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The transculturation of Thomas Mofolo's Chaka : Southern Africa and francophone Africa in dialogue

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The Transculturation of Thomas Mofolo's *Chaka*: Southern Africa and Francophone Africa in Dialogue

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Introduction

Aim

> […] the [Shaka] myth is still far from being ousted from the popular imagination; and as recent propaganda by both the Zulu Inkatha movement and Afrikaner right-wing shows, Shaka[1] remains a politically malleable, even volatile symbol (Wylie 1992:411).

Dan Wylie's insightful remark was made in the lead up to the first free elections in South Africa. In his analysis of the early historiography of Shaka, Wylie demonstrates that very little is known for certain about the Zulu king. Using Nathaniel Isaacs' *Travels and Adventures in Eastern Africa* (1836)[2] as a vantage point, Wylie demonstrates that 'white' literary texts on Shaka are unreliable.

Shaka's myth grew from the unquestioning plagiarising of Isaacs' text which was inspired, on the one hand, by the author's need to "conceal what the real Isaacs had been doing in Natal" (Wylie 1992:415)[3] and, on the other, by a desire to "project onto the Zulu a paradoxical image of tractable discipline and friendliness balanced by unbridled and animal ferocity" (Wylie 1992:415). If the primary function of the early 'white' myths was to entrench Shaka as "the epitome of the African despot, a standard against which European virtue can be measured" (Wylie 1992:419), popular historical writing on Shaka

[1] Note on orthography: I will use 'Chaka' throughout this dissertation unless citing from a text where it appears as 'Shaka', as in the above quotation, or when specifically referring to the historical figure independently from any of his literary representations.
[2] Isaacs' book is the first of only three substantial eyewitness accounts of Shaka's reign (Wylie 1992:413).
[3] According to Wylie: "[…] certainly he [Isaacs] was operating as a mercenary, fathering illegitimate children, running guns, administering capital punishment, and very likely slaving" (Wylie 1992:415).

at the time also contained what Wylie calls a strong 'entertainment quotient' which insinuated into the western imagination an image of Shaka and Africa fraught with mystery, exoticism, savagery, bloodshed and violence (Wylie 1992:415).

At the outset, the first distinctive trait of Shakan studies is that myth, history and literature are intractably linked. Early texts on Shaka – including oral texts – can generally be divided into two categories: historical texts strewn with undependable and often fictionalised biographical information and fictional accounts awash with historical references often accepted as legitimate.

*

Thomas Mofolo's *Chaka* was published in 1925 by the missionary press of the Paris Evangelical Mission Society (PEMS). By then, the debate on Shaka's life had been raging for a century. Carolyn Hamilton elaborates: "[…] by the 1920s the figure of Shaka discussed by constituencies as diverse as popular novelists, Zulu nationalists, academics, and the writers of serious literature[4] was the product of a century of discussions about sovereignty and governance […]" (Hamilton 1998:6).

Mofolo's *Chaka* is a text about Shaka drawn from oral lore and written in Sotho by a Sotho – "in fact the first Sotho novelist, [and] also the first African novelist" according to Alain Ricard (Ricard 2004:105). The translation of *Chaka* into European languages (with more than one English version) influenced other African writers, this time Francophone ones, who then adapted Mofolo's story into entirely new versions

[4] In this category I include Thomas Mofolo, and to Hamilton's list I would also add amateur ethnographers.

where they infused the story of the Zulu king with further culturally-specific layers of their own ideological partialities.

In the present study, I seek to perform a similar study to Wylie's. However, whereas his work focuses on revealing the 'white' literary myths of Shaka, I propose to study the *black* myths of Shaka in Francophone literature. I intend to demonstrate how *Chaka*, the novel, contributed to the historical Shaka's mythical status in Francophone African literature principally through Léopold Sédar Senghor's construal of this myth in his poetic adaptation of Mofolo's novel. Myth is to be specifically understood, here, in terms of how Wylie understands it in the Shakan context:

> Shaka is nothing if not – or nothing other than – a textual construct, and textuality has a way of attaining a solidity which ignores historical changes. If this happens for long enough, and strongly enough, the subject becomes a *myth*. Though much abused and too often loosely applied, the concept of myth is nevertheless a vital one in dealing with literature in which so much material is drawn not from empirical evidence, but from other reaches of the imagination. Most approaches stress myth's positive force in enhancing poetic creativity and resonance, or in supporting group identities […] (Wylie200:6).

*

Senghor's poem *Chaka* first appeared in 1951 in the journal *Présence Africaine*.[5] In the figure of Chaka, its main protagonist, the Senegalese author created one of Négritude's most powerful symbols, posed, in his verses, as an intellectual challenge to the imperial cultural assumptions of the colonising powers. Effectively, in Senghor's poem, Shaka/Chaka becomes, rather anachronistically, an anticolonial hero and his text a powerful analysis of the psychology of the colonised and the evils of colonisation (Jouanny 1997: 74). Senghor is in fact responsible for starting what became *le mythe de Chaka* in Negritudinist circles, inspiring, in turn, further rewritings of Mofolo's novel.[6] The variety of re-inscriptions that followed Senghor's, from Seydou Badian's politicised play to Tchicaya U Tam'Si's portrait of Chaka as a modern antihero, offer new texts where pan-Africanist visions converged with personal quests (Mabana 2002:81).

Argument

I will argue that Mofolo's text, first through its French translation by PEMS missionary Victor Ellenberger, and then through its adaptation into a poem by Senghor, created, in Shaka, an emissary of black liberation and a model for modern African governance across Francophone Africa in the literature on Shaka. Often, literary cultures from Anglophone Africa and Francophone Africa are treated as separate intellectual

[5] *Présence Africaine* was a journal created in 1947 by Alioune Diop and was published in Paris and Dakar simultaneously. Kesteloot explains how *Présence Africaine* offered black novelists and poets of the time an essential forum (as well as the publishing opportunity that they lacked) to have their works read. "Each publication showed the solidarity of a tight-knit group who aimed at saving the works of authors who wrote for their people. The journal was a platform where thinkers and writers, politicians and sociologists, elders and young academics "attempted to define the originality of their Africanity that they tried to fit into the modern world" – Kesteloot quotes Diop from the first edition of the journal (Kesteloot 2004:207, my translation).

[6] The fact that 'Chaka' appears as an entry in the *Dictionnaire de la négritude* is a legacy of this.

spheres. This thesis seeks to understand the dialogue between these cultures. For this, I will examine the evolving narrative of the cultural exchanges through the history of Mofolo's novel and its Francophone re-writings. Previous studies of the Francophone adaptations of *Chaka* appear to have merely sought to list these works and evaluate them on their literary merits.[7] I will show, however, that Mofolo's *Chaka* is a *transcultural* text, which is at the source of a complex intellectual relationship between Southern Africa and Francophone Africa within the literature on Shaka.

*

In order to achieve this I will demonstrate the significance of Mofolo's *Chaka* with respect to the author's intellectual education and development by the Lesotho mission of the PEMS, which is still based in Morija today. I will then examine the translations of the novel in English and French and ascertain to what extent the nature of Victor Ellenberger's French version facilitated its culturally-specific reading by Senghor, before I discuss the Francophone versions that followed his, Seydou Badian's *La mort de Chaka* in particular.

I begin by investigating the history of the PEMS' presence in Lesotho from the end of the nineteenth century. I will show that the PEMS played a key role in nurturing a nascent Sotho literature through the introduction of the written word. My argument will be that, despite the PEMS' obvious priorities, which were historically and politically consistent with missionary endeavour in Africa, the missionaries, particularly the first to arrive, took a profound and unusual interest in the local people and their culture. Rarely

[7] The most notable ones are Blair's (1974), Burness's (1976) and Mabana's (2002).

seen in the history of the evangelisation and colonisation of Africa by Europeans, the missionaries of the PEMS built *personal relationships* with the Basotho they had come to evangelise.

This idiosyncratic way of relating to each other, initiated by Arbousset's and King Moshoeshoe's lifelong friendship, coincided with the beginnings of a homogenised and transcribed Sotho. In speaking of Arbousset, one of the first two PEMS missionaries to arrive in Lesotho, Ricard explains that *he* was the precursor of a completely new way for Europe to relate to Africa (Ricard 2000:46). He also, as will be shown, contributed greatly to the recording of traditional Sotho lore, working all his life on translating and writing Sotho. Arbousset's deep interest in the people, their language and their country was infectious and continued long after he was gone by future generations of PEMS missionaries in Lesotho.

Through these particular historical, cultural and linguistic circumstances, and through the particular character of individuals from both sides, the French-speaking Protestants and the emerging Sotho nation built a special *rapport* which offered a propitious literary context for the creation of *Chaka*.

Additionally, Mofolo held some ideas which represent evidence of the nascent ideological awakening and resistance of black Southern African writers. Although his work is unarguably tainted by his French Protestant education and his relationship with the missionaries and their teachings, it was undoubtedly ambiguous and, although not always in an obvious manner, Mofolo was a highly politicised intellectual. Ricard explains that at the time of his writing, Mofolo's world was losing itself to written

Christian culture. In this context, *Chaka* served as a retrospective on the Africa of the past, in order to reflect on its future direction.

This is essentially what inspired the African Francophone writers that read *Chaka* because Mofolo's concerns paralled theirs at a different historical moment: that of the new independences of their own countries where issues of governance and sovereignty were their primary concerns. It is not surprising that Ricard's understanding of Mofolo's circumstances echoes Négritude's central tenet: in order to recapture an identity that was destroyed by the colonial experience and white imperialism, the 'black man' needs to return to his cultural and historical sources – in other words, to recapture a pre-colonial Africa as a means to envisage a new future. I will also explore the beginnings of the definition of 'Africanity' and its construction in Mofolo's and Senghor's work.

*

Despite evidence to show that *Chaka*'s manuscript was completed much earlier, the novel was only published by the PEMS in 1925. Although the publishing history of the book alone is deserving of a thorough investigation, I will concentrate on the political and literary impact of the text once published and translated.

In examining the translation of *Chaka*, my argument will revolve around the idea of translation as a rewriting of the original text. More specifically, this rewriting will be discussed with the understanding that translation, here, is an act of *transculturation*. Transculturation, as Mary Louise Pratt defines it in *Imperial Eyes*, is a term first coined by Cuban sociologist Fernando Ortiz to encompass and "to replace the paired concepts of

acculturation and deculturation that described the transference of culture in reductive fashion" between colonies and metropolis (Pratt 1992: 228). Transculturation happens, in the case of Mofolo's *Chaka*, through its various translations and rewritings. The transference of culture does not follow a linear (colonies/metropolis) path but, rather, *Chaka* becomes transcultural through the variety of cultures it came into contact with, which are interestingly not delineated by binary imperial relationships.

*

Hamilton makes the following observation:

> A topic that awaits fuller investigation in its own right is the way in which the ideas about the Zulu past have been taken up by African writers, and the way their works have affected and in turn been shaped by white writings (Hamilton 1998:6).

I propose to answer her call from a different angle: I am interested in the way in which African writers' ideas about the Zulu King (such as Senghor's most notably but also Badian's, Kâ's, Nénékhaly-Camara's, Niane's, Zinsou's, U'Tam'Si's and Fall's) have been shaped by other African writers – here, Mofolo. I will show that those inspired by Mofolo used the symbolic power of Shaka to give literary shape to their ideological attitudes, which are mainly inherited or have at least been inspired by Senghorian Négritude.

Senghor's definition of Négritude is illustrated in his poem on a thematic and stylistic level. When Senghor wrote *Chaka* it was clear that Mofolo was his prime inspiration. He tells Donald Burness, in a letter, that he was intimately and *politically* inspired by *Chaka* (Burness 1976:30, my emphasis). Our discussion will focus on Senghor's manipulation of Mofolo's *Chaka* for his own expression of Négritude. Through a close reading of both versions (Mofolo's and Senghor's) I will examine Senghor's interpretation and appropriation of Mofolo's work. Senghor's definition of Négritude is equated to a particular definition of Africanity where aesthetics are of crucial importance, and where rhythm reigns supreme as its essence or *life-force*.[8] Senghor, as will be shown, was truly inspired by Mofolo *sensibilité nègre* – his African sensibility – and his own version bears testament to his aesthetic and political inspiration. Senghor's poem is the only transposition that achieves such a truly effective blend of aesthetic qualities, which follow Négritude's literary precepts, and a genuinely powerful (political) plea against colonialism. The result is a very personal definition of Négritude born out of the Senegalese poet's desire for a unifying national/transnational African identity. This quest for what he terms the *Graal-négritude*[9] stems directly from Senghor's personal life choices. At the time of his *Chaka*, Senghor was torn between his poetical vocation and his duty as a politician, and torn between the need, in his Négritude, to realise both. Shaka/Chaka gives voice to this existential paradox with passionate lyricism:

[8] The concept is basically understood as an essential dynamic mode of being (Bâ 1973:45).

[9] Senghor coined this expression to conceptually compare the quest for one's Négritude (his principally) to that of the mythical Grail of the Legend of the Round Table. The simile is poetic and evocative: it simultaneously highlights the quasi-mythical quality of certain aspects of Négritude – making it particularly appropriate to use in the Shakan context – as well as the nobility associated with the unrelenting quest to attain its almost platonic ideal.

J'ai longtemps parlé dans la solitude des palabres
Et beaucoup beaucoup combattu dans la solitude de la mort
Contre ma vocation. Telle fut l'épreuve, et le purgatoire du Poète (Senghor 1984 :129).

[So long I have spoken in the solitude of the indabas
And I have struggled much in the solitude of death
Against my vocation. This was the testing and the purgatory of the Poet (Senghor 1965:151)] [10]

*

The Francophone transcultural transpositions of Mofolo's *Chaka* will be analysed within the framework of the evolution of post-independence ideology in French-speaking Africa. The texts studied will illustrate how these writers, under the influence of Négritude, sought to recapture a pre-colonial African past in literature by reconstructing their identity through the cult of heroes, Shaka more specifically here.

Shaka was not the only nation-founding hero to have accomplished memorable deeds in his life-time. Yet, he was the one to inspire Francophone authors above all others. My discussion will show that this was because Mofolo, *as well as* the notoriously controversial king, inspired the writers discussed and Senghor in particular.

[10] All English translations of Senghor's poem will be extracted from John Reed and Clive Wake's translation of *Chaka* in *Léopold Sédar Senghor: Prose & Poetry* (1965) unless stated otherwise. Similarly, all English quotations of Mofolo's novel used in the thesis will be from Kunene's 1981 translation, unless otherwise specified.

Methodology

In the same way that a study of the impact of different systems of colonial administration on African territories would, in the words of Albert S. Gérard, require "an astounding combination of skills – linguistic, anthropological, historical and critical […]" (Gérard 1971:16), this thesis could not adhere to a single school of thought. The methodology will be founded on a holistic approach to literary study. Each part of the discussion is inherently linked, often simultaneously, to findings in various academic disciplines. I will draw from as diverse fields as history, socio-anthropology, theory of translation, and, within literary criticism itself, mainly from the Négritude discourse.

*

In the first part, which will focus on the genesis of the relationship explored, most theoretical background will be based on socio-anthropological, ethnographical and historical literature. Here, travelogues of Southern Africa in the nineteenth century, and works on that particular period of Lesotho's history (such as Tim Couzens' *Murder at Morija*) will provide the framework for our analysis. In conjunction, Alain Ricard's research on the subject will guide the perspective of our discussion. The works of John and Jean Comaroff as well as David Coplan on missionary anthropology will provide further theoretical background to our analysis. Kunene's extensive research on Thomas Mofolo and the literature of Lesotho (particularly his very thorough study entitled

Thomas Mofolo and the Emergence of Written Sesotho Prose) combined with Albert Gérard's own work in the field will be crucial.

For the discussion of the translations of the text in Part II, I will borrow analytical tools from Descriptive Translation Studies (DTS). Christiane Nord's *Text Analysis in Translation: Theory, Methodology, and Didactic Application of a Model for Translation-Oriented Text Analysis* will offer the main theoretical framework to this part of the discussion which will draw heavily on the texts themselves.

The same applies to Part III, the last part of the analysis, where I will principally rely on a thematic reading of Senghor's poem within the wider context of Négritude and as defined by Senghor himself. For a better understanding of the context within which *Chaka* was born for Senghor, I introduce the author's intellectual and political circumstances at the time of the production of the text. This contextualisation owes much to Vaillant's thorough biography of the author entitled *Black, French, and African: A Life of Léopold Sédar Senghor* (1990).

When discussing the other Francophone versions of *Chaka*, all of them plays, in Chapter 8, I will define some key concepts in the study of Francophone African drama drawing from Conteh-Morgan's comprehensive critical introduction to the genre (1994).

In my concluding definition of the concept of transculturation I draw from Coronil's insightful introduction to the 1995 edition of Ortiz' *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar* where the Cuban sociologist develops his concept in relation to Cuba's economic and social history.

Part I: Genesis

Chapter 1 – The PEMS and Lesotho

1. An Invitation from 'The King of the Mountain at Night'

In 1832, ten years after it was founded in France, the Paris Evangelical Mission Society (PEMS) which had a keen interest in South Africa because of the presence, in the region of Stellenbosch, of the descendants of a small group of French Huguenots, sent out four young missionaries to evangelise (Gérard 1984:10). They arrived in Lesotho in 1833, after a long and perilous trip to meet Moshoeshoe, "the King of the Mountain at Night" (Couzens 2003:80). Two of them in particular, Thomas Arbousset, who was 23 at the time and Eugène Casalis, barely 20, were to become part of the country's history, in which they would play – and their descendants after them – an indelible role. As an astute politician, King Moshoeshoe very soon saw the potential benefits of an alliance with these white missionaries. Similarly, Arbousset and Casalis were hoping to start a mission in his country. Hence, after a first meeting with the King, Arbousset and Casalis invited him to dinner. In *Murder at Morija* Tim Couzens relates this encounter as follows:

> After the meal, they explained to the King their business as the messengers of a *God of Peace*, with the most perfect assurance that He would make incursions of enemies cease and create in the country a new order of belief and manners which would secure tranquility, stability and abundance. On the material side, they asked for a site where they could

> build houses and cultivate the ground according to their own ideas and habits.
>
> 'My heart is white with joy' said Moshoeshoe, 'your words are great and good. It is enough for me to see your clothing, your arms, and the rolling houses in which you travel, to understand how much *intelligence* and strength you have. You see our desolation. The country is full of inhabitants. Wars have devastated it. Multitudes have perished; others are refugees in foreign lands. I remain almost alone on this rock. I have been told that you can help us. We will do all you wish. The country is at your disposal. We can go through it together and you shall choose the place which will best suit you (Couzens 2003:83, my emphasis).

The place Arbousset and Casalis chose to found their mission came to be known as Morija and still exists today. Couzens' evocative narration of this momentous event in Lesotho's modern history beautifully illustrates the dynamics that were at play, from the outset, in the close and historically unusual relationship that developed between this Sotho king, his country, its people and the French.

*

I will look at the history of this relationship in light of its consequences for the emergence of new literary forms and productions in Lesotho. I will attempt to elucidate the factors that contributed to the uncommon nature of the rapport discussed. I will also retrace the intellectual history of Lesotho within some of its political history (such as the impact of the *Mfecane*) as I believe that it impacted on its literature. It will be shown that the new cultural and literary connections established between the French and the Basotho

culminate in the creation of one of the continent's first novels in a vernacular language by one of the continent's first novelists – and certainly the first Sotho: *Chaka* by Thomas Mofolo.

*

In the first part of Couzen's extract cited earlier, it is worthy of note that Arbousset and Casalis proclaim themselves to be messengers of a "God of Peace". 1833 was the year that the British parliament passed the Slavery Abolition Act and, although the French government only abolished colonial slavery fifteen years later, the French anti-slavery movement was at its peak at the time. In his introduction to Arbousset's *Excursion Missionnaire dans les Montagnes bleues* (a text relating an expedition Arbousset undertook in the company of Moshoeshoe in 1842)[1] Alain Ricard explains that, as the missionaries penetrated into the Trans-Orangia region[2] on their way to Lesotho, both were appalled by the Christian farmers they met who would rather trek to the North than give up their black slaves. For Arbousset and Casalis, such a form of Christianity which permitted racial discrimination was totally appalling (Ricard 2000:16). That is not to say that they were *rousseauistes*, as some of the more liberal missionaries

[1] Ricard explains how the original manuscript (lost today) was deposited at the head-office of the Paris Evangelical Mission, never to be published until it was discovered in 1965 by L. Thomson who, at the time, was preparing a biography of King Moshoeshoe (published in 1975) and hastily translated into English for his purposes. The current edition (presented by Ricard) is hence part of an effort to return to the original French text. Anecdotally, Arbousset is responsible for having found the source of the Orange during that expedition to which he gave the name it still has today: 'Mont-aux-Sources'.

[2] The region, at the time, was not subjected to any colonial law, unlike the Cape colony for instance, where slavery was abolished in 1834, following the British law.

of the time were labeled,[3] but both believed that "man's heart is the same everywhere", to quote the mission's journal (*Journal des Missions Evangéliques*) (Ricard 2000:15).[4] If Ricard may appear slightly apologetic of their more *moderate* attitude than some he does so because he admires them for their open-mindedness and rightly credits them for truly embracing the indigenous people and their culture in which they immersed themselves (Ricard 2000:14).

Significantly, this philosophical universalism allowed Arbousset and Casalis to take an honest and keen interest in the Sotho culture which they begun to study and record as soon as they arrived in Moshoeshoe's country. Albert Gérard sees the Protestant evangelisation enterprise as having had a vastly different impact on the indigenous cultures it targeted than, say, their Catholic counterparts from previous centuries in Asia or America, by virtue of being "modern". According to Gérard, these missions (the PEMS in Lesotho falls into that category) could boast about having created great missionary families who dedicated themselves to the "service of Africa" and distinguished themselves in all fields of African Studies (Gérard 1984:10). They did not just impose western values on the autochthones but also encouraged them to produce their own written texts, in their own language. Their aim was not for the local culture to disappear but for the people to learn the word of God (Gérard 1984:10). As soon as these missionaries arrived, they proceeded to transcribe indigenous languages (and, in this case, Sotho) into written form. The Morija missionary families were not only aware of their

[3] As is the case of well-known Pastor Van Der Kemp of the London Missionary Society (on which the PEMS was modeled) whom Arbousset and Casalis had met during the first stage of their voyage. Van Der Kemp was highly controversial because of his racial liberalism: he had married a former Malagasy slave and wore no shoes, just like the Hottentots! Of course, in our time, he is considered by many to be a pioneer of racial equality (Ricard 2000:14).

[4] As it appears in Ricard (2000:15).

influence in the development of a Sotho literature but actively participated in its emergence and advance, Thomas Mofolo being an illustrious product of their involvement. In Coplan's words:

> Yet he [Casalis] believed there was still a lot that pre-industrial societies in Africa could teach Europe about itself in relation to communal values. This is anthropology, and the Swiss missionaries were great salesmen of it. As Harris summarises: "Their respect for cultural alterity made an important contribution to the developing discipline of anthropology; and it gave the Swiss a critical yardstick with which to their measure their civilization […]" (Coplan 2003:8).[5]

*

The first years of this involvement revolved around translating and writing the Sotho language, in other words, "writing the language spoken by Moshoeshoe's people" (Ricard 2000:27). This is of utmost importance in the historical and social context of the time: Ricard explains that many different ethnic groups lived in the region and that although they shared mutually intelligible languages, they spoke different dialects that in turn differentiated them culturally and ethnically. As Ricard argues, these differences posed difficulties for all mission work in the area. In effect, if the first missionary task

[5] Coplan quotes Marvin Harris from *The Rise of Anthropological Theory*. New York: Crowell, 1968, pp. 61-63. Coplan continues his argument by saying that in fact the PEMS was "[…] the main spiritual colony of French Protestantism, indeed the model for all the others, and it fathered the development of the modern French Calvinist Church and its humanistic orientation in both France and Switzerland. So, isolated, mountainous, stubborn Lesotho became the "Switzerland of Africa" in a more meaningful sense" (Coplan 2003:8). This is important, in my view, because Coplan shows how the impact of the mission in Lesotho was not linear; the PEMS changed Lesotho's experience but was also, in turn, changed from its experience in Lesotho. When I discuss the transculturation of *Chaka*, I mention that part of Pratt's understanding of the concept involves a transculturation that happens *from* the colonies *to* the metropolis. Coplan's argument about the effect felt by the PEMS on its spiritual transformation back 'home' is a beautifully illustrative example to the contrary.

was to translate, how were these messengers of God to choose a language of reference that would ensure the greatest spread of their message (Ricard 2000:24)? The linguistic and ideological issues at stake could engender a study of its own but what is crucial to our study is that Arbousset and Casalis did choose Moshoeshoe's language and in doing so they answered the King's nation-building effort (Ricard 2000:24-27).

David Coplan suggests that owing to his extraordinary political prowess Moshoeshoe built "an increasingly unified national confederacy amid the chaos and depredations of the Shakan period and European encroachment" (Coplan 1994:35). He offered protection from his headquarters at Thaba Bosiu to the four great clans of the Basotho, as well as Sotho-Tswana and Nguni-speaking people, "all of whom today *speak* Sesotho and regard themselves as fully Basotho" (Coplan 1994:35, my emphasis). Coplan further suggests that language was of the essence to Moshoeshoe's political agenda because he saw the permanence of its written form as the key to "future political identity and [the] irreducibility of his recently constructed monarchial state" (Coplan 1994:36). In effect, Moshoeshoe very quickly realised that language would be the most effective unifying tool in his nation-building effort. He understood that in order for his young nation to progress advantageously and seal this unity, he needed language to move into written form. Coplan quotes Moshoeshoe speaking to Arbousset:

> "My language is nevertheless beautiful!" said the chief unaffectedly.
> "We are only beginning to realize this since we have seen it written down. Thanks to the little books of the missionaries, it will not be altered; oh! your paper; the paper organizes everything well […]. My language remains my language on paper. If that paper came from some remote corner of the Maloti, and if it arrived by itself at Thaba-Bosiu, it would be

recognized as a Mosotho, and we would ask if it had not been written by one of the subjects of Mokoteli" (Coplan 1994:35-36). [6]

This is where, to come back to Couzens' account, the word "intelligence" used by Moshoeshoe comes to light in all its importance in retracing the intellectual history of the nation leading to *Chaka*. The word is derived from the Latin *intellegere* which means 'to understand'[7]: the etymological root of the word is enlightening in describing the relationship between the missionaries and Moshoeshoe. Their rapport was based on an understanding (or at least an effort of understanding) that permitted interaction on an equal (or at least *almost* equal)[8] footing. Most accounts of that particular period in Lesotho's history will emphasise the unusual nature of their bond. This is surely because of its historical rarity: Moshoeshoe, Arbousset and Casalis were *friends*. Coplan refers to Arbousset as "Moshoeshoe's close friend" (1994:4); Couzens speaks of Moshoeshoe and Arbousset as "[t]he two [were] friends" (Couzens 2003:43). Their close friendship spanned about 37 years and it grew, in time, to include the missionaries' progeny: Couzens mentions that the King frequently came down the mountain to "join the Casalis family for dinner" (Couzens 2003:110). Importantly, this friendship had evident consequences, on a larger scale, on the relationship between the missionaries and the Basotho at large.

True, in Couzens' extract Moshoeshoe praises the white missionaries' intelligence but this is because he was intelligent himself: historians undisputedly recognise him as a

[6] The quote is extracted from David Ambrose and Albert Brutsch's English translation (1991) of Arbousset's *Excursion Missionnaire dans les Montagnes Bleues*, a revised and edited version of the first English translation of the text discussed in footnote 1.
[7] *Petit Robert* (1991:1017)
[8] I will comment on this further at a later stage in the discussion.

modern leader and an astute diplomat and politician. More specifically however, he held the *understanding* that his burgeoning nation can benefit from the foreigners' knowledge. Moshoeshoe was not afraid of novelty – anecdotally, the birth and development of horse riding in Lesotho is a fascinating illustration of the King's innovative and adventurous spirit.[9] Moshoeshoe sought the innovations of Arbousset's and Casalis' people ("the clothing, the arms and the rolling houses") that gave them the "strength" he immediately recognised. He sought their modernity, of which the written word was to be the most relevant in the relationship discussed.[10] As a result, Moshoeshoe and the PEMS did not only share a friendship but a common goal: that of developing the Sotho nation through a common language.

2. Missionary Anthropologists and the Birth of Written Sotho Literature

Ricard directly credits Arbousset and Casalis with having played a key role in the building of the Sotho nation by virtue of being missionary explorers and expressed his wish to present Arbousset's *Excursion missionnaire dans les montagnes bleues*, not so much from a historical perspective but from a *literary and anthropological* one (Ricard 2000:7). This is because, as Ricard rightly understands it, Arbousset was the precursor of

[9] The Basotho are recognised today as the finest horsemen in Southern Africa. Horseriding in Lesotho dates from Moshoeshoe's time. Couzens relates it thus:
"Sometime in 1929, Bushmen in the service of Moorosi stole two horses […] [and] sent one of these to Moshoeshoe with instructions as to how to ride it. Moshoeshoe was delighted – it was the first horse he had ever owned. With some initial reluctance, he mounted it awkwardly […]. Nervous as he was, Moshoeshoe had no doubts about the significance of the newcomer, and he soon became an accomplished horseman. He then encouraged his subjects to acquire horses, by trade and working in the Cape […]. [The horses acquired] readily adapted to the mountains, developing into what later became known as the Basotho pony" (Couzens 2003:103).

[10] In fact, Ricard remarks that, as opposed to Livingstone a decade later (who saw commerce and industrialisation as the path to progress), Arbousset and Casalis came from the south of France which had not experienced the industrial revolution yet and they consequently both still adhered to the pastoral way of life they knew (Ricard 2000:20).

a completely new way for Europe to relate to Africa: a rapport built through language and conversation where translation was of essence. Ricard explains the importance of the missionaries' interest in what they were exploring and, particularly, of Arbousset's keen observations which have substantially contributed to the field of anthropology (Ricard 2000:46). A case in point, as Ricard notes (in a postscript to the soon-to-be published French translation of explorer Francis Fynn's diary)[11] is the *Notice sur les Zoulas* (a chapter extracted from Arbousset's *Relation d'un voyage d'exploration au nord-est de la colonie du Cap de Bonne-Espérence, entrepris dans les mois de mars, avril et mai 1836 par MM. T. Arbousset et F. Daumas, missionnaires de la Société des Missions Evangéliques de Paris, écrite par Thomas Arbousset, avec onze dessins et une carte* published in 1842) which contains the first known transcription and translation of Zulu poetry: *Ode à Dingaan*, a Zulu praise poem to Dingane.[12] The *Notice sur les Zoulas* in its entirety is effectively one of the first texts written on the Zulus, only preceded by Nathaniel Isaacs' *Travels and Adventures in Eastern Africa* which was first published in London in 1836.[13]

In fact, Ricard believes Mofolo would have read Arbousset's text (translated into English shortly after its publication in 1842)[14] before writing *Chaka*. We will examine Mofolo's sources in greater detail at a later stage but it is interesting to note that, in what appears to be a thorough study of *Chaka* by Daniel P. Kunene (*Thomas Mofolo and the*

[11]This information was kindly forwarded to me by Alain Ricard.
[12] The only text on Dingane collected during the king's lifetime and one that makes no small contribution to the *literary monument* of his panegyric (Ricard 2000:53).
[13] For his part, Casalis announced in 1836 that he had written and printed a catechism in Sotho during his last trip to the Cape. This is perhaps the first Sotho text to have ever been published (Ricard 2000:30).
[14] In my correspondence with Alain Ricard, I enquired about this fact and he mentioned that Mofolo would have read John C. Brown's translation of Arbousset's text (1846).

Emergence of Written Sesotho Prose, 1989), the author fails to mention this very probable source, a point which is crucial to our present argument.

*

In an attempt to trace the roots of the written tradition in Southern Sotho literature prior to the birth of the *Leselinyana la Lesotho*[15] Chris F. Swanepoel looks at "the impact oral art would have on the emerging written traditions" in Lesotho (1989:121). In his article, Swanepoel clearly demonstrates that the literary activities of Casalis and Arbousset actively contributed to Sotho literature as a whole. Swanepoel explains that Casalis' recordings of praise poems, folk-tales, riddles, and proverbs published in his *Études sur la langue Séchuana* (1841) were a first introduction to the grammar and literature of Sesotho. Although oral art existed in Lesotho before the arrival of the missionaries, Swanepoel credits Arbousset and Casalis with producing the first written evidence of it (Swanepoel 1989:122). These missionaries' transcripts of oral lore undoubtedly influenced emerging local writers. In *Chaka*, for instance, Mofolo includes (transcribes) many Zulu praise poems (*izibongo*). Before him, these collections served as a "signpost to Sotho authors of the first generation such as Motsamai (1912) and Mangoela (also 1912). In Motsamai's collection of short stories no less than 14 out of 18 titles show a similar formulation to Arbousset's" as they appear in *Ngatana ea lichuantso le likelello* (1857) - Sheaf of parables and wisdom (Swanepoel 1989:124).

[15] A local newspaper published in Sotho whose name means "the little light of Lesotho". It was founded in 1863 by missionary Adolphe Mabille.

The writing produced by Arbousset and Casalis inspired Sotho writers in content and in form. Swanepoel further reveals that Arbousset's first publications (just four years after he arrived in Lesotho) of hymns (*litoko*) "show a first attempt at end-rhyme" in Sotho (Swanepoel 1989:123). These rhymes are probably at the root, Swanepoel continues, of "the rhyme poetry movement in the written literature which followed" later (Swanepoel 1989:123). The direct creative involvement that Arbousset's rhymes suggest is further testimony to his enjoyment and understanding of Sotho literature and culture and, particularly, to his full appreciation of the importance of the praise poem within that culture (Ricard 2000:47).

The missionaries' recording of oral tradition benefited the literary artist then but also rewards philologists today (Swanepoel 1989:123). Ricard echoes this idea by underlining that Casalis' and Arbousset's texts are essential in contemporary literary and ethnographical studies and are still used as references by such seminal authors in the field as Coplan, Ngcobo and Rycroft (Ricard 2000:60). Examples of key works would be Arbousset's already-mentioned *Ode à Dingaan* (Ricard 2000:53) as well as *Louanges de l'antilope bubale* (another Sotho text transcribed in its entirety by Arbousset)[16], both featured in *Excursion Missionnaire dans les Montagnes Bleues* (Ricard 2000:35).

Many of Arbousset's literary productions in French are testimony to his keen interest in Sotho literature, and its poetry in particular. He translated much of it in his mother tongue and these translations and their accompanying comments are today recognised as a great contribution to research in Sotho anthropology and philology, because of their accuracy and originality (Ricard 2000:32).

[16] It is actually a praise poem to the eland and should read *Louanges de l'éland* – an animal whose Sotho name Arbousset had confused with the buffalo's (Ricard 2000:34).

But Arbousset and Casalis are not the only PEMS missionaries to have contributed to Sotho literature in such an important way. Coplan extols Edouard Jacottet's later contribution:

> […he] devoted considerable effort to the production of a literature on the customs and languages of a number of southern Bantu peoples along with those of the Basotho. He translated and summarized in French the first part of Aziel Sekese's book in Sesotho *Buka ea Pokello ea Mekhoa ea Ba-Sotho, le Maele, le Litsomo* ("Book of Ancient Customs of the Basotho, Proverbs and Folktales"), but with additional notes and better organization. Jacottet's contribution is in the notes, which are extensive and fully ethnological. More important, his *Contes populaires des Bassoutos*, assembled by oral transcription and published in French translation in the 1890s, still stands as the most extensive and authentic collection of Basotho folk narratives ever produced. It contains as well an introduction emphasizing the value of the study of folklore to science and to the preservation of their traditions for future generations of Basotho (Coplan 2003:7).

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In their "study of the colonization of consciousness and the consciousness of colonization in South Africa" (Comaroff & Comaroff 1991: i)[17] some of the concepts enunciated by Jean and John Comaroff serve as a useful framework to our discussion, the most important one being the idea that an *intercultural* discourse always takes place in the colonial context and that this discourse dominates the "semantic scape" which ideological struggles cannot escape even if these are often veiled, to paraphrase, "in the rhetoric of cultural difference" (Comaroff & Comaroff 1991:27-28).[18] In other words, by the coming together of two cultures (Comaroff & Comaroff prefer the term "cultural fields") new meanings are created or existing ones expanded into a discourse unique to the particular context and shared by the different cultures involved. What is more, within this intercultural sphere translation is the "primary textual act" (Comaroff & Comaroff 1991:28). It makes sense to look at the PEMS' presence in Lesotho within this framework. The unusual nature of the relationship between the missionaries and Moshoeshoe analysed above and the (evangelical but also linguistic and literary) involvement of Arbousset and Casalis with Sotho culture as a whole resulted in an intercultural discourse that encouraged the emergence of written Sesotho prose whose specificity[19] is a result of it.

Another (somehow related) point worth noting is that, despite conflicts, colonial evangelism in South Africa successfully imposed its world view (whose "*forms* were authoritatively inscribed on the African landscape") while, at the same time, unfixing many of their own signifiers (Comaroff & Comaroff 1991:18). The only difference here

[17] The analysis focuses on the London Mission Society's (LMS) work, in the nineteenth century, among the Tswana speaking people. A lot of their findings apply however to the situation of the PEMS in Lesotho.
[18] Be it by the colonial powers of the times or by postcolonial theorists today.
[19] We will discuss the particular caracteristics of it later in the discussion and mainly, but not exclusively, through Mofolo's writing.

is that the PEMS' missionaries, unlike those sent by the LMS for instance, would have been less involved in the colonial enterprise in South Africa, as they were neither British nor Boer. This difference is clearly important because the missionaries of the PEMS, in all evidence, remained relatively neutral politically and their involvement with the Basotho can thus be read as a more 'genuine' one than most others. Of course, one would not dare speak of their objectivity. As Ricard eloquently puts it, Arbousset and Casalis wanted to know Africa, not with the view of teaching it French or conquering it but with that of converting it: "ils veulent la connaître pour la convertir" (Ricard 2000:58).

Manifestly, part of the PEMS' effort to know and understand the Basotho was motivated by their chief goal: that of "telling the African which God to pay homage to" (Kunene 1968:19). In Kunene words:

> The missionary had, as one of his major prerequisites, to learn the language of the people among whom he was working – he had to communicate with them; he had to translate excerpts from the Bible, write pamphlets on church dogma, on how to conduct a service and various other topics pertaining to the mission (Kunene 1968:19).

In my opinion however, Arbousset's and Casalis' (and also that of PEMS missionaries of the later generations) philological and linguistic work and contribution to the field stemmed not just from the desire to convert but from a genuine appreciation of the history and culture of their friend's people.

In discussing Arbousset's contributions to Sotho literature Swanepoel aptly remarks:

> To Arbousset's credit must be added his moderate attempts at literary criticism, which are remarkably appreciative. Unlike some of his brethren of a later generation,[20] he had no difficulty in realizing the merits of the samples of literature he had come across. When introducing his annotation of an eland praise, he says: "As our readers are not likely to be in a position to appreciate the beauties of sechuana poetry, they must receive on our own testimony the assurance that there is here a combination of originality, of action, of naïveté which is not altogether devoid of elegance" (1852:81)[21] (Swanepoel 1989: 123).

The PEMS' mission work was undoubtedly primarily aimed at facilitating the spreading of the word of God but the positive consequences of its by-product (the spread of literacy) cannot simply be rejected because of an ideological bias or, even, because of its own ideological bias. In fact, to refer, once more, to Comaroff & Comaroff's study of this *anthropologie de la communication*,[22] it would be far too simplistic to see the PEMS' work through the lens of a "missionary imperialist thesis" or speak of its missionaries either as "well-intentioned philanthropists […] or benign imperialists" (Comaroff & Comaroff 1991:7).

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[20] In a footnote, Swanepoel quotes, as an example, A. T Bryant from *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal* (1929). Bryant is describing a performance of Zulu oral poetry which, in my view, is worth reproducing (in part at least) to show the outrageously contrasting tone of Bryant's comments with that of Arbousset's: "… Dressed in the most grotesque of trappings … they would stride widely up and down, especially on great festal occasions, blazoning abroad […] " (1929:496) (Swanepoel 1989:125).

[21] Swanepoel quotes Arbousset from the 1852 English translation by J.C Brown of *Relation d'un voyage d'exploration au nord-est de la Colonie du Cap de bonne-esperance* published in 1842.

[22] To use Ricard's expression (Ricard 2000:46).

Effectively, missionary involvement in Africa was not devoid of ambiguity and this is true for the PEMS' activities too. We have demonstrated how the first missionaries in Lesotho lay the foundations, through an unusual rapport with the indigenous people, for a mission at Morija where language would be central to its activity. Before going further into what this tangibly entailed, it is essential, at this point, to delve a little more into the notion of their ambiguity. Once more drawing on the terminology used by Comaroff & Comaroff, it is apparent that the missionaries, by virtue of their foremost motivation (evangelisation)[23] could not have been "disinterested philanthropists". However, it is hopefully rather clear now, that they were philanthropists nonetheless but that they were also products of the time and of the cloth. Ricard remarks, for instance, on the limitations of their involvement with the Basotho: neither Arbousset and Casalis nor the generations that followed married a Sotho woman, something that the Basotho still see today as having lacked a genuine desire for cultural integration which was nevertheless part of the missionaries' rhetoric (Ricard 2000:19).[24]

Ambiguity was therefore not unique to the missionaries. As it happens, Moshoeshoe, the key participant in the conversation between the PEMS and the Sotho, never converted – but as shown earlier, this did not thwart the development of a genuine friendship between them. Couzens elaborates:

> It is hard to say why. The usual explanation is that [Moshoeshoe] realized such a step might irrevocably divide his nation and undermine his power, placing him definitely on one side of the split between Christians and

[23] I believe, however, that it would be greatly unfair, as Ricard also points out, to discredit the validity of their important contribution to Africanist philology because of it (Ricard 2000:59).
[24] This grievance is related by Stephen Gill, curator of the Morija Museum, in a personal correspondence with the author (1995).

> pagans. Faced by the threat of Sekonyela,[25] this might not have been a wise or pragmatic move. Then again, since he was living in a period of relative peace and security, he might not have felt it necessary to seek radical changes in his view of the world (Couzens 2003:72).

In my view, the subject of Moshoeshoe's conversion is crucial in showing that the intellectual background to Mofolo's *Chaka* is not ideologically clear-cut. The resulting ambiguity (of the missionaries, of the King who befriended them and even allowed them to carry on their mission, going as far as giving his children a Christian education while at the same time refusing baptism) would be strongly reflected in *Chaka*, the text and in Mofolo himself.

[25] Sekonyela was the chief of the Batlokoa clan, who were "sworn enemies" of Moshoeshoe and lingered in the north of the country (Couzens 2003:48).

Chapter 2 – Mofolo: His Life and Works

1. Lesotho in Mofolo's Time

1.1 A Zulu Legacy

The impact of *Chaka* on African literature and ideology, by bringing international notoriety to its main protagonist, a controversial historical figure that has troubled and thrilled readers since its publication, has been immeasurable. In my view, Mofolo held some ideas which represent evidence of the nascent ideological awakening and resistance of black Southern African writers. Although his work is unarguably tainted by his French Protestant education and his relationship with the missionaries and their teachings, it was also undoubtedly ambiguous and, although not always in an obvious manner, Mofolo was a highly politicised intellectual. Ricard explains that, at the time of his writing, Mofolo's world was losing itself to written Christian culture and, in this context, *Chaka* served to look back at the Africa of the past in order to reflect on its direction in the future.[1]

*

An essential ambiguity in *Chaka* (to which we will return in our in-depth analysis of the text) results from the Sotho perception of the Zulu kingdom and its people. In Ricard's view, this ambiguity transpires as early as in Arbousset's *Notice sur les Zoulas* (Ricard 2000:52). But clearly, it is in Mofolo's text that the complex mixture of the

[1] Information supplied to me by Alain Ricard.

Basotho's admiration and aversion for their Zulus neighbours will be expressed in its most powerful ambiguity.

To revert to Couzens' quote of Moshoeshoe's words cited earlier in our discussion, the king appealed to the missionaries' compassion thus: "You have seen our desolation. The country is full of inhabitants. Wars have devastated it. Multitudes have perished; others are refugees in foreign lands. I remain almost alone on this rock" (Couzens 2003:83). Moshoeshoe is clearly referring to the consequences of the *Mfecane*, a time of unrest in the Southern African region caused by the rise of the Zulu nation under Shaka. Donald Denoon and Balam Nyeko clarify that "[t]he Nguni speakers describe [it] as the Mfecane, and the Sotho speakers as the Difaqane, both meaning the crushing of peoples" (Denoon & Nyeko 1972:20). Jean Sévry explains (rather simplistically perhaps but clearly enough for our purposes) that the Mfecane was a series of ethnic jostlings (the *crushing of the people*) which resulted in the foundation of the Swazi and Sotho nations amongst others (Sévry 1991:65).[2] In that time, Moshoeshoe managed to protect himself and his people from Shaka by actively building good diplomatic relations with him (by sending him gifts) and forging strategic alliances – as with the Makhoakhoa (Kunene 1989:11). Nonetheless, the economic and social consequences of the Mfecane were shattering for all the people of the region, including

[2] On the topic of the origins of the *Mfecane* I wish to stress that according to relatively recent developments in the research of the times, the Mfecane has been a point of contention in the reconstruction of the history of Shakan times. Hamilton sums up the debate: "A major development of the late 1980s and early 1990s in Southern Africa was the debate over the "*mfecane*", the name given to a period of turmoil – generally attributed to the rise of the Zulu power under Shaka – which prevailed across much of southern Africa in the early decades of the nineteenth century. Suggesting that the idea of Shakan agency was a fraudulent settler alibi to mask the illegal procurement of Africans' land and labor, the initiators have called into question the status of the sources of early nineteenth-century southern African history […]" Hamilton (1998:4). For further reading on the current academic debate on the *Mfecane* see Hamilton (1995).

the Basotho. During that time, devastation and hunger pervaded the eastern part of Southern Africa. In Lesotho, it was also the time of the cannibals:

> It was at that time that, on account of hunger, people began to eat each other […]. And then after a few years, the persecutions and sufferings from the east climbed over the Maloti mountains and entered Lesotho, and there too cannibals came into being because of hunger (Mofolo 1981: 137).

1.2 Two PEMS' Institutions: the Morija Sesotho Book Depot and the *Leselinyana la Lesotho*

In Kunene's words, it is in the laying out of the "context of these far-reaching social and cultural changes [into which] Thomas Mokopu Mofolo was born in 1876" (Kunene 1989:18). Before delving deeper in the author's biographical history, our *exposé* of the intellectual and political context would not be complete without an appreciation of the missionaries' material contributions to Sotho literature.

These consisted of schools (including a Teacher Training College in 1868), and a printing press (the Morija Sesotho Book Depot), brought from England in 1841, "just eight years after Moshoeshoe, chief of the Sotho nation, had invited the Missionaries to establish themselves in this country" (Kirsch 1967:3). Importantly, in 1863, the newspaper *Leselinyana la Lesotho* which "was to play a vital role in laying the foundations of an emerging written literature in Lesotho, and in launching new writers" was created (Kunene 1989:18).

This paper, "the oldest vernacular newspaper in South Africa" (Kirsch 1967:3), offered emerging local writers the opportunity to express themselves but also, importantly, it offered them the opportunity to be heard and responded to. In other words, the *Leselinyana* fashioned the first arena for a written dialogue amongst the Basotho. Of the key-role played by the *Leselinyana* in inspiring and promoting Sotho writers Kunene says:

> There can be no doubt that some Basotho who tried their hands at writing were inspired to do so partly by the promise of the public recognition held out by this newspaper […]. Basotho readers often reacted with great enthusiasm in the *Leselinyana* itself as they read installments of narratives contributed by their compatriots. […] It seems to me that the fact that so many readers tried their hands at writing is thanks to the *Leselinyana*.
>
> Another remarkable consequence of the serialization of works was that in this way the *Leselinyana* was taking literature to its readers, a wonderful service in the spread of a literate culture, and a great bonus to the readers (Kunene 1989: 4-5).

Before publishing them in book form, Mofolo's first two novels, namely *Moeti oa Bochabela* in 1907[3] and *Pitseng* (1910) were serialized in *Leselinyana* and responses to Mofolo's works (including, eventually *Chaka*) were published in the paper.

[3] When *Moeti oa Bochabela* was published in full that same year, it became the very first novel ever published by a Sotho and one of the first works of fiction in a vernacular language on the continent.

1.3 Thomas Mokopu Mofolo: a Short Biography

By the time Mofolo was born, the PEMS missionaries had been present in Lesotho long enough for these main educational institutions to exist and have produced local teachers and missionaries. By 1864, in other words within one generation of their arrival, the PEMS was able to send a Sotho missionary, Esaia Seele to evangelize in the Northern Transvaal.[4] It is not surprising then that Thomas Mofolo was born to Christian parents and that he, himself, was baptised by the Reverend H. Dieterlen. Educated by the missionaries, he went to Bible School at 18 and moved on to the Morija Training School in 1896 to study to be a teacher (Kunene 1989:21). He worked at the Morija Sesotho Book Depot at various intervals, the first time being in 1899 to help Alfred Casalis (the grand-son of Eugène who arrived in 1833) run the printing press. The Anglo-Boer war interrupted the publishing activities of the mission and Mofolo left Morija until 1904. After teaching at a school in Maseru for a while, he returned to Morija to work as secretary to Casalis and proofreader for the press (Gérard 1971:109). This position afforded him the opportunity to be immersed in the world of print and there is no doubt that this time was a very formative one for his future writing ambitions (Kunene 1989:22). He was also strongly encouraged to write by the missionaries.

In Gérard's words:

> He was strongly encouraged to do some writing of his own by several missionaries: Alfred Casalis, who had managed the press since 20 May 1894, and who left the country in December 1905; S. Duby, who succeeded

[4] This information appears in the *Livre d'or de la Lessouto: soixante-quinze ans de l'histoire d'une tribu Sud-Africaine: 1833-1908* (1912), p349.

> him at the head of the Book Depot; and the Reverend Jacottet. So it was that in 1905-1906 he composed the first Sotho novel. His sponsors were fully aware of the novelty of the thing. One of them said that it was "an absolutely original work of imagination" (Gérard 1971:109).[5]

"Then on 23 March 1910 Mofolo suddenly left Morija" (Kunene 1989:29). This sudden move had long been clouded, in academic circles, by great mystery and controversy because Mofolo had, by then, already submitted his *Chaka* manuscript. Many have speculated that his departure was somehow linked to a dispute with the PEMS caused by the missionaries' reception of the text. In *A History of Neo-African Literature* (1968), Janheinz Jahn (who dedicates three pages to Sotho Literature in a book of just less than three hundred) argues that Mofolo was disappointed by the missionaries' reaction to *Chaka* and that is why he withdrew from the PEMS and stopped writing (1968:101).

But, although *Chaka* was highly controversial in the PEMS (a controversy to which we will return in detail further on), it appears that Mofolo did leave Morija for personal reasons: he had committed adultery. Most critics and historians concord today on this fact. Gérard explains that Jahn's statement is based on evidence from Mofolo's friend (Zakea D. Mangoaela) as reported by Sulzer.[6] For Gérard, "[al]though this is plausible enough, it is not the whole truth" (Gérard 1971:131). In correspondence with the Reverend Brutsch, Gérard found out that, according to the Morija parish register, Mofolo was found guilty of adultery (under the mention of "bohl.3/10 F. 1910") in March

[5] The expression is quoted directly from the *Livre d'or* here (p508).
[6] In the lenghthy and richly documented 'Epilogue' to *Chaka Zulu*, his German translation of the novel (1988).

1910. Mofolo's wife also left Morija that year in June (Gérard 1971:131).[7] This evidence strongly concurs with the content of the letters Mofolo wrote to Reverend Duby upon leaving. Here are excerpts from this correspondence. On the 23 March 1910, Mofolo wrote:

> Sir, everything you will hear from Rev Mabille, communicated by letter, truly comes from me. I have tried many times to be brave and tell you but I was overcome by shame. I am leaving at this very instant to go and hide myself so that this matter will come to light in my absence, and shall return when it has simmered down a little (Kunene 1989:29).

Later, on 27 April 1910, he replies to Duby's answer:

> Sir, I received your letter with great joy, and it was, besides, a great source of comfort for me in many ways.
> I understand you well when you say I must not make my situation worse than it already is, and I ought to say that I myself did not have such an intention, namely to deny or to try and make light of my guilt which is great indeed (Kunene 1989:31).

Mofolo never returned to Morija despite Duby's efforts to bring him back and reinstate him in his job – as is obvious from the later part of the correspondence quoted above (Kunene 1989:31). What is interesting in Mofolo's reply cited here is the overwhelming evidence of the author's strong (Christian) morals and his insurmountable

[7] Gérard explains that "[t]his, of course, leaves the possibility open that Mofolo, in his literary 'failure', sought relief and forgetfulness in illegitimate passion" (Gérard 1971:131). Although I found this comment unnecessarily speculative at first (something rather uncharacteristic of Gérard), it highlighted for me something which is fair to suspect: that Mofolo's leaving was probably due to *both* reasons discussed: his disappointment with the missionaries' response to the *Chaka* manuscript *and* his adulterous affair.

sense of guilt, this "guilt which is so great, which is great indeed" of which the "bitter fruit" is a life of sorrow (Kunene 1989:32). It is somehow ironic that the "bitter fruit" of Mofolo's transgression echoes, here, the one committed by Nandi and Senzangakhona in *Chaka* and about which, at the end of chapter five, Mofolo writes: "we find that it is indeed true that the fruit of sin is amazingly bitter" (Mofolo 1981:34).

Shortly after writing this letter, Mofolo moved to Johannesburg[8] and had a variety of occupations in the city – amongst others: trading, recruiting and interpreting. In 1937, he turned to farming and got into a buying deal from which he was subsequently ruined, victim of the 1913 Union of South Africa's Land Act which forbade him to take possession of a farm where his neighbors would be white farmers without prior permission – which he hadn't obtained, seemingly unaware of that requirement (Kunene 1989:37-38). He died poor, at the age of 72, and after a long decline in his health (Kunene 1989:41).

2. Early Works

2.1 *Moeti oa Bochabela*

In view of our investigation, we will focus our discussion of Mofolo's biographical history around salient points that will serve in our analysis of *Chaka*. These are: the biographical elements contained in Mofolo's work as a whole, the author's

[8] In recounting Mofolo's biography, Kunene makes an interesting aside worth mentioning not simply for its anecdotal value but perhaps, also, as an instance of how closely-knit the Morija circle really was and how missionaries were not immune to having secrets, sins and scandals of their own. There is evidence to show that when Mofolo got to Johannesburg, he came into contact with H.E. Mabille (one of the two sons of Adolphe Mabille who had just passed away). H.E. Mabille had previously left the PEMS in Lesotho because of an adulterous affair "which involved his Mosotho housegirl" (Kunene 1989:33). In an interesting twist, Mofolo had confided the secret of his own adultery to Louis Mabille – none other than H.E. Mabille's brother (Kunene 1989: 33-34).

ambiguity, his relationship with the PEMS and, lastly, *Chaka*'s reception at the time of publication.

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Mofolo was an avid reader. In his introduction to the 1931 translation of *Chaka* by F.H. Dutton, Sir Henry Newbolt states (basing his information on Mangoaela's account of Mofolo's life) that Mofolo had read all the religious and historical Sotho books published at the time he was working at the Book Depot and Printing Press, as well as authors such as Rider Haggard and Marie Corelli (Newbolt 1931:ix). Included, of course, was Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*.[9] According to Kunene, it is safe to assume that Mofolo would have read both the original English and the Sotho translations[10] of the work (Kunene 1989:22). Bunyan's book, undoubtedly the most influential text in missionary work in Africa after the Bible,[11] was Mofolo's inspiration for writing his first novel, *Moeti oa Bochabela*. For some, *The Pilgrim's Progress* gave Mofolo, at the very least, the outline for his story (Couzens 2003:86). For others, *Moeti oa Bochabela* was "something like a mixture of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, and Olive Schreiner's *Story of an African Farm*" (Newbolt 1931: ix).

[9] Couzens informs us that by 1864, Adolphe Mabille "had collaborated with his able co-worker [Filemone Rapetloane] on translating Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* into Sesotho" (Couzens 2003:118). Although printed earlier, the first Morija edition only appeared in 1896 (Kunene 1989:49).

[10] Mofolo would have also read other African translations of the text. In *The Portable Bunyan: A Transnational History of* The Pilgrim's Progress (2004), Isabel Homeyr points out that "at least one scene in [Mofolo's] novel derives from an illustration that appeared first in Ndebele and then in the Zulu translation" (Hofmeyr 2004:3).

[11] Gérard indicates that C. E. Wilson from "The Provision of a Christian Literature in Africa" in *International Review of Missions* XV (1926), p506-514, claims they were 33 versions of *The Pilgrim's Progress* in Africa by 1923.

Although most critics have not been able to see, in *Moeti oa Bochabela*, much more than a rewriting of a seminal Christian text and a missionary tract, the novel contains finer notable dimensions. If it is obvious that Fekisi's story parallels, in many ways, Christian's quest, what is remarkable in Mofolo's first creative work, at least from a literary standpoint, is that it is imbued with a myriad of genres and discourses from the mission world *and* beyond (Hofmeyr 2004:171), making it a polyphonic and more complex work than is immediately apparent.

Moeti oa Bochabela is a truly Sotho text in its own right. In fact, Hofmeyr speaks of the "Sothoizing" of Great-Heart (Hofmeyr 2004:172), the protector of the weak who, like all knights, fights the excesses of inherited power and authority (Hofmeyr 2004:170-171). Mofolo obviously highlights the value of a meritocratic system against that of the feudal gerontocratic chiefly and lineage rule (Hofmeyr 2004:153), bringing Sotho topicality to a (English) Christian quest story.

In fact, Mofolo was more politicised than is commonly understood. This transpires in his writing as early as in *Moeti oa Bochabela*. His discontent with the Sotho traditional system of governance and its abuse by the chiefs seems to have been a polemic to which he gave his full (political) involvement. It also finds expression in his work as a reporter for the *Leselinyana* where he showed unequivocal support for the people not just against the British colonial administration but also against local chiefs (Kunene 1989:28).

However, as mentioned previously, most readings of *Moeti oa Bochabela* see in it the author's submission to the imperialistic indoctrinations of missionary work: Gérard, for instance, calls it a "Christian tract" (Gérard 1971:110). Kunene speaks of Mofolo's

perception of the question of good and evil as tainted by his Christian upbringing, and of the metaphorical correlation, in *Moeti oa Bochabela*, of "Good" with "European" and "Bad" with "African" (Kunene 1989: 65-67). In an article entitled *Deculturation: the African Writer's Response* (1968), *Moeti oa Bochabela* is used by Kunene as a prime example of what he calls "committed" literature – the product of the circumstances under which black South Africa learned to write; that is to say, from the missionaries (Kunene 1968:19). He introduces the text and comments on it as follows:

> We said, at the beginning, that the earliest Bantu-languages writers in South Africa wrote a committed literature. It is now time to ask, what did they write about? What were they crusading for? […] First let us take the crusaders for the new religion.
>
> The more serious literary works of art started rolling off the press at the turn of the century. One such work was a book entitled Moeti oa Bochabela (The East-bound Traveller) by Thomas Mofolo, an allegory very much along the lines of Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress. Fekisi, Mofolo's hero, sees evil in all the ways, customs and traditions of his people, the Basotho. […] Mofolo, at the opening of his book, describes the African pre-missionary days as being "clothed in darkness […]". […] The symbolism equating black with ugliness, evil and sin, and white with beauty, goodness and virtue, is all too powerful to miss (Kunene 1968:21).

If this is undisputable, while advocating a Christian salvation, Mofolo also praises the validity of the Basotho's religious beliefs and this, Kunene sees 23 years later, in *Thomas Mofolo and the Emergence of Written Sesotho Prose*. He shows that Mofolo, for example, makes an "ethnographic comment in which he tells the reader about the

significance of the East" and of Ntswanatsati (Kunene 1989:67-68). Gérard precisely encapsulates this notion:

> But the fact remains that underneath the disparaging depiction of the minor characters of the novel, there is – illustrated by the elders' speeches, the mythical story of Kgodumodumo,[12] and the motivations of Fekisi himself – the memory of and the aspiration to a life of orderliness and virtue that are presented as independent of any Christian teaching. So 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[13] and the degradation of morality exemplified in the early chapters in the book (Gérard 1971:111).

Mofolo then does not so much seem to condemn his ancestors' ways in favour of the missionaries' as much as he criticises (in a rather politically charged way) *aspects* of the Sotho system of governance of his time. According to Gérard's reading, Christianity then offers the possibility of recapturing the ancient purity and enlightenment of Sotho ways (Gérard 1971:111). Such lost ways, of which the matter of love and marriage – a highly contentious topic in the relationship between the PEMS and the Basotho[14] – will

[12] Kgodumodumo is a fabulous monster who was said to have eaten all the people and animals of the land except for one pregnant woman who managed to escape and whose son eventually freed humanity from the monster's belly.

[13] The parallelism with Senghorian Négritude's desire for the return to a pre-colonial Africa is far too striking here to be left unmentioned.

[14] The PEMS and the Basotho never saw eye to eye on such issues as circumcision, *bohali* (dowry) and polygamy. Although Mofolo never advocated polygamy (as proved by the affair leading to him leaving Morija), the debate around it is a potent example of the PEMS forceful attempt to eradicate certain customs that were deeply entrenched in Sotho culture. Couzens relates: "One of the greatest obstacles to conversion, one of the largest rocks in the road, was the question of polygamy. Moshoeshoe, the greatest polygamist of all, with thirty or forty wives, was nonetheless quite happy to discuss its disadvantages […]. But he warned that in condemning polygamy, the missionaries were attacking 'a strong citadel' and were unlikely to shake it […]" (Couzens 2003:86). In fact, Couzens speaks of the rift between Moshoeshoe and the PEMS which resulted from Moshoeshoe's son Molapo (who had been baptised) taking on more wives after his Christian

be praised out loud in *Pitseng*, his second novel (Kunene 1989:66-67). He writes, characteristically using the light versus darkness metaphor:

> The modern days are said to be days of light, of wisdom, of progress, while the olden days, the days of the *difaqane*, are said to have been days of darkness, of foolishness, and ignorance. But in this matter of marriage we have found that to many people those days of old were days of wisdom […] and it is the modern days which are days of ignorance […] (Mofolo 1930:128)

The two main impulses in *Moeti oa Bochabela* (namely moral and intellectual) which Gérard identifies (Gérard 1971:109) are like young shoots of Mofolo's ideological and literary development, which will grow and take shape as his writing progresses. Whereas *Moeti oa Bochabela* does not question the Christian ideal, *Pitseng,* which in Gérard's opinion shows a more realistic subtlety (Gérard 1971:115), strongly "emphasizes the contrast between this ideal and actual behavior among Christians, both black and white" (Gérard 1971:113).

2.2 Mofolo's Syncretism

Gérard speaks of Mofolo's *syncretism* (a concept which Kunene draws from in his study of Mofolo) to explain the author's ambiguity in his writing, born of the pull between his Christian allegiance and his Sotho commitments. In his life, this is

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wedding, something the missionaries denounced vociferously as the work of the devil (Couzens 2003: 120).

manifested by his Christian upbringing and his reaction, as expressed in the letters quoted earlier, to his alleged adulterous behaviour.

Mofolo's syncretism comes fully to light when examining his political involvement in Lesotho. Firstly, he was one of the founding members of the Basutoland Progressive Association (BPA), formed in 1907,[15] where, according to Mangoaela, he carried great influence (Newbolt 1931: x). For Kunene, the birth of the party needs to be understood as being part of a general movement in awakening black emancipation in Southern Africa, expressed, in the case of the BPA, in a narrowly ethnic manner rather than on a broadly nationalistic level (Kunene 1989:24).

Another founding member – and president until his death at the end of 1912 – of the party was the scholar Cranmer Matsa Sebeta. Although there is no explicit evidence of any influence exerted by Sebeta on Mofolo's ideological evolution, it could be argued that, having worked *together* in creating the BPA, Mofolo and Sebeta must have at least been of the same mind at some level. Sebeta is an interesting tangential character in our effort to draw a political portrait of Mofolo because of their political connection. By the time Mofolo was 19 years old Sebeta had fully broken away from the PEMS. Having been a student of the PEMS, he had soon realized that the missionaries' teaching was intentionally restrictive (an accusation the missionaries vehemently denied) and at times inappropriate for the needs of the Basotho. He went on to found his own, non-denominational school in 1886. By 1895, he had left the PEMS church and joined, 4

[15] By the time *Pitseng* had been serialized, the party was in existence for three years already. This is important in terms of *Pitseng*'s content (mentioned earlier) because, as Kunene rightly points out, this novel is to be understood in relation to the BPA. Effectively, an important theme of the novel revolves around the issues of courtship, love and marriage in Sotho society. In *Pitseng*, Mofolo cautions against the blind acceptance of precepts brought in by the missionaries and calls for a careful consideration of the importance of Sotho customs. "In other words Mofolo saw the then-modern Basotho youth's attitude to the institution of marriage as another manifestation of 'The White Peril' [an expression used by the BPA in its resolutions]" (Kunene 1989:27).

years later, that of the Ethiopian Movement[16] – where blacks held positions of responsibility and which had connections with black churches in the United States of America (Kunene 1989:24-25). The importance of a figure like Sebeta is that he was representative of the educated few who, at the time when Mofolo was getting increasingly involved in the intellectual and political life of Lesotho, were part of Southern Africa's burgeoning black nationalism.

Additionally, that period also saw – "perhaps most auspiciously" to quote Kunene – the birth of the African National Congress (ANC), whose inauguration as the South African Native National Congress (NNC) took place at the beginning of 1912 (Kunene 1989:27). The impact of this momentous event in the political history of Southern Africa was felt in Lesotho too where, for a while, the BPA had seriously considered joining the Congress, even if this did not happen in the end (Kunene 1989:28).

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In *Chaka*, the impulses of Mofolo's writing discussed earlier seem transcended into what is a complex historical, political and psychological novel. Mofolo wrote *Chaka* at a time of great political and personal turmoil. The personal, we have seen, was related to his leaving Morija. The political was the aftermath of the last Zulu uprising: the Bambata[17] Rebellion. For a better understanding of the political background to *Chaka*, I

[16] Couzens explains that, at the end of the nineteenth century, the missions suffered from the threat of breakaway or independent black religious movements labeled "Ethiopianism" (Couzens 2003:265).
[17] Morris spells the name with an *h* (Bambatha) whereas both Attwell and Roux do without (Bambata). I shall use Bambata unless citing directly from a source where it is spelled otherwise

will give a brief account of the rebellion as reported by Donald R. Morris (1998) in an appendix to his work entitled "The ruin of Zululand".

In 1902, the Natal administration opened Zululand to European settlement. As the settlers poured in, a coastal railway line serviced areas where coal was found. But the line was a financial dead loss and Natal took it over. To fund it, the colony passed a Poll Tax Bill to collect £1 from all unmarried native males. At the time, Zululand had been relatively peaceful since 1888 but had suffered from a variety of natural disasters (such as locusts and rinderpest). The imposition of the tax following the devastation and poverty that had ensued could only have caused great discontent. Unrest among the people escalated as a few clans refused to pay the tax. Dinuzulu (Cetshwayo's last surviving son) was, at the time, king of the Zulus. Smaller chiefs sought his support but he could not offer it (although they regarded him as paramount chief, to the Natal colony he was only recognised – and paid by the administration – as a district chieftain) and he, himself, abided to the tax. One of these chieftains, Bambata, then organized a rebellion, after visiting Dinuzulu and leaving his family at the king's kraal. On 4 April 1906, Bambata ambushed a police patrol (during which four Europeans died) and then fled. Sporadic violence erupted in the region. By May, 100 troops from Natal had been deployed in Zululand in a successful campaign. After several clashes Bambata was killed. Two thousand three hundred Zulus lost their lives during that time and almost 5000 of them were brought to trial.[18] Although Dinuzulu had not participated in the rebellion, many

[18] In reading Attwell (1987:56) who quotes, respectively, C.T Binns (*Dinuzulu: The Death of the House of Shaka.* London, Longmans, 1968) and S. Marks (*Reluctant Rebellion: The 1906-8 Disturbances in Natal*, Oxford, Clarendon, 1970), two points cited here from Morris seem to be inaccurate/incomplete. Firstly, many believed that Bambata was not actually killed, but had managed to escape to Lorenço Marques (Binns 279-280). Also, the Zulu death toll given by Morris seems overly moderate; Marks suggests that 3500 to 4000 actually lost their lives during the rebellion (Marks 1970: xvi).

Zulus believed he knew of Bambata's plans and had given him his acquiescence, something Bambata's wife confirmed when she surrendered. Following her confession Dinuzulu was arrested, tried for treason and sentenced to four years imprisonment, after which he never returned to Zululand (Morris 1998:611-612).

David Attwell endeavours to place *Chaka* or, more precisely, the *writing* of *Chaka* into its proper historical context. In doing so, he aptly argues that the manuscript was produced at the heart of the Bambata event (Attwell 1987:53). Although the dates of Mofolo's travels to Natal (where he was traveling, on his bicycle, gathering information for the novel) cannot be ascertained, all evidence points to the period of 1908-1909, which is relevant in view of the aftermath of the rebellion (Attwell 1987:55). A significant aspect of the rebellion which would have a bearing on Mofolo is the ideological climate of the time: that of the attempt to assert "the status and meaning – for Zulus as well as outsiders – of the idea of Zulu nationhood, in particular that of the royal family, 'the house of Shaka'" (Attwell 1987:57).

Effectively, Attwell suggests that Mofolo, in writing *Chaka*, was *engaged* in the "task of historical and cultural diagnosis", using circumstantial details to arrive at the historical truth (Attwell 1987:59), which is, at this historical juncture, that of Zulu (African) nationalism and its subjugation by colonial powers.

In responding to a reader concerned with the historical accuracy of *Chaka* in the *Leselinyana* Mofolo wrote the following, as quoted in Kunene's 1981 translation of the text:

> […] I am not writing history, I am writing a tale, or I should rather say I am writing what actually happened, but to which a great deal has been

> added, and from which a great deal has been removed, so that much has been left out, and much has been written that did not actually happen, *with the aim solely of fulfilling my purpose in writing this book* (Kunene 1981:xv, emphasis added).

A greater part of this project is precisely concerned with extricating this purpose from the text but also from its interpretations. As Ricard understands it, Mofolo's (personal and political) crisis emerges in Chaka's personality in the novel. Mofolo, according to Ricard, asks questions. Why does Chaka kill his lover, his mother and his best soldiers? This questioning happens against the backdrop of Bambata and Dinuzulu's defeat; the defeat, in fact, of the (once great) Zulu nation. This questioning holds, at its heart, the greater question of resistance: the Bambata rebellion proved that violence offered no positive outcome; does the Sotho way, that of comprise (inherited from the days of Moshoeshoe), offer a better way to deal with encroaching white imperialism and vanishing black identity?[19]

2.3 A Voice of Dissent: *Pitseng*

Kunene's comments on the importance of biographical contextualisation in appreciating some authors' work and their impact[20] is a useful premise to our study:

[19] As in footnote 11 of Chapter 1, Part II, these comments appear in the postscript to the French translation of Fynn's diary due for imminent publication and kindly forwarded to me by the author.

[20] Kunene makes this statement with the particular implicit reference, here, to African writers. Although Kunene does not mention any authors by name here, this comment follows a discussion on Négritude which itself was preceded by comments on Mofolo. Furthermore, Kunene's article is part of a diptych whose second panel is a series of biographies of early Southern African writers by R. A. Kirsch.

> While I agree with critics who assert that one's knowledge of the life of an author does not enhance one's *appreciation* of the author's writings, it seems to me that there is equally no doubt that the *understanding* of an author who is clearly dedicated to the campaign of social reform *is* enhanced by a knowledge of his social and cultural world, its effects upon him, and the effects upon him also of any factors which, being external to this social milieu, yet bombard it towards a forceful, even cataclysmic,[21] change (Kunene 1967:13).

We have already intimated that the relationship between the Basotho and the PEMS was, inevitably, laden with ambiguity. Obviously, Mofolo's relationship with the PEMS was no exception.

A brief examination of his second novel, *Pitseng*, will demonstrate this. As already suggested, Mofolo's ambiguity or, rather, to use Gérard's term, his syncretism, is apparent in *Pitseng*. Although there are no English or French translations of the text, D. P Kunene has translated a number of passages (1989) and has written an English summary of it, followed by a short critique that was useful to our purposes.

From these available translations, it is obvious that, in *Pitseng*, Mofolo yearns for the times of the difaqane in Lesotho, before the onset of Christianity. Specifically, Mofolo laments the disappearance of Sotho traditional dealings of marriage. The disintegration of ancestral and local traditions is synonymous with a loss of Sotho identity and is perceived as a direct result of the advent of Christianity (which it has been, in greater part, the missionaries' effort to propagate) often to the detriment of local culture. Mofolo was acutely aware of this and voiced his resentment in no uncertain terms. It is surprising how little focus there has been, in literary studies on the subject, on

[21] This is spelled "cataclasmic" in the article, but I opted to correct the typo in my quotation.

the author's criticism of whites and Christians – apart from, perhaps, in Kunene's work. Mofolo wrote in *Pitseng* that "the heathens are telling the truth when they say that the evil influences come from the Whites, and come into Lesotho with the Christian converts." [22]

These are indubitably harsh words. Surely not all missionaries of the PEMS would have been open minded enough not to attempt silencing Mofolo for this comment or, at least, to begin to perceive him as a strong, influential and potentially disruptive voice of dissent.

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Pitseng is about Mr Katse, a young (African) preacher (an allegorical missionary of the PEMS?) who arrives at the village of Pisteng. He is a good teacher whose "aim is to develop the whole man" (Kunene 1967:9)[23] and in his time as a teacher-preacher in Pitseng he has converted enough people to fill up (towards the end of the novel) the newly built *big* church (Kunene 1967:12).[24] According to Kunene, Mr Katse is construed as the bearer of light, "a metaphor for the spiritual wealth that is coming to the people of Pitseng, as well as the sun that is about to rise and chase the darkness" (Kunene 1989:89). The metaphor of light and darkness is used recurrently in *Pitseng* to designate the opposition between knowledge and spiritual wealth (light) and ignorance (darkness). For

[22] As quoted (and translated) by Kunene in *The Beginning of South African Vernacular Literature* (Kunene 1967:11).
[23] Ibid.
[24] Ibid.

instance, Katse's arrival in Pitseng (and what it will mean to its people) is foretold in these terms:

> Yet he of Pitseng who was poor was about to obtain great wealth […]. […] we might say, indeed, that the light of dawn had already appeared, and the radical shafts of the rays of the morning sun were already visible, and the days of intense darkness and ignorance were already passing away, indeed we do not see them any more (Kunene 1989:89).[25]

Later in the narrative, in a particularly moving sermon about pure love to the people of Pitseng, Katse compares "the love of Christ for the church with the love of lovers" (Kunene 1967:10). Aria and Alfred, two of his students, who Katse sees as very special, and wishes to see end up together one day, are moved by his words. They – separately – lament the absence of such pure love among the youth of Lesotho whom they see flirting among themselves (Kunene 1967:10). Later, when Alfred is in high school in the Cape Colony, he has the opportunity to observe people from different nations. He realises that most of the students he meets "put God last in most things […] like most white people who put God last in everything" (Kunene 1967:10).

Evidently here, Mofolo contradicts himself. On the one hand he speaks admiringly of "the way in which marriage was negotiated among the Basotho of old […] contrasting this with the freedom with which the youth of the Christianized Pitseng go about with girls and flirt openly with them" (Kunene 1967:16) and on the other, central to the novel, is the theme of pure and decent (Christian) love which Aria and Alfred eventually find in each other, after having wondered if "true love, like the love of Mr

[25] Kunene's translation.

Katse's sermon" really existed (Kunene 1967:12). This is not just *ambiguous* but seems downright paradoxical.

What Mofolo laments of course, is the loss of tradition (and hence of a cultural identity) in the face of change (and modernity) brought about by whites, settlers and missionaries alike, which are associated with Christianity, all the while praising the 'light' that was shone on the Basotho by the advent of Christianity – Mofolo was, after all, Christian by choice.[26]

Of course, *Pitseng* is *not* a protest novel. Mofolo is not *engagé*. Kunene accuses him of having "preached and moralized, and condemned the ways of the Basotho in no uncertain terms, especially in *Moeti oa Bochabela* (The east-bound Traveler) and, though not quite to the same extent, in *Pisteng*" (Kunene 1967:9).

But Mofolo proves to us, through his writing, that his ontology is that of a *syncretism*, that despite the lightness and darkness that pervades his writing in such dichotomous terms, he is trying to reconcile his own uncertainty, which is in fact that of his African/Sotho identity, vulnerable and endangered by the complexity of the historical make-up of his time. This time, for Mofolo, is to be found at the juncture of the advent of Christianity in Lesotho and the political forces at play at the turn of the century in Southern Africa; a time best described by Edward Roux in *Time Longer than Rope: A History of the Black Man's Struggle for Freedom in South Africa*. Roux emphasises the importance of the Bambata rebellion – which happened precisely when Mofolo was writing *Chaka*, the acme of his scholarly activity – in identifying a turning point in South African (political) history:

[26] Mofolo was brought up in a non-Christian home. It is said in *Le livre d'or* that he was the son of "pagans" (1912:507).

> The Bambata Rebellion in Natal in 1906 may very well be taken as the turning point between two periods in the history of the black man in South Africa: the early period of tribal wars and fights against the white invaders, which ended in the loss of the country and the reduction of the Bantu to the status of internal proletariat; and the second period, one of struggle for national liberation and democratic rights within a framework of present-day South Africa, where black and white intermingle in complex economic and political relationships (Roux 1967:87).

There is evidence that Mofolo did travel in Natal on his bicycle, gathering information for *Chaka* around 1908. He would, therefore, have been aware of the Bambata Rebellion. Moreover, as a Sotho, he was not immune from the historical and political consequences of the white invasion of the continent. Lesotho was annexed by the British and run by the Cape Colony which obtained revenue from its people. Also, by the time Mofolo was intellectually active, a great number of young Basotho were leaving their country to work in South African mines, bringing the reduction of the Bantu to the status of internal proletariat;[27] and the second period, one of struggle for national liberation and democratic rights within the framework of present-day South Africa closer to home. In fact, as has been mentioned in Mofolo's biography, he himself was victim of the political consequences of changing economic and racial policies in the Union of South Africa – mainly because of the Land Act.

Lazarus' reading of *Chaka*, as well as the timing of its writing, concurs with the idea that Mofolo was highly aware and sensitised to the political issues of his time.

[27] In fact, and this only furthers our revelation of Mofolo's ambiguity, Mofolo partook in that process as a labour recruiter (see page 37).

Lazarus suggests that Mofolo's ambivalence towards his main character, namely Chaka, as rightly identified by Kunene in his analysis of the novel[28] is symptomatic of a wider "pattern of equivocation" that proceeds from an "unforgoable ideological impasse" (Lazarus 1986:45). Lazarus proceeds by quoting the first paragraphs of the novel which illustrates this claim. Here is an abridged version of the opening paragraph:

> South Africa is a large headland situated between two oceans […]. The nations that inhabit it are numerous […]. The boundaries between them are prominent and visible; they are boundaries created by God, not man, […].
>
> Our purpose here has to do with the eastern nations, the Bakone, and it is fitting that, before we plunge into our story, we should describe how the nations were settled in the beginning, so that the reader may understand what will be narrated in the coming chapters (Mofolo 1981:1).

A few remarks can be made here. Mofolo writes primarily for an African audience. This is evident from the language he writes in (Sotho) and from the subject matter, "a reinterpretation of Chaka, an actual and local historical figure, *as the lynch-pin in his retrieval of African culture*" (Lazarus 1986:45, my emphasis). Significantly, when Mofolo announces his intentions in the above-quoted passage he "resists colonial representations of Southern African history" and contests "the right of colonial theory to set itself up as the keeper of the keys to scientific human enquiry" (Lazarus 1986:46). Striking evidence of this is the exclusion of Europeans from the category of nations that inhabit the region described, a point reinforced by the use of the present tense.

[28] As effected in *Thomas Mofolo and the Emergence of Written Sesotho Prose* (1989).

Chapter 3 – Mofolo and the PEMS

Faced with the dilemmas of his time, Mofolo cannot choose a side but sees the merits of both. Is this perhaps why he was not completely shunned by the PEMS? Or was he turned away, but in a subtler way? Was he "discouraged" to write, as his friend Mangoaela reported, which could possibly be felt as the worst punishment by a (clearly talented) writer from his mentors?

As the only way to answer these questions with any certainty would have been to interview Mofolo and the missionaries of the time, we can only speculate on this complex relationship, in a manner that is as objective as possible, based on circumstantial evidence. Most of this evidence can be deduced from the PEMS' printed material or from what is evidently missing from the print, in other words, the "silences", to apply to missionary printing the expression Jean and John Comaroff's use for missionary writing (Comaroff & Comaroff 1991: 36).

In this chapter, I will initially look at Mofolo's rapport with the PEMS, at the publication history of *Chaka* and at the reception of the novel in his time. The translation(s) study of the text that will follow serves as a thematic bridge between the issue of 'censorship' (if, indeed, there was any) and the (cultural/political) interpretation(s) of the text.

1. The Golden Book of the PEMS: Livre d'or de la Mission du Lessouto: soixante-quinze ans de l'histoire d'une tribu Sud-Africaine: 1833-1908

To commemorate the 75th anniversary of its presence in Lesotho, the PEMS published its "golden book": *Le livre d'or de la Mission du Lessouto: soixante-quinze ans de l'histoire d'une tribu Sud-Africaine: 1833-1908* (*Livre d'or*) in 1912. This beautifully produced volume (with no less than 262 illustrations) whose main contributors were E. Jacottet, H. Dieterlen and F. Kohler was an ambitious project. It aimed at presenting a complete history of the mission's activity since the arrival of its first generation of missionaries in 1833 and included a sort of anthropological survey of Lesotho and its people.[1]

The section on the people of Lesotho (written by Dieterlen and Kohler) is divided into "The Basotho of old" and the "Basotho of today" in which about 10 pages are dedicated to "Indigenous literature". The introductory pages to this section are not unambiguous in tone yet one senses a genuine admiration for the emerging writers: "no other South African tribe but the Basotho possess a literature" (503).[2] To this admiration is added a sense of great astonishment: "a few years ago the PEMS would never have thought the Basotho capable of producing literary work at all" (502), revealing an overtly patronising stance towards the Basotho. In brief, the view of the PEMS expressed in *Le livre d'or* is that the Basotho are generally incapable of any literary profundity (the author speaks of the emptiness of the comments by the Sotho public in the *Leselyniana*, 504) and any proof to the contrary comes as a great surprise.

[1] Its subtitle reads: "75 years of a South African tribe's history".
[2] All of the above citations from the *Livre d'or* are my translations from the French.

So while A. M Sekese[3] is praised for his tenacious efforts in collecting local folktales, these are viewed as having little value and their collection as incomplete and badly executed (504). Ironically, E. Jacottet (who also contributed to *Le livre d'or*) "[…] may have encouraged but certainly subsequently *took inspiration* from Ariel Sekese's […] collection of folklore, customs and proverbs […]" (Couzens 2003:3, my emphasis). These obviously disparate appreciations of indigenous literature within the PEMS hint at the fact that the missionaries could not always present a united front on the matter or, rather, that even when they did, responses and attitudes to literary production by their Basotho pupils varied, in practical terms according to each missionary's personality.

Appositely for our study, the Basotho are accused, in *Le livre d'or*, of "*débordements*",[4] of being excessively zealous. An example given is the use of the *Leselyniana* by its readers and correspondents as a forum for empty comments on current affairs and personal feuds to which Adolphe Mabille (the creator and editor of the paper) "*had to put an end to*" (504, my emphasis).

In Chapter 2 we highlighted the importance of the *Leselinyana la Lesotho* in promoting Sotho literature. The paper, as we have said, was a missionary paper with missionary aims. The paper's editorial policy (which, again, was more or less stringent depending on the missionary in charge) illustrated this with a particular intensity.

A specific instance of what the missionaries characterised as a lack of restraint on the part of its Sotho readers and contributors could be a series of articles on the Sotho art

[3] Ariel Sekese preceeded Mofolo in being one of Lesotho's first and most prominent writers; he greatly contributed to the *Leselinyana*, mostly in presenting local folklore.

[4] According to the Harrap Dictionary, this word can be translated as "excesses, dissipation, dissolute living" (1991:214). It is probably used here to mean these three concepts at once.

of divination written by Chere Monyoloza, a regular reader, to which Mabille put an abrupt end in 1890 (Kunene 1967:8). Sekese protested this action:

> […Sekese] argued that Monyoloza's interest in divination was purely intellectual, and did not mean that he believed in it. But Monyoloza had been silenced forever. And even when E. Jacottet,[5] a more broad-minded man, on taking over the editorship of the newspaper, went out of his way to invite contributions on the institutions, customs and ways of the Basotho, the whole thing was a pathetic flop: The Basotho writers had learnt their lesson (Kunene 1967:8).

Monyoloza's case demonstrates the control exercised by the missionaries on Sotho writers and their creations. It shows that the PEMS had the power to influence, whether directly or indirectly not only what was written and what could be printed but also what was *read*. These editorial decisions evidently had quite long lasting repercussions too.

The *Chaka* manuscript was never, for instance, serialised in the *Leselinyana* before its publication in full form – whereas all other published works by Mofolo were – something of an oddity, at the time, when it was still quite common practice. On the other hand, given the strict control exerted by the missionaries over what was printed, it is, at times, astonishing that the *Chaka* manuscript went to press at all.

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[5] Jacottet did not succeed Mabille in this position but became editor of the *Leselinyana* quite a while later.

Before we expound on the highly contentious publication history of the text itself, we will highlight some elements of the discussion on Mofolo and his writing in *Le livre d'or* – whose publication preceded that of *Chaka*. Although sparse, these comments are instructive in that they demonstrate the missionaries' mixed feelings towards the author and his work.

Firstly, there is an undeniable built up, in the commentary on Sotho literature, to Mofolo, betraying, in my view, a strong sense of recognition for his importance. When a mention is made of Sojané's work on hymns (507), it is introduced as being a last word, in passing, "before discussing topics that matter more to us" (507).[6] After two biographical sentences, Mofolo is accredited for having, "one fine day, started composing a work of imagination that is *absolutely original*" (507, my emphasis). This is, of course, *Moeti oa Bochabela* for which another epithet used here is "masterpiece" (508).

After the praises, however, come the criticisms. Once more, they are essentially related to the unwise proliferation of indigenous literature: Mofolo is accused of having (encouraged by his first success) too hastily thrown himself into writing his second novel, *L'Ange déchu*.[7] According to the *Livre d'or*, this work ("which upon the advice of a missionary was put away in a drawer never to be taken out again", 508) was intended to refute "some or other fantastical theory of Marie Corelli" (508), which is seemingly amazing to the commentator – as shown by the multiple exclamation marks that punctuate his statement – because, he says, Mofolo had actually *read* Marie Corelli. To end the discussion on Mofolo, his fourth manuscript is mentioned (after a brief sentence on *Pitseng*) and this is, presumably, *Chaka*'s manuscript of which it is said that it "is a

[6] The French reads: "Avant de passer *à des sujets qui nous tiennent plus à coeur*", literally: matters that are closer to our *hearts*.
[7] *The Fallen Angel*

book dedicated to describing Zulu customs and lays in the care of a missionary to whom Mofolo has asked for advice" (509). The closing off of the section on literature brings the discussion back to the proliferative literary production of local writers, a proliferation branded as "unwise" (509).

2. The Chaka *Controversy*

Mofolo's leaving Morija increasingly appears to us as having resulted from *both* his adulterous affair *and* his disappointment with the missionaries' response to his *Chaka* manuscript.

Chaka was only published in 1925 when, from all evidence, it was written in the period around 1909-1910.[8] Kunene believes this delay was – in part anyway – due to a disagreement regarding the manuscript between the PEMS and its author (Kunene 1989:143). Kunene's investigation of the history of the manuscript's publication revolves around the issues of "whether in fact the *Chaka* manuscript was initially rejected, and if so, whether there was a dispute resulting from this action; and further, whether there was an interference with its contents and the reasons for such meddling if it did in fact take place" (Kunene 1989:143-144).

[8] Clues to this would for instance be its mention – or, at least, the mention of a "4th manuscript" by Mofolo – in the *Livre d'or* (published in 1912 but written earlier and covering the 1833-1908 period of the PEMS' history). Attwell seems to concur with this: "Assuming, as seems feasible from Dieterlen's comments [in *Le livre d'or*] and from the timing of the series of manuscripts, that Mofolo's literary ventures begun in earnest early in 1907 […] the *Chaka* manuscript was probably produced fairly late in this productive period, that is, 1908-1909" (Attwell 1987:53).

There is no doubt that *Chaka* was abridged, but was this due to missionary censorship? To answer the question one would need to ascertain what was cut from the text but, unfortunately, one can only hypothesise on the matter.

In the preface to his English translation of *Chaka*, Kunene says that when asked directly by him, Thomas Mofolo Jr (the writer's son) was adamant that only two chapters were excised from the complete version and this, for financial reasons only. These chapters were on Zulu customs and tradition and were allegedly chosen because their absence would not compromise the quality of the story (Kunene 1981: xii-xii).

It was said that the *Chaka* manuscript was announced, in the *Livre d'or*, as a book "dedicated to describing Zulu customs". Gérard interprets this comment as a "stupendous distortion of its [the manuscript's] meaning and import" which he attributes to the missionaries' lack of scholarly knowledge in literary criticism. This, for Gérard, shows how much the missionaries misunderstood the text, something which in turn would explain their reluctance to print it (Gérard 1971:128). However, in the light of Kunene's conversation with Mofolo's son, the comment in the *Livre d'or* tends to reinforce the scenario whereby *Chaka* contained chapters on Zulu customs that did not appear in the final edition.[9] This would then strongly indicate that the PEMS may not have censored *Chaka*. Yet, the evidence is not nearly compelling enough to discredit censorship. Most scholars on the subject appear to *feel* (rather than *know*) that the text was somehow suppressed.

[9] It is reasonable to assume that Kunene spoke to T. Mofolo Jr *after* Gérard's *Four African Literatures* (1971) was published – since Kunene's translation of Chaka dates from 1981 – and that Gérard was not aware of this fact at the time of his writing.

That feeling is due, of course, to two major factors: the unexplainable/unexplained long period of time that elapsed between the writing of *Chaka* and its publication, and the recorded dispute on its reprint within the PEMS.

Even if one takes Kunene's suggestion that Mofolo may have been (re)working his manuscript in 1922,[10] three years would have nonetheless elapsed before publication[11] and this, in itself, is an obvious indication of the disturbance the manuscript caused. In his correspondence with Kunene (1979) Zurcher states that:

> Mr. Mofolo's book *Chaka* caused a bit of discussion and hesitancy among the missionaries of that time, fearing that the descriptions of witchcraft etc might have an adverse effect on their evangelistic teaching. But their objections were eventually overruled by the missionaries of the younger generation and especially Moruti Casalis who pointed out the great literary value of Mofolo's writing (Kunene 1989:146).

Casalis' involvement in this whole affair is a point of contention. He left for France for good in December of 1925, the same month *Chaka* was first announced in the *Leselinyana* (Kunene 1989:147).

Jahn sees Casalis' departure as a direct result of the *Chaka* controversy:

> The manager of the printing press and publishing house at Morija was Alfred Casalis; it was he and his colleague Edouard Jacottet who trained

[10] Kunene bases this hypothesis on the eyewitness account J. Zurcher with whom first Kirsch and then Kunene corresponded (Kunene 1989:145-146). Zurcher's certitude that Mofolo was indeed working on *Chaka* when he visited the PEMS is terribly intriguing. Is it possible that the book mentioned in the *Livre d'or* was not *Chaka* but a text we will never know?

[11] Which Kunene labels "the three-year silence" (Kunene 1989:154).

> Mofolo and also encouraged him to write. Indeed, according to the Swiss Africanist, Peter Sulzer, *these two alone* stood up for him at the mission, and after finally getting *Chaka* published Casalis *resigned* his position (Jahn 1968:102, my emphasis).

Whereas according to Gérard:

> Actually, Casalis had returned to Lesotho in 1920; he had resumed his various occupations, among others the management of the printing press. He tendered his resignation in early 1925. His age and health did not permit him to pursue his heavy tasks any longer (Gérard 1971:128).

*

Once again, both versions of events are credible enough not to be discounted. This serves to reiterate that the truth about the circumstances surrounding the publication history of *Chaka* and the relationship of its author with the PEMS remains unattainable, buried with its main protagonists, in lands distant and poles apart from each other. It remains to say however that Casalis *was indeed* involved in the publication of Mofolo's controversial novel, an active participation which exasperated prominent missionaries such as R. Ellenberger.[12] The minutes of the yearly Missionary Conference that followed the publication of *Chaka* "clearly show that Casalis was solely and entirely responsible for the publication of the book" (Gérard 1971:129).[13]

Gérard recounts that later, on 21 April 1926, R. Ellenberger forcefully condemned the printing of the novel as potentially harmful to its readers and recommended that an

[12] Ironically, R. Ellenberger is the brother of Victor Ellenberger, who later translated *Chaka* into French (Gérard 1971:130).
[13] Gérard acknowledges Albert Bruscht for this information.

explicative note be written by the author – as a sort of disclaimer for the PEMS – and added to the book. *Chaka*'s content, for R. Ellenberger, was nothing more than an apology of pagan superstitions and for this reason he made it clear that the decision to publish, by a Christian institution like the PEMS, was shocking to him. In his view, those responsible failed to consider the pernicious effects of *Chaka* in favour of what they perceived as its literary qualities (Gérard 1971:129).[14] The Conference[15] advised the Publication Committee – which, in Kunene's words, had turned into "a Commission of Enquiry" (Kunene 1989:147) – to report on the issue. This was eventually done in April 1927, supporting, after all, the publication of *Chaka* but strongly recommending – "*like a warning* to the new director of the press not to repeat the 'errors' of Casalis" – that permission be obtained from the Publication Committee in future, before any other publication was given the go-ahead (Gérard 1971:129, my emphasis).

*

But the saga continued. When the time came, the issue of whether it was wise to reprint *Chaka* caused further discord and delays, postponing the decision to the 1928 Conference (Kunene 1989:148). Kunene remarks that *Chaka* was still controversial within the PEMS 20 years on:

> [..] in the Missionary Conference of 1945, The Reverend RA Paroz, as chairman of the Publications Committee, stated that, in the opinion of the

[14] Gérard acknowledges Albert Bruscht for this information. Also, Gérard quotes the minutes of the conference in French which I have translated here.
[15] The 'Conference' is the name given to the Missionaries yearly executive meeting.

> Reverend Sekhesa, *Chaka* should not be used in the schools since its descriptions of witchcraft and its efficacy would have a unwholesome influence on the children. The Publications Committee recommended accordingly to the Conference (Kunene 1989:149).

At the same time, there is evidence, in Kunene's opinion, to prove that Dutton was already working on an English translation of the text as far back as (possibly) the end of 1927 or, at least, definitely the beginning of 1928. Interestingly, missionaries were not the only ones to be concerned about the text's content. Kunene notes that J.W. Allen (one of the directors of Longmans Green and Company Limited of London) had read Dutton's translation manuscript of the novel and expressed the same concerns about the witchcraft element in *Chaka*. Allen wrote to Major H. Vischer (of the International Institute of African Languages and Cultures) to express his concern: "I have read this MS with very much interest, but I do not think it would be wise to publish it. There is so much stress laid on the power of witchcraft, and any book that shows the enormous influence witchcraft has on the native, would be likely to do more harm than good". Vischer, on the other hand, did not want "such interesting material" lost altogether even if he claimed to "fully understand there are certain objections to the publication of [the] book, especially by a missionary society […]". It isn't clear if Dutton ever obtained permission from the PEMS to publish his translation of *Chaka* which he did in 1931 (Kunene 1989:149-150). Regardless, the above-mentioned correspondence shows that *Chaka* was a seemingly endless source of concern within the PEMS that could not be contained within Morija but that spread outside the geographical limits of Lesotho and as far as the old continent.

3. Chaka*'s Reception by its Early Readers*

In order to get a complete feel for *Chaka*'s reception and its interpretative readings in Lesotho it is interesting to include an overview of some of the reactions it caused among its first Sotho readers.

Once more, this survey will heavily rely on Kunene's thorough investigation (1989).

Firstly, it is only fair to mention that the publication of the book was introduced, in the *Leslinyana* edition of the 11 December 1925, with much eagerness by the PEMS, "[…] written by Mr Thomas Mofolo, the great writer of stories *who belongs to the Basotho*. Readers already know his interesting stories *Moeti* and *Pitseng*. But when we tell them here that *Chaka* is a story that surpasses all those that he has written in its appeal and in the way it reads, they will think that we are simply exaggerating" (Kunene 1989:155, emphasis added). Although Kunene does not mention the name of the author of this introductory comments, the "we" here is clearly a missionary "we" ("they" being the people, the Basotho).

Mere advertisement? After all, once printed the book needed to be read and bought to guarantee some income.[16] In view of our highlighting some positive responses to Mofolo's work by the missionaries, this perspective seems too cynical. Rather, it could be argued that despite its reservation and the ensuing publishing controversy the PEMS held a genuine admiration for Mofolo's craftsmanship and shared in the pride of "the one who belongs to the Basotho" and the first works of what they foresaw as a stepping stone

[16] The financial implications in publishing local authors is compounded by the fact that the Morija Book Depot preferred paying authors a lump sum for their work rather than using a royalties system. Effectively, Mofolo was paid £60 for the rights to *Chaka* and other subsidiary rights (Kunene 1989:153).

to a "genuine south-African literature"(1912:509). They also took responsibility for it. After all, by "drawing the black people out of their lowliness and their ignorance, the white people, and particularly the missionaries, have taken, in part, responsibility for mistakes that would mark the beginning of their Christian, social and political life"(1912:512).

For his survey of the Sotho readers' response (drawn from published comments in the *Leselinyana*) Kunene translates 7 letters he was "able to find". These were written between February 1926 and July 1928 (Kunene 1989:155). Without reviewing each letter in detail,[17] three critical elements emerge from their reading.

The first is that most readers demonstrated their admiration for the novel which they have found "beautiful" and "interesting" (Kunene 1989:245-251) and which they praise with eloquence.

The second is that for some of these readers, reading a novel written in Sotho by a Sotho inspired feelings of national pride. For instance, in the 20 August 1926 edition, a letter signed by B Fred Sehlolo reads:

> You Basotho, people of my country, write more story books, and that way the name of education in Lesotho will lift up the name of the nation of Moshoeshoe. Expand your book, son of Mofolo,[18] we shall welcome it with joy […](Kunene 1989:246).

Later, in the 17 September 1926 issue, RS Mohapeloa, another reader, says:

[17] For a full English translation of the letters see Kunene (1989), p245-251.
[18] Kunene explains that this form of address is a praise to Mofolo (Kunene 1989:246).

> It is a very bad thing that many Basotho seem reluctant to read Sesotho books, some even despise them. They fail to see the light that has come to them through these beautiful books that have been written in their language. They even fail to understand the beauty of their own language. I am not a seller of books, yet I am a Mosotho who loves Sesotho (Kunene 1989:247).

These comments show the educated Basotho's love of letters and the importance they placed on national pride and education which often transpires as synonymous in their comments, something for which Mofolo undoubtedly became a metonymic symbol.

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But there were those, of course, whom *Chaka* disturbed. One particular writer to the newspaper (E.M. Khoachele, on 18 March 1927) speaks of visiting Shaka's grave when a Zulu man standing by told him: "You are as good as dead, you miserable Mosotho, there's a snake here, it will kill you". That snake, of which Khoachele claims to "have full knowledge", is Isanusi, the witch-doctor with whom Chaka makes a fatal pact in the novel. In Kunene's words, this particular letter would have surely caused R. Ellenberger, had he read it, "to turn around and tell[ing] the Publications Committee: 'Well, what did I tell you?'" (Kunene 1989:250).

For us, this letter is a perfect introductory mention to a problematic figure (Isanusi) that will feature centrally in our textual analysis of *Chaka* because of the complexity of his characterisation which is fundamental, in our view, to the text and its interpretations.

*

A last interesting element to be drawn out from the people's appreciation of *Chaka* which will hold weight in our discussion is the fact that a few of its readers confess to being confused and uneasy about its mix of fact and fiction (Kunene 1989:246). Some have even gently attempted to correct the author on what they perceived as historical inaccuracies.

Mofolo's stance on the matter shows that, as a writer of fiction, he clearly makes the distinction between novelistic and historical narrative. In a letter of response to his readers published on 10 August 1928 in the *Leselinyana*, he says:

> […] I am not writing history, I am writing a tale, or I should rather say I am writing what actually happened, but to which a great deal has been added, and from which a great deal has been removed, so that much has been left out, and much has been written that did not actually happen, with the aim solely of fulfilling my purpose in writing this book (Kunene 1989:251).

Interestingly, *Chaka*'s impact on the literary world and beyond can be measured by how much what he wrote as *fiction* is part, today, of popular misconstructions about Shaka and the Zulus.

Part II: The Translation(s) of *Chaka*

Chapter 4 – The Texts and Their Authors

1. Introduction

Thomas Mofolo's *Chaka* has had a considerable impact on African literature and ideology. The text's travels outside the confines of Lesotho were made possible by its early translations. Through these, Mofolo's novel became a key contributor to Shaka's mythical status, propelling the Zulu king into becoming an emissary of black liberation across Africa.

My analysis will aim at identifying the differences in the translations of *Chaka* that have engendered different (cultural) readings of the novel. I will focus on Victor Ellenberger's French translation of the text, published by Gallimard in 1940. I will attempt to find out why Ellenberger's translation, which was read by the likes of Senghor, inspired Francophone writers such as him to exploit Mofolo's text in their creation of Chaka as one of Négritude's most powerful symbols.

The discussion that follows is argued from two main perspectives: the first focuses on the textuality of the translations and the second, which will derive from our findings, offers a cultural interpretation of the translations thus analysed.

For this, I initially do a comparative study of F.H. Dutton's (1931), V. Ellenberger's (1940)[1] and, to some extent, D.P. Kunene's (1981) translations, after which

[1] All citations from the French text are from the 1981 Gallimard edition.

I attempt to uncover Ellenberger's translation's (cultural) idiosyncrasies that resonated with Senghor and, in my view, echoed Mofolo's own intent in writing.

2. Thomas Mofolo's Chaka

Before shedding light on the translations of *Chaka*, it is useful, at this point of the analysis, to give a summary of Mofolo's text.[2] Basically, in Mofolo's prose the Zulu King is shown to make a journey of self-discovery. It is obvious that the psychological evolution of the main protagonist rests at the core of the narrative. The novel begins with the birth, in sin, of the hero and ends with his descent into madness and, ultimately, his fratricidal death. All the elements for a classical tragedy – at least in the classical, western sense – seem in place.[3]

Chaka is the illegitimate child of Senzangakhona and Nandi, conceived in love but also out of wedlock, disregarding the Zulu courting custom of *kuruetso* – word referring to a variety of rites performed on a two-month old.[4] Senzangakhona recognises Chaka as his first-born son and proceeds to announce his birth to the "great king Jobe" (3), to whom he owes allegiance. Shortly afterwards, however, Senzangakhona's legitimate wives bear sons of their own. In turn, these are Mfokazana, Dingana and Mhlangana. The wives proceed to intimidate Senzangakhona into neglecting and

[2] All page references in this analysis refer to Kunene's translation of the text (1981).
[3] It will be noted that a few critics saw, in Mofolo's *Chaka*'s form and content, all the elements of a classical tragedy. In his introduction to Dutton's translation, Newbolt asserts for instance, that "[Chaka's] tragedy falls naturally into five Acts" (Newbolt 1931:12). In a chapter dedicated to the 'Black Man's Literary Image of Himself' in the seminal *The African Image*, Mphahlele discusses Mofolo's *Chaka*. In his analysis, he too recognises Chaka's 'psychic conflict' as central to the novel and, when speaking of it, he likens Chaka to the heroes of great Shakespearian tragedies such as *King Lear* or *Richard III* (Mphahlele 1962:171).
[4] For a detailed explication of the *kuruetso* ritual, see the translator's footnote (6).

gradually abandoning Chaka to secure their offspring's ascendancy to the throne. Chaka and Nandi are consequently rejected by their society and know a hard life which draws them close. Chaka is bullied by his peers as a child, and his mother is shunned by her society. Nandi decides to have her son strengthened by medicine and the administrating doctor foresees great events around Chaka's life.

By the third chapter things have changed drastically for the hero. He proves his great prowess by killing a lion that was terrorising the village of Ncube, where he lives with Nandi. This heroic act only further ostracises him within his community which now envies his fearlessness and great physical ability. The chapter ends with Dingiswayo, the son of Jobe who succeeded his father to the throne, wanting to meet Chaka. This is what his messenger tells Senzangakhona:

> Dingiswayo greets you. He wishes to know why you have not brought before him the young man whose birth you reported to his father, Jobe, so that he should see him and know him. […] This message from Dingiswayo blunted the anger of the wives and the men of the Ncube village […] but [Chaka's] father remained silent till this very day that is shinning above. […] Indeed, it was evident that, instead of working for Chaka's welfare, he was fanning the bush fire so that it should burn him" (20).

Then follows an important event that marks Chaka's extraordinary destiny: he is visited, in a dream-like passage, by the King of the Deep Pool. After the apparition of the mysterious snake-like creature that gazes deeply into Chaka's terrified eyes while he is bathing by the river, a soft praising voice is heard. Although Nandi witnesses the entire

scene, only Chaka hears what was "meant for Chaka alone" (25): "Hail! Hail! […] /You shall rule over nations and their kings […]/ You shall even rule over the winds and the sea storms […] And all things shall obey you with unquestioning obedience/And shall kneel at your feet! /Oh yes, oi! oi! Yet you must go by the right path" (24).

Thus is Chaka's fate foretold in the form of a traditional praise poem, before the hero shows any political or military ambitions. Already though, Chaka is warned: he should not deviate from the right path. But at this stage, the poem he hears is just "words that [he] Chaka did not understand completely" (25). In the next chapter, Chaka flees his village after his brothers, Mfokazana and Dingana, attempt to kill him. Upon seeing Mfokazana and Dingana wounded and bleeding by the hand of Chaka who defended himself fiercely, Senzangakhona orders the fugitive to be killed. Infuriated by this, Dingiswayo fines Senzangakhona and orders that Chaka be found and brought to him unharmed (34).

The next two chapters are dedicated to the man who will change everything for Chaka: Isanusi, the diviner. This character is central in understanding Chaka's rise to power and his subsequent moral decline. There are many possible ways of reading Isanusi's fascinating character. Although this is not central to my analysis, I must highlight Isanusi's importance for the narrative.

He is the most elusive character of all: he has no name but that of his profession – Isanusi meaning 'diviner' – and his origins are vague. We are never completely sure that he really is the one who is supposed to replace Chaka's first doctor and when he is asked where he comes from he points towards the sky in a vague manner but also "longingly" (40). He is astute, deducing Chaka's circumstances from outward signs such as the long

distance he has covered by seeing the condition of his feet. He seems to *know* Chaka, even though they have never met before, which adds to his mystique. When Chaka sees him for the first time upon waking up, Isanusi's face is contorted and hateful. A moment later, his expression is one of "true love" (37). These two faces of Isanusi give him an un-human quality from the start. He is evidently no ordinary person and obviously functions and works in a metaphysical realm. His duplicitous nature is highlighted by the two faces he shows Chaka from the start and his higher powers are subtly implied during their first meeting.

Some have seen in Isanusi not a physical character but a symbol of the evil side of Chaka's psyche. For others, he is Chaka's powerful, metaphysical double. For others still, such as Donald Burness, he is an "African Mephistopheles", "an archetypical symbol of the devil" (Burness 1976:11). Burness arrives at this conclusion based on Mofolo's Christian beliefs. But for Neil Lazarus, such an analysis would be limiting, a position with which I agree. For Lazarus, interpreting Isanusi as either pure evil because Mofolo was Christian or as a wise man because Isanusi shows "vast experience and deep thinking" (Lazarus 1986:52) does not do justice to Mofolo's complex character:

> For Isanusi is both Satan *and* seer/healer. Crucially, indeed, he is both at the same time. He is drawn *simultaneously* from the Christian world, with its categorical ontology, and from the very different world of Chaka's time, with its more anthropocentric understanding of knowledge and order. Within the context of the former universe, Isanusi is exclusively a force of evil. Within the context of the latter, his role is very much more open-ended.

> In terms of Gérard's vision[5] of *Chaka*, presumably, this simultaneity of presentation – in terms of which the character of Isanusi draws its full meaning from two different 'worlds' – would be interpreted as evidence that Mofolo had succeeded in his attempt to fuse elements of 'African' and 'Western' culture (Lazarus 1986:53).

I insist on a thorough presentation of Isanusi when summarising Mofolo's story because his character highlights a few important facts for my analysis. Firstly Mofolo's presentation of Isanusi shows the psychological and narrative complexity of his prose. It also shows that understanding Mofolo's syncretism – as exemplified in the character of Isanusi – and recognising it in *Chaka*, is essential to interpreting the novel. An adequate interpretation of the original text is, by extension, crucial in rendering a faithful translation of it. Mofolo's syncretism presents the biggest challenge for translators. Evidently, the aim in translating *Chaka* would be to balance, in a manner as close to Mofolo's as possible, the Christian and African elements of the novel, without either one overpowering the narrative in a way that would betray the author's original intention or style.

After Chaka meets Isanusi his life is changed forever: "Today he [Chaka] comes back greatly changed […]" (47). Chaka was asked whether he accepted Isanusi's help to acquire the kingship he desires (his father's and greater even) with the condition that he will have to obey the diviner unconditionally from then on. Upon his acceptance, Isanusi 'medicines' Chaka and sends him two of his acolytes as helpers: Ndlebe and Malunga.[6]

[5] By 'vision' Lazarus refers to Gérard's concept of *syncretism* which is discussed in point 2.2 of Chapter 2, Part I of this work.

[6] In his translation of the novel, Ellenberger gives the translations of these names in an explicative footnote: Ndlebe means *Ear* and Malunga *The righteous one* (101). Neither Dutton nor Kunene provide such a

Chaka's transformation is detailed at the beginning of Chapter 8. Meanwhile, the hero has sought Dingiswayo's protection. On the third day after his arrival at Dingiswayo's court, the king went out to attack Zwide where Chaka immediately distinguished himself as the bravest warrior. With Ndlebe and Malunga's help, Chaka captures Zwide in Chapter 10. He is praised upon his return to the royal village and Dingiswayo makes him the commander of all his armies. Senzangakhona dies in Chapter 11. Chapter 12 is dedicated to Noliwa, Dingiswayo's favourite sister and Chaka's love. In the next chapter Chaka and Isanusi visit Senzangakhona's grave in what is another surreal passage in the novel. In it Chaka speaks to his dead father through Isanusi and Senzangakhona gives Chaka his kingship and that of his ancestors combined. He ends the conversation with the following words: "Be a *man*; be a king" (82, my emphasis). The chapter ends with the mysterious vision of a beautiful young maiden riding a horse. To some, she was the *Inkosazana yeZulu*, the Sky Princess making her first earthly appearance, to others, it was Noliwa. The bizarre episode is mentioned but not elucidated; the narrator himself says that "it is a mystery to us" (83). In Chapter 14, Chaka is, at last, installed as his father's successor to the kingdom. Then Zwide kills Dingiswayo and Chaka acquires his kingdom as well. In Chapter 16, Chaka gives his nation a new name: "*Zulu*! *Mazulu* (the sky, people of the sky)" (103). In this chapter Chaka is also asked, by Isanusi, for the blood of

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translation which are nonetheless important as they refer to and illustrate the qualities possessed by these characters.

Interestingly, Ndlebe's and Malunga's origins are as vague as their master's. When asked where they have come from they reply: "We rose up right here, in the middle of the velt" (58). Firstly, the allusion to the *velt* (bush) and the use of the verb 'to rise' gives them an un-human, creature-like quality – something reinforced by their zoomorphic descriptions, Ndlebe's in particular. But, instead of coming from above like Isanusi, they seem to come from below. Also Ndlebe shows the same duplicitous characteristic as his master: he has two faces. He can look inert one moment and completely aware and agitated, with a "treacherous look" in his eyes the next (57). If Isanusi could be interpreted as representing part of Chaka's psyche, Ndlebe and Malunga are easily embodiments of abstract human qualities in their extreme; incredible hearing and amazing military prowess for instance. In Mofolo's narrative, they serve, perhaps, as an explanation for the quasi-mythical qualities of the historical Shaka.

his beloved, Noliwa, and Chaka agrees to kill her because "[…] there isn't anything [he loves] other than kingship, war and commanding armies" (102). The entire Chapter 17 is dedicated to a meticulous enumeration of the reforms (mainly of a military nature) brought about by Chaka to the newly founded Zulu nation. Already, Chaka's thirst for power dominates all other considerations. He claims his authority as divinely granted by Nkulunkulu[7] and teaches his people the 'Bayede' greeting, to be used for him only, for fear of powerful and universal reprisal from Nkulunkulu. The definition of the greeting sums up Chaka's megalomaniac fantasies: "*Bayede* means *he who stands between God and man,* it means *the junior God through whom the great God rules the kings of the earth and their nation*" (115).

After this, the narrative accelerates, in parallel with the hero's increasingly rapid moral degeneration and his descent into madness. First, he kills a pregnant Noliwa to provide her blood to Isanusi for, as he says, "the ultimate in sorcery" (123): this is medicine to take Chaka's already powerful kingship to another level. Chapter 19 begins thus: "After Noliwa's death Chaka underwent a frightful change both in his external appearance and also in his inner being, in his very heart; and so did his aims and his deeds" (127). Effectively, from now on, Chaka will be unstoppable. Then the numerous massacres of King Chaka begin. These massacres are directed at his people whom he accuses of being cowards and of plotting against him. He persecutes his best generals until he assassinates them or they flee – Mzilikazi for exampled ends up migrating to Bulawayo.[8] In this part of the novel, Mofolo describes the impact of the *Mfecane* on everything, from people (including the Basotho), to animals. He says: "it was through

[7] Nkulunkulu is the creator in Nguni cosmogony.
[8] Bulawayo is in today's Zimbabwe and the name means "the place of killing".

Chaka that the *difaqane* came into existence" (153). Chaka has a harem of women and he orders that every child born to them is killed so that he does not have any heirs. When Nandi is caught with a baby she has managed to save, Chaka's "anger [rises] like foam from a boiling pot" and he kills his mother the same way he had killed Noliwa (150). After Nandi's death follows the famous Donga lukaTatiyana massacre where innocents were thrown and slaughtered into the Tatiyana gorge for the vultures to feast upon.

The last three chapters have self-explicative titles. "The Unquenchable Thirst" (Chapter 23) exposes Chaka's greed and inability to enjoy "the fruit of his labours" even though the number of his warriors was "equal to the stars in the sky" (154). "Painful Dreams" (Chapter 24) recounts how, from now on, Chaka will never be happy again and starts being plagued by nightmares. In "Donga lukaTatiyana" Chaka relives some of the key events in his life: he dreams of the good king Dingiswayo and of his first encounter with Isanusi. His dreams cause him pain and remorse. The innocents slaughtered at Tatyiana haunt him, he sees all the evil spirits gathered about that place of death, and he also sees the King of the Deep Pool. He even sees Noliwa and Nandi.

By the last chapter, "The End of Chaka", Chaka has become weak, feverish and confused. The vocabulary of vision is dominant in this important chapter. The last image Chaka 'sees', before Dingana stabs him, is that of Isanusi and his aides, in the distance – present to claim their price? His last words, a vision in themselves, are: "You are killing me in the hope that you will be kings when I am dead, whereas you are wrong, that is not the way it will be because the *umlungu*, the white man, is coming, and it is he who will

rule you, and you will be his servants" (167). [9] The novel ends with a proverb followed by an exclamation mark:

> Even to this very day the Zulus, when they think how they were once a strong nation in the days of Chaka, and how other nations dreaded them so much that they could hardly swallow their food, and when they remember their kingdom which has fallen, tears well up in their eyes, and they say: 'They ferment, they curdle! Even great pools dry away!' (168).

The tone suits the end of an epic, of an African epic where the denouement offers, as is traditional to the genre, a moral to the story. Obviously, the moral of the story of *Chaka* is that evil eventually gets punished.

3. Frederic Hugh Dutton's Chaka: An Historical Romance *(1931)*

The first translation to follow *Chaka*'s publication is Dutton's English translation published in 1931 by Oxford University Press for what is now called the International African Institute. On the title page of this translation, it reads "*Translated from the original Sesuto by* F. H. DUTTON, *Director of Education*". Effectively, Dutton was the Director of Education for Lesotho, still named, at the time, Basutoland. As such, he was in a privileged position to translate Mofolo's text and have it published.

[9] I will show the importance of this vision to the Francophone readers of Mofolo's novel in the next chapter of my analysis.

In the introduction to his translation, Kunene argues:

> By translating *Chaka* into English in 1931 (published by the International Institute of African Languages and Cultures, now the International African Institute) F.H. Dutton made an important contribution to world literature and performed an invaluable service to the dissemination of Sesotho culture through literature. Through Dutton's translation, not only Europe became aware of and benefited from, Mofolo's masterpiece, but indeed Africa itself. It is through translation, to take just one more example that the present writer came to enjoy p'Bitek's beautiful lament, *Song of Lawino*, which he could not have read in the original Acoli. Dutton's translation of *Chaka* inspired non-Sesotho-speaking Africa to heights of creativity as exemplified by the works of Senghor, Badian and Mulikita (Kunene 1981: xiv).

Kunene's praise seems overly generous. Although Dutton certainly helped disseminate Sesotho culture in Africa, it is not *his* translation but Ellenberger's that inspired Francophone Africa to heights of creativity. French-speaking writers, Senghor certainly, read the novel in French.[10] In the mid-50's, roughly ten years after its publication, Ellenberger's translation was readily available in France when Senghor published his own poem *Chaka*, inspired by Mofolo's novel.[11]

That is not to say, however, that Dutton does not deserve the tribute of having been the first to translate *Chaka*, enabling Mofolo's text to move beyond the confines of Lesotho. However, if *Chaka* were to be translated into a particular European language

[10] Senghor, who was at the receiving end of a particularly rigid French politic of assimilation in Senegal (he went to a French school from the age of seven and then straight to Paris to further his studies), always wrote in French. Understandably, he was often confronted with this fact and always replied that French was a language that enabled him to express himself better, *because it had become the language of his thoughts* and because it gave him a vaster scope of expression.

[11] Senghor's *Chaka* was first published in 1951 in *Présence Africaine* and then in 1956 in a collection of poems entitled *Ethiopiques*.

first, it should have been French. It *was*, after all, written by an author artistically nurtured by Francophone missionaries, most of whom, as we have seen, profusely translated from Sesotho into French. It was also published by the PEMS, a French missionary society, even if English, rather than French, was the European language of choice used in their teachings.[12]

Despite his earlier mention of Dutton, Kunene also gives some clues to the motivations and concerns about the first translation of *Chaka* that demonstrate a less altruistic quality. Kunene shows for instance, in what is a thorough investigation of the publication history of Mofolo's manuscript, that when it came to discussing the translation of the novel, there were concerns about its witchcraft content – concerns which were first raised by the PEMS.

According to Kunene, only Dutton could have made J.W. Allen of Longmans Green,[13] from whom Dutton appeared to have sought advice, aware that "there were severe disagreements in Morija concerning the future of the book" (Kunene 1989:150). In effect, Dutton, being the Director of Education of Basutoland at the time, would have been in a very good position to have intimate knowledge of any such polemics. Allen's concerns (seemingly inherited from Dutton) were shared with Major H. Vischer, from the International Institute of African Languages and Cultures,[14] and are uncovered in the latter's reply to Allen: "*As you say*, it does show up the power of witchcraft and the enormous influence it has on the Natives" (Kunene 1989:150, emphasis added). Vischer,

[12] There are still no translations, to date, of *Pitseng*. Ironically, the first one, which at present is still in manuscript form, is going to be in French. I am grateful to Elisabeth Chaka for this information.
[13] To whom Dutton had given his manuscript towards the end of 1927/beginning of 1928. It isn't clear if he had wished to be published by Longmans or if he just sought personal advice from Allen (Kunene 1989:149).
[14] The International African Institute (IAI) was founded as the International Institute of African Languages and Cultures in 1926, in London, for the study of African Languages. The IAI has published a quarterly journal, *Africa*, since 1928.

who was strongly in favour of *Chaka* being published in English, made his case as follows:

> The publication of the book in English, on the other hand, could only be read by a very limited number of Africans. The Africans who can read English have already received a good deal of education and enlightenment and I doubt if they would be harmed by a plain statement of facts showing the effects of the evil (Kunene 1989:150).

Dutton's translation was eventually published in 1931 by Oxford University Press for the IAI.

Kunene also mentions that, although there is no evidence to show that the PEMS gave Dutton permission to publish his English translation, there is evidence that a certain B. Dhlamini (the editor of the newspaper *Umteteli wa Bantu*) approached the PEMS to translate the text into Zulu and was advised to wait for permission. The reason given was that the mission had to resolve "a question of principle"[15] first, but it is not clear if the PEMS ever actually replied to Dhlamini. The interest of this historical vignette is that it strongly reinforces the reticence, on part of the PEMS and Europeans in general, to do anything that would, in their view, condone the practice of witchcraft.

The facts above contribute to a clearer picture of the socio-cultural, but also *political*, context in which Dutton's target-text was produced. These facts also give us some clues as to the intended function-in-culture of the translation and its projected audience: English-speaking readers, most probably within the education field, who would

[15] This question, according to Kunene, pertained, no doubt, to whether or not *Chaka* should be reprinted (Kunene 1989:149).

predominantly be British subjects from the mother country and a minority of whom would be 'educated' British colonial subjects or learners in African mission schools.

4. Victor Ellenberger's Chaka: une épopée Bantou *(1940)*

In the foreword to his translation, signed in September1939, Victor Elleberger says the following:

> "Chaka", c'est, racontée par un noir, l'histoire d'une passion humaine, l'ambition, d'abord incontrôlée puis incontrôlable, grandissant et se développant fatalement, comme attisée par une Némésis implacable, envahissant graduellement tout l'être, puis consumant tout devant elle, pour aboutir à la ruine de la personnalité morale et au châtiment inéluctable.
> Le lecteur appréciera lui-même la beauté des descriptions, la pénétration de l'analyse des caractères, l'habileté avec laquelle est développée l'action, en même temps que la haute portée philosophique et morale de l'ouvrage. De nombreuses visions de scènes africaines (scènes de fétichisme et même de sorcellerie, par exemple), et de piquants détails de mœurs indigènes, ajoutent à l'intérêt et la valeur de ce livre.
> « Chaka » a déjà été traduit en allemand et en anglais : La présente traduction en français vient donc bien à propos combler une lacune.
>
> [*Chaka* is a story told by a black man. It is a story about human passions and about an ambition at first uncontrolled and then uncontrollable. The ambition grows and develops its inexorable course as if stirred up by a relentless Nemesis who overtakes everything in its path until the hero's moral personality is annihilated and his punishment inescapable. The

> reader will appreciate the beauty of the descriptions, the insightful character development, the talent with which the action is developed, as well as the work's philosophical and moral significance. The novel contains many descriptions of typically African scenes and interesting details on indigenous customs which add further to the book's importance and its artistic worth. *Chaka* has already been translated into German and English: the present translation in French means to rectify this great hiatus.][16]

The French reader is made aware, by direct address, of the translator's appreciation of the beauty of the work presented. In two paragraphs, Ellenberger almost demands from the novel's prospective readers to give Mofolo's story its due. The *value*, to use his own terminology, of this story told by a *black man* – emphasized because of its mention in the first sentence of the foreword – lies in the following: the beauty of its descriptions, the depth of character analysis, the impressive development of the action, as well as the work's great philosophical and moral content. Added to these qualities is the African backdrop, authenticated by the numerous typically African scenes and the interesting details on indigenous customs.

The translator's note is obviously critical in studying a given translation, as it helps identify the translator's aim and his socio-cultural background. In his, Ellenberger shares his admiration for Mofolo's talent and for the novel's rich African content. It is fair to assume that Ellenberger's intention was to remain as faithful as possible to the qualities he enunciates. His foreword also hints at an appreciation for local colour seemingly inherited from his father, one of the first PEMS missionary in Lesotho.

[16] My translation.

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A short account of Ellenberger's background will be enlightening at this point.

Victor Ellenberger was the last born of Frédérick Ellenberger, a missionary of the second generation of PEMS missionaries in Lesotho. F. Ellenberger was a prolific writer and translator, and wrote, amongst others, *Histori ea Basotho* which was later translated into English by John MacGregor and printed in 1912. Of this work, Coplan says that it has:

> […] the distinction of having been entirely based on oral traditions and written for the edification of the Basotho and the future preservation of their historical memory. How many anthropologists have undertaken such an act of selfless recompense for what they owe to the communities that gave them their profession? The book itself is a first rate political history of the Caledon (Coplan 2003:6).[17]

Victor – who himself served as a PEMS missionary in Lesotho – was born in Lesotho in 1879, making him Mofolo's contemporary. Victor, no doubt, inherited from his father a deep understanding of Sotho history and culture. In fact, he translated a lot of his father's work and, in turn, his own son Paul worked at gathering his grand-father's writings and was co-founder of the Morija Museum, the best existing archive in the country of the early history of Lesotho and the mission. Part of one of the longest-standing missionary families in Lesotho, Victor Ellenberger was truly immersed in the

[17] In speaking of the Caledon, Coplan refers, here, to the huge geographical area that the river of the same name flows through: "It rises in the Drakensberg, on the Lesotho-South Africa border, and flows generally southwest, forming most of the boundary between Lesotho and [the now] Free State Province, South Africa"; Maseru, the capital of Lesotho, lies on the river (Encyclopœdia Britannica, 2006).

local culture in which he grew up and undoubtedly possessed an intimate knowledge of its language and history. He might even have inherited his father's values of selflessness and benevolent desire to work at preserving and disseminating the cultural heritage of the people that "gave them their profession" – in intending, for instance, to remedy the lack of a French translation of *Chaka*.

5. Kunene's Chaka *(1981)*

Daniel P. Kunene was born in 1923 in what was still, in those days, the Orange Free State. He lectured at the University of Cape Town where he completed his doctoral research until he immigrated to the United States in 1964. Kunene is a not just a scholar of African literature but a poet too. He is a specialist of Sotho literature and of Thomas Mofolo's writing in particular. His *Thomas Mofolo and the Emergence of Written Sesotho Prose* published in 1989 has proved invaluable for the present research. In it, Kunene offers the best published critical work on Sotho literature and his thorough study of Mofolo and his work is seminal in the field. Obviously, Kunene's specialised academic expertise gives him the credentials for a faithful, informed and carefully considered translation of Chaka, published in 1981, with the subtitle "A new translation by Daniel P. Kunene of the famous novel".

Chapter 5 – Translation Analysis

1. Theoretical Framework

In carrying out a textual analysis of the translations I wish to show that diverging definitions of Africanity emerge from Mofolo's novel and its translations. These different visions ultimately influenced the reception of each version of the text and impacted on its philological interpretation. In order to reveal these varying definitions of Africanity and ultimately arrive at Senghor's own definition, I will carry out a comparative analysis of Dutton's, Ellenberger and, to a lesser extent, Kunene's translations of C*haka* by Thomas Mofolo. For this, I will use analytical tools borrowed from a variety of models of translation analysis within Descriptive Translation Studies (DTS).

DTS is defined by Toury as being the empirical study and description of existing translations which are understood to function in the target system (the target language and readership) *only* and where the target culture (for which the text has been produced or is to be produced) is the initiator (in other words, the *raison d'être*) of the translation (Toury 1985:18-19). For Ellenberger's translation that would mean a French readership in the 40s, just a decade after the birth of the Négritude movement and, for Kunene**,** a postcolonial English one – written in response to Dutton's dated[1] and 'biblical in tone' version.

[1] Interestingly, the only French translation of *Chaka* available today is still Ellenberger's, indicating the lack of need (or desire?) for a revised version.

The present study will be based on a comparative description of the three translations described so that salient differences can be revealed and interpreted. This analysis' focus will be to identify 'shifts in translation'[2] between the texts, using the cultural content of the novel – since it will impact on the varying constructions of Africa we seek to highlight – as the central unit of comparison.

Elements of Christiane Nord's model of translation-oriented textual analysis, which requires a close examination of the intratextual factors of the translations, will be used as a guideline (Nord 191:80-81).[3]

Munday explains how Nord's model came in response to Toury's model which did not, at least initially, provide a system rigorous enough for a fully objective analysis. In other words, Toury's system, in application, could be overly flexible (Munday 2002:77). Nord's model, on the other hand, attempts to produce a more comprehensive method of analysis, the downside being that such a model can be laborious and wearisome (Munday 2002:77). This is why we will restrict ourselves to studying the cultural shifts in the translation(s) of *Chaka* where they would be elucidatory of our hypothesis and through selected themes and images, such as, for instance, the 'cattle' theme or the 'masihla-sihla' image.

Munday's own view on translation-oriented analysis is useful to the present study. Also diverging from Toury, he proposes to study *both* source text and target text (and not

[2] In his MA dissertation which offers an analysis of the shifts in translation between Dutton's and Kunene's English translations, Neke gives Popovic's definition of shifts in translation as being "All that appears as new with respect to the original or fails to appear where it might have been expected […]" (Gentzler: 1993:86).

[3] Nord distinguishes between extratextual and intratextual factors to be considered in translation analysis. Extratextual factors answer to questions such as "Who wrote the text? What for? To whom? When? Where? Why?" (Nord 1991: 40-42). We have addressed these questions in the first part of the present discussion, when we recorded the texts studied and highlighted their socio-cultural contexts. Intratextual factors, on the other hand, relate to the texts themselves and are concerned with issues of theme, style and tone (Nord 1991: 80-81) which is the focus of this part of the argument.

the target text *only*) within their own socio-cultural contexts and accordingly identify shifts in the metafunctions[4] of the translated texts while systematically relating linguistic choices to the socio-cultural contexts identified (Munday 2002:80).

Taken from a different point of departure, this crucial theoretical position is central in Nord's argument too. She reasons that all analysis prior to translation should seek to establish "the function-in-culture" of the source-text, which then needs to be compared "with the (prospective) function-in-culture of the target text required by the initiator, identifying and isolating those ST [source-text] elements which have to be preserved or adapted in translation" (Nord 1991:21). Evidently, Nord's words relate to the *process* of translating/translation and her model serves as a tool for an analysis of text(s) *to be* translated. Such an analysis however, can be applied *post-translation*, to the translated texts themselves. For our purposes, Nord's model will enable us to ascertain the diverging function-in-culture of Dutton's and Ellenberger's translations of *Chaka* in order to extract, from the comparison, the idiosyncratic impact of Ellenberger's version on its French/Francophone readers.

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What eventually transpires is that shifts in translation show that Dutton's translation (and his target culture) are not as close to the source culture as Ellenberger's

[4] Strands of meaning in the text which Munday differentiates as 'ideational metafunction' (meaning as representation: denotational components of lexical items), 'interpersonal function' (closely linked in literature to the narrative point of view), 'textual function' (thematic structure and patterns of cohesion) (Munday 2002: 79).

was, hence producing a text that loses some of its original intended meaning and its cultural value which, in turn, leads to a loss of the text's literary value.

More importantly however, the analysis will highlight the elements in Ellenberger's version that could have greatly contributed to *Chaka*'s success, particularly among Francophone African readers of that time.

2. Comparative Analysis of theTexts

2.1 The English versions: Dutton's and Kunene's

There are no thorough comparative studies of Dutton's and Kunene's translations of *Chaka* but in *Chaka, Empereur des Zoulous: Histoire, Mythes et Légendes* (1991) Jean Sévry offers a short section on the subject worth discussing.

Sévry argues that Kunene gave Mofolo's text its Africanity back. In fact, he entitles the first part of his discussion "La traduction de Daniel Kunene (1981) et celle de Frederic Hugh Dutton (1931): déchristianisation et re-africanisation d'un texte Sesotho" ["The translations of Daniel Kunene (1981) and Frederick Hugh Dutton (1931): de-Christianisation and re-Africanisation of a Sotho text"][5] (Sévry 1991:183). Sévry explains that Dutton's text is a more western vision of Mofolo's story which corresponded to the audience it targeted at the time in which it was published, "when African literatures weren't yet well known". Sévry further remarks that Dutton omits a number of linguistic elements, shortens sentences and is generally responsible for great

[5] My translation.

semantic variations from Mofolo's original, at least when compared to Kunene's version (Sévry 1991:183). [6]

Some of the variations mentioned by Sévry are, for instance, that Dutton often uses *oxen* instead of cattle, a word which Kunene prefers. For Sévry, Kunene's choice is more suitable as it takes into account the collective value that the term *cattle* has in a pastoral culture such as that of the Zulus (Sévry 1991:183). In fact, cattle form an important cultural sub-theme in *Chaka*, reinforcing the authenticity of the Zulu backdrop throughout the narrative – just as cattle form the backdrop of Zulu and Sotho physical, social and cultural landscapes, residing at the core of these societies and their organisations.[7]

One could dwell on this theme and analyse its textual representation in the novel in depth, but here we will just give an overview of it.[8] To begin with, many analogies of cattle are used to describe Chaka. He is, in turn, "an ox of the vultures" (6), a "herdboy who would watch his [Senzagakhona's] herds, who would fight his wars, who would succeed him in the kingship" (6). Of the three roles assigned to the child upon his birth the first one is that of a care-taker for the cattle, before his abilities as a warrior or his claim to the kingship are even mentioned. Further on, Chaka is called a "little bullock" (15), and, again, a "yellow calf" (17).

Cattle are not only praised but they, too, praise; 'Cattle praises' are sung to Chaka: "*Bayede*, O King! The *cattle* of Zululand praise you, they greet you, you who are

[6] However Sévry confesses to, just like me, knowing neither Sotho nor Zulu (Sévry 1991:183).
[7] To illustrate this point: the Zulu Kraal (which is circular in shape) is the central feature of the Zulu universe. It is at the centre of this circle that resides the cattle kraal (Lawson 1984:18).
[8] As in the previous chapter all English quotations of *Chaka* will be taken from Kunene's translation, unless specified otherwise.

the heaven that gives rain and pastures […]" (110, emphasis added). The same passage in Dutton's version reads: "Bayete Nkosi. The *oxen* of the Mazulu praise thee and greet thee […]" (133, emphasis added).

Cattle are synonymous with wealth: they are accumulated through campaigns (154) and given as payment – Chaka and Isanusi discuss payment in cattle towards the end of the novel (152). Cattle are also used as reward: "The regiment which had refused to retreat even when the battle was hot was given the entire loot which had been captured from Qwabe's and Buthelezi's; the cattle *were given to them to become their property* rather than for immediate feasting by the regiment" (133-134, emphasis added).

Ownership of cattle is, in addition, a status symbol. When Chaka is in power, he posseses prized cattle. Kunene emphasises this point in his translation:

> […] Chaka's own cattle, which comprised milk cows, slaughter cattle, race oxen and also cattle chosen for *their beauty*, to be displayed on festive occasions, that is to say those which were outstanding in *the beauty of their horn shapes and their colours*. These were prized cattle and well trained so that they knew their praises and recognized their herders (108, emphasis added).

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Dutton's version differs, highlighting a few contentious points for our discussion. Firstly, whereas Kunene rejects pejorative terms – in the South-African context –[9] and the use of Afrikaans words such as 'kraal', 'kraaled' and 'kloof', Dutton makes liberal use of them (Sévry 1991:183).

Dutton writes for a totally different audience to Kunene's and his audience would not have the necessary knowledge to access the cultural particularities of the story. The passage cited below shows that, although Dutton himself no doubt knew about Zulu culture, he may not have been close enough to it to grasp all its nuances. The result is a shorter, less detailed version where crucial imagery is lost – such as that of the beauty of the horns of the prized animals for instance. His text reads:

> Near here was the *kraal* for Chaka's own cattle – cattle for milking, for eating, for racing, extra fine choice cattle, cattle for the feasts: that is to say *all cattle that had good coats and were of good colour*. All that *kraaled* in this *kraal* were cattle indeed; they recognized the songs of praise sung by their herdboys in their honour. (130, emphasis added).

The importance of the physical beauty of the animals is somewhat lost in the above passage. Whereas the word 'beauty' is repeated twice in Kunene's version, it does not appear in Dutton's text. His description of the animals ('all cattle that had good coats and were of good colour') is very matter-of-fact. It suggests that the good condition of the animals is the only priority. Such a description misses the (already mentioned) importance, for the Zulus, of their special Nguni cattle. The word 'good' used instead of

[9] Sévry explains how the people at Chaka's court do not wear *blankets* (as in Dutton's text) but *cloaks* for instance; because in the South-African context the word *blanket* is pejorative in that it conjures up the term "*Blanket Boys*", used for people of the Bantustan who left the rural areas for the mines, dressed with a blanket (Sévry 1991:183).

'beauty' is less culturally and poetically evocative. However, the loss of this imagery would not have had an impact on Dutton's target readership. It does, however, reduce the cultural richness of Mofolo's text in translation.

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In a thorough study of the two English translations of *Chaka*, Sipho Neke identifies many shifts in translations in Dutton's version.[10] Very often, the lexical shifts identified in translation are culture-specific.

For instance, Dutton translates *thakaneng* ("the place where young people sleep") as "a hut where men were sleeping". The translator does not make the cultural distinction between the youth's hut (in which young men, including Chaka, *had* to sleep) and any hut where any men could be sleeping (Neke 1995:57). Neke highlights Dutton's confusion with regards to the signifiers used for people: "woman" instead of "person" to translate the word *motho*, "people" instead of "children" to translate the word *bana* and so on (Neke 1995: 58-57).

Tellingly, he also translates the word *dihlare* as witchcraft whereas it means "medicine" (Neke 1995:58), showing a poor or biased knowledge of the culture described. Dutton also speaks of the "poisons" of the Khoi or the San[11] – which would be

[10] In his study of the English translations of *Chaka* submitted as a thesis entitled "*Chaka* by Thomas Mofolo and its two English Translations" (1995) for the requirement of an MA in translation for the University of the Witwatersrand – and mentioned earlier in footnote 2. His study aimed at using a combination of two translation models – namely the Nord Model (1991) and the Lambert & Van Gorp Model (1985) – in order to identify shifts in translation from the Sotho in Dutton's (1931) and Kunene's (1981) translations of Mofolo's novel.

[11] Incidentally Dutton uses the word "Bushmen" (2) to refer to the Khoi/San, something that Kunene rectifies in his version. Ellenberger, for his part, calls them the "Massaroa" to which he adds a 'translator's note' to explain that they are "Boschimans" (Bushmen) of the Kalahari Desert (13).

associated with witchcraft and/or evil deeds – instead of using the correct word 'herbs' which would have suitably referred to medicine and, therefore, to the idea of *healing* rather than harming (Neke 1995:68).

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Dutton's translation is, in fact, proof that the novel was not always perfectly understood on a certain 'traditionally African' level. Dutton shows a lack of (cultural) understanding with regards to traditional healing and medicine that was symptomatic of his time and sociopolitical circumstances. He seems to confuse traditional medicine with witchcraft – the presence of which in the novel was, as already discussed, a serious point of contention within the PEMS during the publication debate.

If particular attention is being paid to Dutton's shifts in translation from Mofolo's original text, it is not so much to stigmatise the quality of his translation as poor and suggest that he was not a capable translator. My aim is rather to highlight that, although his socio-cultural context put him in a privileged position to translate Mofolo's text, it also jeopardised his work. Dutton omitted or misinterpreted certain concepts and consequently failed to capture the Sotho's text rich cultural content. Again, I do not wish to qualify Dutton's translation as a failure even though some critics have seen it as such. Both Sévry's and Neke's studies seem to suggest as much. In Neke's words:

> Another area where Dutton marred what is otherwise a good translation is the preservation of the original Sotho imagery and idiom. Kunene, being a Sesotho writer himself, did a wonderful job, and in places where he felt

> that the original would make no sense in English, he improvised by using appropriate paraphrases while keeping the original imagery intact. Dutton, being culturally distanced from the original, did what was open to him – he simply translated the imagery into English imagery and idiom, and in the process, the imagery and idiom of the original were lost to the reader. Although no meaning is being lost in this way, the storyline becomes flat, thereby making the book less impressive and less attractive (Neke 1995: 81).

These shifts in translation show that Dutton and his target culture are not as close to the source culture as Kunene or, as will be shown, Ellenberger. Dutton's translation consequently loses some of its original intended meaning and with it, some of its cultural content, which, at least to contemporary readers – and those of Négritude and post-négritude in particular – means a loss of its extraordinary literary value.

Sévry is of the overall opinion that Dutton's text often fails Mofolo because he translated for a European readership, while Kunene succeeded in perhaps remedying the previous translator's cultural failings and omissions because, says Sévry in a parenthesis, "Négritude had already happened"[12] by the time Kunene produced his version (Sévry 1991:183-184). Effectively, Kunene's translation is not just post-négritude but post-colonial too and as such it is geared to a radically different audience.

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The second example of Sévry's analysis is a key illustration of the different cultural, historical and political attitudes of Mofolo, Dutton, Ellenberger and Kunene.

[12] My translation.

In this example, Sévry mistakenly states that Kunene has omitted, in translation, the part where the "*Kaffirs*" (Dutton) or "*Caffres*" (Ellenberger)[13] are truly terrified of madmen. Sévry suggests that Kunene simply *cut it out* from Mofolo's text, because it bothered him for *obvious* connotative reasons (Sévry 1991:184, my emphasis).

This is not the case. Not only did Kunene include that part – "On the other hand, *people in Bokone* are generally very afraid of madmen, and even brave men run away without hesitation when they see them" (50, my emphasis) – but it appears the *he* did translate the passage more faithfully than Dutton or Ellenberger.

In all evidence Mofolo *does not* use the pejorative *Kaffirs* but the expression "*people in Bakone*". This expression is also obviously present (even without any knowledge of Sotho) for instance, at the very beginning of the novel, when the author gives an overview of South Africa and its nations. Mofolo speaks of the Bakone thus: "Morero wa rona mona o lebane le ba botjhabela, *Bakone*; mme ho a lokela hore, […]" (Neke 1995:35).[14] Dutton's version however reads "Our story is concerned with the eastern tribes, the *Kafirs*, and before we begin […]" (1, emphasis added) and Ellenberger's sentence reads: "L'histoire que nous projetons de raconter ici aura pour théâtre la partie orientale de cette terre, et l'action se passera chez les *Cafres*" (12, emphasis added).

Despite Ellenberger's use of the pejorative word *cafres* however, I will suggest that, in comparison with Dutton's version with which it is historically closest,

[13] Actually, the spelling used throughout Dutton's text is *Kafirs* and not *Kaffirs* with two "f". The same applies to Ellenberger's text: he spells it *Cafres* and not *Caffres* as quote by Sévry. This term has a complex history. It is worth noting that in the nineteenth century the term was widely used to describe Xhosas with the Xhosa language being known as Kafir.
[14] As quoted in Sotho by Neke (1995: 35, my emphasis).

Ellenberger's text is culturally richer. His translation – which chronologically and culturally lies somewhere between Dutton's and Kunene's – appears to be closer to the intended aim (skopos) of Mofolo's text.

2.2 Ellenberger's French text

'Skopos Theory' is defined by Nord as being "part of a general theory of translation" which was first presented by Vermeer in 1978 and hinges on the so-called "skopos rule" with its sociological sub-rule. This sub-rule is to be understood as the human factor in translation because translation is always aimed at specific receivers/readers who have their own cultural particularities. In her definition Nord quotes Vermeer: "Human interaction (and its subcategory: translation) is determined by its purpose (skopos) and therefore it is a function of that purpose".[15] Furthermore, she asserts, "[t]ranslation is the production of a functional target text *maintaining a relationship with a given source text* that is specified according to the intended or demanded function of a target text (translation skopos). Nord also stresses that translation allows *a communicative act to take place* which because of existing linguistic and cultural barriers would not have been possible without it" (Nord 1991:24-28, emphasis added).

Indeed, if, in our analysis, we can determine the skopos of Ellenberger's translation (its "intended function" and "the communicative act" that resulted from it), we can hypothesise, with more accuracy, on the *effect* it had on its readers.

[15] Vermeer 1978/1983:54 as translated by Nord (1991).

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In the second part of his commentary Sévry briefly tackles Dutton's, Ellenberger's and Kunene's translations together. He attempts to illustrate fundamental differences between them to show that, despite being translations of the same Sotho text, they vary greatly.

Although some of the points he calls attention to are, in my view, intuitively valid, the first example he cites is erroneous on many counts. Firstly, he claims that the episode of the killing of the madman – and the analogy of the madman to a "butcher-bird" – in Chapter 8 is missing from Kunene's translation. Sévry suggest that this is intentional on Kunene's part, speculating that it might be because the torture described (how the bird impales its prey) foretells Chaka's cruel deeds. But this is how Kunene's translation goes:

> When the people ran after him to recapture their stock, he would play havoc with them, killing those he could kill, and grabbing one of them, as they fled, and impaling him alive on the branch of a tree, as if he were a butcher-bird (50).

Chaka's actions and his fate are often, in fact, anticipated (sometimes explicitly) in the narrative of Kunene's version.[16] Sévry hints at a certain self-conscious timidity on

[16] For instance, we have mentionned that Chaka is described as "an ox of the vultures" (6) at birth; this, the narrator goes on explaining in the same passage, is a particularly appropriate description of the protagonist as it will be shown further on in the narrative.
Kunene has also studied Mofolo's narrator extensively in *Thomas Mofolo and the Emergence of Written Sesotho Prose* (1989, pages 110-143). I firmly believe that although his translation of *Chaka* precedes the publication of this critical work, Kunene was already conscious of the role of the narrator in Chaka and of

part of Kunene as a translator. But this is not the case at all. In fact, where Dutton has lacked the straightforwardness of Mofolo's prose, both Ellenberger and Kunene have stayed closer to Mofolo's text, keeping a similar openness of expression.

Here is an example taken from Neke's study:[17]

> When Mofolo describes the instance when Nandi missed her monthly period he says, *"kgwedi ha a bona e mo tlola"* (5), which actually means that 'when she realized that she had missed her monthly period'. Dutton gives a somewhat misleading translation when he says "*When Nandi saw that her time had come*" (6). This could be taken to mean [in context] that Nandi's time of delivery had come and not that it was the start of her pregnancy. Kunene is more direct when he says, "*When Nandi missed her monthly period* […] (5) (Neke 1995:55-56).

Ellenberger renders the right idea while keeping the modesty required of his time, without compromising on the meaning. In this particular sentence for example, he uses a euphemism that would now perhaps be considered old fashioned but which is still relatively straightforward. His version reads *"Quand Nandi s'aperçut que son mois la passait"* (18).

Another (more serious) instance of such shifts in translation is when Senzangakhona and Nandi have sexual intercourse. According to Neke, Mofolo's text is supposed to "literally [mean] that at last Nandi gave in and Senzangakhona performed the evil deed of his heart" (Neke 1995:56) whereas Dutton's translation reads "But

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his power of hindsight. He is, effectively, narrator *and* histor, enquirer *and* creator throughout the novel (Kunene 1989:142-143).

[17] Neke does know Sotho and conducted his research with the full linguistic understanding of Mofolo's original which he often quotes in Sotho.

Senzangakhona hoodwinked them with deceitful speeches and promises that he would marry Nandi and in the end *he took her by force and accomplished his evil deed*" (6) – such phrasing could imply that Nandi was actually *raped* (Neke 1995:56, my emphasis). This example reveals Dutton's strong sense of Christian/British propriety about physical matters. By altering the original text, he not only compromises the style and literary quality of the original but its *meaning* as well.

Ellenberger however stays closer to Mofolo's version and by being more literal in his translation, he keeps the meaning intact. Although nowhere does it say that Nandi (literally) gives in, the passage does not imply, as in Dutton's version, that Senzangakhona rapes Nandi, but, rather, that *he overcomes the obstacles to the evil designs of his heart*, as Mofolo evidently intended. Here is Ellenberger's version:

> De son côté Sénza'ngakona, qui savait les jeunes filles au courant de son intrigue, fit miroiter à leurs yeux toutes sortes de belles paroles, plus fausses les unes que les autres, leur faisant croire, par exemple, qu'il allait épouser Nandi. *Finalement, il renversa tous les obstacles qui s'opposaient à son dessein et il mit à exécution les désirs mauvais de son cœur* (18, my emphasis).

The relative candidness of the French text conveys the ease with which Mofolo seems to tackle physical matters, which is on par with Senghor's claims, in his theoretical writings, that the 'black man' is more at ease with nature and his physicality.

Senghor explains that while the westerner seeks to understand nature and what is natural in order to dominate it, the black man does not seek to escape his subjectivity

before nature (Senghor 1964:141). Senghor reveals that love, in Négritude poetry[18] is carnal, physical: "C'est un amour charnel, sans majuscule. Tout est, ici, sang et sperme, ventre, cuisse, sexe, croupe et colline et fruit" ["It is carnal love, without a big 'L'. In this poetry everything is blood and sperm, stomach, thigh, sex, buttocks, hills and fruits"][19] (Senghor 1964:141). Senghor's racially biased statement may be highly contentious but it highlights his poetry's strong physical and sensual nature, which, although in a much less explicit way, resembles Mofolo's relative directness on such matters. Ellenberger's candidness in translation is thus crucial here in transferring that 'feeling' of naturalness.

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One of Négritude's most repeated condemnation of the West was that the colonialism of Africa by the West was culturally devastating. The 'black man' lost his cultural identity as a consequence of his traditions being systematically misunderstood, denigrated and suppressed. Senghor and those who followed, in re-writing Mofolo's tale, would have thoroughly appreciated a translated version of the text that did give the impression of having neither been censored nor misrepresented by too judgmental or 'foreign' a narration.

Further comparative examples will confirm that Ellenberger's version literally *translates* his deep understanding of the cultural content of *Chaka*, which he very deliberately and meticulously attempts to convey to the French-speaking reader.

[18] Here, read 'black' and African poetry.
[19] My translation.

In the example discussed earlier with reference to cattle as a form of payment, Kunene's translation was cited to read that "cattle were given to them [the generals] to become their property rather than for immediate feasting by the regiment" (133-134). Interestingly, Kunene does not explain the importance of the comment "rather than for immediate feasting".

Ellenberger, on the other hand, elucidates this in a footnote that reads more like an anthropologist's note than a translator's one. He explains that, for the Zulus and other Bantu-speaking people, it is customary to slaughter an animal received as a gift and consume it immediately (215).[20] Obviously, Kunene makes certain knowledge presuppositions about his readers[21] – which is not the case for Ellenberger whose French-speaking readers, whether from the *métropole*, or otherwise, would not have been familiar with this cultural tradition.

Ellenberger seems to have preserved the cultural content of Mofolo's text by omitting none of the finer points but instead offering, for them, numerous explanations in a style not dissimilar to that of an ethnographer, following the tradition, in fact, of much of PEMS missionary writing about Lesotho and its people.[22] Ellenberger's style is evidently inherited from his father's work and from that of the missionaries before him.

In his abundant notes, Ellenberger gives, for instance, the French translation (sometimes in conjunction with its Latin name) of most indigenous flora, such as the

[20] The French text reads as follows: "Chez les Zoulous et autres tribus Bantoues, il est d'usage, lorsqu'un personnage vous a fait don d'un animal domestique vivant (de ceux dont on consomme la chair) que le bénéficiaire du cadeau doive abattre la bête au plus tôt et s'en nourrir. (Note du traducteur.) "(Mofolo 1981:215).

[21] On the topic of presuppositions in translation Nord asserts that "[s]ince presupposition is by definition a piece of information that is not verbalized, it cannot be "spotted" in the text. […] In order to identify presuppositions, the translator has first of all to ascertain which culture or "world" the text refers to […]" (Nord 1991:97).

[22] See Part I of this thesis.

"sébokou" or the "tlanyané" grasses (12). He often translates names of people and places, explaining how Nandi means "la délicieuse" (16),[23] Malounga "le Juste" and Ndlèbè "oreille" (101)[24] or how the infamous DongalukaTatiyana means "la ravine-aux-flancs-abrupts" (244).[25]

Ellenberger also gives literal translations for a number of idiomatic expressions such as: "Tranché au mouton sa queue pour l'offrir au voleur" (146) – literally *to cut the sheep's tail to give it to the thief*, which means, as he explains, 'to attract the attention of one's enemies'; the expression for "to start anew" is given in a footnote as literally being "to bring a new field into cultivation", etc.

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When Kunene has not included these expressions or images within the narrative through paraphrasing with amplifications[26] he has sometimes omitted them altogether – such as the meaning of Nandi's name for instance, or the image of the abandoned egg of the "môkôpjoané" bird (Ellenberger, 152) used by Mofolo to express Chaka's feeling of vulnerability at the funeral of Dingiswayo. Although this is a rare occurrence, it leads to a loss of the literary quality and rich imagery of the text – in comparison to Ellenberger's rendition.

[23] '*La délicieuse*' can be translated as "The delicious one". The French adjective is in the feminine form, strengthens the correlation between Nandi's name and its signifier which refers to her directly. This is a good example of loss of meaning and/or subtlety of meaning in the transference of a text from one language to another.
[24] Malounga and Ndlèbè could be translated as, respectively, "The Righteous one" and "Ear".
[25] "The gorge with the sheer cliffs of Tatiyana" (my translation).
[26] He comments on the use of this particular translation strategy which he has favoured for translating cultural content that does not exist in English and/or the target (Kunene 1981:xxi, preface to his translation).

Kunene presupposes much cultural knowledge from his readers,[27] just like Mofolo did. Both Mofolo and Kunene wrote for an audience largely familiar with tribal ritual and their texts are addressed to a readership that is familiar with the 'world' of *Chaka* and/or, if not, a readership that would have somehow access to the culture (as in Kunene's case). Generally, in cases where Kunene presupposes the reader's knowledge of a particular image, ritual or expression, Ellenberger gives explicative footnotes.[28] In my opinion these footnotes enrich Ellenberger's translation because they contribute to a fascinating painting of the context of the story while doing justice to the skilled craft of Mofolo's prose. The resulting multilayered richness of the French translation no doubt enthralled its readers, Senghor in particular.

The loss of literary originality by omission in translation is strikingly demonstrated in Kunene's version of the metaphor of hunting field mice, complete with the lexical jargon of Sotho children which Mofolo uses to narrate the ambushing of Zwide by Chaka.[29]

Kunene does mention "a little path like a track of field mice" (64) but he does not sustain the metaphor and offers no insight into it. Ellenberger's version, however, is more evocative – of a cat and mouse game where mice are followed and found, chased, and made to run into a trap etc. – retaining a sort of unusual (but certainly acceptable in the target language) 'authentic Sotho feel':

[27] One of the few instances when Kunene gives a detailed elaboration is in his only footnote on the ritual of *kuruetso* (6-7) –he bases this explicative note on Sekese's *The Customs and Proverbs of the Basotho*.
[28] In fact, there are *no* footnotes in Dutton's translation, there is only one in Kunene's and there are 113 in Ellenberger's.
[29] Which Ellenberger explains in detail in a footnote (109).

> "Cette caverne se trouvait dissimulée dans d'épais taillis, et pour y parvenir il fallait emprunter un sentier plus semblable à une piste à souris qu'autre chose, sentier qui se prolongeait au delà de la caverne et venait déboucher sur la lisière opposée.
> Ndlèbè révéla à Chaka l'endroit où Zwidé s'était caché. Chaka ordonna alors à une partie de ses hommes d'aller faire une battue par derrière la caverne afin de rabattre Zwidé vers lui en l'obligeant à fuir dans la direction où lui, Chaka, l'attendrait" (109).

A last example will serve to complete my argument that Ellenberger has indeed managed, in translating *Chaka*, to convey the essence – and the exoticisms for those foreign to the culture – of Mofolo's original.

Ellenberger offers a version that is often culturally richer even than Kunene's more contemporary one, without it being inaccessible to its French readers. In my view, Ellenberger's numerous explanations have contributed to his translation's success because they have served as a sort of meta-text of an ethnographical nature, which has encouraged understanding without alienation from its 'foreignness'.

This last example is that of the *masihla-sihla*. The circumstances of the meeting between Isanusi and Chaka highlight the importance of subtle details in Mofolo's writing that give his novel its literary complexity and significance. In terms of the content of the novel, these circumstances are crucial in understanding Isanusi's influence and his fatal apparition in Chaka's life – both because foretold and because of the consequences of this fatal meeting. The characters do not bump into each other arbitrarily but Isanusi finds Chaka. Importantly, when the diviner appears in Chaka's life, the hero is asleep, we are told, under a tree of which the lower, multiple branches are fully leaved and arching

towards the ground, like so many "*masihla-sihla*". This particular tree is important because Chaka chose it out of the many trees around him precisely because of the *masihla-sihla*.

Ellenberger provides a long explicative footnote (64-65) on the importance of the *masihla-sihla* of the tree.[30] He explains that an African reader (meaning Sotho-speaking here) would read the presence of *masihla-sihla* as a good omen. The term, he continues, is used to design anything good that befalls a traveler on his journey. Added to this, the larger branches on top of the tree are turned outwards like the palms of a person's hands, symbolising, in Ellenberger's reading, open hands ready to receive a special offering. Ellenberger wants to elucidate, for the foreign reader, the intentionally mystical circumstances of the encounter. It is interesting to me that there seem to be no (Christian) moral judgment on part of the missionary-translator on what could be interpreted as superstitious/pagan beliefs. I believe that this aspect of the magical in the novel is included and explained because it is admired, at least from a literary and *cultural* standpoint. Evidently, Ellenberger is intimately knowledgeable about local culture and fully understands its importance in the narrative. The passage thus retains a certain magical quality and *folkloric authenticity* that gives it richness, even in translation. This dimension is missing in Kunene's version (considered by many the "definitive" English translation) who omits both the term *masihla-sihla* and any explanation on the ominous quality of the tree. In his text, the tree is simply described as higher than the others, its lower branches "fully leaved as those of the willow tree" and its higher ones "stretched outwards like the palms of a person" (36).

[30] We will note that the translator has chosen to keep the Sotho term for *masihla-sihla* as there is no equivalent in French. One technique here would have been to omit it altogether but it Ellenberger chose to keep the concept and add an explicative footnote.

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Under the heading of "Common problems of non-equivalence" of translation at world level, Mona Baker identifies the difficulty of "culture-specific concepts" (Baker 1992:21). This certainly applies to the translation of the term *masihla-sihla*. Baker proposes some common translation strategies to deal with such troublesome words/expressions which apply to our example. Interestingly, Dutton, Ellenberger and Kunene chose diverging strategies.

Ellenberger opts for what Baker calls "Translation using a loan word or loan word plus explanation" (Baker 1992:34). He keeps the Sotho word in his French text (*masihla-sihla*) and offers a thorough explicative footnote for the term.

Dutton and Kunene both choose, for their part, to translate by omission. Of this particular strategy Baker says:

> This strategy may sound rather drastic, but in fact it does no harm to omit translating a word or expression in some contexts. If the meaning is conveyed by a particular item or expression is not vital enough the development of the text to justify distracting the reader with lengthy explanations, translators can and often do simply omit the word or expression in question (Baker 1992:40).

Several questions arise at this point: "Is the culturally complex term *masihla-sihla* – or, for our case, any other term that Ellenberger chose to include or add in his translation – vital to the narrative? Also, does Ellenberger distract the reader rather than enrich his experience by including these concepts with explicative footnotes?

I believe the answer is obvious. Ellenberger has provided a version of Mofolo's *Chaka* whose richness, rather than tediousness, is demonstrated by the creatively fertile reception it received in the Francophone world.

3. Some Conclusions and the Construction of 'Africanity'

We have been able to pinpoint some major differences in the intratextual elements of Dutton's, Ellenberger's and Kunene's translations. What generally transpires is that Dutton's text seems to be the furthest removed from the source culture while Ellenberger's and Kunene's versions seem closer because less of the cultural content has been omitted which could have been perceived as 'too crude' or 'too foreign' in translation. The fact that Ellenberger's version is culturally rich – despite prejudices born from his idiosyncratic "historical situation"[31] – would have undoubtedly played an immense role in Senghor's deep appreciation of Mofolo's novel. The 'cultural richness' of Ellenberger's version is particularly salient in the number of details that are absent from Dutton's version and, in some instances, from Kunene's translation as well.

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[31] To use Nord's expression here (Nord 1991:40). Ellenberger's socio-cultural context is evidently situated within colonialism and this is expressed in his translation which is not, by any stretch of the imagination, blameless - for instance in his use of the word *Kafirs* and all its derivatives, as has been argued.

The following introductory words to *Translation, History and Culture* (1990) sum up our findings:

> Translation is, of course, a rewriting of the original text. All rewritings, whatever their intention, reflect *a certain ideology and a poetics* and as such manipulate literature to function in a given society in a given way. Rewriting is manipulation, undertaken in the *service of power*, and in its positive aspect can help in the evolution of a literature and a society. […] and the history of translation is the history also of literary innovation, of the *shaping power of one culture upon another* (Bassnett & Lefevere 1990: xi, my emphasis).

The specific 'ideology and poetics' of the three translations of *Chaka* discussed reflect each text's skopos and historical situation. By changing the function of *Chaka* through a translation aimed at a British/colonial English-speaking public or African school kids of the colonies, Dutton altered the text greatly, resulting in an inter-cultural communication that could only have been false on some level, because of a loss of authentic imagery and a certain distortion (or exclusion) of the original cultural content. In a postcolonial (and post-négritude) historical situation, there was a growing need for a translation that would remedy, in the English speaking world, what could be considered as a text undertaken in the service of power.

Regardless of this, Dutton is to be appreciated if only because by translating the novel into English he remedied a period of six year when *Chaka* was inaccessible to non-Sotho speakers and contributed to the text's success in the Anglophone world.

French-speaking readers, for their part, had to await a further nine years for Ellenberger's translation. Although written in a time and space closer to that of Dutton's (preceding Kunene's by forty-one years), this version is much closer in content to Mofolo's original. Ellenberger succeeded in preserving at least some of its function. He did this, to reiterate, by keeping the cultural content as intact as possible and by deliberately attempting to emulate what he called the beauty of the descriptions and the 'piquant' details of indigenous life.

For Nord "a change of function in translation is the normal case whereas the preservation of function is a special case in the process of inter-cultural communication" (Nord 1991:72). Ellenberger's achievement therefore is commendable. That way, despite being so foreign, *Chaka* was culturally accessible to French and Francophone readers without compromising its authenticity and local colour. In my view, the exoticism of *Chaka* (its foreign landscapes, with foreign names, inhabited by foreign people with foreign customs and beliefs, where the flora and fauna is so different etc.), combined with the numerous explicative annotations of Ellenberger's translation, contributed to the fascination and the pleasure it stimulated in the intended French/Francophone audience, resulting in a successful inter-cultural communication that in turn inspired further literary productions.

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Ricard explains that the time of his writing, Mofolo's world was losing itself to written Christian culture and in this context, *Chaka* served to look back at the Africa of the past in order to reflect on its direction in the future.[32]

In looking at the above-mentioned translations of *Chaka*, my arguments showed that Dutton, Ellenberger and Kunene offered re-writings of Mofolo's *Chaka* insofar as they each chose, for varying and individual reasons, to keep or omit certain aspects of Mofolo's original. Hence, the poststructuralist concept of textuality, namely that all texts are, in the end, incomplete[33] and thus open to re-inscription is indubitably applicable to *Chaka*. Looking at the three translations discussed in this part of the analysis has opened up the platform for evaluating the cultural, political and literary impact of the writings and rewritings of the text in the Southern African and Francophone worlds.

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To what extent, then, do the different translations of the text contributed to the creation of diverging images of Africa and 'Africanity'?

Dutton's representation of 'the Dark Continent' in his translation is not so much reprehensible as it is illustrative of a culture-specific construction and commonly accepted image of Africa in the European imagination. Very basically, this image is an imperial one: Chaka may have been a great warrior but his greatness is tainted by the savagery of his circumstances, his pagan world and the eerie power of witchcraft.

[32] This comment appears in the preface to the French translation of Fynn's diary due for imminent publication and kindly forwarded to me by the author.
[33] This concept is extracted from Venuti's discussion of Derrida's concept of *différance* in his introduction to *Rethinking Translation: Discourse, subjectivity and Ideology* (Venutti 1992:6-11)

Ellenberger's translation lies, it seems, at the other end of the spectrum: his vision is almost that of the altruistic anthropologist who attempts to present Mofolo's text as faithfully as possible. He still translates, however, without thrusting aside all of his cultural prejudices. As demonstrated, the French translation of *Chaka* is full of local colour, of descriptions and anthropological and ethnological notes *added* to the original. These additions give the French text a sort of authenticity that stretches beyond the confines of Lesotho and the Zulu cultural landscape into a generic (and to some extent idyllic) vision of Africa which remarkably echoes that of the négritudinists, Senghor's in particular. Yet, Ellenberger's translation was not published post-négritude but coincided with the birth of the Négritude mouvement.[34]

A third perspective of Africa also emerges here. It is a self-reflecting one and begins with Mofolo's novel but continues (or re-starts?) some thirty years after *Chaka*'s publication, through its Francophone adaptations which were all at least influenced by Senghorian Négritude. Senghor's ontology of Négritude is based on the need and desire to 'return' to a forgotten and idealised Africa:

> Mais "se revendiquer comme noir", c'est moins cette négation hautaine que l'affirmation de soi dans l'authenticité. Il est question d'un « retour au pays natal »[35] de « l'Enfant prodigue », d'une descente aux abîmes de l'âme noire ou, pour employer le mot de passe, de la *Négritude* (Senghor 1964 :135).

[34] As we know, the translation was published in 1940. The term *Négritude* was used, for the first time, in 1939 by Césaire in his famous poem *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* (1936-1938).

[35] This expression is, of course, borrowed from the title of Aimé Césaire's poem mentioned above. Here, in Senghor's mouth – this is a transcript from a 1952 conference address, "pays natal" refers to the place of birth, the source, Africa in all its pre-colonial glory which includes forgotten great heroes and warriors in its history, such as Shaka for instance.

> [But to claim one's Blackness is not a haughty negation but, rather, the affirmation of one's authenticity. It is about the return to one's native land, the return of the prodigal son, a descent into the abyss of the black soul or, to use the buzz word of the moment, the descent into one's *Négritude*.][36]

In Stephen Gray's words:

> In short, Mofolo's *Chaka* traveled in the way printed books do travel […]. Through French and Igbo translations, as Dorothy S. Blair has noted exhaustively (Blair,1974), it was the source of a good deal of *négritude*'s finest Black consciousness-raising literature, predominantly in dramatic form, in French West Africa. Leopold Sedar Senghor, poet president of Senegal, took out of Mofolo just the Black Africanness that the English literary establishment ignored (Gray 1975:67).

The idea of 'service of power' mentioned by Bassnett and Lefevere in their preface is not restricted, in my view, to the power of the target culture but should be understood as a binary dynamic force. In effect, Ellenberger's translation worked in the service of power of Sotho literature and Zulu history and because of this, or in concordance with this, it was read by African Francophone writers, (such as Senghor and Seydou Badian Kouyaté, to name only two), in a way that allowed them to rewrite their own versions, with their own ideological and cultural agendas. Through this translation, more than any other of *Chaka* discussed in this chapter, "the shaping power of one culture upon another" is expressed in its Francophone adaptations.

[36] My translation.

Part III: The Texts: *Chaka*, Négritude and Francophonie

Chapter 6 – Senghor's Choice

1. Introduction

Senghor's *Chaka* is the first published literary version of *Chaka* in French. As already underlined, Senghor's initial inspiration when he read Mofolo's novel was, in his own words, political. This is where, in my view, Senghor has been misunderstood by many critics. His choosing Chaka as the hero of his famous poem was criticised for being inappropriate (Chaka being a bloodthirsty tyrant) by some[1] or disrespectful by others (Jouanny 1997:39). Senghor's choice was, in reality, a dual political act. He decided on 'Chaka' as an emissary for black emancipation while concurrently choosing Mofolo's *telling* of Shaka/Chaka's story. For these reasons, and no doubt in recognition of his debt to Mofolo, Senghor begins *Chaka* with a dedication that reads, in capital letters, "AUX MARTYRS BANTU DE L'AFRIQUE DU SUD" ['To the Bantu martyrs of South Africa'].[2]

Mofolo's intentions in telling his story were not dissimilar to those of Senghor in re-telling the story. Senghor's recognition of *Chaka*'s Négritude included, even if only

[1] Jouanny makes the pertinent remark that Senghor's *Chaka* was indeed published very soon after the war. For him, it is obvious that Senghor's choice would have shocked some: Senghor had always been the poet of peace, love and respect for others. Unexpectedly he was recalling and defending a nineteenth century bloody king to defend him, shortly after Hitler's time in power, when the legacy of his dominion still resonated very strongly in Europe (Jouanny 1997:90).

[2] All English translations of quotations from Senghor's poem are from John Reed and Clive Wake's translation of *Chaka* in *Léopold Sédar Senghor: Prose & Poetry* (1965). Similarly, all English quotations of Mofolo's novel are from Kunene's 1981 translation.

through intellectual intuition, the recognition of its author's purpose and worldview as thoroughly African.

In fact, the very idea of their common intellectual and artistic ground even if, indeed, that ground is physically and temporally so vast, is central to Senghor's concept of Négritude. Janet G. Vaillant highlights the importance of the common experience by noting that the "theme of separation, internal fracture and the search for wholeness" adds a sombre dimension to Senghor's first collection of poems, *Chants d'ombre* but that, as he explored these divisions within himself (the divisions stemming from "being a black man in a white man's world") he was "comforted by knowing that his experience was shared by men like Césaire and Maran, as well as by men who had lived before him and whom he knew only through their writings […]" (Vaillant 1990:133-134). This comfort is one of the embryonic premises to Senghorian Négritude which could, very simply, be defined, as Senghor himself did years later as "the sum total of the qualities possessed by all black men everywhere" (Vaillant 1990: 244). Valliant's illustrative example in her argument here is how Senghor was astonished to discover a kinship with Dr W. E. B. Du Bois who was very far removed from Senghor's own circumstances. Although Du Bois' writing were more scholarly and addressed a younger Senghor's preoccupations more directly, there is no doubt Senghor also felt a literary kinship with Mofolo, which will be demonstrated through a close reading of his poem.

Firstly however, in order to elucidate Senghor's choice and highlight his artistic and political appreciation of Mofolo and his work, I will focus on biographical elements of Senghor's life which are relevant in reading his *Chaka*.

Senghor would have read Ellenberger's version anytime between its year of publication (1940) and the year of publication of his own version (1951), so the 1940s is a particularly crucial period in our contextualising of Senghor's intellectual and personal situation leading up to the production and publication of his *Chaka*. I will also contextualise Senghor's reading and re-writing of Mofolo's story within his own intellectual life and within the historical context of black consciousness at that time. Lastly, I will offer an insight into Senghor's (evolving) theoretical enunciation of Négritude and a short definition of it from a thematic and stylistic point of view, before tackling the illustration of Négritude in practice through the analysis of Mofolo's and Senghor's *Chaka*(s) in the following chapter.

2. *The Beginnings*

Senghor's rich intellectual legacy, his longevity and pioneering quality as the first black African to have held many prestigious French accolades such as the *agrégation* and, later in life, a membership to the *Académie Française* have often meant that, in studying his personal and intellectual life journey, one is confronted by a plethora of documentation, stories and most of all opinions which make it extremely difficult to paint an objective portrait of the man. In *Black, French and African: A Life of Léopold Sédar Senghor* (1990), Janet Vaillant offers the scholar of Senghor and Négritude the most thorough and consistent biographical reference on the poet-president whose political and artistic fame have given him mythical status in Francophone cultural history. Because of Vaillant's enduring ability to offer a biography that is factual and well-documented but

also strewn with collected anecdotes and comments from Senghor and those who knew him, her biography will serve as a main reference for the following discussion.

Léopold Sédar Senghor was born in 1906, exactly 100 years ago, in Joal, a small town off the coast of the French territory of Senegal, which he immortalised in an eponymous poem in his first collection of verse – *Chants d'ombre* (1945). Although he spent his early years in Djilor, 20 kilometres inland, Joal was, for Senghor, the 'kingdom of childhood', his prototypical African village where the nights around the fire listening to the griots came to epitomise, for the poet, the essence of Africa. In the words of Case:[3]

> [Senghor's] richest verse, mostly composed to be set to traditional West African instruments, expresses his desire to return to his native village that he has left so far behind:[4]
>
> [Tokô Waly mon oncle, te souviens-tu des nuits de jadis quand s'appesantissait ma tête sur ton dos de patience?
> Ou que me tenant par la main, ta main me guidait par ténèbres et signes ?
> […]
> C'est le silence alentour.
> Seuls bourdonnent les parfums de la brousse, ruches d'abeilles rousses qui dominent la vibration grêle des grillons
> Et tam-tam voilé, la respiration au loin de la Nuit.
> (« Que m'accompagnent kôras et balafong », *Chants d'ombre*, Senghor 1984 :36)]

[3] In brackets, I will include Senghor's original version in French before quoting the English translation as it is found in Case's text.
[4] Senghor spent his early adulthood in France.

Toko'Waly my uncle, do you remember those distant nights when my head grew heavy against the patience of your back?
Or holding me by the hand, your hand led me through the shadows and signs?
[…]
All around is silence.
Only the droning scents of the bush, hives of red bees drowning the stridulation of the crickets
And the muffled tom-tom, the far-off breathing of the night.

('For Koras and Balafong' in *Chants d'ombre*)

Then at the end of the very beautiful poem 'Joal' which is also in the collection *Chants d'ombre* we read the striking stanza:

[Je me rappelle, je me rappelle…
Ma tête rythmant
Quelle marche lasse le long des jours d'Europe où parfois
Apparaît un jazz orphelin qui sanglote sanglote sanglote.
(« Joal », *Chants d'ombre*, Senghor 1984:16)]

I remember, I remember…
In my head the rhythm of the tramp tramp
So wearily down the days of Europe where there comes,
Now and then a little orphaned jazz that goes sobbing, sobbing, sobbing.

It is particularly in this first collection of his poems that the nostalgic note is struck although it is also evident in the later collections of verse (Case 1975: 67).[5]

[5] Case does not acknowledge the translator(s) of these particular excerpts here and only gives page references to Senghor's *Chants d'ombre*.

Vaillant's relates the following story of Senghor's birth in Joal:

> At that [moment of his birth], according to a tale now told by the Senghor family, a large baobab tree near the town cracked and fell to the ground. The great spirit that had inhabited the tree had identified a new person in whom to dwell. This story is now a secure part of family tradition. When it begun to be told, however, is not sure. It suggests some of the difficulty of shifting the facts from the myths about this remarkable man (Vaillant 1990:5).

The story of the baobab is important insofar as it poetically illustrates the richness of the cradle that nurtured, from early on, the complexity of thought and feeling of this great African intellectual. Senghor was born to a Catholic family which was still very strongly rooted in its traditions: although Senghor's father Diogoye – which means 'lion' in Serer – went to church "and so showed respect to the Christian God", he stayed loyal to his roots and the traditions of his people; he had several wives and believed in "the older gods of his family" (Vaillant 1990:11). Sacred snakes and lizards, baobab-dwelling spirits and ancestors who were honoured each year with cattle sacrifices (Vaillant 1990:12) inhabited Senghor's daily existence as he was growing up.

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Like Mofolo, Senghor's schooling was done at missionary school. In 1914, when he was seven years old, Senghor was sent to Ngazobil, six kilometres north of Joal, to

board at a mission school run by the Fathers of the Holy Spirit (Vaillant 1990:20). Vaillant relates the history of the mission thus:

> In 1914 Ngazobil was a fine jewel of the missionary crown. It was the model and outpost of the order of the Fathers of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit Order had been founded before the French revolution. In 1848 it had allied itself with an order founded by Father Libermann expressly to serve black people in Africa. He urged the missionaries "to be black with the blacks in order to win them for Jesus Christ" (Vaillant 1990:20).

Despite a mixed experience with the Fathers that run the School – with some being purportedly open-minded while others were openly racist – Senghor became "a pious child, turned towards the Church" and even destined himself to priesthood (Vaillant 1990:24).

At the time of Senghor's schooling, the French colonial administration was changing its educational policy to have the medium of instruction changed from Wolof, the dominant language in Senegal, to French. In Vaillant's words:

> Most Africans in the schools gained only a superficial understanding of French, and with it a thin cultural veneer. Nonetheless, a very small group, destined to become the elite of the colony, developed emotional and cultural ties to France, that reinforced the colonial, political ones. For this group, including Sédar Senghor, France's educational policy was a success, for it did bind them to France. They came to love the French language and culture, but they also suffered from living in two separate worlds […] (Vaillant 1990:22).

Despite the similitude of their early experience and education, Senghor and Mofolo's circumstances were widely different for obvious reasons. Senghor was, after all, a colonial subject who was assimilated into French culture for which his appreciation would be lifelong and central to his intellectual endeavours. Senghor always wrote in French. Understandably, he was often confronted with this fact but always answered that French was a language that enabled him to express himself better, because it had become the language of his thoughts and because it gave him a vaster scope of expression. It reached not only his people but all French people alike, thus giving his message a much desired universality.[6] Mofolo, on the other hand, was a Sotho subject, with very few ties to England for which Lesotho was no more than a protectorate annexed at the request of Moshoeshoe who needed protection from the encroaching Boers. Their colonial administration of the territory differed, hence, quite drastically from the French in Senegal.

However, Mofolo and Senghor shared the same difficulties with regards to the intrusion of 'the West' in their traditional way of life. Through historical circumstances and because they were Africans, both writers had to, evidently, deal with conflicting forces that they embraced with equal loyalty and admiration: the Christian and Western

[6] The issue of language is an important arena of polemic amongst African intellectuals with similar concerns and desires for a cultural emancipation from western dominance. Whereas Senghor does not see his embracing of the French culture and language – which for him are as much his culture and language as his Serer roots – others, such as Ngugi wa Thiong'o sees this choice (or lack of it) as the ultimate cultural subservience and a total negation of any effort to liberate the 'black man' from his colonial chains. In *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (1986) Ngugi wa Thiong'o speaks of language as inseparable from its community of human beings with its specific form and character, history and idiosyncratic relationship to the world and that as such, the literature of this particular community must exist in its own language (wa Thiong'o 1986:5). This statement carries a strong message to (and criticism of) writers such as Senghor. As much as Senghor, however, Ngugi has sought the recognition of the specificity of a common 'black' culture. For Ngugi however, this specificity is encapsulated in language and he therefore argues that a writer can only truly express his specificity in his native language, failing which he only bows to the colonialist means of cultural control: that of the imposed use of the canon language.

worlds and the rapidly disappearing African traditional worldview. I am not suggesting that their individual experiences were as binary in nature as it may seem from my comment. Obviously, both Senghor and Mofolo had to grapple with varying and complex expressions of the two main cultures to which they belonged. This paradoxical experience however is the strongest link between the two authors and the one Senghor related to the most powerfully in Mofolo's writing.

3. The First Black French Man

Senghor's graduated from the lycée of Dakar[7] in 1928. Vaillant relates the graduation ceremony from information gathered in interviews, including one of a future student of the school, Abdoulaye Ly:

> The awarding of prizes was the crowning event of the day. That year, Sédar Senghor won every prize offered by the school: not only the academic prize in each subject but also the prize for the outstanding student. This price was presented by Governor General Carde himself. Sédar had matched the standard set by Hélène.[8] His sweeping triumph over all the French students gave rise to a legend passed on to subsequent African students about a black boy from the bush who had beaten out all the whites (Vaillant 1990:61).

[7] This lycée (or high school) gave a handful of African children the first opportunity for a high standard French education in West Africa by becoming public – after the colonial administration took charge of its financement – in 1925 (Vaillant 1990:58-59).

[8] Hélène was René Senghor's (one of Diogoye's sons and Senghor's half brother) young wife with whom he had moved to Ngazobil. Senghor found a kindred spirit in his sister-in-law whom he admired and with whom he spent much time when in Ngazobil.

Having watched Senghor's progress, Vaillant continues, the school director, Aristide Prat, had become convinced of his extraordinary mind and successfully helped the young Senghor to get a scholarship to study literature in France, the first of its kind to be awarded to a black African (Vaillant 1990:61-62). That year, as Senghor turned twenty-one, he sailed off for Paris, the centre of metropolitan France, which he knew so well on many levels and yet not at all. Senghor then attended the illustrious lycée Louis-le-Grand where he entered a special class in preparation for the exam of the École Normale Supérieure, "the most rigorous of all French academic competitions" as Vaillant says (Vaillant 1990:68). In 1930, a new student, George Pompidou, entered Louis-le-Grand. Senghor and Pompidou became lifelong friends and, almost 40 years later, each became president of their respective (and independent) countries. Importantly, during those difficult times of adjustment, Pompidou gave Senghor his appreciation for Paris which had, for the first two years of his stay, been a dark, wet and foreign land to him (Vaillant 1990:73-74).

The early years in Paris were thus a mixed experience for Senghor. Despite being a product of the French policy of assimilation, Senghor was still considered a native from the colonies and for that, he was treated differently. He himself felt different in France, "I speak its language well, but with what a barbarous accent!" Vaillant quotes him saying (Vaillant 1990:86).[9] As is always the case with Senghor's gift with words, this sentence says it all.

Paris at that time was a real hubbub of intellectual and cultural activity, a place where the elite of *le monde noir* ('black people') converged to discover their difference and to begin claiming their rightful place in the world. The 20s had been the decade of

[9] In *Liberté* I (1964), a collection of essays, interviews and speeches published by the Éditions du Seuil.

the *vogue nègre* in Paris, epitomised by a striking Josephine Baker ironically clad in nothing but a skirt of bananas. It was the decade of the birth of cubism inspired to Picasso by '*l'art nègre*' (Negro Art), a time when jazz and blues notes streamed onto every sidewalk of the French capital. Importantly, Paris was the stage for the beginnings of a Francophone black consciousness awakening, inspired primarily by the Harlem Renaissance.

In 1922, *The Book of American Negro Poetry* was published and edited by James Weldon Johnson. This anthology was the first gathering of Negro verse ever handled by a major U.S publisher and had the particular interest of including a 42 page preface – "an essay" really – on the creative genius of the 'black man' in which its author, Johnson, hoped to "provide overwhelming proof of the vitality, modernity, and historical depth of black expressive culture" (Edwards 2003:45). Even if Johnson's preface would have certainly focused on problems specific to African Americans in the United States, such works as his or Alain Lock's *The New Negro* were being read with great interest by black intellectuals living in Paris (Edwards 2003:50). "*The New Negro* was a scholar's look at the black writing and research of the Harlem Renaissance, as its title was chosen to call attention to a remarkable new departure. […] The concept of the New Negro with pride in himself and his heritage, determined to create his own culture, appealed immediately to Senghor" (Vaillant 190:94). Metropolitan France was becoming, in the 20s, "one of the key places where African Americans, Antilleans, and Africans were able to 'link up'" intellectually and culturally (Edwards 2003:3). Edwards continues:

> Many of the black [American] literati invested, in one way or another in the notion of Harlem as a worldwide black culture capital, and yet many of

> them came to view Paris as a special place for black transnational interaction, exchange and dialogue. For African American intellectuals in particular, as Tyler Stovall phrases it, the role of Paris "was both fascinating and deeply ironic. After all, the city was the seat of one of the world's great colonial empires, a place where anonymous French officials supervised the subjugation of millions of black Africans…Outside of Marseilles, London, and some other British cities, one could not find a more diverse black population in Europe. More so than in the United States, even New York, African Americans found that in Paris the abstract ideal of worldwide black unity and culture became a tangible reality" (Edwards 2003:5).[10]

So, at the time of Senghor's French beginnings, Paris had become one of the world's centres for black creative and political activity. We have mentioned Senghor's early difficulties with adjusting to his Parisian life. Given his circumstances, Senghor found solace in his friendships with other black 'exiles' in the city, African or Antilleans, with whom he shared the common experience of being assimilated intellectually but discriminated against racially. In fact, it is out of these difficulties and through such solidarity that the Négritude movement was born in the 1930s.

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In 1935, Senghor passed his *agrégé* exam and was now the first black African to hold the prestigious title that "professors and ambitious French parents considered synonymous with intellectual superiority" (Vaillant 1990: 107). The same year, Senghor,

[10] Edwards cites Tyler Stovall from *Paris Noir: African Americans in the City of Light* (1996:90) publiched by Houghton Miffin.

who was at the time the president of the West African Student Association, published his first article in the magazine *L'Étudiant Noir* (The Black Student) which he co-founded with Damas and Césaire – then president of the Martiniquan Student Association. *L'Étudiant Noir* was intended to be a sort of survival guide for black Francophone students living in France. The birth of *L'Étudiant Noir* marks the beginning of a long and restless fight for its founders to engage actively in the cultural and political liberation of black people around the world. Concerning his role in the movement which was to emerge from this early endeavour, Senghor commented that, because Césaire was naturally focused on fighting against West Indian assimilation, he had assigned himself the task, as the only African founder of the journal, to concentrate on analysing and exalting the traditional values of black Africa (Kesteloot 1967:78).

Vaillant stresses the importance of the magazine – of which only one issue was ever printed:

> *L'Étudiant Noir* is important for several reasons. First of all, it represents a clear decision by a group of young students to continue in the direction of *La Revue du Monde Noir*, rather than in that of the politically oriented and Marxist-inspired *Légitime Défense.*[11] Its editors chose to stress the unity of all blacks, and to focus on cultural issues. It is also important because of the central figures of the later Négritude group, Senghor, Césaire and Damas, were involved in its organization and planning. It was here that Sédar Senghor published his first article, and it was here that he tentatively

[11] *La Revue du Monde Noir* was founded in 1931 and devoted itself entirely to cultural matters. Its inspiration was the new outlook of Antillean and African writers who were first touching on the issue of racial solidarity and treating characteristically racial themes in literature, poetry in particular (Vaillant 1990:95-96). *Légitime Défense* was published in 1932, a few months after the collapse of *La Revue du Monde Noir* by students "who were tired of what they called the moderation and superficiality of the review" (Vaillant 1990:98).

> set out for the first time the themes that were to preoccupy him for much of his life. He had reached the moment when after reading the work of others and discussing his views with friends, he was ready to express his own point of view in print (Vaillant 1990:108).

4. The 1940s

On the eve of the Second World War, Senghor's first position after graduation took him to a high school in Tours where he taught Classics. During that time, Senghor begun studying ethnography on his own and, although it is "ironic that he had to turn to the works of European ethnographers to learn about his own culture" (Vaillant 1990:119), reading Maurice Delafosse[12] and Leo Frobenius[13] contributed in heightening his insight into the issues that would be pivotal in his creative writing and theoretical enunciation of Négritude.

Senghor realised, during that time, that he had internalised *both* his African and French upbringings. For him, the balance between the two was more even than for many others and, as his early poetry shows, a vital element of his work was concerned with resolving this "problem of twoness" (Vaillant 1990:133). According to Vaillant, in order

[12] Delafosse is a French ethnographer who traveled extensively in Africa. His writings were widely available in France and some had even been published as excerpts in *La Revue du Monde Noir*. He wrote the first book on the story of the great empires of Ghana and Mali. His interest in Africa also included contemporary issues about the continent and its colonisers. Delafosse opposed, for instance, France's large-scale conscription of black troops – such as the famous "*Tirailleurs Sénégalais*' of whom more than 200 000 were mobilized during World War I – to fight its war (Vaillant 1990:121-122).

[13]The German ethnologist greatly influenced Senghor's racial/cultural theories. Senghor adopted, as his main line of argument, Frobenius' division between Africa and Europe based essentially on emotion. This theory inspired Senghor's preference for "the emotionality of the Negro over the rationality of the European" (Mezu 1968: 43) for which he was accused of perpetrating adopted European stereotypes.

to deal with the difficulties of this realisation, Senghor built himself a "protective wall", with images of African power, in his creative writing (Vaillant 1990:137).

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Then the "war cut across Senghor's life as it did across all of France." (Vaillant1990: 166). In 1939, Senghor was called up for service. According to Vaillant, he took the news with a sense of relief seeing his mobilisation as a respite from the exhausting "growing militancy [he felt] about Négritude with his continued love of French culture" (Vaillant 1990: 166).

In 1940, Senghor's unit was put into a prisoner-of-war-camp (Vaillant 1990:166). Senghor's time in the camp was, perhaps paradoxically, an enriching experience for the budding poet. There, Senghor spent much of his time with recruits mobilised straight from Africa and, between renewing contact with his compatriots and evenings of story telling and poetry recitals, he wrote many of the poems that make up his second collection entitled *Hosties noires* published in 1948 (Vaillant 1990 171). *Hosties noires* is undoubtedly Senghor's most militant collection of verse where themes of pan-Africanism and the poet's strongest attacks on the French colonial system dominate.

The "Christological nature"[14] of Senghor's metaphors which become leitmotiv in most of his writing, and as illustrated in *Chaka*, is strongly apparent in the collection. As Vaillant pertinently emphasises:

[14] This expression is used by Nespoulous-Neuville in her study of Senghor's poetry entitled *Listen to Africa, a Call from L S Senghor* (1999). It is a useful term, in my view, in describing a certain idiosyncratic quality in Senghor's poetry that combines the treatment of African themes with Christian analogies.

> The very title *Hosties noires* was carefully chosen for its double meaning. It can be translated in English in two ways, either as "black victims" or as "black hosts" – hosts in the sense of the sacrificial host of the Catholic Communion. The title suggests therefore that black people have been both victims and sacrifices for European causes (Vaillant 1990:172).

Vaillant continues:

> In *Hosties noires* the poet is no longer the searcher of the *Chants d'ombre* poems. In this second collection, the poet has begun to live his vocation, and to serve, as he vowed he would, as the trumpet of his people. It is on behalf of the Tirailleurs that he writes, of those killed at Thiaroye,[15] on behalf of the African host devoured in sacrifice, and on behalf of Africa's suffering, which, like the suffering of Christ, can yet be redemptive (Vaillant 1990:175).

Although he was intellectually *engagé*, Senghor had not been much interested in actually becoming a politician. Yet, he had "written with enthusiasm about the capacity of a single leader to shape the fate of an entire people" (Vaillant 1990:201) – much like Shaka the historical King and Chaka his poetic hero – and if he was going to be 'the trumpet of his people', active participation in the great political changes of the times was unavoidable.

[15] The massacre at Thiaroye is perhaps one of the most heinous crimes committed by the French colonial administration against its African subjects. On the 1st of December 1944, about 40 (reports of the exact number vary greatly from one source to another) Tirailleurs were massacred during their sleep in a small town called Thiaroye where they were waiting to be demobilized after having fought at the front in Europe. The reason for their killing was a dispute that arose due to the African soldiers' inferior treatment – such as, in particular, lower wages than their white counterparts.

At the end of the war, the provisional government set up a commission to decide how France's overseas colonies should be represented in the upcoming Constituent Assembly (Vaillant 1990:195). The 'Monnerville Comission' (thus called after its chairman) was Senghor's first political post, which brought him back home after a long physical, intellectual and emotional exile.

Vaillant tells us that "Senghor was now perhaps the single most respected spokesman in Africa living in Paris. He was a published poet with a book, *Chants d'ombre*, in press, and was sought out by editors for authoritative articles on black Africa and colonial education" (Vaillant 1990:196).

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By 1948, Senghor had been juggling many interests and commitments simultaneously. While now seeking to come out of Lamine Guèye's[16] shadow, he also remained energetically active in the literary world: *Hosties noires* was in press and he was involved in setting up *Présence Africaine*, a publishing house with its own cultural journal[17] to be edited by Alioune Diop, whom he had met during the war. Gide, Camus, Sartre and Wright were amongst the eminent intellectuals that were convinced to contribute. Senghor's patronage of the journal was the first step in the evolution of his intellectual commitments from the cultural to the more political. Through the medium of *Présence Africaine*, Senghor insisted on the importance of the cultural independence of

[16] Guèye was Senegal's senior leadership figure at the time and became Senghor's mentor during his first years in the political arena. Later, he was to be his greatest political rival.
[17] The idea was that each edition of the journal would appear in both French and English, so as to reach a greater readership.

the 'black man' and Africans in particular. He would also come to realise, and gradually articulate, the idea that politics is but one aspect of culture in general.

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Senghor's varied industriousness during this time reveals another aspect of 'twoness' in his life: was he to be a politician or a poet? Clearly his first love was literature but his situation, his own identity and personal dilemmas could not be dissociated from politics. He had become a Frenchman but he was still black and African. His kingdom of childhood was still subjugated by the culture he so admired. He was left with no choice.

Just as Chaka, in his eponymous poem, awaits death to free him from the constant pull between his love for Noliwe[18] (his personal desires) and that of his 'black skinned people' (his political obligations and sacrifices), Senghor would battle with similar dichotomies. Evidently, in the poem (written at around this time of Senghor's life), Senghor merges his own struggles with the story of the Zulu nation-builder. Chaka becomes a very personal hero for Senghor: he, in fact, becomes the poet-politician. In *Chaka*, many of the mentions of the hero, by his own people, are of him as a poet. As Chaka's death nears, the Leader of the Chorus announces that "Le poème est mûr au jardin d'enfance, c'est l'heure de l'amour" (127) ["The poem is ripe in the garden of childhood, it is time for love" (149)]. The Leader of the Chorus then praises Chaka thus:

[18] Noliwe is Reed and Wake's spelling in their translation of Senghor's poem. Her name is 'Noliwa' in Kunene's translation of Mofolo's novel and 'Nolivé' in Ellenberger's – which is the spelling used by Senghor in his original text. When mentioning her in our discussion, however, I will use Noliwe unless I specifically refer to Mofolo's text and unless quoting directly from a text, in which case I will keep the author's preferred orthography.

"L'amant de la Nuit aux cheveux d'étoiles filantes, le créateur des paroles de vie/Le poète du Royaume d'enfance" (Senghor 1984:130) ["Lover of the night with her hair of shooting stars, creator of the words of life/Poet of the Kingdom of childhood"] to which the Chorus answers: "Bien mort le politique, et vive le Poète!" (Senghor 1984:130) ["Let the politician die and the Poet live!" (Senghor 1965:152)].

It was during this time that Senghor broke away from Guèye and the SFIO (his party) to continue his political career on his terms. He founded his own party, the BDS, whose insignia, representing a lion against a green background, is symbolically important:

> The lion, as a symbol of courage, loyalty and strength, held special for Senghor, as it was also the emblem of his father, Diogoye (The Lion) Senghor. Senghor's loyalty to his ancestors was confirmed. He would fight for Senegal under the banner of his father. The color green, too, was a felicitous choice. If for the Christian Senghor green was the color of hope, for the vast majority of Senegalese who were Muslim it symbolized militant faith. For the animists green represented youth and force, and for everyone it suggested new growth after the long dry season that is often the scourge of Senegal. […] Right from the beginning then Senghor's party understood *the power of symbolic expression* […] (Vaillant 1990:235, my emphasis).

Senghor's poetical expression of his political outlook is reflected in the BTS' insignia just as the political nature of his poetical expression cannot be marginalised in the study of his verses, as will be plainly evident in our reading of *Chaka*.

Senghor's political involvement importantly meant – and this becomes central to his poetry of the time such as it demonstrated by the poems contained in *Ethiopiques* (1956) where *Chaka* figures – a reconnection of the poet with his people and their needs, with Senegal in particular and Africa in general.

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The man who was to be elected the first president of independent Senegal in January 1961 campaigned through the country, building electoral support and at the same time reconnecting with the common people, what Vaillant calls a "triumphant pilgrimage home" (Vaillant 1990:237), an image which I find particularly suited to Senghor's syncretism. Also, Senghor political activity is strongly reflected in his creative writing of the time as has already been mentioned with regards to *Chaka*. Another instance would be the poem *Messages* – also in *Ethiopiques* – which paints the portrait of Senghor sitting under a baobab tree, in conversation with the elders (Vaillant 1990:235).

However, his literary activity was not limited to writing personal poetry and Senghor was also politically involved in writing. In 1949 he started the newspaper *La condition humaine* which was published in Senegal. *La condition humaine*, which might as well have been called '*la condition africaine*', focuses on literary and educational issues related to Africa and the black world in general. The newspaper, stresses Vaillant, included articles on African culture and poems from eminent writers such as Césaire, Diop and Léro. It was aimed for the "worldwide community of black men who shared the unique and distinctive culture of Négritude", presenting its readers with examples of its

expression and suggesting a self-awareness through poetry and literature (Vaillant 1990: 224-226). Significantly, the impact of *La condition humaine* on Senegalese youth paved the path for an overwhelming strong political support for Senghor whose own political perspective was increasingly based on his definition of Négritude.

Vaillant describes Senghor's influence on his countrymen at the time:

> The men […] no longer thought of their own culture as something to be left behind as quickly as possible […]. Senghor shared and indeed had helped shape these views […]. Many of Senegal's young intellectuals were […] proponents of Négritude long before they heard the word (Vaillant 1990:233).

This time period, in which Senghor wrote *Chaka*, was undoubtedly vital in shaping the author's intellectual, political and artistic maturing. All these qualities form, in the Senegalese writer and intellectual, an often indivisible heterogeneous whole which cannot be dissociated from either his life or work.

5. Négritude: A Short Definition, its Themes and Style

Senghor has famously defined Négritude as '*l'ensemble des valeurs de la civilisation du monde noir*' – the sum-total of the values of the black world. This means a turning back to and a rediscovery of African values, African art and culture, so that Négritude (the fact of being *nègre* – negro/black) becomes a reason to be proud, thus reversing the long-established associations of shame and discrimination that had been coupled with Blackness. Accordingly, Négritude aimed at trapping the coloniser with his

own logic to reverse the damages he had caused (Orizet 1988:623). Since the 'black man' is oppressed because of his race, he must first recognise his race and free himself from the slavery of his appearance, a task that Senghor best conveys in his poetry, whose objective, as Mezu points out, becomes the illustration of Négritude (Mezu 1973: 136). We will see, for instance, that Blackness in *Chaka* – and in particular Chaka's own Blackness – is a major theme and that it is synonymous with beauty and power.

Frantz Fanon best articulates the point of reclaiming once Blackness positively when he states, in the first person: "There are two ways out of this conflict. Either I ask others to pay no attention to my skin, or else, I want them to be aware of it" (Fanon 1995: 323).[19]

Following this line of thought (even though Négritude precedes this comment chronologically), Négritude invites the 'black man' to reclaim his Blackness and to use the word *nègre* – which has come to symbolise years of discrimination, subjugation and alienation for millions of colonised black people – as an instrument of cultural emancipation and liberation.

Jean Rous tells us that Senghor has repeatedly defined and re-defined his concept of Négritude as a method of *negro-African* knowledge (Rous 1967: 94). Effectively, Senghor speaks of the desire for a return to traditional African values, for the search for a black *raison d'être* in its most literal meaning and for the need to (re)create a black cultural identity as "the quest for the *Graal-négritude*" (Senghor 1964:83).[20] The concept of *Graal-négritude* entails an idea that is in constant evolution in defining itself and what

[19] Fanon is quoted from 'The Fact of Blackness' in *The Post-colonial Studies Reader* (1995).
[20] Senghor says this in 'Le Message de Goethe aux Nègres-Nouveaux', written for the UNESCO's celebration of the 200th anniversary of Goethe's birth in 1949. It is quoted here from *Liberté I: Négritude et Humanisme* (1964).

its implications. This is why Senghor dedicated his life's theoretical writings as well as his political and literary career to it. Négritude is, furthermore, a new humanism or what Senghor names "*Négritude-Humanisme*". The humanist aspect of Négritude refers to a particular aesthetic because of Négritude's need to express the personality of the '*negro*' with beauty, in order to define it by one of the most humane aspects of the human condition: that of aesthetics (Senghor 1964:108). So Négritude is not just a mode of knowledge but it is also an aesthetic philosophy which has a particular sense of the symbol and of rhythm (Rous 1967:95) – a quality that will be explicated in detail through the textual analysis of *Chaka*.

It is interesting to note at this point that if Senghor's Négritude had at first single-mindedly preoccupied itself with a rejection and a negation of the coloniser, it later tended more towards the affirmation of black values with the ultimate, and somewhat idealistic, goal of a universal fraternity, or, in other words, a universal cultural *hybridity*.

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At the end of the 1984 edition of *Poèmes*, a book that contains Senghor's poetry from *Chants d'ombre* to *Lettres d'hivernage* (his last collection, published in 1973) there is a section entitled *Dialogue sur la poésie Francophone*. In it are articles by French poets and intellectuals writing about Senghor and Négritude as well as a longer one – a reply of sorts – signed by Senghor.

In his reply, 'Lettre à trois poètes de l'Hexagone',[21] Senghor speaks of the influences on his poetry as cultural junctions between his African roots and his French education. He says that as much as Djilôr, Joal and the popular poetesses of his childhood, Hugo, Baudelaire and Rimbaud are some of the French poets that have greatly influenced him, allowing for a the cultural '*métissage*' (syncretism) that he cherishes (Senghor 1984:346). Syncretism is one important aspect of Senghor's Négritude as he seeks a universal cultural hybridity. Senghor's cultural *métissage* permeates his poetry with a constant dichotomous pull between forces that are, sometimes, at great odds with each other. Is the poet to love Soukeîna, the idiosyncratic African woman or Isabelle, her French version? How does Chaka become, in a single poem, the Christ and the lover, the poet and the politician? These dilemmas are, however, what give Senghor's verse not only their beautiful originality but also their intrinsically Négritude-like quality, that of the Graal-négritude of which the never-ending quest is to be done through poetic expression.

Senghor's syncretism, on a stylistic level, is perhaps his most eloquent originality and contribution to Francophone poetry. In discussing Rimbaud, Senghor comes to speak of 'symboles nègres' or black symbols. The way black symbolism in poetry is expressed by Senghor is through 'images analogiques' which are, as he says "complex, ambivalent and multivalent" at once (Senghor 1984:349). These images, of which we will discuss some examples in our reading of *Chaka,* are crucial because they define the essence of Négritude. Senghor says:

[21] This can be translated as 'Letter to three poets from France'. In French Senghor uses the word 'Hexagone' (an expression often used to refer to Metropolitan France) differentiating between French poets from France from French poets from elsewhere, thus cleverly avoiding problematic categorisations – such as not including black poets amongst French poets, for instance.

Comme on le sait, la vie mystique en Afrique noire, qui compte plusieurs degrés, plusieurs initiations, se développe tout au long de la vie. Ces initiations ont pour but ultime l'intégration du monde terrestre dans l'univers cosmique, de l'homme en Dieu. Elles comportent l'enseignement, non seulement des liens entre la terre et l'univers, la créature et son créateur, mais encore des techniques d'intégration de l'un en l'autre. Les instruments de ces techniques d'essentialisation, ce sont les temples et les cérémonies d'initiation avec leurs rituels : paroles, gestes, danses, chants, poèmes etc. Comme l'écrit Alassane Ndaw, « la vie mystique apparaît comme une pratique du symbolisme ». […]. Visiblement, nous avons affaire à un symbolisme d'une richesse foisonnante (Senghor 1984 :350).

Senghor's words could be translated as follows:

As we know, mystical life in black Africa, which has many levels, many initiations, is developed throughout one's existence. The ultimate goal of these initiations is to integrate the earthly realm into the cosmic one, to integrate man in God. These initiations explain the relationship between the earth and the universe, the relationship between the creature and its creator as well as providing the teachings for the integration of the one into the other. Temples and initiation ceremonies provide a way to finding these vital essences through their rituals which include words, gestures, dances, songs and chanting, poems etc. […]. We are thus faced with a symbolism of an implausible richness.

In essence, in seeking the Graal-négritude, literature (through its writing but also its reading) provides Senghor with the appropriate expression to use as a tool for this mystical communion with the cosmos where the essence of Blackness lies.

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When reading Senghor's above-citation, it is not surprising that, for the poet, rhythm is central to his expression and it is further obvious that rhythm in other's writing literally speaks to him.

I believe that when Senghor read Mofolo's *Chaka*, he found all the above qualities embedded in the novel that inspired him. The syncretic aspect of Mofolo's novel surely appealed to Senghor. Kunene speaks of Mofolo's motivation in writing *Chaka* as stemming "from both traditional African and Christian values" (Kunene 1989:110). But *Chaka* is not just a Sotho tale about a Zulu king. It is an African tale, strongly rooted in its culture but also fervently framed within the Christian discourse.

Furthermore, *Chaka* is very much written in the tradition of oral lore, where stories are frequently about the battle of good and evil and where characters become metonymies for vices or virtues – for instance, Noliwa (to use Kunene's spelling) symbolises everything that is good, pure and beautiful in Mofolo's novel whereas Chaka is her moral antithesis, being "the-originator-of-all-things-evil".[22] The idea of a syncretism of African and Christian elements here is concurrent with Senghor's concept

[22] Nonetheless, he is, despite his epithet, a far more complex character than is immediately obvious and in fact, *Chaka*'s great quality is that its main protagonist evolves psychologically during the course of the narrative.

of 'cultural hybridity – métissage universel'. We have seen that Ellenberger's translation of the text kept this quality intact and that way, Mofolo's syncretism undoubtedly struck a cord with Senghor. Burness' words seem to translate the idea:

> "[Mofolo] has succeeded in creating a world, both Christian and African that speaks of the best and noblest instincts in man while recognizing human failings. In this sense we can understand *Chaka* being called a masterpiece, for it belongs among the major works of twentieth century literature" (Burness 1976:23).

6. The (Négritude) Appeal of Mofolo's Chaka

Chaka is a tale with universal appeal because it deals with humanity's noblest instincts and failings. So, on a very basic level, the universal quality of *Chaka* permitted Senghor to understand (and be touched) by what it recognisable to all humans and in all cultures: Chaka's inner struggle. Added to this however, is Chaka as an African hero whose struggle is set in the African context which make Mofolo's novel appealing to proponents of the Négritude movement. In effect, the simple act of *reading* Mofolo constitutes a return to Africa.

Senghor's comment, in a letter to Donald Burness, where he stated that reading Mofolo inspired him in a *personal* and *political* way (Burness 1976:30, emphasis added) is to be understood in the light of the poet's personal circumstances at that time as explicated earlier. Senghor found Chaka's (Mofolo's character) humanity, the story's universality and most of all, the novel's Africanity inspiring because *Chaka* is, first and

foremost, an African novel written by one of the first creative writers of the continent. It is reasonable to propose that Senghor did not simply choose Shaka but that he chose Mofolo just as much.

In his preface to the 1981 Gallimard edition of Ellenberger's translation, Le Clézio says the following of Shaka:

> […] He is the symbol of the greatness and the fall of the Zulu empire. Through his exemplary adventure, he reveals another world where essential truths still exist and, by listening to these words full of force, *we* [here, the readers of Mofolo's text translated by Ellenberger] *recognise our own adventure*" (Le Clézio 1981:9, emphasis added).[23]

If Shaka is a symbol that allows us (whether Le Clézio means us 'French-speaking readers' or perhaps us 'humanity') to take an analogical cognisance of our own history, surely Le Clézio, the great French writer, confirmed with his comment the mythical status of the Zulu king in the French-speaking literary world.

In my view, this mythical quality is older than Le Clézio's comment however. The Francophone myth of Shaka is as old as Senghor's reading of Mofolo's eponymous novel. If, as Senghor states, mythology serves to better illustrate and to give meaning to our internal life,[24] *Chaka* then evidently provided him with that myth. In turn, the meaning Senghor derived from the myth served his personal understanding of Négritude; a Négritude with, at its epicenter, the ultimate African hero and martyr. For the

[23] My translation.
[24] In his own words of Senghor: "La mythologie ne sert qu'à illustrer, mieux: à signifier la vie intérieure" (Senghor 1964:190) – my translation.

Senegalese poet, Chaka the hero of Mofolo's novel (from which stemmed the personal inspiration) and Shaka the historical figure (the political inspiration) propose a way to look at the interior life of an African figure, an African text, an African author, and ultimately then, at Négritude and its Senghorian challenge: the political and cultural affirmation of what is essentially African through the arts, and through poetry in particular.

The argument is reinforced on a stylistic level. Mofolo's novel can be described as an African Epic. In fact, its translated French title is "*Chaka: une épopeée Bantoue*". Aspects of Mofolo's style strongly parallel those of Senghorian Négritude. It is evidently clear that besides the novel's content, Senghor found Mofolo's narrative style, the richness of the African images in the novel and its idiosyncratic rhythm – in particular where Mofolo has incorporated aspects of oral literature in the text such as numerous praise poems – enchanting too.

Chapter 7 – The *Chaka*(s)

1. Introduction

My analysis in this chapter will examine Mofolo's and Senghor's *Chaka*(s) concurrently. I will show that Senghor read Mofolo's novel like an early example of '*écriture nègre*' or a text in which specific aspects of Négritude, in writing, figure dominantly. Senghor appears to have reworked Mofolo's story in such a way that the two versions' narratives are dissimilar enough as to be unrecognisable from each other. However, the Senegalese poet has remained faithful to Mofolo in ways that are profoundly significant, if not directly obvious.

Senghor saw a true African text in *Chaka*, which offered a vision of Africa that suited his own whose slow, evolving construction was maturing at the time of *Chaka*'s publication in *Présence Africaine*. Mofolo's novel inspired Senghor, in my view, because he saw it as a perfect example of Négritude writing '*avant la lettre*'.

The aim of the textual analysis will be to show how Senghor read Mofolo and, in turn, to reveal Chaka's multilayered function in Senghor's rewriting of the original. I will show that Chaka evolves, in Senghor's laudatory verses, from an African Christ figure, to a visionary king who lends his voice to the anti-colonial discourse, becoming thus a poet-politician before, ultimately, choosing love and poetry above militant politics and Négritude and the voice of reconciliation above confrontation.

Two spheres of interest will be explored in order to achieve this. Images and rhythm will relate to Mofolo's and Senghor's idiosyncratic poetics, while the analysis of their respective *Chaka* themes will refer to the works' ideological content.

2. Négritude, Mysticism and Politics

2.1 *Chaka* in *Éthiopiques*

Chaka features in *Éthiopiques*, which is Senghor's fourth collection of verse and was published in 1956. *Éthiopiques* is, for many, "Senghor's most conciliatory collection of verse" (Reed & Wake 1989: 388-389). Some earlier collections – such as for instance *Hosties Noires*[1] – were politically more vociferous, containing strong "attacks on French colonialism" and dealt more directly with such themes as pan-Africanism (Reed & Wake 1989: 388-389).

Éthiopiques is Senghor's book of myths: most notably those of the Queen Sheba, of Chaka, and of the Kaya-Magan,[2] born from the "the self-confident rhetoric of a man who represents his people, has become their trumpet" (Reed & Wake 1989:390). Although published in 1956, the collection is a product of a long intellectual and creative "gestation" to use Jouanny's term (Jouanny 1997:44). A number of the poems in it were written and/or published earlier – notably *Chaka*.[3] The seven years between *Éthiopiques* and Senghor's previous collection, *Chants pour Naëtt* (1949), were spent developing the

[1] 'Black Hosts'.
[2] The Kaya-Magan is a character that, in Jouanny's words, exists at the crossroads of myth and history. Kaya-Magan (which means the 'King of Gold') would have been, according to legend, a king during the height of the Wagadou Empire (better known in English as the 'Ghana Empire') which was founded by the Soninké people (Jouanny 1997:86).
[3] As mentioned earlier, *Chaka* was first published in 1951 in *Présence Africaine*.

poet's increasingly active political career while also allowing time for the maturing of his ideological formulation of Négritude. *Éthiopiques* thus indicates a strong desire on the part of the poet for a return to the source ('*retour aux sources*') which coincides with his return and political involvement in his native Senegal. In the author's own words, the collection was born out of a desire to be more 'communal' rather than individualistic in his writing, thus seeking a more traditionally African way of communicating and sharing his artistic endeavour, perhaps in a similar fashion to the *veillées* – nights around the fire sharing stories with the entire village – of his childhood.

The title of the collection itself[4] indicates the central role of Négritude in the poetry contained within (Jouanny 1997:37). Further evidence of the pervasiveness of Senghor's concerns with Négritude in this particular collection is the author's 'Postface' to the book. In it, the poet reflects on the first published collection of writing to focus on black Francophone literature (his own *Anthologie de la poésie nègre et malgache de langue française*, published in 1948) as well as on specific aspects of the idiosyncrasy of *black* writing.

In Senghorian mythology, Ethiopia is also the source of mankind, an idea he derives from Frobenius' argument that Africa, and more particularly Egypt, played a crucial role in the development of human civilisation (Jouanny 1997:37). In *Chaka*, the Zulu king becomes a strong symbol for Négritude. He is "the Ethiopic Lion" – "with head erect" indeed – (142), as Chaka names himself with pride in the opening verses of the poem. The epithetic image is a perfect illustration of what Senghor labels '*images analogiques*' – an important stylistic feature of Négritude. The meaning of these images are supposed to be ambivalent and multivalent, conjuring up meanings that go beyond the

[4] 'Éthiopiques' comes from the Greek word '*aithiops*', which means black.

simple relationship of signifier and signified (Senghor 1984:350). The words 'Ethiopic' and 'Lion' assigned to Chaka are heavy with analogical meaning that reflects a profound African pride and contribute to the importance and signification of this particular poem in the entire collection. Effectively, the very ancient "myth of God-Sun-Lion" is symbol of ('black') power in Africa (Senghor 1984:366-367). Immediately then, Chaka is elevated, in Senghor's verses, to a mythical status since myths (as opposed to allegories) are, for the poet, symbioses of analogical images which would be evoked by "Ethiopic Lion". Some of the concepts/images/analogies suggested here would be Chaka, African, Ethiopian, Lion, Pride, Sun, Africa, Négritude etc.

2.2 Syncretism and Hybridity – African and Christian Elements in Mofolo and Senghor, or the Making of an African Christology

Chaka is composed of two chants. In the first chant, Chaka and 'A White Voice' are talking, against a background of funeral drums:

CHANT I

(*sur un fond sonore de tam-tam funèbre*)

UNE VOIX BLANCHE

Chaka, te voilà comme la panthère ou l'hyène-à-la-mauvaise-gueule
A la terre clouée par trois sagaies, promis au néant vagissant.
Te voilà donc à ta passion. Ce fleuve de sang qui te baigne, qu'il te soit pénitence.

CHAKA (*visage calme*)

Oui me voilà entre deux frères, deux traîtres deux larrons
Deux imbéciles hâ ! non certes comme l'hyène, mais comme le Lion d'Ethiopie tête debout.
Me voilà rendu à la terre. Qu'il est radieux le Royaume d'enfance !
Et c'est la fin de ma passion (118).

[CHANT I

(*against a background of funeral drums*)

A WHITE VOICE

Chaka, there like the panther or the evil-mouthed hyena
Three assegais nail you to the ground. The void howls for you.
This is your passion then. May the stream of blood that bathes you, be as a penance for you.

CHAKA (*calmly*)

Yes I am here between two brothers, two traitors two thieves
Two fools…ah! not as the hyena, but as the Ethiopic Lion with head erect.
Here returned to the earth. How bright it is, the Kingdom of Childhood!
And it is the end of my passion (142)][5]

In these opening verses Chaka is portrayed in a Christ-like manner: he is "nailed" to the ground (like Jesus on the cross) [6] by "three assegais",[7] much in the way one would

[5] Again, all English quotations of Senghor's poem are from John Reed and Clive Wake's translation of the poem in *Léopold Sédar Senghor: Prose & Poetry* (1965). Similarly, all quotations of Mofolo's novel are from Kunene's translation (1981).
[6] The reference to Christ is not, as we will elaborate, incidental here.
[7] Note on translation: Senghor says 'sagaies' just like Ellenberger has in his translation of Mofolo's novel. Kunene, however, uses the word 'spear' in his English translation of Mofolo's text and not 'assegai', like Reed and Wake's translation of Senghor's poem.

be if crucified. The White Voice uses Chaka's vulnerability to accusingly tell him that he deserves nothing less than this tragic end which is "penance" for his "sins" (142). It is a similar scenario to that of Kazantzakis' *The Last Temptation of Christ* but, instead of Jesus visualising his life retrospectively as he is being crucified, Chaka is in dialogue with his accuser.

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In *Panorama de la littérature négro-africaine* (1965) Eliet gives an interesting reading of the opening scene. For him, the mocking tone of the White Voice is reminiscent of the Roman soldiers' contemptuous treatment of Jesus on the cross (Eliet 1965:47). Expanding on the image of the crucifixion, the White Voice speaks of Chaka's passion ("This is your passion then"). For Eliet however, this passion – in the sense of utmost suffering – is a word borrowed from Christian vocabulary to be used according to a pagan perspective (Eliet 1965:46). I disagree. The whole stanza is awash with Christian mythology and there is no other interpretation possible of Chaka's death than that of a black Christ. Senghor's only deviation from the biblical image of the dying Christ is his retelling it in an African setting.

Hence, just as Mofolo does in *Chaka*, Senghor's poem combines African elements with Christian ones. In the *ouverture* of the poem, Chaka is told to have a "passion" and is doing "penance" but he is also an "evil-mouthed hyena"[8] speared by "assegais", both quintessentially African images.

[8] Kunene explains that he coined the term *eulogue* to facilitate the identification of 'praise phrases' which abound in heroic poetry and in Mofolo's *Chaka* particularly (Kunene 1989:231). For an interpretative

The Christian element in Senghor's creative writing is not in contradiction with his philosophy. It is, rather, an expression of his cultural hybridity[9] which he values immensely, often to the detriment of his popularity.[10] The Christian element in Senghor's poem can be interpreted in many ways, all of which are significant for our purposes. Senghor never saw his Christian faith as contradictory to the assertion of his Négritude – much like Mofolo reconciled his faith with his loyalty to the traditional Sotho way of life. Senghor's Christian upbringing is evident in his poetry in general and in *Chaka* in particular. Nespoulous-Neuville speaks of the "Christological nature of his poems", which, in her view, is in harmony with the animistic inspiration for his poetry (Nespoulous-Neuville 1999:80).

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Mofolo's syncretism appears as a different version (perhaps a less ideal one) of Senghor's cultural hybridity. Whereas Senghor's 'Christological' imagery serves to enrich the mythical dimension of the poem – by multiplying the cultural sources of myths – Mofolo's text is more subtle and perhaps more devout in nature.

In Senghor, the possible ambiguity brought about by the inclusion of Christianity into writing that wishes to illustrate Négritude is easily resolved because it is never

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discussion of the various eulogues in the novel, see Kunene's *Thomas Mofolo and the Emergence of Written Sesotho Prose* (1989), pages 205-210.

[9] Senghor's Négritude was, as has been said, a certain 'humanism'. The (political and cultural) goal of this Négritude was therefore to give back to the black world its values and to eventually arrive at a universality of culture. As he has said in an article written in 1950, freedom of the soul is obtained by combining the best of two worlds – which are often antithetical forces to black intellectuals such as Senghor who is a cultural *métis*. These worlds are that of the wisdom of the griot, to which one has to return to and that of the assimilated French culture, which one admires (Senghor 164:103).

[10] Senghor was often condemned for what was perceived as his excessive 'assimilation' into the French culture, particularly by his English-speaking, African critics.

contradictory with the text's African elements. By becoming Christ-like, Chaka, in what could appear as a paradoxical association, is instantly connected to Africa by the poet. Effectively, in *Dialogue sur la poésie Francophone*, Senghor likens the continent to Christ crucified because this is, he says, what has been metaphorically done to Africa during five centuries by the Slave Trade and colonisation:

> […] j'ai vécu le mythe, essentiel, de *l'Afrique*. D'une part, l'Afrique depuis cinq siècles, comme le Christ, crucifiée par la Traite des Nègres et la colonisation, mais l'Afrique rédimée et, par ses souffrances, rachetant le monde, ressuscitant pour apporter sa contribution à la germination d'une civilisation panhumaine ; d'autre part l'Afrique Afrique noire, Féminité, Amour, Poésie […] (Senghor 1984:361).

Roughly translated this excerpt reads:

> [...] I have lived the myth of *Africa* in all its essence. On the one hand, it is an Africa who, like the Christ has been crucified in the last for five centuries by the Slave Trade and colonialism. But it is also an Africa redeemed whose resuscitation will greatly contribute to the germination of a panhuman civilisation. Similarly, I have lived Africa as the Black Continent, the Africa of Femininity, Love, Poetry […].[11]

In the passage, Senghor also speaks of his poetic awakening and of his poetic experience of Africa or, rather, of the myth of Africa. This inspiration led him to his own great themes of Négritude. Among these is the theme of an idyllic, highly romanticised, pre-colonial Africa as well as a wounded Africa whose people have become "martyrs".

[11] My translation.

But with the embracing of its own Négritude, the continent is healing and Africa is then resuscitated and ready to take on the task of the world's redemption. The idea of rebirth is a leitmotiv in Senghor's poetry and his verses abound with images of ashes, new dawns and rebirths.

In *Chaka* especially, the king is a dutiful, metaphorical, hardworking farmer whose life is dedicated to the preparation of the metaphorical fields: "I have set the axe to the dead wood, lit the fire in the sterile bush/Like any careful farmer. When the rains came and the time for sowing, the ashes were ready" (144). The hero has prepared, through the sacrifice of his life and that of his beloved, for a new dawn for his people. The pastoral register used by Chaka to explain his deeds is typically Senghorian while simultaneously African and Christian. The African continent is still very rural and life revolves around farming the fields. Biblical times were also rural times and pastoral metaphors are used abundantly in Christian phraseology – Jesus is a shepherd, people reap what they sow etc. The metaphor of the bush fire thus evokes a strongly traditional Africa and a Christian conception of sacrifice and rebirth: Jesus rose from the dead just like Africa could rise from the ashes of its history of subjugation.

The metaphor for rebirth continues and is carried throughout the poem, even in the more romantically lyrical second part. In "Chant II", the Leader of the Chorus sings of awaiting the "Good News" (153). The reference here is to the arrival of the messiah. In *Chaka* the messiah has already arrived and with his dying come the good news of a new dawn of possibilities for his people: "And at *dawn* the *Good News* will be *born*" (153, my emphasis) after which Chaka's last words are "And from the drum, may there *arise* over a *new world* a *new sun*" (154, my emphasis).

The image of a new dawn for Africa – "new dawn opening my people's eyes" (154) – is central to Senghor's rhetoric for he believes that with the 'black man's' re-affirmation of the values lost to white encroachment on the continent will come a new understanding, for humanity as a whole, of relating to each other. This is precisely what he refers to when he speaks of the 'new humanism' which is to result from the quest for the 'Graal-négritude'.

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Mofolo's syncretism in writing of Christian and African elements is vastly different and more problematic. We have briefly explored this aspect in *Pitseng* and came to the conclusion that in Mofolo's writing the Christian element can, at times, lead to ambiguity and sometimes even conflicting ideas. This is less salient in *Chaka* because Mofolo manages, in my opinion, to smooth out many otherwise contradictory ideological perspectives. Still, Christianity in Mofolo is often expressed purely as a moral system. In his analysis of the episode of Chaka's visitation by the 'King of the Deep Pool' (Chapter 4) Attwell insightfully reveals how Mofolo's judgements are Christian while his references are African, originating directly in Nguni lore:

> By now his [Chaka's] personal destiny, and by implication, that of the nation as well, are fixed. In reaching this point, Mofolo's narrative materials, his characters and events, the literal field of reference, have been recognizably African, based on the most part on what appears to be well-established Nguni lore. But Mofolo's judgments, or the pattern of significance implied within the narrative, have an altogether biblical

> source. The moral realm of the first four chapters is that of the Fall: the Bakone world is a divine order; a change is signalled in an act of sin, specifically involving carnal knowledge; the visible agent of corruption and the associated imager are serpentine; the interior life of the principal actor in this mythic drama has been transformed for the worse; the results of this process affect *all humanity, even nature* (Attwell 1987:62, my emphasis).

Mofolo's and Senghor's worldview converge on this last comment. Chaka, whether he is a sinner or a saviour, is given by both authors the awesome and god-like power to impact on the universe ("all humanity, even nature").

2.2 Chaka's Deathbed Prophecy

There is a crucial moment, in Mofolo's novel that has been central to its Francophone interpretations and rewritings. This is Chaka's deathbed prophecy of the advent of white colonisers who, he foretells, will strip the great Zulu nation of the power bestowed upon it by its founding father. As he draws his last breath, Chaka tells his fratricidal killers:

> "You are killing me in the hope that you will be kings when I am dead, whereas you are wrong, that is not the way it will be because *umlungu*, the white man, is coming, and it is he who will rule you, and you will be his servants."
> Chaka died riddled with wounds, far away from his home (Mofolo 1981:167).

Ogunbesan speaks of Chaka's prophecy thus:

> Chaka first heard of the white occupation of the Cape from a party of white traders who visited him shortly before his death, and his subsequent military campaigns in the South brought him into contact with the white colonizers. Thus his fears about the future of his nation were most likely prompted by what he considered to be expansionist desires of these people. *His death-bed prophecy* that the white men would grab his land proceeded from his recognition that his successors would not be able to keep his nation united or stem the former's advance (Ogunbesan 1973:216, my emphasis).

This is a confused reading of *Chaka*. Ogunbesan is conflating, like many readers and critics have done, historical fact with Mofolo's fictionalisation of the historical truth. Mofolo wrote (and intended to write, as he has explicitly said) a *novel*, and *not* a historical account of Shaka's life. Even if he spent time gathering information in Natal, *Chaka* was not intended to be the definitive biography of the Zulu King. Besides, despite the substantial biographical component of the novel, Mofolo would have no way of knowing what Shaka's last words were or even whether he did, indeed, fear white domination, as Ogunbesan suggests. In reality, given the time of Shaka's death (1828) it is plausible that he never even held an opinion as strong or as far-sighted as that expressed in the novel.

Obviously, it is Mofolo's outlook that is reflected in these words[12] and maximal dramatic impact is indubitably sought and achieved by the author who has his character

[12] Mofolo, on the other hand, was born in Lesotho in 1876, when the country had already been annexed by the British. He is more likely to have held stronger (negative) opinions on white settlers in Southern Africa than Chaka did.

utter the prophetic words at the point of the novel's climax, that of his death. In this context, Ogunbesan's reading has the only merit of highlighting the relevance of 'the prophecy passage' in understanding 'African' readings of the novel, Senghor's more specifically here. Intriguingly the passage seems to have gone unnoticed among those it critically targets. The PEMS concerns about the novel never included Mofolo's dark vision of white expansionism in Southern Africa.

Gray's construal of Mofolo's *Chaka* as a novel that gave birth to an entire literary tradition – he says that "Mofolo's attempt is the opening bracket of what has become virtually a tradition within traditions, the written literature on Shaka […]"(Gray 1975:67) – should include Mofolo's political concerns in that tradition which he expresses through his hero's last words. The prophecy becomes central to Senghor's poetic and political interpretation and to those Francophone ones that followed. Senghor's choice in setting his poem at the moment of Chaka's death reinforces the idea that the passage in Mofolo's narrative has particular importance to him. The passage is indeed key to understanding Senghor's interpretation of Mofolo's novel and, in turn, it is vital in our literary appreciation of the later Francophone versions of the myth of Chaka.

2.3 Chaka, a Visionary-King and an Emissary for Négritude and the Anti-colonial Struggle

Senghor's version differs from Mofolo's in that Senghor's *Chaka* is, rather anachronistically, an anti-colonial hero. In effect, whereas whites do not feature in Mofolo's novel as characters at all, here we have a "dramatic poem for several voices"

whose first is the white, accusatory voice speaking to the dying King in a conversation that bears close resemblance to a trial. Chaka is accused of crimes he has committed. The Zulu king does not deny any of his crimes but focuses on the (ultimately good) end that justifies, in his eyes, the means he has employed to achieve it.

Chaka fought for his people who suffered under white subjugation at great personal cost. He calls his sacrifices – in keeping with the Christian register – his "calvary":

> Mon calvaire.
> Je voyais dans un songe tous les pays aux quatre coins de l'horizon soumis à la règle, à l'équerre et au compas
> Les forêts fauchées les collines anéanties, vallons et fleuves dans les fers.
> Je voyais les pays aux quatre coins de l'horizon sous la grille tracée par les doubles routes de fer
> Je voyais les peuples du Sud comme une fourmilière de silence
> Au travail. Le travail est saint, mais le travail n'est plus le geste
> Le tam-tam ni la voix ne rythment plus les gestes des saisons.
> Peuples du Sud dans les chantiers, les ports, les mines les manufactures
> Et le sir ségrégés dans les kraals de la misère.
> Et les peuples entassent des montagnes d'or noir d'or rouge – et ils crèvent de faim.
> Et je vis un matin, sortant de la brume de l'aube, la forêt des têtes laineuses
> Les bras fanés le ventre cave, des yeux et des lèvres immenses appelant un dieu impossible.
> Pouvais-je rester sourd à tant de souffrances bafouées ? (123-124)

[My calvary.
I saw in a dream all the lands to the far corners of the horizon set under the ruler, the setsquare, the compass
Forests mowed down comma? hills levelled, valleys and rivers in chains.
I saw the lands to the four corners of the horizon under the grid traced by the twofold iron ways
I saw the people of the South like an anthill of silence
At their work. Work is holy; but work is no longer gesture
Drum and voice no longer make rhythm for the gestures of the seasons
Peoples of the South, in the shipyards, the ports and the mines and the mills
And at evening segregated in the kraals of misery.
And the peoples heap up in mountains of black gold and red gold…and die of hunger.
I saw one morning, coming out of the mist of the dawn, a forest of woolly heads
Arms drooping comma? bellies hollow, immense eyes and lips calling to an impossible god.
Could I stay deaf to such sufferings, such contempt? (146-147)]

This passage is one of Senghor's most evocative accusations against colonialism and the wreckage left in its wake. The nominal sentence "My calvary" sets the tone for the monologue that ensues. The focus here is on Chaka as a martyr. Chaka is also a visionary in this passage and as such strongly resembles Mofolo's Chaka. The liturgical repetition of "I saw" reinforces the idea of prophecy and adds a mystic quality to it: Senghor's Chaka had premonitory dreams "I saw in a dream" becomes "I saw one morning". The King's prophecy about the fate of his "black skinned People" (145) is realised, in complete antithesis to Mofolo's textual chronology, in his own lifetime.

In Mofolo's novel, one premonitory dream that is realised within the novel's timeframe is about Chaka's own death. In Chapter 24, entitled "Painful Dreams",[13] a few pages after Chaka dreams that he is killed, Dingana and Mhlangana decide to "kill Chaka and take over the kingship" (161).[14] Really, Chaka's demise begins with nightmares and visions and culminates with his assassination which is executed while he is in a trance-like state – in the "daytime dreams he dreamed with his eyes wide open" (167). Mofolo beautifully renders the importance of visions, dreams and eyes in his writing. Chaka's superiority in life was precisely that he was a visionary.[15] This attribute, as highlighted in Mofolo's prose, has been fundamental to the Négritude writers' reading and rewritings of the novel.

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Because of the contraction of historical time in Senghor's poem, at the time of his death Chaka finds himself face to face with a White Voice who challenges him to explain his past actions. The White Voice tries to reason with Chaka *rationally*,[16] get him to admit that he has killed and that others have killed in his name; that it is a terrible thing since "The greatest evil is to steal the sweetness of breath" (144). For the White Voice he

[13] This title is, in my opinion, more accurately translated by Ellenberger as "Visions et Cauchemars" in French.
[14] All quotes from Mofolo's novel are from Kunene's English translation of the text.
[15] Textually, the importance of 'vision' in Mofolo's novel is particularly salient towards the dramatic end of the story. As his powers deteriorate in the novel, Chaka's vision gets blurred ("His eyes sank deep in their sockets, receding far to the back; and sometimes they bulged out and drooped like those of a drunkard"). Images fleet through his mind ("he saw them dimly"), his deeds pass before his eyes etc. (159-166). Such images abound in the last chapters, making 'vision' an unremitting motif in the novel.
[16] Since rationality is, as Senghor liked to repeat it, Hellenic.

is not a warrior but a butcher – "We looked to find a warrior. All we found was a butcher" (143).

Chaka does not deny any of his crimes but he proposes a different way of looking at the historical interpretation of what he has done. A different way, in fact, of looking at history and ultimately a different way of conceptualising life and the universe: that of Chaka's, not the White Voice's. This alternative philosophy is, of course, Négritude. The aspect of Négritude that comes to light here is that of the desire to reclaim Africa's past glory and more importantly, to (re)assert the values of 'black civilisation' destroyed or at the very least undermined by the imposition of Western ideals.

Chaka becomes the spokesperson of a martyred Africa: the visionary poet that, through ultimate sacrifices fought foreign oppression – "It was a means…Your pleasure…My calvary" (146). "I have hated nothing but oppression" (147) he says to the White Voice. Chaka has exposed the real offenders, the colonialists: those that landed "with rules and set-squares, with compasses and sextants/White skin clear eyes, thin lips, bare speech" (145) and then took "Spices and gold, precious stones parrots and monkeys" (148) in exchange for which they gave "rusty presents" and "tawdry beads" (148). But that is not all. How can they call Chaka a butcher when the "Pink Ears" were the masters of destruction? The damage they caused did not spare people or nature. The people with "woolly heads" "die of hunger"[17] and suffer from "bellies hollow". The "forests [were] mowed down", the "hills levelled" and the "rivers [put] in chains".

[17] The original verse in French is, in my opinion, more powerful because of Senghor's particular lexical choice: he uses 'crever' instead of 'mourir' to signify 'to die' – the word chosen by Reed and Wake to translate this concept here. The connotation between the two is vastly different. Whereas 'mourir' means, simply to die and is hence a more neutral word, the familiar 'crever' adds a greater intensity to the act of dying since it is implies a hard death. English equivalents could include all familiar expressions such as 'to snuff it' as suggested in the Harrap's but I cannot think of one that would remain truly faithful to the expressive meaning of the French.

In this last image, 'river in chains', nature becomes personified to create a powerful illustration of the bondage of Africa. This technique is characteristic of Senghor. It is an '*image analogique*' – like the one of the 'Ethiopic Lion'. It illustrates, through language, the interconnectivity of all things (here of people and nature) and the life force present in all of them, which, according to Bâ, is central to black African ontology and, consequently, to the expression of Senghor's Négritude in his poetry (Bâ 1973:45). For him, this 'essential dynamic of being', as Bâ calls it,[18] is re-created in black African art and not just in poetry. The expression of Négritude in art is that of a dynamic cosmos recreated, where "the earth, the stars, the universe, plants, animals, people and God" are dynamically interrelated. Specifically however, Négritude in poetry is *not* the "*phuséôs mimêsis*" (or 'the imitation of nature') of the first Greek poets, founders of classical western poetry (Senghor 1984:356-357).

The image 'rivers in chains' therefore, does not just become powerful because it is seemingly an oxymoron, but because it is through such images that Senghor's Négritude is expressed in its most intense complexity.

The French surrealists' influence is obvious here or, at least, Senghor's admiration for them, because, for him, they have produced work that, in Western literature, is the closest to his definition of black African literature.

[18] We draw extensively from Bâ's comments in this section because her book entitled *The Concept of Négritude in the poetry of Leopold Sedar Senghor* (1976) was prefaced by Senghor himself who approved of Bâ's particularly astute and comprehensive reading of his poetry, stating that she seemed to sometime understand his work better than he did himself. He says: "It is a curious sensation for a writer, especially a poet, to feel that he has been understood […]. It is an ever stranger feeling to have someone show you in your own work thoughts you did not know you had had […]. And that was the jolt I had when I read Sylvia Washington Bâ's dissertation, revised and transformed into this book." (Senghor 1973:v).

In Bâ's words:

> Senghor cites as one of the major contributions of surrealism the revelation of the juxtaposition of totally unrelated concrete realities as a powerful means of forging images. This technique has a counterpart in the black African "syntax of juxtaposition" and depends for its force upon a similar telescoping of objects or associations (Bâ 1973:149).

With 'rivers in chains' the poet simultaneously invokes *his* profoundly (African) ontological understanding of the universe – that of the life force present in everything – and exposes the injuries done to this system, which includes all forms of life. The damage is total. It is physical and economical: people die of hunger and exploitation, misery pervades, natural resources such as gold (147) or animals (148) are stolen. The negative consequences are spiritual and psychological: an "impossible god" (147) that cannot offer solace has replaced tradition. This means a death of sorts and the idea of the problematic disappearance of African traditional ways echoes, here, Mofolo's own struggle with the encroachment of Christianity and modernity on traditional Sotho lifestyle.

"Drum and voice no longer make rhythm for the gestures of the seasons" (147). The voice with which to speak out is muted. The African has been hit at his very core. The silencing of the voice and of the drum is the death of the spirit of Africa and its people. Effectively, in Senghorian ontology drums and life are synonymous: "The preponderance of percussive features in black African musical expression is the result of the rhythm aspect of the philosophy of life forces" (Bâ 1973: 113).

These injuries are not just those of colonialism but those of Apartheid as well: "*Peoples of the South*, in the *shipyards*, the ports and the *mines* and the mills/And at evenings segregated in the *kraals* of misery" (147, my emphasis).[19]

In those unambiguous verses Senghor directly refers to Southern Africa ("People of the South"), using typically South African words ("kraals"). However, none of the seminal critiques of the poem or of Senghor's poetry have highlighted Senghor's rather strong, albeit poetic, criticism of the Apartheid regime. This is particularly surprising to me since it features in one of his most famous poems.

Perhaps most readers confine themselves to interpreting the text within the historical context of Chaka's life, seeing the treatment of colonialism as a poetic anachronism that only momentarily interrupts the temporal linearity of the narrative. But this would be an incomplete analysis of *Chaka* since the hero of the poem is given multiple functions by the poet. His function as an African hero from the past that becomes instrumental in the fight against oppression in the present[20] – including the Apartheid regime – cannot be overlooked, particularly since *Chaka* is a rare example of direct treatment of the theme of the exploitation of Africa in Senghor's poetry (Cartey 1969: 259).

[19] This idea is reinforced by the opening dedication to the Bantu martyrs of South Africa, of course.

[20] Interestingly, Shaka takes on a similar function in Biko's interpretation of the aims of the Black Consciousness movement. In an article written in 1970, under the pseudonym of Franck Talk, Biko calls for the recovery of the history of the 'black man' by reclaiming the glory of previously vilified African heroes such as Shaka and Moshoeshoe (Biko 2004:32). This call is recurrent, in fact, in Biko's pugnacious anti-Apartheid rhetoric.

3. Chaka, a Poem of Négritude

3.1 Some Images

3.1.1 The Lion

In the previous chapter, we have demonstrated why Mofolo inspired Senghor politically. Here, we focus on Senghor's literary inspiration.[21] In the context of Négritude, animals can figure strongly in African imagery. For Bâ, the symbolism of African images comes, to a large extent, from animistic sources where "[a]nimals and cosmic forces are constantly used to express ideas and forces associated with them" in myths and cosmogonies (Bâ 1973:141).

We have mentioned the lion-image. The idea that it is the name Chaka gives *himself* with pride in the early lines of the poem concurs with Bâ's analysis of its symbolic function. Bâ elaborates on its importance in African folklore and in Senghor's poetry in particular:

> An obvious symbol is the lion: not only does he symbolize force and courage, not only is he strong and courageous: he is the very spirit of force and courage and, therefore, he has a definite place and function in the hierarchy of interacting life forces. These forces of strength and courage contribute to the fundamental meaning of the lion image. In Senghor's case, this has added personal significance as his father's name, Diogoye, means lion. As he explains in the Postface of *Éthiopiques*, everything and every form speaks to the black African, communicates a meaning through symbolism […] (Bâ 1973:141-142).

[21] The two inspirations are intrinsically linked in Senghor. An example in *Chaka* that has already been treated would be that of the image of Africa crucified which is a poetical expression of the author's anti-colonial feeling.

Mofolo's and Senghor's texts bear a strong resemblance in the use of animal imagery. Because both texts are rich with animal symbolism, I will not analyse all of them in detail but concentrate mostly on a study of the lion-image, since it is particularly significant here. The analysis of the lion-image will be illustrative of both authors' narrative use of animal imagery in their respective *Chaka*(s).

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In Mofolo's novel, the lion-image fulfils the compound function of being an analogical image for Chaka and offering a rich symbolic subtext for the action of the story. Both functions strongly parallel Senghor's own interpretation of the image in his poem. In Mofolo's novel, this is what is said of Chaka when he is still a very small child:

> […] any person whose eyes met his, even without having known him before, could tell at once that he was of royal blood, and not the child of a commoner; they said that all who saw him described him with the words: 'He is the cub of a lion; he is the nurseling of a wild beast; he is a new born little lion.' The people all acclaimed him the same way (8).

There are many instances when Chaka is referred to as a lion, particularly (but not always) when he is being praised. This is the case, for instance, in "the greeting of respect" taught to his councillors and advisers (116). Elsewhere he is a "lion with sharp claws" (143) and, towards the end of the novel, as he is about to do die, he becomes "the

lion of Zulu descent" (164), a eulogue that seems to come from the author's admiration for Chaka and not just something quoted within a transcribed praise poem.[22]

Chapter 3 of the novel is entitled 'Chaka kills a lion'. Although a lot of the titles of the novel's chapters indicate death and/or killing[23] this is the only one about the killing of an animal. It happens very near the beginning of the story, which underlines its narrative importance as it signifies new beginnings for the main protagonist.

When Chaka was still young enough to be "an uncircumcised little bullock" (15), a lion was killing the cattle of the village where he lived – in exile from his father's home. In the episode, Chaka accompanies the men on an expedition to kill the beast. They (the men) were "feeling extremely tense and cold with fear, their hair standing on end since they could feel that they were about to come face to face with a ferocious beast" (17). Chaka, however, is *different* from the rest of the men, he *feels no fear*. Effectively, as the lion leaps to attack, all of them "scatter in all directions", locking themselves inside their huts, leaving out, in their terrified rush, their own women and children, with the sole exception of Chaka who waited for it "without fear" until it "came" and "jumped" (17). The narrative rhythm accelerates from this point culminating in the death of the lion who is killed so swiftly and expertly by Chaka, still "a young lad whose chin was yet smooth, who had not yet fought in any wars" (18) that he did not realise that "his life was a thing of the day before yesterday" (18).

The killing of the lion by a very young Chaka is a turning-point in the story from a narrative and political point of view. It is the first time, truly, that we are given a

[22] This eulogue is particularly interesting as it illustrates Mofolo's admiration for the Zulu King despite the unambiguous loathing he shows for Chaka's inhuman deeds (Kunene 1989: 210).
[23] Such as, for instance, 'The Death of Senzagonakhona', 'The Death of Noliwe', 'The Killing of the Cowards' etc.

glimpse of Chaka's transformation: from bullied child to a medicine-strengthened confident young man.[24]

This episode directly precedes the episode in which Chaka encounters the 'King of the Deep Pool' and foretells, in a way, this important moment in the hero's life which marks the beginning of his singular destiny as foretold by Nandi's doctor. The killing of the lion also gives Chaka his father's recognition and, in addition, sets in motion the hero's military and political ascendancy:

> That lion was carried unskinned to Senzangakhona at Nobamba, and he in turn passed it to his overlord Dingiswayo, since Jobe was already dead. He said, a hyena is eaten only in the royal village. He sent word saying that the beast has been killed by his son Chaka all by himself, after all the men had run away. He spoke those words without realizing that he was thereby cultivating goodwill for Chaka in the king's heart (19).

The episode introduces the important power dynamics that will rule Chaka's destiny. On the one hand he is *praised and adulated* by the women of the village who give him back his due recognition as Senzangakhona's (most precious) son:

> […]
> Gripping a lion by its jaws.
> Senzangakhona has no men, they will desert him and he will be killed.
> O, Senzangakhona, come fetch your child and take him home,
> He is a male child, a shield bearer,
> He will fight for you and conquer your enemies (19).

[24] His strengthening medicine consisted, amongst other things, of eating the liver of a lion (14).

But "the lion [also] brought envy into the village" (19) and the praise-singing for Chaka aggravates the *jealousy* and even *hatred* of the men towards him with fatal consequences: "[t]he evil spirit spread until it influenced people like Mfokazana,[25] and all of them plotted to kill Chaka" (20).

Other complex animal images in Mofolo's *Chaka* are the snake-image and the hyena-image – the latter also featuring in Senghor's poem as mentioned earlier – with parallel connotations of magical and malevolent powers: "Chaka there like the panther or the evil-mouthed hyena" (142). In Mofolo, the hyena-image is recurrent and multi-layered: from the hyena that does not pick him in the hut when he is the closest to it, to the one he kills in Chapter 5, [26] to the hyena of witchcraft, "made from a lump of bread" (28) and finally to those which surround Chaka's dead body in the night without, astonishingly, eating it (167).

Although we will not dwell on the serpent imagery, it is worthy of note that the serpent is, in Senghor's poetry, a symbol of fecundity and knowledge (Bâ 1973:142) but that, according to the narrating/authorial voice in Mofolo's *Chaka*, snakes have an ambiguous importance for the Bokone. They are "highly regarded" as messengers from the ancestral world but they presage "either good fortune or extreme bad luck" (Mofolo 1981:2). This phrase forms part of a lengthy ethnographical tangent on the importance of snakes in the culture of the Bokone and is particularly significant as it appears very early

[25] Even though Chaka was Senzagakhona's first born son, Mfokazana became the first in line for the throne when Chaka was disinherited by Senzangakhona's wives. Mfokazana was immediately followed by Dingana.

[26] In an almost identical scenario to that of the killing of the lion: Chaka is courageous enough to confront the beast that he then kills, saving a young woman from her certain death precisely when her neighbour in the hut – none other than Mfokazana – "was the most scared" (31) and left her to her fate. The people "were overwhelmed with joy" and sang Chaka's praise (30) causing a disgraced Mfokazana to decide "to kill Chaka in a cruel manner" (31).

in the novel. Effectively, it serves to reinforce, before it happens, the importance of Chaka's meeting with the King of the Deep Pool, a scene in the novel that "is a metaphor with several levels of interpretation, all of which are mutually complementary" (Kunene 1989:112) and a scene which also appears in some of the Francophone rewritings too, such as Badian's for example.

Interestingly, Attwell sees Mofolo's judgments, torn between "the existence of the two rivaling moral systems" in the novel (Christian and African) encoded in the imagery of snakes (Attwell 1987: 60-61).[27]

3.1.2 Blackness and the African Woman

As our reading of Senghor's *Chaka* progresses, it is becoming clear that Chaka fulfills many functions in the poem. He is a black Christ crucified, a militant anti-colonial spokesperson and an Ethiopic Lion, symbol of Africa's glory and majesty. Above all, however, Chaka is first and foremost African. Senghor thus exalts Chaka's Négritude throughout the poem. He does this stylistically but also thematically: Chaka's Blackness is a recurrent image in the poem.

Chaka is the first one to speak of his "Blackness" – reinforced by the use of a capital letter – as he is declaring his absolute love for Noliwe to the White Voice:

[27] For a more detailed discussion of this scene and its interpretations, see Attwell's article (1987) and Kunene's seminal work (1989). Neil Lazarus offers another interesting reading of the imagery of snakes in Mofolo's *Chaka*. For him, the ethnographical paragraphs on snakes at the beginning of the novel are illustrative of what he calls the *equivocation* of Mofolo's text; for further reading on this, see his article (1986).

Ah ! Tu crois que je ne l'ai pas aimée
[…]
A mes entrailles de laves ferventes, aux mines d'uranium de mon cœur dans les abîmes de ma *Négritude* (121, emphasis added).

[Ah! You think that I never loved her!
[…]
From my bowels of fervent lava, from the uranium mines if my heart in the depths of my *Blackness* (145, emphasis added.)]

In the more lyrical second part of the poem, the second chant, the Chorus praises the Zulu King for his Blackness: "He is leaving us. How black he is […]. Let us sing the Zulu […]" (149). The Leader of the Chorus, in turn speaks of Chaka's "black splendour" (150) and, further on, he calls him the "Lover of night" (152).

Significantly, in Senghor's verses the images of Blackness and darkness are inverted from the traditional clichés to refer to positive qualities. In fact, if Senghor's definition of Négritude could be summed up in a single sentence, this would be a comprehensively descriptive one. The play of darkness and light in *Chaka* is a direct subversion of the traditional clichés. Chaka tells the White Voice: "There is no need for your false daylight. My breast is a shield against which your lightening breaks" (143). Light is these two verses is equated to deception ("false daylight") and danger (blinding "lightning"). Mofolo too uses the light-darkness metaphor but, in contrast to Senghor, he does so in a completely conventional manner. In accord with the standards of his time,

darkness is, for Mofolo, synonymous to backwardness and sin, whereas light is often representative of wisdom, purity and divine inspiration.[28]

*

The African woman and the thematic treatment of her singular qualities in writing is a pillar of Senghorian Négritude. Her function is to symbolise *l'âme nègre* - the black soul - and if she is so adored by the Négritude poets in general it is because, more than the man, she is susceptible to the mysticism of life and the cosmos, more permeable to joy and to pain (Mezu 1968: 69).[29] The black woman symbolises beauty and Blackness simultaneously, since they are effectively synonymous for Senghor. Ultimately, she is metonymic for Africa and a symbol of everything African; she is the land and its inhabitants, Africa and her people. Ultimately, she is, for the Senegalese poet, Négritude itself/herself.

One of the most beautiful illustrations of this is the poem *Black Woman*, featured in *Chants d'Ombre*. In this, his first collection, where themes of exile and of a lost idyllic childhood pervade, the woman is quasi-omnipresent and therefore takes on the most crucial significance. From this point on, the African woman will become the nucleus of Senghor's poetry, a personal fetish, the fetish of his verses and, ultimately, that of his Négritude.

In *Black Woman*, the metaphors convey the intense sensuality and spirituality of the idealised African woman, as the poet uses her to praise Africa and her beauty in a sort

[28] Mofolo's uses of light and darkness in his writing are analysed in more depth in the first Part of the thesis.
[29]Mezu quotes Senghor from an article that appeared in *Liberté I* (1964: 117).

of aesthetic osmosis. Through her sexuality the black woman enables the poet to enter the realm of her spirituality, leading him to her soul and hence to Africa. This ontology of the African woman is strongly echoed in *Chaka* through the character of Noliwe, Chaka's lover. In Towa's words, Noliwe is made symbol in *Chaka*. She represents the kingdom of childhood – Senghor's childhood in native Senegal before his exile in France, poetry and Négritude (Towa 1983:129).

*

Chaka assumes another role for Senghor which grows more salient in the second part of the poem where the background music has changed from funereal drums to the animated sounds of the "love drum". Chaka is Noliwe's lover and also the ultimate lover "in his black splendour, his naked slenderness/In that agony of joy, heaviness of sex and throat" (150). His love for Noliwe turns the Zulu into a poet and, at the crucial time of his death, when the reunion with his beloved departed nears, the politician cedes his place to the poet. The Chorus proclaims "Let the politician die and the Poet live!" (152) and Chaka to exclaim:

> O ma Nuit ! ô ma Noire ! Ma Nolivé !
> Cette grande faiblesse est morte sous tes mains d'huile
> Qui suit la peine. C'est la chaleur des palmes dans la poitrine
> Maintenant, les aromates qui nourrissent les muscles
> L'encens dans la chambre nuptiale, qui fait les cœurs voyants.
> O ma Nuit ! ô ma Blonde ! ma lumineuse sur les collines
> Mon humide au lit de rubis, ma Noire au secret de diamant

Chaire noire de lumière, corps transparent comme au matin du jour premier.
Mais elle morte cette angoisse de la gorge, lorsqu'on est nus l'un devant l'autre
Et soudain éblouis et soudain foudroyés par les yeux de l'Amant
Ah ! L'âme dévêtue jusqu'à la racine et au roc.
Mais elle est morte cette angoisse sous tes mains d'huile (131-132).

[O my Night, my Black One, my Noliwe!
That great weakness is dead under your hands of oil
The weakness that follows pain. Now the warmth of your palms on my breast
Aromatics to feed my muscles
Incense in the wedding chamber, giving visions to the heart.
O my Night, my Fair One, shining upon the hills
Moist in the bed of rubies, my Black One with the diamond's secret
Black flesh of light, body translucent as the morning of the first day.
But it has left me…that agony in the throat, when we are naked one before the other
And suddenly dazzled and dumbfounded by the eyes of the Lover
Ah! The soul is stripped at the root of the rock.
But it has left me, that agony under your hands of oil (153).]

The vocabulary of darkness and light is extremely significant throughout this passage. Noliwe is quintessentially black: she is the "Black One" and the poet's/Chaka's "Night" and "Lover" – the capital letters each time reinforcing the importance of this. Her Blackness is worn with pride and incites admiration ("O my Night, my Black One"), thus challenging, once again, the traditional negative associations of Blackness.

Noliwe's Blackness is so striking that it is also, without paradox, made of light: "Black flesh of light". This typically Senghorian analogical image stresses the intrinsic link between the African woman's Blackness and her cosmic dimension: she is the night and she is also the light of day, that, in fact, of the "first day".

Her celestial and African dimensions are reinforced with the metaphors used by the poet for her physical attributes. Earlier in the poem, she takes the form of the night, "with her hair of shooting stars" (152). Like the poet's love(r) in *Black woman* who is "Clothed with [her] colour which is life" (Senghor 1965:105),[30] Noliwe, who has become the archetypal black woman, is confounded with the origins of life itself; her femininity and her Blackness become synonymous with beauty and life.

The "first day" could also be that of the first day of love, the first morning after the night in the "wedding chamber". In this way, the "Black One" seems to be discovered, perhaps for the first time. Senghor's revelatory discovery of Africa was quite tardy as it only happened once he was in Paris. The fact that it happened in adulthood and while in exile certainly heightened the intensity of his experience. In this poem, the realisation brings light to the poet's vision – rather than Chaka's here, surely – and it is so powerful that he is "suddenly dazzled and dumbfounded".

Because of Noliwe, Chaka's life, his soul and his certitudes changed for ever: "The soul is stripped at the root of the rock". In the same way, the discovery of a new way of relating and exalting one's Blackness, named Négritude long after its conception, has changed the poet's certitudes for ever.

[30] Reed's & Wake's translation (1965).

The striking luminosity and the vocabulary of vision (‘rubies’ diamonds’ ‘light’ ‘translucent’ ‘morning’ ‘dazzled’ ‘vision’ ‘eyes’) in apposition to Blackness gives the revelation a quasi-mystical sense, here, of an almost divine illumination.

*

The darkness and light in the poem, so typical of Senghor’s writing illustrate best, for us, the poet’s internal struggle (of his dual existence, that of a French-educated black man) for which the black woman offers herself as the solution. This is how the poet becomes the griot whose duty is to elevate, through his lyricism, Africa and her Blackness from her subdued position, to that of a continent reborn, which claims back all the beauty and culture that were once stolen from her. The Chorus sings: “She will die Noliwe in the sapwood of her flesh *n’deissane*!/And at dawn the Good news will be born” (153). This particular emblematic image is, to reiterate, recurrent in Senghor’s poetry: from the ashes comes the new birth, from destruction the rebirth and from Africa’s miserable past comes the dawn of a new continent.

*

The representation of the black woman in writing is where Mofolo’s and Senghor’s *Chaka*(s) texts truly differ, particularly around the character of Noliwa/Noliwe.

In his analysis of the characters in the novel, Kunene includes the group of 'women and girls' because, in his view, they play an important role in that they represent the valued, traditional position women have in Nguni society.

Noliwe stands out of this group in *Chaka*. She is the most beautiful and striking young woman in Chaka's circle:

> Her name was Noliwa and she was amazingly beautiful, and crowned it all by having a kind, compassionate heart, which was always well disposed towards other people. All who knew her swore that Nkulunkulu,[31] the Great-Great-One, had used her as an example, so that her exceeding beauty and her eyes that were soft and full of love, should teach his children the beauty and profound love of their Creator, and that through Noliwa they should see the perfection of a woman without blemish, and may thus understand the perfection of Nkukunkulu (71).

The references to Nkulunkulu no doubt give Noliwe an otherworldly, quasi-mystical quality. In her perfection, she may be construed as the ideal Zulu woman, gaining thus some symbolic status analogous to Senghor's Noliwe – the ideal African woman in the poet's verses. When Senghor read the passage above he would have identified with the idealisation of this African woman. For Senghor, the characterisation of Noliwe would have been one of most brilliant illustration of Mofolo's Négritude in writing. From her first appearance, because Ellenberger translated her name for French readers as '*la délicieuse*', Senghor's interest in her character would have been piqued. His interest and admiration for Mofolo's Noliwa (Noliwe in *his* poem) was no doubt furthered by the episode of the appearance of the Sky Princess, a surreal moment in a

[31] The creator.

narrative that is otherwise relatively realistic, even within the realm of the magical. In Chapter 13, Chaka visits Senzangakhona's grave with Isanusi who then facilitates Chaka's conversation with his dead father as a spiritual medium. Their return to the village afterwards is narrated in the following manner:

> Those who saw him when he entered the village say that Chaka, when he returned from his father's grave, came riding on a horse with a smooth shining coat, led by an *intombazana*, a young maiden who surpassed all the maidens of the world in beauty. Many people swear that the *Inkosazana yeZulu*, the Sky Princess, first appeared on that day, and they said further that it was she in person who led the horse upon which Chaka was riding. Others surmise that it was Noliwa, and yet Noliwa had not yet arrived, for she only came after the cattle was taken out to the pastures, and she came in the company of many people […] (83).

This apparition, which is laden with mystery, reinforces Noliwa's mystical quality and her earthly perfection. For some of those who saw this perfect woman, hyperbolically described as the most beautiful maiden in the world, she *was* Noliwa, Nkulunkulu's best creation, an idealised African woman. However, her prime narrative function in Mofolo's text is not akin to Senghor's desire to eulogise Africa's beauty and mysticism as embedded in his ideology of Négritude.

In Mofolo's *Chaka*, Noliwa's character has a two-fold purpose. Firstly, her role contributes to the plot in that she is the love interest that adds romance and passion to the story. The love she feels for Chaka and the reciprocity of that love in particular serve to dramatise Chaka's murderous act, simultaneously emphasising the enormity of the sacrifice that this required of Chaka.

Despite his deep love for her – "a storm" of confusion "which raised much dust in his heart" arose in his chest at the thought of killing her (126) – he gives her up and kills her in exchange for power and glory. Her murder is *not* the ultimate personal sacrifice performed for the good of the people but a heinous crime motivated by personal greed, "the ultimate sorcery", in fact, as emphasised by the narrator (122).

For many critics, Noliwa also serves to represent (as in traditional folktale where characters take on absolute qualities) everything that is antithetical to Chaka's tyrannical nature. She symbolises life (because of her femininity, her capacity to love, her role as a mate and, ultimately, because she carries his child when she is killed), whereas Chaka symbolises the negation of life.

3.2 On Rhythm and Aspects of Orality

The literary interest of the episode of the killing of the lion studied earlier doubles up as a beautiful illustration of Mofolo's style and of his novel's literary characteristics – in particular, those that dovetail with Senghor's conception of the literary qualities of Négritude.

For Senghor, rhythm is central to the expression *nègre*, a key aspect of Négritude. He always returns to rhythm in his theoretical writings, arguing for the necessity for African writers/poets/artists/dancers to embrace it or return to it. Rhythm, for Senghor, is also one of the greatest distinguishing features between Western and African art:

> Senghor observes a specific sensitivity to rhythm and rhythmic expression, the feature which is for him *the* hallmark of Négritude. He sees the force

> of rhythm as so dynamic and so entrenched in the black man's psyche that it persists throughout any and all experiences separating him from his origins. This is perhaps the most cogent of Senghor's arguments on behalf of Négritude, for although it is one of the most difficult to validate, it is one for which there is the most constant evidence in the artistic expression of the black man (Bâ 1973:80).

We have mentioned the acceleration of rhythm to a syncopated beat as the passage of the killing of the lion reaches its paroxysm. This type of rhythm, which simulates the beating of drums, is "one of the most characteristic and familiar features of black African rhythm" (Bâ 1973:137). Although Mofolo does not use the technique as self-consciously as Senghor does, episodes where the action mounts, such as that of the killing of the lion or the description of the battle against Zwide, are highly rhythmical with sentences varying from long descriptive ones to an accretion of short ones in quick succession.

Senghor's poem is explicitly musical. It follows *New York* in the collection, a poem for "Jazz orchestra: solo trumpet" (155) and precedes *Épitres à la Princesse*, a long lyrical poem in five parts where each section is introduced by the particular African musical instrument that is to accompany it, such as the *kôra*[32] or the *balafong*.[33]

In fact, when speaking of the search, by African authors, for the continuity and authenticity of orality in their writings, Eileen Julien mentions Senghor as being "among the first to signal the continuity of African verbal arts" (Julien 1992:4). She elaborates her comment thus:

[32] Similar to a lyra, it is also the instrument that symbolises the griot.
[33] The balafong is a type of xylophone.

> In *Ethiopiques*, published in 1956, Senghor includes among his poems the essay "Comme les lamentins vont boire à la source".[34] He states with regard to French influences in his poetry and that of other poets included in his *Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie et malgache* (1948): "Si l'on veut trouver des maîtres, il serait plus sage de les chercher du côté de l'Afrique" (156) ["For those wanting to discover our mentors, they would do best to look toward Africa]. As it is well know, throughout his poetry, beginning with *Chants d'ombre* in 1945, Senghor frequently alludes to the oral tradition in the title of his poems […] (Julien 1992:5).

In *Chaka*, too, rhythmical instructions – much like in the staging of a musical – are enunciated at the beginning of each part of the poem. The poet becomes, in writing *Chaka*, a musical director, a true African *chef d'orchestre*. The caption underneath the poem's title is "A dramatic poem *for several voices*" (142, my emphasis), an instruction that even precedes its dedication to the Bantu martyrs of South Africa.

The two parts of the poem themselves are entitled "chants" ("Chant I" and "Chant II"). Both parts differ radically in their mood. We have hinted at Chaka's calvary in Chant I. This part, or chant, is supposed to 'take place'[35] "against a background of funeral drums" (142). A similar direction (reminiscent of a stage direction) announces that the second chant should be accompanied by a "love drum, with animation" (149). Indeed, this second part comes as "it is time for love" (149). The shift in the musicality of the text is in complete harmony with its thematic content. The change of tone and rhythm to suit

[34] Interestingly, the title of this essay could be translated as "The way the *lamentins* go drink at the source" and the metaphor here is worth explaining: *lamentins* are small mammals that inhabit the rivers of western Africa. Obviously, since these creatures are aquatic, they would not need to go anywhere else to drink but in Senghor's metaphor, they need, to survive (to be nourished) to drink from the source – an obvious metaphor for the need, for Africans, to return to their source for nourishment.

[35] One is almost tempted to say that it is to be 'sung'.

this part that speaks of love in all its glory – and as personified by Noliwe – is reinforced by the introduction, in the characters of the poem, of the voices of a "Chorus" and its "Leader".

The presence of a Chorus and its Leader seems indicative of a strong desire on Senghor's part to revive, in this poem, the childhood experience of hearing epic tales and poems narrated around the communal village fire by a local or passing griot and his troupe. Mabana explains that the Leader and its Chorus in Senghor's *Chaka* are allegorical characters that represent the laudatory tradition in Africa. Their role in the poem is to echo the poet's agony and to preserve the memory of the hero praised. They are there to impart their reverence to the King, to sing praises in his homage in which they equal him to great chiefs of the past. They are, lastly, the guardians of collective memory and the true historians of their race, the custodians, lastly, of royal secrets (Mabana 2002:39).

*

Evidently, since Mofolo is one of the first Sotho authors to have produced creative written Sotho text(s), he comes from a tradition of oral literature. He would have known this tradition well and would have experienced and perhaps even have participated in it directly. Elements of the oral tradition pervade Mofolo's written text. One important aspect of this is the maintenance, in the novel, of the form and content of the heroic tale: it is evident in the development of Chaka's journey, from the circumstances of his birth, to the events that will set his destiny apart from that of common people, through his

various life stages and learning curves, to the pinnacle of his success and ending with his eventual downfall.

As Kunene explains, oral literature has a didactic function and its function is "to reinforce the concept of the individual's social responsibility through a strong restatement of the society's ethos" (Kunene 1989:198). The function of this art is strongly linked to its form because of the interactive and recited/or improvised nature of the art:

> […] one very important aspect of the relationship of the people concerned with the narrative is that the narrator and the audience subscribe to the same ideals, beliefs, rituals and superstitions, to the same conception of man's relation to the cosmos, and the perpetual cyclical movement between life-here and life-in-the-Spirit-World. […] It is clear from this that an oral narrative depends for its success on the mutual relationship between the narrator and his audience. […] It should be obvious that a writer [Mofolo] whose story-telling habits have been fashioned in the above manner faces formidable challenges (Kunene 1989: 199-201).

Both Mofolo's and Senghor's work contain select elements from the African oral tradition. For Senghor, this becomes a technique to make the poem feel more African and oral, and is combined with Mofolo's influence on him:

> Readers familiar with African oral traditions and with Senghor's comments tend to view the breath and rhythm of Senghor's verses and their "traditional" – that is to say, culturally specific and nature-based – imagery also as derived from oral poetry. Senghor thus aims – with what might be called "une volonté de transparence" ["willed transparence"] – to

> situate his poetic practice vis-à-vis oral traditions and to guide the reception of his poems (Julien 1992:5).

Apart from all the musical directions, Senghor's *Chaka* contains elements of praise poetry. Senghor has included in his poem a line from the most important praise of Chaka taken from Mofolo's novel: "Bayété Bâba ! Bayété ô Zoulou !" (127)[36] which becomes, in the poem, a refrain repeated by the 'Chorus' almost every time it speaks. This gives the salutation a great importance and serves, through its incantatory repetition, as a litany, which adds a spiritual, quasi-idolatrous dimension to Chaka's praise.

Although the effects sought vary, we will remark that Mofolo too uses repetition as a powerful rhythmical device. Kunene explains that, in essence, Mofolo's repetition is used to encompass "sensual impressions and emotional responses to situations" (Kunene 1989: 217).[37] This can also be said of Senghor, as shown in the example quoted earlier where 'I saw' was repeated to emphasise Chaka's visionary qualities.

Even when read in translation, a discerning quality of Mofolo's literary style is his use rhythm in *Chaka*. In the novel, Mofolo's stays very close to the rhythmic qualities of oral literature – the numerous repetitions as well as the interspersed praise poems within the narrative illustrate this best.

To return to the 'Bayede' greeting, Mofolo's text begins with a narrated explication of the origins of the names *Zulu* and the word *Bayede*:

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[36] Translation remarks: Senghor uses Ellenberger's French spelling of the words (Mofolo 1981:90). Reed and Wake use 'Bayete Baba! Bayete O Zulu!' (149) – an English version (without the accents in other words) of Ellenberger and Senghor's French spelling of the Zulu words, whereas Kunene opts for 'Bayede Baba!' (115).

[37] For a thorough analysis of Mofolo's use of rhythm in *Chaka*, see Kunene's *Thomas Mofolo and the Emergence of Written Sesotho Prose* (1989), pages 217-230.

> Chaka, after changing the national name and choosing for himself the pleasant sounding one of Zulu (Sky), also desired to find a beautiful greeting which would complement that national name of his, whose sound would be pleasing to the people's ears.
>
> One day when he finished the army games, he assembled his regiments together, and he also called together the people of his city and he said to them: 'My children, at night as I lay asleep, Nkulunkulu sent his chief messengers to me. These messengers said that I should teach his nation, the Mazulu (the Sky People) a beautiful, sweet-sounding greeting, one showing the respect with which the nation should greet its king who has been placed by Nkulunkulu over all the kings of the earth and all the nations under the sun and the moon so that they should pay homage to him and worship him. […] 'The greeting I have been told to teach you is BAYEDE. It is a greeting with which you will greet only me […]. *Bayede* means *he who stands between God and man*, it means *the junior god through which the great God rules the kings of the earth and their nations* (114-115).

Chaka is represented as a megalomaniacal but nonetheless powerful man. This is the apogee of his nation building efforts and his supremacy is ultimately encapsulated in his power to name. He names his people 'the people of the sky'. By naming them he also gives himself the god-like power of a creator: this is how the Mazulu's existence was consolidated. By naming them himself he also becomes a messenger between Nkulunkulu, the greater god, and the common people. Because of this, 'Bayede' will be his greeting.

The impact of this passage is apparent in Senghor. Obviously, the naming of people would be important to a poet. The naming of a nation would, furthermore, be

important to a politician. We have mentioned the poet's admiration for Chaka's leadership qualities and, previously, Senghor's search for an individual political identity at the time of his writing of Chaka. Senghor's personal interests which lay at the core of his Négritude and its (poetical first and political later) construction come to life in Mofolo's text in a particularly lyrical way here. Significantly, this quasi-poetic narrative extract is a transition to the long praise poem that Mofolo includes afterwards.

Reading the above-quoted passage would have been, for Senghor, like reading authentic, avant-garde Négritude writing. At the time that he read Mofolo's novel, they were *not* many African works of fiction about historical African figures that included traditional laudatory poems/songs in their narrative. This must have seemed radically modern to one of the pioneers of the Négritude discourse. Added to this, the fact that Mofolo did so in his idiosyncratic literary style so early in the twentieth century and considering his relative literary isolation, must have seemed extraordinarily remarkable. My French edition of the novel does not mention the year of the first publication of *Chaka* in Sotho. It is however obvious from Ellenberger's preface that the novel's French translation came quite a while after it was written simply because he mentions that German and English versions already existed. Even if Senghor did not know that Mofolo wrote *Chaka* at around 1909-1910 and that it was published in 1925, the French publication (1940) coincided, in fact, with the early hours of the Négritude movement's birth and with a time when the Senegalese poet was starting his long intellectual engagement with its constructs. It is evident then that Senghor read *Chaka* as a proto-type of his nascent literary philosophy for the specificity of black writing.

4. Conclusion – Senghor's Myth of Shaka/Chaka

For Jouanny, the whole of *Éthiopiques* is a true dialogue between the poet and the world (Jouanny 1997:40). This comment is particularly pertinent in the case of *Chaka*, where the tension between politics and poetry is expressed in a very personal way. We have mentioned that *Éthiopiques* is the book of myths for Senghor. Another strong African figure is praised in this collection: that of the Kaya-Magan – in an eponymous poem. Both *Chaka* and *Le Kaya-Magan* converge on a few points: both are poems about real African historical figures that founded important African nations and both, in Senghor's verses, are kings pulled between politics and poetry. Both also possess messianic qualities through their implicit likeness to Christ: the Kaya-Magan is the shepherd of his people.[38] Chaka, as we have seen, becomes a black Christ whose calvary was to sacrifice himself for his people.

In *Chaka* the hero becomes a poet of Négritude. Noliwe is not just Chaka's love but the *poet's* love as she becomes the symbolic, cleansing sacrifice, from whose ashes a new continent will be born. As he draws his last breath the poet (Chaka) says:

> Dure ce grand combat sonore, cette lutte harmonieuse, la sueur perles de rosée !
> Mais non, je vais mourir d'attente…
> Que de cette nuit blonde – ô ma Nuit ô ma Noire ma Nolivé –
> Que du tam-tam surgisse le soleil du monde nouveau.

[38] The analogy is ingenious since it conjures up African (where pastoral life dominates) and Christian (of god as a spiritual shepherd) images concurrently.

(*Chaka s'affaisse doucement : il est mort.)* (132).

[Let the great sonorous battle go on, the harmonious struggle, sweat is pearls of dew!
No, I shall die of waiting…
For that fair night…O my Night O my Black One my Noliwe…
And from the drum, may they arise over a new world a new sun.

(*Chaka sinks back softly. He is dead*.) (154).]

Chaka's struggle between politics and poetics reaches its paroxysm when Noliwe is consecrated as the essence of Blackness in Senghor's lyrical praises. At the moment of his death, Noliwe, Blackness and the night become one and the same thing for the Zulu. This union – a sort of African trinity – is illustrated, in the example cited above, by these three epithets strung together – which the lyrical repetition of 'O' in place of punctuation and conjunctions further reinforce.

The dying Chaka has become, in Senghor's verses, the poet of love. This love is for Noliwe, who then epitomises the black woman and who, in turn, becomes a metonymy for Africa and Négritude. Evidently, the analogies attached to Noliwe have political as well as poetical associations. This is how Chaka becomes the lyrical spokesperson of Négritude: his focus has shifted from a heated argument with the White Voice about the destruction left in the wake of colonialism and carried on by Apartheid in Africa to that of exalting the black woman. This shift echoes that of Senghor's intellectual journey from a young African living in Paris and experiencing social and

political discrimination to the politically conscious emissary of his 'race' who has made peace with his mixed identity – that of being a Frenchman and an African.

Towa's appreciation of Chaka's role as a poet of Négritude mirrors our argument. He reads from Chant II, from "The *poem* is ripe" to "[…] it is time for *love*" (149, my emphasis):

> The people do not want heroic action anymore; it is Chaka-the-poet that they acclaim presently, it is from poetry, from love, from Négritude that they await "the good news" and the "new world": "And from the drum may there arise over a new world a new sun" (154). As he has said these words Chaka sinks back and dies: he has made his political (or rather poetical) statement.
>
> This is how the man who was known as the greatest conqueror of Africa is transformed into a gentle poet. Senghor, as it has been shown[39] abandoned all designs for a struggle against colonialism. He justified this political stance by stressing the black man's nature as gentle, sensual and poetic. So that he would not contradict himself, it was essential to change this illustrious military genius to show that Chaka became a warrior against his gentle and sensual nature as a poet; something for which he paid the price of infinite suffering (Towa 1983:129).[40]

The parallelism of the last verses with Mofolo's text is also striking: Senghor's Chaka utters grave words as he takes his last breath. His words, however, seem like the exact antithesis of Mofolo's main protagonist. Chaka foresaw colonialism and its

[39] Towa refers here to his discussion of Senghor's work towards the creation of the 'Eurafrique', an old "imperial dream", as the critic rightly calls it (Towa 1983:125-128).
[40] My translation.

destruction in Mofolo's novel. In Senghor's poem he *has witnessed* that destruction and he wishes for a new world, born from the drum, born in fact, from Négritude. In other words, Chaka's prophecy in Senghor's is not so different from Mofolo's hero but a historical, political and ultimately ideological continuation of it. Senghor's reconciliatory nature comes through in *Chaka*. As a poet-politician, Senghor does not wish for accusations and bitterness but longs for a return to love and to the long lost paradise of childhood. He wishes for the new world of his much anticipated 'new humanism'.

*

In my view, Senghor has been misunderstood by many for choosing Chaka as the hero of his famous poem. We have said that the poet was criticised for being inappropriate by some and disrespectful by others and Senghor's dedication to the 'Bantu martyrs' is to be understood as a dedication to all Africans victims of white imperialism in any form – be it colonialism or racial segregation – and the ensuing loss of their culture, history and, more importantly, their self-worth.

The opening word 'martyr' immediately gives the tone of the poem: white colonialism has made a martyr of the 'black man'. White expansion in Africa has made a martyr of the continent.

Chaka, despite his historical reality, is used by Senghor, in a completely transformed way. Even if the conflict between politics and poetry is not new in Senghor's work, it is expressed with particular eloquence in *Chaka*, on a personal and on a political level, precisely because Chaka – the historical King and Chaka-Mofolo's hero

are transformed (but somehow still recognisable) to fit perfectly in Senghor's poetic and political universe. The resulting Chaka is inspired by the first two in a political sense. Senghor has kept some of Chaka's duality (his cruelty and his heroism) but he turns him into a hero of the anti-colonial (and anti-apartheid) struggle (Jouanny 1997:24)[41] because of the historical inspiration of Chaka's fame, military impact and political genius.

But Chaka is also born out of Senghor's poetic imagination because, as a poet he is like "a woman in labour that has to give birth" (Senghor 1984:156, my translation). The inspirational manipulation of Chaka enables the Senegalese poet to voice his personal struggle in *Chaka*: that of the pull between politics and poetry.

[41] It is important to reiterate that Mofolo's hero is the complete opposite to Senghor's in that respect: in *Chaka*, the Zulu king is unambiguously evil and always chooses the 'bad' when he is given a choice – everything that Isanusi does for Chaka is with his full agreement and informed choice, and always for his personal gain.

Chapter 8 – Other Francophone Adaptations

1. Introduction

In this chapter, I will discuss the Chaka theme in Francophone African literature as pioneered by Senghor's first rewriting of Mofolo's novel. Because a thorough literary analysis of each of the African Francophone adaptations of Mofolo's text is beyond the scope of this research,[1] I have chosen to focus on Seydou Badian Koyaté's *La mort de Chaka* (1961). This is because Badian's text is the first to have followed Senghor's poem chronologically and also because it is generally illustrative, in my opinion, of most Francophone interpretations of *Chaka* or, at least, of their most salient thematic and stylistic characteristics.

I will however also consider the other texts that have been inspired, some to a greater extent than others, by Mofolo's novel. These are, in chronological order, Abdou Anta Kâ's *Les Amazoulous* (1968), Condetto Nénékhaly-Camara's *Amazoulou* (1970), Djibril Tamsir Niane's *Chaka* (1971), Agbota Zinsou *On joue la comédie* (1975), Tchikaya U'Tam'Si's *Le Zulu* (1978) and, lastly, Marouba Fall's *Chaka ou le roi visionnaire* (1984).

[1] For more on the subject, see Donald Burness' *Shaka King of the Zulus in African Literature* (1976) and Kahudi Mabana's *Des transpositions Francophones du mythe de Chaka* (2002). Both offer more thorough examinations of these works and their authors. See also articles by Kolawole Ogunbesan (*A King for all Seasons: Chaka in African Literature*, Présence Africaine, 1973, Volume 88) and Dorothy Blair (*The Shaka Theme in Dramatic Literature in French from West Africa*, African Studies, 1974, Volume 33 N°3).

John Conteh-Morgan's study[2] will provide a useful theoretical background on the origins and specificity of the dramatic form in Francophone African literature as well as an insightful look at the thematic of this particular literature in which he identifies the theme of Chaka as being of particularly importance.

Two things will be highlighted in this chapter. Firstly, I will show that each of the authors cited earlier has made a conscious choice, in parallel with what was demonstrated in our analysis of Senghor's poem, to preserve the authenticity of their written texts by assuring continuity with oral tradition. It is no coincidence, thus, that all the African Francophone re-writings of *Chaka* are plays – with the exception of Senghor's 'poetic drama'.[3] In choosing a literary genre that allows the inclusion of elements drawn from traditional theatre, these authors make the nationalist cultural choice to contribute to the rediscovery (or the preserving) of African values, art and culture. This conscious intellectual choice is inherited from Négritude which, as seen earlier, advocates the quest for cultural recovery as one of its fundamental tenets.

My second and closely related point refers to the use of history in this quest. Specifically, Shaka's history will serve as an illustrious example of Africa's pre-colonial glory and as an allegory of post-independence politics simultaneously. I will demonstrate that the Francophone authors who have written about Shaka/Chaka have retained the

[2] Most of the critical corpus available on these Francophone versions, except for Mabana's latest work and Conteh-Morgan's introduction to Francophone African drama, dates from the mid-seventies. Oddly enough, the critics who have studied these various re-writings *all* mistakenly believe that Senghor's poem was published in 1958 (this is the case for Spronk and Blair) or in 1965 (Couzens and Ogunbesan) when it was in fact, as we know, first published in 1951, as a single poem in *Présence Africaine*, and later in 1956 in the collection *Ethiopiques*. This factual inaccuracy shows, in a sense, a certain deficient understanding of the importance of Senghor's text – at least in the context of his poetical and political endeavours at the time he wrote it – and could then also suggest a similarly scanty understanding of the Francophone versions that followed Senghor's initial adaptation.

[3] A form considered by some, such as Soyinka as cited in Conteh-Morgan's work, to be the legitimate modern heir to traditional African ritual performance (Conteh-Morgan 1994:24)

strong Shakan identity and its correlated Zulu politics from Mofolo's novel which have served them to advance pan-Africanist ideals or lament, whichever the case, their loss.

In order to achieve this I will firstly present a synopsis of the plays, noting particularities in each that are relevant to our analysis. Then, in order to elucidate some of the points brought to light in our overview of the plays, I will offer some general perspectives on Francophone African drama drawn mainly from Conteh-Morgan's thorough introduction to the genre. Lastly, I will tender a more comprehensive analysis of Badian's play so as to reinforce and illustrate all the arguments put forth from a more minutiously textual perspective.

2. Synopsis of the Francophone Re-writings of Chaka *and Some Theoretical Insights into Francophone African Drama*

2.1 To Each his Own Chaka

2.1.1 Nénékhaly-Camara's *Amazoulou*

The text that follows Senghor's and Badian's versions is Guinean Nénékhaly-Camara's *Amazoulou* (1970). When Nénékhaly-Camara wrote his play he had been working in government for ten years, although he was a writer by profession. He was certainly not an exception in this regard as a few other fellow dramatists, such as Senghor but also Badian and Niane most notably, had also been practicing politicians.

In discussing *Amazoulou*, Blair rightly observes that Nénékhaly-Camara demystified Chaka in his play. Chaka, she continues, loses his superhuman stature of hero in a text that has lost the grandeur of Chaka's exploits and the supernatural qualities of

Mofolo's story which "lift[s] the facts of history to the domain of myth"; all that in an attempt to offer his compatriots a "figure with whom they can identify their own revolutionary efforts […]" (Blair 1974:137).

Mario de Andrade, who wrote the preface to the play, entitles his short analysis 'Antar-Chaka: Vers un théâtre épique pour les peuples africains' ['Antar-Chaka: Towards an Epic Theatre for African Nations'].[4] The preface's title itself is key to elucidating the author's revolutionary impulses in re-interpreting Mofolo's story. But what is more explicit, however, is Andrade quoting the author as having told him directly that the historical figures Antar[5] and Shaka "symbolise, through their respective destinies and achievements, *the historical evolution of Africa within its true revolutionary vocation*" (Andrade 1970:5, my emphasis).[6]

Nénékhaly-Camara also adds a further dimension to the fascination and admiration he holds for Chaka. He sees Chaka as the first founder of a modern African state. In the words of Andrade:

> Tout en suivant de près l'épopée de Thomas Mofolo, Nénékhaly-Camara dépouille le personnage de Chaka. Par son traitement théâtral, le héros Zoulou apparaît dans toute sa stature de bâtisseur d'une nation (Andrade 1970:8).
>
> [While remaining faithful to Thomas Mofolo's epic,[7] Nénékhaly-Camara's theatrical adaptation strips Chaka of most of his distinctive characteristics

[4] The play which precedes *Amazoulou* is entitled *Continent-Afrique* and is the story of the hero-warrior Antar.
[5] A 6th century Arab warrior of half African descent who distinguished himself as a great warrior and poet.
[6] My translation.
[7] Andrade uses the word 'épopée' (epic) taken from the subtitle of Ellenberger's French translation of Mofolo's novel which reads, in full, "*Chaka, Une épopée Bantoue*".

as portrayed in the novel, in order to focus on his standing as a nation-builder][8]

This singular facet of the historical king is, I believe, crucial in understanding all the versions studied because it is at the core of each playwright's particular manipulation of (Mofolo's) Chaka for the expression of his individual ideology. The modernity of Chaka is central to the character's ability to be transformed into an icon for modern African leadership with pan-African aspirations.

*

Nénékhaly-Camara's Chaka, very much like Senghor's main protagonist, is also a tormented hero. He has struggled for his people and the sometimes cruel deeds he has committed for their good weigh increasingly more on his conscience: "Cette vie trop agitée me pèse chaque jour advantage" [This overly hectic life weighs on me more each day][9] (Nénékhaly-Camara 1970:75).

Nénékhaly-Camara has also retained Chaka's visionary quality, that of the hero who foresees – here, together with Isanusi the diviner – the advent of colonialism and its subsequent devastation.

As he is drawing his last breath, in a moment reminiscent of Mofolo's and Senghor's texts as analysed so far, Chaka speaks of the coming of a new era, that of the Zulu nation's struggle for the preservation of its heritage and its existence (its blood in

[8] My translation.
[9] Ibid.

fact, '*leur sang*'): "l'avènement d'une ère nouvelle, celle de la lutte des Zoulous pour la défense de leur patrimoine et de leur sang" (Nénékhaly-Camara 1970:97).

2.1.2 Djibril Tamsir Niane's *Chaka*

As with Nénékhaly-Camara's *Amazoulou* which appears in a book that contains two plays of which the first, *Continent-Afrique* tells the story of the hero Antar, so does Niane's *Chaka* follow *Sikasso ou La dernière citadelle*, a short play on one of the last bastions of resistance against French colonial forces in West Africa – Sikasso was situated in what is now Mali.[10] The fact that *Chaka* follows the story of Sikasso is telling of the author's intellectual stance: that, of course, of acquainting his readers with the glorious side of the continent's past history.

Like all the versions discussed, Niane's *Chaka* is inspired by Mofolo's eponymous novel from which he has extricated what could be used in the mythification of the historical Zulu king to fulfill a more personal and immediate purpose in writing his story.

Niane is best known for his now classic novel, *Soundjata ou l'épopée mandingue*, the story of Soundjata, the founder of the Mandinka empire. This is relevant as it shows the author's academic love of literature and history as well as his profound political interest in the glorious side of the African past that is either too little known or too often

[10] It took the French two days to seize the town. After much resistance, on the 1st of May 1898 Sikasso finally succumbed to the French forces' modern artillery causing the ruling king to kill himself rather than accepting subjection to French rule.

told by the winning side. Obviously, given Niane's inclination for writing historical novels/plays, he would have been predisposed to be inspired by Mofolo's *Chaka*.

*

A short biographical aside would elucidate the source of Niane's passion. After completing his *licence ès lettres*[11] in Bordeaux, majoring in history and literature, Niane returned to a newly independent Guinea to actively participate in his country's edification. Niane's great contribution to his country focused on its educational system but he also worked on archeological projects focusing on the Mandinka Empire of the Mande people before ending up in the government's ministry of Scientific Research (Autra 1970:5).[12]

*

The layers in Niane's re-writing of *Chaka* include, firstly, his aspirations for a modern and socialist-inspired African model of governance. Added to these are complex – and interesting – literary intertextual inspirations and references. Niane has been

[11] The equivalent of an Honours degree in the English system.
[12] This biographical information appears in the preface of the book written by Ray Autra, on request by the author.

nurtured, throughout his childhood, by the myths and legends he heard at night around the communal village fire where he had the privilege to meet some of the most distinguished griots of the Mandinka heritage (Autra 1970:7). Once studying literature in France he, like Senghor, developed a true admiration for Greco-roman literature and – because of their obvious similarities with his African heritage – the classical myths:

> Dans l'une et dans l'autre société – mandingue et gréco-latine –, toute la vie quotidienne est imprégnée de la même éthique, du même déterminisme, des mêmes croyances ; les hommes agissent tout comme dans l'univers où se meuvent Chaka et les siens sous le coup des mêmes forces telluriques (Autra 1970 : 17).
>
> [In each of these societies – Mandika and Greco-Roman – everyday life is impregnated with the same ethics, the same determinism, and the same beliefs; in these societies, men act like they do in Chaka and his people's universe, guided by the same telluric forces][13]

This is where Soundjata, the founder of the Malian empire and Shaka, the founder of the Zulu nation, converge in Niane's *Chaka*'s narrative. Both were extraordinary leaders from similar origins – that, among others, of being outcast children for instance – who overcame great obstacles to become nationalistic heroes whose powers, because so awe-inspiring, are understood to belong to the supernatural – much like the Greek heroes of classical Greco-roman literature.

The supernatural origins of Chaka's rise to glory can be traced to the episode of his encounter with the King of the Deep Pool which Niane has preserved in his play from Mofolo's original. But, just like Mofolo – and this is Niane's *Chaka* singularity when

[13] My translation.

compared to other Francophone versions – the author has not absolved Chaka of his crimes. By remaining faithful to Mofolo's characterisation of Isanusi, Niane retains the moral dilemma central to Mofolo's narrative. Despite Isanusi's wickedness, it is Chaka who chooses what is offered to him by the diviner and that is supreme personal power.

However, Niane's hero is eventually plagued by remorse which does somehow redeem him. He tells Issanoussi (Isanusi): "Maître, tu m'as dit : « Je ne te force pas. » Je l'ai voulu le pouvoir. Mais mon cœur n'a plus de repos" (Niane 1971 :88) [Master, you told me « I am not forcing you. » It is truly that I did choose power. But my heart is now restless].[14] Niane's Chaka is not a hero who has sacrificed his 'purity of heart' for the love of his nation but neither is he an unforgivable blood-thirsty tyrant since he suffers untold guilt under Isanusi's 'sniggering'.

*

Ultimately, by writing *Chaka*, Niane opens up a topical debate for newly independent African governments: can leadership ever be truly blameless? If not, when does a forgivable failure end and a tyrannical reign begin?

[14] My translation.

2.1.3 Abdou Anta Kâ's *Les Amazoulous*

The subtitle to Kâ's play reads "Tragédie négro-africaine inspirée du roman *Chaka*, de Thomas Mofolo" and, in that, it acknowledges its (African) debt to the Sotho writer, further demonstrating the extent of the impact Mofolo's novel has had on Francophone African literature.

Kâ was not, however, solely inspired by Mofolo. In his preface, the author acknowledges his debt to both Senghor and Badian. I strongly concur with Mabana for whom Kâ retains, from Senghor and Négritude, the mythical-epic nature of the representation of Chaka and from Badian, the sense of duty and moral rectitude necessary for the edification of the black world (Mabana 2002:49).

*

Les Amazoulous is perhaps one of the poorest versions of *Chaka* thus far because it offers neither a substantial narrative nor a plot line and it also lacks, in my view, any originality. But Kâ has the merit of wishing to offer a singular variation from his predecessors which is, in his own words, that his version is to be one from the "man on the street" after that of a president – Senghor's – and of a government minister – Badian's (Kâ 1968:36). Despite this original intention, Kâ's second objective, which is to give "Chaka his due place in the Pyramid [– here the image is reminiscent of a pantheon –] of

the *Heroes of the Race*" (Kâ 1968:37, my emphasis),[15] is something whose (relative?) success could doubtfully be attributed to Kâ alone.

2.1.4 Some later versions: Tchicaya U Tam'Si's *Le Zulu* and Malouga Fall's *Chaka ou le Roi visionnaire*

After Senghor, Badian, Kâ, Nénékhaly-Camara and Niane, the political preoccupations of the Francophone writers to have re-interpreted the myth of Chaka change. They are now concerned with an Africa of the mid-seventies to the mid-eighties which emerges as neither glorious nor optimistic as in the earlier versions.

*

In Togolese Sénouvo Agbota Zinsou's *On joue la comédie* (1975) for instance, Chaka is persecuted by the apartheid police. In the play, he is an actor called Chaka acting out Chaka's life. He is at once an actor and an actor of justice and this play about a play blurs out the distinction between the various 'realities' being acted out. Despite the lightness of the play and its happy ending, the central theme is dark. It is a plea for the black race against the background of apartheid South Africa (Mabana 2002:76).

Although I do not intend to analyse this particular text since it does not offer much in terms of our investigation, we will note one interesting contribution by Zinsou

[15] My translation.

which is worth highlighting. Besides the transposition of Chaka's 'situation' into Apartheid South Africa which the Zulu only prophesised in Mofolo's novel, the most notable originality of Zinsou's play, in my view, is his move away from the form followed, in his time, by Francophone West African dramaturgists. This form – of modern texts written in French – too often resulted in plays being "popular in intent, but élitist in form and preoccupation" (Conteh-Morgan 1994:35) – something which I believe to be the case for Senghor's *Chaka* as well. In his attempt to break the barrier between audience and stage however, Zinsou was part of those Francophone playwrights who, "since the late 1970s and early 1980's", attempted "to create a drama which, while still in French and written, textualis[ed] more systematically the performance modes of traditional theatre. Their idea [was] to overcome the obstacle of the dialogues in French by the integration of the non-verbal language of song, music, dance and so on" (Conteh-Morgan 1994:35).

2.1.4.1 *Le Zulu*

Chaka, in Tchicaya U Tam'Si's *Le Zulu* (1978) is an antihero who commits suicide at the end of the play.

Both the colonial era and apartheid are prognosticated in *Le Zulu* – "Le danger viendra de là – méfie-toi de l'écume de la mer…La mer, l'enfer de tout ce qui touché à ce qui est blanc [Danger will come from there – beware of the sea-scum…The sea, everything that touches what is white becomes hell!], warns Chaka!" (U Tam'Si 1977:119).

Importantly perhaps, U Tam'Si's version expresses the author's deep existential disillusionment with the realities of African governance of his time, a time when African dictators, like the Chaka in his play, are so imbued with their self-importance as heroes (of independence for instance) that they end up dying in utter loneliness (Mabana 2002:146). Tchicaya's contribution to the panoply of re-writings of Mofolo's *Chaka* is that the Congolese author has remained faithful to the characterisation of his main protagonist.

Effectively, Ndlébé and Malounga (Ndlebe and Malunga; wizards in U'Tam'Si's play) seek Chaka and offer him unsurpassed glory precisely because he is open to accepting its consequences. Even if, just like Mofolo's Isanusi, they are the ones to *tempt* Chaka, he is the one who ultimately accepts the temptation to fulfill his greedy ambitions. Just as we proposed earlier in our discussion[16] that Isanusi could be interpreted as the manifestation of the nefarious side of Chaka's psyche, so are Ndlébé and Malounga in U'Tam'Si's play, according to Conteh-Morgan, "the objectivisation of the hero's unconscious desires" (Conteh-Morgan 1994:177). Conteh-Morgan's psychoanalytical perspective proves revelatory in that it highlights that, ultimately, Mofolo and U Tam'Si were both concerned with the nature of evil and its manifestation in a notorious (and infamous) historical figure. This aspect of U Tam'Si's *Le Zulu* is in total discordance with the rest of the versions discussed.

[16] In the study of Isanusi's character effected in Chapter 4, Part II.

2.1.4.2 *Chaka ou le Roi visionnaire*

Malouga Fall's vision of the modern African state in *Chaka ou le Roi visionnaire* (1984) is just as dark. His hero is a modern leader who fought and defeated colonialism in order to found a single-party government in his newly independent country. His cruelty and inhumanity, which match that of Mofolo's Chaka, have led his country into misery, ruin and famine (Mabana 2002:69). Like all others before him, Fall has infused his version with a topical political message: that of the necessity of good governance. And if, in Mabana's words, the hero in *Chaka ou le Roi visionnaire* is rather Senghorian in tune – reminiscent of older adaptations – the character of the griot in Fall's version (which the author calls "récitant") carries a modern message. In the very last paragraph of the play, he tells the audience that the future of Africa lies in their hands (Mabana 2002: 68-70):

> L'histoire nous dit que le cadavre de Chaka fut abandonné aux chiens.
> Que nous importe de savoir ce que devint son corps.
> Sa mémoire nous est restée et c'est le plus important !
> Hommes d'aujourd'hui, hommes oublieux
> Lequel parmi vous a rompu l'Enigme ?
> Conducteurs de peuples,
> L'avenir de l'Afrique est entre vos mains (Fall 1984 :103).

> [History tells us that Chaka's corpse was left out for the dogs.
> It does not matter what has happened to his body.
> His remains and that is the most important!
> Men of today, forgetful men
> Which one amongst you has broken the Mystery?
> Leaders of nations,

The future of Africa lies your hands][17]

It is significant that the last words of Fall's play come from the *récitant*, the one who would actually address the audience directly if *Chaka ou le Roi visionnaire* was to be enacted on stage. We have already mentioned the importance of the griot in most traditional West African societies. Evidently, Fall wishes to keep his text as close to an 'authentic African' genre familiar to his readers/audience. Just as Badian, as we shall see, makes Isanusi his spokesperson (as the wise elder of the community), so does Fall use the *récitant* to voice his pan-Africanist message of unity and strong leadership in a time when, for him, Africa is in danger of succumbing to the evils of greed and nepotism.

*

As is clear from this initial look at the varied interpretations of the story of Chaka, each author cited has manipulated Mofolo's central character according to his distinctive 'worldview' or political stance. Conteh-Morgan's following statement echoes this notion in a perfectly summed up argument which is worth quoting at length:

> To most Francophone writers, Chaka is just a convenient symbol for personal and political myth-making. Senghor, for example, sees him as a nationalist driven by only the purest of political motives: that of liberating his people […]. His Chaka […] suffers from none of the megalomania of the hero of Thomas Mofolo's historical romance. If anything, his recourse

[17] My translation.

> to the politics of destruction (which Senghor does not deny but instead defends with rare lyrical brilliance) involves great personal […].
> Badian for his part depicts a man who is pure heroism in thought and action […]. To Abdou Anta Ka,[18] Chaka is above all a 'man of the people' […], while in Zinsou's play […] he becomes a theater activist and anti-apartheid agitator. But even when he is shown to be very destructive, as is the case in Nénékhaly-Camara's work, it is his advisers […] who are held responsible for that. […] And it is in the context of this general chorus of praise that U'Tamsi's[19] play erupts like a discordant note. His hero is neither Badian's patriot nor Senghor's martyr but rather Mofolo's protagonist : a great man possessed by the desire for power and personal glory and in the end ravaged by it (Conteh-Morgan 1994:175-176).

2.2 Contextual Observations

The first generalisation to be made concerning the particularities of Francophone African drama should be that, "[c]entral to the thematic preoccupations of Francophone literary drama is the presentation of events and figures drawn from Africa's historical past" (Conteh-Morgan 1994:61).

In fact, some of the authors discussed did not restrict their historical preoccupation with (re)writing the story of Shaka/Chaka. Senghor, as we know, did not only retell Shaka/Chaka's story but was also more globally concerned, in his poetry, with other historical figures of Africa's past such as the Kaya-Magan or the Queen of Sheba. The same goes, as has been noted, for Nénékhaly-Camara who makes a strong

[18] Note on orthography: Conteh-Morgan spells Ka's surname without the circumflex accent as I do – and as it appears in French texts.
[19] Note on orthography: Conteh-Morgan spells Tchicaya U Tam'Si's surname 'U'Tamsi' which is a spelling I have never encountered before.

association between Ankar and Shaka. Niane too, as mentioned, wrote his most inspiring work on the legendary Soundjata.

This commonality in most Francophone plays from Africa, which is reinforced, in the words of Conteh-Morgan by their "*celebratory* and *commemorative* nature" (Conteh-Morgan 1994:62) is particularly salient in the re-writings of Mofolo's novel that concern us. Linked to this desire to celebrate heroes from a pre-colonial African past is, of course, the need expressed by these writers (revolutionary in nature) for the formation of a cultural identity. In their rewriting of Mofolo's novel, Senghor, Nénékhaly-Camara, Niane, Kâ, U Tam'Si, Fall and, as it will be shown, Badian too, have attempted to resurrect Chaka – a hero from the past – to be used, as Conteh explains, as a unifying myth and a source for national consciousness.

This past in the service of the future is insightfully remarked upon by Burness for whom these authors have re-created Chaka's image in light of post-independence reality, because they saw, in him, a heroic model for a glorious African future (Burness 1976:80). Shaka, as a historical figure, would have been, in his nation-building endeavour and resulting deep-seated Zulu identity, an inspiring catalyst in the quest for a coherent post-independence identity for these authors as they, themselves, were often directly involved in the decolonisation of their countries or, at least, in the (re)building of their newly independent nations. The structure of Mofolo's narrative, with entire chapters dedicated to the changes brought about by Chaka and the king's achievement in unifying his people provided textual reinforcement to the historical myth.[20]

[20] This is particularly true since *Chaka* provided the only comprehensive and widely available document at the time on the life and times of the Zulu king in French – made available by Ellenberger's 1940 translation of course.

For Conteh-Morgan, the "*vast* majority of Francophone plays", and this includes, in my opinion, *all* the plays concern with re-writing Chaka's story, "are concerned with man's social and political conditions […]. Francophone drama is a drama of social and political combat" (Conteh-Morgan 1994: 26-27).

This combative aspect is not simply evident in the content of the plays but also in their form. Part of the African Francophone playwrights' crusade was to reconnect with their past politically *and* culturally. Whether it be Fall, Badian or Senghor for instance, the telling of the story and the way of telling it becomes a political act. In strong keeping with Négritude's principles of a cultural reconnection with one's Africanity, these authors have sought to reconnect in an essential way. They chose to tell their stories in the form of plays or poetic drama – because these can be performed and thus reach a wider audience – and in turn made a conscious decision to reconnect that form (partly inherited from the West) to more African "ancient theatrical forms" (Conteh-Morgan 1994:30) which belong to the realm of oral narrative.

An immediate demonstration of this is the inclusion, in many of the versions discussed, of a griot – sometimes also called a *récitant* (by Fall) or the 'Leader of the Chorus', as in Senghor – which "has become an important dramatic character in modern plays" (Conteh-Morgan 1994:43).

Part of this revolutionary undercurrent in Francophone drama stemmed, as Conteh explains, from the rigorous French policy of assimilation. This policy manifested itself in a strong cultural control of France's subjects and left many West-African countries 'purged' of their authentic cultural identity. Conteh-Morgan further explains:

> One can understand why, when Francophones later revolted against French rule, history either as a discipline or just as a theme in literature, especially in drama, should have become so attractive a weapon […] they now saw no better tool with which to further *their* anti-colonial political ends. They came to the conclusion that as a condition for political and psychological freedom, they had to take part in, at the very least, if not take over, the *production* of their own self-image […]. [21] The predilection of historical themes in the works of the dramatists among them is a reflection of the awareness of this need, and an attempt to meet it. By putting on stage the politico-military achievements of, say, Chaka (one of their favourite heroes) […] the dramatists were doing several things. They were repudiating the myth of a history-less and insignificant past on which (French) colonialism based its claims; restoring theirs and their people's injured pride; rousing in the people a sense of patriotism and finally creating, as we have mentioned earlier, myths and symbols for national self-consciousness and unity (Conteh-Morgan 1994:70).

The points raised here will become particularly salient in the analysis of Badian's *La mort de Chaka* to follow.

3. Seydou Badian Koyaté's La mort de Chaka (1961)

3.1 Chaka Celebrated

The text that follows Senghor's chronologically is Seydou Badian Koyaté's *La mort de Chaka*. Published by Présence Africaine in 1961,[22] it is a play comprising five acts (referred to as *tableaux* by the author) proceeded by an authorial preface. The story is

[21] This is, incidentally, central to Négritude's tenets as we know.
[22] All page references for the text are from the 1972 *Présence Africaine* edition.

that of the death of Chaka (the literal meaning of the title). In it, Chaka has been governing his newly established kingdom with an iron fist. His generals (Malhangana, Mapo, Oumsélé, Myodzi and Dingama), tired of his warring ambitions and his authoritative ways meet to discuss Chaka's demise. As Chaka prepares for yet a new campaign the generals decide to ask for a two-day break before going to war. Chaka grants them the respite with some reluctance and then proceeds to exclude his generals by reorganising his army into three regiments each lead by, in turn, Isanoussi and N'Dlébé,[23] (his two most trusted acolytes) and himself – in command of the 'Machakas' regiment, made up of the young warrior elite, abd who come back victorious.

Once the battle is won, Chaka is suddenly killed as he is performing the rituals to the all mighty '*N'kouloun-Kouloun*'.[24]

*

The main tension in the narrative resides around the generals' debating the vices and virtues of their leader. The antithetical sides are voiced by Malhagana and Mapo. For Malhagana, Chaka is nothing but a bloodthirsty tyrant driven by greed: "What makes him happiest […] is to listen to his praises" (195); "The enemy is Chaka!"(208), he says in turn.[24] Mapo's opinion of Chaka is diametrically opposed as he is unconditionally loyal to the king, going as far as excusing him for the massacres of his own 'brothers' – a reference here to the episode in Mofolo's novel entitled "The killing of the cowards"

[23] We will note that these characters are taken from Mofolo's novel. Yet, if in Mofolo's text they are the great diviner Isanusi and his servant Ndlebe (dark characters, masters of witchcraft, Chaka's tempters), they are, in Badian's play, his most trusted (and wise) advisors. Could this transformation stem from a desire, on the author's, to remedy the characters' infamous reputation?

[24] His name is spelled 'Nkulunkulu' in Kunene's translation of Mofolo's *Chaka*.

(Chapter 19). Mapo is prepared to die (by Chaka's own hand even), if it is for the greater good of the nation: "If he kills us it is for the Zulu nation!" he says (194).[25]

The exchanges between Malhagana and Mapo echo, of course, those between a dying Chaka and the White Voice (whose stance Malhagana echoes) in Senghor's poem. The intertextuality with Senghor's text is testimony to the poet's contribution to the Chaka myth in Francophone literature. This myth, as already underlined, rests in most Francophone versions, on the desire and the need to elevate a wounded people by retelling the history of the African continent from a more positive perspective, an act viewed as fundamental in Senghorian Négritude. So it is that historical accuracy in these plays is thus only secondary to their authors' political motivations and this includes *La mort de Chaka*.

The effort to commemorate and elevate of which we spoke earlier is already explicitly clear in the author's preface where he says that Chaka is the greatest black conqueror to have come from Africa.

Although he has omitted many others from Mofolo's story, Badian includes the episode of the visitation of the King of the Deep Pool in his play – which the main protagonist recounts to Notibé retrospectively. Badian's version of the meeting serves to highlight Chaka's inherent goodness towards his people and his strong socialist aspirations. In Badian's re-writing, The King of the Deep Pool offers Chaka all the glory and riches of the world but, instead of greedily accepting the offer, Chaka brings out his people's greatness and happiness as being his only priority:

[25] My translation.

> […] un jour le Seigneur des Eaux Profondes a dit à Chaka au bord d'une rivière : "Je te donne la fortune, je te donne le bétail et je te donne la gloire au milieu de ton peuple." Et Chaka a demandé : "Pendant ce temps, comment sera mon peuple ?" Le Seigneur des Eaux Profondes a répondu : "Pourquoi t'occupes-tu des autres ? Tous seront dans la misère." Et Chaka a prié : "Accorde-moi la grandeur de mon peuple et laisse-moi dans la misère" (238).
>
> [One day, the King of the Deep Pool told Chaka by the river: "I will give you fortune, I will give you cattle and I will give you glory among your people." And Chaka asked: "What will become of my people while I bathe in this glory and riches?" The King of the Deep Pool answered: "Why do you worry about others? They will all live in misery." And Chaka begged of him: "Give me the greatness of my people and leave me in misery instead"][26]

Badian's hero becomes a leader whose culpability is exorcised by his own great sacrifices performed for the good of the nation. Defending himself from his accusers Chaka says that:

> […] l'homme est un animal à deux têtes. L'une s'appelle la Grandeur, l'autre la Médiocrité. La Grandeur naît dans les sacrifices, dans la douleur. La Médiocrité, elle, pousse sur la paresse, sur l'insouciance, sur les plaisirs. J'ai voulu enlever cette tête à mon peuple, mais elle est difficile à vaincre (31).
>
> […] man is an animal with two heads: Greatness and Mediocrity. Greatness grows from sacrifices and pain, Mediocrity from laziness,

[26] My translation.

> insouciance and pleasure-seeking. I have wanted to cut that head off from my people, but it is difficult to beat.] [27]

These words, once again, resonate with Senghor's poem. When exonerating himself of his crimes to the White Voice, the Senghorian hero claims that all he did was, in fact, "for the love of his black-skinned people" (145) and that "the greatest evil is the weakness of fear" (144).[28]

3.2 Badian's '*pièce à thèse*'

3.2.1 A Combative Narrative

It is unmistakably evident that Badian heard, just as Senghor before him, a voice of protest in Mofolo's *Chaka*. That voice warns of the advent of colonialism and all its consequential destruction, something which history proved to be true. Just as in Mofolo's novel, these troubling times for Africa are foretold by Badian's hero upon his death – as is, in fact, also the case in most of the Francophone versions of Mofolo's *Chaka*.

Chaka's visionary qualities in Badian's play are highlighted in the hero's last monologue when he announces the coming of a long metaphorical night for his people, just before he dies:

> Notre terre sera bouleversée bientôt. Quelque chose d'extraordinaire va arriver. Il y aura de l'orage, nous allons connaître une vie sans lumière, une vie de tortures, d'humiliations. […] Mais je suis convaincu, moi

[27] My translation.
[28] Cited from Reed's & Wake's translation (1965).

> Chaka, grâce aux vertus de mon peuple, qu'au bout de cette nuit, vous trouverez une aube nouvelle […] (250).
>
> [Our land will be lost soon. Something extraordinary will happen. There will be thunder; we will know a life without light, a life of torture and humiliation. […] But *I*, Chaka, am convinced that at the end of this night, *you*, my people, will be able to come through this troubling time by relying on your own virtues and see a new dawn for yourselves […]][29]

Senghor's terminology of a new dawn, which has been discussed in the previous Chapter, recurs in Badian's text. From this, it is at least clear that a common thread between the Francophone re-writings of Mofolo's *Chaka* is that of a vision of the future. As has been repeatedly stressed, the re-interpretation of (Mofolo's) *Chaka* is, for these authors, the expression of their individual visions and desires for the continent *after* colonialism.

Badian's vision is that of a socialist-based model for governance driven by the new generation who would take over from the one that struggled for independence. The analogy with Chaka's story in the play is obvious here. Chaka built a nation with the help of his generals and he now wishes for the latter to let the new generation take over and carry on what has been started. Like Senghor in his poem, Badian uses an African rural metaphor to address the issue. The image bears a strong resemblance to Senghor's analogy of Chaka as a farmer preparing the fields for future sowing and is worth reciting here:

[29] Reed's & Wake's translation (1965). This extract of Chaka's monologue in the last tableau of the play is awkward to translate mainly because of the personal pronouns used in the French text. These could be confusing if translated literally. Chaka speaks of 'us' but then of 'I' before using the third person singular possessive 'mon' in speaking of his people whom he, at the end of the monologue, addresses as 'vous' ['you' in its plural form] and not 'nous' [us], thus excluding himself from the final outcome of his prophecy when he had included himself initially.

J'ai porté la cognée dans ce bois mort, allumé l'incendie dans la brousse stérile
En propriétaire prudent. C'étaient cendres pour les semailles d'hivernage. (120)

[I have set the axe to the dead wood, lit the fire in the sterile bush
Like any careful farmer. When the rains came and the time for sowing, the ashes were ready (144)][30]

3.2.2 *La mort de Chaka* as A Post-Independence Socialist Model of Governance

Badian's version comes a year after the independence of his home country, Mali. Effectively, Badian wrote *La mort de Chaka* at a time when he had "interrupted his medical career to put all his energies into the development of his country" (Battestini 1968:3). Badian, who comes from a long lineage of griots from the Madingue Empire (Mabana 2002:88), became the country's first Minister of Development after independence. The writer's circumstances and his political involvement in the birth of his country's first independent socialist government thus put his play in a particular perspective.

In a review of Clive Wake's translation of Badian's play,[31] Couzens offers the following insight into *La mort de Chaka*'s central theme:

[30] My translation.
[31] Translated as *The Death of Chaka* and published in 1968 by Oxford University Press, Cape Town.

> [Badian's] theme is the struggle between the charismatic nationalist leader, who has united his people in the face of terrific odds, who has kept them together through his own personal magnetism, while sacrificing his personal pleasures, *and the divisive forces of the elite* who have risen with him and who now wish to live the good life rather than pursue nation-building […] (Couzens 1974: 187, my emphasis).

Evidently, Badian warns, in his play, against the careless governance of those who feel they deserve to reap the rewards of their hard work to the detriment of the good of the nation. Dingana, who is the first to speak in the play, introduces the theme by speaking on behalf of the generals and voices their desire for the freedom to enjoy the riches they have accumulated on behalf of the Zulu nation:

> "[…] il faut que Chaka nous laisse la liberté de profiter des immenses richesses que nous avons accumulées" (190).
>
> [Chaka must allow us the freedom to enjoy the huge treasures that we have accumulated][32]

Spronk cites Badian as having said that the socialist venture requires that collective interests take precedence over personal ones (Spronk 1984:637).[33] Badian's Chaka did, indeed, seek the happiness of his people above his in *La mort de Chaka* – "le bonheur et la tranquilité" [happiness and serenity], as he says (227). This quest has meant all sorts of sacrifices for Chaka (personal and political) since it was a divine mission,

[32] My translation.
[33] The French version reads "La construction socialiste exige que l'intérêt collectif passe avant l'intérêt individuel" and is extracted from « Les Difficultés de la construction socialiste en Afrique » in *Afrique et politique*, ed. Maurice A. Lubin (Paris : La Pensée Universelle, 1974), p.129.

leaving him very little choice: "we had a mission" he tells N'Dlébé, "N'kouloun-Kouloun the great had assigned us with this task, we had to accomplish it […]" (231). [34]

As opposed to Mofolo's Chaka, who is a man without temperance, driven by his insatiable thirst for power, Badian's Chaka, in the words of Mabana, is a self-sacrificial, nationalist-socialist leader whose murder becomes an act of treason against a great leader (Mabana 2002:106-107).

3.2.3 The Role of The Youth in Badian's Socialist Model

In Badian's model, the youth represents the future of the people. After those who have struggled for freedom (or, in the play, after Chaka's successful nation-building) must come those who will carry their country, their continent in fact, to a new era of justice and well-being for all.

Chaka says to the youth:

> Vous montrerez si vous êtes capables de faire fructifier le champ que nous avons labouré (233).
>
> [You will have to prove whether you are indeed capable of fruitfully exploiting the field that we [Chaka and the generals] have prepared for you][35]

The youth, in Badian's play, will inherit Chaka's strong leadership and continue the uplifting of their people, acting as the custodians of their strong national identity. The

[34] My translation.
[35] Ibid.

importance of youth in Chaka's/Badian's vision of the future of the Zulu (African) nation(s) is poetically illustrated by Chaka words: "Toute une génération de jeunes, surtout mes enfants, les Machakas, montent vers le soleil avec le coeur et l'esprit de Chaka" (231) – [An entire generation of youngsters, my children in particular, the Machakas, are rising towards the sun with the heart and spirit of Chaka].[36]

To his generals, Chaka proposes to let the Machakas take over the leading reigns, allowing the young warriors to make a name for themselves after which the whole nation shall celebrate its pride in these young lions together (243). Chaka personally leads them into battle from which they come back victorious. The young warriors greet him with the correct praises of "Bayete!" (233). The king, in turn, addresses them as a father – "Mes enfants…" [My children…] he says (233).[37] He tells them that the battle they are going into is a battle of destiny, the last one of the Zulu people which it will be their duty to fight for the nation (233).

Parenthetically, Chaka refers to the Machakas as "lions" (246). We have seen, in the previous chapter, that the image of the lion is a recurrent description of Chaka in Mofolo's text and that it is central to Senghor's mythologising of the Zulu king. In Badian's version, the metaphor is transferred onto the youth that will take over from Chaka in when he dies. The image is used several times as, for instance, when Chaka

[36] My translation. In this monologue, Chaka speaks about himself in the third person – as has always been the case of royalty in French. Also, we will note that, once more, Badian's text bears strong resemblance to Senghor's poem from which he was evidently strongly inspired. This is the case, in this instance, with the allegory of the *youth rising up towards the sun* which is reminiscent of Senghor's natural imagery – he speaks of a new dawn in his *Chaka*.

[37] The Machakas are not his children in a literal sense of course; they are the young warriors of his own regiment.

meets the King of the Deep Pool. The creature encountered prophesises Chaka's glorious future which will make, it says, "the lions […] roar with admiration for him" (238).[38]

The lion imagery, in Badian's and Senghor's *Chaka*(s) seems to work like Ariadne's thread – even if it is perhaps not as intentional in Badian as it is in Senghor – leading us readers through the labyrinth of the varied readings of Mofolo's novel and their intertextuality.

3.3 Isanusi's Role

La mort de Chaka is perhaps one of the most faithful rewritings of *Chaka*. Badian has included many original details from Mofolo's novel such as for instance the name of tribes and regiments used by Mofolo and even a reference to the *Mfecane* in the opening of the play – Dingana speaks of "le bousculement des tribus" (189).[39] The meeting with the King of the Deep Pool as already discussed but, also, the episode where Chaka saves a young woman abducted, in the night, by a hyena (199) are taken directly from Mofolo's novel.

One crucial departure from Mofolo's text, however, is that of Isanusi's role. Whereas the diviner is, as we have seen, the cause of Chaka's downfall in the novel, his function, in *La mort de Chaka*, is the radical opposite. Isanusi[40] is a benevolent character in Badian's text. He is a *sage* in the traditional African sense, the wisest advisor to Chaka who shares, with him, a boundless goodwill towards his people. The reversal of Isanusi's

[38] My translation.
[39] The crushing of peoples – which is what *Mfecane* literally means in Zulu, as elucidated in the first Chapter of Part I of this work.
[40] Spelled '*Issanoussi*' in *La mort de Chaka*, as it is in Ellenberger's French translation of Mofolo's novel.

narrative function in the Malian writer's version stems, in my opinion, from two simultaneous intentions, both political in nature.

Firstly, Badian shows a clear desire for a text whose form is reminiscent of the *théâtre naturel*[41] of traditional African oral literature. By writing a play as opposed to a novel for instance, Badian chooses a genre that, although produced in printed form, can be *performed* orally, much like the stories told by the traditional griots in African villages. This point strongly concurs with the Conteh-Morgan's earlier comment on the Francophones' effort to produce a theatre that is less elitist.

Isanusi is type-cast in Badian's version as the village elder (or *sage*) who represents the wisdom of old and is also the keeper of tradition. Of course, Isanusi could have remained 'evil' and still retained his function as a traditional character with the distinguishing trait of a villain in the intrigue. In changing Isanusi's function, however, Badian strikes two birds with one stone: he keeps close to a genre that is, for him, politically adequate to his socialist endeavour as it is a 'popular' genre and as such accessible to all, while at the same retaining an important figure of many African societies, that of the sage or African elder, whose wisdom and experience grants him the role of preserving traditions and protecting the integrity of his society. This way, if *La mort de Chaka* was to be performed for an audience, the spectators would be able to hear Badian's message for the need for temperance and altruism in governing a young, modern state through the words of a respected and familiar figure, the elder, Isanusi, who is also the author's spokesperson.

[41] The concept could be translated as 'natural theatre' but what it really refers to is traditional storytelling that is often based on classical stories and myths where characters are members of the spectators community and could include *sages* (the wise elders), kings, queens, warriors, villains etc.

3.4 Conclusion

Badian's vision of a socialist new dawn driven by the new generation is weighed down by the author's concern with the problematic nature of power struggles in leadership. His pan-Africanist aspirations – since Chaka is strongly portrayed as the unifying leader in his play – are marred by the threat posed by those who see it as their due to reap the rewards of the struggle. This is voiced by Dingana in the opening of the play: "[…] il faut que Chaka nous laisse la liberté de profiter des immenses richesses que nous avons accumulées" (190) [Chaka must give us the freedom to enjoy the great riches that we have accumulated].[42]

Badian rebukes the nation's greedy leadership desires through the wise words of N'Dlébé speaking to Malhagana, but addressing, in fact, all the generals simultaneously:

> Il faut savoir choisir; la mollesse, les plaisirs ou la grandeur. [..] Il faut comprendre que vous devez savoir vous priver afin que ceux qui viendront après vous puissent profiter de ce que vous avez fait. Ce seront vos enfants et vos petits-enfants (215-216).
>
> [One needs to choose between weakness, pleasure or greatness. […] You need to understand that you must deprive yourself so that those that come after you can truly benefit from what you have achieved. They will be your children and your grand-children][43]

[42] My translation.
[43] Ibid.

Although the authors discussed are obviously situated within the postcolonial discourse,[44] *Chaka* was the perfect emblem for African intellectual and literary creativity (Mofolo's), and African political and military prowess (Shaka's). Furthermore, Mofolo's *Chaka*, in a very modern fashion for its time, brought forth issues in Francophone literature of African governance and leadership which are connected to our much earlier discussion of his own political views.[45]

*

For Burness, "Mofolo is concerned with the nature of power and the destiny of African peoples. Because of this, his novel has much in common with contemporary African literature" (Burness 1976:14). Effectively, Burness sees Mofolo's modernity, as it is expressed in the novel *Chaka*, encapsulated in the character of Dingiswayo, who "is a thinker who tries to understand history and seeks above all the welfare of his people. But historical forces and human nature are such that he fails. This is his tragedy in a novel that deals primarily with a man that is very much unlike him" (Burness 1976:14). Burness' comment is enlightening because the critic hints at the possibility that the Francophone writers who read Mofolo could have picked out this particular theme of the novel and made it the focus of their own versions, in accordance with their own political and personal concerns.

[44] In that they belong to the "[…] culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day" (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin 1994:2).
[45] See Chapter 2 and 3 of Part I.

Attwell's interpretation of Dingiswayo's role in the novel has an added dimension. He says:

> The pre-Shakan world of the Bakone is valued for its immanent sense of divine providence; in Dingiswayo, Mofolo sees enlightened management (oriented, clearly, toward "civilization") and a certain humanistic piety. This represents an essentially *Protestant set of ideals*, soon to be violated by the arrival of Chaka (Attwell 1987:60, emphasis added).

It is striking to me that none of the Francophone versions studied here replicated the Christian dimension of Mofolo's judgment of his main protagonist.[46]

As we have seen, in Mofolo's text Chaka's conflict is personal and reproved by the narrator. Chaka's motivation is driven by the desire for revenge and the overwhelming yearning for absolute power, something which the narrator/Mofolo condemns. Chaka is also denounced for his unjustified cruelty. This excerpt from Chapter 6, before Chaka even meets Isanusi, gives the future king full responsibility for his brutal ways:

> 'How will it be the day I become a man and I take over the kingship? How shall I take my revenge the day that sun of mine shall rise!'
> He saw all the affairs of his life, from the time of his childhood, and he found that they were ugly and frightening, and made a man shudder. […] he decided that here on earth the only person who is wise and strong and beautiful and righteous, is he who knows how to fight with his stick; and

[46] Senghor is the only version that carries a strong Christian element but, as discussed in the previous chapter, the Christianity of the poem is about creating an African Christology and nowhere in Senghor's poem is Chaka judged by Christian standards.

> he decided that, from that day on, he would do just as he pleased, and that, whether a person was guilty or not, *he would simply kill him if he so wished*, for that is the law of man (35, emphasis added).

On the contrary, in most Francophone adaptations, Chaka's struggle is political and even good. He "has no regrets, for only evil must be regretted and for him the only evil is weakness and cowardice" (Blair 1974:134).

*

A frequent criticism of the Francophone adaptations of *Chaka* is that the stories are overly political to the detriment of their literary value. Effectively, when saying that no contemporary African writer has managed to produce a masterpiece, Blair suggests that one possible explanation for this is that "none has been able to distance himself from the political aspects of his subject" (Blair 1974:134). Although Blair's comment is contentious in its generalisation, it concurs with some of the Francophone re-writings of *Chaka*. Burness, for instance, is scathing about *La mort de Chaka*, which he calls an "artistic failure" because of its strong socialist slant (Burness 1976:79). We may not completely agree with his unforgiving criticism but it is true that sometimes, "[p]olitical commitment by itself cannot redeem a literary work" (Burness 1976:79) and this is where Senghor performs a poetic tour de force with his *Chaka*, proving that literature and politics are not always aesthetically exclusive.

Conclusion

Let us reconsider the opening quote to our thesis by Dan Wylie:

> […] the [Shaka] myth is still far from being ousted from the popular imagination; and as recent propaganda by both the Zulu Inkatha movement and Afrikaner right-wing shows, Shaka remains a politically malleable, even volatile symbol (Wylie 1992:411).

In writing *Chaka*, Thomas Mofolo contributed to the creation of a coherent Zulu identity (within the novel) in the same way that Shaka had done historically. As we have demonstrated, through his distinctive writing, Mofolo allowed for his tale to become a sort of literary matrix for the politicisation of a specific part of Zulu history, in the service of varied groups, in a variety of intellectual and ideological fields.

Gray's comment that "Mofolo's attempt is the opening bracket of what has become virtually a tradition within traditions, the written literature on Shaka" (Gray 1975:67) adds a further layer to Wylie's comment cited above. This layer is, of course, that of the literary expression of the malleability of Shaka's image as a political metaphor. The political function of metaphor is to be understood in Hamilton's terms as " taking something that is formed in the past, project[ing] it in[to] the future, and fill[ing] in the blanks" where its historical dimension is crucial "and can be said to have a predictive aspect" (Hamilton 1998:33).[1]

[1] I have strongly highlighted the predictive nature of Shaka as political metaphor when I discussed, for instance, Chaka's prophecy of the advent of colonialisation in Mofolo's, Senghor's and the Francophone adaptations – see Chapter 7 and 8 of Part III notably. We also note that this particular feature of the 'black' literature on Shaka is not limited to the Francophone African texts or even to Mofolo's version but

We have mentioned that Senghor always believed politics to be but one aspect of culture. The idea could not be truer than in the case of the historiography of Shaka around whose figure myths were created even during his lifetime. These myths were fed into popular consciousness through literature, from oral to written. The myths and their texts evolved according to the myth-tellers and their cultural bias: the multiple groups who had various motives for their own interpretation of what could not be historically verified[2] and who gave them expression in an array of textual forms. For Hamilton, the very malleability of the image of Shaka is expressed in Shakan historiography through the variety of the "forms of the production of history" (Hamilton 1998:7). One such form is, of course, written literature and, as we have shown in this study, one great example of it is *Chaka*.

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Of course, Shaka is, "Nelson Mandela excepted", "probably the most famous South African in history" (Wylie 2000:1) and his fame knows very few geographical and cultural limitations. Wylie's study (2000) is that of the 'white' myths of Shaka in literature. He defines his central aim as contributing "to an understanding of *part* of Shaka's many-sided and mythic literary existence" (Wylie 2000:3).

This has also been my aim in this research. But whereas Wylie has chosen to study those 'white' myths which "are closely aligned with the evolving political

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Shaka/Chaka's death-bed prophecy appears to be a potent common denominator in Shakan historiography – see Hamilton (1998:214).

[2] And cannot be established, still, despite a substantial academic effort to do so. Wylie's latest work in fact attempts to put the pieces of the biographical puzzle of Shaka's life together to ascertain, exactly, what it is that is know for certain about the Zulu's life (2006).

psychology of the broader hegemony of white imperial power" (Wylie 2000:3),[3] I have analysed the converse nature of the 'black' myths of Shaka in which he becomes a "trans-ethnic symbol of revolutionary victory" in postcolonial Francophone discourse (Wylie 2000:2). Although these 'black' myths of Shaka are not, by any stretch of the imagination, confined to the limits of Southern Africa or to the French speaking world,[4] I have strictly focused my analysis on the realm of Francophone literature and its very distinct mapping of Shakan identity in its cultures, as pioneered by Senghor. While Wylie's original argument rests on the incestuous nature of these 'white' myths,[5] I have demonstrated that the Francophone versions of the myth are similarly interrelated.

*

The inherent intertextuality of the Francophone versions analysed rests in *both* Mofolo's and Senghor's *Chaka*(s). Our study has shown that, by advancing his own, culturally-specific version of Shaka's story, Mofolo has significantly contributed, via Senghor's own poetic interpretation and adaptation of the novel, to the evolution of the myth of Shaka in the Francophone African postcolonial discourse.

[3] It is important to remark that not all 'white' myths vilify and that, conversely, not all 'black' myths glorify Shaka. In her study, Hamilton challenges, in fact, this binary understanding of Shakan myths (a myth in itself) by offering thoroughly research evidence that much of Shaka's negative image has roots in the African context (Hamilton 1998:70). This is has been partly demonstrated in our textual analysis of Mofolo's *Chaka* where, in fact, Shaka is portrayed as a tyrant.

[4] Some other 'black' literary treatments of Shaka would include, for Southern Africa, Mazisi Kunene's epic poem *Emperor Shaka the Great* (1979) which is part of the UNESCO collection of representative works in the African Series; R.R.R Dhlomo's novel *uShaka*, written in Zulu and first published in 1937 and Mulikita's *Shaka Zulu: A Play* (1967). English speaking African writers from around the continent have, too, written fictional work featuring the Zulu. I am particularly thinking of Wole Soyinka's *Ogun Abibiman* (1976), whose 1980 edition is dedicated to "the dead and the maimed of Soweto".

[5] Wylie remarks on the dubious historiography surrounding Shaka, which was drawn "incestuously on a remarkably small pool of information" (Wylie 2000:7).

In view of that, I have appraised the resulting cultural, political and literary impact of the writings and rewritings for the Southern African and Francophone worlds. Through its translations and Francophone rewritings *Chaka*, itself a product of an intercultural discourse between Lesotho and French Protestant missionaries, becomes a rich and complex *transcultural* text around whose main protagonist a constantly evolving mythical metaphor has linked radically different cultures and literatures – Southern African and Francophone African – and histories – Sotho, Zulu but also Senegalese, Guinean, Malian, Congolese and Togolese – in the most unlikely ways.

The translation of Mofolo's *Chaka* into French by Victor Ellenberger which was published a year after Césaire used the word Négritude for the first time in *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* (1939) greatly contributed, at a critical time in the ideological development of Francophone literature, to the availability of the text in Francophone circles. Senghor, in turn, has been responsible for starting, in Francophone African literature, the tradition of retelling the myth of Shaka using Mofolo's novel as a point of departure and offering, from his reading of Mofolo's text, the qualities of symbolism, myth and political malleability that Wylie refers to. As was demonstrated, the succession of *Chaka*'s re-inscriptions in French started by Senghor offered versions of the Zulu king imbued with each author's cultural and ideological individuality to produce entire new texts in the literature of Shaka that performed the simultaneous acts of deculturation and neoculturation of Mofolo's novel and of Shaka/Chaka's life.

Mofolo's *Chaka*, a transcultural text

The word transculturation was coined by Cuban sociologist Fernando Ortiz in 1940; ironically enough the year Ellenberger's translation came off the press. Ortiz intended the term to encompass and "to replace the paired concepts of acculturation and deculturation that described the transference of culture in reductive fashion" (Pratt 1992:228).

Our investigation of the cultural and political exchanges between the African Francophone world and that of early Southern African intellectual and literary production has shown that, ultimately, *Chaka* is a fine example of transculturation in literature. The novel's transcultural richness is revealed like a literary abyss where all texts become open-ended and awaiting to be re-written.

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The English term 'acculturation' suggests a unidirectional process in the transference of culture. Transculturation, on the other hand, refers to two phases in any cultural contact/union: that of deculturation[6] – the loss of culture[7] – and neoculturation – the creation of a new culture (Coronil 1995: xxvi). Coronil also suggests that "theoretical travel is defined by non-linear complexities, by processes of transculturation rather than

[6] This is a word Kunene (erroneously?) claims to have coined to refer to "the process whereby, at the meeting of two cultures, one consciously and deliberately dominates the other, and denies it the right to exist […]" (Kunene 1968:19).

[7] The loss of culture has been shown to be, in our discussion, that of the Sotho culture which Mofolo was painfully aware of lamenting in his work and that of the traditional ways – as for instance the way of the griots – that were being suppressed in 'assimilated' French Africa.

acculturation" (Coronil 1995: xiii). *Chaka* inspired, through its French translation and varied interpretative readings and subsequent adaptations, the literary expression of a multi-faceted ("non-linear complexities" to use Coronil's expression), but no less coherent, African identity in Francophone Africa.

For Coronil, Ortiz would have welcomed a postmodern reading of selected sections of his book, which he offers in the preface, and of Malinowski's 1947 introduction to the first English translation his *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar*. This perspective, stresses Coronil, "while respecting the integrity of a cultural text, recognizes its *provisionality* and *inconclusiveness*, the contrapuntal play of text against text and reader against author" (Coronil 1995:x-xi, emphasis added).

Such a theoretical slant is what Ortiz attempts to apply to a cultural analysis of Cuban society which seeks to reveal "the illusion and power in making and unmaking cultural formations" and "to celebrate the self-fashioning of peripheries" (Coronil 1995:xiv). Ortiz' study, in other words, is perfectly adaptable to ours. Although the term 'transculturation' was initially designed to remedy a deficiency in the sociological terminology of the times, the notion provides a larger conceptual framework in other related fields of cultural studies, such as literature, which wholly fits our reading of the Francophone myths of Chaka.

Effectively, the concept of transculturation can be applied to two disciplines related to cultural and social studies. Firstly, it is appropriately related to anthropology by Coronil himself: he proposes that what is called cultural anthropology is in fact "transcultural anthropology" (Coronil 1995: xliv). Although not wishing to digress here,

it is enough to repeat what was revealed when discussing the PEMS' involvement in Lesotho in our first Chapter: its missionaries were also anthropologists. They cherished the emerging nation of the Basotho with which they built profound and meaningful (as well as unusual) relationships. They took great interest in the Sotho culture which they recorded and attempted to preserve, generation after generation. These missionaries adopted and *were adopted* by Lesotho. The written work resulting from this cultural contact – whether for instance Arbousset's, Sekese's, Mofolo's or Ellenberger's – which was discussed in Part I – is evidence of the transculturation of anthropology and literature in this context.

Furthermore, the transcultural quality of *Chaka* is evident on many levels. Firstly, although it is a novel, *Chaka* contains a strong anthropological element. After all, Mofolo traveled in Natal researching his book. There, he had apparently been impressed by the Zulu military system (Kunene 1981:xii) and thoroughly gathered information on Shaka in preparation for the historical context to his novel. As we have pointed out, two chapters on Zulu history and customs were excised from *Chaka* before printing. Despite the absence of these chapters, the novel is still strewn with historical facts and ethnographical observations – as highlighted in Parts II and III of my research. For example, there are numerous references to the Mfecane and its consequences, the praise poems transcribed by the author and included in the novel are first given in Zulu and then in translation, much in the manner of ethnographers. The entire Chapter 17 is dedicated to Chaka's reforms and in it Mofolo even tells the reader that he "reproduce[s] the praises of King Chaka, in Zulu, which [he was] able to obtain", naming its original author, "Chakijana Son of Msenteli" (Mofolo 1981:117-120).

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From the varied sources thus available to Mofolo, he produced the first written, fictionalised, account of Shaka's life in a vernacular language, which in turn, through its literary success in translation, became the primary source of knowledge, at least in the Francophone world, on the Zulu nation. *Chaka* was often read as historically true despite the author's explicit disclaimer. It has been shown that some of Mofolo's fictional creations (the greatest example of this being Noliwa/Noliwe) are popularly accepted as being historically true.

In themselves, Mofolo's sources are transcultural and allowed the self-fashioning of firstly a Sotho vision of Shaka and later a polyphonic Francophone one. We have also mentioned Zulu oral sources. To them must be added written sources that were, themselves, gathered from oral sources. Although this can only be a matter of conjecture, we can reasonably suppose that Mofolo had access to the resources found at the Morija Press where he worked as proofreader and secretary to missionary Alfred Casalis. There is good reason to believe that the press would have had copies of two important works on Zulu history published before Mofolo researched his novel because these works were written by PEMS' authors. One of them, of course, is Arbousset's *Notice sur les Zoulas*[8] published in 1842. As mentioned at the beginning of the thesis, Ricard is adamant that Mofolo had read Arbousset's text. At the very least, Ricard shows that some of Mofolo's historical/social references in key passages of the novel closely correspond to the

[8] See Chapter 1, Part I.

transcription from oral sources by Arbousset.[9] The other PEMS source that would have been readily available to Mofolo is Sekese's *Zulu Chronicles*, published in 1894.

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Examining *Chaka*'s literary transculturation has been central to our study. *Chaka* becomes transcultural through its various translations and within the variety of cultures and languages it exists in: it is a text born from multiple sources, written about a Zulu king, by a Sotho, in his own tongue. It is a text which then travels, through its French and English translations – but also including German and Italian ones – to Europe first and then, through its readings, back to the African continent. As was shown in Part II, Ellenberger, acting as a cultural and linguistic mediator, is to be credited with starting *Chaka*'s transculturation in Francophone Africa with his French translation – itself a work of interpretation.

The transculturation of *Chaka* is further complicated (or enriched?) by the transformation of its literary forms. The first *Chaka*, Mofolo's, is a novel whose historical content is largely transliterated from oral lore but which indubitably remains a work of written fiction. *Chaka* has been called anything from a historical romance to a novel or a Bantu epic. With its Francophone transpositions, *Chaka* went through a politically deliberate return to its sources in the form of dramatic adaptations – and this most definitely includes Senghor's 'dramatic poem for several voices' – as its authors sought to reconnect with their heritage from traditional griots.

[9] This information was supplied to me by Ricard.

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I have shown that Senghor's contribution to *Chaka*'s transculturation through his poetical adaptation of Mofolo's novel extended beyond his own version. Senghor's poem was obviously inspired by Mofolo's. Yet, Senghor infused his text with his own literary idiosyncrasies while retaining an intricate connection with his source. It has become evident that Senghor found and wove in his version, the *Négritude-like* aspects or what Gray calls the 'Black Africanness' (Gray 1975:67) of Mofolo's *Chaka*. Senghor was inspired by reading *Chaka*. This is because Senghor read Mofolo's novel at a crucial time in his intellectual development when his personal and political quest for the Graal-négritude was at its most impassioned. In re-writing it, he thus paid tribute to a fellow African writer while seeking his own, personal definition of Négritude. Senghor's distinctive expression of Négritude in his own *Chaka* is that of a poetics suggestive of an African Christology.

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In this thesis, I have essentially demonstrated *how* Mofolo's novel became an important transcultural text within the postcolonial Francophone African discourse. What has transpired most perceptibly is that Senghor's poetic rewriting rests at the core of its transculturation. In turn, at the core of Senghor's interpretation, lies the metaphor for a literary and political apprehension of Négritude, the cultural movement he co-started and which profoundly impressed itself upon the Francophone psyche.

I wish to conclude this section with a short comment on Senghor's contribution to Francophonie at large. Senghor is, in fact, one of the forefathers of the institutionalisation of the concept of Francophonie which has been active as an organization ("Organisation internationale de la Francophonie" or OIF) at the service of the preservation and propagation of its culture and social and technical collaboration between its members since 1970 – when it was called the "Agence de coopération culturelle et technique". The idea of such an institution positively corresponds with Senghor's desire to see Négritude evolve into 'a new humanism' where cultural hybridity would thrive – the OIF's membership of 55 countries answers this call to an extent. Last year, the OIF celebrated the 100th year anniversary of Senghor's birth and to pay tribute to its most eminent engineer, it organised a myriad of events around the world including hundreds of press reviews on Senghor, the publishing of new works dedicated to him and the staging of numerous exhibitions and spectacles based on his life and works.[10]

Beyond *Chaka*'s literary transculturation

Traditionally, Anglophone and Francophone African literary cultures have been treated as separate intellectual spheres. This thesis has sought to understand the dialogue between them, examining the evolving narrative of their cultural exchanges in history through Shaka/*Chaka*.

[10] For more on this see the organisation's official website at www.senghor.francophonie.org

The ramifications for the connection between Southern African and Francophone Africa's literatures and ideologies are profound. Shaka has been posed by Senghor and those who followed as a challenge to the imperial cultural assumptions of the French colonising powers. Négritude and its divergent interpretations – notably Césaire's – then recombined with the Black Consciousness movement in South Africa to pose a challenge to the Apartheid regime.

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In *L'Orphée Noir*, an introduction to Senghor's 1948 *Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie nègre et malgache de langue française*, Jean-Paul Sartre says that Négritude is a '*racisme anti-racisme*' – an anti-racist racism. This accusation is central to the criticism of the movement. Senghor has been blamed for feeding the very systems which Négritude claimed to want to free itself from, by perpetrating adopted European stereotypes – Senghor has professed, as we have mentioned, to favour the emotionality of the 'black man' over the rationality of the European for instance (Mezu 1973: 43). Wole Soyinka has been one of Négritude's strongest opponents. He has accused Négritude of having "borrowed from the very components of [European] racist syllogism" by adopting the Manichean tradition of European thought and then forcing it to describe a culture that is radically different (Soyinka 1976: 126-129). However, if we cannot deny this fact and, even if "a tiger does not proclaim his tigritude" as Soyinka apocryphally proclaimed it is perhaps because tigers do not have voices - borrowed or otherwise. And if Négritude did not entirely remove itself from the coloniser's discourse, it was undoubtedly "the most

pronounced assertion of the distinctive qualities of Black culture and identity" available at the time of its expansion (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin 1994: 21).

*

The above criticisms present some of Négritude's inherent rigidity and intrinsic flaws. These are at the root of the problematic relationship that such an influential South African intellectual as Ezekiel Mphahlele had with the movement. In the 1962 edition of *The African Image*, Mphahlele articulates his main unease with Négritude's precepts. In Chapter 2, evocatively entitled "What Price Négritude?", he makes a cultural distinction between the African in British-settled territories ("a product of 'indirect rule'") and the French-speaking ("assimilated") African (Mphahlele 1962:25). It seems that for Mphahlele, this historical difference of cultural experience is at the core of the very different attitudes and experiences of these groups. This difference also motivates his main allegation against Négritude: the movement does not consider all social possibilities. When it advocates aesthetic action, such as a return to indigenous art, it blatantly ignores the South African "multi-racial" context – where, Mphahlele emphasises, Africans are "detribalized" and "produce proletarian art" (Mphahlele 1962: 27-28).

Mphahlele disparaging arguments offer an interesting continuation to our argument. If, as has been revealed, *Chaka*'s transculturation into the Negritudinist discourse through its literary rewritings lead to a specifically Senghorian definition of Africanity, at a time when French colonies were struggling for independence or grappling

with the cultural and political complexities of their new-found independence, Mphahlele's passionate quarrel with its ideology is testimony to a stronger rapport between Southern African and Francophone African literatures than often acknowledged.

In the same way that there was, in the 1960s in South Africa, a political "conceptual refashioning" (Attwell 2004:126) among black intellectuals, the rhetorical focus of our analysis, if we were to carry it further, would shift from what was essentially an intertextual study in this research to a broader investigation of the transmission of political cultures between Francophone intellectuals (Fanon and Césaire in particular) and Black Consciousness. Further investigation along this vein would ponder on the influence of Négritude, its Martinican approach in particular, on the Black Consciousness movement in South Africa. Aimé Césaire and Frantz Fanon both very strongly influenced Steve Biko, the originator of the movement, in his philosophy and the enunciation of its defining concepts. Fanon's analysis of the impact of colonialism on the psyche of the colonised finds resonance in Biko's discourse. The idea that racism stems from the deliberate construction of blackness as a symbol of darkness (with all its consequential pejorative associations) pervades Biko's writing.[11] Evidence of the Martinican thinker's influence on Biko (whether implicit or in direct quotation) abounds in *I write what I like*, a selection of his writing first published in 1978.

For instance, Biko begins both parts of a paper presented at a student conference in 1971, by quoting Césaire (Biko 2004: 66–72). In this paper, he gives a definition of Black Consciousness, which is built around three key notions – recurrent throughout his writing and often repeated word for word elsewhere. These are: the idea of the

[11] Instances of this are Biko's repeated references to the dehumanisation of the 'black man' by white supremacist ideologies and the resulting association of African culture with barbarism (Biko 2004:30-31).

uniqueness of the black world, the urgent need to take cognisance of this fact and the necessity to rewrite the African past. Although certainly not unique to Fanon,[12] Biko substantiates this notion from Fanon's idea that colonialism robbed indigenous people of their history by distorting, disfiguring and destroying it (Biko: 2004:76)[13] and he believes that the re-appropriation of African history by Africans involves a re-discovery of past heroes such as, precisely, Moshoeshoe and Shaka (Biko 2004:76). The idea strongly echoes Négritude's main ideological assertion. Once more, then, Shaka becomes synonymous with black power and solidarity. Biko, the South African activist, seems to echo the words of Senghor, the French-speaking African poet, who had seen in a Sotho novel nearly 20 years earlier, the symbolic power of a Zulu king.

[12] Senghor's lyricism *is* indeed born out of a quest for an often idealised pre-colonial African past, an idea, we have seen, that finds its poetical expression in his poem *Chaka*. We will note, however, that both authors differ considerably in their understanding of what this entails and of its ideological and political consequences for a new, positive nationalism.

[13] Fanon is quoted directly here. His words resonate throughout Biko's discourse. In a column written earlier, Biko uses the *exact* same words, this time without reference to their source: "[…] colonialists were not satisfied merely with holding a people in their grip and emptying the Native's brain of all form and content, they turned to the past of the oppressed people and distorted, disfigured and destroyed it." (Biko 2004:31).

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