. Adults and children love Diseko and her home. She is identified with warmth, love and protection.

The other part of the name Diseko implies *sekehela*, meaning to listen. *Ho sekehela motho ditsebe* means to listen to a person. There is a link between the meaning of Diseko and her identity because she realises that Mme made her a good person because she listened as Mme advised her. She converses with her eyes full of tears. She is no longer the person who hurts innocent children.

In Mme’s belongings, Diseko, finds a letter written to Thollo by Mme, stating the whereabouts of their son, a wedding photo proving that Mme was Thollo’s wife. The narrator says: *...o ne a ithutile botebo ba Mme, mme jwale a batla ho tshwana le yena* (Maake 1995, 113) [...She had learned the kind of a person Mme really was and now she wanted to emulate her]. Diseko does not intend letting the cat out of the bag, as that can ruin the marriage of Mmateboho and Thollo. Diseko’s testimony of her lesson from Mme was her response to keep all the secrets as Mme did. Mme’s death becomes the source of her urgency to experience a kind of religious rebirth in her life. Mme’s life comes to an end and Diseko becomes her natural successor in terms of secrets.

Mmatakatso

Mmatakatso is Mmateboho’s neighbour. They sell clothes at Lekwa Race Course. She sells clothes to earn money for the betterment of her family. The name Mmatakatso is from the verbal stem *lakatsa*, meaning appetite, desire, or lust (Mabille and Dieterlen 1983, 260). This name has relevant connections with its meaning. This is reflected for instance in the fact that she has an appetite for Mmateboho’s food. She wishes to know how Mmateboho met Thollo. She has also the desire to know whether Thollo allowed Mmateboho to further her studies or not.

Thollo drops his money purse by accident after buying fruit from Dikeledi (before she became Mmateboho) and Thollo receives his money from Dikeledi and Rakgadi. Mmatakatso wishes she were

Mmateboho because she would have taken the purse which Thollo dropped. In other words, she has a desire for Thollo's money; she is very eager to possess Thollo's money.

Immediately after Mme's death, she heard Mmateboho lamenting. She quickly runs to Mmateboho's place because she has a desire to know why Mmateboho is lamenting. The narrator says:

...Mmatakato a phutha Mme matsoho, a mo kwahela ka kobo...a tsamaya a ilo tsebisa basadi ba bang, hore ka lapeng ha Mofokeng ho se ho hlahile mokgohlane (Maake 1995, 97).

...Mmatakato folded Mme's hands and covered her in blanket...She went to tell other women that the Mofokeng family is in mourning.

She had the desire to fold Mme's hands. She even went out to let other women know that Mme has passed away. The personal traits, mentioned under Mmatakato, identify her as a person with a strong wish to have or do something.

The author gives readers another aspect of the personality of Mmatakato. She is invited to join the family as Thollo's relatives from Matatiele accuse Mmateboho of Mme's burial at Thollo's house. The narrator says: *Mmatakato o ne a ile a bitswa, empa a itatola, a re a ke ke a kena taba tsa lelapa* (Maake 1995, 101) [Mmatakato was invited but declined the invitation, stating that she could not interfere in the affairs of another family]. She turns that invitation down because she is not concerned with the neighbour's affairs. She is not interested in the affairs of Mmateboho and Thollo's relatives. It is surprising to see Mmatakato sitting unconcerned with the painful drama going on around her friend and neighbour Mmateboho. Mmatakato's personal traits are clear in the sense that although she is very interested in some things, she is not interested in Mmateboho's family affairs.

Symbolism in settings

In this section, I show how the author creates the relationship between the names of characters and their environment. Maake's socio-ecological references, briefly sketched here, will be regarded as one of the factors which should be stressed in an attempt to show the complexity of the author's creativity.

According to Okpewho (1992, 10), "a symbol is a concrete or familiar object that is used in reference to, or as an explanation of an abstract idea or less familiar object or event". Symbolism is therefore the use of symbols to represent a person, ideas, values or an occurrence. Every society is known to have its symbols. There are universal symbols as well as symbols typical of a specific society. Some universal symbols are well known, for example, a rose symbolises beauty, a cross symbolises Christianity, and the dove symbolises peace.

There are symbols which the author clearly creates in his or her world of imagination, which, on the whole, colour his or her art. I sketch a few symbols as well as a few cosmic phenomena which also help to understand the cultural identity in characters' names.

Many readers would assume *Mme* is a novel based on the prevalence of symbolism, analogy and the heroine's personal reflections throughout the novel. In fact, this work challenges generic and national stereotypes on various levels. This novel helps some people to abandon certain rigid ideas about the form and content of African literature. With this context in mind, let us now turn to the primary symbols the author has chosen as leitmotifs in the text.

Lekwa-Shandu

According to Guma (1983, 178), Basotho originally came from somewhere in the north. They crossed a red sea, which they named "makwa-mafubedu". They further crossed the Vaal River which they named "Lekwa". This seems to have reminded them of the lake they had crossed. Shandukane is the

name of the founder of the school which was Vereeniging High. Shandu is a name which is derived from or a short form of Shandukane.

Lekwa-Shandu is the name of the school. It means that learners must come and cross Lekwa-Shandu for the betterment of their lives. The school, as part of society, is an institution created to further the aims and objectives of society. The school therefore serves as the caretaker, storehouse and communicator of cultural values. Lekwa-Shandu is a symbol of the source of life because the school provides education for children. The cultural identities of teachers such as Masitha and Miss Lekena correspond with this setting because they are the sources of life for learners.

Sebokeng

Maake's setting corresponds to the nature of his characters. For example, the elements of Sebokeng life, which in an ideal situation cultivate an image of peaceful communion among people, domestic animals and nature, here mark the disjuncture between the narrator and his environment.

The name Sebokeng is derived from *seboka* or *ho bokana*, which means a meeting or assembly (Mabille and Dieterlen 1983, 32). The name Sebokeng suggests a community. Fielding (2000, 400) had this to say about a community:

For community to become real, the mode of relation characterized by freedom to be and become ourselves in and through relations of personal equality must take place within the context of certain dispositions and intentions towards other persons.

As the name suggests, characters from this place are characterised by the occasions that bind them together. There are church members such as Fatima, Mpolokeng, Rakgadi and Fatere.

There is also a group of characters betting on horses together such as Thollo, Masodi and Serame. The name Serame means cold. The July Handicap runs during July when it is cold, and thus the name Serame corresponds with this big race.

According to Meyer (2007), ego identity is part of a group identity. Cultural identity is the whole sum of characteristics given by place, gender, age, race and religious beliefs. Characters such as Thollo, Masodi and Serame identify themselves as a group of men betting on horses.

It is Mme who identifies the Sebokeng residents as a community. Sebokeng people are together as one because Mme taught them to share everything; birth, life and death, sorrow and trouble, happiness and joy. The narrator portrays Mme not as only as a person, but also as a place where dreams and reality become one, where the physical meets the spiritual. Here we find the link between the name of the place Sebokeng and its identity, the place that brings people together as one.

Many of the people attended Mme's funeral. They are all saddened by her death. On the burial day, the atmosphere of sadness and mourning is conveyed through the clear description of the mood of the Sebokeng community. Mme's death creates an atmosphere of loss and grief in the Sebokeng community. They cry for their beloved mother and also fear that no one is going to prepare medicine for their sick children. During Mme's burial, people were crying and the narrator says: *Ba ne ba lla... ba llela mma bona. E ne e hlile e le Mme ka nnete...* (Maake 1995, 98) [They were crying...crying for their mother...She was a real mother...].

Mme regarded people for what they are intended to be, rather than what they are. Today the people of Sebokeng are proud of one of their medical practitioners. At the time that he was a sick infant, Mme used her herbs to cure him and today he is a real medical doctor. The narrator further says:

...kobo yane eo Mme a neng a fihle a thathetse mehaswana ya hae ka yona...e ne e se e fedile ke ho pepa bana ba Sebokeng... (Maake 1995, 110).

...that blanket Mme arrived with wrapping up her belongings...was in tatters because of carrying Sebokeng children on her back...

Mme and her blanket are an embodiment of goodness. When this doctor was still an infant and was sick, Mme tried her best, summoning up all her skills. She even carried him on her back with this blanket, which is now in tatters. Mme is a woman who once lived, and who made sure that the people of Sebokeng never forgot her. The meaning of Sebokeng symbolises this setting as a place of unity and peace. The Sebokeng people are united as one and this can be deduced from when they buried Mme.

Bohlokong

Bohlokong is derived from *bohloko* meaning pain, grief, sadness or suffering (Mabille and Dieterlen 1983, 153). Rakgadi is from Bohlokong and as the name suggests, she has been through pains and sadness. Her brother passed away and also her brother's wife. Here I am referring to Dikeledi's parents. For both Rakgadi and Dikeledi, Bohlokong is a symbol of suffering. Dikeledi and her cultural identity correspond with the meaning and identity of the place where she is from.

Manyatseng

Manyatseng is derived from the verb stem *nyatsa* meaning to despise, to disapprove, to blame or criticise (Mabille and Dieterlen 1983, 328). Tsekiso is from Manyatseng and there is a strong link between Tsekiso and the place he is from. As the name of this place suggests, Tsekiso despises the social and moral values of the Sebokeng community. He is always seen coming from the bushes with a girl, and this behaviour is unacceptable in the Basotho culture. Manyatseng is a symbol of disdain and lack of respect.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to point out that the author employs his strong imagination to create fictional characters whose names influence their actions and dispositions. The name "Mme" breathes life into the names of other characters. They are not static or rigid; they develop along with the events of the story. The author makes his characters fully human and also suggests through their names a larger significance of identity and in this way, a character becomes a symbol. For example, "Mme" ultimately symbolises womankind.

Naming in Maake's (1995) novel *Mme*, engages the creative abilities and work in combination towards one end and satisfies readers in that all that they are feeling and imaginatively conceiving is being presented artistically through those names.

Maake (1995) artistically engages the eye and the ear to make his readers experience the sense of meaning discernible in a character's name. The crying of the Sebokeng community vibrates in the reader's ears and so do the names of characters and settings as well as the symbols inspired by their names.

An African name is an image of an individual's cultural identity. According to Deluzain (1996),

[i]dentity is related to the question of the difference between us and others; a difference in culture, social class, sex, religion, age, nationality, living area, etc.

One's name makes one socially and culturally unique. A person's name is that person's identity. African names are very important because they speak to a person in an African language.

Finally, I would like to recommend that in order for Africans to view their names as part of their identity, African creative writers should employ characters with names which reveal who the person is. A true moment of the author's creativity through naming is that in which we recognise the form of

his imaginative creation. It is through the names of characters that the author manages to combine and unify all elements of the novel to occur successfully, penetrating the reader's insight and leaving them with profound satisfaction.

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