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# A critical discourse analysis of Maphalla's selected poems: South Africa's pre-democratic election messages

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The years 1990 to 1994 were the most critical years in the lives of all South Africans. For writers, this period presented an opportunity for expressions that have long been suppressed due to the censoring of writers in South Africa. Poetry was one of the ways in which a writer was able to reveal and express his or her thoughts about what they see, hear and the general events that are related to their lives and society at large. Maphalla is also one of the writers who used the pen to spread the messages of death, pain, love, hope and peace, whilst also being very critical of the socio-political environment at the time. As his name (the peaceful one) implies, Kgotsi Maphalla was a writer who was able to rebuke, criticise and give hope in a peaceful manner. This article analyses four of Maphalla's poems from his poetry book called *Seitebatso* [Oblivion]. The four poems were selected to address the themes of freedom, hope and injustice. There are many traditional methods used to analyse poems. In this article, I have chosen to use critical discourse analysis, which is a method of analysing spoken language and text, to demonstrate the balance between language, identity, social relations, and power. Discourse is therefore molded by relations of power and invested ideologies. In this kind of analysis, I show that Maphalla used language in a manner that reflected freedom, peace, and hope that the volatile situation will settle down, at a very uncertain time in South Africa.

## Introduction

It is not easy to imagine or believe that there are writers who have not been influenced by politics in South Africa. The apartheid regime, although many see it as a hindrance to the development or growth of African literature, the greater influence comes from the colonial period, especially the role played by missionaries (Peires 1980). It is common knowledge that writers do not just live on an island that has no social, economic, political, historical, or educational status in the country, to name just a few. One can only imagine the hold and influence held by a system that takes credit and the responsibility for teaching a person to read and write, how to learn and to analyse their mother language. The mental bounds and the political forces are unimaginable. Research discussing censorship of literature in South Africa shows that African writers found other ways to avoid censorship (e.g., de Oliveira, Moraes & Mateus, 2019; McDonald, 2009; Maake, 1992). In this article, I analyse selected poems of the Sesotho writer, KPD Maphalla, paying attention to the period after the release of Nelson Mandela until just before the first South African democratic elections (1990–1993). Four poems have been selected for analysis from his collection of poetry. The intention is to show that these selected poems, based on their time of publication, reflect the themes of freedom, peace, injustice, inequality, and the hope of a new life. Furthermore, I intend to demonstrate how, the same poems that reflect peace and hope for the future are also a reflection of the power-changing dynamics, which were present in South Africa at that time. This is done using the analytical framework of critical discourse analysis (CDA).

This article will take the following format: In the first section, I discuss the role of censorship in general for those who write in African languages. The next section highlights South African authors' responses to this literary pressure and what techniques they have used to further their writing. In section three I introduce CDA as an analytic framework and motivate why it is seen as a suitable framework for interpretation and analysis of Maphalla's poems. The article concludes with a presentation of the author's brief background and an analysis of the selected poems.

## The role of censorship in shaping South African literary discourses

The issue of when South Africa gained liberation and independence remains a debated matter depending on several considerations. In many instances, racial background determines the dates that South Africa gained independence. In their discussion of censorship in Africa, De Oliveira et al. (2019) argue that the discussions that South Africa should not be considered a colonial state because the Apartheid era started after 1940 in South Africa, should not be entertained. In their view, the 1910 independence from Britain only applied to a small portion of the population. According to de Oliveira et al. (2019), black South Africans not only had to deal with and survive under terrible conditions, but they also had to deal with the tensions between the Afrikaaners and the British. These authors also point out that '[f]or or a long period of time, it was not true also for the writers and artists to [be] kept silent by censorship when they tried to denounce Apartheid's injustices — no matter if these artists were

whites or blacks' (de Oliveira et al., 2019: 2). In other words, even if white writers did not face the same kind of censorship, they were also censored from voicing their views regarding the apartheid system. This was made possible by the fact that the apartheid system ensured that racial communities were segregated in all aspects to prevent any kind of cross-pollination, including education and by default, literary discourses.

Although there were black writers, it is argued that literature written by black writers in South Africa is a 20th century phenomenon (de Oliveira et al., 2019;). Maake (1992: 163) also notes that in 'the first three decades of the century there was little literary critical scholarship on African language literatures. Preires (1980: 71) also echoes the same sentiments when he points out that 'special features of written vernacular history as a specific category of African historical documentation still await a general theoretical analysis' in his introduction to an article that discusses the role of The Lovedale Press in promoting or suppressing the growth of literature written in African Languages. Peires (1980) and Maake (1992) concur that the missionaries devoted much more attention to grammatical studies of the language, which in turn marginalised literature. It is therefore not surprising to find that even to date, it is very difficult to teach literary criticism in African literature, written in African languages.

It is against this backdrop that authors such as JM Coetzee, Andre Brink, Nadine Gordimer and Breyten Breytenbach achieved international status writing during apartheid, while writers writing in African languages remained localised. What is interesting for the purposes of this article is that although the other authors' works (Brink, Gordimer and Breytenbach) was banned in South Africa, JM Coetzee's works were never banned. It is for this reason that de Oliveira et al. (2019) embarked on a study that explored JM Coetzee's writing strategy to survive censorship. Although de Oliveira et al. (2019) agree that there were too many circumstances at the time, such as the choice of an international publisher, back-and-forth letters between the author and the publisher, as well as letters to friends detailing dissatisfaction with the political decisions in the country, the researchers believe that the writing strategy, specifically the unknown villages and unnamed natives, was reason enough for JM Coetzee's novel, *Waiting for the Barbarians* to escape censorship. They also agree that the 'many layers of interpretation and meanings will certainly escape an inattentive reader' (de Oliveira et al., 2019: 9). It is these layers of interpretation and meaning that I hope to uncover in Maphalla's selected poems from *Seitebatso*.

### South African writers' responses to censorship

Although I mentioned earlier that literature by black South African writers is a 20th century phenomenon, this does not account for the oral literature which dates back to before the reduction of African languages into writing, in the late 19th century. The effect and influence of oral literature became one of the ways in which authors could write about important social and political issues that affect them in a very symbolic manner. In particular, SeSotho poetry has always been considered a way of getting 'a glimpse into

modes of life, culture, and the world's outlook together with some bits of information regarding the original home of the Basotho people and their tribulations during the period of 'migration' (Bulane, 1972: 63).

This richness is also observed by Opland (1975: 185) where he notes that 'praise poems found in Southern Africa are said to be the most specialised and most complex forms of oral poetry in Africa.' Barber and Furniss (2006) are also of the opinion that, although written literary genres were pioneered by teachers and churchmen, they also somehow offered a bird's-view into the tradition and cultural history of the societies within which they operated. Oral traditions from East and West Africa also support the notion that for the large part, oral literacy opens a window into traditional cultural and political histories of societies (Locke, 1990).

The downside of this richness is that many of the works that have been collected are dependent on secondary sources. There is no access to the original sources because of language barriers (Barber & Furnis, 2006). This means that much of what has been written in the form of literary criticism pertaining to African literature written in African languages is based on secondary sources. The richness as well as the sociopolitical forces may have been compromised. It is therefore very important to understand the various forces that worked against this creativity. In the next sub-sections, I outline some of these challenges.

### Little readership

One of the motivations for keeping writers inspired to write is the feedback that they receive in the form of publication royalties, reviews and generally being appreciated as an author. In the case of African literature, and in this particular case, Sesotho literature, one of the suppressors of creativity and progress is lack of readership. Maake (1992) notes that in addition to the language barriers, as early as the 1950s, many poets had unpublished manuscripts of poetry for various reasons. One of the reasons cited is the problem of a lack of readership which was already obvious at the beginning of the 1930s (Maake 1992: 166). This lack of readership was also associated with the opportunities for writing in Sesotho. For many authors, as Maake points out, more and more of them started writing in order to supply the school market which provided a financial cushion.

### School curricula

The reduction of African languages into a written format in most of Africa came about as a form of religious force. It is therefore not surprising that authors writing in African languages managed to get printed 'by producing didactic Christian poetry, or emasculated poetry written with European stanzaic structure and rhyme' (Maake, 1992: 203). Furthermore, Maake (1992: 203) notes that 'publishers were reluctant to publish what cannot be prescribed by schools, otherwise the poet must water down his poetry to make it sufficiently Christian or innocuous for schoolchildren'. It is therefore expected that much of the poetry that made it to print, 'not many of the published poetry captures the full force of the traditional oral performances' (Maake, 1992: 2003).

Furthermore, Maake (1992) concludes that the interference of government through the regulation of what they regarded

as undesirable literature, used language boards as guardians of what books should be prescribed for schools. In Maake's (1992: 173) view,

the writings of South African Sotho writers indicated no overt attempt at tampering with pressing issues, and politically committed works were conspicuously absent. It is plausible to make a surmise that the South African writers realized that they stood a chance of a wider market in the school, and thus did not want to offend those in charge of the educational affairs of Africa.

Along the same lines, Peires (1980), in his discussion of Lovedale Press also notes that the financial implications of printing materials that would not generate income also added to the dearth of African literature, which truly reflected the sociopolitical and historical circumstances associated with colonialism and apartheid. Seddon (2008) is of the opinion that the many obstacles that faced African writers, including the integration of the written form of South African poetry, remain the main stumbling blocks even today.

### **Publishers' preferences**

Publishing in African languages continues to be plagued with challenges even in post-apartheid South Africa. Although this is slowly changing, for many decades, authors have always had the challenge of finding publishers who are willing to take the risk. Peires (1980) discusses how the interactions with Xhosa historians and the history of the Lovedale Press provide insights into the impact of publishing houses on the quality and content of African literature. In particular, Peires (1980: 71) emphasises the fact that 'it is not only oral traditions which are affected by their mode of transmission ... that it is one thing to be literate, but quite another to find a publisher.'

Peires (1980) goes into detail outlining the challenges that the authors faced under the leadership of RHW Shepherd at Lovedale from 1929. As a printing press, Lovedale initially prided itself in publishing 'evangelical and educational tasks of the mission' (Peires, 1980: 71). Peires (1980) further notes that, Shepherd, inspired by the American Black Consciousness Movement, encouraged the publication of what he termed 'good literature', which in Shepherd's view, was a move away from the poetry of 'protest, rebellion and despair, often an inartistic and unloving thing' (Peires, 1980: 72). This meant that African writers could now focus on themes other than religion. This victory was short-lived though. This position financially affected the Lovedale Press. The income came from printing outside jobs such as journals and literature for the missions operating in southern Africa. During the Second World War, there was a shortage of paper, which forced the press to redirect its focus. According to Peires (1980: 72), Lovedale was forced to take printing that was more lucrative from the missionaries followed by the printing of school textbooks. In terms of literature, focus had now shifted to the printing of shorter pieces. As a consequence, there was a reluctance to print substantive literary works. Many writers were forced to either edit or agree to print in two parts. In many instances, the relationship between many of these writers (such as Mqhayi, Soga, Raditladi) and the press soured.

Undoubtedly, similar conditions were reported by Mofolo's departure from Morija in Lesotho (Maake 1992: 166), as well as similar financial and censorship challenges in publishing

houses in South Africa. Although Maake's (1992) position was to address the issue of inequality between African literature and Afrikaans, he also made important contributions that shed light on the role of publishing houses in South Africa in suppressing the development of African literature. Most of the publishing houses in South Africa that published Sesotho were meant for the revitalisation of the Afrikaans language and culture. As such, Basotho writers were constrained by the interests of the missionaries. According to Maake (1992: 171), '[t]he South African Sotho writers addressed only those problems such as the *Makgoweng* [Jim comes to Joburg] motif could provide them, and begged the question instead of challenging the most sensitive and pressing questions of the time. The only genre that escaped this suppression was *dithoko* [poetry], perhaps because of the marginalisation of oral literature.'

### **Fragmentation of the continent**

The fragmentation of the African continent did not only end with the demarcations of artificial borders. These borders were also imposed on linguistic communities as well. In South Africa, the policy of separate development — apartheid — ensured that similar language groups developed separately, resulting in divergent orthographies, unshared literatures as well as an emphasis on the differences rather than the similarities. Kunene (1992), attributes the lack of development in African literature to the fragmentation of the African continent. In his view, African writers have been painted into a corner by history, where their writing was constantly a reminder of how colonialism violated the integrity of African societies.

In response to this violation, Africans began articulating their discontent with colonialism through a movement that swept throughout the African continent, the birth of African literature. Kunene (1992) is of the view that the search for roots and freeing themselves, physically and psychologically, that came with the discovery of African literature, also contributed to the marginalisation of the oral forms of African literature fragmentation.

Another form of fragmentation of African literature came with the revising of orthographies. The 1930s saw a wave of orthographic reforms across the African continent. Language bodies, such as the International Institute of African Languages and Cultures co-founded by DH Westermann in 1926, aimed to standardise orthographies on linguistic grounds and this ended up having disastrous societal effects (Peires, 1975). According to Maake (1992), the revision of orthographies had good intentions, however, the state, together with the missionaries, used these new orthographic conventions to destabilise established writers. Maake (1992: 175) notes that

[t]hough it was argued that the orthography was introduced for practical purposes — namely, that it was a better graphological representation of the language sounds than the old one, which was introduced by French missionaries, it nevertheless created a stale-mate for Lesotho writers. More books were published in South Africa than in Lesotho, and some new editions of Morija publications were reprinted in South Africa.

Whereas the fragmentation of Africa also resulted in various fragmentations of African literature, there was also less attention given to the oral poetic forms of literature.



Conversely, the abandonment (albeit not intentionally) of oral literature (written or performed), allowed this form of literature to grow and continue to capture the souls of the people. Oral literature, with a few exceptions (e.g., Locke, 1990; Kaschula, 2008; Sheldon, 2008; Asuro, 2020), has remained less tainted by colonial influences than are evident in other forms of African literature.

This dire situation has changed a bit in the past few years with a number of companies offering different awards that include the celebration of poetry in different languages (e.g., de Lange & Motinyane, 2018). In other areas, such as music, the connections between music, poetry, folklore, and language as an embodiment of sociocultural influences remain underexplored (Motinyane et al., 2017). It is for this purpose that I believe that an analysis of poetry, provides an angle that the current body of literary criticism does not capture in full.

### Critical discourse analysis

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is an analytical framework that emerged in the 1980s driven by discourse studies in Europe under the wing of researchers such as Norman Fairclough, Ruth Wodak, and Teun van Dijk (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000). The purpose of CDA is to analyse structural relationships that reflect dominance, power, and control that are embodied in the way language is used (Wodak, 1995). According to Wodak (1997: 173),

CDA studies real and often extended, instances of social interaction which take (partially) linguistic form. The critical approach is distinct in its view of (1) the relationship between language and society, and (2) the relationship between analysis and the practices being analysed.

There are three dimensions that are associated with CDA. These are discourse as text, discourse-as-discursive practice and discourse-as-social-practice (Fairclough 1992a). The dimension of discourse as text deals with the micro-elements of discourse, such as an analysis that targets the choice of vocabulary, grammar, cohesion and text structure (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000). The second dimension has to do with how the 'text' is produced and how it is circulated and received in the society. The third dimension deals with 'the ideological effects and hegemonic processes in which discourse is a feature... Hegemony concerns power that is achieved through constructing alliances and integrating classes, and groups through consent' (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000: 449). This third dimension situates discourse in society. It deals with the way in which discourse is represented, respoken and rewritten and how this sheds light on the emergence of new discourses, struggles, normativity, attempt at control and resistance against regimes and power.

Whereas there are critiques of CDA for its lack of a clear distinction from various analysis methods and theories, focus on text and its linguistic aspects, and the lack of multimodality, later researchers have embraced the basic aspects of CDA and extended and incorporated some aspects of social theory that have evolved from the third dimension of CDA.

### Using CDA in the analysis of poetry

The origins of poetry in its written form can be attributed

to oral traditions. In South Africa, and many other African societies, poetry recitals were often seen as a means of social and political mediation. In his analysis of *iimbongi* [praise singers] performances, Kaschula (1993) alludes to the fact that although some elements of the traditional recitals have been abandoned, the function of the *iimbongi* and his relationship with the audience and the context of his performance should be taken into consideration.

Whereas there are differences between written and performed poetry, Ntombela (2016) is of the view that the focus on the written forms side-lines the messages that denote power relations that are also evident in the oral traditions. Ntombela (2016: 109) further emphasises that the relationship between oral and written texts remains an area of neglect due to modernist views that still favour standardisation of language orthographies. Regardless of these modernist preferences, oral language skills cannot be completely eliminated from classroom literacy practices.

Taking these two views together, we can begin to see how CDA manages to connect the two forms, the written and the performed as an analysis framework. The textual analysis (the first dimension) addresses most of the written form. The second dimension which deals with how a text is produced and circulated speaks to the mode of delivery but also takes into consideration the context of this delivery. The third aspect addresses the power relations as expressed in the written form, considering the power relations as reflected in the society.

While CDA does not situate poetry as one of the areas of interest, a number of scholars have used it in the analysis of poetry. Ntombela (2016) uses CDA as a framework for the analysis of Maskandi music, Khan (2016) used CDA in the analysis of William Blake's 'The Rose', Motinyane (2018) utilised CDA in the analysis of chants and social media textual messages, and Alipourgaskari et al. (2022) use CDA to analyse Buick Maleki's poems and adolescence.

The focus of this current article, given the time at which the book was published in South Africa, and the political environment coupled with historical influences, will be well served by an analytic framework that combines text, mode of delivery and power dynamics. The analysis focuses on the textual part as one aspect, with the other two combined and discussed under one section. These two dimensions will be part of the discussion. It is therefore the intention of this article to address issues related to language use and power dynamics in four of Maphalla's poems:

- '*Ntho tsena di a tshwana*'
- '*Ke kgutlile*'
- '*Ke tlile kahlong*'
- '*Le rona re a kena*'

### Themes that emerged from selected poems

Kgotso Pieter David (KPD) Maphalla was born in 1955 in South Africa. At the time of his death on 5 April 2021, he had published over 70 literary works including poetry, novels, short stories, and plays. Most of his works were prescribed in schools and tertiary institutions. Maphalla won 'his major literary prize in 1980, in the Sesotho poetry competition of the Radio Bantu Sesotho Service, now known as Lesedi FM' (SABC News, 2022). He received numerous awards

during his 40 years as a teacher, including the MNet Award and the Chairperson's Award from the South African Literary Awards, and an honorary doctorate from the University of the Free State in 2007. He was described by those who worked with him or read his works as a religious person, a revolutionary and a champion for Basotho and Sesotho who mentored younger writers.

Among the many literary works this article focuses on, *Seitebatso*, a collection of Sesotho poetry that was published by Van Schaik in 1993. The title of the book, *Seitebatso* [Oblivion], says a lot more than what the English translation means. Oblivion can be defined as a state of being unaware of what is happening around one, some form of 'unconsciousness'. In the context of South Africa, the build-up to the 1994 elections never allowed one to be oblivious. On the other hand, the first poem is called *Seitebatso*, which is the name given to a 'horse' but also a name inherited from the author's family. I will return to these facts in the discussion section.

*Ntho tsena di a tshwana*

1 *O itsatso maobane Ramosebetsi;*

2 *Ha a bona hase tsabo di kotelwa;*

3 *O hlile a ema thabeng, a hla a hakala*

4 *A re ha o eme ka lepaketla, o leeme,*

5 *Hobane mohlomphehi*

6 *Ntho tsena tse pedi di a tshwana.*

7 *Ha e le wa heno, ke kgeleke e kgolo ditabeng,*

8 *Ke kgabane ya ho tshapelwa ho komela dinyewe;*

9 *Haele wa heso ke seqamotanehadi,*

10 *Ke shwahle ya ho phofa le metsheare;*

11 *Empa mohlomphehi*

12 *Ntho tsena tse pedi di a tshwana*

13 *Ha e le wa haeno o ne a itshireletsa,*

14 *Le ha a batile kgutsana letoma le sa tshelweng ke nta;*

15 *Ha e le wa heso ke mohlola-a-dietsa,*

16 *O tswaetse ho nna a kgakgatha dikgabane;*

17 *Empa mohlomphehi*

18 *Ntho tsena tse pedi di a tshwana*

Maphalla, 1993: 8

'These things are the same

1 The Boss said so yesterday;

2 When he saw the calves being removed from the cows;

3 He actually stood up in fury

4 He said that if you stand up against it, you are biased,

5 Because sir

6 These two things are the same.

7 If it is your family, he is a great expert in matters,

8 He is an eloquent to be trusted with judgements;

9 If it is my family, he talks too much

10 He speaks nonsense;

11 But sir

12 These two things are the same

13 If it is your family, he was defending himself,

14 Even if he left the orphan with a gushing wound;

15 If it is my family, he is a hardened criminal,

16 He is used to bashing respectable people;

17 But sir

18 These two things are the same.'

The poem, *Ntho tsena di a tshwana* [These things are the same], addresses a general theme related to inequality, bias, and discrimination. The theme is expressed through the repetition of the title and by contrasting vocabulary. The use of the name *Ramosebetsi* [the boss], is itself an indication of unequal status. This bias is then carried out throughout the poem with words that express the same thing, but one of them is derogatory in nature. Examples can be found in line 7 *kgeleke* [one who speaks eloquently] and 9 *seqamotanehadi* [a person who talks too much and no substance]; line 13 *itshireletsa* [self-defense] and 15 *mohlola-a-dietsa* [hard criminal who assaults people]. All the positive terms or characteristics are associated with *Ramosebetsi*, but when the same action is associated with the implied worker, derogatory terms are used.

Maphalla is known for his eloquent and rich use of language. This is evident in the way in which he uses idiomatic expressions to heighten the level of bias and inequality. These include line 4 *ho ema lepaketla* [to stand up against], line 10 *ho phofa le metsheare* [speak nonsense], and 14 *letoma le sa tshelweng ke nta* [a gushing wound; lit. a wound that a louse cannot cross]. This play with language can be found throughout the poem.

*Ke kgutlile*

1 *Ngwaholakola ke ne ke le kwana Methating*

2 *Ke ithathika ka methati e se eso;*

3 *Mosotho o re e thala e boela mosehlelong*

4 *Ke mona kajeno ke kgutlile*

5 *Ngwahola ke ne ke le kwana Matswapong*

6 *Ke tswapela ka matswapo e se eso;*

7 *Mosotho o ye a re mayo ke maboyo*

8 *Ke mona kajeno ke kgutlile.*

9 *O ne a bolele hantle Mosotho wa kgale,*

10 *O ne a re ha e thala e thala e boela mosehlelong;*

11 *Ho neng ke hlathetha ke kgikgithaka*

12 *Empa ke mona kajeno ke kgutlile.*

Maphalla, 1993: 12

'I am back

1 The year before last year, I was following a Path

2 Following unfamiliar paths

3 Mosotho says you can go away but you must always remember to go back home

4 Today I am back

5 Last year I was there at the Mountains

6 Following unfamiliar paths between mountains

7 Mosotho says what goes around comes around

8 Today I am back

9 The old Mosotho rightly said,

10 When you go away, you must always remember to go back home;

11 I have long been roaming and running around

12 But I am here today, I'm back.'

This poem, *Ke kgutlile* [I am back] superficially addresses the theme of labour migration. If one looks at the poem in comparison with another one before it (not included here), *Ke ya mosebetsing* [I'm going to work] (Maphalla, 1993: 10), it becomes clear that it is not only about coming back from

work, it could also mean the return from exile. The notion of returning from exile is supported by the place names, which suggest lack of familiarity, a concept that is different from the usual 'going to Johannesburg' theme.

First, Maphalla expresses the length of time by using adverbs of time, starting with a long time ago, moving down to yesterday and ultimately 'today'. Line 1 *ngwaholakola* [the year before last year], line 5 *ngwahola* [last year], then *maoba* [the day before yesterday], *maobane* [yesterday] and finally *kajeno* [today]. This creates an image of the length of time associated with his absence. Foreignness on the other hand, is expressed by the choice of vocabulary. Line 1 *Methating* and line 4 *Matswapong* give an illusion that these are place names, because they are capitalised. However, when one continues to the line following these names, lines 2 and 5 respectively, it is clear that these are not place names but rather refer to 'wilderness', an unfamiliar place. For example, line 2 *Ke ithathika ka methati e se eso* [following unfamiliar steps, paths], line 6 *Ke tswapela ka matswapo e se eso* [walking between mountains in unfamiliar areas] and line 11 *Ho neng ke hlalathela ke kgikgitha* [roaming and running around]. Seen together, these are an indication that the poem is not about coming back from work.

On the use of idiomatic expressions, Maphalla drives the point home by using the expression, *e thala e boela mosehlong* [you can go away but you must always remember to go back home]. The closing line of each stanza follows the same pattern as many of his poems, a repetition that emphasises the theme, the completion of a journey. This repetition is contrasted with the opening line of each stanza, an expression of 'then' and 'now' as expressed in lines 1, 5 and 7.

*Ke tlile kahlolong*  
<sub>1</sub> *Ha le mpona ke boborane mona,*  
<sub>2</sub> *Ke se ke ithomotse ke boborane mona;*  
<sub>3</sub> *Le mpe le tsebe ha se ka boomo*  
<sub>4</sub> *Ke tlile kahlolong.*

<sub>5</sub> *Ho thwe ke fahlile mmuso ka lehlabathe,*  
<sub>6</sub> *Ke lebetse ho rolela Ramohlongwana katiba;*  
<sub>7</sub> *Ha le mpona ke kokometse mona*  
<sub>8</sub> *Ke tlile kahlolong.*

<sub>9</sub> *Kajeno moahlodi wa ka ke Morena Ramasiba*  
<sub>10</sub> *Motjhothisi yena ke mofumahadi wa hae;*  
<sub>11</sub> *Ha le mpona ke tlakasela tjena*  
<sub>12</sub> *Ke tlile kahlolong.*

<sub>13</sub> *Mpolelleng ha ho le tjena nnete e kae*  
<sub>14</sub> *Ke kae moo leeme le sa long ho sebetsa?*  
<sub>15</sub> *Ha le mpona ke kgathetse matla tjena*  
<sub>16</sub> *Ke tlile kahlolong.*

<sub>17</sub> *Mpolelleng hore na nka phonyoha jwang*  
<sub>18</sub> *Ha kajeno moqosi e le yena moahlodi?*  
<sub>19</sub> *Ha le mpona ke tsietsehile tjena*  
<sub>20</sub> *Ke tlile kahlolong.*

Maphalla, 1993: 13

<sub>1</sub> 'I have come to be judged  
<sub>2</sub> When you see me sitting here sluggishly,  
<sub>3</sub> Sitting uncomfortably and sadly;

<sub>3</sub> You should know that it is not on purpose  
<sub>4</sub> I have come to be judged.

<sub>5</sub> They say I have broken the law [lit. threw sand in the eyes of the authorities],  
<sub>6</sub> I forgot to take off my hat in the presence of the Honourable one;  
<sub>7</sub> When you see me squatting here  
<sub>8</sub> I have come to be judged.

<sub>9</sub> Today the judge is Lord Ramasiba  
<sub>10</sub> The prosecutor is his wife;  
<sub>11</sub> When you see me shivering like this  
<sub>12</sub> I have come to be judged.

<sub>13</sub> When things are like this where is the truth  
<sub>14</sub> Why wouldn't there be bias?  
<sub>15</sub> You don't see me hopeless like this  
<sub>16</sub> I have come to be judged.

<sub>17</sub> Tell me, how can I escape  
<sub>18</sub> If today the plaintiff is the judge?  
<sub>19</sub> You see me confused like this  
<sub>20</sub> I have come to be judged.'

In this poem, Maphalla is clearly speaking out against injustice and bias. This he does through the title of the poem, *Ke tlile kahlolong* [I have come to be sentenced/judged]. This sense of lack of justice is expressed in many ways. First, this is expressed with verbs that express position or motion such as sitting sluggishly as in line 1 (*boborana*), sadness in line 2 (*ithomola*), sitting uncomfortably in line 7 (*kotsomala*), frightened as in line 11 (*tlakasela*), loss of hope in line 15 (*kgathala matla*) and, finally, confusion in line 19 (*tsieleha*). This figurative level of figurative discomfort is a reflection of daily societal discomforts.

Another way of expressing injustice is through direct reference to the government using idiomatic expressions and names that reflect power relations. These include line 5 *Ho thwe ke fahlile mmuso ka lehlabathe* [They say I have broken the law]. The use of the impersonal subject 'ho thwe', they say, can be read as rebelling in a way that does not accuse a specific person. In line 6, *Ke lebetse ho rolela Ramohlongwana katiba* [lit. I forgot to take off the hat in the presence of the honourable one; I disrespected him] is an example of daily trials and tribulations. Finally, Maphalla uses rhetorical questions that are associated with a lack of justice. For example, line 9 and 10, can be contrasted with the rhetorical questions in lines 13 and 14 as well as lines 17 and 18.

<sub>9</sub> *Kajeno moahlodi wa ka ke Morena Ramasiba*  
<sub>10</sub> *Motjhothisi yena ke mofumahadi wa hae-*  
<sub>11</sub> *[...]*  
<sub>13</sub> *Mpolelleng ha ho le tjena nnete e kae*  
<sub>14</sub> *Ke kae moo leeme le sa tlong ho sebetsa?*  
<sub>15</sub> *[...]*  
<sub>17</sub> *Mpolelleng hore na nka phonyoha jwang*  
<sub>18</sub> *Ha kajeno moqosi e le yena moahlodi?*

Maphalla, 1993: 13

<sub>9</sub> Today the judge is Lord Ramasiba  
<sub>10</sub> The prosecutor is his wife'  
<sub>11</sub> [...]

- <sup>13</sup> When things are like there where is the truth  
<sup>14</sup> Why wouldn't there be bias?  
 [...]  
<sup>17</sup> Tell me, how can I escape  
<sup>18</sup> If today the plaintiff is the judge?

*Ke tlile kahlolong*, is perhaps one of the most explicit poems where Maphalla rebukes the system of injustice, where the plaintiff and the judge are the same, a hopeless situation.

- Le rona re a kena*  
<sup>1</sup> Menyako ke eo re e bulelwa  
<sup>2</sup> Yane ya ho dula e tinketswe le maoba;  
<sup>3</sup> Ha eba ke menyako ya kgotso le kgotso  
<sup>4</sup> Le rona re a kena.
- <sup>5</sup> Menyako ke eo re e bulelwa  
<sup>6</sup> Yane ya hore re e supiswe le maoba;  
<sup>7</sup> Ha eba ke menyako ya toka le nnete  
<sup>8</sup> Le rona re a kena.
- <sup>9</sup> Menyako ke eo re e bulelwa  
<sup>10</sup> Yane ya ho hore re e tshepise le maobeng;  
<sup>11</sup> Ha eba ke menyako ya ho nena leeme  
<sup>12</sup> Le rona re a kena.
- <sup>13</sup> Menyako ke eo re e bulelwa  
<sup>14</sup> Mohlomong ha re e bulwelwe, re a ipulela;  
<sup>15</sup> Ha eba ke menyako ya tshebetso ka thata  
<sup>16</sup> Le rona re a kena.

Maphalla, 1993: 14

- 'We are also entering  
<sup>1</sup> The doors have been opened for us  
<sup>2</sup> The ones that used to be tightly closed the day before yesterday;  
<sup>3</sup> If they are the doors of peace and stability  
<sup>4</sup> We are also entering.
- <sup>5</sup> The doors have been opened for us  
<sup>6</sup> The ones that we were shown (thrown out)yesterday;  
<sup>7</sup> If they are the doors of justice and truth  
<sup>8</sup> We are also entering.
- <sup>9</sup> The doors have been opened for us  
<sup>10</sup> The ones that we were promised a few days ago;  
<sup>11</sup> If they are doors that avoid bias  
<sup>12</sup> We are also entering.
- <sup>13</sup> The doors have been opened for us  
<sup>14</sup> Perhaps they are not opened for us, we open ourselves;  
<sup>15</sup> If they are the doors of hard work  
<sup>16</sup> We are also entering.'

The last poem, *Le rona re a kena* [we are also entering] expresses hope and opportunities for the future. The first line of each stanza, *Menyako ke eo re e buletswe* [The doors have been opened for us], gives the impression that there is a window of opportunity. However, the use of the passive form of the verb, and an implicit agent gives rise to doubt. This structure is kept throughout the poem, until the second last stanza, where the doubt is expressed explicitly. This is seen in line 14 *Mohlomong ha re e bulwelwe, re a ipulela* [Maybe the doors have not been opened for us, but

we opened them ourselves]. This indicates that there is an opportunity, however, agency is required to remove any doubt. The agency that is expressed through an active voice, sets this stanza apart from the rest.

The second aspect of this hope for a better future is expressed through reference to the past. The second line of each stanza does this:

- <sup>2</sup> Yane ya ho dula e tinketswe le maoba  
 'The ones that used to be tightly closed the day before yesterday'

- <sup>6</sup> Yane ya hore re e supiswe le maoba  
 'The ones that we were shown (thrown out) yesterday'

- <sup>10</sup> Yane ya ho hore re e tshepise le maobeng  
 'The ones that we were promised a few days ago'

Here again we see excessive use of the passive form. The passive form is regarded as an indirect and therefore polite way of expressing an accusation in Sesotho. These are paired with a play with words, signifying denied access in the past. Additionally, Maphalla uses adverbs of time to refer to the past, moving between the present, expressed in the first line of each stanza, and the past, which follows immediately after the lines that refer to the present time.

Another way in which Maphalla expresses hope and doubt can be found in the third line of each stanza:

- <sup>3</sup> Ha eba ke menyako ya kgotso le kgotso  
 'If they are the doors of peace and stability'

- <sup>7</sup> Ha eba ke menyako ya toka le nnete  
 'If they are the doors of justice and truth'

- <sup>11</sup> Ha eba ke menyako ya ho nena leeme  
 'If they are doors that avoid bias'

- <sup>15</sup> Ha eba ke menyako ya tshebetso ka thata  
 'If they are the doors of hard work'

The use of the conditional conjunction *ha eba* [if] shows some reservations on the side of the poet. On the one hand, there is an open door that can lead to possibilities. On the other hand, the poet expresses concern, 'we can enter, if the doors lead to peace and stability, justice and truth, avoidance of bias and well as acknowledgement of hard work.' This combination of the conditional conjunction and yearning for peace, stability, justice, truth, avoidance of bias and hard work, reflect hope and doubt. However, towards the end of the poem, lines 14 and 15 encourage the reader to take charge of the future, hence the active voice (compared to the passive voice).

## Discussion

The discussion focuses on the second and third dimensions of CDA. As mentioned earlier, CDA was criticised for blurring the lines between various approaches. It is however important to point out that an analysis lays the groundwork for the other two dimensions of CDA. This discussion is based on the production of text, how it is circulated and received by society and the power imbalances reflected by language use.

In the opening sections of this article, I mentioned some of the historical challenges facing South African poets (and writers in general). These include limited readership, school



curricula, publishers' preferences and the fragmentation of the continent. Looking at Maphalla's success as a writer, one cannot avoid asking the same questions that de Oliveira et al. (2019) asked in relation to JM Coetzee's works: How did Maphalla manage to publish over 70 literary works during apartheid in South Africa?

There are many ways to respond to this question. Firstly, Maphalla's books were prescribed in schools and tertiary institutions. This means that they had to conform to requirements set out by the government. For this to happen, his writing had to reflect the values embodied by the government as expressed in the school curricula. He also had to satisfy the publisher. Focusing on *Seitebatso* [Oblivion], one wonders why Maphalla chose this title in a country that was on the brink of political unrest from 1987 to 1993. It is hard to believe that he could have chosen to turn a blind eye to everything that was happening around him. The analysis of these selected poems clearly indicates that this is not the case. The choice of the title served the purpose of deflecting attention away from some of the poems that are clearly political and speaking against the injustices of the system. Another way of deflecting attention can be observed on the dedication page of the book, which refers to *Moruti* (preacher) SK Motshabi, *Moruti* NM Ramafikeng and *Monghadi* LP Nzunga. By dedicating the book to pastors and priests, the book shows the religious background of the author, thereby making it safe to be prescribed as a school textbook.

In terms of the structure of the book, when one opens *Seitebatso*, there is no reason why the book would not be prescribed. First, the poems follow the nice and neat conventions associated with poetry, neat and even stanzas, alliteration, metaphors, sonnets, elegies, and tributes. These are often required as part of the school curriculum. It would therefore not make sense to censor such books. Another way in which Maphalla managed to spread the message of the yearning for justice, avoiding bias and discrimination (a message of peace), freedom (the possibility of coming back home) and a message of hope for a better future, is through the use of layers of obscure language. From the title of the book to the ambiguous titles of some of the poems, all these put together managed to conceal some of the criticisms against the injustices evident in society. Through a careful selection of vocabulary, a combination of grammar and idiomatic expressions, and reference to non-existent places (Methathing & Dikgohlong), Maphalla created the many layers of interpretation and meanings that would have certainly escaped an inattentive reader (de Oliveira et al., 2019: 9), including the publisher's reviewers.

As part of the analysis of the poem, *Ke kgutlile* [I am back], I alluded to the fact that it superficially addresses labour migration. There are two other ways of understanding the poem considering the time in which it was published. First, Maphalla acknowledges having taken a break from writing, and that he was encouraged and reinvigorated during the 10th anniversary celebrations of Lesiba (Southern Sotho Authors Association called Lesiba [Writing quill]) (Maphalla 1993). In this context, the poem could be addressing the return to writing. Another way of looking at this could be related to the sociopolitical events surrounding the publication time. Nelson Mandela's release was one of the 'returning home' themes that prevailed at the time. Many

people who had been in exile were returning home. Could it be the case that Maphalla was addressing that issue? Could it be that he was also referring to the return of the many political organisations that were banned from participating freely? Or perhaps referring to the psychological freedom (Motinyane, 2020) of returning to the familiar- free from apartheid? These questions, and many more, require further investigation into Maphalla's literary works.

Finally, I discussed the fragmentation of Africa, in terms of language, orthography and lack of coordinated efforts to extend literary criticism to oral performances. This could also be seen in a positive light. Given that poetry faced challenges, from its oral traditions, there was less focus on content. Also, because of the nature of the language associated with poetry, it is subject to different interpretations depending on the circumstances surrounding its production and the circumstances of the reader. After all, Maphalla found ways of using Sesotho in a very evasive manner.

## Conclusion

The period 1990 to 1994 was a very sensitive period in South Africa. There was a sense of relief that the country did not go to war but also doubt and disbelief that the apartheid regime has been dismantled. It is therefore not surprising that artists took to spreading messages of love, peace, hope, death and many others. Maphalla, given his standing as a teacher and a mentor to young scholars, used this opportunity to spread his messages of peace and stability. In this article, I have also indicated that whereas he spread messages of love and peace, he also encouraged stability and equality. He rebuked injustice, he challenged those in power to be kind and avoid bias. In fact, the word *leeme*, which appears in many of his poems, has many meanings, i.e., bias, unequal treatment, favouritism. This is an indication that he discouraged the oppression of 'workers' by those in positions of power, *boMorena* [the likes of Lord], *mmuso* [government], *moahlodi* [judge], *motjhotjhisi* [prosecutor] and so on. This creative and elusive use of Sesotho language will continue to glorify his name for generations to come as he predicted in the last poem of *Seitebatso*, *Le ha nka phomola* [Even if I rest (die)].

*Le ha nka hla ka phomola,  
Ka hla ka latela Mofolo, ka phomola;  
Siba lena la Mofolo le tla sala katibeng  
Tholwana tsa Basotho di tla bua ka lona.  
[...]*

*Le ha nka phomola,  
Ka hla ka dula ka thoko ho tsela, ka phomola;  
Nnete a tla e bolela mafeta-ka-tsela  
Hore pene e matla ho feta sabole.*

'Even if I rest  
And follow Mofolo, and rest;  
Mofolo's pen/feather will remain on the hat  
Basotho generations will talk about it.  
[...]

Even if I rest  
And sit on the side of the road;  
The passers-by will tell the truth  
That the pen is stronger than a sword.'

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