

**An analysis of selected poems from
Sefalana sa menate by L.D. Raditladi
with reference to Riffaterre's and
Lotman's semiotics**

Manini Wilhelmina Ntsonda

B.A., B.A. Hons., PTC

**Mini-dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree Master of Arts in Tswana at
the Potchefstroom Campus the North-West University**

Supervisor : Prof. H.M. Viljoen
Co-supervisor : Ms F.D.G. Dlavane

2009

Keywords : Setswana poetry, cultural identity; semiotics,
Raditladi, L.D. 1

Databases consulted : MLA, GKPV, RSAT, Kovsideks, Nexus

Table of Contents

Dedication	5
Acknowledgments	6
Abstract.....	7
Opsomming	8
Chapter 1 CONCEPTUALIZATION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT	9
1.1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM	13
1.2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES	13
1.3 BASIC HYPOTHESIS	13
1.4 METHOD.....	13
1.5 CHAPTER OUTLINE	14
Chapter 2 DEFINING A SEMIOTICS OF POETRY BASED ON RIFFATERRE'S AND LOTMAN'S THEORIES.....	15
2.1 INTRODUCTION.....	15
2.2 RIFFATERRE'S SEMIOTICS OF POETRY.....	18
2.3 LOTMAN'S ANALYSIS OF SEMIOTICS.....	24
2.4 DEFINING A SEMIOTICS OF POETRY.....	28
2.5 CONCLUSION.....	30
Chapter 3 SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF POEMS FROM <i>SEFALANA SA MENATE</i> BY L.D. RADITLADI	32
3.1 INTRODUCTION.....	32
3.2 AIMS	33
3.3 "LOSO" (DEATH).....	33
Conclusion	40
3.4 "FATSHE LA BATSWANA" (BATSWANA LAND)	41
Conclusion	45
3.5 "NGWAGA O MOŠWA" (NEW YEAR).....	46
3.6 "TSHWANOLOGO" (DEFAMILIARIZATION).....	51
Conclusion	56
3.7 "TAU" (THE LION).....	57

3.8 "MOTLHABANI" (THE SOLDIER)	63
3.9 "BABOKI BA DIKGOSI" (PRAISERS OF KINGS)	68
Chapter 4 CONCLUSIONS	76
4.1 RECOMMENDATIONS	79
BIBLIOGRAPHY	80

Dedication

This work is dedicated to my late father, Komane Gerson Morule, who passed away when we were still kids. It is also dedicated to my mother, Sebati Bellah Morule. I value everything she did for us, especially her single-handed approach toward our upbringing. It is through her concerted efforts that my dream has become a reality. I love you, Mama.

Acknowledgments

All thanks to my Creator who, through His grace, gave me the strength, patience and good health to complete my research.

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to Prof. H.M. Viljoen, my supervisor, for his expert advice, competence, guidance, motivation and empathy. From him I have learned to appreciate the challenging world of research, and without his help I would have given up.

Special thanks to Mrs. Dolly Dlavane, my co-supervisor, for giving me courage and guidance; Dr. Hoenig for her constructive contributions; Dathini Gwili for proofreading my work.

I am grateful to my husband, Ndawo, for his patience.

Sincere appreciation to my sisters Mantadi, Gabainewe and Mamotsei, brothers Mohapi, Pitso, Sydney and Ratsie for their emotional support.

Joy, Lady, Mpho, Tsholofelo, Letlotlo and Reabetswe: you are my greatest admirers. I care for you.

I owe a special debt of gratitude to Mariëtte van Graan for patiently and carefully typing my work. You are great.

Many thanks to the staff of the Ferdinand Postma Library for helping me with the valuable information I needed. To all of you I say, "God bless".

Abstract

The aim of this study was to define a semiotics of poetry, to apply that semiotics to analyze seven poems by L.D. Raditladi and to determine how cultural elements are transformed in Raditladi's poems.

The study comprises four chapters. The central problems, aims, central theoretical statement and method were outlined and motivated in the first chapter. The second chapter defined a theory of semiotics based on M. Riffaterre's views about the kinds of indirection in poetry and Y. Lotman's view of symbols.

Chapter three analysed the indirection and the use of cultural symbols in seven poems from Raditladi's collection *Sefalana sa menate* (1984). The different variants of the central ideas of phrases (matrices) were traced in the poems. By using symbols and indirection, the poems do not so much express the ideas and emotions of the speaker and the hidden meanings behind the signs, but rather take the reader on fascinating journeys of meaning generation. The analysis of Raditladi's use of symbols revealed the cultural meaning of each poem. Raditladi's seven poems support the idea that symbols, images and indirection provide vital semiotic clues to a poem's significance. It was also shown that the speaker adopts different stances towards traditional Batswana cultural material, like irony, exaggeration, nostalgia and celebration.

Chapter four summed up the conclusions of this study.

Keywords: Setswana poetry; cultural identity; semiotics; L.D. Raditladi.

Opsomming

Die doel van hierdie studie was om 'n poësie-semiotiek te omskryf, dit toe te pas op sewe gedigte deur L.D. Raditladi en om te bepaal hoe kulturele elemente in Raditladi se poësie getransformeer word.

Die studie bestaan uit vier hoofstukke. In hoofstuk een is die probleemstelling, die doelstellings, die sentrale teoretiese stelling en die metode kortliks uiteengesit. In die tweede hoofstuk is 'n poësie-semiotiek, gebaseer op M. Riffaterre se siening van indirekte uitdrukking en Y. Lotman se siening van simbole, kortliks beskryf.

In hoofstuk drie is die indirekte uitdrukkings en die gebruik van kulturele simbole in sewe gedigte uit Raditladi se bundel *Sefalana sa menate* (1984) ontleed. Die verskillende variante van die sentrale idees of begrippe (die matryse) in die gedigte is nagespoor. Deur die gebruik van simbole en indirekte maniere van uitdrukking gee die gedigte nie primêr die idees en gevoelens van die spreker of die verborge betekenis agter die tekens weer nie, maar neem die leser eerder op fassinerende ontdekkingstogte na betekenis. Die analise van Raditladi se gebruik van simbole toon die kulturele betekenis van elke gedig aan. Hierdie sewe gedigte ondersteun die aanname dat simbole, beelde en indirekte uitdrukkings belangrike sleutels tot die gedig se uiteindelijke betekenis oplewer. Die analises toon ook aan dat die spreker in die gedig uiteenlopende posisies teenoor die tradisionele Batswana-kultuur inneem. Dit sluit in ironie, oordrywing, nostalgie en viering.

Hoofstuk vier is 'n opsomming van die bevindings van die studie.

Sleutelwoorde: Tswana-poësie; kulturele identiteit; semiotiek; L.D. Raditladi.

Chapter 1

CONCEPTUALIZATION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

Scholes (1982:35) indicates that many semioticians would argue that the meaning of any sign or word is purely a function of its use in a paradigmatic system and in a syntagmatic situation. But he suggests that meaning is also a function of human life as a whole experience. For those who have experienced such things as marriage or bereavement, the words themselves will signify different meanings than they will for those who have not experienced these things. Much of literature attempts to generate semiotic equivalents for experiences that seem to defy representation in mere signs.

According to Swanepoel *et al.* (1997:33) the concept "semiotics" is derived from the Greek word *semeion*, meaning "sign". Semiotics is therefore concerned with everything that can be taken as significantly substituting for something else. The coffin with many people around it is a reality that can be regarded as a sign that conveys a meaning of death or a funeral. The coffin may be perceived as a sign by a particular poet who takes his word-pictures and ideas from the environment in which he lives.

Traditionally Batswana can distinguish three principles in the example of a coffin as a sign to explain the semiotic process:

- The sign users recognize the perceivable form coffin.
- We assign a certain meaning to the sign coffin. This implies that there exists a connection between the perceivable form (coffin sign) and something else that is absent.
- This "something else that is absent" refers to a dead body or a funeral. Thus the sign of a coffin and people is used as a

communicative device which makes it clear to us that a funeral is taking place or that there is a graveyard in the vicinity.

It is clear from the above-mentioned example that semiotics refers to the study of signs and that signs involve a special knowledge of a certain tradition and special interpretive skills.

Signs are studied with the focus on their potential communicative function. The relationship which exists between signs and sign systems can be called a functional one, because this relationship always intends to express meaning. Signs can only function aesthetically when the transmitter and the receiver share recognized connections such as a common language. A semiotic approach tends to direct the reading of a poem towards signs that are dominant communicative factors. It also helps the listener and reader to construct and receive the message (Swanepoel *et al.* 1997:34).

According to Sillars (1991:110), semiotics is the study of signs. He further argues that a sign is something physical, perceivable by our senses that refers to something other than itself and it depends upon a recognition by a user that it is a sign. Saussure recognised language communication as the most important sign system.

Moloi (1968:2) states that to understand the poetry of a people, the critic must understand their language, sentiments, share their experiences and emotionally be one of them. The ability to unearth human feelings and thought in a collection of poems gives the poet's readers not only intellectual satisfaction but also enables them to feel and interpret the message he is conveying to them.

Selden and Widdowson (1993:60) write that the French semiotician Michael Riffaterre agrees with the Russian Formalists in regarding poetry as a special use of language. Ordinary language is practical and is used to refer to some

sort of "reality" while poetic language focuses on the message as an end in itself. Culler (1981:89) further adds that Riffaterre departs from two axioms, namely that poetic signification is indirect (a poem says one thing but means another) and that the unit of meaning in poetry is the finite, closed entity of the text.

This study will primarily focus on Riffaterre's and Lotman's semiotics. Lotman (1990:4) indicates that when we speak of semiotics today, we should bear in mind three aspects, which are:

- Semiotics is the scientific discipline adumbrated by Ferdinand de Saussure. This is the domain of knowledge which object is the sphere of semiotic communication. It is therefore possible to conceive of a science that studies the role of signs as part of social life.
- Semiotics is a method of the humanities that is relevant to various disciplines and that is defined not by the nature of its object but by the means of analyzing it.
- Semiotics can best be defined as a special feature of the scientific psychology of the researcher, the way his cognitive consciousness is made up. The semiotic researcher has the habit of transforming the world around him.

Together these three aspects make up the domain of semiotics.

According to Riffaterre (1978:2), there are three possible ways in which indirection can occur, namely displacement, distortion and creating meaning.

- Displacement occurs when the sign shifts from one meaning to another, e.g. when one word stands for another as in metaphor and metonymy.

- Distortion occurs where there is ambiguity, contradiction or nonsense.
- Meaning is created when textual space serves as a principle of organization for making signs out of linguistic items that may not be meaningful otherwise.

A few researchers have already made important contributions to the study of Setswana poetry. Van Staden (1985:1) in his study of Setswana imagery, *Beeldspraak in Sefalana sa menate*, found that to interpret a poem by means of its imagery is a fruitful approach, but might cause problems in intercultural situations because, for example, Setswana and Afrikaans do not always have equivalent words for the same concepts.

Manyaapelo (1998) focused her study on the use of metaphor to analyse three poems of Raditladi. To date no semiotic study of Raditladi's poems has been made, however. This could be an important contribution, since Raditladi is one of the foremost Setswana poets, renowned for his unique way of expressing his feelings. Using semiotics as a metalanguage might enable his readers to share, interpret and better understand the feelings he communicates through his poems.

The title *Sefalana sa Menate* (Granary of niceties) basically indicates the different forms Raditladi uses in his collection of poems, namely wishes, reports, confessions, laments and praises. In this study I will focus on Raditladi's poems that express different forms of identity concerning death, space, culture and power. I chose these poems because they demonstrate Raditladi's way of transforming cultural elements which depict themes of life and death. These poems, therefore, raise important issues of cultural identity.

1.1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In this study of Raditladi's poetry, I propose to look into the following central questions:

- (a) How can a semiotics of poetry be defined, based on Riffaterre's and Lotman's theories?
- (b) How can a semiotics of poetry be applied to understand Raditladi's poems?
- (c) How are cultural elements poetically transformed in Raditladi's work?

1.2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aim and objectives of this study are to

1. Define a semiotics of poetry based on Riffaterre's and Lotman's theories.
2. Apply such a semiotics in analysing and understanding Raditladi's poems.
3. Describe how cultural elements are transformed in Raditladi's poetry.

1.3 BASIC HYPOTHESIS

I will argue that Riffaterre's and Lotman's theories about aspects of semiotics can be applied to the collection of Raditladi's poems in *Sefalana sa Menate* to determine ways in which semiotics contribute to analysing and understanding Raditladi's style of writing and the ways in which he transforms cultural elements.

1.4 METHOD

A combination of Riffaterre's and Lotman's theories of semiotics will be used to analyse a selection of poems from *Sefalana sa menate*.

1.5 CHAPTER OUTLINE

The first chapter outlines the problem statement, aims, central theoretical statement and the research design of the study. The second chapter is a discussion of semiotics in general and of Riffaterre's and Lotman's views on poetry and on symbols. The aim is to outline the concepts that are necessary for the semiotic analysis of selected poems from *Sefalana sa menate* in the third chapter. In the final chapter the main conclusions of the study are summarized.

Chapter 2

DEFINING A SEMIOTICS OF POETRY BASED ON RIFFATERRE'S AND LOTMAN'S THEORIES

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to define what semiotics is and to outline the theories of Riffaterre and Lotman. Semiotics is the theory of the sign systems used in human society. Any sign requires the presence of a signifying material aspect by which the sign can be perceived by human sense organs or appropriate instruments and a significant aspect or meaning that correlates the sign to certain objects situated outside the sign system. A sign is emitted with the precise intention of meaning something to somebody. For example: The orange, red, and green of a traffic light emit the messages "Caution", "Stop" or "Go", which indicate to the receiver that he should act as advised.

In natural language, a sequence of acoustic signals (spoken language) or optical signals (written language) is the *signifying aspects* of words, and meaning (defined by translation into another language or in correlation with extra linguistic objects) denotes the *signified aspects* (Lucid 1977:20).

Scholes (1974:26) states that the poetic function is the most important in some kinds of utterances. In such utterances we find the message emphasizing itself, drawing attention to its own sound patterns, diction and syntax. This poetic function appears in all languages. That is why, when a speaker selects words to use in a poem, he brings into play a set of possibilities which is radically different from those used in ordinary discourse.

Semiotics is concerned with communication processes. An author creates an artistic text, and the reader experiences it as such. A poem that tells about a king (a person who has extraordinary status among his people) needs a special reader who knows such a traditional background. This background enables the reader of such a poem to interpret and identify its meaning properly because he/she is aware of its relationship to the community that shares the same cultural background.

Noth (1990:326) quotes Eco's definition that semiotics is concerned with everything that can be taken as a sign, substituting something for something else that does not necessarily have to exist or actually can be somewhere else at the moment when the sign replaces it.

Hawkes (1977:83) states that semiotics is a science of communication and signification, vast in breadth, yet limited to the study of sign functions. Semiotics has been defined as the exchange of any message and of the system of signs which underline it. Jakobson agrees with Hawkes that the message must refer to a context which must be understood by both addresser and addressee (Lotman, 1990:20). This will enable a message to make sense. Poetry does not use everyday language, but if the poet uses images or signs the message he conveys will make sense to the reader of his poem. Poetry is determined by the conventional role the society gives to the particular uses of language in which they engage. Raditladi's poem "Tau" (Lion) immediately signals to a Motswana reader that it will be about a great person because a lion can refer to a number of large, extremely dangerous and ferocious wild animals. The message of the poet thus might bring fear of meeting a lion. This fear is the feeling in the presence of a king. Traditionally, the king is the only one who has the power to rule and command his people.

Cohen (1985:18) states that semiotics studies signs as part of a society's historical cultural and ethical way of life. It involves customs, values and beliefs. Among the members of a community there is a relationship which is

regulated by shared social norms, beliefs, interests, attitudes and needs. In the Batswana culture someone's death is regarded as something that should be honoured and remembered for as long as those who have experienced the death of the loved one are still alive. Mourning in the Batswana culture can be seen in the dress code. A Motswana married woman mourns her husband by wearing black clothes for a certain period. In the Batswana context, black signifies darkness - which is a bad omen within this tradition. This type of image is not universal because it is only understood by people who share the same beliefs. Hofstede (1990:5) indicates that culture is always a collective phenomenon, because it is at least partly shared by people who live or have lived in the same social environment where it was learned. It is thus clear that the study of signs involves a special knowledge of a certain tradition and special interpretative skills.

Raditladi's poems are powerful mediums of communication and inspiration because they are embedded in historical, cultural and ethical ways of life. The images he uses in his poems carry a meaning informed by certain rituals and habits of the Batswana. In the Batswana communities a lion is used to signify a king. The king is honoured in his community as other animals honour the lion. Reading a poem about a lion or a king requires that readers know the meaning of these symbols in the Batswana tradition.

By reading poems you are able to understand that they are described by signs that express ideas and emotions of the poet. The hidden words or meaning of a poem can be revealed by symbolic signs which express the meaning of the hidden words. To express something in another "language" is a way of understanding it. Hofstede (1991:7) states that symbols represent the most superficial, and value the deepest manifestations of culture with heroes and rituals in between. Symbols are words objects and even customs that carry a particular meaning which are only recognised by those who share the culture. Raditladi's poem of praise stands for something more memorable than praising different animals, which represent kings and people of status.

Raditladi uses such traditional images in an indirect and often ironic way. We need a systematic approach to indirection in order to understand his poems. For this we can turn to M. Riffaterre's semiotics of poetry.

2.2 RIFFATERRE'S SEMIOTICS OF POETRY

According to Riffaterre (1987:4-5), the semiotic process really takes place in the reader's mind. It results from a second reading. If we are to understand the semiotics of poetry, we must carefully distinguish between two levels or stages of reading. The first is the heuristic reading, where interpretation takes place. During this reading meaning is apprehended. Retroactive reading forms a second interpretation, the truly hermeneutic reading. As the reader progresses through the text, he remembers what he has just read and modifies his understanding of it in the light of what he is now decoding.

To his reading of the poem, the reader brings his experience – especially his linguistic experience – which helps him transcend the mimetic representation to the higher level of semiotics. The reader can recognise the linguistic aspects in the poem with his literary competency, meaning that he can discover the signs in the poem. The reader's use of linguistic competence will also help him to discover that the literal sense of the word does not always make sense in its usage in the poem. There may be ungrammaticalities which he will be able to recognise by means of his linguistic competence. Immediately when he recognises ungrammaticalities in the text, he will start uncovering the semiotic representation. The semiotic representations are ungrammatical and they overcome the mimesis in the interpretation of the poem. In semiosis the reader does not require a long unusual method, as Riffaterre calls it, to recognise the indirection of its allusive significance; he simply decodes the poem.

Riffaterre's *Semiotics of poetry* is an ambitious work of literary theory that proposes a coherent and relatively simple description of the structure of

meaning in a poem. The expressions that the poet uses to express his feelings when communicating to his readers function like dual signs with a meaning conveying part and a significance carrying part. The dual sign works like a pun. The pun in poetic discourse grows out of textual "roots". It is in essence an account of the way readers process or make sense of a text. Unity is achieved when or perceived only when the reader abandons the apparent referential or representational meaning of the discourse and grasps the unifying feature or factor that the various signs of the poem express indirectly.

Riffaterre distinguishes two stages of reading. In the initial or heuristic reading, readers comprehend linguistic signs in a primarily referential fashion, assuming that the poem is a representation of an action or a statement about an object or a situation. A poet can, for example, express his feelings when hearing about the sudden death of a friend or family member. He can describe to the reader the situation in which he found himself and the difficulties he encountered to come to terms to accept what had really happened. Raditladi's poem "Loso" (Death) can be read in this way.

Riffaterre (1978:4-5) states that the first heuristic reading is also where the first interpretation takes place, since it is during reading that meaning is apprehended. The second stage is that of reactive reading. This is the time for a second interpretation, for the truly hermeneutic reading. As the reader remembers what he has just read, apprehending the meaning of what he has read, he starts perceiving incompatibilities between the mimetic meanings of the words and has to modify his understanding in the light of what he is now decoding. The code of the poem is symbolic. A poem about a lion represents the title of a king who people of a certain nationality regard as a person who can protect them from their enemies. They refer to their king as someone strong as a lion because he is referred to as a powerful person.

Riffaterre (1978:1-9) further indicates that the ungrammaticalities result from the transformation of a *matrix*, a minimal and literal sentence, into a longer, complex and nonliteral periphrases. The matrix can be hypothetical, being only a grammatical and lexical actualisation of a structure. The matrix may also be epitomised in one word, in which case the word might not appear in the text. It is always actualised in successive *variants*. The form of these variants is governed by the first or primary actualisation, the model. Matrix, model and text are variants of the same structure.

Riffaterre (1978:19) indicates that the poem's significance, as a principle of unity and as an agent of semantic indirection, is produced by the detour the text makes as it runs the gauntlet of mimesis, moving from representation to representation (for example, metonym to metonym within a descriptive system) with the aim of exhausting the paradigm of all possible variants on the matrix. The indirection leads the reader step by step through distortion, away from mimesis. The longer the detour must be, the more developed the text is. The text functions something like a neurosis as the matrix is repressed. The displacement produces variants all through the text, just as poeticity is inseparable from that of the text. The reader's perception of what is poetic is based wholly upon reference to the text.

Riffaterre (1987:23) also indicates that the poetic sign is a word or a phrase pertinent to the poem's significance. This pertinence is either an idiolect factor or a class factor. It is idiolect if the poetic quality of the sign is peculiar to the poem in which it is observed. The poetic sign is a *classeme* if the reader recognizes its poeticity. The poetic sign is determined by hypogrammatic derivation: a word or phrase is poeticized when it refers to (and, if a phrase, patterns itself upon) a pre-existent word or group. The hypogram is already a system of signs comprising at least a predication and may be as large as a text. The hypogram may be potential, therefore observable in language, or actual, therefore observable in a previous text. For the poeticity to be activated in the text, the sign referring to a hypogram must also be a variant

of that text's matrix. If not, the poetic sign will function only as a stylistically marked lexeme or syntagm.

If a sign referring to a hypogram is made up of several words, it is their common relationship to the hypogram that defines these words as components of one single significant unit.

According to Riffaterre (1990:99-100), a title can function as a dual sign. It introduces the poem it crowns and at the same time refers to a text outside it. Since the interpretant stands for a text, it confirms that the unit of significance in poetry is always textual. By referring to another text, the dual sign explains the significance of its own poem. In a poem like "Ngwaga o moša" (The new year, Raditladi 1964:3), the poet wishes that the new year will bring him happiness because the year that had passed was not enjoyable. The title thus links this poem to common texts about New Year.

The other text (outside the poem) enlightens the reader through comparison: a structural similarity is perceived between the poem and its textual referent despite their possible differences at the descriptive and narrative levels. It may be, for instance, that the textual reference has the same matrix as the poem at hand. Only structures are involved, and contact between the two texts is made through one sign alone. The two texts are related to that sign in the same way, the relationship being based upon analogy rather than upon similarity. The relationship between poem and textual referent is not one of intertextuality, for there is no conflict between the two.

The interpretive skills of the poet express ideas and emotions not by interpreting them directly but by suggestion what they create in the mind of the reader through the use of unexplained signs. The different forms that Raditladi uses in his poems – wishes, reports, confessions and praises – go beyond ordinary language by using language significantly in order to encode a specific meaning and to make perfect sense in the reader's mind. It comes

down to a continual rereading that makes the poem endlessly readable and fascinating.

Riffaterre (1978:138-139) states that some poems are characterised by nonsense. They may not be completely opaque, but they are always absurd or unacceptable as language used for communicating. Nonsense varies in range. It may involve entire texts or crucial parts of texts, but it always bears upon semiosis producing a paradigm that affects at least the matrix's successive variants or any derivation from the model. Thus nonsense is a phenomenon linked to intertextuality, for as soon as the reader becomes aware of the hypogram, an interpretation becomes possible – perhaps not in a complete hermeneutic process, but the reader at least gets the feeling that the wording of the text, however disconcerting, is no longer gratuitous. Nonsense is its own sign because it adds a dimension to the retroactive reading. Not only does the reader become capable of a structural reading, he becomes sensitised to the semiotic constant pointing to connotations rather than to denotations.

Riffaterre (1990:4) regards the role of signs as part of social life, further celebrating them beyond convention, to give the reader greater understanding of why people do the things they do and revealing what the poem means. In the poem "Botsofe" (Old age) the poet's wish is that he should be taken care of by his children during his olden days as he cared for them in his younger days. Instead of naming the object directly, the poet makes the reader feel the frustration of being old, and his sadness and hopelessness because young people no longer follow the traditional way of life by helping old people. The poet's aim is to interpret to his readers the practical experience life brings to the aged.

Intertextuality exists between the author and the reader, but distortion can occur – like in Raditladi's poem "Loso" (Death), where he uses the image of "marrow melted", which is vaguely absurd because marrow is a part of the

body that is invisible. This absurdity about the melting of marrow does not enable the reader to understand the message; the speaker seems to have little concern about what language does to reality. This proves that, no matter what the poem ultimately tells us, its message might be quite different from our ordinary perceptions of the world. The poem should be seen as figurative because it represents something that is not "marrow". Everything points to a hidden meaning of how death has brought hopelessness to the speaker.

Displacement in Raditladi occurs, for example, in the poem "Ngwaga o mošwa" (New Year), where the speaker compares two different things: New Year and burial. The year cannot literally be buried as it is not tangible. This ungrammaticality becomes an obstacle, an error and a violation of the language rules as the reader continually seeks relief by getting away from dubious words back to safe reality. In the reader's mind it means a continuous recommencing with each reliving and revealed significance, an indecisiveness resolved one moment and lost in the next. This makes the poem endlessly re-readable and fascinating.

Apart from this general function with respect to the poem as a whole, the dual title may have its own particular function in the poem's semiotic grid. The title in Raditladi's poem "Ngwaga o Mošwa (New Year) (1990:3) does not prepare the reader for the first line, which reads: "Re letse re fitlha Ngogola" (Yesterday we buried last year). The title is supposed to inform the reader about the new year but instead of stating its subject or its genre, the first line hints at the hidden meaning. Instead of referring to the new year, the poem moves beyond convention by speaking about the old year in the same breath as if it were human.

To read Raditladi's poems properly we need, in addition to a systematic view of indirection, also an adequate understanding of culture and a systematic view of symbols and their use. Lotman's views in *Universe of the Mind* (1990) are very valuable in this regard.

2.3 LOTMAN'S ANALYSIS OF SEMIOTICS

Lotman's three aspects make up the domain of semiotics. Lotman and Riffaterre note that poetic texts challenge our accepted modes of speech, perception and belief. Lotman believes that such challenges bring us dialectically to a greater understanding of the world. He does not take up the subject of poetic genesis directly, but he seems to feel that poems can come from almost anywhere, as long as they adopt the techniques that will enable us to recognise and read them as poetry. While Riffaterre emphasises the process whereby texts grow out of previous texts, Lotman makes it an exclusive form of poetic communication.

Lotman (1977:34-35) indicates that the problem of meaning is basic to all sciences employing semiotics. The ultimate goal in studying any sign system is to define its contents. It is senseless to study culture, art or poetry as a sign systems without considering the problem of content. We cannot help but note, however, that the content of sign systems is the most difficult aspect to analyze (assuming that one is not satisfied with purely intuitive concepts of meaning). Lotman's work could be helpful to give a fuller picture of the nature of the sign and its meaning.

Defining a semiotics of poetry brings out the aspects of Riffaterre's indirection, but this needs to be supplemented by Lotman's historical views on the cultural knowledge that is valuable to certain communities. The speaker encodes his feelings, ideas and emotion for his reader by conveying an indirect message that will be interpreted by the reader. How Raditladi encodes emotions in poems that depict death, power, wishes, longing and life will be analysed in chapter three.

Signs are also defined in atomistic terms. The unity of signifier and signified is emphasized considerably more often than the fact that a sign necessarily enters into more complex systems. The first is only a manifestation of the

second. The immanent study of a poem is an essential means of getting at the content of the written message. Meaning is basic to all sciences employing semiotics.

Lotman (1990: 102-104) states that in the semiotic sciences *symbol* is a word of many meanings. The common phrase *symbolic meaning* is often used as a simple synonym for signification. Where there is an expression-content relationship and the conventionality of this relationship is being stressed, the researcher will often talk of the symbolic function of symbols. In another classification, a symbol is defined as a sign which meaning is a sign of another order or another language. Against this definition stands the tradition which understands a symbol as a semiotic expression of a higher and absolute non-semiotic reality. According to the former definition, symbolic meaning is something rational and the symbol is understood as a means for the adequate translation of an expression level into a content level. Since symbols are important mechanisms of cultural memory, they can transfer texts, plot outlines and other semiotic formations from one level of cultural memory to another.

Symbols reveal their duality, on the one hand, by recurring throughout a culture's history. A symbol appears as invariant and repeatable. What is important is that the semantic potentials of the symbol are always greater than any realization of them. The links that a symbol establishes with a particular semiotic context, never exhaust its entire semantic valence. So a symbolic expression never entirely covers its content, but the content it alludes to belongs to the profane, open, demonstrative domain of culture. The elementary expression level of symbols has a greater cultural and semantic capacity than symbols which are more complex. Every living culture has a "built in" mechanism for multiplying its languages. We can therefore situate Raditladi's collection within the broad spectrum of "culture". Within that collection one set of symbolic meanings concern the chieftainship, the most highly valued institution within traditional Batswana culture.

Lotman (1990:102) states that symbolic meaning is something rational and the symbol is understood as a means for the adequate translation of an expression level into a content level. Lotman thinks that any semiotic system, whether regarded as a real fact in the history of culture or a system for describing any signifying object, senses its incompleteness unless it has its own definition of a symbol. Such a definition does not mean a precise and full description of an object that remains identical in all circumstances, but involves rather the presence in each semiotic system of a structural position, without which the system is incomplete because certain essential functions cannot be realized.

The mechanisms which carry out these functions are, however, persistently referred to by the word *symbol*, although it is extremely difficult to produce an invariant definition for either of these functions or of the mechanisms which realize them. So we conclude that, even if we do not know what a symbol is, every system knows what "its symbol" is and needs a definition of symbol for working out its semiotic structure.

Lotman (1990: 103) writes that a symbol "involves the idea of a content which in its turn serves as expression level for another content, one which as a rule is more highly valued in that culture." He also thinks that a symbol never belongs to only one synchronic section of a culture, "but always cuts across that section vertically, coming from the past and passing on into the future." Saussure thought that the sign consists of a signifier which is a sign and a signified which is an object. That is why it is said that semiotics studies all cultural processes of communication where ideas and emotions are expressed not directly but by interpreting something in the mind of the reader.

According to Lotman (1990:103), a symbol always "passes from the depth of the memory into text", not the other way round. Moreover, the symbol acquires new life and meaning in the new text. A symbol "preserves its own

semantic and structural independence" and thus can be lifted out of its semiotic context and enter a new text. It comes from the past, but it passes into the future. It is at once stable and "changed" by the "new" context.

Thinking about wishes, in Raditladi's poems there are comparisons in which he does not name things, but rather gives the reader an idea of what a poet was wishing or reported about. To be more precise, in naming things he demonstrates the impossibility of expressing the wishes he is writing about. Raditladi's words in "Seetebosigo" (June) are a case in this point:

"Matlhare a phaphasele godimo"
"Leaves flying high" (Raditladi 1964:38).

What the poet says about the month of June is somehow impossible to be conveyed to his readers. June is very cold and trees generally then do not have leaves that can fly high. It is therefore difficult to understand what he was thinking. Something will always remain that seems to refuse obstinately to emerge from the poet's words. The most vital point of what he tries to convey, remains unstated. In such a case we can well understand that a word is not just a conventional sign, but a symbol.

It should be borne in mind that a symbol can accumulate and organize new experience around it, turning into a kind of memory condenser which the author selectively combines with other elements. The symbol is distinguished from a conventional sign by the presence of an iconic element – some likeness between the expression level and the content level. The difference between iconic signs and symbols could be illustrated by the difference between an icon and a picture.

In a picture a three-dimensional reality is represented by a two-dimensional depiction. But the incomplete projection of the expression level onto the content level conceals the illusionary effect: the viewer is encouraged to

believe in the complete likeness. In an icon (and a symbol in general) it is in the nature of the communicative function of the sign that the expression level is not projected onto the content level. The content merely glimmers through the expression, and the expression merely hints at the content. In this respect an icon may be likened to an index: the expression indicates the content to the extent that it is depicted. Hence the well-known conventionality of the symbolic sign.

Summing up the characteristics of a symbol, Lotman (1990:111) writes that a symbol

is a kind of condenser of all the principles of sign-ness and at the same time goes beyond sign-ness. It is mediator between different spheres of semiosis, and also between semiotic and non-semiotic reality. In equal measure it is a mediator between the synchrony of the text and the culture's memory. Its role is that of a semiotic condenser.

In general terms we can say that the structure of symbols of a particular culture shapes the system which is isomorphic and isofunctional to the genetic memory of an individual.

2.4 DEFINING A SEMIOTICS OF POETRY

The language of poetry differs from common linguistic usage. To put it simply, Riffaterre (1978:1) states that a poem says one thing and means another. There are three possible ways for semantic indirection to occur. Indirection is produced by displacing, distorting or creating meaning. Displacing occurs when the sign shifts from one meaning to another; when the one word "stands" for another, as happens with metaphor and metonymy. Distorting occurs when there is ambiguity, contradiction or nonsense. Creating meaning occurs where the textual space serves as a principle of organization for making signs out of linguistic items that may not be meaningful otherwise.

Among these three kinds of indirection there is one common factor, namely that representation may simply be altered visibly and persistently in a manner inconsistent with verisimilitude or with what the context leads the reader to expect. The contradictory details are ungrammatical because they deviate from the direct relationship of words to name things. Any component of the poem that points to that "something else" is constant with and will be sharply distinguished from mimesis. The formal semantic unity which includes all the indices of indirection Riffaterre calls the significance.

In the seven poems by Raditladi that I will analyse in chapter 3, we find both Riffaterre's indirection and symbols as Lotman defines them. Symbols both as elements that recur throughout a culture's history and as content levels which serve as expression levels for other content levels which are as a rule more highly valued in that culture, recur frequently in Raditladi's work. The poem "Ngwaga o mōswa" (New Year) indicates the wish the speaker has that the year should be buried and he should never see it gain. The year is not a human being and it cannot literally be buried. This emphasizes the indirection used where the poem says one thing and "means" the other. It is ungrammatical to compare a year "with" burial. The hidden words used by the speaker is an indication that the language is used semiotically. It needs the reader to have the linguistic and poetic competency to understand what the speaker really wanted to convey to his readers.

"Motlhabani" (Soldier) and "Loso" (Death) are linked to each other because they symbolize sorrow and pain. There is distortion in the poem "Loso" because the speaker uses words like "my marrow melted". The use of such words confuses the reader of the poem because marrow is hidden in the human body. The message which the speaker conveys makes no sense until we try to understand the different variants the poet uses to bring home the idea that death brings sorrow to everybody, regardless of the status or the identity of a specific person.

"Motlhabani" (Soldier) also reveals the power death has over all of us. The soldier died on the battlefield, far from home. The burial was unusual because it occurred in the midst of the battle. None of the cultural rituals which are highly valued in the Batswana community were performed when this hero was buried. In the Batswana tradition a cow is actually slaughtered and its skin is used as a coffin to cover the dead body. A cowhide is a symbol that is readily recognizable by a Motswana reader. All these poems deal with the emotional side of the death of loved ones.

Raditladi's poems, "Tau" (Lion) and "Baboki ba Dikgosi" (Praisers of kings), can be related to the poet's memorable historical background of the speaker. Raditladi was born into a family of chiefs. He was the son of Sekgoma I, an important Batswana chief. He was also a Christian and was mission-educated. His poems were influenced by the community that he grew up amongst who praised their kings by comparing them to strong and powerful animals.

"Fatshe la Batswana" (Batswana Land) and "Tshwanologo" (Defamiliarization) are ironical because the nostalgic feeling the speaker has is exaggerated and it is something that the speaker fantasises about. The land the speaker wishes for does not exist. "Tshwanologo" represents something that happened in the past and cannot happen in the present life as it did in the past; traditional open-toed shoes and animal skin clothes are no longer in use.

2.5 CONCLUSION

Lotman and Riffaterre are both semioticians, but one writes out of a French tradition, the other out of a Slavic one (Scholes 1982:48). Lotman and Riffaterre identify semiotic aspects in three different ways. Riffaterre's basic view of semiotics is that of a literary phenomenology which describes the interaction between text and reader. He sees three possible ways in which indirection occurs in poems, namely displacement, distortion and creating

meaning. In Raditladi's seven poems these three aspects of indirection can be recognized.

Lotman's three aspects make up the domain of semiotics. Lotman and Riffaterre note that poetic texts challenge our accepted modes of speech, perception and belief. Lotman believes that such challenges bring us dialectically to a greater understanding of the world. He does not take up the subject of poetic genesis directly, but he seems to feel that poems can come from almost anywhere, as long as they adopt the techniques that will enable us to recognize and read them as poetry. While Riffaterre emphasizes the process whereby texts grow out of previous texts, he makes it an exclusive form of poetic genesis (Scholes 1982:48).

Defining a semiotics of poetry needs both Riffaterre's ideas about indirection and Lotman's ideas about symbols and their role as condensers of the culture that are valuable to a certain community. Seven poems by Raditladi that depict death, space, culture and power will be analyzed in Chapter 3 in terms of Riffaterre's indirection and Lotman's expression of cultural value.

Chapter 3

SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF POEMS FROM *SEFALANA SA MENATE* BY L.D. RADITLADI

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The title, *Sefalana sa menate* (Granary of niceties), indicates the different forms that Raditladi uses in his collection of poems, namely wishes, reports, praises, laments and confessions. Raditladi's poems express different forms of identity and different forms of cultural space and power. These poems demonstrate Raditladi's way of transforming cultural elements to depict themes of life and death, but also to raise important issues of cultural identity.

"Sefalana" (granary) in Botswana culture is something that is highly valued. Traditionally, it was used to store sorghum and mealies, which could be used during times of drought. Today, rural people who still have granaries for sorghum and mealies, also use them to store their valuables, such as birth, death and marriage certificates or traditional clothing. The food that is stored, in modern times is sometimes sent to war-torn African countries, like Zimbabwe, Burundi and Rwanda in times of need. "Sefalana" as used in the title of Raditladi's collection of poems becomes a symbol, understood by a Botswana reader to represent things which they value highly in their lives. Even in a modern township one can often find a communal granary. The reader of Raditladi, even a modern Motswana, knows from the title that the poems will celebrate his Batswana culture. In the olden days it was sorghum and mealies which could save them from famine, and in the context of Raditladi's poems, it refers to the simpler lifestyle of yesterday, on the farm,

with the daily activities of milking the cows, ploughing the fields, hunting wild animals and in the evening, dancing around the fire, wearing traditional clothes (as evoked in the poem "Fatshe la Batswana"). Raditladi's "granary", it might be said, becomes a symbol of the warmth, security, and feeling of belonging he experienced in growing up in the Batswana cultural context.

3.2 AIMS

The aim of this chapter is to analyze selected poems using Riffaterre's and Lotman's theories of semiotics in poetry. The focus will be on poems that depict themes of life and death. In the analysis I will discuss important issues of praise, space and cultural identity.

3.3 "LOSO" (DEATH)

Death is something that strikes at any time, anywhere and wherever it strikes it always leaves pain, sorrow, misery and loneliness. Still, as human beings we are always surprised by the unpredictability of death. That is what we find in the first stanza of this poem.

The poem is reproduced below, followed by a translation into English. All seven translations are my own:

(5) E rile ke utlwa ba re o sule ka tshoga,
 Ka nyera moko, ka rothisa keledi,
 Lefatshe la ntshofala, la dikologa,
 Leitlho la me la benya jaaka naledi,
 Sengwe sa seba pelong khubidu ya me
 Sa re: "Se lele, ke thata ya Modimo!"
 Dikeledi tsa kgala mo letlhaeng la me,
 Loleme lwa ama magalapa godimo,
 Ka didimala fela ka rina semumo.

- (10) Ga se gope kwa loso re sa lo boneng,
 Re lo bona ka matlho gongwe le gongwe
 Mo lobopong lotlhe lo lo sa tsamaeng,
 Le mo phologolong le mo bathong, longwe.
 Selemo se ntsha dibe tsa letlhafula,
- (15) Maungo a lone ke mefago ya dingwaga,
 Ba ba a fulang ba a ja dimpa go gompala
 Ba itse ba tlogela tsotlhe tsa lenaga
 Mme ba ba sa sweng ba leta la mariga.
- (20) Fa o falotse wena, o se ka wa lebala,
 A o Kgosi e kgolo kana o Mokgalagadi,
 Leru la loso le tla nako nngwe fela,
 Ga le phatsime, ga le dume setladi.
 Loso lo rena pakeng tsotlhe tsa ngwaga,
 Lo rena, lo buse, lo rene serena,
- (25) Letlhafula, kgakologo le mariga.
 Dithunya di kgabisa phupu tsa rona,
 Le metlantlanyane e rapama le rona.
- (30) A tshwanologo e kgolo loso lo e dirang!
 Leba bontlente jo bogolo 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:
 Seo mpho ya motho mongwe le mongwe fela,
- (35) Boswa jwa mmu le nama ya dibokwana.
 Marapo mairwa majwe le makgabana.
- Le fa bangwe fatsheng ba go panyeletsa,
 Mo losong ba lekana sentle fela nao;

- (40) Baikgodisi le fa ba re ba a go nyatsa
 Mmung mmogo gone lo tsamaya ka dinao.
 Loso lo nna motho ka mabela sentsi,
 Ga lo sisimoge le maemo a serena;
 Lone lo kotoma fela moo, re a go itse.
 Bagale, magatlapa losong ba a tshwana,
 (45) Kgosi le motlhanka mo mmung ba a lekana.

When I heard that he is dead I was shocked,
 My marrow melted, I dropped a tear,
 The earth darkened, it rotated,
 My eye shone like a star,
 Something whispered in my red heart
 It said: "don't cry, it's God's will!"
 Tears dried on my cheeks,
 The tongue touched the palate high,
 I became quiet, turned mute.

There is nowhere that we don't see death,
 We see death everywhere
 In the entire non-moving universe,
 In animals and people it is the same.
 Summer produces debris of autumn,
 Its fruits are the provisions for years,
 Those who pick them eat them to gorge themselves
 Knowing that they are leaving earthly things
 But those who don't die await winter.

If you have escaped, don't forget,
 Whether you are a great King or a slave
 Clouds of death come anytime,
 They don't shine, they do not roar like thunderstorms.

Death reigns throughout the year,
 It reigns, it rules, it reigns like kingship,
 Summer, Autumn or Winter.
 Flowers decorate our graves
 Even butterflies rest with us

What a big difference death makes!
 Look at the great beauty of a person,
 Cleanliness that has nothing that can dominate it,
 And happiness in the light of the eyes,
 In death it is no man, it is nothingness,
 In the grave it is soil pebbles of bones
 This is a gift for every person,
 Estate of soil and meat for the worms.
 Bones made into stones of pebbles

Even if some on earth pin you down,
 In death they are clearly equal to you;
 Conceited people even if they undermine you
 On the ground you walk together
 Death sits on a person with pride fly-like,
 It does not revere status of royalties;
 It squats just there, that we know.
 Victors, cowards in death are the same,
 A king and a servant in the grave are equal.

The speaker in the poem is confused and frightened even though it is not clear whose death the poem deals with. These expressions leave the reader wondering why the speaker is so emotional. That his marrow melted and that he dropped a tear are signs of his misery when hearing about the death of the unidentified person. It is not clearly stated what the relationship of the dead person was to the speaker. Raditladi uses words that encourage the

reader of the poem to seek and reveal the meaning of what he is conveying. Displacement takes place in those first two lines. The poet is "shocked". The sign of shock indicates that he has heard something terrible. It swiftly moves from the meaning of being "shocked" to another of "melting marrow", of dropping a tear. All these are signs of the speaker's feelings when he heard about the death. This also brings us to the Batswana culture where we think that now there is a gap to be filled. Who is going to look after the family?

The image of the marrow guides the reader to look for correspondences between marrow and tears. One sheds a tear when one is hurt but the "marrow" cannot be seen because it is a part of the body that is invisible. The reader needs to fill in the gaps that do not give us a clear explanation of what the poet had in mind when he spoke about the melting marrow. The speaker feels as if he has lost all the strength in his body. He is hopeless. He indirectly compares his state of mind to a feeling that the dark earth rotated. This is distortion, because the earth has never become dark, nor can a human being see its rotation. Displacement is used here to convey an image (the earth darkened, it rotated) of the severe distortion that this death caused, a pain that cannot be explained by simply using everyday language.

The speaker's sorrow is captured in line four where he is still in darkness. This is a bad sign in the Batswana culture because darkness is regarded as sombre and dangerous. When a Motswana is dressed in black, black symbolizes mourning for the Batswana culture. While the speaker was still in darkness something shone in his eyes like a star. When tears fill your eyes it seems as if something is shining into your eyes. The shining of the eyes overcomes the darkness that the speaker felt earlier, creating a sense of relief from the pain. When the star shines during the night we know it is going to be a bright night, a night where you can move about freely without being afraid of the dark.

Darkness can symbolize a horrible sight in the life of humans. The speaker finds consolation in the brightness of the stars. He is no longer hurt; he has accepted what has happened; he becomes aware that what has happened is God's will. The star symbolizes light, light that has brought the speaker to his senses; he can now hear words whispered in his ears and his bleeding heart is cured by the whispered words. This makes him reason that death reveals the glory of God. His tears dry up because he now understands that nothing happens without a reason. It suggests to the speaker that God does what is best for His people, whom He has created in His image. By drying his tears, the speaker seems to accept that we all are going to die so that we could rest forever. The effectiveness of the whispering voice, drying a tear, indicates God's will to him. It emphasizes that God can cause pain and relieve it.

The second stanza indicates that death can strike anyone, regardless of status. There is a direct expression of death in this stanza where the speaker indicates that death occurs at any time, everywhere and that everybody is affected by death. Death does not discriminate, whether you are a human or an animal. Symbolically the title *Sefalana sa Menate* (Granary of niceties) can be interpreted as an image of lives that are valuable, lives which God has given us. This is also a strong indication that while we are living life, we must not forget that death will strike one day. The speaker compares summer with something good, that everybody can experience in life, indicating that it brings pleasure to the people because they are able to fill their stomachs.

Summer is a very important season because it comes after dry, cold times. People become happy to do their daily work without getting cold and wishing to be indoors. Everything that is planted grows well and people enjoy eating the fruits and vegetables they have planted. Because it rains, there is plenty of green grass for the animals to enjoy. People enjoy this time of year because they know that they will die one day. The speaker contradicts himself when he reminds people to die before winter. Nobody knows when they are going to die; only God can predict our deaths. Summer indicates that while

you are still alive you should make the best use of your life, because one day you will die. Winter has the implication of some unpleasant life experience.

In the third stanza the speaker warns people who have been missed by death not to forget that, one day, they will also die. He emphasizes the power of death by stating that it does not consider status – even if you are a mighty person, death will take you. You won't see death coming because it does not make any sound . This implies that you will be unaware of your own coming death.

Death strikes at any time, anywhere. Death does not prepare you, nor does it wait for a specific season. Death rules, it reigns like a king. This personification emphasizes that death takes control of everything when it presents itself. Death has no concern over the beauty of a person, it does not care about your happiness. Everybody remains the same in death, we are all buried in a grave where flowers grow and butterflies fly around us.

In the fourth stanza the speaker emphasizes the difference death makes; it turns us into nothing because we are the legacy of soil and meat for the worms. That is how the poet describes those who are dead. This is the power of death; it makes everybody equal. Even heroes are the same as cowards in death.

In this poem "Loso", Raditladi shows us that kings are highly regarded in the Batswana culture. They play an important role in the lives of their people by protecting them against anything that might harm them. But in death a king and a servant lie in the grave, despite their difference in status. This king might have had a high life, one where he had everything, had happiness, had people who obeyed him. The servant did not have all the riches of a king; he was the one who had to obey every order. And yet in death they are equal, both their graves will be covered in pebbles.

The fifth stanza indicates that death strikes everybody. No matter how powerful you are, you cannot protect yourself against death. All that you possess, servants, honour, your whole legacy, will fade away like mist. The speaker uses contrast by comparing himself to those who are conceited and he uses the fly to emphasize the power of death over people. Death does not consider your greatness, even if you used to lord over those who were under you. The speaker indirectly uses "tsamaya ka dinao" (walking with your feet) to show that all people are buried underground in the same manner. Death is like a fly which does not choose where it squats. It flies around and squats in a dirty place and comes back to squat in a clean place. By using a fly the speaker states that death also strikes anywhere, whether you are rich or poor, because a fly is associated with dirt. Raditladi indicates that death makes everybody equal. Death does not look at status; we are all buried in the grave, reminding us always to be ready for death.

The variants of this poem are grief, pain, misery and loneliness. These indicate what death brings to people when it strikes. The matrix of this poem is mourning, because the symbols used throughout the poem show that the speaker is in a state of pain and sorrow.

Raditladi activates cultural memory by using the idiomatic expression "nyera moko" (melting of marrow) to show hopelessness and misery. He also uses the traditional cultural image of kingship as a symbol to reactivate the cultural memory to show the power that death has over us. The use of a fly as a symbol of dirt is used indirectly to show that death does not discriminate; it levels everybody.

Conclusion

The images used in this poem – the spinning earth, the melting of marrow, the dropping tear – symbolise the hopelessness and pain the speaker experienced when death struck. Death is indirectly compared to lightning that

strikes and causes destruction. Death also causes pain that is so unbearable that no one can describe the pain the mourner experiences. Death is like a fly, it squats anywhere. This brings to mind the Setswana proverb, "Ga se tlala, tthaola malata, ke marumo majamagosana" (It is not hunger that choose servants, it is spears that kill kings). This means that when there is war, everybody can be killed, but hunger only strikes poor people.

In this poem Raditladi has interwoven traditional cultural material into his use of indirection, displacement, and contradiction to underline the destructive and disruptive power of death.

3.4 "FATSHE LA BATSWANA" (BATSWANA LAND)

The poem "Fatshe la Batswana" seems to express directly what the speaker longs for. The message is that he is bored in the Western land. He is longing for his Batswana land to do the things he valued most in his life as he indicates in the first stanza of the poem. Closer reading of the poem reveals a much more complex relationship to the Batswana world of the past.

The poem reads as follows. The English translation is again my own:

Pelo ya me e kwa lefatsheng la Batswana
 Go leleka phudufudu le photsana;
 Pelo ya me nna tota ga e mono Sekgoeng,
 (4) E kgakalagakala fela kwa dikgweng.

Pelo ya me tota e metseng ya ditlhoa
 Go bina dipina tsetsho ka motlhowa,
 Go bona ba ba tshipi tshwaana mabogong,
 (8) Go utlwa dikgaka di keketla molapong.

Fatshe la Batswana, fatshe la bagale,
 Fatshe la dikgomo, fatshe la mabele;

Fatshe la mašwi a elelang jaaka metse,
 (12) Mašwi a dikgomo di gangwang di robetse.

Lefatshe le banna ba diala ditshumu;
 Le ngwana o kgotlang e e mathamuthamu;
 Le nama go jewang ya thutlwa le phofu,
 (16) Le batho go gogwang fela ba difofu.

Pelo ya me e kwa lefatsheng la Batswana
 Go leleka phudufudu le photsana;
 Pelo ya me nna tota ga e mono Sekgoeng,
 (20) E kgakalagakala fela kwa dikgweng.

*My heart is in the land of the Batswana
 To hunt steenbok and duiker;
 My heart is not really in the Western land,
 It is far away in the bushes.*

*My heart is really in the village hills
 To sing my cultural songs,
 To see those with black iron bangles around their arms,
 To hear the songs of guineafowl in the river.*

*Batswana land, land of victors
 Land of cows, land of corn
 Land of milk, flowing like water
 Milk of cows that are milked whilst asleep.*

*Land of men with huge upper arms;
 Where children dip their fingers into cream like milk;
 Where they eat giraffe and eland meat,
 Where only the blind are led.*

My heart is in the land of the Batswana
To hunt steenbok and duiker;
My heart is not really in the Western land,
It is far away in the bushes hunting wild animals.

This first stanza is an exaggeration, because the speaker says his heart is in the Batswana land. No heart can be somewhere else but in the bosom of a human being. The speaker thus uses metaphor to emphasize his longing to be in the Batswana land. Using a "heart" as a longing object symbolizes the speaker's deep nostalgia for a more natural life in the bushes hunting wild animals.

In the second stanza the speaker still expresses a feeling of longing to stay amongst his Batswana people. That is what the speaker states in these lines: "Pelo ya me tota e metseng ya ditlhoa". (My heart is really in the village of the hills). This line emphasizes that the speaker longs to be in the Batswana land in order to perform his rituals and cultural songs. The speaker is longing to wear the iron bangles that bound his arms while dancing to his cultural songs. He is longing for the sounds that the bangles make when the dancers clap their hands. In the Batswana culture people perform their rituals at a specific time of the year. It may be when a child is born or when boys and girls return from the initiation school. It makes the speaker happy to go to the river and listen to ducks making sounds as if they are singing. A river in the Batswana culture is used to perform rituals like cleansing traditional healers. It may also be a sign of peace.

In the third stanza the speaker describes the land of the Batswana as a proverbial land of milk and honey. It is full of the traditional riches of the Batswana nation like cattle, sorghum and milk. The land is so rich that nothing is scarce. Milk flows like water, a symbol of having plenty to eat and

to drink. The richness is overdone, showing that this land of plenty is not real – it is a fantasy.

The fourth stanza describes the people who live in the Batswana land in superhuman terms: the men are very strong, their children eat well and drink cream like milk. These strong people hunt wild animals like giraffe and eland to give their families the best meat to eat. Blind people are not left alone; they are led to whatever the people are doing. This means that nobody is neglected – not even the blind or the children. The speaker describes the Batswana land as a place of many pleasant things, where meat is not bought; you only have to hunt giraffe and eland to get meat. This Batswana land is a land of plenty, of overabundance.

The fifth stanza repeats the first stanza. These stanzas indicate the strong longing of the speaker for the Batswana land, where he reflects on many important things that happened there. This makes him prefer the Batswana land above the Western city. The repetition of things the speaker enjoys in the Batswana land, where he hunts wild animals in the bushes, wears his cultural decorations around his arms and sings with his Batswana people, is a clear indication that the speaker longs to be among his Batswana people. This is emphasized in some of the stanzas that show that the speaker is no longer interested to live in the Western land. The speaker imagines a land full of milk and cream, and the meat of wild animals, a land where peace is found and where the Batswana people can practise their traditional customs. The Batswana people have plenty to drink and to eat because they hunt and milk cows. They make bangles of iron which they wear around their arms and which make wonderful sounds when they dance to their cultural songs.

The poet visualizes the happy life he had lived in the true Batswana land. The nostalgic feelings dominate the speaker's feeling because he might have left home to go and seek work far from home. The life he encountered elsewhere might not be as easy as it was at home, where everything was plenty. The

speaker imagines the Batswana land as it is in the Bible, where milk and honey was plentiful for everybody. This image from the Bible is transported into the setting of the Batswana people, where people used to have plenty to eat and drink.

The speaker longs for things that are found in the Batswana culture, including the performing of rituals. The images used by the speaker in this poem reveals irony, exaggeration and nostalgic feeling. He exaggerates when he says that milk flows like water. He is also ironical when he says that blind people are led. Traditionally Batswana people rear cows, goats, sheep and pigs. If they need meat they simply slaughter from their kraals. But the speaker does not mention the meat of such animals, which might be easy to find, because they are the legacy the Batswana people pride themselves on. The Batswana land is a symbol of richness for a Motswana because it includes all the traditional symbols of wealth.

The matrix of this poem is the horn of plenty and a feeling of longing.

Conclusion

Raditladi uses cultural symbols to celebrate the life of the Batswana, but men with huge upper arms, children dipping their fingers in cream like milk exaggerate the richness of the Batswana people. Even if the Batswana people reared cows, pigs, goats and sheep they also hunted animals like the eland. The Batswana people believe in using horns to protect their homes from evil. Raditladi uses the eland because the Batswana people show respect to the hunter who has killed an eland by ululating.

Milk in the Batswana culture symbolises abundance of food and the poet exaggerates this traditional cultural food to celebrate the richness of the Batswana way of life. The poet fantasizes about cows that are milked whilst asleep to show the peace that prevails in the Batswana land. This peace is

emphasised by men with huge upper arms who symbolize security to their people. The poet uses irony when he says children dip their fingers in milk like cream. Traditionally children are not allowed to take things without permission.

Raditladi uses indirection in this poem to show that the speaker longs for the cultural legacy of the Batswana people, where everything is plentiful and rituals are performed without hindrance. The nostalgic feeling makes the speaker believe that "Gaabo motho go thebe phatswa" (home is best). This is a clear indication that even if you can migrate to another place you will never forget the happiness of the place of your birth.

3.5 "NGWAGA O MOŠWA" (NEW YEAR)

In the poem "Ngwaga o mošwa" (New year) the speaker indicates his longing for the New Year and expresses his satisfaction that the past year has gone because it caused him grief. His feelings toward the new year are ambivalent, however:

Re letse re fitlha Ngogola,
Tshipi di letse di mo lelela,
Bana ba letse ba sa ikutlwe,
(4) Bohutsana ethe bo a ba wela.

Ngogola nna ga ke mo lelele,
Ngwaga o le o o sa nthateng o ile,
Wa go ka wa se ka wa mpoela.
(8) Ngogola sia tlhe, o nkidile!

Jaanong ke setse ke itshopere,
Nna ke ntse ke ologa matlhare,
Dikala tsa me di epetswe mmung,
(12) Ke imeneka esi jaaka tlhware.

Ngwaga o mošwa, tlaa tlhe, ke a go atla,
 Moeng goroga, nna ke a go batla,
 Gata tlhe, ka mabedi sekau,

(16) Gata tlhe, o se ka wa kokotla!

Ngwaga o mošwa nna ke a leboga,
 Ke fano jaanong ke a phaloga,
 Ke sutlha dikgwa ke itebetse

(20) Ntšwa malatsi one a ntse a robega.

Tsatsi leno ke le ke fano,
 Bontsi bo le tlhoketse pono,
 Bo robetse losong maloba,

(24) Nna ke sa le sego ke yono.

We buried last year,
 Bells were ringing for him,
 Children could not take it
 As if grief befell them.

I don't cry for last year,
 Gone is that year that hated me,
 The one that should pass and never return,
 Last year, please pass quickly, you hated me.

Now I am left in despair,
 I have been shedding leaves,
 My branches are dug into the soil,
 I wriggle alone like a python.

New year, please come I embrace you,

Visitor come, I want you.
Please tramp with both feet like a gentleman.
Please tramp, don't hop.

New year, I am thankful,
I am here now, I am descending,
I am penetrating through the forest without remembering,
While days are shortening.

This day here I am,
Many have missed sight of this day,
They slept in death days ago,
I am fortunate to be here.

There is metaphorical displacement in the first stanza because the speaker personifies the past year, by claiming that it was buried. A year cannot be buried because it is not human. According to the speaker, it was not a good year. When the bells rang for its burial, children became sad. The speaker expresses the children's feelings by saying "grief befell them". There is a contradiction here because traditionally, when the year ends, bells ring, and people rejoice because they are looking forward to welcoming the New Year. They are positive that it will bring them good things. Saying the children were grieving does not make sense, because children do not know the suffering of their elders; they are being taken care of by their parents. So when the year ends, they only hear the happiness of the bells sounding and see everybody celebrating. They do not know the meaning of the celebration, nor do they know why some people do not celebrate.

In the second stanza the poet expresses a lack of regret at seeing the end of the year that brought him misery. The speaker's wish is that the year that has passed should never come back again. He emphasizes this by stating that he has no regrets that the year has passed. This indicates that the year that has

passed was not kind to him. In the Batswana culture there is a proverb that says "Ngwaga o sa nthateng kgabaganya" (Year that hates me pass by). It is a clear indication that people who wish that the year should pass have encountered lots of problems.

The third stanza shows that the year has left the speaker in a state of despair. The speaker describes himself as a very sad person who was extremely emotional because of what had happened in the year that had passed. He imagines himself to be a tree that is losing its leaves and whose branches are drooping as if dug into the ground. He seems to feel that he does not have the strength to do what he used to be able to do. He is now growing old. He also has a feeling of loneliness, of being stripped naked and being left to stand alone. He still stands firm and strong even if he is alone, yet he feels feared like a python. He symbolizes himself as a very dangerous person because a python is a feared snake which lives alone. The python might also be an image of being lost and being without a sense of direction, because it stays alone in the forest.

The fourth stanza indicates the happiness of the speaker. He uses the word "tlhe" (please) to emphasize his plea for the New Year to come soon because he wants to embrace it, like he would embrace a visitor. He wants the New Year to come with noise, not in silence. His wish is that the New Year should come trampling, not hopping, but his wish is that the year should come like a gentleman. The speaker compares the year to a gentleman who is regarded as a person of high status; he also calls the year a visitor. Traditionally, when you are a visitor, you get the best treatment from your host. As a visitor you get the best food, you sleep comfortably and you are treated with respect until your departure. It is believed that if you ill-treat a visitor, he will pass on your behaviour to others and nobody in the family will visit you. Your place will be quiet and lonely. In the Batswana culture we have an idiom that says, "Moeng goroga re je" (Visitor arrive so that we can eat). The speaker imagines the year as being a visitor whom he embraces and kisses.

Raditladi recalls traditional belief in this poem by using the images of a python and a gentleman. A python symbolises danger and a gentleman in the Batswana culture is associated with good character. By condensing these two images the speaker replaces the hardship of life in the past year with the happy mood of the new year.

The idiomatic expression that says, "Ngwaga o sa nthateng kgabaganya" (Year that hates me pass by) will be recognised by people who have the same cultural knowledge as the speaker. In this way, the speaker emphasises his joy because the bad experiences of the past are finally over.

The speaker commands the year to come very fast so that he can forget the past and concentrate on the future. He personifies the future as a gentleman. Traditionally, when a visitor arrives, all preparations are done in advance to welcome him/her with all possible dignity. The meaning of the idiom is that the visitor brings happiness to his host; food that is normally not cooked is now cooked. In the Batswana culture there are goods that are specifically kept to be used by visitors only.

In the fifth stanza the speaker thanks the New Year even though he does not know what it will bring. He seems to be desperate to welcome the New Year because he says, "New year I thank you". He uses the image of the forest to show how lost he had been. His life, according to his description, was reckless and unthinkable because he was walking aimlessly in the lonely forest. It seems the speaker wants to recover what he had lost in the past year. The speaker believes that the New Year will bring him something good before his life is shortened by the miseries he encountered in the previous year.

In the sixth stanza the speaker is grateful because he is still alive. He is happy to have seen the New Year, while others died before they could see it. He expresses his good fortune by saying, "I am fortunate to be here", meaning that he did see the New Year while others have died days ago. Others were

not fortunate enough to hear the bells ringing in the New Year. There is ambivalence in this poem because the speaker expresses different emotions in speaking about the New Year and about himself and how fortunate he is not to be dead. His wishes have been granted; he has seen the New Year.

In symbolism, ideas and emotions are expressed not by describing them directly but by suggesting what they are or by recreating them in the mind of the reader through the use of unexplained objects. The python symbolises danger. The fallen leaves symbolise the loss of hope that the speaker had.

The speaker imagines himself to be a tree because a tree symbolises firmness. Even though he was sick, alone, and growing old he stood firm and feels lucky to be alive when others have died. The matrix of this poem is thanksgiving, for the speaker indicates his good fortune of being alive while others were not as fortunate. Others died before they could see the New Year.

Conclusion

The speaker believes in the idiomatic expression, "Ngwaga yo o sa nthateng kgabaganya" (Year that hates me pass-by). That is why his wish is to live to see the New Year – it might bring him happiness. Once that year has passed all his misfortunes will be over. The speaker expresses a range of emotions: regret and relief that the year has passed, despair and a sense of loss and lack of direction. In the end he welcomes the new year with the confidence that it will bring better times.

3.6 "TSHWANOLOGO" (Defamiliarization)

In the poem "Tshwanologo" (Defamiliarization) the speaker has a nostalgic feeling for the past, where he used to perform cultural rituals without any hindrance. He is not happy about the differences modern life has brought about. This makes him long for the life he used to live:

A namane e tona ya tshwanologo!
 Diaparo tsa borraarona di ile,
 Go setse dikhai di re bofang mabogo,
 (4) Di re khinang di re soboloke mmele.

Ga re rate manyebi le diseisei,
 Malakalaka, diphatsimane thamong.
 Re neeleng dikoloi tsa rona tsa dilei,
 (8) Koloi tsa rona tse di gopang ka mpa mmung.

A re newe matlhowa re ko re bine,
 Basadi ba opele ba phanye magofi,
 Leoto le sete, go bine didumane,
 (12) Thokwana kgolo di benye le lefifi.

Re fe mpeetšhane setlhako sa bontate,
 Ka tsa direthe di re kgola mangole,
 Di re khwiga magwejana re sa rate,
 (16) Di re soke menwana re nne digole.

Keletso ya nna pitse, nkoo ke pagama!
 Ka maatla ka etsa phologolo ya lekau,
 Le fa e le ja photšhwana kgotsa kukama,
 (20) Ka boela kwa morago ka ijela mogau.

What a great defamiliarization!
 Our forefathers' clothes are gone,
 The remaining clothes tie our hands,
 They tie and bundle our bodies up.

We don't like shiny and silky clothes,

Hanging long shining necklaces.
Give us our sledges,
Our sledges that crawl with their stomachs on the soil.

Give us seedpods so that we can dance,
Women should sing and clap hands,
The feet should stamp, dance should rattle,
The milking cows should shine in the dark.

Give us our forefathers' open toed shoes,
Because heeled shoes break our knees,
They bind our knees against our will,
Twisting our toes, crippling us.

If wishes were horses I would ride them!
With strength I would gently tame them,
Even if it were an eland or gemsbok,
Returning to eat bitter berries.

In the first stanza the speaker is amazed at the difference between the present and the past, especially about the clothes that are worn in these modern days. He longs for the clothes that his forefathers wore. People of different cultures used to be recognised by the different clothes they wore, even though these clothes were made from animal hides. The speaker indicates that modern clothes restrict him. The speaker uses exaggeration by referring to clothes that tie up one's body in contrast with the clothes his forefathers used to wear, which were loose and let their bodies move freely. The speaker cannot say modern clothes are too tight. He compares the olden days to modern life. Modern life makes the speaker feel uncomfortable. He is not free because the life he now lives seems to restrict his freedom of movement. The experience of being tied down by modern clothes make the speaker sad, because he says, "Our forefather's clothes are gone".

In the second stanza the speaker states that he does not care for the sophisticated things of modern life, like shining belts around one's body. All he wants, are the old ways of transport to move around. He uses indirection in what he wants by saying "give us our reins". It is ungrammatical to say that a sledge crawls with its stomach on the soil because it is inanimate. The transport that the speaker longs for was drawn by an animal. Reins indicate the ropes that bound the horse or ox to the sledge that was used to transport people in the olden days. The sledge is made up of poles and was used before the wheel was used in Batswanaland?

The third stanza indicates the speaker's longing for the ritual performances as part of the dances of the past, where people clapped hands and stamped their feet as they sang their traditional songs, celebrating the important occasions of their times. The dance seems to take place during the night because the speaker indicates that they see the milking cow shining in the dark. In the Batswana culture young women dance without covering their breasts. The speaker compares the young women's breasts to milking cows. Traditionally, only women who are virgins can expose their breasts. The dance is performed during the night and young women expose their breasts with pride.

In the fourth stanza the speaker states that he wants sandals like those that were worn by his forefathers. The shoes that are worn today are not comfortable on his feet. His wish is to have shoes that fit him well and do not hurt his toes. The replacement of old open shoes and clothes is something that the speaker is not prepared to live with. The shoes of modern days press one's toes together and make one move like a cripple, meaning that the speaker is unable to do what he wants with his feet, like dancing because in the Batswana culture people sing and dance. But this is prevented by the stiff shoes which make his movements uncomfortable. The speaker indirectly compares his uncomfortable life with tight clothes that bind his body. What he

actually means is that he did not inherit his forefathers' way of life, and that is why his life is complicated.

In the Batswana tradition, when people performed their rituals, they danced and sang while stamping their feet, but modern life prevents all this because everything is done with fear, one doesn't know who can be against you. The speaker uses personification to describe modern life so we can understand what sorrows it has brought to him.

In the last stanza the speaker realises that his longing for the past is unreal – that wishes can never be horses, maybe referring back to things that people used to do when they were still young. That is why he wants his strength back so that he can tame a wild beast like an eland or gemsbok. By taming them he will be able to ride them. He longs for the berries which they used to pick up in the forest, enjoying eating them, even if some of the berries were bitter. In this poem the speaker shows his deep concern about the modern life that has replaced their past. He wishes that all the wonderful things they used to enjoy could be brought back. He wants the legacy of their forefathers to return. He does not take pride in modern things. His impossible wish is to return to the traditional past.

In Raditladi's poem we notice that he loves his Batswana culture. He believes that by not obeying the forefathers his life will not be stable; it will be a life full of regrets, as the speaker states in this poem. The images in this poem add up to a longing for a past freedom. The speaker wants to wear the clothes of his forefathers, to perform his cultural dances where girls exposed their breasts. His wish is to go back to the freedom of the past, which he imagines not to have at present. He longs for freedom but he compares his wishes to spiritual horses that he will be able to tame – thereby showing that he realises that his wishes can never become true.

Raditladi indicates in the above-mentioned images that the speaker wishes for an impossible life style. He forgets the universal saying that, "O lelela mašwi a tshologile" (you cry over spilled milk), meaning that the speaker wishes for the freedom of the past which will never come back again. These different images are contrasted with the modern lifestyle that to the speaker seems unfree, restricted and lacks spontaneity.

The matrix of this poem is a longing for the good old days, the gratefulness of getting to perform your cultural rituals of dancing and gazing at the fields watching the beauty of nature.

Conclusion

The speaker longs for the simpler lifestyle of the past, where he had been free to wear traditional open-toed shoes and unrestrictive clothing and to enjoy the performance of girls dancing and clapping their hands. He also realises that returning to the past is impossible and might yield only unpleasantness.

Raditladi's poem, "Tshwanologo" (Defamiliarization) presents an image which is not real to other people who do not share the Batswana culture. Although people perform their cultural rituals, misunderstanding is possible because they share the land with other people who do not share the same beliefs.

Although the poem expresses love for the Batswana culture, the longing of the speaker to wear his forefathers' clothes, to see girls exposing their breasts, in short, to ride his wishes as though they were tame horses, is a fantasy that cannot happen in this modern era. In praise of the cultural behaviour of the past, the writer compares modern life with traditional life in order to show how modern life has restricted the cultural values, customs and norms of the Batswana.

3.7 "TAU" (THE LION)

The speaker personifies the lion in this poem. He describes how the lion praises itself as a great king of the jungle. In the first stanza the lion describes himself as a mighty, powerful and fearsome person who challenges veterans and blinds them with ash. In the Batswana culture a lion is associated with kings, so it is highly regarded as a powerful animal. Kings wear the skin of a leopard and this symbolises the power they have amongst their people.

Here is the poem, followed by my translation:

Ke nna mapetekanyi wa ga mosetlha,
 Bagale le ka molora nka ba fatlha.
 Ke nna mathule yo o mokokotlo o thupa
 (4) Ga ke latwe, ke mosimane a sa rupa.

Tau ga ke tshabe, ke kgebetlaka batho,
 Nna ke phura kgomo, ke phure le motho,
 Ke phura le badisa ba dinamane;
 (8) Nna mmusi kgomo e lale le dinamane

Ke nna serobaroba sa matlhakola,
 Searobaki fela se sa tle go a lala.
 Ee, ke nna tau diphatlha di tswa mamina,
 (12) Dinko di tsagalala wa ga tawana.

Nna ngwana wa ga rre setlhaolelanageng,
 Ke fitlhetse dikgomo leswaratlhatlheng,
 Di fula fela nokeng ya letshikhiri,
 (16) Ka khukhutha ka boboanya le moriri.

Le kwa gaeng la batho nna ga ke gopolwe,
E a re fa ngwana wa motho a nkgopola a phailwe,
Go twe, "Se gopole sefephe go dutswe,
Se bue thata ka Makhutse go itebetswe."

I am the mighty great son of mosetlha,
The veterans with ash, I can blind.
I am the great with a stick back.
I am not conquered by uninitiated boys.

I lion, I am not afraid, I tear people,
I devour cattle and devour people too,
I devour calf shepherds,
I conquer cows laying with calves.

I am the breaker of the remnants,
The breaker who breaks inconsiderately.
Yes, I am the lion with mucus coming out of the nostrils.
Nose that flows like that of a cub.

I am the son of the isolator of the veld,
I found cows in a grazing valley,
Grazing on the river shore,
I ambushed with my hairy hair.

Even at the people's homes I am never remembered,
When a child remembers me, she is smacked.
It is said: "Don't remember a cunning person whilst
relaxed,
Don't talk much about sorrows while people are relaxing."

Tau is associated with kings, but in this poem Raditladi's image of a lion contradicts what the lion usually represents in the Batswana culture. This poem plays on the meaning that a lion has to the Batswana people, but the series of images of the lion in this poem are images of weakness and of abuse of power rather than images of strength.

The first stanza indicates that the lion's mighty deed is that he blinds his opponents with ash. By running around a lion can cause a lot of dust, so that other animals and people cannot see him when he attacks them. Blinding the veterans might be a clever trick, because ash is thicker than dust, but it is not a brave deed.

The lion's spine is described as a stick, indicating that it is not easy to bend, but it is also not an image of strength. It is part of the strategy in the poem that uses images that seem strong but the fact put the lion in an ironic light. Likewise the stubbornness of its character is emphasized (but also undercut) in the last line of the first stanza where the lion further says, "I am not conquered by an uninitiated boy." In the Batswana culture a boy who has not undergone initiation is regarded as a weakling, a helpless person who cannot make any good decisions because he is not regarded as a real man. Such a boy would not be a big threat to a mighty and fearsome beast like a lion. The lion might despise such a person, but it is a hollow boast that he cannot be overcome by a person who has not reached proper manhood.

In the second stanza the lion's daring prowess towards its prey is indicated in the first line where he says "Tau ga ke tshabe" (I lion, I am not afraid). He instils fear in his opponents by saying that he fears nobody, he devours people and animals alike. He is not afraid of cows that have calves, he kills everything and everybody. The speaker shows how merciless a lion is. He does not care whether a calf is small; he kills it together with its mother. The lion, as the king of the jungle, ought to challenge powerful animals like elephants. Instead, it devours harmless shepherds. The lion exaggerates its

strength because it cannot challenge stronger animals. They will defeat him. He only boasts about breaking things that are already broken, and are remnants. This is a sign of cowardice.

The third stanza further describes the lion's inconsideration of other species. People are described as remnants, meaning that they are like leftovers that are not used anymore. There is distortion in lines 11-12. The speaker is belittling the lion by stating that mucus comes out of its nose and compares it to a cub. Traditionally, the lion is regarded as strong and is known for his power; he is the commander of both animals and people. For the speaker to compare a strong person like a lion to a cub is a contradiction of his power and strength. The lion is a strong animal that ought to protect small animals instead of destroying them.

The fourth stanza indicates the power of the lion because he lives alone in the wild. If he happens to find any animal grazing in his territory, he kills it, and he does not want to share his prey with anyone except with his own kind. But here he does not kill the cow with his fearsome teeth, but instead ambushes her with his hair. He refers to himself as a hairy beast because of its mane. Again, this is a rather strange image of power.

Traditionally, people believe that because a king is associated with a lion, he must stay in a separate place and not mix with his subjects. That is why in those olden days kings stayed in palaces. Amongst Batswana people there was a belief that a king is a born leader who has the power to govern through the will of his forefathers.

The fifth stanza describes the lion as an animal that is never remembered at home, which again undermines the image of power. Children are warned not to use that cunning name, especially when people are relaxing. Parents instil fear in their children by smacking them when they mention this cunning name. Traditionally, Batswana believe that if evil befell them it will be passed

on to their children. This means that if parents have not taught their children to respect certain cultural beliefs, the evil will grow with them. They teach their small children to grow up with this belief so that they can also pass it on to their children.

The poem "Tau" (Lion) functions as a symbol, indicating to a Motswana that the poem deals with chieftainship. The lion is typically a praise name for chiefs because the qualities associated with a lion are compared to those of a chief. In the Batswana tradition, only the chief may wear the skin of a lion, attire which sets him apart from ordinary people.

Tau (lion) as a symbol of power and the absolute authority of a chief is fixed in the Batswana cultural memory. Traditionally the chief is the only one with the authority to try cases and mete out punishment. Chiefs have more power than anybody else. Even in the Bible Chiefs were respected and had the power to spare life or put to death.

In this poem the images that the speaker uses are contradictory and ironic. The lion boasts about the power he has. He also imagines himself to be somebody who cannot be defeated because he calls himself a conqueror. People at home smack their children when they mention his name, because this name is associated with a bad omen.

The images of power that the lion imagines he has actually show that he is a coward who lacks power, instilling fear in everybody but he becomes laughable. The irony he uses when he says he "breaks remnants" shows that he does not have the power he claims to have. Attacking calf shepherds and cows laying with calves are clear indications that the lion targets defenceless human beings and animals.

The images contradict the powers of a mighty king that is associated with a lion. Traditionally, kings are called lions, but they are supposed to rule with kindness and consideration to serve their people. But the lion is heartless, he

forces everybody to fear him. The power the lion imagines he has, turns out to contradict the respect animals and people have for the lion. Instead of protecting his people, he threatens them.

The variants of power which are associated with the lion include the "largest and most feared animal", "the king of the jungle", a mighty beast that occupies its territory by means of roaring. He shows remarkable patience in stalking his prey; he is a nocturnal beast, the noblest and most fearsome of the big cats.

The matrix of this poem is the empty power that the lion has. He is a weakling that boasts of his power but instead he is like a baby who has a runny nose. The only power the lion imagines to have is to instil fear in people and animals so that when he is remembered people should shiver with fear. Traditionally, kings are associated with lions, but in this poem it will be ironic to compare a lion who misuses his power to abuse others to a king who is supposed to have empathy with his people.

Conclusion

Raditladi indicates that even if the Batswana people associate their kings with the lion, there are kings who do not protect their people genuinely, like the lion who fakes power and threatens the lives of animals and people who are powerless to fight him.

The images in this poem, therefore, reverse the traditional view of kings with mighty powers like lions and instead show up their cowardice, self-deception and exploitation of the weak. The poem embodies the universal saying that "Self praise has no recommendation", meaning that a person who praises himself has no real power at all.

3.8 "MOTLHABANI" (THE SOLDIER)

Soldiers protect their country from enemies that might harm them, so they are highly respected amongst their people. When a soldier dies, he is buried in a manner that befits his status. But in the poem "Motlhabani" (Soldier) the soldier is buried in an unusual manner, without any cultural rituals, because he died on the battlefield:

Le fa e le mokgwasa kana o no o yo!
 Le fa e le moropa ka baka leo
 Fa re baya setoto sa gagwe phupung!
 Phate ya kgongwana o ne a sa e bewa,
 Setlhako lenaong a sa se newa,
 Ra mo tsenya a le segwere mo mmung,
 Ra mo latsa jaaka motlhabani,
 (8)A ladiwa legae le thobane.

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 digai
 Ka kepu di ne di setse kwa gae;
 Sefikantswe sa gagwe sa nna thebe,
 Baboki ba palelwa go boka
 (16) Mosetaseti yole wa mabaka.

Batho Tebele ba ne ba lela
 Ba lela a lekoa semelamela
 Ba re ba lela ba le matlho a kwano
 Ba re, re fe bana re "khombize",
 Re neela bana, rra, o ko o re lese!
 Nkwe marema le ka tsheka o fano,

Ke yo o tsutsubantse sefatlhogo,
 (24) Modimamako go tshelang yo o sego!

Not even a rustling sound was there,
 Not even a drum for that reason,
 When we laid his corpse in the grave,
 He was not wrapped in a young ox's skin.
 No shoe on his foot was put.
 We laid him unclothed in the soil.
 We laid him like a soldier.
 We laid him at home with a knobkerrie.

He slept in the light of the moon,
 His body was dripping blood,
 The ground was scraped with shields,
 The grave was dug with assegais
 For the mattocks were left at home.
 His tombstone was a shield.
 The poets were unable to recite
 That organisers of facts

Foreign people cried,
 Crying while in a bad state.
 They say they cry with downcast eyes.
 They say give us children "to show".
 Give us children, father, and leave us!

Leopard chopper who refuses to be caught is here.
 Here he is with frowned forehead.
 Half-god who lives through fortune.

The first stanza indicates that the funeral of the soldier took place without the sound of drums. No salute was given to show that the person who was being buried was of great status. In the Batswana culture when a hero like a soldier is buried, many people attend to honour the great person who fought for his people, but this funeral was very quiet because the soldier died on the battlefield.

Traditionally, a cow is ritually slaughtered and its skin used to cover the dead body. A cow-hide is a symbol that is readily recognisable to a Motswana as representing tradition and respect. Today the Batswana use coffins, except in cases where they own the land and can therefore choose to perform the traditional rituals. The cow skin is firmly fixed as a symbol in cultural memory and will resonate with a Motswana reader as a symbol of death. Matjila (1995:23) states that, according to an English poet during the burial of Sir John Moore, there was no shroud to wrap the body, so they covered him with his martial cloak. Raditladi indicates that traditionally in the Batswana culture, the body is not dressed in clothes. It is believed that one is born naked and should leave the world in the same way. It is believed that the clothing would be an encumbrance in the resurrection. Among the modern Batswana, a body buried in a coffin will be dressed. But the soldier was buried in a manner that befits a soldier who fell on the battlefield. Strangely the speaker says the soldier was laid to rest at home, whereas he died on the battlefield. If the soldier was laid to rest at home, cultural rituals would have been performed. This indicates that the battlefield was his real home.

The second stanza states that the burial of the soldier took place during the night because the only light the soldiers could rely on to bury their fallen comrade was that of the moon. It is a clear indication that the soldier was buried at night. The dripping of blood shows that the soldier was stabbed to death because he was in a battle. The digging was done with spears because the spades were left at home. In the English poem bayonets are used to dig a grave on the battlefield. In Raditladi assegais and shields, African tools of

war, are used to dig the grave. The poem refers to the proper instrument, "kepu", a sharp stick with a blade that is typically used to dig a grave. There was no gun salute and no prayers at the graveside of the soldier.

Traditionally a soldier would be honoured in his death by the beating of drums and the singing of praises that show that the burial is that of an important person. We can say that respect and dignity, which are important culturally, are not present on this occasion. This adds to the sadness of the poem. The dead soldier was buried in a hurry because he died on the battlefield. Various symbols that make up the ritual of burial in the Batswana culture are evoked by the speaker: the cow-skin to cover the corpse, the fact that the body is buried naked; the singing of praises to honour the fallen hero. Usually when a soldier dies he is buried by his comrades in a manner that befits his status. They wear their uniforms, beat drums and march. Here the elements of the proper ritual are replaced by what seems to be weak imitations because the soldier was buried on the battlefield.

In the third stanza the speaker emphasizes the weeping of the people for their hero. But he extends the meaning by mentioning "Tebele", which literally means "Zulu", but usually indicates foreigners. All the nations are therefore grieving for this man. A very sad feeling is found in this stanza.

At home people were crying for soldiers who were at war. The soldiers were nostalgic because they were also crying but not showing it. The downcast eyes symbolise the pain and hurt the people went through. In the Batswana culture, no man is allowed to cry because it is a sign of weakness. That is why the faces of those who cry are facing downwards. The people seem to be crying for the children the fallen hero will never father.

In the last three lines the speaker praises the soldier by comparing him to a brave leopard. The speaker indicates that the soldier, like a leopard, refused to give up and be caught. A leopard is a very dangerous animal when

confronted by hunters; it protects itself fiercely. This comparison underlines the bravery of the soldier.

A soldier is regarded as an idol by some communities. That is why the speaker describes him as a half-god. Some people believe that idols can save them from death. Raditladi in this poem praises the soldier as superhuman. Even though some people regard the soldier as their idol, he could not save himself from the stab wounds he sustained. He died just like any other person.

The beating of drums, the digging of the grave with traditional instruments, the cow skin which traditionally covers a Motswana corpse – all the traditional rituals of honour were absent. This seems to signify that the cultural legacy of the Batswana was disregarded. No rituals were performed because the soldier died far away from home.

The speaker celebrates his cultural beliefs by imagining that if the soldier had been buried at home, he could have had a decent burial, forgetting that in the Batswana culture there is an idiomatic expression that says, "Moswela gae o tswana le moswela tebele" (He who dies at home is like the one who dies in a foreign land). A person who has died at home will be buried according to his belief and culture. The same applies to somebody who dies amongst people he does not know, because traditionally Batswana people are generous. They believe that "Motho ke motho ka batho ba bangwe" (A person is a person through others). They use their "Ubuntu" (Humanity) to show empathy and kindness by not discriminating against others by regarding them as strangers, even if they do not adhere in their culture.

The soldier died on the battlefield, under horrible conditions. Yet the others fulfilled the Batswana custom of burying a corpse and not leaving it to rot in the veld or to be eaten by wild animals.

Tombstones are erected by a family so that they can show future generations where they had laid their beloved to rest. But in the case of this soldier, the only mark of identification is a shield that does not have a name on it.

Conclusion

Ironically, the matrix of this poem is "honouring a soldier by giving him a proper burial". In this poem Raditladi evokes the Batswana customs and beliefs for burying a hero, but mark them as absent. He describes the burial as a negative of a proper cultural way to bury a hero. No cow was slaughtered and its skin used to cover the body of the deceased. No meat was cooked and fed to the mourners. No praise songs were recited at the funeral of the soldier. "We laid him (to rest) like a soldier". "We laid him at home..." Here we should take the speaker at his word and realise that this burial, without traditional ceremonies, was indeed much more befitting. His home was the battlefield and to dig his grave with spears, lay him to rest naked and still bleeding in silence and to mark his grave with a shield is a simple and pure way to honour him properly.

3.9 "BABOKI BA DIKGOSI" (PRAISERS OF KINGS)

Kings, like soldiers, are regarded as great and powerful people amongst the Batswana people. In the first stanza the speaker describes the praisers of kings as people who do not understand that the people they praise are their rulers. Praisers mock and laugh at their kings - something that is not done in the Batswana culture, as the king is highly regarded. The speaker further disapproves of their praisers' behaviour by belittling the kings because they say they have no milk to feed their people, as indicated in the fourth and fifth lines that the milkmen are unable to milk their cows because cows kick them. This is a displacement of the cow that kicks and spills the milk that ought to feed the children and their parents. The praisers mock the kings because they

say that the kings are unable to feed their people. Even their children are starving.

Baboki ba dikgosi basenyi,
 Baboki ba rona balotlhanyi,
 Ba sotla ka dikgosi ba tshega,
 Ba re kgomo thokwana e a raga,
 Thokwana e ragile le bagami,
 (6) Banyana ba tsoga ba bopame.

Nka bo ke le kgosi nka bo ke laya,
 Baboki ba nka bo ke ba bolaya,
 Ba re, kgosi tsa rona maruarua,
 Kgosi tsa rona nnaa ga di a re rua:
 A di iretswe go kometsa batho,
 (12) Kana puso ya kagiso le batho?

Mmoki wa gaetsho o ko o itumele,
 O tshege ka beno ba bogile,
 Mosong go tla bo go le bosigo,
 O tla tswa setilong seo sa gago,
 O lela ka madi a tletse ganong,
 (18) O gadima fela jaaka lenong.

Baboki ba jeno batlhalefi,
 Lo se boke poko ya lefifi,
 Joo bo leruarua ga se bogosi,
 Go metsa batho ga go tshabise,
 Go kwatlalatsa pelo tsa batho,
 (24) Ditsheko di se fele tsa batho.

Nna dikgosi tthe ga ke itumele,

Le baboki ga ke ba lobele,
 Ba ko ba bitse dikgosi maina,
 Ba se re ke ditau, dibatana:
 Fa ba realo kana ba a ba sotla!

(30) A dilo tse bone ba a di batla!

Baboki a ko ba ithute go boka,
 A mafoko ba a tswese dipaka,
 Dikgosi ba di tshase menate,
 Merafe e tle e itshware dibete,
 E re, Botswana go ntle masisi,

(36) Marena a teng namane tsa Kgosi!

Fa lo re ke dikometsabatho,
 Lo ba gantsha lefatshe le batho,
 Jaaka Mojeremane maloba.
 Mafatshe a ka tloga a ba kakoba,
 A re tse dikgosi dilalome,

(42) Di tshotlhang le lesea le bopame.

Nna kgosi tsa rona ke a di rata,
 Ke rata tse di marapo a thata.
 Fa di sotliwa nna ke a tenega!
 Baboki tlhe a re se intsheng dinoga,
 A re bokeng kgosi go tshwanetse,

(48) Ga re ba maloba, re tsweletse.

Praisers of our kings are no good,
 Our praisers are mischief-makers.
 They mock the kings while they laugh.
 They say the brown cow kicks,
 A milking cow kicked the milkers

So that the next day children starve.

If I were a king I would teach them morals.

I would have killed the praisers.

They say, our kings are whales,

Our kings did not rear us:

Are they there to swallow people

Or for peaceful governance of their own people?

Let my praise poet be happy,

Laughing at your people when they suffer.

In the morning it will be night for you,

You will lose that position of yours,

Crying with your mouth full of blood,

Glancing back like a vulture.

Praisers of today, wise men,

Don't recite the poem of doom,

That whale is not kingship,

Swallowing people is not threatening,

It strengthens people's hearts,

People's litigations unending.

I the King I'm not happy.

I don't hide it from the poet-praisers.

Let them call kings names,

Let them not call them lions, wild beasts:

When that is said by them, they mock.

Do they want these things?

Let praisers learn to praise.

Their words should wear suits.

Kings should be covered with niceties.
 Tribes should hold their livers,
 Saying the Botswana are solemn,
 Their chiefs are calves of kings.

When you say they are man-eaters,
 You make the world and people reject them
 Like a German yesterday.
 Countries will fear and ostracise them,
 Saying, these kings are animals,
 They will chew even a lean baby.

I love our kings.
 I love those with strong bones.
 When they are mocked I become angry!
 Praisers, please, let us not turn into snakes,
 Let us praise Kings for it is good.
 We are not of yesterday, we are progressive.

In the second stanza the speaker expresses the feeling of being hurt by the disrespect the praisers show their king. He wishes to be a king so that he can punish the praisers by killing them to teach them the lesson that kings are not to be mocked by anybody because they occupy high positions amongst their people.

Praisers indirectly compare kings with aquatic animals that swallow their people. In the Botswana culture kings protect their people from anything that can harm them. This distortion of comparing great people like kings to whales angers the speaker because praisers instil fear in the people, who will regard their heroes as man-eaters.

In the third stanza the speaker has positive advice for the praisers. He advises them to be proud of their kings and not to rejoice in their downfall. He even warns them that they should know that by doing what they are doing they will be discarded as praisers and they will regret losing their positions. They will be like vultures. By comparing the praisers to vultures indicates that they will no longer have the important positions they used to hold, because vultures eat what other animals have killed. This implies that they will be listening to other praisers and they will regret the opportunity they have wasted when they were praisers but could not do what was assigned to them.

In the fourth stanza the speaker appeals to the praisers to be careful of what they say when they praise. He advises them to use words that befit their king's capabilities because he is aware that they are capable of doing that. He warns the praisers not to recite poems of doom. By threatening people with whales, they only strengthen their hearts.

The fifth, sixth and seventh stanzas indicate the dissatisfaction of the king. The speaker warns the praisers to stop belittling their kings by calling them bad names like whales or wild animals. He is telling them to show respect to their kings by covering them with niceties. The sixth stanza emphasises what the speaker really wants praisers to do. By covering the kings with niceties, a good image will be presented to the people they rule. In the Batswana culture it means that kings should be given the respect they deserve, they should be honoured as the leaders. That is why the speaker even indicates that they should be praised with good words; those words should be smart or nice to be like a suit, which is usually a sign of a person who has good manners like a gentleman.

In the last stanza the speaker expresses his love for his king. He describes his love for his kings and wants them to be praised with words that befit them. He uses irony when he says he loves his kings because he indirectly symbolizes a king as a vulture, meaning that after being physically abused by

the kings, they will be thrown away to be eaten by the vultures. He pleads with praisers to be cunning because they will be dangerous to people who listen to them. By comparing kings to snakes, the speaker expresses a curse – snakes are regarded as messengers of Satan and signs of deception. So praisers must be careful in what they say about kings. The speaker also warns the praisers not to recite poems of doom because they are misleading, people will think that kings are people who never do any good things. He indirectly pleads with praisers to behave like modern people who are civilized, so that people can know the truth in what they are reciting.

There are different variants of images in this poem. The speaker indirectly criticises the kings by accusing them of chewing lean babies. He also indicates that their milkmen are kicked by the cows – this means that the milk spills and the children starve. They cannot be fed with the milk because the milk has been spilled. The speaker also warns that other people are watching their behaviour, meaning that other countries can distance themselves by regarding the kings as heartless.

The matrix of this poem is a warning by praisers to kings that are corrupt; if the kings do not humble themselves, their authority and honour will be rejected by their people and outsiders will meddle in their lands and affairs. This is something that is very unusual in the Batswana culture. Traditionally the Batswana believe that kings possess great powers to rule their subjects, but when they abuse their powers they anger the ancestors whom they rely on to exercise their leadership. The poem suggests that kings swallow defenceless children, a sign of cruelty. It is the duty of kings to protect the innocent and punish the guilty, to defend their people's property, to allow personal rights for individuals, to enforce respect for the law so that everybody should know that it is not right to do whatever you please.

Conclusion

In this poem Raditladi's use of traditional material is ironic because the attitudes of the praisers do not show the respect that is expected from them as the subjects of the king. Instead of praising the kings they criticise them indirectly, something that is not allowed in the Batswana culture.

Raditladi wants to show his readers that if you don't act properly as a king, your subjects will mock your behaviour. The attitude of kings who abuse their power makes a mockery of the culture of the Batswana people.

This poem uses the culture of the Batswana people indirectly in a very clever way, because kings should protect their people from all forms of abuse. But these kings abuse their power and neglect their duties. The proverb that says, "Kgosi thotobolo o olela matlakala" (A king is a dune which gathers sweepings) does not suit these kings because they have left their people starving. A king is distinguished from all his people as having moral perfection – somebody who people can revere and trust and who fills their hearts with happiness.

The use of symbols, signs and images are the most important source I have applied in analyzing the seven poems. I have also identified the cultural material Raditladi uses in his poems which are irony, exaggeration, sorrow, warning, fantasy and celebration.

The use of the above sources enables the reader to understand, identify, and interpret the message the poet wants to convey. This gives the reader of the poem intellectual satisfaction and the means to unearth the hidden meaning of the poem, interpret the ideas and emotions of what the poet really wanted to reveal, and how he felt when he presented the poem to the reader.

In the conclusions all seven poems will be linked together.

Chapter 4

CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this study was to define a semiotics of poetry, to analyse Raditladi's seven poems, based on Riffaterre's and Lotman's theories, and also to describe how cultural elements are transformed in Raditladi's poetry.

The analysis of these poems highlights the big contribution that a semiotic approach to the study of poetry can make to the understanding of Raditladi's poetry. In Raditladi's seven poems the use of symbols and the development of matrices by means of different variants explores the indirections that generate semiotic equivalents. The images and the ideas found in the seven poems are mourning, belonging, thanksgiving, longing, faking power, tombstones and warning. The symbols Raditladi uses suggest the importance of revealing meaning and communicating with his readers. Symbols assist the reader of the poems to construct a meaningful understanding of the poems themselves but also of the links the poems have to each other. By using symbols and indirections the poems do not so much express the ideas and emotions of the speaker and the hidden meanings behind the signs, but rather take the reader on fascinating journeys of meaning generation.

Raditladi's use of cultural symbols in his poems indicates that semiotic studies are cultural processes of communication where ideas and emotions are expressed not directly but by instilling something in the mind of the reader. Symbols are word objects and even customs that carry particular meanings that are only recognised by those who share the culture. The seven poems

describe the different forms that Raditladi uses in his collection of poems, like wishes, reports, praise and laments.

In the first poem "Loso" (Death) the speaker learns about the death of a beloved one. The pain and sorrow that befell the speaker cannot be described by the use of everyday language. The pain caused the speaker's marrow to melt and the earth to spin. These signs reveal how the speaker reacted to the terrible news of the death. The speaker uses irony to say his "marrow melted" - no marrow can melt. The real pain that the speaker felt was hopelessness. In this poem Raditladi uses traditional Batswana cultural material to underline the destructive and disruptive power of death.

The second poem "Motlhabani" (Soldier) has a link to the first poem because it also describes a death – the death of a soldier who died on the battlefield. The soldier was regarded as half-god by his people, who believed that he had the power to give them everlasting life, but because death is above everybody he was killed on the battlefield. The soldier was powerful but he could not defeat death, he died like everyone else. The burial of the soldier lacked the performance of rituals; there was no slaughtering of a cow, so his body was not covered with cow-hide, he was laid in the grave naked. No tombstone was erected as a shield was put on his grave, but that did not bear his name.

In his work Raditladi creates different signs and variants for sorrow, power and wishful thinking. The use of indirection points out images that assist the reader of these poems to create and construct the significance of the poems and the links the poems have with each other.

The indirections used in the poem "Loso" (Death) reveals the overwhelming power of death to all. Death does not choose; it strikes everybody, anytime and everywhere. This is also indicated in "Motlhabani" (soldier) who was regarded as half-god by his people who had the belief that he had the power

of giving them everlasting life but he also died. These two poems have a link because they show that death cannot be avoided.

"Fatshe la Batswana" (Batswana land) and "Tshwanologo" (Defamiliarization) share the same images because the speaker's wishes are only in his dreams. The modern civilization does not allow people to isolate themselves by clinging to their traditional beliefs which add no value to their lives. Hunting in the traditional sense is hardly possible today in South Africa and wild animals are kept safe in places like zoos and game reserves. To wish for traditional attire made from animal skins is impossible because we live with different ethnic groups who do not share our Batswana culture. To wear clothes that reveal parts of your body, in this modern lifestyle will make a Motswana feel very uncomfortable amongst other cultural people of other cultures.

These two poems reveal that Raditladi is concerned about Batswana people who still want to practice and cling to their outdated culture. He indicates to them to set aside their dreams of the past and to transform their traditional culture into modern life.

"Tau" (Lion) and "Baboki ba dikgosi" (Praisers of kings) share the same images of power. Raditladi indicates that kings are associated with a lion and traditionally kings are given power by their subjects to rule. The legitimate king exercises his power to rule his subjects with love and respect. But these two poems show that power can be abused. This creates a negative perception in other nations that Batswana kings are greedy and do not defend their people but oppress them. One can deduce that the misuse of the kings' power has created dissatisfaction, fear and disrespect in the community who used to honour and respect them.

The poem "Ngwaga o mošwa" (New Year) is not very clear about the speaker's emotions. The images Raditladi uses in this poem seem contradictory, because they do not explain the speaker's real wishes. This is

compounded by writing that "children grieve", whereas in the Batswana culture children enjoy the passing year by shooting fire crackers, dancing and singing because they imagine that everybody is happy to welcome the new year. But the speaker seems to have mixed feelings. Will the year bring sorrow to the speaker or does he still want the passing year to remain because he says "he wants to go back and eat sour berries"? The images are indirectly used in these poems because what the speaker really longs for is to see the past moving away and modern life and times taking charge. The speaker gives special thanks to God because He has spared his life. He is still alive and he is going to see the new year.

Raditladi's poems portray the enjoyment, warmth, security and feelings of belonging in life. On the other hand the poems also deal with death, deep inner feelings of sorrow and longing that the speaker encounters when he has lost what he loved most. While the speaker of a poem foregrounds what he wants to convey, the reader imagines and reproduces the real meaning of the message which is often expressed indirectly.

Raditladi's seven poems support the idea that symbols, images and indirections provide vital semiotic clues to a poem's final significance. The speaker also takes different stances towards traditional Batswana cultural material, like irony, exaggeration, sorrow and celebration.

4.1 RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of this research I have a firm belief that indirections and images reveal the meaning of poems with ease, because the language of poetry is difficult to interpret. I am convinced that if Raditladi's poems are studied from the viewpoint of symbols, the hidden meaning of the poems will be communicated better. I do not imagine that the Batswana people will go back to their old roots because everybody is moving into the present life. This study should teach the Batswana people to accept change because going back to their old roots is impossible.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary source

RADITLADI, L.D. 1984. *Sefalana sa menate*. Johannesburg: Educum.

Secondary sources

COHEN, P. 1985. *The symbolic construction of community*.
London: Routledge.

CULLER, J. 1981. *The pursuit of signs*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

ELAM, K. 1988. *The semiotics of theatre and drama*. London and New
York: Routledge.

HAWKES, T. 1977. *Structuralism and semiotics*. London: Methuen.

HOFSTEDE, G. 1991. Levels of culture (In Hofstede, G. *Culture and
organisations: Software of the mind: Intercultural
cooperation and its importance for survival*. London:
Harper Collins).

LESETE, M. 2000. Symbolism in D.P.S. Monyaise's novels *Omphile Umphi
Modise, Marara, Ngaka mosadi mooka, Bogosi Kupe* and
Go ša baori. Potchefstroom: PU for CHE (Dissertation,
M.A.)

LOTMAN, J. 1977. *The structure of the artistic text*. Michigan: University of
Michigan Press.

- LOTMAN, Y.M. 1990. *Universe of the mind. A semiotic theory of culture.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- LOTMAN, M. 2002. Atomistic versus semiotic sign systems. *Studies* 30.2.
- LUCID, D. 1977. *Soviet semiotics.* Baltimore: Indiana University Press.
- MANYAAPELO, K.P.N. 1998. Raditladi's use of metaphors in selected poems. Potchefstroom: PU for CHE (Dissertation, M.A.).
- MATJILA, D.S. 1995. An intertextual analysis of D.M. Mothoagae's poetry. Potchefstroom: PU for CHE (Dissertation, M.A.).
- MATUMO, Z.I. 2005. *Setswana English Setswana dictionary.* Gaborone, Botswana: Macmillan Botswana.
- MOLOI, A.J. 1968. A comparative study of poetry of Ntsane and Khaketla. Pretoria: Unisa (Dissertation, M.A.).
- MURRAY, C. ed. 1999. *Encyclopaedia of literary critics and criticism.* Vol. 2 L-Z. London: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers.
- NOTH, W. 1990. *Handbook of semiotics.* Indiana: Indiana University Press.
- RELYEA, S.L. 1976. *Signs, systems and meanings: A contemporary semiotic reading.* Middleton, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press.
- RIFFATERRE, M. 1978. *Semiotics of poetry.* Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press.

- RIFFATERRE, M. 1983. *Text production*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- SCHOLES, R. 1974. *Structuralism in literature*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.
- SCHOLES, R. 1982. *Semiotics and interpretation*. New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press.
- SELDEN, R. & WIDDOWSON, P. 1993. *A reader's guide to contemporary literary theory*. New York: Harvester Press.
- SILLARS, M.O. 1991. *Message, Meaning and Culture: Approaches to communication criticism*. University of Utah: Harper Collins Publishers.
- SWANEPOEL, C.F. 1997. *Modern Drama*. Pretoria : UNISA.
- THOMPSON, E.M. 1977. Jurij Lotman's literary theory and its context. *The Slavic and East European Journal* 2(2): 225-238.
- VAN STADEN, P.T. 1985. Beeldspraak in *Sefalana sa menate*. Potchefstroom: PU for CHE (Thesis – Ph.D).