

**THE BINARY OPPOSITIONS IN A SETSWANA SHORT STORY:
O NKUTLWE - BY R.M. MALOPE.**

Mokgethi Alphanious Nchoe

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Supervisor : Dr. E.S. van der Westhuizen

Co-Supervisor : Mr. R.S. Pretorius

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my wife **Lebalang** and my children **Tsholofelo**, **Boitshoko** and **Katlego**.

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ABSTRACT

The basic aim of this mini-dissertation is to apply the Lévi-Straussian theory to the Setswana short story: *O nkutlwe* by R.M. Malope in order to determine the dynamism of binary oppositions in the structure of the story and relate these to the context of the Batswana community.

The study is divided into four chapters. The objectives as well as the central problem are outlined and motivated in the first chapter.

The second chapter deals with the theoretical concepts. An explanation of binary oppositions and a discussion of the Lévi-Straussian theory with reference to the Tsimshian myth, *The story of Asdiwal* are provided.

The third chapter concentrates on the structural analysis of *O nkutlwe* in the context of the Batswana community. The binary oppositions are identified in the essential aspects of the structure of the story on various levels (the geographic, economic, sociological and cosmological) according to Lévi-Strauss's theory. The theme of **contrast between modern life and traditional life** should not be misunderstood as an attack on modern life as such, but as an appeal to the Batswana community not to disregard their tradition.

Chapter four is a summary of the main points of this study and conclusion.

In general it can be concluded that Lévi-Strauss theory can be successfully applied to a reading of modern literature.

Keywords: binary, binary oppositions, short story, Lévi-Strauss, Setswana, African languages.

OPSOMMING

Die basiese doel van hierdie skripsie is om die teorie van Lévi-Strauss ten opsigte van die dinamiese werking van binêre opposisies in 'n verhaal te ondersoek deur dit spesifiek toe te pas op die Setswana-kortverhaal *O nkutlwe* deur R.M. Malope en die teksinterne verwysings na die tekseksterne, reële werklikheid van die Batswana-gemeenskap uit te lig.

Die skripsie word verdeel in vier hoofstukke. Die probleemstellings as deel van die sentrale teoretiese stelling, asook die doelstellings word omskryf en gemotiveer in die eerste hoofstuk.

In die tweede hoofstuk word die teoretiese begronding gedoen. Die konsep *binêre opposisies* word verklaar en die teorie van Lévi-Strauss se gebruik van binêre opposisies soos verduidelik aan die hand van die Tsimsiese mite *Die verhaal van Asdival* word bespreek.

Die derde hoofstuk konsentreer op 'n struktuuranalise van die kortverhaaltteks *O nkutlwe* binne die groter konteks van die Batswana-gemeenskap. Die binêre opposisies word geïdentifiseer wat betref die essensiële aspekte van die struktuur van die verhaal ten opsigte van verskeie aspekte binne die verskillende vlakke (geografies, ekonomies, sosiologies en kosmologies) soos gesien deur Lévi-Strauss. Die tema van kontras tussen die moderne lewensbenadering en tradisionalisme moet nie verstaan word as 'n aanval op

moderniteit as sodanig nie, maar as 'n beroep wat gedoen word op die Batswana-gemeenskap om nie hulle tradisies te minag en te verwaarloos nie.

Die vierde hoofstuk is 'n samevatting en 'n gevolgtrekking van die studie.

Oor die algemeen kan gekonstateer word dat die teorie van Lévi-Strauss met betrekking tot binêre opposisies steeds waardevol is in 'n leesstrategie vir moderne literatuur.

Kernwoorde: binêr, binêre opposisies, kortverhaal, Lévi-Strauss, Setswana, Afrikatale.

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CHAPTER 1

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Claude Lévi-Strauss's structural analysis of a Tsimshian myth (Lévi-Strauss, 1977:146-197) reveals that the myth is composed of a system of binary oppositions. An examination of these binary oppositions enables the analyst to relate the structure of the myth to the real life of the community in which the myth is told.

The purpose of this mini-dissertation is to apply Lévi-Strauss's analytic model to the Setswana short story *O nkutlwe* in order to examine the binary oppositions in their context.

1.2 CONTEXTUALIZATION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

This research project will focus on the application of the Lévi-Straussian theory, published in English first in 1977, to the Setswana short story: *O nkutlwe* by R.M. Malope (1983) in order to examine the dynamism of binary oppositions. It will do so by analyzing and comparing the formal structures in the story and relating the story to real life.

Malope (1980) established himself as one of the most capable Setswana writers because his short story *O nkutlwe* was awarded the first prize in a Setswana short story competition arranged by Longman Penguin Publishers

in 1980. The main objective of the competition was to encourage Setswana short story writing. He wrote another three short stories which were published in 1982 together with *O nkutlwe* in *Mmualebe*, a collection of his short stories.

Malope's work has gained wide readership among the Batswana. Several studies on his work are still current and one has already been completed. For example, Mashike (1988) did a critical analysis of R.M. Malope's short stories in *Mmualebe* for the purpose of his masters degree.

In his work, Mashike (1988:1-3) expresses his concern about the slow development of short story writing in Setswana which is even worse when compared to other genres in Setswana. It was therefore the objective of his study to examine some aspects of the structure of the short story that can serve as a guideline for short story writers.

Currently, Molebaloa and Mabe are busy with their research projects on Malope's novel: *Matlhokomatlhoko* (1980). Molebaloa's working title is *The makgoeng motif in R.M. Malope's novel Matlhokomatlhoko*, and Mabe's title is *The interplay of characters and milieu in R.M. Malope's novel Matlhokomatlhoko*. Both research projects commenced in 1994. However, according to a computer search no study on binary oppositions in his works, or on binary oppositions in any Setswana narrative has yet been completed, therefore making this study relevant.

It is important to investigate the use of binary oppositions in *O nkutlwe* with regard to modern life and tradition holistically, and how the binary oppositions identified in the essential aspects of the story structure on the geographic, economic, sociological and the cosmological level must be seen as working together to develop the theme.

The perception of opposites implies that there is an awareness of two signs with a certain relationship between them, e.g. it can be characters or words. Meaningful differences should therefore be observed in the relationship between such oppositions, that which A.J. Greimas (in Hawkes, 1977:88) refers to as the 'elementary structures of signification' on which his semantic theories rest.

Terence Hawkes (1977:88) explains it as follows:

The difference we discern between these basic "semes" involve, at elementary level, four terms, seen as two opposed pairs, which our "structuring" perception require us to recognize in the following form: A is opposed to B as -A is to -B. In short, the "elementary structure" involves recognition and distinction of two basic aspects of an entity: its opposition and negation. We see B as the opposite of A and -B as the opposite of -A, but we also see -A as the negation of A and -B as the negation of B.

In African languages, M.P. Makgamatha (1988) made an attempt to apply the Lévi-Straussian theory to the North-Sotho folk-tale *Masilo le Masilwane* in order to examine the sequential structure in its context.

Makgamatha in his article *System of binary oppositions in the North Sotho nonwane of Masilo le Masilwane* accepts Lévi-Strauss's argument that folk-tales are miniature myths, and that the same oppositions that are found in myth are transposed to a smaller scale in folk-tales, and that this is what makes them difficult to study (Lévi-Strauss, 1977:130). However, Makgamatha succeeded in applying the system of binary oppositions on different levels of abstraction which Lévi-Strauss (1977:146) terms the geographic, economic, sociological and the cosmological level to relate the structure of this folk-tale to the realities of life in the community in which it is told.

1.3 PROBLEM QUESTIONS

In the light of the argument outlined above the following questions may be posed:

- What are binary oppositions, and how can they be used with Lévi-Strauss's theory as theoretical framework for the analysis of *O nkutlwe*?
- Can binary oppositions be identified and analysed as essential aspects of the structure of *O nkutlwe* with regard to modern life and tradition?

- Can Lévi-Strauss's analytic model be applied as aspects of the different levels of abstraction to this short story in order to determine the dynamism of binary oppositions and to relate the structure of the story to real life of the Batswana community?

1.4 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this study are to:

- Define the concept binary oppositions and to discuss Lévi-Strauss's theory in order to use them as theoretical framework for the analysis of *O nkutlwe*.
- Identify and analyse binary oppositions as essential aspects of the structure of *O nkutlwe* with regard to modern way of life and tradition.
- Apply the Lévi-Straussian theory to *O nkutlwe* on various levels in order to determine aspects of the dynamism of binary oppositions and relate its structure to the realities of life of the Batswana community.

1.5 THESIS STATEMENT

I will argue that the Lévi-Straussian theory can be applied to the short story *O nkutlwe* to determine the ways in which binary oppositions contribute to the emerging of the meaning in the text, and also relate the story to the realities of life. In addition I will argue that cultural aspects such as traditional beliefs

represented in the short story also have an influence on understanding the realities in its context. I would also venture to say that the Lévi-Straussian theory and the concept of binary oppositions are useful for the analysis of the short story in relating its formal structures to real life.

1.6 METHOD OF RESEARCH

In order to achieve the abovementioned goals (objectives), the following modus of operandi will be followed:

Before attempting an application of Lévi-Strauss's theory to Malope's short story, it is essential to place binary oppositions in context. An explanation of binary oppositions and a discussion of Lévi-Strauss's analytic model which will serve as the basis for the analysis to be provided.

A structural analysis of this short story will then be attempted in terms of its relation to the realities of life. The essential aspects of the structure of the narrative on the geographic, economic, sociological and the cosmological level will be discussed and the schemata for each level will also be provided.

Before the conclusion, a summary of the main points of this study will be provided. The conclusion will attempt to illuminate as whether modern life and tradition can accommodate each other.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL CONCEPTS : EXPLANATION

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In this research project, some of the arguments of the New Historicism, binary oppositions and Lévi-Strauss's analytic model will be used. Makgamatha, together with other references will be used as secondary sources. Lévi-Strauss, a French anthropologist, will be the primary source. Although his work appeared in the 1950's, it is still prominent. Some fully commend his work while others criticize it. I will comment on their views.

2.2 NEW HISTORICISM

According to Robert Con Davis and Ronald Schleifer (1989:374) New Historicism is a movement in literary criticism that emerged as a result of the reconception and the historicity of literature. This concept was introduced by Stephen Greenblatt as quoted by Davis and Schleifer (1989:374) in a special issue of the journal *Genre* in 1982. The new awareness of historical study as opposed to traditional historical study that Stephen Greenblatt defines as old historicism, is that history, like a fictional narrative, exists in a dialogue with something "foreign" or

"other" to it that can never be contained or controlled by the historian. History is projected as a series of irrational ruptures.

Earlier, modernists like T.S. Eliot, and Northrop Frye who are associated with the first half of the twentieth century, (in Davis and Schleifer, 1989:374) argue that we can try to make of history a process of repetition so that what was valuable in the past is continually regained ("made new") through poetry in a cultural retrieval mechanism or an apocalyptic promise to be fulfilled in time.

In New Historicism, however, it argues that, like Marxist criticism, also attempts to situate literary works within a historical matrix, but that it does not necessarily define that matrix as a relationship between a base and superstructure. Rather it describes both history and literature in terms that eschew universalizing and transcendental descriptions. Greenblatt in an article about *Shakespeare and the Exorcists*, says:

For me the study of the literary is the study of contingent, particular, intended and historically embedded works ... I believe that the most important effect of contemporary theory upon the practice of literary criticism, and certainly upon my practice, is to subvert the tendency to think of aesthetic representation as ultimately autonomous, separable from its cultural context and

hence divorced from the social, ideological and material matrix in which all art is produced and consumed. (1989:429)

According to Leonard Tennenhouse as discussed by Davis and Schleifer (1989:374), literature itself also emanate from the history of a particular culture and therefore can be looked at in terms of the present situation:

The history of a culture is a history of all its products, literature being just one such product, social organization another, the legal apparatus yet another, and so on.

Thomas Pavel (1993:121-125) claims that the shift from the antithematic bias of the 1970's to a renewal of interest in thematics is one of the most important changes in literary criticism in the last decade.

New Historicism as a new method, in essence seeks to find prove of the theme of the text to avoid subjectivism of the critics. Pavel in Sollors (1993:133) goes on to say:

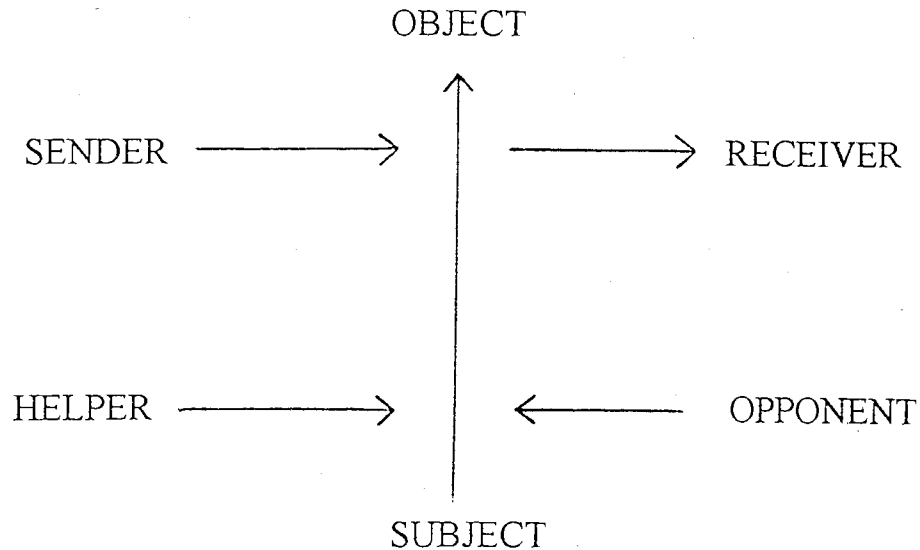
Since standard historical methods are suspicious of arguments based on skimpy evidence, New Historicist critics propose an innovative technique of premodern literary texts to their cultural content, a technique based on thematic analysis.

From the above comments on New Historicism it can be argued that this new movement in literary criticism seems to provide a better approach for historical research in literature, in as far as research on the representation of tradition as part of cultural history is concerned. But when the fundamental point of departure is taken into consideration, namely that only loose fragments in time can be researched, in which no meaningful continuity can be found, the ideology which underlies this can be questioned. This is an aspect that requires detailed attention and because of its wide range, falls outside the scope of this dissertation.

2.3 BINARY OPPOSITIONS

According to Hawkes (1977:88), our fundamental concepts of 'meaning' present themselves to us through the opposition we feel to exist between the basic 'semes' or semantic units. Thus 'dark' is defined principally by our sense of its opposition to 'light', and 'up' by our sense of its opposition to 'down'. Therefore, opposition plays a very predominant role in the revelation of meaning in a text.

He argues that the binary oppositions form the basis of a deep-lying 'actantial model' and the superficial structures of individual stories are transformed from this deep-lying structure. Hawkes (1997:50) discusses the 'actantial model' which was invented by Greimas and which produced the following actantial categories i.e. three sets of binary oppositions:



Hawkes (1977:50) further comments that Greimas begins with the fundamental notion of binary opposition as the basic human conceptual mode. A narrative sequence embodies this mode by the employment of two actants whose relationship must be either oppositional or its reverse, and on the surface level this relationship will therefore generate fundamental actions of disjunction and conjunction, separation and union, struggle and reconciliation.

Hawkes (1977:77) says:

Jacobson sees metaphor and metonymy as the characteristic modes of binary opposed polarities which between them underpin the two fold process of *selection* and *combination* by which linguistic signs are formed.

Ferdinand de Saussure (in Hawkes, 1977:23) also emphasizes that contrast or opposition is capable of generating meaning. Therefore, we have to search for that meaning.

Edmund Leach (in Gardner, 1981:152) views the opening chapters of the Bible as a series of three episodes which have the same general structure and which reflect the same narrative impulse in the course of confronting various crucial questions. The first story has to do with the creation of the world, the second with the Garden of Eden and the expulsion of Adam and Eve, the last with the story of Cain and Abel. Leach (1981:152-154) further maintains that in each of the three episodes, one can discern a series of categorical oppositions, mediated by an intermediary phenomenon or category. For an example, in the first episode, light is separated from darkness, heaven from earth, and fresh water above (rain) from salt water (sea). The above mentioned oppositions are mediated by the sky; the next opposition introduced, that between sea and dry land, is mediated by grass, herb-yielding seed, and fruit trees.

It is thus the intention of the researcher as stated in the thesis statement to apply the Lévi-Straussian theory to the Setswana short story: *O nkutlwe* to determine ways in which binary oppositions contribute to the emerging of meaning in text.

2.4 CLAUDE LÉVI-STRAUSS'S ANALYTIC MODEL

Makgamatha (1989:105) regards Claude Lévi-Strauss as a distinguished French anthropologist and the standard-bearer of a structuralist approach to anthropology because of his numerous groundbreaking contributions towards the structuralist analysis of mythology. Makgamatha used the Lévi-Straussian theory in the study of the North-Sotho folktale in his article, *System of binary oppositions in the North-Sotho nonwane of Masilo le Masilwane* in order to examine the sequential structure in its context.

Claude Lévi-Strauss (1977:146-147) distinguished the geographic, economic, sociological and the cosmological levels. According to him the oppositions on these levels symbolize the contradictions that appears in real-life situations and how such contradictions are resolved. The binary oppositions, levels as well as transformations are the main features of the Lévi-Straussian theory which will be dealt with in this research project. The researcher also maintains that a short story is composed of a series of binary oppositions, located at various levels of abstraction. According to Lévi-Strauss (1977:146) each one of these levels, together with the symbolism appropriate to it, is seen as a transformation of an underlying logical structure common to all of them.

Lévi-Strauss (1977:146-197) demonstrated his analytic model in his detailed structural study of a native Tsimshian myth from the pacific coast of Canada, *The Story of Asdiwal*.

According to Lévi-Strauss (1977:152) *The story of Asdiwal* refers to facts of various orders. First, the physical and political geography of the Tsimshian country, since the places and towns mentioned really do exist; secondly, the economic life of the natives which governs the great seasonal migrations between the Skeena and Nass valleys; third, the social and family organizations with several marriages, divorces and widowhoods; and lastly, the cosmology, for, unlike the others, two of the Asdiwal's visits, one to heaven and the other below earth, are of a mythological and not an experiential order.

To anchor the theoretical concepts in a fictional context Lévi-Strauss (1977:152-158) further explains the essential aspects of the story in various levels mentioned earlier as follows.

2.4.1 THE GEOGRAPHIC ASPECTS

The story begins in the Skeena valley, when a mother and her daughter, both of whose husbands have died of hunger leave their villages. Since the mother lives down-river and the daughter up-river, the former goes eastwards and the latter westwards. They both meet halfway.

The young woman becomes the wife to Matsenas, their mysterious protector. Soon she gives birth to a son, Asdiwal. After her mother's death the young woman and her son Asdiwal pursue their course westwards and settle in her native village. It is from there that he visits heaven and marry a beautiful girl, Evening-Star. Thereafter he returns down to earth again with her. Asdiwal deceives her with a woman from his village. Evening-Star, offended, departs to heaven.

Asdiwal's mother dies. He continues his journey westwards. He settles in a certain town where he marries the daughter of the local chief. Asdiwal joins his brothers-in-law for the Nass river to fish candlefish there and on wild goat hunts. A quarrel takes place between Asdiwal and his brothers-in-law over the respective merits of mountain-hunting and sea-hunting. They take their sister with them and abandon Asdiwal. Having travelled from east to west, Asdiwal accompanies the strangers to the Nass river for the candlefish season, that is to say in a South-North direction, then in the opposite direction, to "their town", offshore from which the visit to the sea lions takes place.

From there Asdiwal returns to the Skeena - this time from west to east.

2.4.2 THE ECONOMIC ASPECTS

The economic activities brought to notice by the myth no more real than the geographical place and the populations evoked in the preceding paragraphs.

Everything begins with a period of famine such as was well known to the natives in the period between mid-December and mid-January, before the moment when, theoretically, the spring salmon arrived, which was just before the arrival of the candlefish, the period called the interval. After his visit to the heavens, Asdiwal takes part in the spring migration to the Nass for the candlefish season; then the families return to the Skeena in the salmon season.

The seasonal variations are on par with others, no less real differences emphasized by the myth, notably that between the land hunter and the sea hunter.

2.4.3 THE SOCIOLOGICAL ASPECTS

When moving on to the sociological aspects, there is a much greater freedom of interpretation.

The initial sequence of events evokes clearly defined sociological conditions. The mother and daughter have been separated by the latter's marriage, and since that time each has lived with her own husband in his village. The elder woman's husband was also the father of the younger woman, who left her native village to follow her own husband upstream. This can be recognised as a society in which, while having a system of matrilineal filiation, residence is patrilocal, the wife going to live in her husband's village; and one in which the children, although they belong to their mother's clan, are brought up in their father's home and not in that of their maternal kin.

But in the myth, this patrilocal type of residence is quickly undermined by famine, which frees the two women from their respective obligations and allows them, upon the death of their husbands, to meet halfway. Their camping at the foot of the tree on the bank of the frozen river, equidistant from up-river and down-river, presents a picture of a matrilocal type of residence reduced to its simplest form, since the new household consist only of a mother and her daughter.

Matrilocal marriage, accompanied by antagonism between the husband and his in-laws, is further illustrated by Asdiwal's marriage to Evening-Star; they live in her father's home, and the father-in-law shows so much hostility towards his son-in-law that he sets him trials which are deemed to be fatal.

Asdiwal's second marriage is matrilocal and is accompanied by hostility between the husband and his brothers-in-law because they abandon him and persuade their sister to follow them.

The same theme is expressed in the third marriage. After Asdiwal's visit to the sea lions, the situation is reversed. Asdiwal recovers his wife, who has refused to follow her brothers and was wandering in search of her husband. She collaborates with him to produce the "machination" - in the literal and the figurative sense - by means of which he takes revenge on his brothers-in-law. Finally, patrilocality triumphs when Asdiwal abandons his wife (whereas in the previous marriages it has been his wife who abandoned him) and returns to the Skeena where he was born, and where his son comes alone to join him.

Thus, having begun with *the story of the reunion of the mother and her daughter*, freed from their affines or *paternal kin*, the myth ends with *the story of the reunion of a father and his son*, freed from their affines or *maternal kin*.

2.4.4 THE COSMOLOGICAL ASPECTS

If the initial and final sequences on the myth constitute, from a sociological point of view, a pair of oppositions, the same is true from a cosmological point of view, about the two supernatural voyages which interrupt the hero's "real" journey. The first voyage takes him to the heavens and into the home of the Sun, who first tries to kill him and then agrees to bring him back to life. The second takes Asdiwal to the subterranean kingdom of the sea lions. He returns back safely to the land. The first voyage results in a marriage which is matrilocal, and which, moreover, bears witness to a maximal exogamous separation (between an earthborn man and a woman from heaven). But this marriage is broken up by Asdiwal's infidelity with a woman of his own village. This may be seen as a suggestion of a marriage which, would neutralize matrilocality (since husband and wife would come from the same place) and would also be characterized by an endogamous proximity which would also be maximal (marriage within the village). Asdiwal's second supernatural voyage to the subterranean kingdom of the sea lions brings about a reversal in the matrilocal tendency of Asdiwal's successive marriages, for it separates his third wife from her brothers, the hero himself from his wife,

their son from his mother, and leaves only one relationship in existence: that between the father and his son.

In this analysis of a myth, four levels have been distinguished: the geographic, the techno-economic, the sociological, and the cosmological. The first two are exact transcriptions of reality; the fourth has nothing to do with it; and in the third real and imaginary instructions are interwoven. Yet in spite of these differences, the levels are not separated out by the native mind. It is rather that everything happens as if the levels were provided with different codes, each being used according to the needs of the moment, and according to its particular capacity, to transmit the same message.

According to Lévi-Strauss (1977:158-161) when we consider the message of the myth we find that winter famines are a recurrent event in the economic life of the Tsimshian. This famine often compels the Tsimshian to migrate for fishing. One may schematize the initial situation as follows:

mother	daughter
elder	younger
downstream	upstream
west	east
south	north

Asdiwal's first adventure presents us with an opposition - that of heaven and earth - which the hero is able to surmount by virtue of the intervention of his

father, Hatsenas. Even so, Asdiwal does not manage to overcome his earthy nature, to which he twice submits, first in yielding to the charms of a fellow countrywoman and then in yielding nostalgia for his home village. Thus, a series of oppositions results:

low	high
earth	heaven
man	woman
endogamy	exogamy

Pursuing his course westwards, Asdiwal contracts a second matrilineal marriage which generates a new series of oppositions:

mountain hunting	sea hunting
land	water

But finally, the visit to the subterranean world sets the course of the hero's return; for from then onwards he travels west to east, from the sea towards the mainland, from the salt water of the ocean to the fresh water of the Skeena.

According to Lévi-Strauss (1977:161) the above analysis leads us to draw a distinction between two aspects of the construction of a myth: the sequences and the schemata.

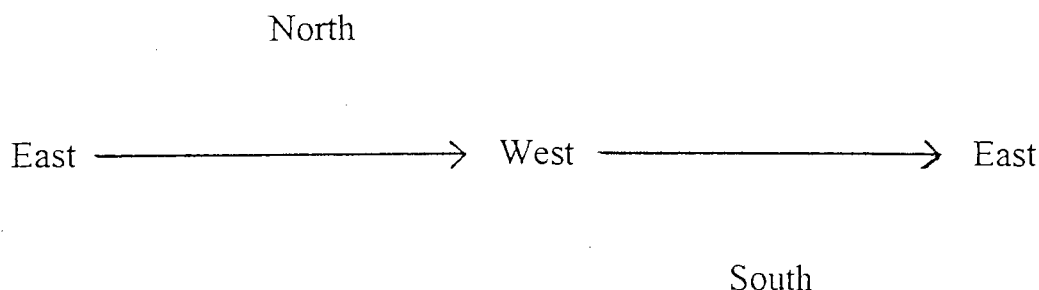
The sequences form the apparent content of the myth, the chronological order in which things happen. But these sequences are organized on planes at different levels of abstraction in accordance with schemata, which exist simultaneously, superimposed one upon the other; just as a melody composed for several voices is held within bounds by two-dimensional constraints: first by its own melodic line, which is horizontal, and second by the contrapuntal schemata, which are vertical.

2.5 INVENTORY OF SCHEMATA

Lévi-Strauss (1977:162-164) drew up an inventory of such schemata for *The story of Asdiwal* and these are the following.

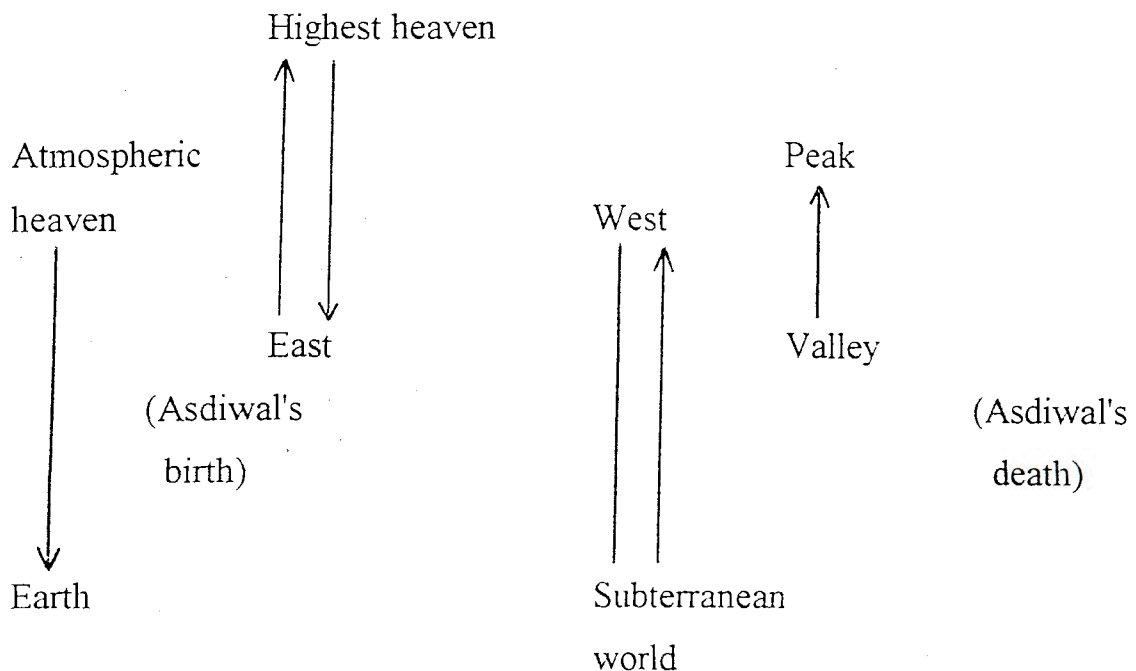
2.5.1 GEOGRAPHIC SCHEMA

The hero goes from east to west, then returns from west to east. This return journey is modulated by another one, from the south to the north and then from the north to the south, which corresponds to the seasonal migrations of the Tsimshian (in which the hero takes part) to the river Nass for the candlefish season in the spring, then to the Skeena for the salmon fishing in the summer. The geographic schema is schematized as follow:



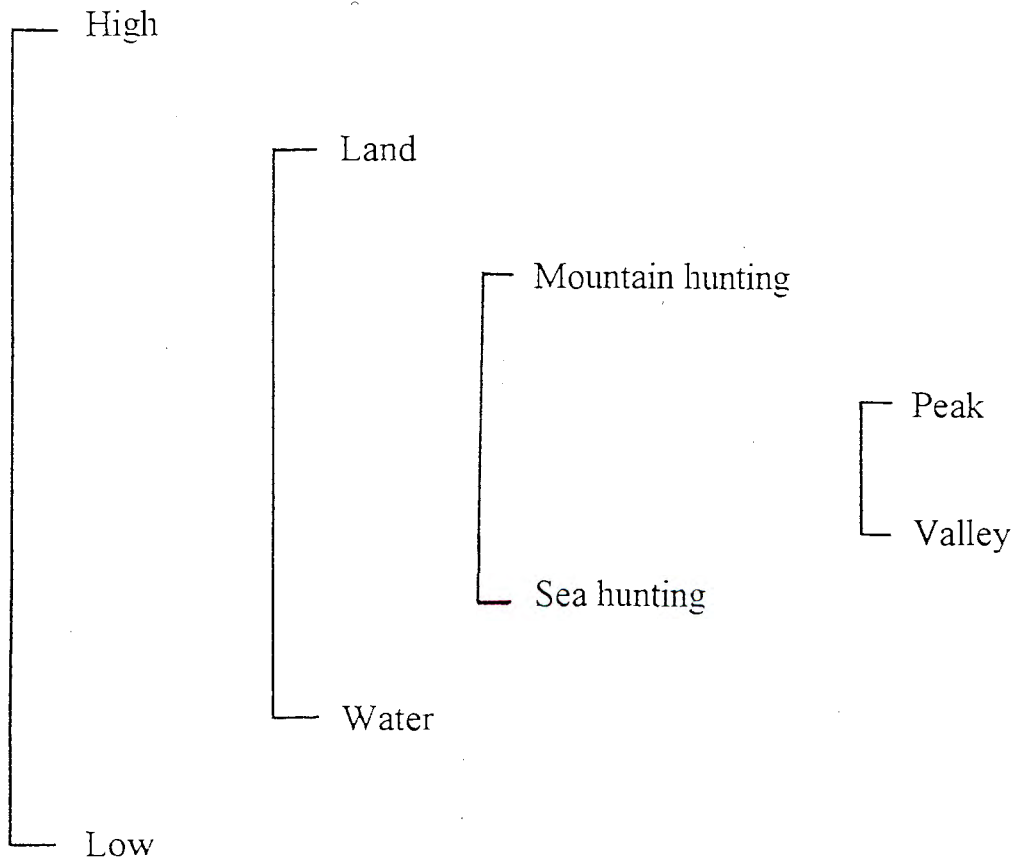
2.5.2 COSMOLOGICAL SCHEMA

Three supernatural visits establish a relationship between terms thought of respectively as "below" and "above": the visit to the young widow by Hatsenas, the bird of good omen associated with the atmospheric heavens; the visit by Asdiwal to the highest heavens in pursuit of Evening-Star; and his visit to the subterranean kingdom of the sea lions. The end of Asdiwal, trapped in the mountain, then appears as a neutralization of the intermediate mediation established at his birth but which even so does not enable him to bring off two further extreme mediations (one between the heaven and earth considered as the opposition low/high and the other between the sea and the land considered as the opposition east/west). The cosmological schema is schematized as follows:



2.5.3 INTEGRATION SCHEMA

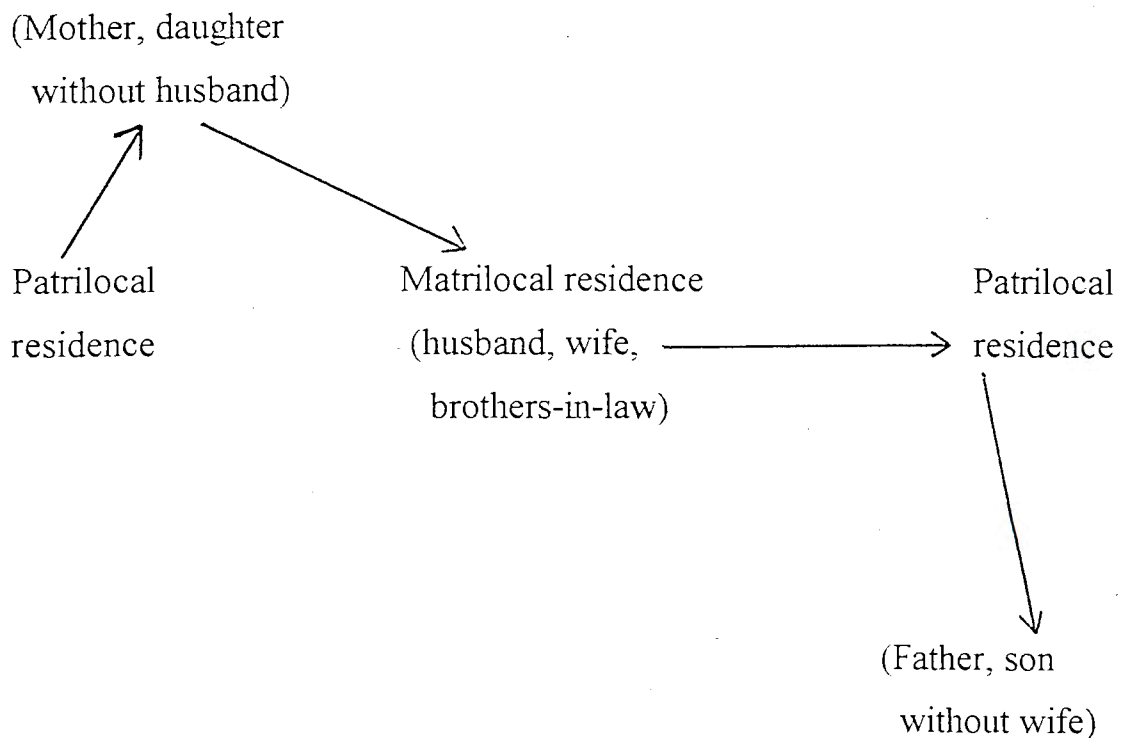
The above two schemata are integrated in a third consisting of several binary oppositions. The initial and final oppositions, high/low and peak/valley, are "vertical" and thus belong to the cosmological schema. The two intermediate oppositions, water/land and sea hunting/mountain hunting, are "horizontal" and belong to the geographic schema. But the final opposition, peak/valley, which is also the narrowest contrast, brings into association the essential characteristics of the two preceding schemata: it is "vertical" in form, but "geographical" in content. The integrated schema is schematized as follows:



2.5.4 SOCIOLOGICAL SCHEMA

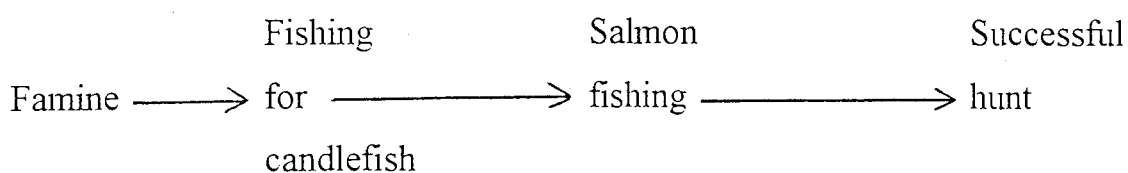
It starts with patrilocal residence. The patrilocal residence gives way progressively to the matrilocal residence (Hatsenas's marriage), which becomes deadly (Asdiwal's marriage in heaven), then merely hostile (the marriage in the land of Firs), before weakening and finally reversing (marriage among the People of the Channel) to allow a return to patrilocal residence.

At the beginning the sociological structure involves a mother and her daughter; in the middle, a husband, his wife, and his brothers-in-law; at the end, a father and his son. The sociological schema is schematized as follows:



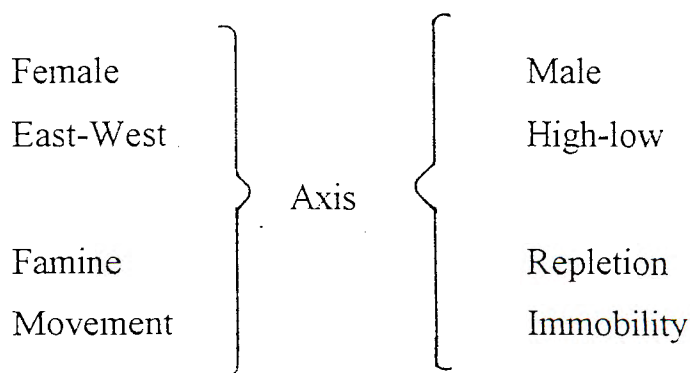
2.5.5 TECHNO-ECONOMIC SCHEMA

The Tsimshian myth begins by evoking a winter famine; it ends with a successful hunt. In between, the story follows the economic cycle and the seasonal migration of the native fishermen. It is schematized as follows:



2.5.6 GLOBAL INTEGRATION

In this schema the myth is finally reduced to its two extreme oppositions, the initial and final state of affairs. The two major oppositions clearly summarize the operational function of the myth. The two sets of oppositions are schematized as follows:



According to Gardner (1981:117-129), Lévi-Strauss's thinking is characterized by a dialectical interplay between two dominant

tendencies: a penchant towards logical analysis and systematic comparison on the other hand, a flair for the suggestive metaphor, and the unanticipated link, the synthesis of two apparently contradictory notions on the other. He considers the perception of opposites and contrasts as the underlying common ground of all human thought. He also believes that thinking in oppositions is a fundamental property of the human mind.

In a major essay on myth analysis first published in 1955, Lévi-Strauss introduced a method for investigating the nature and significance of myth. In this essay he proposes a breakdown of the myth into its component parts or units, and a grouping together of those units which refer to the same point or theme. When these groups of points are considered in relationship to one another, the major themes as well as the structure and the message of the myth can be deciphered (Gardner, 1981:132).

Gardner (1981:135) further argues that the mind builds upon its perceptions of the world, and its tendency is to perceive oppositions, contrasts as well as differences.

Davis and Schleifer (1989:144-147) says:

Lévi-Strauss has attempted to apply the methods of structural linguistics to narrative so that, in just the way linguistics

analyzes sentences, structural anthropology - as he calls it - can analyze narrative discourse. In this endeavour, he has articulated the highest ambition of structuralism and semiotics. Lévi-Strauss codified, extended and even created structuralist possibilities for literary analysis. *The Structural Study of Myth* and Lévi-Strauss's work as a whole had a tremendously stimulating effect on narrative study and induced Anglo-American criticism to re-examine its own formalistic and strongly descriptive tendencies.

In summary we can argue that New Historicism as an approach instills more relevance in the study of literature, bringing a new awareness to literary studies. It makes us look at historical events to the point in time, therefore enabling the use of theories such as Lévi-Straussian theory, eventhough his works appeared as early as the 1950's. He demonstrated the relevance of his structural approach to classic anthropological problems.

Eventhough some literary scholars criticize his work, others do commend him for his contribution in the structural analysis of myth. It can therefore be agreed that Lévi-Strauss's analytic model and the concept of binary oppositions are still valid and essential for the analysis of narratives. The oppositions in a narrative can even be

manifested diagrammatically on various levels distinguished by Lévi-Strauss to relate the structure of the narrative to real-life situation. Meaning can be derived from such contradictions.

2.6 CONCLUSION

Claude Lévi-Strauss applied his theory in the analysis of a myth and Makgamatha used it in the study of a folk-tale. Therefore, as stated in the thesis statement, in the next chapter Lévi-Strauss's analytic model will be applied to the Setswana Short Story: *O Nkulwe*, in order to determine the dynamism of binary oppositions and to relate the story to real-life of the Batswana Community.

CHAPTER 3

A STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS OF *O NKUTLWE*

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, Lévi-Strauss's analytic model as illustrated in his detailed structural analysis of a Tsimshian myth, *The story of Asdiwal* (Lévi-Strauss, 1976:146-197), will be applied to the Setswana short story: *O nkutlwe*, in order to determine the dynamism of binary oppositions and relate the structure of the story in the context of the Batswana community since the Batlokwa tribe falls within the Batswana community. The essential aspects of the story's structure on the geographic, economic, sociological and cosmological levels will first be discussed, after which the drawing up of an inventory of schemata will follow.

It is important to clarify the use of terminology. References in this study are not to the text, story and history levels, but to the levels according to the Lévi-Straussian theory. Translation in this study will be free.

3.2 THE ESSENTIAL ASPECTS

In this short story, as in all narratives, the different elements and aspects are interwoven as will be seen in the discussion of the geographic, economic, sociological and cosmological aspects which will follow hereafter.

3.2.1 THE GEOGRAPHIC ASPECTS

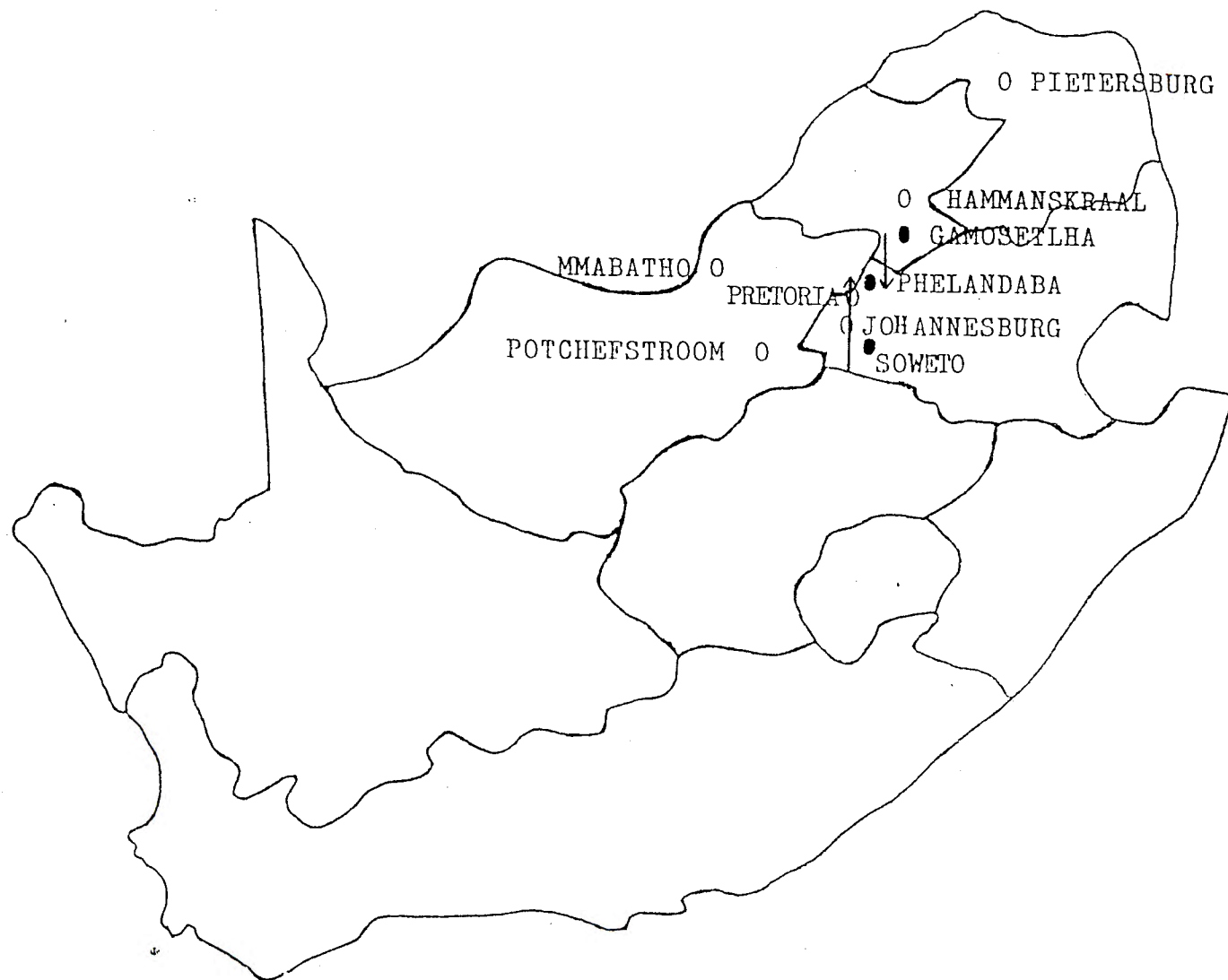
The events of *O nkutlwe* mainly take place at Phelandaba township in the Pretoria area Moroe Street, House Number 2610, a home for Mofeti (*one who passes*) and Kedisaletse (*I have remained for them*) together with their sons Tlhobolo (*a gun*) and Setena (*a brick*). Mofeti originates from a village known as GaMoseitlha in the Hammanskraal area and Kedisaletse from Soweto township in the Gauteng area where both their parents live. The places where the couple originate and finally settle as a family (Soweto, Phelandaba and GaMoseitlha) introduce a township (semi-urban)/village (rural) opposition.

The movements of Mofeti from GaMoseitlha which is in the North of Phelandaba according to the South African map (see fig. 1) and Kedisaletse from Soweto which is in the South of Phelandaba suggest an opposition of North to South/South to North directions.

The narrator also mention other places in the narrative to provide the readers with background information on characters. Such places include Boy Town, a clothes shop in Prinsloo Street, Pretoria where Pekwa (*a bird*) a very close friend of Mofeti works. He is also staying in Phelandaba, Maunde Street, Black Rock Section. Tsholo (*caring*), the elder brother to the late Mofeti is staying in Section Two, House Number 2428 GaRankuwa. The office of the superintendent of Phelandaba township, Viljoen, is in Komane Street.

KEDISALETSE: SOWETO TO PHELANDABA (SOUTH TO NORTH DIRECTION)

MOFETI : GAMOSETLHA TO PHELANDABA (NORTH TO SOUTH DIRECTION)



It can also be argued that the aforementioned places further suggest an opposition of urban/rural settlement. The communities in villages are under the administration of the chief and the tribal council but in urban areas they are under the administration of the municipality. Settlement in urban areas is according to streets with street names and house numbers as opposed to rural area where settlement is nucleated as it is the case with GaMoseletla.

In the South African geographic context the places mentioned in the short story do exist. The geographic level can be diagrammatically represented as in Fig. 1.

3.2.2 THE ECONOMIC ASPECTS

The events begin with the death of Mofeti, Kedisaletse's husband who was the breadwinner. Since they are staying at Phelandaba, which is a township, family maintenance responsibilities are even more when compared to those required of people living in villages. Such responsibilities include amongst others the payment of house rent. Kedisaletse, who is not employed, is left by her husband in a very difficult situation where she is now expected to buy food and clothes for the children as well as pay the house rent. This situation gives us a contrast of employed/unemployed; breadwinner/housewife.

Although the children were still not of a school-going age, it was going to be her responsibility to finance their schooling as soon as they had to go to school. The situation became worse when Viljoen, the superintendent of

Phelandaba township invites Kedisaletse to his office to discuss the issue of rent payment.

Viljoen's concern is that according to municipality records the house is rented by the late Mofeti. Viljoen says to Kedisaletse in this regard:

"Poifo ya rona ke gore o tla palelwa ke go duela rente gonne pasa ya gago e supa fa o ntse o sa thapiwa gope ke ope." (p.46)

[Our fear is that you will not be able to pay rent because your pass book shows that you haven't been employed anywhere by anybody.]

Viljoen's fear is justified in the sense that Mofeti is actually the person who has been responsible for rent payment. The municipality has the right to know who will now take over the payment from the late Mofeti. This is not to say that Viljoen is unfairly pressurizing Kedisaletse, but that he is merely executing his duty as expected by the municipality.

Kedisaletse promises Viljoen that she will look for a job. Her highest qualification is standard six. Viljoen insists that after six months she must come and prove to him that she got a job. However, in the meantime she must make sure that the rent is payed regularly.

After this discussion with Viljoen Kedisaletse finds herself in a very difficult situation because if she does not find a job and also fails to pay the rent, she

will be forced to vacate the house so that it can be occupied by somebody who will be able to pay the rent.

Here we find an opposition of the economic life in the township as opposed to the economic life in the village. In the village house rent is not paid. The tribal authority allocate sites to members of that community to build houses. Mofeti, as a Motlokwa unconditionally qualifies for a site at GaMosetlha. But now that his family stays in a township, it is compulsory to pay house rent to the municipality.

Even though Kedisaletse is not working, in the village the family could still survive on farming which cannot be practised in a township like Phelandaba. Pekwa takes advantage of Kedisaletse's desperate situation. He offers to help her, bringing along with him food to her home and finally convincing her that even if she does not get a job very soon, she needn't worry because he is prepared to give her support and pay the house rent to the municipality. Ultimately a relationship develops between them and Pekwa starts to sleep at Kedisaletse place.

On the other hand, Pekwa is using Kedisaletse's *Chev* motor vehicle as transport when going to work. He further convinces Kedisaletse to exchange her *Chev* for a *Datsun E-20* at Martin Jonker Car Dealers in Pretoria on the pretext of feeling uncomfortable with the *Chev*. The following day Pekwa disappears with the *Datsun E-20*, abandoning Kedisaletse with her two sons and also expecting a baby. She later discovers that Pekwa did not pay house rent as he initially promised her. Kedisaletse reports the matter to the police.

Pekwa denies everything about the receipts for rent payment and having fathered Kedisaletse's child. Documents prove that the person who sold the *Chev* is Kedisaletse but the person who bought the *Datsun E-20* is Pekwa, not Kedisaletse. The town council now confiscates all her property and locks up her house. Consequently Kedisaletse returns to her township, Soweto. This is an opposition of what Kedisaletse expected from Pekwa as her lover. The binary oppositions regarding the economic level can be diagrammatically represented as in Fig. 2.

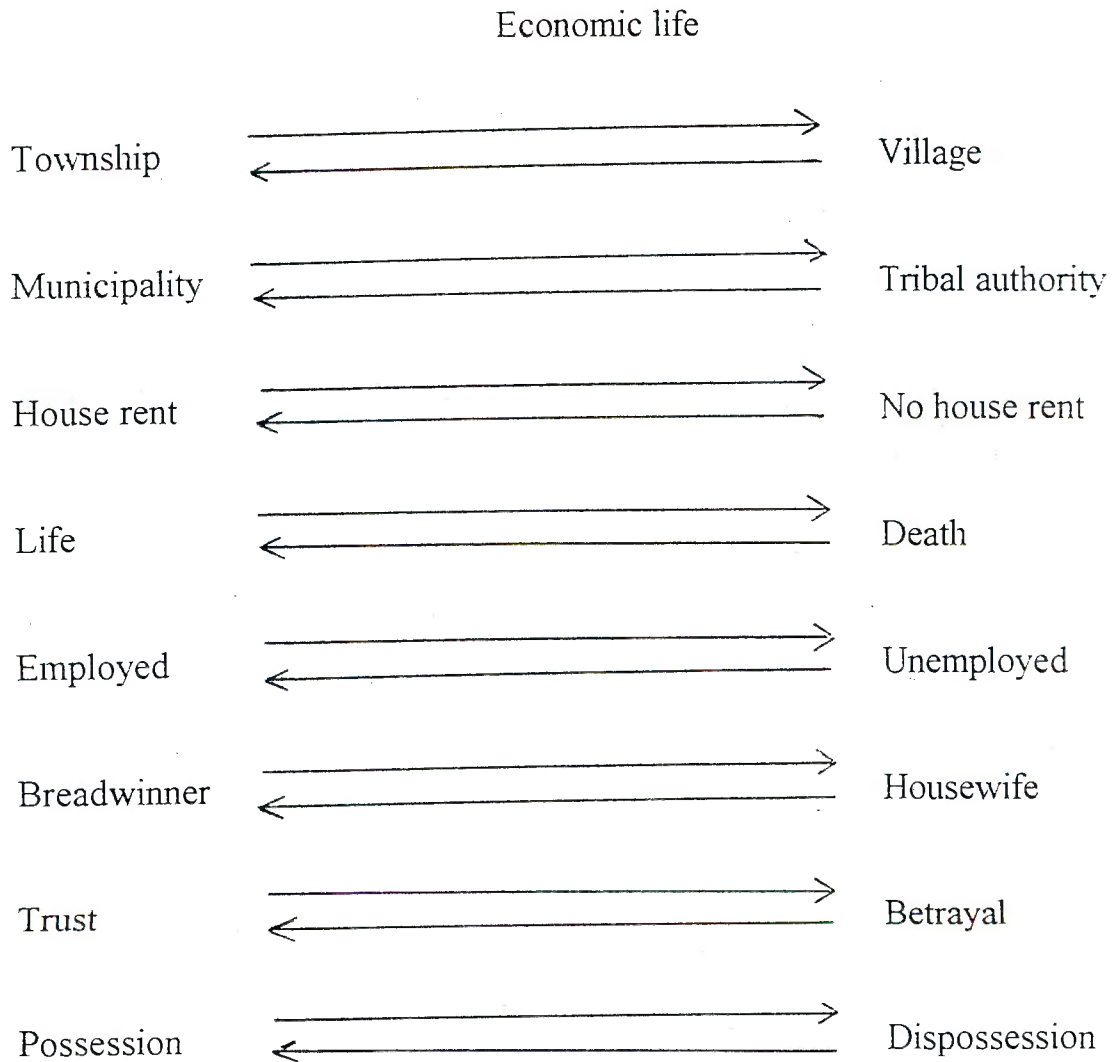


Fig. 2

3.2.3 THE SOCIOLOGICAL ASPECTS

The names of characters establish an opposition. For example, the name Mofeti (*one who passes*) stands in opposition with the name of his wife Kedisaletse (*I have remained for them*). According to the events of the story, Mofeti, the father in the family dies and Kedisaletse as the surviving spouse have to remain with their family of two sons to look after and a house rent to pay.

It can also be argued that there is a contrast of Setswana tradition and modern life in the short story *O nkutlwe*.

After the burial of Mofeti, Kedisaletse's biological parents as well as her parents-in-law strongly feel that it is traditionally right and proper that Kedisaletse be remarried to her husband's younger brother, Tholo (*Kudu*) who is a teacher and not yet married.

Ketlamoreng, (*what can I do with her?*) who is Kedisaletse's biological father voices his opinion as follows:

"Nna le fa ke le motho wa Soweto, ke bona go le botoka gore thitshere Tholo - ka a ise a tseye - a mpe e nne ena a tsosang dithako tsa lelapa la ga mogoloe. Bangwe ba tla re re potlakile thata; mme kana go botoka go akofa go ise go tle mongwe kana sengwe se se ka tsenyang khadi monwana. Ke ipoa

kgatsu ka re lebitla la mosadi ke kwa bogadi e bile lebitla ga le tlhadiwe, gone mosadi ke wa eng fa e se wa dikgomo? Ke rapela gore Kedisaletse a nkutlwe ka ntlha ya kgôlê e, "o supa Tlhobolo" e Mofeti a nanogileng ba setse ba bofagane ka yona." (p.45)

[Though I reside in Soweto, it seems better to me that teacher Tholo - as he is not married yet - take over his brother's family. Others might say that we hurry unduely. But it is better to hurry before someone comes with something that can spoil the arrangement. I repeat, a woman should be buried where she is married, and a grave cannot be divorced because what is a woman if not of lobola? I pray that Kedisaletse listens to me for the sake of this commitment, "he points at Tlhobolo" that joined them together before Mofeti passed away.]

Ketlamoreng's opinion is based on traditional grounds because according to the Batswana tradition it is acceptable that a brother can take over his younger or elder brother's family. A married woman need not return home after the death of her husband. It is the responsibility of her in-laws to look after her. This is evident in the sense that when Tholo refuses to take over his elder brother's family, his father alternatively suggests that Tsholo (*caring*) the first born in the Matlapeng (*at the stones*) family takes over his younger brother, Mofeti's family. Tsholo, who is a medical doctor at Ga-Rankuwa

hospital, is married but does not have children with his wife. He also refuses such a traditional arrangement.

In actual fact, it is surprising for Ketlmoreng who is a Soweto resident to be in total support of tradition. His argument is in opposition to what is expected from a township resident. He is the person who comes up with the idea of 'Seyantlo' (One of the late brother's brothers should take over his family). Perhaps it can be argued that as an elderly Motswana person he still observes the Setswana tradition. This shows that he has not been affected by modern life. Ketlmoreng takes the same position with Matlapeng regarding Kedisaletse's situation after her husband's death. On the other hand, their position is contrary to the position taken by their children, Pekwa and the minister regarding the same situation.

It is evident from the events of *O nku!we* that the Phelandaba community accepted civilization and ultimately distanced themselves from the Setswana traditional ways of addressing family matters. They started to live according to modern times.

The father of the late Mofeti makes it clear to his remaining two sons, Tholo and Tsholo, that if one of them married Kedisaletse according to Setswana tradition, it would be an advantage for the family, because the Matlapeng's family blood will be secured within the family itself as well as their late brother's property, unlike somebody who is not a family member coming to reap what he did not sow. The Matlapeng's family payed lobola to

the Ketlamoreng's family to marry Kedisaletse because lobola is very central in Setswana tradition.

Tholo regards such traditional arrangement as a miracle in Phelandaba township. Kedisaletse goes on to say in this matter:

"Nna ga ke ise ke bone selo sa mafuta oo se dirwa. Moruti o ne a le fano. O ntlhoboseditse gore ena a ka se segofatse lenyalo la mofuta o." (p.50)

[I have never seen something like this being done. The minister was here. He informed me to forget because he can not bless such a marriage.]

Tholo would also want to know from Kedisaletse whether she finds it possible for such a relationship between them and she replies emphatically by saying:

"Le go ka! Nna ga ke sediriswa. Ke motho." (p. 50)

[Never! I am not a tool. I am a human being.]

It can be seen from the above quotation that the position of the minister and the church also had a serious impact on issues that could have been addressed in a traditional manner.

On the same note, Tsholo disagrees with his father's suggestion that he should marry Kedisaletse in addition to his wife with whom he does not have children by saying to him:

"Sekeresete se letlelela monna go tsaya mosadi a le mongwe fela ... Nna ke Mokeresete." (p.51-52)

[Christianity allows a man to take one woman only ... I am a Christian.]

But the father insists:

"Setlokwa se letla monna go gorosa jaaka a kgona." (p.52)

[Setlokwa tradition allows a man to marry as many women as he can provide for.]

It can be argued further that even the title of the short story itself, *O nkutlwe* (*you should listen to me*) suggests a binary opposition. Such an opposition is evident from the views of the parents which are contrary to those of the young people and the minister. One party would like its traditional views to be listened to while the other one would also like its modern views to be given a hearing.

Pekwa establishes a love relationship with Kedisaletse and stays with her in the late Mofeti's house without involving the parents according to traditional procedures. This is contrary to the Setswana tradition in the sense that Pekwa did not pay lobola for Kedisaletse to the Matlapeng's family as it was supposed to be .

Kedisaletse is admitted to Baragwanath Hospital where she gives birth to a premature deformed baby. During the birth the legs of the baby comes out first instead of the head which is abnormal. The facial appearance of the baby looks the same as that of Pekwa who denied to have pregnant Kedisaletse. When discharged from the hospital, she leaves the baby in the incubator.

There is a contrast in the physical appearance of Kedisaletse at the time of her husband's death and when she is discharged from Baragwanath hospital according to her description by the narrator. It is said:

Sengwe mo tshobotsing ya gagwe se mo kaya e ketse e sa ntse e
le mosetlana wa sekontari, ntswa a setse a tswa madibeng
gabedi ... (p.41)

[Something in her physical appearance portrays her as if she is still a secondary school girl, though she already has two children.]

It is further said:

A hulara jalo morwa Matlapeng - Bra Feti; a tlogela Kedisaletse e le legamma ... (p.43)

[The son of Matlapeng - Bra Feti died, leaving Kedisaletse still looking very young.]

But on the contrary her physical appearance now looks different when she is discharged from the hospital:

Kedisaletse a tswa mo bookelong morago ga kgwedi, a tlherephane e kete ga se ena mosetsana yole wa ngogola. (p.54)

[Kedisaletse was discharged from the hospital after a month looking old and worn-out as if she is not the young girl she was the previous year.]

From the above facts one may conclude that there is an opposition of the traditional way intended by Kedisaletse's biological parents and parents-in-law to address her desperate situation after her husband's death and the modern way of life as well as the christian views of the minister, Kedisaletse, Tholo, Tsholo and Pekwa regarding the same situation.

The argument of Schapera (1940:273) corresponds with to the traditional way of addressing Kedisaletse's problem:

In Kgatla law, death does not immediately dissolve marriage.

Schapera (1940:284) further says:

If the widow is still fairly young, and especially if her sons are all minors or she has none at all, her fate may be settled in various ways. In the old days custom demanded that her husband's younger brother, even if already married, should enter the hut, so that she might continue to bear. He was not regarded as her husband, but merely as her guardian, and apart from cohabitating with her, he protected and supported her and her children, and looked after her husband's estate.

Modern life also seriously affected the Batswana traditional way of burying the dead. The skin of a cow slaughtered for the funeral used to serve as a coffin for the deceased. But there is an opposition in this regard because Mofeti is buried in a beautiful casket. Even food prepared for the funeral is also of modern style: custard and jelly, rice and vegetables as well as beer instead of just sorghum porridge and meat.

Ketlamoreng emphasizes this opposition by saying:

"Ka setso kobo ya moswi ke letlalo la kgomo ya megoga, e seng magasigasi a lekase." (p.44)

[According to tradition a deceased person is buried in the skin of a cow, not in a beautiful coffin.]

According to Setswana tradition or custom when the husband dies, the wife has to wear black clothes for a period of twelve months as a sign of sorrow and respect to the deceased. Thereafter, a ritual should be arranged by the in-laws whereby the wife is traditionally washed, after which she can also take off the black clothes.

It is also traditionally unacceptable for a widow or widower to leave her or his home and walk through the village in black clothes or even to have sex with a widow who has not been traditionally washed. But it happens with Kedisaletse shortly after the burial of Mofeti when she had to respond to the letter which invited her to Viljoen's office to come and discuss the issue of rent payment. Furthermore, Kedisaletse becomes involved in a love relationship with Pekwa, her late husband's friend and lives with him, ultimately falling pregnant.

Kedisaletse's in-laws did not arrange or attend any ceremony intended to traditionally wash her and take off her black clothes. They have since clashed over the issue of who is having the right to distribute or allocate her

late husband's clothes among members of both families. Kedisaletse feels that she has the final word regarding the property in her house. It is said:

Le gompieno monnamogolo ga a ise a ko a bee lonao kwa ga ngwetsi ya gagwe. Ga re itse gore Kedisaletse o rotswe ke mang thapo. (p.52)

[Even today the old man has never put a foot at his daughter-in-law's house. We don't know who performed the ritual of cleansing Kedisaletse of her late husband's death.]

The sociological level can be diagrammatically represented as in fig. 3.

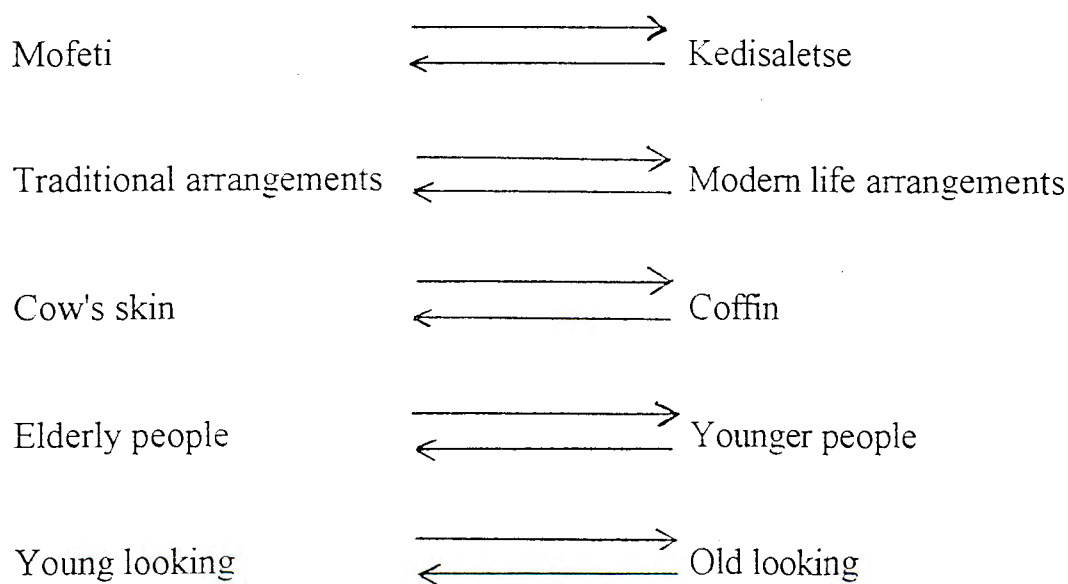


Fig. 3

3.2.4 THE COSMOLOGICAL ASPECTS

According to Lévi-Strauss (1977:157-158) the concept 'cosmological' has nothing to do with reality in his analysis of the Tsimshian myth, but is rather supernatural when the two voyages of the hero are considered, namely a voyage to the heavens and the sun, and a voyage to the subterranean underwater world. In this sense the cosmological level and aspects are restricted to the mythological abstracts.

It can be argued that in the African context the cosmological level portrayed by Malope in *O nkutlwe* within the Phelandaba community, is a reflection of life in the Batswana community as part of the holistic life and world view which is all-inclusive.

Tukonbo Adeyemo (1995:16) says from a point of departure of an African life and world view:

... traditional values are collapsing leaving behind a cultural vacuum. Here again the church is faced with the need for theological contextualisation that does justice to both the text and the context.

Adeyemo's view is evident from the events of the narrative which are centred around tradition and modern life with christianity included.

At the outset of events Kedisaletse's marriage is discontinued by the death of her husband, Mofeti. After all efforts by both her biological and parents-in-law to have one of Mofeti's brothers to take over his family fail, she cohabites with Pekwa.

The failure of such efforts can be related to Adeyemo's view that traditional values are collapsing in the sense that the cohabitation of Kedisaletse and Pekwa is just an arrangement between the two without following proper traditional channels.

The position of the minister, Tsholo, Tholo, Kedisaletse and Pekwa in the narrative with regard to the traditional practice that one of the late brother's brothers should take over his family (Seyantlo), creates a gap between the older and younger generation, that which Adeyemo (1995:16) views as a cultural clash and subsequent cultural vacuum.

This situation is currently a problem in the Batswana community because it causes confusion as to whether tradition should be followed or modern way of life or a mix of the two.

The events of the narrative end with the relationship between Kedisaletse and Pekwa finally becoming a great disappointment to both of them. Pekwa becomes so dishonest with Kedisaletse and robs her of her car which was left for the family by Mofeti. Pekwa, on the other hand, did not pay the house rent as he promised Kedisaletse. The municipality in return takes her

property and locks up the house. Kedisaletse goes back to Soweto, dispossessed of her property.

It can be argued that all this come about as a result of a curse by Mofeti's father because according to Kedisaletse, she still remembers very well that the day when Mofeti's clothes were distributed among the family members, his father-in-law went away angrily and said:

"Lo tla se bona!" (p.54)

[You will see it!]

Pekwa also experiences misfortune. He becomes ill and is to be hospitalized because of sores that developed all over his body. He decides to leave the *Datsun E-20* with another woman he was then staying with at Mmamelodi township after disappearing with it from Kedisaletse. Unfortunately it burns to ashes because he connected the alarm system incorrectly. Pekwa is taken to Kalafong Hospital. However, a year after admission, his condition has still not improved.

According to the narrator, Pekwa receives a punishment he deserves. He says:

Selo sosi o se ithutile: Mogama motho ke lesito, mogama kgomo ke ena lethlare. (p.55)

The narrator expresses his belief by means of this Setswana proverb which can be explained as follows:

[Pekwa has learned one thing that it is foolish of him to cheat Kedisaleitse because he finally did not benefit anything but it is only wise to milk the cow.]

The cosmological schema can be diagrammatically represented as in fig. 4.

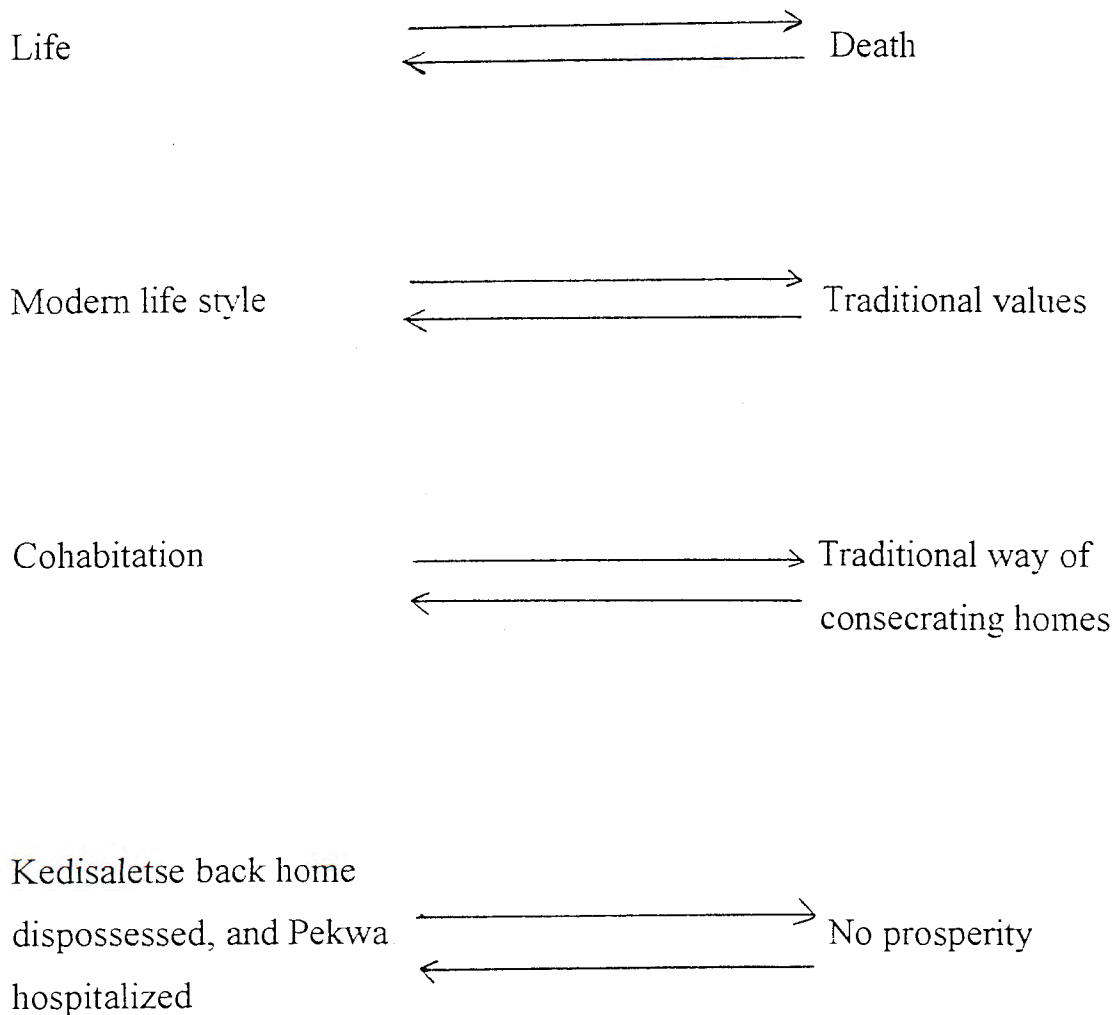


Fig. 4

In this analysis of *O nkulwe*, four levels with various aspects have been identified: the geographic, the economic, the sociological and the cosmological. But these levels are not necessarily separated from each other because they jointly and integratively enhance the theme.

3.3 GLOBAL INTEGRATION

The short story can be finally reduced to its two extreme oppositions, that is, the initial and final state of affairs. Together they summarize the operational function of the story. The two sets of extreme oppositions are diagrammatically represented in fig. 5.

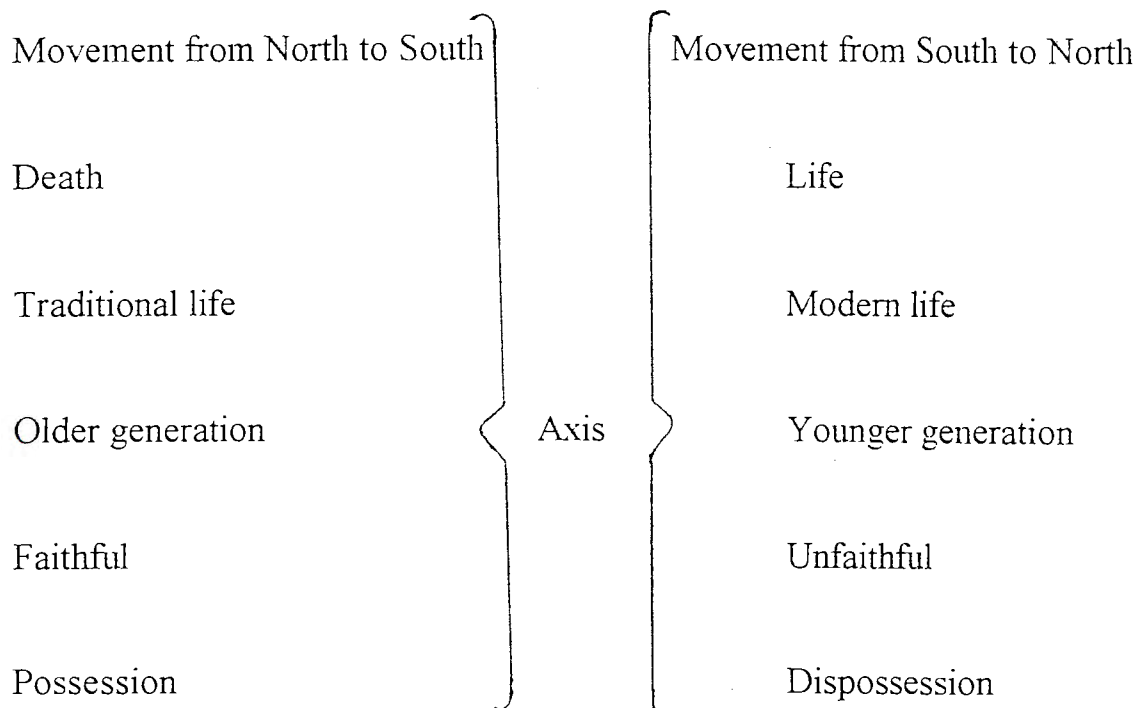


Fig. 5

The binary oppositions and Lévi-Strauss's analytic model are of noticeable importance in the analysis of *O nkutlwe* because they demonstrate that structural analysis has sociological value. The short story is certainly related to given facts of life and it is therefore essential to round off such an analysis with a clear indication of its relation to life of the Batswana community.

It is a belief in the Batswana community that custom or traditional practices should be preserved. In the eyes of Kedisaletse and Mofeti's parents Kedisaletse's problem could have been solved right away, with Tholo or Tsholo taking over the late Mofeti's family, was it not due to the influence of modern life. Adeyemo (1995:16) describes the African condition as follows:

Culturally Africa is still in a state of transition. While the older generation cries for a return to traditional roots, the younger generation craves for western ideas and life style. The shift from permanance to change; from unity (ethnicity) to plurality; from the absolute of religious taboes to the relative of existentialism, and from passivity to activity has brought with it the problem of identity crises.

On the other hand, the dynamism of binary oppositions reveals itself clearly when Kedisaletse deviates from tradition and follows the modern way of addressing life as a whole. In this regard the holistic approach to an African life and world view as seen by Adeyemo (1995:29-30) can be referred to:

This holistic approach to reality ... implies *dynamic* holistic treatment of human needs.

3.4 CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that the system of binary oppositions and Lévi-Strauss's analytic model gives a more comprehensive structural analysis of *Onkutlwe*. On the other hand, they complement each other in relating the story to the realities of life of the Batswana community within the broader African life and world view.

CHAPTER 4

4.1 SUMMARY

It was stated at the outset of the inquiry that the purpose of this study is to apply the Lévi-Straussian theory to the Setswana short story: *O nkutlwe* in order to determine the dynamism of binary opposition and relate the story to the realities of life of the Batswana community. According to a computer search no study in Setswana literature has yet been approached in the manner in which this research project does. I have chosen this study because I wanted to find out whether the Lévi-Straussian theory and binary oppositions could be used to analyse the structure of *O nkutlwe* in its context.

In the first chapter I contextualized the research topic for this study, presented an overview of existing research projects on Malope's work and also on Lévi-Straussian theory. The problem questions, aims and objectives of the research, thesis statement as well as the modus operandi were addressed in order to clarify the intention of this study.

The second chapter dealt with the arguments on New Historicism, binary oppositions and the Lévi-Straussian theory. These theoretical concepts were explained with reference to the views of Davis and Schleifer, Pavel, Greimas, Hawkes, Saussure, Leach, Makgamatha and those of Lévi-Strauss in his structural analysis of a Tsimshian myth. Various levels of abstraction were also explained and finally, an inventory of schemata was drawn with particular reference to the Tsimshian myth, *The story of Asdiwal*.

The third chapter presented a structural analysis of *O nkulwe*, concentrating on the essential aspects of the story's structure in various levels: the geographic, economic, sociological and the cosmological, and the identification of binary oppositions in each one of them. On the other hand each level was schematically represented with emphasis on certain binary oppositions. It was established that modern life have substantial influence on the traditional way of life of the Batswana community.

4.2 CONCLUSION

In general it can be concluded that the binary oppositions make the development of the conflict in the plot possible and thus make the story. Furthermore, the structural analysis of *O nkulwe* in this study does not only concentrate on the sequential structure of the short story, but also relates the structure of the short story in its context by means of binary oppositions.

It would appear from the events of this short story that the narrator is appealing to the Batswana community not to ignore their tradition as a result of modern ways of life. In the same breath, it can be argued that there seems to be nothing wrong with modern life per se, as long as traditional values and norms are not completely kept aside and looked down on.

Basically, *O nkulwe* reveals the issues of binary oppositions regarding modern life and traditional life with reference to the Batswana community in Phelandaba. Such issues can be researched in other genres in

modern African literature for example, novel, poetry, drama including stage and television drama, and also in other African communities.

In retrospect, it is clear that the binary oppositions identified in *O nkutlwe* enhance the development of the theme of this short story. J.E. Cirlot (1983:24) defines the concept binary as:

Duality ... a basic quality of all natural processes in as far they comprise two opposite phases or aspects. When integrated within a higher context, this duality generates a binary system based on the counterbalanced forces of two opposite poles. The two phases or aspects can be either symmetrical (or in other words identical in extent and intensity) or asymmetrical, successive or simultaneous.

What Cirlot (1962:25) says about the fundamental working of binary oppositions, is also affirmed in this short story:

The mystery of duality, which is at the root of all action, is manifest in any opposition of forces, whether spatial, physical or spiritual. The premodial pairing of heaven and earth appears in most traditions as image of primal opposition, the binary essence of life.

The contrast between modern life and traditional life is the important theme of *O nkutlwe*. The problem arises when the parents could not succeed with the traditional arrangement that one of the late Mofeti's brothers takes over his

family, and Kedisaletse ultimately cohabitating with Pekwa. Such a relationship did her no good but more harm. Adeyemo (1995:16) has this to say:

An increasing shift in value is evident primarily in our cities. Previously, people mattered more than things. Nowadays many are reversing the equation. The church must arrest this trend.

Although Lévi-Strauss's theory appeared in the 1950's, it is applied in this research project to determine the dynamism of binary oppositions in *Okutlwe* and to relate the story to the realities of the Batswana community. This clearly demonstrates that old theories can still be applied successfully in current studies, but also taking critique of contemporary literary theorists into consideration. In my opinion this study has achieved the main purpose for which it was intended.

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