

## A.C. HODZA, CREATIVE INTERPRETER OF SHONA TRADITIONAL POETRY: A PERSONAL TRIBUTE

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The development of Shona as an academic discipline owes much to the experience, research and publications of the late Mr Aaron C. Hodza M.A. (Honoris Causa). At his death in 1983 he was Research Fellow in African Languages in the Department of that name in the University of Zimbabwe. His work, extending over some twenty years, lay mainly in the fields of traditional poetry and culturally defined speech styles. Of poetry he was not only a collector, but also a gifted composer, able within the tradition to recognise and evaluate poetry of many different genres. These are distinguished and exemplified in the three collections he compiled in order to share and perpetuate a heritage in danger of being lost.

The academic recognition of Shona in its homeland, as a language worthy of study and development, came to pass in 1959 with the creation of a Chair in African Languages in the new University College of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. A grant from the Ford Foundation in response to an application from the college had made this development possible (Gelfand 1978:145).

The academic recognition of Shona as a group of related dialects close enough to allow of a common written form and a future literary development was also due to an American grant, this time from the Carnegie Corporation, in 1929. The recognition of this underlying unity was the result of a survey of the Shona dialects conducted by the late Professor C.M. Doke to whom progress in Shona studies will always be indebted (Doke 1931). As an example of the progress made on the foundation he laid, we have witnessed this year (1997), a mere sixty five years since Doke's work, and a short lifetime in the history of a language, the publication of the first completely monolingual Shona dictionary (Chimhundu (ed.) 1996). According to a review which heralded its launch on

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ed. Rosalie Finkler. Pretoria: UNISA Press,  
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## NARRATION AS ART IN THE NORTHERN SOTHO NARRATIVE: FROM ORAL TO WRITTEN

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### INTRODUCTION

For quite some time now literary criticism and philosophy have been concerned with what I may call "the death of the author". In post-structural criticism, for instance, every text is regarded as an intertext of another text, and thus as belonging to the intertextual. However, even the post-structuralists cannot deny that insofar as there is a narrative, there must be someone narrating it. Every narrative text, therefore, should be perceived as that text in which a narrative agent, that is a narrator, tells a story.

In the primary oral narrative the narrator is a visible, fictive "I", a storyteller who interferes in his narration whenever the desire to do so arises or where necessary; who even participates in the action of the narrative of a character. In the written narrative the narrator is not a person, but the linguistic subject, that is a function which expresses itself in the language that constitutes the text. The "I" of the written narrative, which is for the most part invisible, is "that agent which utters the linguistic signs which constitute the text" (Bal 1988:120). Tzvetan Todorov (1970:133) calls this agent the "poetic personality".

It has become commonplace in literary theory that it is essential not to confuse author and narrator. Wayne Booth, in *The rhetoric of fiction* (1967), even found it necessary to introduce the concept of the implied author as a concession to the arguments against the request for the intentions of the empirical author. The term would enable him to discuss and analyse the ideological and moral stances of a narrative text without having to refer directly to a biographical author. For the purposes of this inquiry I shall follow Mieke Bal and others, and stick to *narrator* in the written narrative as that

agent which utters the linguistic signs that constitute the text, and not the biographical author.

For analysis of oral narrative material I shall use folktales collected from various tradition-bearers in the Northern Sotho-speaking area and preserved in written form in Makgamatha's *Keleketla* (1990). It must be noted from the onset that even if only one pronoun denoting masculinity is used throughout this article, the storytellers who served as informants in this inquiry were both male and female. For the written narrative I shall use material from Matsepe's novel, *Megokgo ya bjoko* (1969).

## THE NARRATOR-PERFORMER

In the primary oral narrative the narrator, who is the visible storyteller or narrator-performer, simply spins a tale, unbothered by considerations of form: "There was a tale ..." he begins, and then proceeds to narrate the tale to his audience. He describes the characters whenever it becomes necessary for general effect, often speculating on what the characters think and feel, as well as describing their action. For instance, in the tale *Mošemanane wa dišo* (Makgamatha, 1990:76-80) the narrator-performer pauses to describe the action of the hero and heroine, whose whole bodies are covered in sores, to prepare the audience's minds to understand why the community treats them as outcasts later in the story, fearing that their disease might spread. He says:

*Ba mo hweditše; motho le kgaetšediagwe. Dišo tša gona ga go sa na le ka sekgala se tee. Mebele ye ya bona ke dišo fela. Ba re batho ba ba fedilego mo, ba bolailwe ke tšona dišo tše. Go dio šala bona ba le babedi.* (1990:76) (They found him; the man and his sister. There is no part of their bodies that is not covered with sores. They say the people who have died here all died of these very sores. The two are the only people who survived.)

He also interjects comments and ideas of his own whenever he feels like it, although this does not occur on a large scale in the Northern Sotho *dinonwane*. Rather than be bothered by considerations of form, the narrator-performer tries to establish himself as the narrator-creator of the tale he is narrating. His ability to harmonize the individual (represented by himself) with the social and contemporary (represented by the audience) and with the historical (represented by the traditional tale) will determine the success of the performance, and consequently the survival of folklore (Başgöz, 1986:12).

The creativity of the narrator-performer, however, is limited by the traditionality of the tale in that he works within a tradition which imposes certain "structural patterns and plot-clichés" upon him (Scheub 1975:360).

Since all the events in a primary oral narrative are deemed to have occurred in remote or past time, the narrator-performer is called upon by tradition to present them along certain fixed and predictable lines. The telling or retelling is obviously done by someone who, although he was not an eyewitness to the events narrated, nevertheless comes to possess the information on the events. The invitation to the audience to listen to a tale, *E rile e le nonwane*, (There was a tale), is sufficient evidence of this.

Although the narrator-performer is the main source of information on all the events in the tale, he still does not exercise all the powers of omniscience. The limits of his knowledge do not extend beyond the actions and the events that can be seen and heard. Thus, he does not include as recorded observation anything about anything that could not have been seen or heard in action.

These conditions are different in the written narrative. The narrator takes us wherever he wishes, peers inside the minds and hearts of his characters at will and tells us what they are thinking or feeling. Although most narrators do not claim the authority of the eyewitness in their narratives (the rarity of the so-called first-person novels in Northern Sotho is sufficient evidence) as omniscient narrators they stand in a godlike position above their characters, knowing what each of them thinks and feels, and often allowing us to overhear conversations or "catch a character unawares in a way denied to any participant in the story" (Raban 1968:33). Such omniscient narrators usually display familiarity with the character's innermost thoughts and feelings, knowledge of the past, the present and the future of the world they narrate about, and the awareness of what is happening in several homes and villages at a given time. However, for thematic purposes, the narrator often chooses to limit his omniscience or we may have the same anonymous narrating agency, but through different focalizers. It appears that in matters of a controversial nature the tendency is for the main narrator to hand over to secondary or tertiary narrators, so that we end up with a narrative with more than one narrator. When this is done, the secondary narrator (who may be a character that participates in the *fabula* as an actor) becomes a reliable narrator "whose rendering of the story and commentary on it the reader is supposed to take as authoritative account of the fictional truth" (Rimmon-Kenan, 1988:100).

## MODES OF NARRATION

The narrator in the primary oral narrative, that is the storyteller, often interrupts his narrative with individual remarks aimed at explaining some archaic words and expressions (which may not be understood any more by his audience), or instructing his listeners on various topics such as religion and folk

medicine, or describing the meaning of certain customs, traditions and rituals which are given in the tale. Such individual remarks, referred to as "digressions", are cross-cultural folklore phenomena. Başgöz (1986:6) observes, and correctly too, that despite the significance of these digressions in reflecting the individuality of the narrator, and in the very structure of the narrative, they have not been taken seriously by folklorists. They have not always been regarded as part of the so-called text, and have thus not been recorded and published.

In the written narrative one comes across many narratives which are interspersed with myths, biographical information, and elaborate descriptions of objects, scenes and personages; all of these can be regarded as digression. According to Başgöz (op. cit.), digressions in general can be divided into three categories: (1) explanatory and instructional; (2) opinion-related and communicative; and (3) self-reproaching and confessional. However, only the first two categories appear to characterize the Northern Sotho written narrative, on the average. The last category occurs rarely, and when it does, it usually occurs in those sections of the narrative where the narrator adopts a first-person narrating stance. In this inquiry I shall concentrate on only the *opinion-related and communicative digressions*.

These digressions enjoy a greater usage in the Northern Sotho written narrative than the other two categories. By means of these digressions the narrator often expresses displeasure of social and political tendencies, the operation of social institutions, and so forth, or reveals his own feelings, ideas and values related to the events being recounted. These digressions take the form of reliable commentary, and can range over any aspect of human experience as well as be related to the primary oral narrative in innumerable ways and degrees (Booth 1967:155).

Sometimes the narrator's reliable commentary becomes an isolated rhetoric, with the narrator in his own person doing what he can, "with all the stops pulled, to work us into a proper mood before his story begins" (Booth, 1967:201). Then the digression, which often assumes the form of philosophizing, functions as a mood-setting commentary which prepares us psychologically for the events that are to follow, which may be unusual in contemporary society.

The narrative of O.K. Matsepe's *Megokgo ya bjoko* (1969), for instance, opens with the following deep philosophizing comment that properly sets our mood for the intricacies that characterise the entire narrative:

*Re llela go phela, re llišwa ke go phela; re llela go phala ba bangwe, re llišwa ke go phalwa ke ba bangwe; re llela tšwelopele, re llišwa ke*

*tšwelopele, ka ge nnete gona bophelo e le peapeano yeo go yona mang le mang a ratago go ba tšhia ya letšatši le lengwe le le lengwe. Re llela go buša, re llišwa ke go bušwa; re llela go huma, re llišwa ke bodiidi, gobane nnete gona se sekaone se ka ganwa ke wa kgopolo ya mohuta mang?*  
(1969:1;31;45;58)

(We yearn to live, we complain about living; we yearn to be better than others, we complain that others are better than we; we yearn for progress, we complain about progress, for indeed life is a race in which everyone would like to be a winner of every day. We yearn to rule, we complain about being governed; we yearn to be rich, we complain about poverty, for indeed, of what thinking will he be who declines something better?)

The narrator philosophizes about the natural desire of man, not only to *live*, but to lead a *better* life than others, to be *more* progressive than others, to be revered *more* than others, to be *more* powerful than others, and not only to combat poverty, but to be *wealthier* than others. The narrator's intrusion right at the opening of the narrative already implicitly outlines the source of conflict in the first narrative.

To show that the intrusion is not inadvertent but deliberate, the narrator conjures up the same commentary, verbatim, each time an event that verifies this philosophy is narrated. For instance, on the occasion of the death of Lefehlo's father, a king revered by all the neighbouring kings, all the neighbouring kings come to pay their last tribute to him, except Nthumule. All of them observe a period of mourning by suspending initiation schools, prohibiting feasts and the tilling of their lands, and so forth, except Nthumule. Indeed Nthumule makes sure that all that is regarded as taboo during such times is done – and very conspicuously too – among his subjects. At this point the narrator brings up the commentary (1969:31) as if to refresh the narratee's memory.

The same commentary is used again (1969:45) to digress in the narrative of the event in which the supremacy of Lefehlo's medicine-men over Nthumule's is demonstrated by a flight of pied crows that pick up all the divining bones of the latter and fly away (1969:44). Again, when the two kings prepare for battle the narrator digresses with the same philosophizing commentary (1969:58), to remind us that life is one long struggle for power. In fact, the entire narrative is characterized by dichotomies of goodness and evil, strength and weakness, friendship and animosity; and the various binary oppositions are mediated by the arrival of the Voortrekkers on the scene towards the close of the narrative.

Just as the narrative opens with a philosophizing commentary to set our mood

for the coming contraries, it closes with another, to assert that the binary oppositions have been mediated to a resolution, thus:

... *mme go ratega bjang ge bana ba motho ba dutše gammogo mme ba ratana etšwe pele ba be ba melelane meno a ka godimo?* (1969:103)  
 (... and how lovely is it when the children of man live together and love one another even though previously they had turned against one another?)

This closing philosophizing commentary leaves us with no doubt that the initial mood-setting commentary was not in any way inadvertent but deliberate, and had a direct bearing on the object of narration.

Another type of digression, related to the one discussed here, also characterizes the Northern Sotho narrative, and thus deserves mention even if in passing. This consists mainly of incorporation of traditional folklore forms (such as proverbs, myths, praise poetry and quotations from primary oral sources) into the narrative. In these digressions the narrator himself does not directly reveal his own feelings, ideas, values or comments, but lets a traditional form express them in stead (Başgöz, 1986:8). It is remarkable that when these digressions come in the form of proverbs, they are often introduced by means of the phrase, *moswana o re*, or even *mogologolo o re*, commonly meaning, "the old people, the ancestors, say". This can be regarded as the narrator's indirect manifestation of self. In these contexts, the narrator is not the creator of this folklore form, as its message and form have been handed down by the tradition (as evidenced by the reference to *moswana* or *mogologolo*); but it is significant is the fact that he is the selector. He selects and links the traditional lore to the first narrative and assigns it a specific function.

We note that digressions in general are about something clearly dramatized in the main narrative. In a digression the narrator tries to make clear to the narratee the nature of the focalized object itself, by giving the narratee the hard facts, by establishing a world of norms, or by relating the *fabula* in the narrative to general truths. Through digressions, the narrator explains the meaning of a motif or episode and expresses his emphasis, understanding, and personal interpretation, either directly or indirectly. Furthermore, in the digressions the narrator addresses the narratee directly, changing the third-person narration into the first, as it were. During the narration of the first narrative the father, religious or traditional man, remains silent; however, internal or external stimuli, from time to time, activate these other selves and let them come to the fore, thus interrupting the narration.

The discussion above may lead one to conclude that in the Northern Sotho narrative the narrators frequently speak directly and authoritatively to us even

where one would expect them to maintain a certain silence, leaving their characters to work out their destinies or tell their own stories. That cannot be further away from the truth, for in the Northern Sotho narrative a considerable balance is struck between what is related and what is represented directly in dramatic representations and in the presentation of the thoughts of a character. The narrators employ, each in their own way, certain dramatic devices, which become characteristic of their style, to present the narrative object. We shall examine some of those devices below.

## PRESENTATION OF THE NARRATIVE OBJECT

One characteristic of the Northern Sotho narrative, from oral to written, is the use of **fantasy**. By fantasy here I refer to the unrealistic story, that is, one that transcends the bounds of known reality. Such a story conjures up a strange and marvellous world in the mind of the narratee; it introduces strange powers and occult forces into the world of ordinary reality. It introduces human characters into a strange and marvellous world where the ordinary laws of nature are suspended, where the landscape and its creatures are unfamiliar, or where familiar creatures perform unfamiliar acts. Such fantasy is commonly associated with, and is used abundantly in primary oral narratives, especially folktales (*dinonwane*).

In fact, the *nonwane* is a story of fantasy. Its opening formula, *E rile e le nonwane* ... (There was a tale ...), serves to set the mood for the start of the fantastic event, to prepare the audience for adventures, to warn the audience that what follows is fiction and does not call for their belief. The opening formula introduces the audience to the fantastic world of folktales which has its own logic, its own laws, and its own reality which differs from that of everyday life. It introduces them to

a world where the unexpected and the magical are commonplace, a world where the strong are overcome by the weak, a world where the human being, the animals and other natural objects are unified (Makgamatha, 1991:46).

Thus in *Kgolomodumo* (Makgamatha, 1990:63) the audience are prepared for willing suspension of disbelief in the narrative of a single huge animal that swallows all the people of a village, save one old woman, together with all their cattle, sheep and goats. The same old woman takes instructions from a bird to get into a calabash, which returns through the rear of the monster each time the monster swallows it, until the monster abandons it. The same bird gives this old woman three eggs and a small stick to strike them with and bring forth a

boy and two dogs. This boy, with the help of the dogs, tracks down the monster and kills it to release all the people and animals from its belly. One cannot imagine all these acts taking place in the reality of our everyday life.

In the folktale world of fantasy the unification of human beings, animals and other natural objects is commonplace, for human characters easily infiltrate the animal world, acting like the animals and speaking their language, as in *Tau ya moroko dimpeng* (Makgamatha 1990:34–38). In this tale, a man in quest of a lion's liver to cure his dying wife dons a lion's skin and joins a pride of lions in the jungle, where he patiently waits for a safe opportunity to kill one of them and remove its liver. In addition to the lion's skin, the man carries, concealed on his body, some dried ground nuts to help him imitate the lions grinding their teeth, and some red ochre for the blood-spitting contests. All these initially enable him, even if for a short time only, to find acceptance in the pride as just another lion.

Similarly the animals, with or without transformations, have the ability to conceal their animal characteristics, re-enter the human world and interact successfully with human characters, as in *Moselapše* and *O jele ngwana a re ke mmutla* (Makgamatha 1990:48–55 and 56–60 respectively). In both these tales fabulous animals assume the appearance of human beings and approach the heroines with the motive of trickery. Their concealed animal characteristics are only revealed after their trickery has been successfully completed, thus bringing about what one may call, to use Propp's terms, the villain's Exposure and Punishment, especially in the former tale, *Moselapše*. In the latter, *O jele ngwana a re ke mmutla*, the heroine, who had given her baby to strange "children" to look after while she was hoeing the field, makes a shocking discovery only after the villains have killed and eaten the baby, sharing the "meat" with her. The narrator-performer describes what the heroine sees, when it is time to bring the baby back, as follows:

*Ga go sa le batho; ke meselana fela. Ke moka meselana yela e namile e eme, e a opela* (Makgamatha 1990:59).

(They are no longer human beings, but only little tails. Then those tails stood up and sang.)

With their mission accomplished, the characters have now been transformed back into fabulous animals. In fact, in the reality of the folktale world of fantasy, even if the animals retain the characteristics of their species, they "think and act like human beings in a human setting" (Makgamatha, 1991:28).

In the written narrative, fantasy, like other elements of fiction, is often employed merely for its own sake or to communicate an important insight, such as the temporal or spatial setting of the narrative. An element of fantasy

may be employed in a narrative simply for its own strangeness, for thrills, for surprise, or to illuminate the normal world of our experience. As in the primary oral narrative, we approach the written narrative with willing suspension of disbelief, for we understand that the narrator begins by saying, "Let us suppose ...", as it were.

One does not encounter such a well-defined use of fantasy in the Northern Sotho narrative on a large scale. In most cases the fantasy that is employed usually accompanies the magical powers of the traditional medicine-men. For instance, after the disappearance of Leilane from King Nthumule's in Matsepe's *Megokgo ya bjoko*, all the medicine-men are assembled to divine his whereabouts (1969:43–44). While they are examining the manner in which their thrown divining bones have fallen, a cloud appears from the east, followed by a shooting star in broad daylight. While the cloud is hovering over their heads, a flight of pied crows appears from nowhere, which swallow all the divining bones before flying away to the west, following the cloud. The miracle is apparently the work of Phethedi, King Lefehlo's greatest medicine man.

As I said earlier in this essay, such elements of fantasy help the narrator to create the desired temporal-spatial setting for the narrative. In this particular narrative the story is set in a traditional African society, at a time when a king had to prove his paramountcy over the other kings by defeating them in battle. This society also upholds the belief in the magical powers of medicine-men, which the kings also depend on for their victory in such battles.

Another characteristic of the Northern Sotho narrative is the use of *humour and satire*. The primary oral narrative may be regarded by some researchers as drab repetition of what has been heard from generation to generation, but when it is handled by a tradition-bearer with a good narrating style, then it is transformed into a fascinating form of entertainment that keeps the audience, both old and young, spellbound from the beginning of the narration to its end. Use of such narrative devices as humour and satire represents part of the oral style, which is characterised by the use of intonation of voice and bodily gestures, and facial as well as other expressions to achieve the desired effect. Thus, to read a folktale is not necessarily to experience it as one does when watching its live performance.

For instance, one may miss the humour (perhaps the satire too) when reading the tale *Mabutle le Tau* (Makgamatha, 1990:1–5), especially where Hare descends to the cooking pots of meat after securing Lion's tail to the roof of the hut they are erecting. To experience it, one needs to watch and listen to the storyteller as he goes through the story (to the accompaniment of voice intonation and bodily gestures). The audience is very amused by the



unsuspecting Lion who speaks with an authoritative voice, and the knowing Hare who fakes humility in the dialogue:

*Tau a re: "Mabutle, eya go topa mola. O se ke wa ba wa topa ye kgolo ya go tshotshoma makhura."*

*Mabutle ge a fihla mola dipitšeng o re: "A ke tope ye, Rakgolo?"*

*Tau o re: "Aowa, e sego yeo!"*

*Mabutle a e bušetša.*

*"Ke tope ye, Rakgolo?"*

*"Aowa! Ke ya Dimo yeo!"*

*A e bušetša; a topa ya lerapo.*

*"Ke tope ye, Rakgolo?"*

*"Aa! Yeo o ka no e ja."*

*Mabutle o a e bušetša.* (Makgamatha, 1990:3)

(Lion said, "Hare, go and take a piece. You must not take a large, fatty one." When Hare reaches the pots he says, "May I have this one, Grandfather?" Lion says, "No, not that one." Hare puts it back in the pot.

"May I have this one, Grandfather?"

"No! That one is for the Great One!" He puts it back in the pot and selects one bony piece. "May I have this one, Grandfather?"

"Ah! That one you may have with pleasure." Hare puts it back in the pot.)

James Ngugi comments as follows on the use of satire:

The satirist sets himself certain standards and criticizes society when and where it departs from these norms. He invites us to assume his standards and share the moral indignation which moves him to pour derision and ridicule on society's failings. He corrects through painful, sometimes malicious laughter (1969:56).

In Maisepe's *Megokgo ya bjoko*, for instance, the narrator can be seen in a traditional and social setting, pouring "derision and ridicule" on society's total belief in traditional medicine-men and ancestor worship. He gives an account of a medicine-man who is called to attend to a woman suffering from tuberculosis (1969:36–41). With utmost confidence he demands a goat to slaughter, whose hide he wraps around the patient – to drain the sickness out of her. When that and the concoction of medicines fail he demands a cow to be slaughtered, whose dung should be smeared on the floor of the patient's hut. As if this is not enough, one of the patient's relatives claims that their ancestors gave instructions for the patient's cure in a vision she has had. Their uncle, Rathinyane, must slaughter a cow, and the patient must then be smeared with

its fresh dung. Rathinyane's insolent retort clearly ridicules the logic of the message, for he says:

*Le tla nkwa banabešu, ditaba tše di a mmakatša. Go mmakatša ga tšona ke gore batswadi ba ka ge ba hlokofala – le kgomo e tee ga se ba ntlogelela yona ka gore le a tseba gore di ile tša ya kae, gomme ke makala gore kgomo yeo mme a e bolelago – o ra ye nna ke tšwago go e tšea kae* (1969:38)

(You will hear me, my people, these matters astonish me. My astonishment is caused by the fact that when my parents died – they left me not even a single cow, for you all know what happened to them [the cattle], therefore I wonder at the cow that my late mother is referring to – where does she think I got that one from?)

Thus, according to Rathinyane, it does not make sense that his late mother can expect him to have a cow for slaughter, when she knows (or is supposed to know?) that when she died she had left him none. In his own voice, the narrator queries the logic of the message in this account thus: How can the ancestors demand a cow when they left none behind at the time of their death? How can the ancestors suddenly show concern over their daughter-in-law's health, when they never saw eye to eye during their lifetime? If they know where to find whatever is needed urgently, why do the ancestors take their message to someone else far away? It is clear that those who claim the ancestors sent them to Rathinyane are merely jealous of his cattle, and seek to find a way to reduce their number (1969:39).

As far as traditional medicine-men are concerned, in this narrative the narrator seems to have no problem. Even though humorous accounts of their queer methods of healing patients are given, they are, naturally, sometimes successful and sometimes unsuccessful. For instance, Maphutha's son, who is known for his ability to redirect medicinal traps from his patients to the people who set them, successfully heals a sick woman by strapping a black cat on her back and then beating it with a stick, whereupon it scratches and bites the patient, who runs and unfastens the cat. Thus freed, the cat climbs into a tree and cries, trembling, before it drops dead on the ground. The patient becomes instantly well. Impressed by his success, the villagers bring him another patient with the same sickness. But this time, instead of climbing into a tree, the freed cat attacks and kills the medicine man (1969:50–56).

Even though the narrator often gives credit to the traditional medicine-men, he also pours derision and ridicule on society's indiscriminate belief in any stranger who claims to be a medicine man. As a result of such belief, some people enrich themselves at the expense of the unsuspecting public, like the

couple who tell a man that a living being buried in his yard is depriving his family of peaceful sleep at night (1969:61–65). After promising to uproot the evil the following morning, they retire with him, only to sneak out during the night and bury a living tortoise they have brought along in his cattle kraal. About such deception, the narrator says:

*Go tseba mang le mang gore ga go se se re forago go swana le ditaola. Motho o tla a rwaleletše dithebele le ditaola, a re go fihla go wena a go botše ge e le motho yo a ka go fago lešwalo leo ka lona o tla bolayago mabele, lešaka la tlala dikgomo le dihuswane, etšwe yena a se natšo tšona tšeo.* (1969:61).

(Everyone knows that nothing deceives us as easily as divining bones. A man comes carrying a pouch of divining bones, and tells you that he can give you a lucky-charm through which you will have a good harvest and fill your kraals with cattle and small stock, when he himself does not have any of those.)

In such narratives we see the satirist narrator in his social setting. Other narrators, on the other hand, may look at contemporary South Africa and do the same with their narratives. In those narratives we see the narrators in their social as well as political settings. They often reduce all conflicts to two polarities, where white is wealth, power and privilege, and black is poverty, labour and servitude. However, I do not have space to elaborate on, and illustrate this in the present article.

## CONCLUSION

Although the narrator in the primary oral narrative has his representation of events limited by the nature of the narrative to the actions and events that can be seen or heard, his counterpart in the written narrative is able to take us wherever he wishes, including inside the minds and hearts of the characters to show us their thoughts and feelings. A considerable balance is struck, however, between the narrator's "telling" and "showing", for he does not become fully dramatized by referring to himself as "I" in the narrative, although he is sometimes dramatized so subtly that an unobservant reader hardly notices. Interestingly the narrator in the written narrative often hands over the narration of events that handle controversial matters to tertiary narrators who participate in the *fabula* as actors, and he thus assumes a position of neutrality while he allows the characters to speak for him. However, certain internal or external stimuli often activate this narrator's other selves to come to the fore and reveal his feelings related to the events being recounted, by means of

digressions. When this happens, such devices as fantasy, humour and satire can help the narrator to conceal his "telling" in the narrative.

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