The following article looks at Mofolo’s *Moeti oa Bochabela* from the point of view of the opposition and mutual complementarity between “Eden” (Christianity) and “Ntsoanatsatsi” (Basotho mythology) as places of mythological origins. Through the eyes of the protagonist, Fekisi, we see a society completely overtaken by evil from which it can only extricate itself by a return to the Original Place of Innocence.

Mofolo, a Christian and a Mosotho, reveals both of these traits in motivating his character in his search for his lost Paradise. How and in what proportions Mofolo does this will constitute the central argument in this paper. Since search is involved, journey will be found to be a powerful symbol through which the protagonist undergoes his rites of passage.

The translations of excerpts used in the illustrations are my own.

**The Argument**

“Then one fine day, he began to create an imaginative work, absolutely original, and which first appeared in *Leselinyana.*” With these words H. Dieterlen and F. Kohler refer to the publication, in September 1907, of Mofolo’s *Moeti oa Bochabela* by the Morija Press. This came as the climax to a serialization of the entire manuscript in the *Leselinyana* from January to September of that year. The following year was to mark the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society’s (PEMS) labours in Lesotho. It is with obvious pride that the commemorative volume *Livre d’Or de la Mission du Lessouto*, recalling the labours of those years, mentions, through Dieterlen and Kohler, Mofolo’s work in the section “Les Bassoutos d’aujourd’hui” as opposed to “Les Bassoutos d’autre fois” who are described in the earlier part of the book.

This paper will have as its recurring motif the reflection of Mofolo’s development of a new philosophy of life. We shall enquire into the all-
pervading question of good and evil and how Mofolo's perception of it was affected by his initiation into the brave new world of Christianity and western values.

*Moeti oa Bochabela* opens with a powerful projection of the image of darkness. Darkness as a metaphor is equated with evil, ignorance, backwardness. The people in the period so characterized are represented metaphorically as beasts. Their behaviour is also of beasts, for they "eat each other." There are constant wars, uncertainty in respect of life and property, perpetual flight, splitting of families. Fornication, excessive drinking, lying, cheating, rule by might, murder, are the order of the day. The very title of this chapter is "The Darkness of Old."

It is clear from the above that the movement that is precipitated by this description can only be in one direction, namely towards light. Mofolo ensures this process by placing his protagonist, Fekisi, in this environment. The stage is now set for a classic case of a journey of search. The major catalyst is Fekisi's dissatisfaction with the (in his view) "unwholesome" life of his people, a conflict which he will, henceforth, try to resolve.

Fekisi represents all the virtues that stand opposite the vices mentioned above. Analysing the story as a symbolic journey, we can immediately recognise several characteristic features:

1. The protagonist, Fekisi, is dissatisfied with the way things are in his society and wishes to change them. If we designate his home point A, then his *home-with-conflict* is designated Point A1. Henceforth, then, his artistic function will be to bring about Point A2, namely *home-with-conflict-removed*. Or he might choose to remove himself permanently from Point A.

The protagonist faced with A1 may do one of two things: either he engages in what may be termed *internal resistance*, that is, fighting the evil from within, or he departs with the purpose of finding the means of resolving the conflict (which we refer to as *external mobilization*) or going into permanent exile. In either case, the search is conceptualized as moving the character from Point A towards Point B (place of foreign sojourn).

Fekisi engages in the first stage, namely internal resistance. He defends the weak against the strong. When, because of his leadership qualities, the boys make him their *mampoli* (i.e. chief herdboy), he abolishes all special privileges traditionally accorded to the *mampoli*, and lets everyone enjoy equal rights, thus democratizing the institution. He fights the men who come to *khoathisa* the boys at the pastures (i.e. give them a few lashes on their hacks). He is ready to go and punish Phakoane for killing his (Phakoane's) wife in a drunken rage, and would like to do the same with the people who murdered Sebati. In both cases, the people stop him.
It soon becomes obvious, however, that the surrounding "darkness" is overwhelming and will not go away. Instead, it is threatening to engulf him too. Internal resistance is clearly failing, and there is no alternative left for him but to go away in search of a solution.

So far light, in the symbolic sense, has been conspicuous by its absence. In other words, except for Fekisi, there is, up to this point, a total lack of good people. However, physical light has meanwhile emerged as a strong metaphor, for the sun is cast in the role of God's messenger who sees all the evil on earth and then goes back, at sunset, to report what he has seen. The sun is also regarded as God's eye that sees (exposes, lays bare) all of these earthly happenings. The sun is the one thing that Fekisi, even when he feels most discouraged, continues to pin his hopes on. He believes that the Great King whose messenger or eye the sun is, will one day wipe out all the evil and bring about a new earth and a new people.

When the old earth and its earth-bound inhabitants continue in their waywardness, and the sun seems indifferent to it all, Fekisi's faith in it is shaken:

"Surely it does not come from God. A servant of God cannot be so happy while evil things are done before his eyes. By its appearance and deeds it seems to be a royal servant. But if it is he indeed, how can he be so happy while evil is increasing and bringing goodness to an end? If God is good, the servant of God has to be good, like God." He began to have doubts about the sun.

All of the mythology that Fekisi builds around the sun for his own peace of mind is thus dashed to pieces, and he is totally discouraged.

Later we shall look into the question of syncretism, of Mofolo's apparent equal recognition of Ntsaonatsatsi and Eden, of the Basotho (alias Africans) as human beings sharing fully in the strengths and weaknesses that all human beings are heir to, which are both the nobility and the corruptibility of man universally. We must, however, even at this point raise a somewhat related problem. It appears that Mofolo fails to distinguish between those things which must universally be recognized as evil, i.e. repugnant to the moral sensibility of any society (wanton killing, murder, sexual promiscuity are but a few examples), and what must be accepted as legitimate customs and traditions of the Basotho regardless of what anybody else might think of them. For example, the institution of 'mampoli' among the herdboys was a social hierarchy created by the boys among themselves that, far from corrupting them, reflected self-discipline and recognition of leadership and all
that that entails. In other words, it sharpened their awareness of social responsibility, and of the role of leadership. To lump this together with such socially disruptive activities as murder and fornication and over-indulgence in drink shows a lack of sensitivity on Mofolo's part. For the critic, it creates a veritable dilemma. So far we have recognized the legitimacy of Fekisi's decision to engage in internal resistance because we have accepted uncritically his definition of "evil." In other words, the analysis so far has implied that all of Fekisi's dissatisfactions with his society have been justifiable. But this is not true. The truth of the matter is that Fekisi is as much a problem for his society (for rejecting its institutions) as the society is a problem for him (for producing an excessive number of criminals and corrupt people). It is difficult to justify Fekisi's rejection of his society's legitimate, and indeed necessary, institutions as a valid conflict, or at least a conflict that the society would be in sympathy with. In fact, the reason Fekisi is campaigning alone for the changes he advocates is precisely because those changes can only come about at the cost of a wholesale abandonment of Basotho institutions, traditions and values, and the overwhelming majority of the people are not willing to pay that price. And this is where the crucial difference lies between Moeti and Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress. Bunyan's hero, Christian, sees God's wrath coming to mankind for their sins: Mofolo's Fekisi sees God's wrath coming to the Basotho because they live according to their traditions.

Fekisi's crisis, therefore, arises out of his own disharmony with his society. It is an internal problem which he externalizes and objectifies, finding for himself convenient targets and scapegoats among innocent people.

Having made this point, however, we must come back to the analysis itself which, like blindfolded justice, recognizes any sense of disharmony strongly felt by the hero as a legitimate reason to designate his home as containing the element A1.

Fekisi has failed to convert A1 to A2 through internal resistance. The next step for him to take is to go away. He may depart with or without the intent to return. This is important for this analysis because intent to return goes with the conviction that, at Point B, the proper means will be found or forged which will be taken back home to cancel A1 and replace it with A2. Intent not to return, i.e. permanent exile, must therefore mean that the protagonist regards the situation that made him leave as beyond his power to change. Therefore he escapes from it. As we have indicated earlier, Fekisi is as much a problem for his society as his society is for him. This means that there is a mutual incompatibility and a mutual rejection. There is no other way. For what he regards as darkness they regard as light in the sense that that is what makes their society work. In fact Mofolo says as much in his next book,
Piseng, where he loudly and openly praises the days of the lisaqane as having been days of knowledge and enlightenment as far as the matter of love and marriage was concerned.

2. Fekisi departs from home. He now enters the fluid space A → B. Viewed from the point of view of plot, he leaves the sanctuary of home, whatever its imperfections, and enters the hazardous territory of the unknown. This is a trademark of the quest traveller. His conviction, his determination to obtain what he is searching for, are to be tested. He sets in motion his rites-of-passage which will take him through the three stages of trials, purification, and induction into his new status. Fekisi's terrestrial journey from Lesotho to the shores of the Indian Ocean in Natal constitutes the first stage, namely his trials; his journey across the sea in the white men's ship is the purification or cleansing period; and his steps towards the altar in the church in the east as he is received into eternal life by Christ and his disciples constitute the induction. Through death he has found God, which is what he left his home to seek. Theoretically, therefore, his intent not to return is well motivated, for there is no returning from death — those who have seen God never come back among the living to tell what they saw.

The above contradicts O.R. Dathorne's view that Fekisi's death "confirms his pointless vacillations and the illogicality of alienation." Fekisi's death is a fulfilment, not a failure. That is the one moment he has been longing for all his life, the moment when he would meet his Saviour face to face. His exclamation: "Hail, my Jesus! . . ." is not a cry of despair, it is a shout of triumph. The suffering and death of the flesh have become the only and inevitable means of releasing the spirit.

We may now complete the juxtaposition of opposites which run through this story, placing side by side the various metaphors for good and evil which Mofolo uses:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Evil</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Light (metaphorical and physical)</td>
<td>Darkness (metaphorical and physical)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Being (good character)</td>
<td>&quot;Beast&quot; (bad character)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature (animals, plants, the firmament)</td>
<td>Man (greed, lust for power, refusal to obey the laws of nature)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European (&quot;saved,&quot; has long emerged from darkness into light and therefore destined to lead those who have not)</td>
<td>African (in need of salvation, living in darkness from which he is yet to emerge and therefore destined to follow the European)</td>
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Why must Mofolo’s traveller go to the east to be saved? Firstly Mofolo makes an ethnographic comment in which he tells the reader about the significance of the east as a locus of orientation for the Basotho, and then he enumerates some of the ways in which this orientation is reflected.

All the Basotho of those days, as well as those of modern times, like the east very much. When they have suffered the loss of a person by death, when that person is placed in his grave, they put him down carefully, his face being made to look eastward so that when the sun rises, it should strike him on the forehead.

A. Casalis notes this custom of the Basotho, giving an explanation even more apropos to Mofolo’s story. He states that “in burying their dead, the Basutos are careful to turn the face of the deceased towards the north-east, stating as their reason for this custom, that the children must always look towards the regions from which their ancestors proceeded.”

Ntsoanatsatsi therefore has a strong religious significance as the place where the Basotho first came out of the earth’s womb. It is also a place of regeneration and repurification as the sun perpetually rises from there. Here then, Mofolo, while advocating salvation through Christ, simultaneously makes the strongest statement for the continued validity of the Basotho’s religious beliefs in so far as they have to do with the origin of man. This point will be better understood if we now go back a short step to look at the conclusion of the first part of the story, as Fekisi’s eventual departure becomes more and more inevitable.

On the same day that Fekisi expresses his doubt about the sun’s relationship to God, a total eclipse takes place. Through this complete wiping out of the last ray of light, people and animals alike are thrown into a state of utter confusion.

The cattle bellowed, they scattered in flight and fell down the slopes... The animals ran away, colliding with people as they did not know where they were going. Over there in the village, a person who was outside would try to find his house but would walk into a rock. He would try to grope for his house but would collide with another person, or with a dog, or some other object. Dogs screamed and howled.

This is the picture of a confused society that runs into deadends and collides with obstacles, for it follows paths that lead nowhere. But Mofolo is also
suggesting to the reader that this eclipse represents the wrath of God, and has direct relevance to the doubts earlier expressed by Fekisi. There are mystical happenings. A rumbling as of thunder is heard, first in the distance, but coming closer and closer. The people cry aloud: “Oh, we perish!” They hear what sounds like many angry voices, a veritable doomsday atmosphere that leaves some people mentally deranged, others dead from fright, others maimed. For, if the sun’s presence means order, security, life, hope, its absence means chaos, fear, death and despair. The depiction of this in an eclipse rather than the normal setting of the sun heightens the dramatic effect. It is unusual, it interrupts the people’s normal cycle of activities. It creates a dislocation.

The last ray of light is also the last ray of hope for Fekisi of changing his society from within.

When Fekisi is enjoined by a voice he hears faintly coming out of the darkness to “seek the truth till you find it. Seek God till you find him,” the question of which direction to go becomes urgent, and he goes to bed that night with the question throbbing in his head. Then he has a dream:

Far away in the direction of the rising sun he saw Ntsoanatsatsi. But he saw it at a great distance, and rather dimly. He saw a reed-bed which was surrounded by a marsh of abundant waters; in the middle of that marsh was a very dense growth of reeds; in the middle of those reeds was a clear, circular piece of ground; and in the centre of that space was a large spring that bubbled up strongly, that gushed forth vigorously; in the midst of that spring he saw the sun as it rose, bursting into view from there.

Prior to this experience, Fekisi had already been told by some old men, in answer to his enquiries, that God lives at Ntsoanatsatsi which, they had said, “is in the east, where there is a dense growth of reeds in the midst of an abundance of water, where a large spring bubbles forth, and out of which the sun comes.” However, the Ntsoanatsatsi he sees in his dream has additional features which are more suggestive of the Garden of Eden than of Ntsoanatsatsi:

Along the sides of the marsh were well-arranged trees whose branches spread out wide and which grew next to each other in a line. Next to them were others which were exceedingly beautiful, which bore fruit that was very desirable. Scattered among those trees were very beautiful flowers, some of them red, some yellow, some white, and some with many colours.
In addition, this Ntsoanatsatsi has a shining light over it, and another on the ground.

By now it is quite clear that this dream is pointing to Ntsoanatsatsi as the place Fekisi must go in search of God and of innocence. But, to conclude the revelation, the dream goes on to show us the silhouette of a human figure passing, or hovering, over the light above Ntsoanatsatsi. There is a tremendous emphasis on the beauty of this silhouette: its hair, which is so long that it trails on the ground and Fekisi cannot even see where it ends, is described as follows: “o le motle haholo-hholo-hholo” (it was very, very, very beautiful). Even though seen in the form of a silhouette, the face of this apparition is so beautiful that it blinds Fekisi (suggesting that it radiates light) causing tears to come out of his eyes. Then he wakes up.

At this point there is a total fusion between the traditional place of the Basotho’s origin and Eden, the birth-place of Adam and Eve.

The Basotho, then, must return to Ntsoanatsatsi to rediscover their lost Innocence. The fact that Mofolo weaves the two traditions together to produce a Ntsoanatsatsi/Eden image means that he is deliberately universalizing the eternal story of Man’s Original Innocence, his Fall from Grace, and the long tedious journey he must undertake in order to return to that Lost Paradise.

Gérard is, therefore, pretty much on target when he makes the comment that “the hero’s discovery of Christianity is, as much as a conversion to a new faith, a return to beliefs and manners that had antedated both the introduction of Christianity and the degradation of morality exemplified in the early chapters of the book. Mofolo’s ideal, then, may be said to be less one of rejection of traditional values in favor of Christian standards, than one of syncretism. Christianity is the new way toward the restoration of ancient purity.”

Perceptive though this comment is, however, it fails to note, as detailed above, Mofolo’s obvious tipping of the scales in favour of Eden.

Not only does the Eden component of the syncretism dominate, it takes over completely once Fekisi is discovered by the three white elephant hunters as he lies unconscious on the coast of the Indian Ocean. Is it because the Mosotho is incapable of finding his own way back to Ntsoanatsatsi/Eden without the help of the white missionaries? At the risk of adding more confusion to this already complex picture, we must pose the further question: how can Ntsoanatsatsi prevail if the customs, traditions and values that are its legacy for the Basotho are equated with evil? How can the Basotho’s Original Innocence abide within a foreign ideology and a foreign conceptualization of Being? If there is a need for Innocence to be reformulated as Eden rather than Eden/Ntsoanatsatsi, then it does point to a total abandonment of
Basotho traditions, which are now equated with sin. This is where Mofolo leaves us with questions, in terms of his own philosophy, for which it is very unlikely we shall ever find the answers. And, I'm afraid, as we go back and forth with Mofolo as he vacillates between affirmation and rejection, we must ourselves of necessity appear inconsistent.

Given the historical context within which Mofolo wrote *Moeti*, we have to say that he gives a strong affirmative answer to the question raised by the missionaries in *Leselinyana* and which had by now been raging for some time: did the Basotho have a knowledge of God before the white missionaries came and gave it to them? Mofolo's answer is given in a more explicit way towards the end of the first chapter where he briefly summarizes the ancient burial rites of the Basotho as follows:

The ancient Basotho, even those who lived in those very days, truly believed that there was a living God who had created all things. They believed that God rejected all evil. They said that God hated witchcraft and things like that.

The Basotho, when they lost someone by death, put together seeds of all kinds for him, and they said to him who had died: "Oh, sleep for our sake, beg rain for us, give us corn, pumpkin!" and things like that. By talking in that manner, they made it seem as if the dead one heard them, even though he was dead. At the burial people wept and sang songs that truly touched one's heart. Some of them had words like the following:

We are left outside,
We are left with weeping,
We are left with sorrow.
O, if only I too could be taken to heaven!
Why do I lack wings? For else I would myself go there!
If there were a string hanging down,
I would hold on to it
And ascend to my people in that place of peace.

3. Fekisi reaches his Point B, the end of his search, in the country of the three white men. It may be obvious, but it can nevertheless bear repeating, that the hero who goes on a quest has no pre-knowledge of where he is going, the geographical point where his search will end. He has to be able to recognize it, to read the sign or signs that tell him his search is over. Point B can only meaningfully exist at this moment of recognition.

During his sojourn in the white men's country as the guest of the minister of religion, Fekisi is so impressed by the purity and moral rectitude of the people
that "he felt instinctively that this was a society in which he could live happily." Because of the facts that they live such pure lives, that there is a man of God in the person of the minister who is able to answer all his questions to his satisfaction, and that he has crossed the wide expanse of water that separates him irrevocably from the evil society he left behind, Fekisi does not feel inclined to travel any further. But he is soon troubled by doubt: what if he has not read the signs right? Maybe he is supposed to travel farther east? "He prayed to the Lord to show him the way if his journey had not yet reached its end." His doubt arises from the fact that he does not recognize the physical features of Ntsoanatsatsi in this place. Yet all the signs are there. So, even though there was "no answer, no word, no dream, nothing" in response to his appeal, he lingers on, for he recognizes the signs.

The next cue he is waiting for is the great church service that is shortly to take place. And it is, as we know, during that service that Christ reveals himself to him and the final stage of the rites of passage, namely the induction, takes place as he is received into God's Kingdom.

A final word on the loci of action will be useful. Of the possible four loci, namely A, A → B, B, and B → A, the action in this story is restricted to three since Fekisi does not return. Narratives differ rather widely, and are quite arbitrary, in the way they distribute action concentrations when analysed according to the scheme set out above. In Moeti, A and A → B carry by far the largest share of the action, while B is a place/time of waiting for the inevitable end, which is not long in coming.
Locus I: Action at A
In the preceding discussion we have concentrated largely on the evil prevalent in Fekisi's society in order to highlight his motivation to leave. But there is more. Mofolo has created a very powerful and all-pervading pastoral quality as the backdrop against which all the evil deeds of men are taking place. We also get to realize that Fekisi is more at home with nature and with his herds than with other people.

Some of the more prominent features of this pastoral setting are the village as the hub around which all actions are centred; a landscape of hills and meadows; wide, open spaces with rich green pastures; the lowing of the cattle; the mutual bond of love and trust between Fekisi and his herds; the abundance of wild life and vegetation; and the general sense of nature's bounty. This is, in a sense, a hymn to Nature. Mofolo makes the lowing of the cattle, especially the two leading cows, a very powerful and evocative image in many of these pastoral scenes. In fact he constantly refers to their lowing as a song, a duet which is always started by the white-faced cow and later "received" by the grey one. In this serene atmosphere, this beautiful anthem, there is only one discordant note — Man. The cattle sense Fekisi's unhappiness and reflect it in their own behaviour. In the more prominent "lowing" scenes, there is always that note of sadness, a strong premonition on the part of Fekisi's herds that something terrible is about to happen. And this they reflect through their lowing. Thus the lowing may also be interpreted as a dirge foreshadowing the impending calamity of Fekisi's departure. The lowing is often characterized as long, both in the sense of being long-drawn-out, and also of travelling long distances and being caught in long echoes that bounce from cliff to cliff and reach distant mountains.

Mofolo successfully engages the eye and the ear to make the reader experience this sense of serenity and peace. The "crying" or "singing" of the two cows is constantly in the reader's ears, and so are the praises of the old men in the village, inspired by this lowing. The picture of the cattle themselves following Fekisi as he walks ahead of them playing his lesiba is etched in sharp outlines.

The last sounds in this scene, as Fekisi is about to steal away in the dead of night, are the soft lowing of the cows as they see him sneak out of the house, and his own voice as he stands by the kraal gate and hurriedly recites their praises for the last time in subdued tones. The situating of this scene in this strategic place shows the master's touch in Mofolo.
Locus 2: Action at A → B
This is divided into two parts. First, Fekisi travels on land. He is alone with nature in the raw and is daily faced with the immediate problems of sheer survival. What sustains him is, of course, not only his knowledge of and respect for nature, but his conviction that all the suffering is more than worthwhile as long as it brings him closer to his goal, and, most importantly, his faith in God who, he is sure, is guarding him all the time.

The sun comes into its own firstly as Fekisi's constant guide to Ntsoanatsatsi. The only way he can be sure he is keeping to the right course is that the rising sun should "strike him on the forehead." Secondly, through the sun, the image of light is seen to become more and more dominant.

We can dismiss rather quickly the trials Fekisi faces, for these are the stock-in-trade of all heroes on a search journey. They only differ in their details from story to story, and from culture to culture. Suffice it to say Fekisi has his wildnesses to traverse, his forests and rivers to cross, snakes, crocodiles, lions and so on that, at various points in his journey, threaten his life. Add to this the elements, exposure to extreme heat and cold, and then hunger, thirst and fatigue all taking their toll on him, and you have the complete measure of his suffering. The crowning statement is, of course, his total exhaustion as he collapses in a faint by the sea.

The second part of A → B consists of Fekisi's voyage across the sea. A great deal of symbolism is concentrated here. The trials are over, and now the cleansing or purification begins. Since this is largely an act of exorcism, some violence is inevitable. At the beginning Fekisi is acutely ill and the white men give him intensive day-and-night care. The patient is upset by the movement of the ship which the white men are quite used to. He vomits a great deal. He is given good, nourishing food which is quite different from the food he is used to, and which helps to restore his health. After the patient has completely recovered, he is divested of his old clothes and given new ones; also his loin cloth, his blankets, his spears and his battle axe are taken from him and put aside.

The concrete images are direct, and, as they focus on the final stages of the rites of passage, they effectively carry the theme forward toward a successful conclusion of the quest. Between the illness (which is both physical and spiritual — need to emerge from the darkness, need for salvation, etc.) and the recovery, the intervening stages are vomiting (violent rejection), good nourishing food (the gospel), new clothes (investiture at the conclusion of initiation).

This whole process has resonances of the Basotho's initiation of teenage boys into man's estate which is concluded with acts symbolic of total
renunciation of the stage of boyhood they have just emerged from. Their old
clothes (belonging to their boyhood) are destroyed by fire together with the
circumcision lodge which was their temporary home during their initiation.
The boys are to run home at speed, never looking back at the lodge as the
tutors set it alight. They are entirely naked at this point, and will be met
halfway between the lodge and the village by relatives who will invest them
with new clothes reflecting their new status. This is followed by festivities in
the village. And we see how, for Fekisi, there is the big church service in the
place beyond the sea, where he finally goes through the gateway to heaven.

Locus 3: Action at B

Here we need focus attention only on the concluding scene of Fekisi’s ultimate
triumph, his induction into God’s Kingdom for which he has suffered and
sacrificed so much. He gazes at the vision on the wall over the pulpit:

He was looking at that silhouette which he saw in a dream while he was
still at his home in Lesotho, the silhouette of an exceedingly beautiful
person whose eyes were full of truth and love and mercy, eyes that had
pity. It was that silhouette that he saw in the night while he slept on the
sea shore. Here he was seeing, not the silhouette, but the Son of Man in
person. He saw him in his glory, he saw him at his home, at the Royal
Abode.

Oh, how beautiful his eyes!
Oh, how full of love and grace, his eyes!
The Son of Man was standing flanked by six men, three on the right
hand side, and three on the left. Those men shone and were lovely, and it
was truly a wonder.

Characterization

The characters in this book vary in the manner they are presented by the
author. There are, first of all, specific individuals who perform certain
specific acts and/or make certain specific statements which characterize their
individuality. Next there are individuals who are referred to by the author
and/or by the other characters, but who never themselves take the centre of
the stage to talk and act for themselves. The next category is that of
characters presented in groups, who may be further subdivided into more
specific subgroups such as “the men” or even “the ten or so men who went to
attack Fekisi in the pastures,” or “the group of doctors who went to sit outside
during a thunderstorm trying to ward off the lightning with their charmed
sticks,” and so on. The most common general term used for a group of
characters is “the people.”
Individuals
The most constantly present individual character is, of course, Fekisi. His presence is injected by the author into the morass of darkness and sin painted in the first few paragraphs of Chapter 1. The word motho (human being) in its elevated sense of someone with compassion, a strong sense of moral integrity and social responsibility, is used to describe him. He is a human being noted for having brought under strict control all his animal desires and instincts. He alone deserves to be called motho in the midst of all other batho (people) who have allowed the beast in them to grow out of control.

Despite his central position in the story, we hardly ever hear Fekisi talk, or get inside him to hear his thoughts. The narrator does most of the observing, the interpreting, and finally the telling. This is one of the reasons the author’s presence is felt so constantly and so strongly in the book. He has a story to tell which he knows better than anybody else, and that’s precisely what he intends to do. Besides, he has a purpose in telling that story, namely to influence the reader to view things in a certain light, and again he does not pretend that his intention is otherwise. An author has a certain amount of divine arrogance for no other reason than that he has chosen to make a certain piece of human drama public in which he, and he alone, can be the mediating agent. Therefore, when Mofolo describes Fekisi as

a human being not only in appearance and knowing how to talk, but a human being in his words, a human being in his deeds, a human being in all his ways; a human being in private and in public, a human being in sorrow and joy, in good times and in difficult times, in hunger and in plenty . . .

he does not feel under any obligation to show us Fekisi in these situations that he has listed. He shows him spottily; for the rest he summarizes him for us.

When it comes to actually showing the character, again Mofolo tends to compress history, avoiding the specific and restricting himself to the general. An example will best illustrate what is meant here: after telling the reader that Fekisi used to (or would) feel unhappy about the herdboys fighting among themselves; that he used to feel that if he did not intervene to help the victim, it would be just as if he himself were the infector of the suffering; that whenever he found the boys fighting he would ask the reason for the quarrel, and would help the weaker against his stronger opponent, Mofolo ends this series of customary actions by quoting words Fekisi would speak to the stronger if he found that the weaker of the two fighting parties was the one at
fault:

He would say: “Oho, So-and-So, he has indeed wronged you, but now you have punished him enough. Be careful lest the punishment you administer with your stick becomes itself a crime, burdening you with a guilt that is not rightly yours.”

By referring to the person Fekisi is addressing as “So-and-So,” Mofolo underscores the non-specificity of person, within the general non-specificity of time and event, which is precisely the point we are making. This means that the direct speech itself is not quoting the words Fekisi spoke, but must be viewed as a distillation, by Mofolo, of a general sentiment. The speech then must be read as words to that effect, rather than the words themselves.

The reader reading Moeti in Sesotho will not fail to observe, in certain parts of the story, the prolific use of the syntactic structure described either as “past continuous” or sometimes as “past habitual” tense, incorporating the auxiliary verb ne in the first part of the sentence. That is the cue that signals a generalized (habitual) rather than a specific (historic) past. It is a tense that will generally be found where setting dominates over the individual events. The “past subjunctive” takes over as soon as the narrative begins to focus on specific events happening within a specific historic past.

We hardly ever see Fekisi in dramatic scenes, that is to say where he engages in dialogue with another character. On the contrary, he is extremely introspective, and most of the time we are obliged to follow the peregrinations of his mind as he observes his surroundings and either asks questions about them or passes judgement on them. The first time we hear him talk in a human-contact situation is when he and the man he saved in the land of the Batlokoa engage in a brief conversation in which they enquire about each other’s identity. The next time is when he talks with the white men who picked him up when he lay unconscious on the sea shore. (One must, in passing, express surprise that he acquired their language so quickly.) Here again the dialogue amounts to nothing more than a few mutual enquiries regarding identities and intentions, and so on. The rest of their rather protracted interaction is reported.

Mofolo strives (almost too hard) to present Fekisi as a noble character. To do this, he over-idealizes him as a super-hero in physical combat — he can put ten men to flight all by himself — while at the same time endowing him with the qualities of restraint, evenness of temper, clear judgement and slowness to anger. He is, in short, a superman.

Phakoane, Fekisi’s neighbour, is even less conspicuous than Fekisi
himself. As a foil, his role is limited to illustrating behaviour traits that are diametrically opposed to those of Fekisi. Again, Phakoane is reported rather than presented. His actions are generalized. We know that he is an evil man, a drunkard, a wife-beater who eventually kills his wife. He dies of fright during the eclipse of the sun. One would have thought he had more than served his artistic purpose by now, but Mofolo pursues him beyond death by making his corpse twist its facial muscles as if in extreme pain, so that the people drop it and run away.

Phakoane's wife, Sebati, the man murdered at the chief's instigation, and the chief himself are even farther into the periphery of vision, and their outlines correspondingly blurred.

**Groups**

The presentation of people in groups is one of the hallmarks of characterization (if the term may still be considered applicable) in African-language literature. Mofolo uses it to great advantage in all his works. Again the important thing here is non-specificity of the individual which, in this case, is in inverse relationship to the prominence given to the solidarity of the group defined. The group acts in concert either because it is brought together by special common interests (the doctors trying to ward off the lightning, the murderers of Sebati, the men trying to discipline Fekisi for interfering with their *khoathisa* practice), or through the urgings of its common humanity, expressing concerns for justice and human compassion, and so on. Communality of interests and actions completely overshadows individuality. Which (let the point be made at once) is not the same thing as *suppressing* the individual will. On the contrary, the individual will finds its most fulfilling expression in the group sentiment and action.

The groups found in *Moeti* are as follows:

(a) The group of doctors who try to fend off a thunderstorm:

These men are introduced in the context of Fekisi's contemplation of the power that has created the universe and is responsible for the wonders and the awesome might of nature. Against this, it is not only futile, but presumptuous for man to pit his strength. To do so is to court disaster. The point is particularly apt in this godless society. The scene is brief. There is a severe thunderstorm which, among other things, kills Phakoane's son and two cows. The doctors, who are known to have the power to ward off lightning, go and sit outside in order to chase it away. Instead the lightning strikes one of them and, as the rest run away, it strikes yet another before they reach the safety of the house.
(b) The ten men who objected to Fekisi's interference in their fun:
The point to be illustrated here is Fekisi's resolve to espouse the cause of the
weak against the strong. The general context is that of Fekisi's rejection of
certain traditional practices. After Fekisi routs the men, Mofolo caricatures
them by nicknaming the injured ones according to their injuries. He thus
reduces them to a state of insignificance, almost of non-being, as if the entire
purpose of their existence is to display their injuries in order to warn others to
keep out of Fekisi's way, and in particular, to stop defending the practice of
"evil" customs. There is "Mr. Injured-Eye" (moihlo), whose confrère is
"Mr. Injured-Hand" (tsohane). The rest run away, but Fekisi calls them back
kindly and asks them to administer aid to "Mr. Eye" and "Mr. Hand." He is,
after all, the human being in this den of sin. Those who stand against his
cause come like phantoms out of nowhere and retreat injured and humiliated,
deserving only the fragile and lack-lustre identities symbolized by their
injuries.

c) The murderers of Sebati:
These are hired assassins in the pay of the chief who, for some vague reason
only important to himself, finds Sebati a threat to his ego. These mercenary
killers are arrogant, and brag about their deed whenever they are inebriated.

(d) The men whom Fekisi trusted:
The existence of this group seems to be inconsistent with the earlier statements
suggesting that everyone in this society is evil and doomed except Fekisi.
Somewhere in the middle of this total mess of excessive corruption and
carnality sits a group of uncorrupted elders who watch what is going on
around them and are willing, if asked, to share their wisdom and profound
knowledge. The surprising, almost disconcerting, thing is that Mofolo
mentions them so casually. They know about the old religion, the myths of
origins, the legends that undergirded Basotho society. One wonders why
they are made to sit there like silent shadows, responding only when someone
takes the initiative to tap their wisdom. Their entry on the scene should be
more auspicious than that. They are presented as a group. One tends to
think of them as sitting together at some spot in the village, waiting to be
consulted. However, it is possible that, even though mentioned as a group,
Fekisi had to go to them individually.

The first time these venerable men are mentioned is one day when Fekisi
returns from the pastures more troubled than usual about the goings-on in his
village. On this occasion the atmosphere of sadness and mourning is
conveyed also through a very empathetic description of the mood of Fekisi's cows. We are told that after milking, Fekisi "once again asked searching questions from the men whom he trusted, that they should explain to him in detail about God." They tell him all they know, including the old traditions. They go further and tell him the story of the Swallowing Monster, the *Kholumolumo*. The story, as previously mentioned, is of a Saviour who is much like Christ in his selfless love for the people he saves. They assure him that God exists even though he removed himself from the midst of the people because of their wickedness, and went to live far away. They tell him about Ntsoanatsatsi. They show no inclination of wanting to go away with Fekisi, nor that what is happening around them is particularly distressing to them.

(e) The white men by the sea:
The number three is suspicious. Are these men surrogates for the three missionaries, Arbousset, Casalis and Gosselin who came to Lesotho in 1833? Their ministrations to the sick Fekisi and the total process of symbolic cleansing they administer during the sea passage strongly suggest a metaphorical re-enactment of that episode in the history of Lesotho. They teach Fekisi about God, how to read and write, and present him with a Bible.

These three men and their fellow hunters who later join them are brought in as a convenient *deus ex machina* when Fekisi is at a loss as to how to cross the sea. They literally come out of a machine, which is their ship. Yet there is nothing forced or unconvincing about their appearance on the scene.

As previously stated, Ntsoanatsatsi begins to be relegated to the background once these white men make their appearance. Eden predominates. The arrogance of the white people comes out naked and undisguised. After they exchange myths and religious customs with Fekisi, their verdict is that "some of the traditions he told them about were almost in accordance with the truth." Their version of the history of the separation of peoples is that in the beginning all the people were children of one man. That man had been created by God. Afterwards the people increased and evil came into being in their midst, and it grew, and eventually wars came about. That was how the people became dispersed to different lands. When wickedness had appeared, God, because he is good, remonstrated with the people, but they would not listen. In the end he dissociated himself from them and let them be, *but chose only those who obeyed him, and laid laws for them* and he, for his part, stopped living among the people. (my emphasis)
The chosen are, of course, the white people, and the Bible is the book of laws that God gave them. No further comment is necessary.

(f) Large crowds:
These are characterized by the events that bring them together. We have the sense of milling crowds during the festivities accompanying the coming-out of the chief's son from the circumcision lodge together with his fellow initiates. Then there is the crowd of people mourning Fekisi's disappearance. There is a slight credibility problem here, however. It sounds as if all the people were saddened by this event. Yet it should be the other way round. They should all rejoice, with the exception of "the old man whom he trusted" and perhaps some hopeful girls who were eyeing him for a possible husband.

Finally we must mention the congregation at the big church service where Fekisi dies. We see wave upon wave of people coming before the altar.

(g) The People:
This is all-embracing. When Fekisi wants to go and punish Phakoane for murdering his wife, and also when he wants to do likewise with the people who murdered Sebati, we are told that "the people stopped him." It could have been two or three people, but they represent the communal sentiment of justice and goodwill. "The people," in this sense, are guardians of the collective conscience of the community.

Implied characters
The one type of "implied character" found in Moeti is one for which passive verbs are used in the predication without specifying the agent, as in: "He was warned that grave consequences might follow," where we are not told by whom he was warned.

In one instance in Moeti we can conclude from other evidence that the implied characters are, in fact, "the old men whom he trusted." On one of the occasions on which Fekisi arrives home greatly troubled, he asks searching questions about the gods, and

he was told that the gods are people who had died and were now living with God. It was said that God is good, he is pure, he rejects all things that are evil. (my emphasis)

Moeti and Pilgrim's Progress
Was Moeti inspired by Pilgrim's Progress? This is not only possible but
perhaps even likely. The fact that Bunyan's book was available in both English and Sesotho when Mofolo composed his, makes it virtually certain that he had read it by that time. Mofolo refers to the Sesotho translation, namely Leeto la Mokresti (lit. Christian's Journey), in Chapter 11 of Pitseng, where he makes Alfred Phakoe draw a parallel between his mentor, Mr. Katse, who apparently "cared no more about the present life" as he dedicated himself to a higher ideal, and Christian, Bunyan's pilgrim.

Whether a writer is influenced by another of an earlier age is often a hazardous guess based on circumstantial evidence. I am saying this deliberately in order to exonerate myself from giving a categorical answer concerning Mofolo's possible influence by Bunyan. After all, the general presence of such an aggressive religion as Christianity was at the time of Mofolo's composition of Moeti could have, on its own, inspired an allegory such as this one. But coming back to the two books, we have seen earlier that Mofolo's thesis contains a flaw in that it fails to distinguish between universally repugnant behaviour and the legitimate customs and institutions of a people. This is not to say that he should not have used Lesotho as his example of corrupt humanity. After all the universal abides in, and derives its concrete objectification from, the particular. By including Basotho customs in his criticisms, however, Mofolo's message becomes distorted, and we begin to find ourselves moving back and forth between two rather unrelated points of reference. For example, the following statement has nothing to do with man universally, but with Lesotho in particular:

The goings-on among the herdboys of the old Sesotho tradition were so ugly and painful that we are happy to have been born in these days of light.

Mofolo also underscores the sense of realism in his book by using ordinary people's names rather than symbolic ones and real geographical areas rather than imaginary and symbolic ones. G.H. Franz's interpretation of this can be understood in this light. He says: "Like the Pilgrim's Progress it is an allegory well sustained throughout. The great difference between the two books, however, is that whereas in Pilgrim's Progress the characters are all personifications of Virtues and Vices, in Moeti the characters are real men and women, and exemplify types. Thus, throughout the book, there is something far more material." Franz, who considers Mofolo's book as "painting a vivid picture of the early life of the Basotho, and showing up all the evils in lurid colours," concludes that the story "is therefore less universal in application because materialism limits whereas abstraction transcends all
limits. "8 This latter point is debatable since any perceptive reader should be able to make the link between the artist's particularized situation and the general condition of man. Thus Franz concludes further on, in obvious reference to Fekisi's experiences in the land of the Batlokoa, that Fekisi "soon finds out that people of other Bantu races are no better than his own people."9

G.A. Gollock, on the other hand, states that "Fekisi's quest is so broadly human that the Western reader recognizes a familiar pilgrim way, yet the whole setting is so distinctive that every step is a discovery of the African mentality." His position is thus the very opposite of Franz's.

In concluding this all-too-brief comparison between Pilgrim's Progress and Moeti, two more points are worth making. Firstly, Bunyan's story often assumes the nature of a fable because the human traits Christian finds himself constantly confronted with, even though disguised as people, are by reason of their impersonality inalterable: obstinacy is obstinacy, so "Mr. Obstinate" can never change and become "Mr. Reasonable," or "Mr. Talkative" suddenly change into "Mr. Taciturn." Each is locked within a prison whose walls are "The Trait." In Mofolo's Moeti we are given Fekisi and Phakoane and Sebati and the chief and Sebati's murderers and so on. It is true they do not change either, but they are capable of changing. The very fact that Phakoane is stricken with fear when the eclipse plunges the earth in darkness points to this possibility.

Secondly, besides using symbolic names to maintain a proper distance between his story and any real society, Bunyan also presents his allegory in the form of a dream. This helps to insulate it even further from the plane of reality. There is therefore a quality of surrealism in Pilgrim's Progress that is not found in Mofolo's Moeti. In Moeti dreams are dreamed by the character, not the author, and their function is to facilitate communication, at moments of crisis, between Fekisi and the divine power that guides him towards his goal.

Contemporary Opinions of Moeti
Mofolo's stance of a severe moral judge against his own society drew the following comment from Alice Werner in her review of Moeti: "This picture of tribal life strikes one as unduly black, but perhaps the shadows have been deepened, half or quite consciously for artistic reasons. Moreover, one finds that native converts, flushed with the joy of enlightenment and progress, are apt to exaggerate the evils of their former state and overlook its better features; they want, like most young and enthusiastic reformers, to scrap the past wholesale."11

But it was precisely this that pleased the missionaries. The Reverend H.
Dieterlen wrote a long introduction-cum-review of the book when it was launched in September 1907. Under the heading “Rekang Moeti oa Bochabela,” (Buy Moeti oa Bochabela) in the Leselinyana of September 1, 1907, Dieterlen begins his appeal to the reader as follows:

Today there has come into existence a book which ought to be published and bought and read by each and every one who calls himself a Mosotho or who loves the Basotho and their traditions. Its name is Moeti oa Bochabela. Its writer is Thomas Mofolo who works at the Book Depot at Morija.

It is important that you realize that this book is the very first one that has come out of the head of a Mosotho ever since the Basotho existed under the sun.

But since Sekese had been the first Mosotho to have a book published, and Dieterlen did not want to detract from the importance of that event, he emphasized the distinction to be made between a book giving the results of research, and thus conveying factual information (i.e. Sekese’s book), and one in which the author has exercised his imagination to compose something that did not exist before. He says:

It is not to be forgotten that Azariele Sekese wrote a pleasant and valuable book, about which we continue to feel the dissatisfaction that it has not yet been printed a second time. But Azariele did not himself compose the contents of that book out of his own head. He gathered them with great diligence and patience, and explained them in the most beautiful way. We salute that man of the Molapo clan who will never be outshone by anyone.

Thomas Mofolo’s book, however, is one that has been composed by him all alone; its contents, its words, all these are his alone. That is why I said that it was the first that ever came out of the heart of a Mosotho without help from anyone.

The rest of this rather lengthy and excited introduction makes a general appeal to the Basotho to buy and read and possess the book:

That is why I say to you, Basotho, look what has been done by your own brother and show appreciation of his work, and you will see that the head of a Mosotho has wisdom and strength, and is able to comprehend matters of high philosophical import and to write them in a book. It would be a disgraceful thing if you, Basotho, would be reluctant to buy a
book like this one, and to read it; whereas we, whites, have read it with much enjoyment, have expressed our appreciation of it, and have given encouragement to its author.

Dieterlen concludes with an appeal addressed to everyone:

You Basotho, you Christians, you heathens, buy Moeti oa Bochabela! Accept my testimony, I who have read it with so much enjoyment.

Another missionary, but this time not of the PEMS, threw in his own appeal to his congregation to buy and read the book. This was Reverend G. Beyer writing from Mohome, Transvaal. Beyer was working among the Batswana and his letter had been previously published in the Setswana language newspaper, Mogoera oa ba Batšo (The Friend of the Blacks) and was reprinted in the Leselinyana. Beyer appealed to the readers of Mogoera as follows:

To the readers of Mogoera oa ba Batšo, especially the young men.

Here is my message: You heard in the November newspaper that there is a new book in Moshoeshoe's country. I bought it for myself and read it, and it has truly captured my heart! It is a very beautiful book with a beautiful story of olden times, which is of great help to every one, even to us who live here. That little book tells the story of a certain young man called Fekise, how he yearned for the word of God, how he sought him and wished to see him.

That entire story has been written by a mo-Sotho, and that is why it agrees so well with the feelings of the people (the ba-Sotho). Therefore I say, especially to you young men, listen to that message! You can no longer say that you have no other book than the Bible since, as for the little catechism, there is nothing to be read there. Here is a very good book, buy it for yourselves, and so buy yourselves something that does not decay, which can help you for ever and ever.

With greetings,
G. Beyer (Minister)

In this context, we must also quote the first advertisement of Moeti in the Leselinyana since this amounted to a review aimed at encouraging the reader to buy the book. This piece must, of course, also have been composed by one of the missionaries, probably Dieterlen himself. It reads:

We advise all Basotho who know how to read to buy this beautiful book
which is called

MOETI OA BOCHABELA

It is a book that will bring joy to all those who read it; it is very interesting. It tells us about a certain young man who lived in the olden days, before the missionaries were there, when the teachings of the Gospel were not known to anyone.

It is told how this young man was frightened by the evil things that he saw among the people, and had to leave his home to find God, even though he did not know him. The reader will be both very happy and very surprised when he sees how this story is told, and where it ends.

It is not something that really happened, it was invented by the writer, Mr. Thomas Mofolo, yet it shows very clearly how the Lesotho of old was. It is the first book of its kind to be written by a Mosotho; we know that it will therefore be appreciated by all the people and all their friends.

It has been printed with great care, and it has been sewn together better than all the other Sesotho books.

The Basotho readers themselves were extremely excited about the publication of Moeti. It is clear that they considered Mofolo’s book a collective achievement of which every Mosotho ought to be proud. They had been following the instalments regularly since the first one was printed in January 1907. Indeed, even before the serialization ended, there was at least one appeal from a Mosotho reader to have the series bound in book form. The reader was D.D. Nthoba whose letter appeared in the May 1, 1907 issue of Leselinyana. Nthoba requests that Sam Duby’s “Tsa Lehолimo le tsa Lefatse” (About the firmament and the earth) and “Motho le tseo a phelang har’a tsona” (Man and his environment) be published, and he adds: “Perhaps you might supplement them with ‘Moeti oa Bochabela, Fekisi le Phakoane.’ Even though I am writing before the Fekisi story is finished, it appears that it is pleasing to the readers’ ears.” Nthoba concludes by saying that “newspapers get old, and besides, we give them away.”

It is noteworthy, though perhaps not surprising, that none of the Basotho readers who commented on Mofolo’s book appears to have found his rejection of Basotho customs objectionable, or at least disconcerting. One has to conclude that they shared his views.

I include both of the two other commentaries by Basotho which I found in the Leselinyana, partly because they make the occasion doubly historic: not only had the first work of fiction by a Mosotho been published in Sesotho, but other Basotho were expressing their views on it and congratulating its author.
P.M. Mosebi wrote from Winburg in the then Orange River Colony expressing his appreciation of *Moeti*. Perhaps the publication of his letter was deliberately timed by the editor to coincide with the first announcement of the book, because it also appears on September 1, 1907, like Dieterlen's letter. It is short, but highly appreciative. It says:

Let the Pilgrim of the East continue forward, we are pleased with him. Besides, salvation came from the East.

I would like to add this one more little word: The wish that the Leselinyana should be increased in size so that, even though we are weak, we should nevertheless be continually helped to make progress.

The second Mosotho whose letter of appreciation appeared in the *Leselinyana* after the book was published was J.L. Sekulu. He wrote on March 15, 1908 as follows:

Reverend, since last year I did not receive my maselinyana12 regularly, I therefore missed the beautiful story of “Moeti oa Bochabela.” I was upset, and I wished and desired that it could be made into a little book, but I did not know how this could be done.

The miracle was performed, and I obtained the book, and I read it, I read it with great care. It seems to concern the things of God, it seems to concern the affairs of the world! Oh, that book, my friends! What it says, for its part, is: “Here are matters pertaining to humanity, true humanity!” For that reason I personally am extremely happy about it. However, I am not entirely happy, because it is not properly decorated, this little grey cloth is not for it.

Let it be decorated more than this so that it may excel in beauty, after all it excels in the pleasure it gives.

“When they examined him carefully they found that his flesh had remained in the house of prayer. Hail! My Jesus, I long for you, let me go with you to the Royal Abode!”

How much joy will there be when it has been enlarged, and also decorated, this little book!

Sekulu's evaluation seems to hinge on the fact that the book talks about “the things of God” and “the affairs of the world” all in one breath. In other words he is quite aware of the allegorical nature of the work and is intrigued by it. He is also thrilled by the message of salvation, and he finds that the only way to express his own feelings is simply to repeat the words that convey Fekisi’s triumph as he is transported through the gateway of life. Which
means that he also savours the words, the poetry, with which Mofolo conveys his message. One is tempted to ask what greater tribute Mofolo could ask for.

It can be assumed that there were many more Basotho who felt a sense of appreciation than were able to convey those feelings through the Leselinyana. There is evidence that shortly after the book was first published, some Basotho wrote direct to Mofolo to order their copies. This was reflected in a letter of October 15, 1907, written by Mofolo to these potential buyers, drawing their attention to the proper procedure to be followed. He writes:

I have already received quite a few letters from friends who want “Moeti oa Bochabela,” and here I wish, with great respect, to inform all those friends of mine that all letters requesting that book should kindly be sent to the Rev. S. Duby, and not to me. Money orders, postal notes, cheques, and stamps should be sent to him. He is the one who is the printer and seller of books.

Greetings my beloved ba-Koena, yours
Thos. Mofolo.

Since the advertisement of the book specifically stated that “Those who would like to buy themselves this book should return this slip together with the money to MORIJA SESUTO BOOK DEPOT, MORIJA, Basutoland,” it must be partly their desire to show Mofolo their own individual appreciation of his achievement that prompted them to overlook the above directive and communicate direct with him. One does not know what messages of congratulations or comments they may have included with their orders. It seems to be a reasonable guess that many of them did.

**Conclusion**

There is ample evidence in Moeti oa Bochabela that Mofolo, like many of his contemporaries, was faced with painful choices at the time he composed his book. He had been brought up and educated as a Christian, yet he was also a Mosotho around whom Sesotho traditions were being vigorously practised by his compatriots and, no doubt, to a considerable extent by himself as well. His superimposition of Eden over Ntsoanatsatsi is a strong reflection of this dual existence. This was, without any doubt, a very difficult situation within which to define one’s identity and cultural loyalties. The triumph of Eden over Ntsoanatsatsi is but a recognition of historical reality. It matters little whether these juxtapositions and the dynamics arising therefrom were done consciously or unconsciously by Mofolo. What is important is that the
dilemma of a man faced with difficult choices did not begin with Mofolo, nor indeed did it end with him. It is part of man's political existence, and the artist is at the centre, trying to define viable alternatives for his society.

NOTES


6. Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg, *The Nature of Narrative*, London: Oxford University Press, 1971 (1966), pp.265-266, put forward the concept of the *histor* as “the narrator as enquirer constructing a narrative on the basis of such evidence as he has been able to accumulate,” and later he is further described as “a man . . . of authority who is entitled not only to present the facts as he has established them but to comment on them, to draw parallels, to moralize, to generalize, to tell the reader what to think and even to suggest what he should do.”


9. Franz, p.174. This particular comment is found in what purports to be a summary of the plot, but is highly coloured emotionally, as this statement shows, with Franz's own prejudices. Nowhere does Mofolo say that.

