

SOUND REPETITION AS METAPHOR MARKER IN AAFERIKA@ BY L.D.

RADITLADI

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* Please note that the first part of the paper is by Ina Biermann and the second part by Sekepe Matjila.

PART 1

1 INTRODUCTION

This paper is a report on our joint exploratory work in progress¹ on the role of sound repetition in Setswana poetry, exemplified with reference to AAferika@ (AAfrica@) by L.D. Raditladi. We are envisaging extending this into a larger research project together which will include more readings of Setswana poems by more than one poet. Our provisional research aims are:

- (1) To apply a model for the study of sound repetition which has been devised for and applied to the poetry of G.M.. Hopkins (Biermann 1991) to Setswana poems in order to establish the strength of the model and to determine what adjustments may need to be made for poems in the oral literary tradition.

This aim is based on the assumption that printed poems in Setswana, by virtue of its being an African language, form part of the oral tradition. This is supported in part and at a general level by what Brown (1998:15) terms the debt of almost all poetic forms to oral rhythms and vocalizations@. More specifically, in the case of the poem AAferika@, the allusion to a traditional Setswana proverb may be considered to be directly representative of orality (following Zabus 1996:33 who considers allusion to proverbs in printed literature as a manifestation of the oral).

- (2) To investigate how orality manifests itself in the sound of Setswana poems. A hidden assumption on which we are basing this research aim is that there is, of necessity, a specific and strong relationship between orality and the phonic organisation of poems which requires description. This is narrowed down to the specific area of sound repetition, which may be viewed as a manifestation of parallelism. It is widely accepted that parallelism in general and sound repetition in particular characterise orality in literature (see Van Gorp 1984:226 and Foley *in* Groenewald 1990:6).

2 PROCEDURE

We started our study of this text by translating together the Setswana text into English. (Notes about the translation appear in the Appendix) The translation was read by colleagues² in the Department of African languages at Unisa and suggestions for changes were selectively incorporated. We consider the translation process itself to be an initial stage in our interpretation, because some of the discussions about grammatical categories, for instance, which arose from the translation, turned out to aid our subsequent interpretation of the central tenor-vehicle relationship.

After completing the translation, we collected recordings of performances³ on cassette to be used as control mechanism in the study of sound repetition.

Our next step was to do separate analyses of the poem based on what each of us found to be salient aspects of it. This was followed by a series of discussions of our individual readings. Here follows, then, the versions of our readings that have emerged from these discussions. Ina Biermann's reading is from the entry point of sound repetition and Sekepe Matjila=s from that of the semantic associations that are activated by the central metaphorical construction. It may be worth noting that noth of us in the initial stages of our separate readings of the poem, perceived the second stanza of the poem as a foregrounded part, and that we think this can be explained on the grounds of the metaphor we identified in line 9.

3 SOUND REPETITION

My finding is that sound repetition in this poem serves specifically as a marker of metaphorical information in the sense that it accentuates, continues and establishes relationships between elements of metaphorical constructions. To put it more bluntly, I think that I identified the foregrounded stanza and the central metaphor itself because the sound repetition in the poem alerted me to it and because the sound repetition helped me to relate certain parts of lines to one another. This finding coincides with my (1991) view of sound in poetic language use as an organisatory element of which the guiding principle is repetition. According to this view, sound repetition has a potential semantic function because it establishes relationships of equivalence⁴.

However, apart from the fact that I found this poem to be a demonstration and affirmation of the communicative role of sound repetition, I found that the specific sound repetitions I perceived as foregrounded also had an additional function, of activating and establishing an intertextual relationship⁵. This is the allusion to a Setswana proverb which proves to be essential for the activation of specific metaphorical associations. It is precisely this intertextual relationship which also enables our reading of the poem in terms of the oral tradition.

In the first line of the poem, *ALefatshe leno le lentle jang!@* (AHow lovely is this land!), the alliteration of /l/ serves to foreground the line as a whole. This effect is strengthened by the repetition of the line in the last stanza, which is in itself a repetition of the entire first stanza. What is interesting about this sound repetition, apart from the general emphasising effect, is that the subset of reverse rhyme of /le/ establishes a phonic (and grammatical) link between the notion LAND (*ALefatshe@*) and the qualification BEAUTIFUL (*Ale lentle jang!@*). My interpretation of this instance of sound repetition is that it creates a close identity between the land and this one characteristic of beauty. Its beauty is made through sound repetition to be felt to be its essential characteristic. This is the kind of beauty that can only be seen by the eyes of one who is a child of that land, by one who is closely bonded to the land. This lyrical AI@, by virtue of his close relationship to the land, is able to see the essence of its beauty in the variety and bounty described in the rest of the poem. The way the lyrical AI@ sees the land as superbly and innately beautiful provides the foundation for reading of the land-girl metaphor ironically in line 11, which will be discussed by Sekepe in the second half of the paper. Although this sound repetition is grammatically necessary (the *le-* in this case is determined by the requirement of correspondence between the prefixes of the noun and the adjective) I perceive it as semantically functional because it relates two content words which are important components of the central metaphor.

In the descriptions of all the things that make the land beautiful, other instances of functional sound repetitions occur which establish smaller units of semantic relationships. I omit describing them for the sake of brevity, with the exception of the alliteration of /f/, assonance of /a/ and line-internal rhyme of /la/ in the last line of the first stanza (line 8): *ADi aila fela mono Aferika@*. This alliteration emphasises that the *Aland@* in question is only this land, AFRICA.

In summary, it can so far be said that the sound repetitions have outlined and related the central components: LAND, BEAUTIFUL and AFRICA.

The vehicle *Amosetsana@* (*Agirl@*) in the central metaphor, *ALefatshe le ke mosetsana@* (*Athis land is a girl@*) (line 9) participates in patterns of reverse rhyme of /m]/, alliteration of /m/ and assonance of /]/ throughout the second stanza as follows:

9 Lefatshe le ke **mosetsana**,

Land this is a girl

This land is a lass

10 **Moratwa** [w]a [di] thaka tse **dikgolo**,

One who of peers/ those who are great

is admired/ gentlemen

The loved one

One cherished by eminent guys

11 Ntšwa fela a le **mmala motšhwana**,

Although only she is colour black+skin of the female (girl)

Although she is dark-skinned

12 **Mmala o o bosulabogolo**.

Colour which is bad omen+big

The colour of bad omen

13 Selefera ke **meno** a gagwe;

Silver is teeth of her

Her eyes are a shining silver

14 Gouta ke **marinini** a gagwe;

Gold is gums of her

Her gums a glittering gold

15 Ta**mane** dinala tsa gagwe;

Diamond nails of her

Her nails a sparkling diamond

16 Tsotlhe tse di **mono** Aferika

All these are here in Africa

All these are abundant in Africa

The sustained occurrence of these three sound patterns has the effect of establishing a relationship of phonic (and in some cases, grammatical) equivalence between the girl Amosetsana@ and the various features and characteristics ascribed to her in this stanza, such as her desirability (one who is admired and sought after by eminent men: Amoratwa a thaka tse dikgolo@), her physical

features that are focal expressions in the metaphorisation of the vehicle Agirl@ in terms of the tenor Aland@, such as her dark colour, her silver teeth and her golden gums. I perceive lines 11-12 as particularly foregrounded in terms of the increased intensity of the repetition of the sound patterns under discussion. This seems to tie in with the crucial importance of the aspect that is qualified in these lines, which is the dark colour of the girl. This is compounded by the elaboration of the first reference to her colour as the colour associated with bad omen, Abosulabogolo@. The sound repetitions relate the descriptions of the girl to the land not only through the semantic associations of the qualities (all the features are closer to those of the tenor land more than those of the human girl, except for the foregrounded feature of colour, which can be viewed as appropriate both to the tenor Aland@ and to the vehicle Agirl@). In the last line, assonance of /j/ and reverse rhyme of /m]/ draw the phrase that is repeated like a refrain throughout the poem Ahere in Africa@ (Amono Aferika@) into the pattern of focal expressions that relate to the way the tenor and the vehicle interact in this poem. This phrase brings the sound patterns full circle in that *this land is a girl* (Amosetsana@) and all the features of the girl are those that pertain specifically in and to Africa (Amono Aferika@), i.e. *this land is Africa*. The sound repetitions in this stanza therefore serve to connect the tenor and vehicle in terms of auditive qualities, which mediates the perception of the semantic relatedness in the context of the metaphorical construction. It is now possible to describe the central tenor and vehicle as:

AFRICA (THIS LAND) IS BEAUTIFUL [AS] A GIRL		
(Aferika)	(le lentle jang)	(mosetsana)
TENOR		VEHICLE ⁶

The elements of this construction are established in this configuration by sound repetition, but the construction also becomes evident when the title AAferika@ (AAfrica@) and the pattern of syntactic parallelism/ of the first lines of every stanza are taken into account. The following paradigm emerges:

1 Lefatshe leno le lentle jang! (AHow lovely is this land!)

9 Lefatshe le ke mosetsana, (AThis land is a girl (lass)@)

17 Lefatshe leno la meriti; (AThis is the land of still shadows@)

25 Aferika, fatshe la letsatsi (AAfrica the land of sun(shine)@)

33 Lefatshe leno le lentle jang! (AHow lovely is this land!)

The central tenor and vehicle relationship between land and girl depends strongly on the shared quality of *beauty* (as specified in lines 1 and 35). Sekepe Matjila alerted me that there is a

Setswana proverb which qualifies the notion *beauty* as follows: ABontle bo na le dibebejane bo sa loeng bo a rota@. Translations or paraphrases of this include: ABeauty has in it good and bad / beauty is the source of conflict and reconciliation / beauty, if it doesn't bewitch, it heals@. It is my perception that the intertextual relationship between this proverb and the text of this poem, in the form of an allusion, relies not so much on the presence of the word *beauty* in the poem *Aferika* or on the way this element is associated with the tenor *land* and the vehicle *girl* in terms of the various facets of their shared beauty, but rather on the strong phonic parallelism that draws the proverb into the sound-meaning relationship which is so strongly communicative in the second stanza. This is evident in the reverse rhyme of /b]/, the alliteration and diffuse repetition of /b/ and the assonance of /]/ in the proverb. The patterns of sound repetition provide a strong intertextual connection which qualifies the two opposing facets of the notion *beauty* in terms of the proverb. This allows for a reading of the central metaphor itself in terms of this proverb, upon which much of the productive ambiguity of the metaphorical relationship relies, as will be demonstrated by Sekepe Matjila in the second part of our joint paper.

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PART 2

METAPHORICAL ANALYSIS

Four images will be used to illustrate or visualise the main aspect of the central metaphor. The associations are as follows:

- 1.Landscape and wild animals
- 2.The land is a girl
- 3.Minerals
- 4.Agriculture

I will concentrate on the second image A **The land is a girl** A because of its centrality. The association between the land and the girl is elaborated by other images in the poem such as **silver, gold and diamond**:

The reader perceives the above line as metaphorical. When reading the above line one knows that it is inconsistent with the nature of the world of humans and objects. This is a noun metaphor because two nouns the main subject in the frame and the nominal focus or focus subject are semantically and grammatically incompatible but interconnected by a verb to be Ake@

The main subject is a tenor while the focus subject is a vehicle. The tenor is the crucial element here; the function of the vehicle is to specify the tenor metaphorically. The interpretation of a nominal metaphorical expression depends critically on the interaction between literal associations surrounding the tenor and the vehicle. For instance:

Lefatshe leno ke *mosetsana*

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vehicle **tenor**

object *human*
inanimate has feelings
 beautiful beautiful
 untouched attractive
 fertile loveable
 desireable
 young
 probably untouched virgin

Interpretation

The girl

The girl is as beautiful as the land. Her eyes are shining like silver, she has golden gums and diamond nails. The beauty of this girl is portrayed around the qualities of land. A beautiful girl attracts attention of gentlemen and becomes loveable.

In the syntactic environment the vehicle *Alefatshe@* is humanised in that all the object characteristics that cannot be transferred to a human being are eliminated; the characteristics denoted object, no power of speech are therefore moved into the background. All other characteristics that typify a land can in fact be transferred to a human being. Thus in terms of the above interpretation, the statement **Lefatshe leno ke *mosetsana*** implies that the land is beautiful, loveable and attractive.

It is important to note the relationship between the above-mentioned line and *line 1* of the first stanza viz.

A lefatshe leno le lentle jang A

The land this is beautiful so

As it has been mentioned earlier on that this paper will concentrate on the association between the

land and the girl, this research will use a Setswana proverb **A Bontle bo na le dibebejane bo sa loeng bo a rota** @ to explore the two sides of beauty and to establish the relationship between land and girl.

The above-mentioned proverb can be translated literally as *beauty has its irksome disadvantages* which is an equivalent of an English proverb **Beauty is but a vain and doubtful good** according to Plaatje S.T. (1916:24)

In their attempt to portray this proverb most writers in Setswana literature concentrate on one side of the proverb without showing the other side. Their work delineates only the demerits without mentioning the merits of beauty. A beautiful girl is associated with evil and demonic acts such as; prostitution, witchcraft, cruelty, greed, murder, vengefulness, deceit, unfaithfulness and bitter conflicts to mention but a few. A beautiful girl is a source of trouble within a family. If the girl is not lazy she is stupid. If she is not stubborn she is rude.

The proverb **bontle bo na le dibebejane** might be understood as meaning **beauty is the source of conflict** or where there is beauty there is also trouble. In many works a beautiful girl is portrayed as a source of conflict; e.g Mosele in Mosele, Nthite in Pelo e ntsho, Mamotia in Dintshontsho tsa lorato, Lebogang in Marara and Naomi in Ngaka Mosadi Mooka to mention but a few.

On the contrary a beautiful girl can also give life to the family. Fame and fortune can also follow her wherever she goes because of her good looks. She can amass riches from the admirers simply because she looks good. The girl as well as her family can reap benefits from her beauty. The last part of the proverb **bo sa loeng bo a rota** literally means if it does not bewitch it urinates which can be interpreted as **if it doesn't bring sickness it heals**. The word **loeng** emanates from the verb **loya** which means to bewitch. In Setswana witchcraft is known as boloi.

According to Setiloane G.M. 1976:52 the motives of greed, envy and vengeance characterise boloi. The purpose of a moloi is always to kill or injure a particular person. The injury may be moral in nature. Boloi is used to reduce a seriti Adignity@ of a successful person so that he

becomes lazy and loses interest in work; or otherwise likeable character becomes unpleasant.

The continent Africa alludes the above-mentioned characteristics. Lefatshe on one hand is described as beautiful because of the hills and plains, densely populated forests, flowers and rivers still shadows and meandering rivers. This is the physical beauty of Africa. To complement this beauty there is also domestic and wild animals. This beautiful land is also fertile for agriculture.

This land is not only physically attractive, she has inner beauty as well, something that cannot be seen from far i.e. silver, gold and diamond

All these features make Africa to be the focus of other countries just like a beautiful girl is to gentlemen. Even if they regard her as a dark continent, they still scramble for her wealth. The eminent guys symbolise the powerful European countries. These countries go all out to colonise e.g. Portugal, England, France, Germany and Belgium. The conflict between English and Dutch in South Africa marked by occupations and confrontations is also clear example. Again a contrasting picture has been painted by the above expression. Africa which is a beautiful continent has its ills as well. There is greed because natives do not want to share and the invaders would like to take everything. Everyone wants to have the whole cake to himself. Dangerous reptiles may symbolise hostility between indigenous people and the foreign legion.

Go **rota** is to urinate. In the olden days **moroto** Aurine@ played a significant role in the life of the community. For example if an elderly person was having an eye disease; a small boy of about seven years was requested to urinate in a container. It was believed that the urine was having healing powers. This urine was then used to rinse the patient's eyes. After a few days the patient's eyes will be in a good condition again. Urine was also used by herdboys. Initi and herdboys, who did not know how to whistle had to rinse their mouth with a cow's urine so that they can learn different kinds of whistling.

It is important to note that the land also possesses animals which sustain life to people. Antelopes, Wildebeest and Impalas provide people with meat, hide for clothing and even horns which were used to make trumpets by traditional societies for inviting the tribe to the place of assembly.

Even though Lefatshe is beautiful it also harbours very dangerous reptiles such as iguanas and snakes. An admirer of this beautiful land can be attacked and injured by these reptiles. What makes them more dangerous is the fact that they **creep** in the grass and it is not easy to see them as the land is grassy and densely wooded.

CONCLUSION

The balance of the two contradicting sides of the proverb is well demonstrated. The land is beautiful but it also has its irksome disadvantages such as dangerous reptiles which means **that falseness often lurks beneath fair hair.**

Because the land is the focus point here, the characteristics of a girl are described around the characteristics the land. The author uses symbols such as silver, gold and diamond to describe the girl's features.

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AFERIKA - L.D. Raditladi

Africa

Please note:

- (i) that this is a working translation.
- (ii) below each line, the literal, word-for-word English equivalent is given and below that, the literary or poetic rendering of the line.
- (iii) the poetic/literary translation is by Sekepe Matjila.

Stanza 1:

1 Lefatshe leno le lentle jang!
Land this is beautiful how/so
 How lovely is this land

2 Le makhubu, ee, le dipala.
With hills oh yes with plains
 Oh yes, with its hills and plains

3 Le ditlharetlhare le majang;
With many trees with weeds/ grasses

Densely wooded and grassy

4 Dikgama, dikgokong, diphala.
Red hartebeest wildebeest impala
Antelopes, Wildebeest and Impalas

5 Phologolo, tsotlhe tsa naga,
Animals all of the veld/ wild
 Animals of the veld

6 Kgatwane, kgwathe le dinoga,
Lizard iguana and snakes
 Lizards , Iguanas and snakes

7 Digagabi di ilang mariga,
Reptiles which dislike winter
(those who
crawl on their
breast and make noise)
 Reptiles that despise winter

8 Di aila fela mono Aferika.
They creep only here in Africa
 Creep only here in Africa

Stanza 2:

9 Lefatshe le ke mosetsana,

Land this is a girl

This land is a lass

10 Moratwa [w]a [di] thaka tse dikgolo,

*One who of peers/ those who are great
is admired/ gentlemen*

The loved one

One cherished by eminent guys

11 Ntšwa fela a le mmala motšhwana,

Although only she is colour black+skin of the female (girl)

Although she is dark-skinned

12 Mmalo o o bosulabogolo.

Colour which is bad omen+big

The colour of bad omen

13 Selefera ke meno a gagwe;

Silver is teeth of her

Her eyes are a shining silver

14 Gouta ke marinini a gagwe;

Gold is gums of her

Her gums a glittering gold

15 Taemane dinala tsa gagwe;

Diamond nails of her

Her nails a sparkling diamond

16 Tsotlhe tse di mono Aferika

All these are here in Africa

All these are abundant in Africa

Stanza 3:

17 Lefatshe leno la meriti;
Land this of shadows
 This is the land of still shadows

18 La [di] thunya di methalethale;
Of flowers of variety/sundry
 A paradise of sundry flowers

19 La dinoka di emang sesiti,
Of rivers of standing pools
 A land of meandering rivers

20 Di ikgarakgarang jaaka tlhale
That wind like thread
 Zigzaging like thread

21 Ke lefatshe la matlhomola,
This land of pitiableness/compassion/suffering
 This is the land of pitiableness

22 Ruri fa go le letlhafula,
Truly when it is summer
 Verily in summer time

23 Fa dinku le podi di fula,
When sheep and goats they graze
 Sheep and goats do graze together

24 Diruiwa tsa mono Aferika
That which of here in Africa
I possess/
Possessions
 Africa=s vital possessions

Stanza 4:

25 Aferika, fatshe la letsatsi
Africa land of sun
 Africa the land of sunshine

26 Le phatsimang ngwaga fela otlhe;
That shines year throughout whole
 Brightening throughout the year

27 Aferika lefatshe la metse
Africa land of water
 Africa the land of tawnish water

28 A masetlhana [di] nokeng tsotlhe.
That which [is] tawnish [in] rivers all
 Permeating every river

29 Lefatshe leno ke la temo,
Land this is of agriculture (crop farming)
 This land is cultivable

30 Lefatshe leno ke la kgomo,
Land this is of cattle (livestock farming)
 This land is a haven of cattle

31 Lefatshe leno ke la khumo;
Land this is of wealth
 This is the land of riches

32 Tse di bonwa mono Aferika.
These they are found here in Africa
things
 All these are abundant in Africa

Stanza 5:

33 Lefatshe leno le lentle jang!
Land this is beautiful how/so
 How lovely is this land

34 Le makhubu, ee, le dipala.
With hills oh yes with plains
 Oh yes, with its hills and plains !

35 Le ditlharetlhare le majang;
With many trees with weeds/ grasses
 Densely wooded and grassy

36 Dikgama, dikgokong, diphala.
Red hartebeest wildebeest impala
Antelopes, Wildebeest and Impalas

37 Phologolo, tsotlhe tsa naga,
Animals all of the veld/ wild
 Animals of the veld

38 Kgatwane, kgwathe le dinoga,
Lizard iguana and snakes
 Lizards, Iguanas and snakes

39 Digagabi di ilang mariga,
Reptiles which dislike winter
(those who
crawl on their
breast and make noise)
 Reptiles that despise winter

40 Di aila fela mono Aferika.
They creep only here in Africa
 Creep only here in a Africa

1. This paper is an attempt to act upon the suggestion in Steen (1994) that comparative readings by literary specialists are required in the empirical study of literature.

2. The readers are:

3. The recorded performances are by the following readers:

4. This is based on G.M. Hopkins's notion *the figure of sound* (House & Storey 1959:107)

to which Jakobson (1960) refers in his formulation of the principle of equivalence.

5. This potential function of sound repetition has been demonstrated with reference to other data by Biermann (1993) and my reading of *AAferika* by L.D. Raditladi provides more data in support of the view of intertextuality as parallelism demonstrated in that publication.

6. The view of metaphor on which the analysis in this paper is based, is essentially an interactive view as represented by Reinhart (1976) and Gräbe (1985), taking into account Steen's (1994) critique of their text-based approach without taking it on board fully (see Biermann (1997)). In Steen's sense, the present two-authored paper can also be viewed as an attempt at offering empirical evidence of how expert readers understand metaphors in a poetic text.