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TOWARDS AN AESTHETIC OF SESOTHO PROSE

1. Introduction

Sesotho is a Bantu language spoken in Lesotho and its environs. Lesotho is situated in Southern Africa, and is completely surrounded by the Republic of South Africa. The total number of Sesotho speakers, both in Lesotho and elsewhere (in parts of the Republic of South Africa) is approximately 3,000,000 or more.

The first missionaries to come to Lesotho, namely Arbousset, Casalis and Gosselin, arrived in 1833, representing the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society. Prior to this there was no system of writing in Lesotho, and all verbal art was dramatic and participatory.

It is important to remember that the missionaries came to Christianize, and that whatever other activity they engaged in was conceived as an aid to, and as part and parcel of, the process of Christianization. The promotion of mother-tongue literacy was one such activity. The fact that education for Blacks developed into something bigger and worthy of pursuit for its own sake was purely an accident of history. In the words of Dr. James Stewart, himself a missionary in South Africa at the turn of the century, "If missionary education communicated no other power than the ability to read the Bible, it would still justify itself."

Thus, as will be seen later, in the process of learning to read and write, the Black man acquired a new set of values, and inherited the missionary zeal to pass them on to his fellow Blacks and, through writing, to his readers. Traditionally, the story-teller had been a moralist, and most of his stories were, to varying degrees, didactic. The writer conceived his task in the same way — he would both entertain and teach.

2. Motivations, or the writer's function as he sees it

First of all, like his oral narrator/performer counterpart, the writer assumes the role, in relation to his characters, of a wise, all-knowing father and guardian. He approves and commends, he disapproves and chides, he teases and mocks with lighthearted playfulness, displaying a paternalistic amusement at, and tolerance for, the human foibles of his characters -- a Gulliver among the Lilliputians. In another sense, he is comparable to God's own messenger among men of diminutive moral stature.

The writer, as against the oral narrator/performer, also has the magic power of communicating through a new medium whose acquisition has given him an enhanced status as a man of knowledge, something possessed only by the lucky few.

Secondly, the writer sets out to tell a story which he hopes will, among other things, be entertaining. He is, therefore, a narrator and entertainer, and in this role he creates people and situations which he objectifies for his reading audience. He has the disadvantage, however, in comparison with the oral narrator, that he does not create in the presence of a participating, critical audience which could inspire him to great heights of artistic excellence or, in some cases, bring his creative performance to an abrupt and premature end. He pursues his creative activity individually and in privacy, springs it upon his reading audience who also receive and evaluate it individually and in privacy, and he can only hope that they will both concur and be entertained. Which means that his critics speak after the fact, not during the process of creation.

Thirdly, the writer takes upon himself the role of commentator. Both directly and indirectly he interprets, evaluates and pronounces judgement upon the actions, attitudes, and expressed intentions of his characters. He is both the entertainer and the entertained, cuing his audience and hoping that they will endorse his evaluations and judgements. His function, in this respect, could be compared to that of the Greek chorus.

With respect to his first and third roles -- i.e. as the big father of all his characters and as a critical commentator upon their actions -- the writer must be seen as someone who has attitudes towards those characters. The attitudes themselves arise out of a moral code which the writer vehemently upholds and jealously protects. His characters either observe and reinforce this code, or wilfully disregard it and threaten it

with destruction. As an involved person with a vested interest in the behaviour of his objectified creatures, therefore the writer either likes and praises them, or he dislikes and vilifies them, as the case may be. Similarly, the oral narrator, in dramatizing the actions and words of an actor in an oral tale, implies an attitude towards that character: The eating of the hyena would be dramatized by mimicking ravenous eating with all the ugly noises; the bigness of the lion and his authority and dignity by a raising of the shoulders and simultaneous bending forward of the head and looking at members of the audience with a severe expression, and, for authority in the voice, reaching down to the lowest register of the narrator's voice; the antics of the trickster by being simultaneously amusing and repugnant, exactly as the trickster sometimes is. He likes them, dislikes them, is amused by them -- exact parallels to the writer's attitudes noted above. That means that both the oral narrator and the writer display what I call an Affection/Disaffection relationship with their characters. There are, of course, other manifestations of the writer's involvement.

In sum, then, we come up with a writer who is inescapably didactic, who creates situations which will prove his moral point. He tends to see the world in extremes, in sharp contrasts of black and white, evil and good, ugly and beautiful; and his characters are either doomed or saved. There is no compromise, no merging of extremes -- it is either day or night, never twilight or dawn, and the stories of his people are classical fables featuring stereotypes.

In his *Moeti oa Bochabela* (The eastbound traveller) Thomas Mofolo, the well-known Mosotho writer, describes right at the beginning what he considers as the dark age among the Basotho, the period prior to the coming of the missionaries. Into the powerful image of darkness that he builds, he introduces the contrasting image of light, but it is only a tiny spark which vainly attempts to resist the darkness, but must finally escape to avoid total engulfment by its more powerful rival. To represent these images, Mofolo creates a nation of corrupt men and women who lie and cheat and fornicate and kill, and suffer from a general condition of moral turpitude. The character who illustrates the corruption of the Basotho is a man named Phakoane. He is the personification of evil. Next door to Phakoane lives the protagonist, the

young man Fekisi, who is the personification of virtue. In lack of verisimilitude, these characters are, of course, no different from all characters of allegory. But we must see in this, also, the moralist's ubiquitous technique: the twice-told tale with the "good" character and the "bad" character involved in turn, the "good" one making all the right moves and prospering in the end, and the "bad" one blundering at every turn, and getting punished.

Mofolo believes that the term "human being" -- *motho* -- should be reserved only for the men of unimpeachable character. The rest are "beasts". Mofolo does not raise the question of corrigibility. Nor indeed that of corruptibility. We get cardboard figures in a rigid, static situation where the "good" are good forever, and the "bad" are bad forever. Phakoane and Fekisi are pigeonholed, *inter alia*, by the following descriptions: "Phakoane was a human being when he had not taken any drink, but when he was drunk, he was a wild beast." Fekisi, on the other hand, was "a human being in the full meaning of the word 'human being', a human being as the Creator had planned that human beings should be, a true image of Him who made all things, both the visible and the invisible, the very human being described when it was said: All creatures shall fear him, shall be obedient to him and shall honour him, because he has a glory of his own which other creatures do not possess."

In *Chaka*, Chaka the persecuted young lad, and later the brave and courageous but unappreciated young man, a budding warrior thrown to the mercies of his bloodthirsty enemies by his own father (the enemies including his half-brothers and his mother's co-wives), sung by the women but hunted down by the men -- he, at the beginning of the saga, and for some time after, is a "human being", and his detractors are "beasts". However, when he comes into his own, a social misfit, a sadist and a bloodthirsty Dracula, he is disqualified from "human beingness", and the label "beast" is stuck on him. The beginning of this decline is hinted at as Chaka is, by degrees, seduced by the Diviner or Smeller-out, Isanusu. But the process is considered to be complete and irrevocable when Chaka agrees (nay, even begs) to kill his beloved Nolwa on Isanusu's promise that this will bring him greater power and renown: "Firstly, the last little spark of humanity still remaining in him was extinguished, completely extinguished in the terrible darkness of

his heart Secondly, his being dead, dead forever, and there entered [into him] the nature truly of a beast.”

Similarly, in *Pitseng*, the people of darkness (equivalent to beasts) are the legions of young men and young women who pervert love into a thing of no consequence, contracting relationships with many partners at the same time, relationships which they ended casually and abruptly, failing to consult with their parents before committing themselves to marriage. These are the “beasts”. The “human beings” of the story are Alfred Phakoe and Aria Sebaka who never engage in these frivolities until they discover true love, which they do when they meet.

Now we can say that Mofolo loves “human beings” and hates “beasts”. We must, however, not lose sight of the fact that, as a writer, he had the power to create and define his own human beings and his own beasts according to the moral code which he observed. The moral code Mofolo recognized was that arising from western Christian ethics, one which, at that time, however, was not shared by the majority of his fellow-Basotho. In this role, Mofolo is an extension of the White missionary, and he is therefore a crusader, a self-styled Moses inspired with the zeal to lead his people out of the bondage of the darkness of *Sothohood* (Bosotho) into the light of *Europeanhood*.

The tensile situation that results from this, that is, where the author no longer subscribes to the same values as his audience (i.e. his readers), calls for a redefinition of didacticism, or, perhaps, an extension of its signification. The oral narrator/performer of premissionary days (in which we include the contemporary remains of this tradition) believes in the same customs, traditions and cultural values as his audience. The didactic tale that he tells illustrates the threat to society of social deviants who would commit rape, incest, murder, fratricide, who would lie, steal, and cheat. The narrator passes judgement on them, and his audience concurs and cries “Vengeance!”. It is a reaffirmation of the mores of the social group. It reseals the cracks in the social structure, it heals the wound inflicted on society by a renegade. It either rehabilitates the renegade or ostracizes or even destroys him physically.

The audience concurs without any need for cuing from the author; so do the numerous anonymous characters whose omnipresence is felt everywhere in the story, who are always on the side of justice and

truth, and always stand ready to help the innocent victim of the social deviant. They stand ready to join those directly involved in passing judgement on the villain, in celebrating a successful and happy conclusion of the story, or in acts of commiseration if all is not well in the end.

This is integrative didacticism, and it belongs to the Africa of premissionary precolonial times. It is a feature of oral didactic tales.

The story of Masilo and Masilonyane includes fratricide and theft as its most powerful themes. It is a story of success for the younger brother Masilonyane and failure for his elder brother in finding wealth in a search that takes them away from home. Luck comes to Masilonyane in the guise of an old woman he discovers under an overturned clay pot in the ruins of a village they see along the way. She insists that he should carry her during the rest of their journey. Twice he uses a ruse to get her off his back, and he runs away and hides. On the second occasion, as she comes to where he is hiding, he sets his dogs on her, instructing them not to eat one of her big toes, which was extraordinarily big. He chops it open, and several herds of cattle come out including a beautiful cow whose colour is indescribable. Masilo is envious, and begs him to give him some of his cattle, particularly the beautiful cow. Masilonyane would willingly give him some of the cattle, but not that cow. They go to a fountain to drink. Masilonyane holds the large slab of stone covering the fountain, while Masilo drinks. Then Masilo holds the stone for Masilonyane, but deliberately lets go of it and kills him. He then drives the cattle home. But there is a little bird that keeps appearing and twittering a little song that reveals the murder. It is Masilonyane's heart that has been transformed into this little bird. Masilo in turn kills the bird, grinds it to powder, burns it, but it keeps rising again and singing the same song. Eventually it reaches home just as Masilo is receiving compliments from the people for 'his' beautiful herds and especially for the beautiful cow, and is denying all knowledge of his brother's whereabouts. The truth is revealed and, in the ensuing confrontation, the people indicate that they believe the bird (alias Masilonyane), and when it changes into Masilonyane, Masilo runs away into exile.

Fratricide and theft and lies are negative forces that threaten the solidarity of the society. The crack is sealed when the culprit is

punished and the equilibrium restored. It is to be noted that the whole community is involved in the final dispensations and determinations, and that they are on the side of right and justice and of the observance of the society's mores.

A similar story among the Bene-Mukuni tells how a man who kills his pregnant wife alleging that she has eaten some of his figs is reported by the foetus that comes out of the mother and comes running after him dragging its umbilical cord and singing:

Father wait for me.
 Father wait for me,
 The Little Wombless!
 How swollen are those eyes!
 Wait till the Little Wombless comes.

The Little Wombless One is indestructible and comes to contradict the man's lying about his wife. When he is completely exposed and there is no point in further argument, "His brothers-in-law tie him. And then ... all the assegais are poised together in one direction, every one saying: 'Now today you are the man who killed our sister ...'

"Then they just threw the body there to the west." *

Then comes the literate narrator -- the writer who, as previously stated, has willy-nilly embraced the new, aggressive and radically different values which come in the wake of missionary enterprise and colonial subjugation. He has received the skill of writing as part and parcel of the new mores and standards and traditions. He has had to accept everything as a package deal -- all or nothing. This way, he has simultaneously inherited the task of the missionary/"civilizer".

Meanwhile the missionary has recognized that his first and most important task is to create a sense of sin among the people he wishes to convert, and that will make conversion more plausible. He has had to begin by destroying the structure that he found in order to make room for his own model. The African has thus been placed in a position where he has succeeded in being a sinner without even trying -- all he has had to do has been to continue to believe in his own traditions and values.

[* J. Torrend, *Specimens of Bantu Folklore from Northern Rhodesia*, New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969, p. 17 (First published by Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd., 1921)]

The writer who comes out of this training is, then, an extension of the missionary -- a Black ancestor worshipper preaching White Christian values. Like the missionary, he has first to destroy in order to make room for the new ideals, for the brave new world he has discovered. It is a process of destruction, deculturation, disintegration. We thus have to label his didacticism as disintegrative didacticism. In that the disintegration or destruction is undertaken as a means to predisposing the Black man to accept the new values, we see that it is not an end in itself, and that some form of reintegration follows close behind. Reintegration is seen as synonymous with the anthropologist's acculturation, while disintegration is equivalent to deculturation. But unlike what it replaces, the disintegrative/reintegrative process is never totally successful either qualitatively in terms of the depth of its penetration, or quantitatively in terms of the number of those who are significantly moved by it.

For example in Mofolo's *Moeti oa Bochabela*, Fekisi, the puritanical young man who considers everything around him to be evil, fails to change the ways and traditions of the Basotho to accord with the new concepts of "good" and "evil" which Mofolo is advocating. Instead, Fekisi has to withdraw from this society and go elsewhere. The Basotho remain stubbornly Basotho in their ways. In fact we must conclude that the very vehemence with which many writers advocate the acceptance of the Christian religion and western concepts of morality is a barometer of the limited success attained by the Whites in their 'westernization' of the Blacks during the early years of contact.

In *Chaka*, Mofolo accepts without apology or explanation the efficacy of the Zulu diviner Isanusi's medicines and potions. Finally, in *Pitseng*, Mofolo personally condemns the new attitude to courtship and marriage that he observes among the modern youth of Lesotho which he says came in with the Whites and has destroyed the youth of Lesotho.

3. Manifestations, or the writer's discharge of his duties as he sees them

For us as critical readers, the first imperative is to accept the validity of the writer's role as a deeply involved individual. This, after all, links

him naturally with his predecessor or predecessor/contemporary, the oral narrator/performer. Having done so, however, we have to keep alive in our minds that the writer, in our particular situation is, initially, disintegrative -- he is a deculturating agent.

The writer's involvement may take the form of *direct, explicit comment*. He interrupts his narrative in order to comment on a situation or a character's behaviour. He either talks to the audience to further explain what has just happened in the story, as when Mofolo concludes a chapter in *Chaka* by saying:

In this chapter we find that it is indeed true that the fruit of sin is bitter to an amazing degree, because we do not see what transgression Chaka has committed in this matter, yet, even though that is so, his father gives the command that he be killed.

Or he contemplates and muses, as in *Moeti oa Bochabela*:

Such is drunkenness, it associates one with evil things; its fruit is bitter. When one's mind clears, one is ashamed when one is told, and sees for oneself, the things that one did.

Or he debates a point as in *Pitseng* where Mofolo tells us:

The days of today, it is said, are days of light, of wisdom, and of progress, and the days of long ago, of the *difaqane*, it is said, were days of darkness, of foolishness, of lack of knowledge. But in a matter such as this one of marriage, we find that to many people those days were of wisdom, and not of darkness and foolishness, and that it is these days of today which are of darkness and foolishness, and not of wisdom and light.

All these evaluations are communicated to the reader with the expectation that he will endorse them -- or the hope, at any rate.

One of the problems here is that, in order to do this -- that is, to make a direct, explicit comment -- the writer has to put his characters in a state of suspended animation, to reactivate them when he has finished saying his piece. A perfect analogue to this is the sudden stoppage of the movement of a film while the commentator explains some detail in the still photo confronting the audience. This objection is sustained by the consideration that the author could convey the same

sentiments by building them into the plot, making them emerge as the story moves forward.

A second objection is that explanatory comments, that is ones which reiterate what is already obvious to the reader as against those introducing new elements, are irritating to the reader who rightly feels that he is not trusted to reach the same conclusions without the writer's intervention, nor given the option to conclude differently.

Thirdly, the suspension of the narrative creates a dangerous vacuum which sucks in the closest thing to it, namely whatever the writer may choose to put into it. For one thing, the writer easily turns preacher, particularly since he is crusading for a new religion. This is all the more likely since writers like Mofolo and his contemporaries, and for some time after, went through Bible classes and were trained as preachers in addition to being school teachers.

We see that direct comments do not add to the beauty of the narration; on the contrary they detract from it. Indeed, they are not a part of the narration at all. They are thus a negative element, and can be irksome. On the other hand, the author may sustain the narrative, employing various styles to comment. This is *implicit comment*, and it is carried effortlessly, unobtrusively, along with the flow of the narrative, enhancing its elegance.

There are many stylistic techniques which the author employs to insinuate his affection or disaffection for a character into the story. First of all then, affection.

The author may show his affection for a character by a manipulation of the syntax. He inverts the usual relationship that moves from subject to predicate into the less usual movement of predicate to subject. This is *inversion* or *anastrophe*. A brief linguistic orientation is necessary here before we illustrate from the literature. In Sesotho, a verb predicate is structurally related to its noun subject by what is called a subject concord which has a phonological relationship to the noun prefix:

Batho ba makala
The people (*they*) were surprised
Letsatsi la tjhaba
The sun (*it*) rose

In a subject-to-predicate sequence as above, the subject concord and the verb stem (*ba* and *makala*, *la* and *tjhaba* respectively) collaborate to jointly produce a verbal predicate – the subject concord relates the predicate to a specific class or gender of nouns sharing the same prefix, the verb stem carries the action.

Inversion of the above two sentences results in the following:

Ba makala ba tho
They were surprised, the people
La tjhaba letsatsi
It rose, the sun

In these examples, the subject concord has assumed an additional function, namely that of noun substitute. It functions this way also when the noun is omitted. This means that the necessity to use the noun is substantially reduced or even totally eliminated. Mention of the noun in these circumstances then becomes a rhetorical device used for poetic effect, as in the following illustrations:

A di hana Fekisi
He rejected them, Fekisi
cf. *Fekisi a di hana*
Ya gala kgomo e tshwinyana
It started, the feminine-white-starred bovine
cf. *Kgomo e tshwinyana ya gala*

E ne e se motho yaa ratang ntwā, Fekisi
He was not a person who liked fighting, Fekisi
cf. *Fekisi e ne e se motho yaa ratang ntwā*

It is important to note that, in addition to the inversion, the prosody is slightly but significantly modified. The word just preceding the delayed subject carries a longer length in its penultimate syllable, a phenomenon which would occur if such word were final in the sentence. This means that the process of changing the subject and the predicate around is *inversion plus*, rather than simply inversion. The bestowal of final occurrence prosodic features on the word just before the delayed subject must be seen as reinforcing the argument that, once removed from its usual position, i.e. before the predicate, the noun subject becomes an appendage, syntactically speaking, which is only loosely linked to what precedes it. But there, precisely, lies its rhetorical power.

The noun subject is sometimes omitted, being deducible from the subject concord. In ordinary discourse, such omission serves to avoid the cumbersome repetition of a noun which is already "understood". In a *rhetorical omission of the noun*, however, there is no need to assume that the omitted noun is "understood". The rhetorical effect depends precisely on the challenge to the reader to supply the correct noun.

Mofolo uses this to great advantage in *Moeti oa Bochabela*, especially in his references to the sun. In a paragraph where he likens the sun to a royal messenger (with God as King), he rhetorically omits the noun *letsatsi* (sun) from seven key positions of *letsatsi* (subject) plus verb (predicate). So we get *la tjhaba* (it rose) three times and *la hlaha* (it appeared) four times.

The rhetorically omitted noun need not be in subjectival relationship; it could also be an object, or be related to a qualifying word or phrase. In all these situations, an appropriate concord (for example object concord, relative concord, etc.) is used to reveal the class gender and hint at the identity of the omitted noun.

The writer sometimes shows his admiration of a character through the *filial relationship* technique, whereby the character is related to his or her parentage, specifically to his or her father. He is called *son of ...*, and she *daughter of ...*. There are two important motivations for this. First, the relationship establishes the character as someone who belongs within a definite line of descent, not a nobody whose antecedents are not known. This harks back to the genealogical references so common in heroic poetry. The common practice whereby a Mosotho will greet another, or express gratitude or appreciation by simply declaiming the clan name of the one he is addressing, emphasizes the importance, to a Mosotho, of being recognized as having origins through reference to the ancestral father and/or the ancestral home.

Secondly, and very important, the use of the filial relationship technique does not depend, for its validity, on the illustriousness of the father. Rather, it emphasizes the illustriousness of the person praised, suggesting that he or she rubs off fame onto anything with which he or she is related, however remotely. In the sentence

Ho bile jwalo ho shwa ha Noliwa, *moradi wa Jobe*
So it was, the death of Noliwa, *daughter of Jobe*

from *Chaka*, we know, of course, that Jobe was a famous king. But his fame only adds to the amount of praise that, in Mofolo's eyes, Noliwa has already earned for herself through her "human beingness" and her sheer beauty.

But in the numerous references to Alfred Phakoe as *mora wa Phakoe* (the son of Phakoe) and Aria Sebaka as *moradi wa Sebaka* (the daughter of Sebaka), or even to Chaka as *mora wa Senzangakhona* (the son of Senzangakhona), neither Mr. Phakoe nor Mr. Sebaka nor indeed Mr. Senzangakhona is particularly famous. In fact the reader does not even know Phakoe and Sebaka since they are merely referred to in passing in *Pitseng*, the book in which their children are central characters. It is rather Alfred and Aria and Chaka who are illustrious.

Phrases of *associative relationship* are also sometimes used. These relate the character to his clan or to a wider socio-cultural group and to his place of origin. This also is reminiscent of heroic poetry. Thus Mofolo refers to Chaka as

Tau ya hlaka la ha Zulu
Lion of Zulu descent

and as

Tlou e kgolo
Great elephant

As with filial relationship, one important aspect of the above descriptions is their reaffirmation of the belongingness of the person praised.

There are other, similar, relationships which are, however, not as frequently employed in prose as they are in heroic poetry. Noliwa, in the sentence relating her to Jobe, is also referred to as

kgaitsemi ya Dingiswayo
sister of Dingiswayo

and

mosadi wa Chaka
wife of Chaka.

In many, perhaps most, cases of inversion, the subject, if a person whose father is known, is expressed through a phrase of filial relationship rather than through the given name of the character. For example:

a sa kena ntweng mora wa Senzangakhona ...
he just entering the battle, the son of Senzangakhona.

Warm feelings toward a character or an animal or other actor in the story are sometimes conveyed through a *special use of the adjective*. Here the normal function of the adjective, namely to distinguish an individual from a class of things which have a basic sameness, is suspended. In describing the graceful movements of the beautiful, well-fed, well-groomed, lively horse mounted by an immaculate suitor who comes to propose love to Aria Sebaka, Mofolo says

ya hakala *pitsi e soothe*
it excelled, *the dark brown horse*

Mofolo is using the adjective as an indication of his admiration of the horse. But what is important is that he is not admiring the horse because of its dark brownness -- he is admiring the dark brownness because of the horse. Thus the horse could have been any other colour, and that colour would have been equally admirable because the thing in which it inheres is admirable. In this context, such directly opposed descriptions as black and white, short and tall, large and small, etc., are all potential instruments for the expression, by one and the same writer, of the admiration of him who, or that which, is admired.

We must conclude, therefore, that in this context there is nothing in these adjectives *per se* that evokes feelings of admiration. They borrow glory rather than impart it, so that, as with filial relationship, the admired object rubs off its fame onto something else, that is, an otherwise irrelevant inherent quality; that is, it bestows fame on the adjective. Here are further examples:

A hana hona teng *Fekisi e mosootho*
He outclassed them even there, *the dark brown Fekisi*

Ya tjho ya hlomolana *kgomo e pudutswana*
Doing thus, it created tearful admiration, *the feminine-grey bovine*

Ya tla e tiile ho yena *kgomo e tshehla*
It came to him a full gallop, *the yellow bovine* (i.e. the lion)

...e tsoisitse mohlahla, e tonne mahlo, e tiisitse mohatala, *namane e tshehla*

...its mane raised, its eyes staring, its tail taut, *the yellow calf* (i.e. the lion)

a e nyafa ka *le lephatshwa*
he stabbed it deep with *the black and white one* (refers to spear; this was
the colour of Chaka's spear)

As seen from the examples adduced so far, the above techniques are sometimes combined. Usually, inversion is combined either with filial relationship or with given name plus special use of adjective. Illustrations of these can be found easily among the examples already provided above.

These expressions of admiration by the author should help us understand why some prose works contain occasional paragraphs of poetry. In the following description, in *Chaka*, of the lion that is about to attack the men looking for it in tall grass, the six-line poem praising the lion constitutes the delayed subject of the inverted syntax in exactly the same way as *the yellow bovine* and *the yellow calf* do above:

Ya re feela ham-m-m, ya be e se e le ka hare
Tshehla ya boMothebele, kokomoha,
Tshehla, thokwa-lekakuba,
Ekare o sa je tsa batho,
O itjella dirobala-naheng!
Matjhana a se na babo-moholo,
O a n'a bolaya a be a ratha! ,
It just went ham-m-m, and was immediately among them,
Tawny One, brother of Mothebele, rise up,
Tawny One, fawn-coloured king of the wilds,
Why, you eat not what belongs to men,
But eat, for your part, the sleepers-in-the-veld!
A nephew bereft of uncles
Kills and lays claim to all the booty!

In other words, we have here the same stylistic technique as employed about half a page down from the above quotation:

Yare ha e kgaruma, ya tjho e se e tlotse
 namane e tshéhla
 sebata sa meru
 And when it roared, it did so already having jumped
 the yellow calf
 beast of the forests

The only difference is that in the last illustration Mofolo writes the second and third lines (as arranged by me above) so that they run-on with the narrative that precedes them, and of which, indeed, they are a part.

The praises of the hyena which is laid low by Chaka's spear constitutes a substantival statement in apposition to the absolute pronoun *yona* (it) occurring as the possessor in a possessive qualificative phrase. Here is the sentence:

E ne e tshajwa thamahane, batho ba thothomela ha ba utlwa tsa yona
 Thamahane, phiri, sephaka-thamaha,
 Rangwan'a tau le letlonkana,
 Ngwana wa merara e matswedintswewe.
 Thamahane, ngwana wa dika-tsholo-la-ka-phirimana
 Ana motsheare o tshabang ho le dika?
 Ke tshaba molato nthong tsa batho.

Brown hyena, wolf with a brown-coloured fore-arm,
 Little father of the lion and the spotted hyena,
 Child with zig-zag tattoo, mark of brave warriors
 What makes you fear to hunt by day?
 I fear accusations of stealing men's stock.

The admired person or animal or object is sometimes praised by means of a eulogium as in heroic poetry. Thus Fekisi, the main character of *Pitseng*, is called

ngwana wa setsoha-le-pelo-ya-maobane
 child who is getter-up-with-the-heart-of-yesterday,

that is, one who is constantly good-intentioned toward other people.

And now, just a brief mention of *disaffection* and how the writer conveys it. Here the writer mainly relies on well-chosen emotive words. For example, in *Pitseng*, Mofolo tells how some diviners sit outside during a thunderstorm in an attempt to ward off the lightning. The

author regards them as trying to control the might of God, and this makes him view them with contempt. The lightning strikes one of them and the rest run inside, but before they reach safety, it kills a second one. To describe their flight, Mofolo chooses the ideophone *naka-naka*, which denotes running and simultaneously connotes the futility of a tiny creature trying to run away from a might or force that is all-pervasive, and from which there can be no escape, like an ant trying to run away from a tidal wave. The sentence is

Ba re ba sa re naka-naka, la bata e mong hape
Even as they ran futilely, it struck yet another one.

Mofolo never fails to show contempt for those who unjustly provoke a fight, especially when they are given a good, well-deserved beating by an upholder of right and justice, or simply by the one whom they despised. This he does with great effect where Fekisi, during the early part of his journey, beats off several men who are about to murder another one. He does it more elaborately, and with a lot more venom, when Chaka fights for his life against his half-brothers and their supporters after his father gives the order that he be killed. Mofolo's descriptions of the miserable deaths of Chaka's assailants are very lively. One feels, however, that the dramatic effect would be greatly enhanced by oral presentation with all the vocal effects, the gestures and grimaces of the narrator. The following comments and translations of some of the words and phrases used, however, will capture some of the sentiments Mofolo is expressing here:

The word *motho* or the phrase *motho wa bona* roughly denotes an insignificant, little known person; a nonentity. It is used often in the description referred to above.

bokwana is a diminutive of *boko* (brains). The effect of the diminutive is to show contempt; perhaps "petty brains" might be fitting. The brains referred to are those of someone whose head Chaka has just smashed with his stick.

a shwa a bohla jwaleka motho yaa nweleng jwala haholo: he died belching like someone who had drunk too much beer. Death, usually regarded with awe and solemnity is associated with the repulsive act of belching -- or perhaps retching -- of someone who has taken too much drink.

motho a shwa hampe yeo: what an ugly death that man died!

leihlo a le dukula la wela fatshe e le pataolo e kang ya nku: as for the eye, he dug it out and it fell to the ground a big, round thing like that of a sheep. (i.e. Chaka dug out his opponent's eye)

a shwa a dikeditse meno fatshe: he died with his teeth dug deep into the ground.

Mofokazana madi a kopotseha ka hanong, ka dinkong, ka ditsebeng, a phalla jwaleka a nku ee kgaotsweng molala: As for Mfokazana, blood flowed freely through his mouth, his nostrils, his ears, it flowed like that of a sheep whose neck had been severed.

The associations are animalistic, the victims are mostly considered as being of no importance, of no known origin.

Towards the end when Mofolo has begun to express the same uncomplimentary sentiments for Chaka, his annoyance is unmistakable which he evinces as he caricatures Chaka as a trickster in his exaggerated and hypocritical wailings in connection with the death of his mother whom he himself has killed. He makes Chaka cry aloud:

Joo, joo, mme o shwele wee! Joo, joo, malapeng a mang mosi
oa thunya, heso ha o thunye!

Joo, joo, my mother is dead, oh-h! *Joo, joo*, from other homes
the smoke goes up, from my home it does not go up!

my home it does not go up!

The effect of this is to provoke derisive laughter on the part of the reader. But again the dramatic effect would be much enhanced by theatrical presentation.

4. Conclusion

There are other ways, outside of affection/disaffection, in which the author conveys his involvement in the story. For example, he may show pity for a character in trouble, or he may be part of the audience and watch from the sidelines reflecting his emotional reactions with appropriate interjections. Beyond this, one could talk, in pursuance of the topic of this paper, of stylistic techniques which are outside of the sphere of author involvement, but which are none-the-less natively Sesotho. Time does not permit this.

From the above discussion, however, the conclusion is inevitable that the author is a very deeply involved person, one who not only creates, but also reacts; one who loves some of his characters and likewise hates others, and reflects these feelings in basically the same way as the heroic poet praising the warrior on the home side and pouring scorn on the enemy. And he seeks the concurrence of his audience.

Perhaps future Basotho writers will develop in some direction away from these relationships, which is not to say that such a break is necessarily desirable. For the present, however, we have to recognize that a significant number of the stylistic techniques the contemporary writers employ arise out of, and reinforce, this role. We have to accept the validity of this role, and let our critical statements begin at the point where we consider *how* the writer fulfils it.