

# Influence Discernible in Selected South African Literature

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## Abstract

Influence discernible in selected South African literature refers to the impact of the English language and culture on literary works produced by Southern African writers. There is also an influence of Setswana on English literature. The paper uses influence theory, a study of formal models of one person or group of people. The study will look at Setswana novels, stories and poetry. The influences that exist in Setswana literature can be categorised into two, namely, Western and Batswana. Western refers to influences or factors that originate outside the Batswana experience; and Batswana refers to effects that are typical of Batswana traditional cultures or practices. Influence discernible is an effort to achieve or complete something difficult, and the aim is to compare literature. Literature crosses boundaries across time periods and looks at events or phenomena that span a range of historical epochs. This could involve comparing different historical periods, analysing the evolution of concepts or technologies over time, or identifying lasting trends that continue to shape societies across different eras. Influence study is an attempt to trace the influence of a writer or a set of writers on another theme, idea, attitude or technique. The study of influence is linked to the problem of connections between various national literatures and has become a favourite in comparative literary studies.

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## 1. Introduction

The purpose of this article is to examine the influence that is discernible in selected Setswana literature. This is done to demonstrate impressions that have been incorporated into the Setswana literature. It is the researcher's view that influence does not denote an imitation between source and target text. The relationship should be understood in the context of Palmer's observation that:

A reasonably fair statement of the position would seem to be that  
African literature grew out of Western literature (1988:6).

According to Palmer, influence might be an interconnection instead of an endorsement factor to the emergence and a moulding factor to the development and sculpting of a work of art. One would argue that the artistic production does not grow out of its influences but is undistinguishable from the admission that there are several factors that encroach on the poet's or novelist's mind in the process of formation of a mental image of something that is not perceived and is not visible to the senses. This means that influence is no longer a stain on a work of art, but it signifies one of the forces that gives idiosyncrasy and nourishment (Moleleki, 1988:13).

Influence may be an outcome of a conscious and deliberate attempt, as indicated by Willan (2018:527) when stating "...to marry together two different cultural traditions, African oral forms and traditions and forms of English language and literature were purposeful and intentional."

The influences that exist in Setswana literature can be categorised into two parts, namely Western and Batswana. Western refers to influences or factors that originate outside the Batswana experience, and Batswana refers to influences that are typical of Batswana traditional cultures or practices. Influences nurture and shape Setswana literature. The two theoretical categories of influences are important and integral components of Setswana literature – a miscellany of Batswana and Western culture. Furthermore, neither of the two cultures is a fixed or stern entity. Influences inform Setswana literature's artistic creations. In an article on 'Literature and folklore', Rosenberg (1982:91) makes this fitting remark:

Writers mature within a culture; they learn their skills and their craft within that culture; and  
so inevitably reflect some aspects of that culture in their writing.

Rosenberg emphasises the fact that culture plays a significant role in literature. Language is a component of culture; therefore, names of objects and subjects, events, experiences and arts, as well as manifestations of human intellect are part of culture.

Influence discernible is an effort to achieve or complete something difficult, and the aim is to compare literature. Literature crosses boundaries across time periods and looks at events or phenomena that span a range of historical epochs. This could involve comparing different historical periods, analysing the evolution of concepts or technologies over time, or identifying lasting trends that continue to shape societies across different eras. Influence study is an attempt to trace the influence of a writer or a set of writers on another theme, idea, attitude or technique. The study of influence is linked to the problem of connections between various national literatures

and has become a favourite in comparative literary studies.

## 2. Methodology

This study analysed influence discernible in South African literature, namely, English, Afrikaans, Setswana, Northern Sotho and Southern Sotho, and the article contributes to understanding the symbolic significance of the five official languages stated above. Literary criticism is the study of evaluation, exploration and interpretation. This exploration provides valuable insights into the intersection of literature, specifically novels, poetry and stories. This article explores existing fields to travel through the unknown to learn or discover new information. Exploration is fundamental to human success and knowledge, and gives people hope for a better future. The landscape, hills, woods, meadows and lakes inspire people to express their feelings. Literature is vital to personal growth, fostering and understanding diverse perspectives.

## 3. Influential theory

Influential theory in literature comprises literary theory, aestheticism and cognitive literary theory. For Europeans, the study looks at literary theory that delves into the interpretation and analysis of literature. It celebrates beauty, form and sensory experience in literary works. For Africans, literature echoes the voice of history, explicates culture as a vehicle of redefining inner mysteries, uses metaphor, allegory, folklore and myth to define African personality. It represents the socio-historical context in which Africans understand themselves.

This research looks at literature as a base of extraction, indicating and exploring the influences and discussing how they contribute to it.

The paper also identifies the contexts from which these influences are most likely to have originated. This study focuses on three genres, namely, novel, story and poetry.

## 4. Impact of influence discernible in artistic writing

The impact of influence in literature is discernible in several ways, including how a writer's background and ideology shape their work, how literature reflects and critiques social values, and how literary works, can influence reader's perceptions and beliefs. Influence can also be seen in the evolution of literary styles and genres over time, as well as the impact of individual authors on subsequent writers.

Literature plays an important role in shaping cultural norms and values by reflecting and challenging social beliefs and encouraging critical thinking. It also allows us to explore the implications of various values and worldviews and gives us an excellent opportunity to take closer look at our own.

The South African literature is profoundly shaped by the nation's complex history, including colonialism, apartheid, and struggle for democracy. Influences from various sources, including Western literary traditions, oral traditions, and lived experiences of South Africans, contribute to the richness and complexity of literary landscape.

## 5. Influence discernible in literature

Setswana written literature owes its existence to the different missionary societies whose main task was to Christianise Batswana. To accomplish their task, the missionary societies had to teach people to read and write. The three powerful missionary societies of the time (the London Missionary Society, the Berlin Missionary Society and the Wesleyan Missionary Society) each set up a printing press to print and publish school readers for their different schools, for instance by Leseyane's *Buka ya go buisa* (The school reader) series. The writing of school readers can be regarded as a stepping-stone to creative literature in the language because the creation of mission schools for higher learning resulted in the demand for suitable reading material. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that the creation of mission schools for higher learning prompted the writing of creative literature.

### 5.1 Novel

The researcher used *Mhudi* as an example of a Setswana novel written in English. This novel was the first English narrative written in South Africa by an African, because the novel narrates a Setswana story with Batswana characters (Mhudi, Rathaga), in a Setswana milieu or environment (Kunana, Thaba Nchu, Mosi-oa-Thunya). The themes of *Mhudi*, which is a historical novel, include love, tribal wars and cattle raids.

As Plaatje set about writing *Mhudi*, he looked to the imperial romance for inspiration and for a literary model, drawing upon Rider Haggard. While in England, Plaatje read a Zulu Trilogy of Haggard, namely *Marie* (1912), *Child of storm* (1913) and *Finished* (1919). *Child of storm* was performed on stage when Plaatje was in London in 1914. *Nada the lily* drew Plaatje's attention and served as a model for *Mhudi*. Willan (2018:527) further suggests that it showed that it was possible to use a model from other spheres to tell your own story.

*Nada the lily* was set in the time of King Shaka and his brother Dingaan. It is the story of the illegitimate son of Shaka, and his love for the beautiful Nada, drawing upon both real and fictional characters. The aim was to convey in narrative form some idea of the remarkable spirit that animated these kings and their subjects, to visit long-lost incidents of history and to make them accessible in a popular shape, all in a time when the Zulus were

still a nation, a mixture of realism and fantasy (Willan, 2018:527).

There are parallels between *Mhudi* and *Nada the lily*, such as peaceful pastoral idyll, a town sacked, the wandering of a hero and heroine, lion stories to test courage, the entry of Boers halfway through the narrative, alliance of Blacks and Whites against cruel oppressors, use of prophecy and a love story.

While Haggard was able to get sources from his oral traditions, Plaatje got most of his at first hand. The slaying of Bhoya and his companions was unrecorded in many published histories, and Plaatje only heard about it by chance “from old people” while collecting stray tribal history later in his life (Willan, 2018:527).

Critical discourse analysis of *Mhudi* demonstrates that it is a Setswana novel, not an English novel. The characters’ names are in Setswana and the milieu or environment is that of Setswana. The themes of *Mhudi*, which is a historical novel, include love, tribal wars, cattle raids and more. The names of places are a setting in which the events took place are in Setswana, such as *Thaba Nchu*, *Kunana*, *Zambesi* and *Mosi-oa-Thunya*, and the names of characters are in Setswana, such as *Mhudi* and *Rathaga*.

Plaatje retrieved other stories from members of his own family. His use of proverbs and other idioms was a quite deliberate attempt to convey something of the richness and cultural resources upon which he was drawing.

Plaatje expressed the view that it was likely that some of the stories on which Shakespeare’s dramas were based ‘find equivalents in African folklore’. When he investigated this question more closely, he found this prediction to be correct. The lion stories and his exploration of symbolism and meaning of planetary omens and prophecies were two of the outcomes. This was the cultural borderland he loved to explore (Willan, 2018:528).

Plaatje’s motivation for writing and publishing *Mhudi* was partly the desire to save the folktales and proverbs of the Batswana people from oblivion. Proverbs and folktales, deeply rooted in culture, carry wisdom and reveal attitudes, norms and values. Most Setswana stories and proverbs derive their imagery from cattle-rearing and hunting, the two male domains in the traditional way of life, which gives an inkling of the fact that traditional Setswana society elevates the work of men and accords them special status. The following is an example of a Setswana folktale:

## 5.2 Story

The stories that Plaatje embeds in *Mhudi* are traditional narratives drawn from Batswana life. In some cases, local place names are used, for instance, one story is entitled *Mokgalagadi le Ditau* (The Man from the Kalahari and the Lions) (Jones & Plaatje, 2004:14-15).

Wearing a cultural camouflage of partial resemblance to Shakespeare, *Mhudi* bears the inner imprint of the Batswana cultural influences and sensibilities, like the following folktale:

### The King’s Judgement

Plaatje includes in his 1916 bilingual collection, republished in 2004 and again in 2007 with illustrations, a story entitled *Kattholo ya Kgosi* (The King’s Judgement). He states that:

*Batswana ba na le polelo nngwe ke e. E tshwana le kattholo ya ga Solomone e e bolelwang mo Bebeleng, ntswa baruti ba pele ba re ba fitlhetse e itsege mo Batswaneng. Bebele e ise e kwalwe ka Setswana.*

The following is a Batswana story that is like the Bible story of the judgement of Solomon, but the pioneer missionaries say that they found it to be known among the Batswana before the Bible was ever written in the Setswana language.

In this story, two new mothers claim one baby after one woman has accidentally suffocated her baby in the night and then stole the other woman’s child. *Kgosi* (the chief or king) asks for a sword to cut the baby in half. One of the mothers acquiesces, while the other pleads with the chief to spare the child’s life and give it to the other mother. Her love for the baby is stronger than the pain of losing him to the other mother. The chief discerns that she who pleaded for the baby’s life must be the real mother and settles the dispute in her favour. Whereas in the Bible story, the emphasis is on the discernment and wisdom of the King; in the Batswana story, the emphasis is on the mother. It is explicitly stated that:

*Kattholo e, ke yona e e simolotseng seane sa Setswana se se reng: Mmangwana o tshwara thipa ka fa bogaleng.*

This judgement is the origin of the Setswana proverb: The mother of the child is the one who grasps the knife by the blade; the English equivalent is ‘One mother is more venerable than a thousand fathers’ (Plaatje, 1916:57). There is another story written by Plaatje, namely:

Matlhaku: dipinagare tsa setšhaba

*Ga twe bogologolo-tala go kile ga bo go le motse o bidiwa Galebethe. Bontsi jwa baagi mo motseng o, e ne e le botlhogoputswa. Ka moo gee, o ka dumela gore e ne e le bona baeteledipele ba motse wa Galebethe. Ka dinako di le dintsi o ne o ka fitlhela bannabagolo ba kakaletse ka fa tlase ga meriti ya ditlhare, ba thubile kobo segole, ba ntse ba sielana phafana ya mabele, tshetlhana ya boMaেকে, selo se bogorogorong, ba fetisa ka segwapa go tswa mo leisong. Tiro ba bašwa ba Galebethe e ne e le go disa dikgomo, medimo ya*

*Batswana. Ka letsatsi lengwe ba ntse ba disitse, mofeti ka tsela a ba botsa gore ba dirang. Ba mmolelela gore ba disitse dikgomo. A ba botsa gore ke mang yo o tlhokometseng motse wa bona, fa bona ba disitse dikgomo.*

*Basimane ba mmolelela gore borraabo ke bona ba disitseng motse. Mofeti a ba bolelela gore ba itshema masilo ka go tlogela motse o sa sireletsega ba ikantse bannabagolo. A ba gakololola gore ba na le thata; ke bona ba ka sireletsang motse, e seng botlhogoputswa. A bua gore o fetile bannabagolo ba aithametse phafana; go se tsapa le le ba fisang pelo. Basimane ba elelwa boelelele jwa bona, ka go tlogela motse le botlhogoputswa. Ba fetsa mogopolo gore botlhogoputswa ga ba na mosola, sa bona ke go ja le go nwa fela. Basimane ba ikana gore fa ba goroga kwa motseng, ba tla bolaya botlhogoputswa botlhe; go akaretsa le kgosi e e neng e le letlhogoputswa. Ba utlwana gore ba tla tlhoma kgosi ya mošwa, yo o tla tlisang dipheto. Ba boela kwa motseng ka mogopolo o le mongwe fela. Mo go bona go ne go le lekolwane le le neng le rata rraalona e le rure. A taboga ka bonako, a tsaya rraagwe a mo tshabisa, a mo fitlha mo legageng la thaba e e boitshegang.*

*Mo bosigong joo, ya nna kgaphamadi mo motseng wa Galebethe, lerumo le magagana tsa kgemetha ditlhogo tsa botlhogoputswa; ba bolawa botlhe fela. Fa bosa bo sa, basimane ba kakalala ka fa tlase ga ditlhare ba emetse gore basadi ba ba tlišetse bojalwa le digwapa go simolola moletlo wa boipuso. Mo moletlong o mogolokgadi, ba itlhophela kgosi ya bona ya moswa, go busa motse wa Galebethe. Ba opela meepelwane, ba thibologa ka dipina le dipako, boitumelo ba ya magoletsa. Le fa basimane ba ne ba itumetse bommaabo ba ne ba lela selelo sa masisapelo; ba ledisiwa ke setlhogo sa matlhotlhapelo; a go latlhegelwa ke balekane ba bona. Basadibagolo ba rapela mo dipelong tsa bona gore e kete Motlhodi a ka otlhaya basimane, go bakisa katse go nnyela mo boping.*

*Morago ga moletlo basimane ba phatlhalala, ba ya ka magoro. Kgosi e ntšhwa le yona ya ikela gae go isa marapo go beng.*

*E rile fa a Thulamela, ga tla selalome sa noga; sa ithatetsa ka ena go tloga kwa dinaong go fitlha kwa tlhogong. A lela ka selelo se se botlhoko, se se kwa godimo, se se neng sa tsosa motse otlhe. Ba tla ba taboga go tla go bona gore kgosi ya bona e jewa ke eng. Ba fitlhela selalome se ithatheditse ka ene, se dirile lefuto mo molaleng wa kgosi. Ba boifa gore fa ba ka se tilhasela, se ka bifelwa mme sa bolaya kgosi le bangwe ba bona. Lekolwane la kopa gore le ye go tsaya letlhogoputswa le le fitlhlilweng kwa thabeng go tla go thusa ka dikakanyo. Monnamogolo a goroga. A fitlha a latlhela legotlo le le tona gaufi le noga. Noga ya simolola go ipofolola ka bonya mme ya tlogela kgosi ya ya go ja legotlo. Kgosi ya falola mme morafe wa itumela. Ba dumelana gore monnamogolo a tlhomiwe go nna kgosi ya bona. Basimane ba ne ba jewa ke ditlhong, e le gona ba elelwang gore ba bolaile matlhogoputswa ba ise ba itseele thuto le go anya botlhale mo go bona.*

*Ya nna go na ba elelwang gore 'Letlhaku le lešwa le beelwa mo go le legologolo' kgotsa 'Loare go bona sešwa lo se eka-eke, lo latlhe segologolo sa lona' meaning 'at sight of new styles you always discard your old customs and nurse the new, English equivalent is 'Cast not forth thy old water whilst the new comes in. (Plaatje 1916: 52). "Letlhaku le lešwa le bewa ke le legologolo." meaning, the new thorn branch is put down by the old one, that is, young people should be guided by the traditions of the forefathers. In Afrikaans 'Die nuwe doringtak word neergesit deur die oue' meaning 'Die jeug moet gelei word deur die tradisies van die voorgeslag.' (Letšhama, 1998:34)*

Once upon a time there was a village called Galebethe. Most of the people in that village were elderly people. Thus, you would assume they were the leadership of Galebethe village. You would find them sitting under the shade trees drinking beer and eating the meat cooked for them by the women. The job of the young men in that village was to herd the cattle in the fields. One day as they were herding the cattle, a certain traveler passing along the road, asked them what they were doing. They told him that they were looking after the cattle and he asked them, who was looking after their village while they were looking after the cattle.

The young men replied that the elderly men were looking after the village. The traveler perceived them as idiots for leaving the old men to look after the village whilst they were capable. Thus, brought to their senses, the young men vowed that when they reached the village, they would kill all the elderly men and look for a young man to take over the chieftainship. They went back to the village. All this time there was one young man who didn't like the idea of killing all the elderly men and he took his father and hid him in the mountain.

In the night they attacked the homes of the elderly men and killed them all. By sunrise the young men were sitting under the shade trees waiting for the women to bring them beers and meat. There and then a chief was chosen and there was a big feast in Galebethe village. Even though the young men were happy, the old women were grieving. Often when the elders feel pain, the people who have caused this pain are cursed. After the feast



the young men dispersed; the chief also went home to sleep.

While he was sleeping a big snake came and wound itself around his neck. He cried out in terror and the villagers came to see what was happening. They found their chief bound by a big snake, but no one could help him because they were afraid to kill it with a spear lest they stab the chief. One of the young men suggested that the old man who had been hidden in the mountain be fetched to come and help.

The old man was brought. When he arrived, he threw a large rat next to the chief and the snake slowly unwound itself and went to eat the rat. Thus, the chief was freed, and everyone was happy. The old man was appointed chief. The young men were ashamed of themselves, realizing that they had killed all the elderly men before imbibing their wisdom. They remembered that the new thorn branch is strengthened by being placed next to the old.

The Setswana proverb that the new thorn branch is placed next to the old refers to the traditional way of maintaining the fence, and its meaning is that young people should learn the wisdom of the elders whilst they are still alive.

In this story, the boys decided to kill their parents for being lazy and irresponsible. Kgosi (the chief or king), while he was sleeping a big snake came and wound itself around his neck. One of the boys gradually acquiesced to inform the boys accepting that he has hidden his father in the forest. He decided to spare his father's life. His love for his father was stronger than the pain of losing his life. The boys pardoned him, and he went to the bush where he was hiding, so that he can help the chief who was in danger. His father arrived and saved the king. The Setswana proverb and story extols the strength and courage of the boy who saved his father and the tribe. The chief presided over *Kgotla* (the tribal court), as would undoubtedly have been the setting of this story.

There is another biblical story about 'Father against son and son against father.' The father-son relationship is traditionally one of authority and inheritance. In the cultural context of the time, a son was expected to follow in the religious and social footsteps of his father. However, the gospel challenges these expectations, as seen in the story of the Prodigal Son, where the younger son breaks away from his father's ways. This division signifies a break from traditional values and a new allegiance to Christ, which can cause familial strife. ([Luke 15:11-32](#))

Setswana's story acknowledges culture and proverbs, highlighting another view of the story, focused on the strength, tenacity and resilience of Batswana people.

There are always at least two ways of viewing a story, depending on where one stands, but there is also a place of convergence. Our shared human identity allows us to enter the space between cultures and languages where we can learn about the wonderful diversity of our oneness.

### 5.3 Fiction

In some Setswana stories, stars are associated with the ancestors who are overlooking people from above. The morning, evening and night stars provide light when it is dark. To Batswana, stars provide knowledge of seasons (harvest, winter, summer and autumn). The stars enable them to predict whether there is going to be hunger or plenty, or whether plants would live or die. The reappearance of some stars prepares the Batswana for loss of life, like *Motšhotšhonono* (Halley's Comet).

According to Couzens in Clegg (1986:33), there is a star with a long tail. It traverses the sky once 75 to 100 years. It is visible to the unaided eye. For Batswana and Plaatje, *Motšhotšhonono* presaged times of tumult, the Great Trek, Difaqane, the Great War and the passing of great leaders. The link between the events in the 1830s and Plaatje's events in South Africa is emphasised by yet another device, namely the introduction of *Motšhotšhonono* in Plaatje's novel, *Mhudi*. According to Plaatje, it foreshadows the fall of the empire of the Matebele, who are depicted as land robbers and unjust tax collectors.

Couzens (1996:189) points out the comet that appeared in 1835 returns every 75 years and thus was again visible in 1910 – shortly before the implementation of the Land Act of 1913. At that time, it was widely taken as a symbol for the end of white rule in South Africa, and Plaatje undoubtedly employed this symbol not because he was so fond of the stars, but as a warning to whites that their rule would collapse. Plaatje, like many Batswana children, learnt from his grandmother and great-grandmother the stories, the history, the culture, the values, the mores, the landscape with its flora and fauna as well as the firmament. His humanity was broad and deep; however, he was never complacent. Plaatje named his son who was born in 1910, Halley/ *Motšhotšhonono*. Naming something is an expression of a relationship, mostly of ownership. By naming his son after a star, he created a bank for the memory generated by human interaction with the natural environment.

Another image regarding influence is found in the Setswana novel, *Matlhoko-Matlhoko*:

*Mmalesedi a kgabola mo tlhologanyong ya gagwe jaaka naledi ya motšhotšhonono e kgabaganya loapi lo lo sa ikategang* (Malope, 1980:21).

Mmalesedi crossed his mind like Halley's Comet traversing the unimagined skies.

Malope's novel applies the image of the celestial star *Motšhotšhonono* in his novel to demonstrate the knowledge of Batswana astronomy and how it can be applied to illustrate or elucidate an action. Mpotseng left his wife, Mmalesedi, in the village, when he went to the city, Pretoria, to look for work. After struggling for a long

time, he secured a job and stayed with his aunt in the Granny's quarters of her employers. After a while, he moved to a hostel in Phelindaba, where women or wives were not allowed to visit their partners. Loneliness and boredom tempted him to find a concubine. Being aware of his senseless decision and guilty conscience, he sees Malesedi in his imagination. The face of his wife passed before his eyes like a comet traversing the skies.

According to Couzens (1996:189) and Clegg (1986:33), a comet passing through the intermittent sky symbolises good or bad. In 1910, the reappearance of Halley's Comet coincided with the death of Chief Batheon I. A substantial solar eclipse occurred shortly after the death of Sir Seretse Khama in 1986. Such celestial events occur frequently enough to justify a *prima facie* connection with earthly happenings, and any event which is not clearly associated with such a happening can always be explained in terms of an unknown one.

The above assertion is like the following example. It says there is a star with a long tail. It traverses the sky once in 75 to 100 years and is visible to the unaided eye. In the Renaissance, meteors, or shooting stars, were understood to be stars falling loose from the sphere of fixed stars. Thus, shooting stars can represent a disruption of high status or a fall from grace. In *Richard II*, Richard is compared to a shooting star:

Ah, Richard, with the eyes of heavy mind  
I see thy glory like a shooting star  
Fall to the base earth from the firmament.  
(Richard II, iv.18-20)

Richard's fall from kingship to prison and death is symbolised by the fall of a star from the more perfect and elevated sphere of the fixed stars to the corruption of the earth. Another example is when Calpurnia, wife of Julius Caesar, begs her husband not to venture out on that morning, the Ides of March. Caesar had a restless night, and there was a wild storm raging. Calpurnia had disturbing dreams and cried out three times in her sleep, "They murder Caesar!" She begged him to stay home. Caesar sent word to the priests, and they too, returned a warning that Caesar must stay home.

Calpurnia was very upset, especially because of the strange events of the previous evening: reports that a lioness was seen giving birth in the streets of Rome, the dead rising from their graves, warriors fighting in the clouds, reports of horses neighing and dying men groaning, ghosts shrieking. Comets were seen during the night, which Calpurnia interpreted as a prophecy of the death of a prince. Shakespeare says:

When beggars die, there are no comets seen,  
The heavens themselves blaze.  
Forth the death of princes.  
(Julius Caesar II.ii.32-33)  
*Fa batlhoki ba swa, ga go motšhotšhonono o bonwang*  
*Kgosi ngwana wa Modimo*  
*Fa a swa magodimo a kurutla*

## 5.4 Poetry – English

### Death

Like Willan's suggestion that it is possible to use a model from other spheres to tell your own story, there are Setswana poems that show images of English poetry.

Mogapi (1990:50) contends that some of Raditladi's poetry has been influenced by English poetry. It is not surprising, because Raditladi was a protégé of Plaatje, the first Motswana man of letters. Sol Plaatje was the first African to translate Shakespeare's plays into African language, Setswana.

There are some texts and allusions embedded in Setswana, Northern Sotho and Sesotho poetry from English poetry. Compare:

#### Death the Leveller

The glories of our blood and state  
Are shadows, not substantial things  
There is no armour against fate.  
(Shirley in O'Malley, 1967:412)

With:

#### Loso (Death)

*Leba bontle jo bogologolo jwa motho*  
*Bophepa bo se nang se se ka bo phalang,*  
*Le boitumelo mo leseding la matlho*  
*Mo losong ga se motho, ke selo fela,*  
*Mo phupung ke mmu, marapo makgabana*  
(Raditladi, 1964:10)  
Look how beautiful human beings are  
Innocence that can't be compared to anything

In death he is not human, but nothingness  
In the grave he is dust and bone ashes.

In both cases, the poets describe a condition created by death. Shirley asks what a human can do in the face of gods and fate. He relates that all wonders in the world, including life itself, are like mist; it can fade at any time. Another poem, *On the Tombs in Westminster Abbey*, by Beaumont, also deals with the same theme and is often used for comparison.

Raditladi continues thus:

*Loso lo nna motho ka mabela sentshi  
Ga lo sisimoge le maemo a serena  
Lone le kotama fela, moo re a go itse  
Bagale, magatlapa, losong ba a tshwana,  
Kgosi le motlhanka mo mmung ba a lekana* (1964:10).  
Death lays its hands on everybody like a fly  
It does not give royal families special treatment  
It lands everywhere, we all know  
Heroes and villains in death are equal  
King and peasant in the tomb are even.

Here, Raditladi suggests that human life is consecrated and sanctified, yet death changes everything within the blink of an eye. Shirley persists that death does not discriminate, that kings and knaves are all equal, that is, the sceptre and the crown of the king fall and lie equal in the dust with the poor peasant's scythe and spade.

Similarly, Raditladi, from his experience in Botswana, where they lived alongside the San, says serfs and the masters are alike in death. This means that in death, there is no difference between Motswana (master) and San (serf).

There are quite a few Setswana proverbs explicating the relationship between Batswana and the San people, such as, *Morwa mmidibidi wa tlhaga, ngwana a se nang gaabomogolo o ijela mashori*; that is, the San is the child of the meadow, having no relatives, he owes no nephews' duties to any uncle (Plaatje, 1916:67). Masori is a present from a nephew to his maternal uncle.

This kind of present strengthens their relationship. In Setswana, the relationship between *malome* and *setlogolo* is holy or sanctified by ancestors, just as it is a practice among the Gabonese for a nephew to give their uncle *kola nut* as an expression of gratitude (Plaatje, 1916:67).

Raditladi may have read and been influenced by Shirley's poem, if one considers the time and period in which these two poems were published. But again, during the interviews with Batswana scholars and community elders, Raditladi experienced similar feelings when composing his poem because he lost a fiancée a few weeks before paying lobola. There are several poems in his anthology, like *Selelo sa Morati* (Lover's lament) and *Motlholagadi* (widow), in which he expresses the pain of losing his loved one. All human beings across all continents in the world are astounded by the random occurrence of death.

In Setswana, there is a proverb, *Losho lo fa mojeng wa kobo*, or death is at the end of the cloak, an English equivalent is, amid life we are in death, that is, death is part of life, a person dies anytime, anyhow and anywhere (Plaatje, 1916:54).

In the first case, Raditladi is like the nature poet. He might have been influenced by English romanticists. Again, Raditladi taps into his African sensibilities. "The deeper the roots of the poet in a specific African tradition, the more use of animal and plant imagery."

## 5.5 Poetry – Afrikaans

Again, there is a similarity between the first two lines of Raditladi's poem and an Afrikaans poem:

Compare:

*Erile ke utlwa ba re o sule ka tshoga* (Raditladi, 1964:10)  
When I heard about his death, I was shocked

With:

*O die pyn-gedagte: My kind is dood  
Dit brand soos 'n pyn in my.* (JD du Toit in Opperman, 1951:22)

Oh, my heart is sore: my child is dead  
It burns like a pain in me

The first verses deal with the emotions that appear to overwhelm both poets when they hear about the death of a loved one. Death in any family brings conflict, sorrow, confusion and uncertainty. It can be inferred that the poet's fear is dominated by what is going to happen. How is he going to cope with what has happened? The poet is disheartened.

JD du Toit, in his poem, *O die Pyn-gedagte*, expresses similar emotions after losing his daughter. Traditional Afrikaner men, like most other men across cultures, were not allowed to show their emotions and shed tears in public. Du Toit, like Raditladi, feels that the pain is unbearable, and it is not disgraceful to cry.

Both poets have lost their beloved ones and are in a gloomy mood associated with death, *tshoga* and *pyn-gedagte*. Du Toit uses the image of coagulated blood stuffed into his heart to portray excruciating pain emanating from the loss of a loved one, and Raditladi talks about shock and disbelief after being informed of his loss. The two images complement one another in that shock and disbelief lead to pain in one's heart.

Looking at the symbols, such as the images and allusions used by Raditladi, one cannot ignore their similarity with the works of some Afrikaner poets. Raditladi grew up in Botswana and lived in South Africa for a short period when he was in high school and at university. The following poem is also about death:

### 5.6 Poetry Northern Sotho

Matsepe is warning death that it is about to die. He is admonishing death without fear. He says death's grandfather was defeated a long time ago, when Noah and some animals did not die:

#### **Lehu se ikgogomoše**

*Lehu se ikgogomoše o batametse go hwa  
Gobane rraago mogolo o šetše a hwile kgale  
Pele ga ge meetsefula a metša diphedi  
Ka bogale le go hloka kgaugelo  
(Matsepe, 1978:30)*

Death be not proud, you are about to die  
Because your grandfather died long time ago.  
Before all living beings were demolished,  
Brutally and mercilessly.

Death's father was stone-hearted, but he was defeated by Enoch, Elijah and Jesus Christ. When Enoch was 65, he had a son, Methuselah. After Methuselah's death, Enoch lived in fellowship with God for 300 years and had other children. He lived to be 365 years old. He spent his life in fellowship with God, and then disappeared because God took him (Genesis, Chapter 5, Verses 21-23).

Elijah also ascended into heaven: "Then it happened, as they continued and talked, that suddenly a chariot of fire appeared with horses of fire and separated the two of them; and Elijah went up by whirlwind into heaven. And Elisha saw it, and he cried out, 'My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and horsemen!' So, he saw him no more. And took hold of his own clothes and tore them into two pieces. He also took up the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him and went back and stood by the bank of the Jordan" (2 Kings, Chapter 2, Verses 11-13).

Jesus Christ, in the New Testament, was the last person to go to heaven: "And when he has spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and the cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, 'Ye men of Galilee, why stand you gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven'" (Acts 1 Chapter 9-11).

Compare this with the English poem:

#### **Death, be not proud**

**John Donne**

Death be not proud, though some have called thee  
Mighty and dreadful, for though are not so.  
For those whom thou think'st thou dost overthrow  
Die not, poor Death, nor yet canst thou kill me.  
From rest and sleep, which but thy pictures be,  
Much pleasure: then from thee much more must flow  
And soonest our best men with thee do go  
Rest of their bones, and soul's delivery.  
Thou' art slave to fate, chance, kings and desperate men,  
And doth with poison, war, sickness dwell,  
And poppy or charms can make us sleep as well  
And better than thy stroke; why swell'st thou then?  
One short sleep past, we wake eternally,  
And death shall be no more

The poet encourages people not to fear death. Even if many people were killed by wars and sickness, others survived. Every day, many children are born all over the world. The poet is speaking directly to warn death to stop killing people. Death can kill people, but their spirits will live forever. The poet describes death as a coward that



does not have power. Death is controlled by disease, obesity, accidents, wars and suicide.

Although death thinks that it is omnipotent, it is still going to face its death as well. The poet is asking death what it gains from killing people. The poet is rebelling against death and gives a new meaning and understanding of life. Death is a coward because it uses poison, war, illness or other mishap.

**Poetry – Southern Sesotho**

*Lefu, ha o senatla,  
o ntshunyagare,  
mohla o fanyehwang,  
ruri ke tla thenthetsa  
(Maphalla, 1983)*

Death you are not a hero,  
you are an intruder,  
the day you are hanged,  
surely, I'll be delighted.

The poet pinpoints what he regards as the plunderer of life, namely death. He addresses death directly, personifying it as though the poet and death are involved in a skirmish. The persona voices his distaste for the boastful and bullying way death treats human beings. He identifies it as the main culprit in the contradictoriness of nature. In fact, it is a scoundrel that needs to be eradicated to give full meaning to life (Moleleki, 1988).

In the first line, the speaker uses antithetical concepts to refer to his interlocutor, death: hero as opposed to 'intruder'. This not only reveals the poet's attitude of utter contempt towards death, but it also casts it in an extremely bad light, for it behaves like a hero, yet it is a charlatan: it destroys life in whose creation it made no contribution whatsoever. It is, in fact, both imposter and villain.

The word '*fanyehwang*' alludes to the poet's Christian moral faith. It is suggestive of the speech register associated with the Christian field of discourse. The context in which it is used (implying the day of resurrection) evokes in the reader the idea of the crucifixion of Jesus. This has an oblique reference to the speaker's unflagging hope about the transitoriness of death: hope borne out of Christian upbringing. He will be extremely happy the day death is crucified (hanged) 'on the cross.'

He appears confident that on doomsday, death will be pronounced, as Christ died on the cross so that human mortals might eventually overcome death and live eternally beyond the grave. Although the persona protests death, his Christian faith fills him with hope of eventual victory over death (Moleleki, 1988).

*Sa talla o sa phela,  
O tshware le ka meno;  
Bophelo ke lempetje,  
Bo fetoha le letsatsi  
(Maphalla, 1983)*  
You can brag while you are alive  
Hold tight with your teeth  
Life is complicated  
It changes every day

There is a complexity to life that flows through everyone and everything. Change is inevitable, things are evolving or dying. We as humans have no say about it.

Compare the following English and Setswana stanzas:

**The Donkey-English**

...For I also had my hours.  
One far fierce hour and sweet:  
There was a shout about my ears,  
And palms before my feet!  
(Chesterton, 1933:325)

**Selelo sa Tonki-Setswana**

*Ditlhakong ke kile ka alelwa matlhare  
Mokwatleng ka rwala morena wa batho  
Le ditsebeng ka goelelwa ke batho  
Ba kua 'Hosana,' ba betsanya matlhare (Raditladi, 1964:15)*

I once had palms before my feet  
On my back I carried the people's lord  
People shouted in my ears  
Shouting 'Hosana,' lashing their palms

These extracts allude to an incident in the Bible story (John, Chapter 12, verses 14-15) when Jesus Christ wanted to use a donkey as His mode of transport. He sent messengers to collect a donkey that was tied to a tree. When the owner asked the messengers why they were untying the donkey, they told him that the Lord needed it.

In Raditladi's text, the donkey complains that it is ill-treated when it expects to be treated with respect. The reason is not hard to find. It is the only animal on earth that received the privilege of carrying Jesus Christ on its back. According to the Christian Bible, it is Jesus Christ who saved mankind through crucifixion so that every human being could be forgiven for their sins. It is therefore important that people treat a donkey with the respect it deserves, for it transported their Saviour in His hour of need. Furthermore, Chesterton says:

The tattered outlaw of the earth  
Of ancient crooked will.  
Starve, scourge, deride me; I am dumb,  
I keep my secret still (1933:325)

Compare with Raditladi:

*Nna tonki kana ga ke bolo go hupela,  
Molao o bolo go tlhoka go ntlamela  
Ke tshwana fela le molora wa molelo  
Nna tonki ga ke khiniwe tsa go ntshetsa  
Le sebanteu ruri nna se ntshetlha momong  
Gape thupa ya me ke pata ya logong  
Le tshipi tota nna ga e rone go mpetsa* (Raditladi 1964:15)

I, donkey, have suffered for too long  
The law has been partial  
I look like fire's earth  
I don't get tied to keep alive  
The whip wears my backbone  
A stick is used to spank me  
Even a rod is used to strike me

In Chesterton's text, the physical description of the donkey is given. It is referred to as an animal with a monstrous head and big ears. Her features are regarded as wrong, and she feels that she is an exile from the rest of earthly life; she does not belong. The donkey sees itself as a strange character who speaks to itself in hateful and dark language. She has a negative opinion of her place in the world. But something good happened to her later, and, finally, she is recognised by the masses. It was when Christ rode her that, suddenly, everybody started loving her, as they were forever tied to the story of Jesus.

In Raditladi's text, the donkey is used symbolically to represent the oppressed creatures in the world. Raditladi was a cosmopolitan writer and a citizen of the world. He witnessed oppression in Botswana and South Africa under colonisation and apartheid.

He read about inequality and racism in the world. It is the researcher's contention that the donkey symbolises all the oppressed people in the world, for example, Bayei and Basarwa in Botswana, Black people in Africa and the diaspora, the Jews, the Indians and other people of colour. The donkey epitomises occurrences like slavery, colonisation and globalisation, where the oppressed are abused and exploited. Moletsane (1983:9) suggests that:

Looking at the place setting of the poet, an area where people own others as their servants who were maltreated just like donkeys until during the colonial period when the Law started to protect them. The donkey in this case may be a Mosarwa, San. The human characteristic behaviour suits the San well when he makes his appeal to his master and to God.

The donkey is making an appeal to be freed from the shackles of oppression by man. In this case, the donkey represents the oppressed people of the world. Moletsane emphasises the fact that Raditladi's appeal was not only about racism, but it also encompassed tribalism. He pleads with his homeland to stop the master-serf relationship practised at the time.

Raditladi's second line, *Molao o bolo go tlhoka go ntlamela*, the law has been partial, derives from a Setswana proverb, *Molao ga o gobebele*, or the law is not partial. The Latin equivalent is *Actus legis nulli injuriam* (Plaatje, 1916:64). Impartiality is a principle of Justice holding that decisions should be based on objective criteria other than bias, prejudice or preferring the benefit of one person over the other for improper reasons.

In terms of date of publication, Chesterton's text is older than Raditladi's. It is therefore possible that Raditladi could have read Chesterton's text before writing his own. It is also possible that both may have been influenced by the Bible story from a religious point of view. The Bible itself might have borrowed the image elsewhere; and those other texts, in turn, might have borrowed it from somewhere else. As it is shown from the above examples, there is no originarity, that is, an origin of origins. What we are witnessing is nothing but the association of texts.

Another striking similarity of images occurs in the following extracts.  
Compare:

**The burial of Sir John Moore**

Not a drum was heard, not a funeral not.  
As his corpse to the rampart, we hurried.  
Not a soldier discharged his farewell shot,  
Over the grave where our hero we buried.  
No useless coffin enclosed his breast,  
Not in sheet nor in shroud we wound him.  
But he lay like a warrior taking rest,  
With his martial cloak around him  
(Wolfe in Gardner, 1972:541)

With:

**Motlhabani**

*Le fa e le mokgwasana kana o ne o se yo!*  
*Le fa e le moropa ka baka leo,*  
*Fa re baya setopo sa gagwe mo phupung!*  
*Phate ya kgongwana o ne a sa e bewa.*  
*Setlhako lenaong a sa se newa.*  
*Ra mo tsenya e le segwere mo mmung,*  
*Ra mo latsa jaaka motlhabani,*  
*A ladiwa legaeng le thobane,*  
(Raditladi, 1964:34)

Not even a rustling sound was heard  
Not even a drum at that moment  
When we buried his body  
He was not wrapped in a cow skin  
He did not put his shoes on,  
We buried him naked as he was  
We buried him like a soldier  
With his stick next to him

Wolfe's poem is based on an unforgettable event in which a soldier dies on the battlefield. No funeral arrangements were made because the battle was not yet over. They were unable to buy a coffin, and his body was not wrapped in a sheet. There was no time to make all these arrangements. A hole was dug, and his corpse was buried naked, without a coffin or a sheet.

Usually, soldiers have a state funeral, and the community attends these funerals. Bands and soldiers in uniform are a common sight on such occasions to pay soldiers their last respects. At the graveyard, rifles are discharged as a sign of honour and to bid a final farewell to the man who sacrificed his life to protect his people.

Raditladi's poem has similar features. In his poem, a soldier also dies on the battlefield and is buried immediately. Unlike the Europeans, Africans used the skin of a black cow to cover the dead. Hence the Setswana proverb, *Re tla kopanela ko kobong ya kgomo*, we will meet next the ox-hide (at death). The English equivalent is "Can vengeance be pursued further than death?" (Plaatje, 1916:85).

Usually, they used the skin of a cow that had been slaughtered expressly for this purpose. Among the Batswana and elsewhere in South Africa, male initiates receive one or more carved sticks in recognition of their transition to manhood.

Initiates often embellish their sticks, and many also add empowering medicines to them. Some communities require initiates to carve their own sticks while recovering from the ordeal of circumcision; the stick becomes a symbol of their character, and when they die, it is buried in their tomb.

John Wolfe in Gardner continues thus,

Compare:

We buried him darkly, at the dead of the night,  
The swords with our bayonets turning.  
By struggling moonbeams' misty light...  
(Wolfe in Gardner, 1972:541)

With:

*O letse ka lesedi la ngwedi*

*Mmele wa gagwe o rotha le madi  
Mmu re ne ra o fata ka dithebe  
Phupu re ne ra e epa ka digae  
Ka kebu di ne di setse kwa gae.  
(Raditladi, 1964:34)*

We buried him by struggling moonbeams  
His body was bleeding  
The ground was scraped by shields  
The grave was dug by assegais  
For we have left the mattocks at home

In both poems, the battle is ongoing, and the soldier must be buried immediately. They could not just leave his body to be devoured by beasts and vultures. Even if it is dark, they must rely on moonlight to dig the grave. The soldiers are at war and that is why they are carrying short spears and shields.

Furthermore, John Wolfe in Garner says,  
Compare:

Few and short were the prayers we said  
And spoke not a word of sorrow  
(Wolfe in Gardner, 1972:541)

With:

*Baboki ba palelwa ke go boka  
Mosetaseti yole wa maloba  
(Raditladi, 1964:34)*

Poets were unable to sing praises  
And kept their sorrow to themselves

The two poems address a similar event, that is, the death of a soldier. However, the cultural background of the two poets is different. Perhaps this striking similarity occurs because of the influence or intertextual relationship between the two texts.

Raditladi may have borrowed presences, echoes, allusions and guests from Wolfe and used them in the process to suit the characteristics of his own work. Wolfe also borrowed the features from somewhere. Accordingly, the poet Robert Southey wrote an account of these events, namely, War of Coruna. His account was read by Charles Wolfe, a young country parson, in a place named Donaghmore, in Ireland.

Wolfe then wrote this poem in 1814, when he was 22 years old. The poem was published in a provincial Irish newspaper three years later. Lord Byron discovered it five years after that, admired it tremendously, but did not know who had written it.

Once more, a text is not a finished entity. It is and is part of a differential network. This is what Derrida (1982:84) has to say in this regard:

A text is henceforth no longer finished corpus of writing, some content enclosed in a book  
or its margins, but a differential network, a fabric of traces referring endlessly to something  
other than itself

This means that no text is self-contained. The entire meaning of a text does not reside within the text, but elsewhere, that is, outside the text as well.

Mallarmé maintains that a book is not an ex-nihilo creation. The poet experiences strong emotions and is visited by a frenzy of inspiration. In a burst of passion, he creates works stamped with the indelible originality of frenzy. Although the poet may feel violent, intense, overwhelming fervour, his poetry is made not by the effective turmoil or consciousness, but by words, codes and conventions. A given work may appear singular and unique, a strange display of inhibited emotion. We believe such deceit is but a measure of our naivety. Every syllable, every word, every utterance set to paper reflects amalgamation and repetition of countless types and precedents. Although there is sameness in all books, there are also differences between one book and another (Plottel & Charney, 1978: pxvi). There is an intertextual relationship between the texts. Poets are experiencing a feeling of loneliness, bringing back childhood memories of growing up in rural areas. They are thinking of their families, friends and their childhood when life was pure and uncomplicated. There is a strong feeling of nostalgia about their villages and all the beautiful spots. Van Bruggen is an Afrikaner who was born and bred in South Africa, and Raditladi is a Motswana who grew up in Botswana and studied in South Africa. It is perhaps for this reason that their images are similar, coming from the same environment. Over and above the images that are alike, one is struck by the repetition of the same sounds:

*Go utlwa dikgaka di keketla melapong*

(‘To listen to the serenading voices of guineafowls’)

*(En die klinkende klank van geld)*

(‘And the noisy sound of coins’)

The two poets used repetition of the same sound /k/ to stress similar actions with contrasting meanings. On the one hand, Raditladi’s repetition emphasises his longing for a serene and quiet environment where only natural sounds are heard, such as the melodious sounds of birds singing. On the other hand, Van Bruggen uses the same sound to express feelings of frustration and annoyance made by noisy coins in the big city. As far as an intertextual relationship is concerned, Miller in Bloom (1979:225) sees that:

[t]he poem in my figure is that ambiguous gift, food, host in the sense of victim, sacrifice. It has been broken, divided, passed around, consumed by critics canny and uncanny who are in that odd relationship to one another of host and parasite. Any poem, however, is parasitical in its turn on earlier poems, or contains earlier poems within itself as enclosed parasites, in another version of perpetual reversal of parasite and host. If the poem is food and poison for the critics, it must in turn have eaten. It must have been a cannibal consumer of earlier poems.

This is an illustration of how Raditladi’s poetry is inhabited by a long chain of parasitical presences, echoes, allusions and quests of previous texts, and how these parasitical presences feed upon the host and, conversely, how the host also feeds upon the quest. There are various symbols that make up the ritual of burial in the Batswana culture evoked by Raditladi: the cowhide to cover the corpse, the fact that the body is buried naked and the singing of praises to honour the dead. Whereas this poem indicates some rituals surrounding death in the Batswana culture, his other poem *Loso* (Death) appears to be less concerned with rituals in the Batswana culture and more concerned with the universal aspects of death, that is, the feelings and emotions they evoke. It also philosophises about death. The first verse deals with the emotions that appear to overwhelm the poet at hearing of the death of a loved one. The three poets portray death as a hunter whose spear is deadly; it never fails to penetrate its victim, resulting in certain death. All the poets employ their feelings effectively in the discursive process of their language. The following is another example.

### 5.7 Setswana influence discernible to English

There are several intriguing parallels between African literature and Western literature demonstrated by transatlantic poetry. In the opening lines of his essay, “Malcolm X and the Black Revolution: The Tragedy of a Dream Deferred”, mourning the death of Malcolm X, Keorapetse Kgosietsile opens the lament by paraphrasing a Setswana proverb: “a Motswana doctor throws his bones and when they divulge to him an irretrievable loss”:

What is gone is gone.

Irretrievably gone down the abyss of unfathomable depth,

Only the unwise/ill-tempered will attempt to go after it (Phalafala, 2017:64)

*Se ileng se ile*

*Se ile mosimeng motlhaela-thupa*

*Lesilo ke moselatedi*

Kgosietsile’s words reiterate the Setswana proverb *Se ileng se a bo se ile lesilo ke moselatedi* (What’s gone is gone, he who pursues it is a fool). The English equivalent is “The mill will never grind with the water that is past” (Plaatje, 1916:86). Another Setswana proverb, which is related to Kgosietsile’s saying is that death, *Ga se tlala tlhaola malata, ke lerumo le ja magosana*, it is not hunger, the chooser of servants, but spears the slayers of princes. The English equivalent is ‘This fell Sergeant, Death, is strict in his arrest’ (Plaatje, 1916:37). To extend the meaning of the wonder that death causes, Raditladi (1964:11) says *Lone lo kotama fela, moo re a go itse*. This line emanates from a Setswana proverb *Loso ga le bitse yo o ganang*, (Kitchen, 1995:65), meaning if a person is meant to die, there is no way he can refuse. Proverbs in any language are as old as human existence. A proverb is a component of language, and language is a component of culture.

Kgosietsile’s words become the portal through which the Setswana doctor traverses transatlantic spaces. It helps Kgosietsile to seek and make sense of his devastating sense of loss – indigenous knowledge is cultivated to make sense of the present. In that knowledge system, he finds a vocabulary to soothe his own pain, reverting to traditional wisdom through the proverb. Kgosietsile leans on this communal truth and universalises it throughout his poetry. In this context, Setswana influences English poetry by borrowing the following stanza:

Poet leaves him alone you have praised him

You have praised him without knowing his name

His name is spear-of-the-nation (Phalafala, 2017:64)

*Ngwale boela yoo o mmokile,*

*O boka o sa itse ina ja gagwe,*

*Ina ja gagwe ke matsodimatsoke* (Seboni, 1978:11)



Young lady, pause to thank and praise; You do not know his name; His name is perfect obtuseness’.

Kgositsile’s identity is shaped by the oral and literary traditions of his people, and their pertinent value is seen in the act of his carrying Tswana classics over the Atlantic. He considered them to be produced *and* productive, generated *and* generative, as well as formed *and* transformative.

Kgositsile was impressed by Setswana literary texts that were transformed from oral sources, and, in turn, influenced Kgositsile’s writing. When he was instructed by the ANC to go into exile, he packed his ‘most valuable movable property’, his collection of Setswana classics, with his meagre belongings (Kgositsile ‘Interview’ 15 February 2013). This corpus included some of the first published books in the Setswana language, including Raditladi’s dramas *Motswasele II* (1945); *Dintshontsho tsa Lorato* (1957); his poetry collection *Sefalana sa Menate* (1948), and a collection in which he is anthologised, *Boswa jwa Puo* (1949); Moloto’s *Motimedi* (1963); Leseyane’s *Moremogolo wa Motho* (1965); and the novels written by his high school teacher, Monyaise.

Crucial to this selection is Raditladi’s *Motswasele II*, whose imageries, language, plot and heroics strategically transform Kgositsile in his ‘Towards a Walk in the Sun’, which first appeared in *Black Fire: An Anthology of Afro-American Writing* (1968) (Phalafala, 2017:670).

Most importantly, the wisdom of the collective will be shown to be transformed by Kgositsile and routed across the Atlantic through the secondary and tertiary archives. The way the Setswana oral traditions go through processes of transformation and translation into historical dramas, poetry, novels, short stories and so on, as embodied by the corpus of Setswana classics that Kgositsile carries over the Atlantic, constitutes the secondary archive. Kgositsile’s collections of poetry are an elaboration of the collective stream of consciousness, from the oral to the literary. These constitute the tertiary archive and prompt everyone to unearth the primary and secondary archives to map how roots travel, are translated and disseminated in black international periodicals, and are further reformulated by diaspora cultures.

It is important to draw attention to the specifics of Tswana collective wisdom and consider how they function, their forms, characteristics and social values. The researcher discusses praise poetry, naming, storytelling, folklore and legends.

## 6. Conclusion

African and Western forms portray the common and shared ethos, beliefs and practices. In their writing, they depict artistic and edifying aspects of the people’s culture in a remarkable way. In addition, they employ modern devices of poetry to good effect. Before the encroachment of Europeans, African poetry was different. Africans were rooted in their oral traditions. African poetry was inspired by storytelling, drumming, music and dance. It was about rhythm, repetition and dance.

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Bible Verses:

Acts 1 Chapter 9-11  
Genesis, Chapter 5, Verses 21-23  
2 Kings, Chapter 2, Verses 11-13  
[Luke 15:11-32](#)