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The concept of an owl depicted in 'Makxothlo' [The Owls]

Abstract:

This article, argues that in his poem, 'Makxothlo' [The Owls] which is one of the shortest praise poems in Sepedi, Lekgothoane praises nature more than traditional leaders and tribes. He praises the importance of birds in the lives of people, focusing more on the owl's nature than on culture and tradition. According to Bapedi (a nation speaking Sepedi) tradition and culture, people associate the owls with the concept of death. Notwithstanding this, Lekgothoane confirms that the owl concept can also symbolize life. Therefore this concept is meaningful and significant in the lives of Bapedi. Lekgothoane tries to explain the term, the owls, so that it becomes a concept that surprises readers. The concept becomes alien in the minds of readers for the owls are no longer defined according to their custom and habit; they have been transformed into a species of living beings. Therefore readers start to observe Lekgothoane's intention about these owls. They are distinct from the owls the reader is familiar with. The poet employs paradox to interpret the symbolic meaning of the owls.*

** Sepedi is one the official languages of the Republic of South Africa.*

Introduction

Although an owl is a particular type of a bird, having its own customs and habits, its own way of hunting for food during the night, and so on, according to tradition and culture, people place it side by side with the concept of death. If an owl comes in the night and sits on top of the roof of the hut and hoots, then it is considered as an omen of death. As a result,

it is always associated with death, because it is seen as a messenger of death that also foreshadows misfortune. This is partly illustrated by Malebana (1979:30) when he recites his oral poem, *Leribiši* (An Owl) as follows (followed by literal translations throughout):

*Se re go kwa hiihi bošego,
Wa ngita mapai wa tšhaba le go gohlola;
Wa hloma eke ke sehlola ke a hlola,
Wa gopola gore mongwe o tlo tšewa ke phiri;
Aowa, ke a itshelela, ke inyakela magotlo.
[Do not hear the sound of an owl in the night,
And in fear pull the blankets over your head and cease coughing,
And think that I am an evildoer, who commits evil deeds,
And think that someone will die,
No, I am merely hunting for food; I am merely looking for mice.]*

An owl is feared because of these customary associations, especially regarding this type of bird. Although this ideology is not profoundly documented in our dictionaries, when the owl is talked about, this concept is immediately recognized in tradition; it is well-known by almost all Africans. It is for this reason that this concept is very significant in the lives of Bapedi. If the above poem is read critically it will be seen that the concept forms the basis of the type of education the author wishes to convey to the reader. Malebana's poem acknowledges the customary association of the owl with death, but it reinterprets the association, juxtaposing superstition with reading.

There are other South African nationalities such as the Afrikaners that compare an owl differently. When Merwe Scholtz (1975:14) examines one of Van Wyk Louw's poems – which talks about a person who committed suicide – he denotes that the poet portrays 'wyse vlieërs' [wise fliers]:

*Ons weet dat die uile in hulle fonkelende beraadslaging nie
voluit gepersonifiseer word nie – dit is in hulle hoedanigheid
van wyse vlieërs dat hulle sitting hou oor die dood van die
loper. Bloot die feit dat die loper vir hulle uit die lug val, is
genoegsaam aanduiding daarvan dat hulle die fout van alle
primitiewe sielkundiges maak.
[We know that the owls amidst their sparkling conversation
are not fully personified – it is in their capacity as wise flyers
that they have a meeting about the death of the
walker/runner. The mere fact that the walker falls from the
sky for them, is sufficient indication that they make (the
same mistake) as all primitive psychologists.]*

The in-depth investigation into the death and wisdom concepts above assists in the discussion, enabling us to comprehend what Lekgothoane describes vividly in words in his artistic work.

A rhetorical question that Lekgothoane employs in his poem confirms the fact that the owl concept indicates that these birds are wise. In this poem, the owls are confronted with a question. It is as if they will actually be able to answer the question for the narrator. This poetic language arrangement further indicates that these birds are not just mere ordinary owls – they are the wise birds that will respond positively to the question posed. The description of the concept, owls, accordingly needs more attention.

The second element that will receive our whole attention is the use of the concept of apostrophe in Lekgothoane's poem. Lekgothoane portrays this bird as follows:

*Makxothlo manyelaphaxong!
Mothla' pula o nyela kae?
[An owl crevice-sitter/excreter
When rain falls where do you excrete?]*

The first above metrical line focuses on a rhetorical device the apostrophe. Thus falls under the category of figures of speech, because it manifests itself in the form of word structures that accomplish certain stylistic effects. Abrams (1993:182) confirms that

An apostrophe is a direct and explicit address either to an absent person or to an abstract or nonhuman entity. Often the effect is of high formality or else of a sudden emotional impetus.

Abrams emphasises that an apostrophe aims to 'address'. Therefore, an apostrophe is a very important element of poetic discourse. It is, here, analyzed under the following sub-headings:

- (a) Apostrophe vis-à-vis praise poem
- (b) Apostrophe vis-à-vis personification
- (c) Apostrophe vis-à-vis viewpoint

Apostrophe and praise poem

An apostrophe is an essential characteristic of the traditional praise poem. Groenewald (1980:24–25) stresses this point when investigating Ramaila and Ramokgopa's praise poems. When examining one of Ramokgopa's traditional praise poems he states:

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Die gespreksgenoot tree in die geval as toehoorder en waarnemer op, maar nie as aangesprokene nie; dié rol kry die saak of persoon onder bespreking aan hom toegesê, en as sodanig word hy binne hierdie geselskap veronderstel: daar word trouens nie oor hom nie, maar met hom gepraat.

[The conversation participant in this case acts as healer and bystander but not as addressee; this role goes to the issue or person allocated to him, and as such he is assumed within this conversation: in fact the conversation is not about him but with him.]

In this way, the addressed is transformed into the addressee; the importance of the topic immediately emerges, and ultimately the atmosphere becomes clear because it focuses on the addressee. Lekgothoane's use of this device focuses his intention on the owls to reveal its natural habitat and nature. The concept, owls, starts to embrace characteristics which are no longer only related to a bird. For this reason other investigators associate apostrophe with other figures of speech, namely personification.

Apostrophe and personification

When De Klerk (1975:536) argues about apostrophe, he associates it with personification. They are related. He categorically states that, '*is nou verwant aan persoonifikasie*' [is narrowly related to personification], because an abstract entity is being addressed in the form of beauty or love. In this poem, 'Makxothlo', the owls are being addressed and, in addition, are questioned to respond on their own behaviour.

These owls are no longer considered just birds, but rational beings. Lekgothoane employs these birds (owls) as symbols of nature. That is, the owls represent everything that can be addressed by a person.

Apostrophe and viewpoint

When this poem is closely analyzed, the reader will notice that Lekgothoane makes use of a narrator who converses with the owls. The reader perceives the owls and everything related thereto through the eyes of the persona's point of view. It may be said that the reader employs flat point of view. When Abrams (1993:167) defines this, he states categorically that

The narrator tells the story in the third person, but stays inside the confines of what is experienced, thought, and felt by a single character (or at most by very few characters) within the story.

Confirming this, Henry James (Abrams, 1993:167) argues that this account of an event is usually told by a selected character who brings it into focus. What James talks about is the fact that incidents and actions are produced as they are progressing according to how they are read and narrated. This enables the reader to display his/her experience to understand certain things in the development of his/her total knowledge and/or feeling.

Accordingly, this viewpoint describes what happens, which arouses the total feeling of a character in a certain event, and by so doing guides the reader to the events he/she is knowledgeable about. In this manner, the reader will be able to notice what is actually being observed by the narrator. This means that he/she does not know about everything in detail. The author employs the narrator if he/she wants to keep something from the knowledge of others, which is to be answered by the rhetorical question:

Mothla' pula o nyela kae?

[When rain falls where do you excrete?]

This type of flat point of view confirms the significance of the rhetorical question technique in the praise poem.

Although an apostrophe is a usual linguistic element, Lekgothoane uses it in his praise poem to highlight certain intentions. This is done with the aim of transforming the birds (owls) into symbols. It is in this way that in the description of the owls, Lekgothoane uses his title symbolically to focus on the message of this poem. That is why Malebana (1979:30) depicts an owl like a bird, while Lekgothoane portrays the same bird metaphorically to represent a person.

As already noted, Lekgothoane recites:

Makxothlo manyelaphaxong!

[An owl crevice-sitter/excreter]

When the narrator converses with the owl, he/she qualifies this bird referring to the bird as a crevice-sitter. This attribute differs from the one focusing on a qualificative pronoun or even a relative pronoun because the narrator uses a collective noun, and compares it with the noun under discussion (owl). In this analysis, two issues related to focalization and qualification will be examined namely

- (a) distinguishing by employing the infinitive mood, and
- (b) distinguishing by contrasting the noun and the collective noun class-6 of the infinitive mood.

Distinguishing by employing the Infinitive mood

Readers of praise poems acknowledge that praise poets usually employ collective nouns as Lekgothoane does when portraying the owls, because he refers to them as crevice-sitters. Lekgothoane makes use of infinitive mood of the noun class 6: *manyelaphaxong* [crevice-sitters]. But we are aware that this is not compulsory when a poet employs the infinitive mood in this way. The poet uses this type of mood to convey his/her ideas to the reader. When a relative verb is used to exaggerate its meaning, the poet will not employ the infinitive mood. When Ramaila (1955:48) recites *Masire* [name of a person], he refers to him as

Tlou ye e tšwang Sephako e tšwa Sephakwana.

[An elephant that comes from *Sephako* [place name], derives from *Sephakwana* [another place name]

Ramaila here employs a relative verb, but not an infinitive mood:

Tlou ya go tšwa Sephako/Tlou setšwaSephako...

[An elephant that comes from *Sephako*]

By extension we may argue that Lekgothoane employs the infinitive mood of the noun class 6 for his focalization which, in turn, foregrounds his intention. The employment of the relative verb could not as effectively have conveyed his intention. We will now look for a reason which urged him to recite:

(Makxothlo) manyelaphaxong,

[(The owls) crevice-sitters,]

rather than constructing his verse line like this:

(Makxothlo) a a nyelago phagong.

[(The owls) that excrete in the crevice]

The difference between *(Makxothlo) manyelaphaxong*, [(The owls) crevice-sitters,] and *(Makxothlo) a a nyelago phagong*. [(The owls) that excrete in the crevice] is evident. To employ the infinitive mood indicates artistic expertise and knowledge of custom. For the same reason, for example, a race-horse is called a horse that runs fast, but not a fast running horse because a horse that runs fast has a certain running skill, while a fast running horse may also refer to it is each and every running horse that may have been frightened.

This reveals Lekgothoane's intention. His owls are not all owls we are acquainted with. They have a certain custom (obstinacy, perseverance) of excreting in a crevice. As a result, they differ from the ordinary owls that we can recognise. They are therefore particular owls that engender wonder or marvel. But Lekgothoane goes on to emphasize the owl concept when contrasting the noun and the collective noun.

Distinguishing by contrasting the noun and the collective noun class-6 of the infinitive mood

Lekgothoane distinguishes the owls by contrasting the nouns, namely the owls and the crevice-sitter. As already stated, he does not distinguish the owls by saying:

Makgohlo a go nyela phagong

[The owls that excrete in the crevice]

Makgohlo a go nyela phagong [The owls that excrete in the crevice] are those referred to in the above paragraph, which have a certain custom of excreting in the crevice. The custom that is surprising is related to excretion in the crevice. Therefore the following sentences are similar:

Makgohlo manyelaphagong.

[(The owls) crevice-sitters,]

Makgohlo a go nyela phagong.

[The owls that excrete in the crevice]

Although the above descriptions may be correlatives, their connotations are distinctive. The difference focuses on the poet's intention. The question is: 'what is this difference?' The explanation can be clearly understood if the above sentence can be rewritten as directly metaphoric:

Makgohlo, e lego manyelaphagong.

[The owls are crevice-sitters.]

or

Makgohlo, e lego (dilo/dinonyana) dinyelaphagong.

[The owls are (creatures/birds) crevice-sitter.]

The above concept means that now the owls are no longer defined according to their custom and habit. This means that the owls have transformed. It is as if they have changed into the species of living things that excrete in the crevice. And, it looks as if that custom has become a habit.

Now readers start to observe Lekgothoane's intention about the owls under discussion. They are not familiar to the owls the reader has acquainted himself/herself with. This is just the route the poet undertakes to describe a concept or even a word to represent a symbol. A discussion of what the owls represent follows.

Applicative verb

Lekgothoane's exercise is to explain the nature of the owls in such a manner that the concept represents a symbol which will give a clear picture of birds and beyond the definition thereof. What Lekgothoane does is in line with the art of works of the Russian Formalists. Erlich (1955:145) quotes Eichenbaum when he argues:

We are not "formalists", but if you will, specifiers
(*specifikatory*).

The technique that Eichenbaum defines in this regard is called *priem ostranneniya* [the device of making it strange].

It has already been noted how Lekgothoane has tried to explain the term, the owls, so that it becomes a concept that surprises readers. He defamiliarizes the concept. Erlich (1955:150) defines the concept of Russian Formalists in this manner:

It is this inexorable pull of routine, of habit, that the artist is called upon to counteract. By tearing the object out of its habitual context, by bringing together disparate notions, the poet gives a *coup de grace* to the verbal cliché and to the stock responses attendant upon it and forces us into heightened awareness of things and their sensory texture. The act of creative deformation restores sharpness to our perception, giving "density" to the world around us.

Erlich (1923;151) explains 'density' further when he quotes arguing that

Density (*faktura*) is the principal characteristic of this peculiar world of deliberately constructed objects, the totality of which we call art.

Lekgothoane deliberately undermines custom, which is 'routine' and 'habit' or even 'habitual context' when defining the owls by adding this concept to include additional characteristics which are not normally associated with the owls. That is, he brings 'together disparate notions, giving density to the world around us'. The applicative verb which we will be examining is the other '*specifikatory*' which Lekgothoane employs so that the owls – to excrete together with crevice – should become the concepts giving full 'density' to the image described.

When Lekgothoane distinguishes the owls, he classifies them under the notion of crevice-sitters. In this way, that they become strange and surprising. To excrete in the crevice means that the owls, after hunting for food or resting somewhere else, are immediately compelled to rush to the crevice to excrete because there is no place to excrete except in the crevice.

But to excrete in the crevice means that the owls may excrete by chance in the crevice or any other place because they are not forced to excrete only in the crevice, or where they fly high in the sky toward the crevice, or they may also excrete anywhere as well. If the owls are defined in this manner, we then find ourselves acquainted with the definition. However, Lekgothoane destroys this type of custom and habit by bringing in foreign definition of the owls. As a result, the focus of the sentences, in the form of the applicative verb and the ordinary verb, differs because the explanation of the applicative verb aims at the crevice which the owls use for excretion. The definition of the ordinary verb (*nyela*) [to excrete] summarizes the place wherein the owls may be excreting.

As a result, the crevice denotes both the dwelling-place and the place of excretion. This place becomes significant for the reader, because it is portrayed in the form of the applicative function. The importance of the creation of this place is also confirmed by Nokaneng's (1983:89) utterances:

*Ge lediredi le šomišwa bjalo ka lerui la go hlolega go legoro
la – go, le šupa lefelo.*

[When the applicative verb is used like possession derived from the class noun prefix –go, denotes a place.]

It should be emphasized that this place is importantly essential because it is surprising that Lekgothoane's owls excrete in their dwelling only because, in actual fact, they are bound to excrete everywhere else. Accordingly, this place is no longer considered a crevice only, because its meaning exceeds all expectations. This place therefore, functions as a refreshingly new image.

In concluding the remarks on the first metrical line of this poem, one may add that, on one hand, the owls are wonderful birds while, on the other, the crevice is also surprising because that is the place where the owls habitually excrete. Lekgothoane thus employs the so-called *priem ostranneniya* [the device of making it strange].

Two parts of the poem

Lekgothoane's brief poem comprises two parts, namely, the first part is apostrophe which has already been discussed above, and the second one is the rhetorical question:

Mothla' pula o nyela kae?

[When rain falls where do you excrete?]

The division has been confirmed by arranging elements of the language so that it determines the division of the hemistiches. Even if the hemistich under discussion is in the form of a question, there is an element of apostrophe in it, that is, it starts to resemble the first hemistich that comprises part of the apostrophe. In the arrangement of the hemistichs the contrast is in the form of a question. Because the sentence is constructed in the form of a question, *mohla' pula* [when the rain falls] denotes a rainy time. This implies that there are two issues which determine *mohla' pula* [when the rain falls], namely

- the time when rain does not fall, and
- the time when rain falls.

This above structuralist implication evokes further surprise. These birds look as if they live in two different dwelling-places determining the rainy time and non-rainy one. For this reason, *mohla' pula* [when the rain falls] also indicates a dual signification.

When *mohla' pula* [when the rain falls] becomes an adverbial clause of time or one single concept, the repetition of non-fricative continuant consonants **l** and **hl** is emphasized because the air goes out on the side of the mouth. Thus *nyela* [to excrete] is, in this manner, also emphasized.

Also, *nyela* [to excrete] is repeated in both metrical lines to emphasize a place (the crevice). We may conclude by stating that *mohla' pula* [when the rain falls] and *nyela* [to excrete], by being stressed in the form of alliteration, become the main ideas that transform the owls into symbols. These concepts do not determine usual time when the owls excrete in the crevice. Lekgothoane's implied contrast between *mohla' pula* [when the rain falls] and the time when the rain is not falling reinforce the difference which is evident between an apostrophe and rhetorical question.

A rhetorical question conveys the narrator's surprise. In this way Lekgothoane draws the reader's attention to his choice of diction, and provokes the question on whether it is vivid truth if one examines the two sentences, namely (a) where the owls excrete which is also the place where the rain falls and (b) the place where the rain does not fall. This emphasizes the significance of this concept.

This emphasis is exalted in two different ways, namely, that the first way is when Lekgothoane conflates *mohla wa pula* (three disjunctive words) [when the rain falls] into one word, *mahlapula* [when the rain falls], in order to show one single thought. The second one is when he repeats the non-fricative continuant consonants **l** and **hl** with the aim of stressing and confirming the definitions of *mohla' pula* [when the rain falls] and *nyela* [to excrete], which become the concepts that are related to the narrator's surprise.

The addressee's subjectival concord

When the reader starts to read this poem, he/she will notice that Lekgothoane employs the addressee's subjectival concord, namely **o**, when he recites:

Mothla' pula o nyela kae?

[When rain falls where do you excrete?]

This subjectival concord implies that if the owls are the addressees, the subjectival concord thereof then should be **le**. The plural form for *makgohlo* [the owls] changes to the class prefixes **6** if Lekgothoane metaphorizes the owls into the collective noun, *manyelaphagong* [the crevice sitter].

This subjectival concord suggests that the author imagines a person that the narrator seeks an answer from. However, this utterance becomes complicated by the fact that the two hemistiches of this poem form one single sentence. If the subjectival concord, **o**, represents the subject that is not the designated owl, but *makgohlo manyelaphagong* [An owl crevice-sitter/excreter]. Lekgothoane does not use footnoting or even other utterances related to subtitling to explain the anthropomorphization.

The subjectival concord, **o**, describes the owl. This concept is endorsed by the fact that (a) this sentence has only one action, (b) *nyela* [to excrete] is used aiming at *nyela* [to excrete] of *manyelaphagong* [excreting in the crevice] and (c) the adverb of time, *mohla' pula* [when the rain falls] is employed, so that the question *Makgohlo manyelaphagong* [(The owls) crevice-sitters,] and *nyela kae?* [where do you excrete?] is highlighted.

Lekgothoane's question is nuanced. To clarify, the question can be rewritten as follows:

Ge go se na pula, makgohlo a nyela phagong;

Fela ge pula e ena, makgohlo a nyela kae?

[When the rain does fall, the owls excrete in the crevice,

But when the rain does not fall, where do the owls excrete?]

Although one can be very sure that the subjectival concord, **o**, describes the owls, the problem is not yet solved because it is not customary to make use of this subjectival concord that shows the singular when plural form thereof is normally employed. The normal practice is to make use of the addressee's subjectival concord when one person is addressed. By so doing the addresser respects the addressee.

Although the investigator may say Lekgothoane has employed the singular form of the subjectival concord to indicate a certain purpose, this utterance will not be accepted without being confirmed. We will now examine this confirmation whether it

exists in the poem when closely scrutinized. There are two ways of describing the usage of the addressee's subjectival concord: the first route confirms Lekgothaone's viewpoint, when he addresses the owls as *manyelaphagong* [crevice-sitters], and the second one determines Lekgothaone's theme.

The addressee' subjectival concord confirms Lekgothaone's point of view

Lekgothaone's point of view has already been discussed in the discussion of the first hemistich of this poem. The plural form of *makgohlo* [the owls] determines the singular form which serves to pose a direct question to a specific owl rather than to owls in general.

Lekgothaone's intention

In languages, such as Sepedi, the addresser usually uses plural form when he/she wants to show respect to the addressee. But the issue that the singular form is employed when people are addressed (which is plural) is not used in this language arrangement, or even in language usage in general compels one explore to compel the intention that led the poet to use the subjectival concord *o*, and not *le* in his poetic language.

When singular and plural are compared, it will be noticed that the singular has more power than the plural when a person is addressed in Sepedi. The plural form carries no obligation, but displays honour and modesty (humility). This is clear when a small group of people is addressed; language coercion is dispersed in such a way that language emphasis or instruction will determine number of (many) people in the discussion. If one person is addressed automatically language coercion will determine that the individual under discussion is singular.

When Lekgothaone's poem is closely read, the addressee's question becomes coercive and arduous. It becomes infused with a sense of urgency because the narrator wants a word of truth in what he narrates, and that should not be delayed by the addressee.

Lekgothaone focuses his discussion on four concepts, namely, the owls, to excrete, crevice and the rain. He focuses on these concepts by using *priem ostrannenija* especially when he portrays them as follows:

- It is as if his owls are birds which we have not seen before or we are not accustomed to because they have been deliberately defamiliarized.
- Again, the owls' excretion is surprising because they excrete only in the crevice, whilst we are aware that according to custom the owls, like all the birds, excrete everywhere and not just in the crevice only.
- The crevice is also a strange place. In essence that is the owls' toilet.
- *Mohla' pula* [When the rain falls] describes unusual things. The implied utterance (if it does not rain) does not determine usual time in relation to the owls' excretion in the crevice.

Through these four concepts, Lekgothaone gives the owls symbolic value. Heese and Lawton (1988:86) define a symbol as a representation, which is more than a comparison of two things. Mojalefa (1995:16) confirms this by stating that it is a definition of an unusual thing, which also relates to ideas that are transformed into more meaningful concepts. This relationship between concepts will determine and develop the intention of the author.

In this way, a concrete thing changes to an idea or an abstract concept, because it is built up directly on the focused things which are based on association of different things. In this context, Lekgothaone employs such symbols, contrary to reason, so that they represent a specific viewpoint.

The final characteristic of the language arrangement in the structure of the poem is realized in the question, *kae?* [where]. What heightens the impact of the problem is the fact that it is a rhetorical question. In practice, when a question is asked, it requires an answer. This stylistic device serves both to anthropomorphize the owls and to intrigue the reader. Lekgothaone's owls present a fresh perspective representing neither death nor wisdom overtly, yet arguably subtle by evoking both.

Conclusion

In conclusion it may also be said that the theme of Lekgothaone's poem is broad, for the owls focus on people, to excrete symbolizes to live, the crevice represents life and when the rain falling unfolds life-giving properties.

Thus, the theme of this poem is complex because the owls are no longer focusing on people, but are intended for death; to excrete represents the action of death, the crevice portrays the dwelling-place of that which is dead, of detritus or waste matter. The theme of this poem thus points to and mocks death. The poem, 'Makxothlo', presents a paradox: life in death and death in life. Lekgothaone therefore polemicizes the traditional notion of owls as portents of death. Through the use of paradox, the owls come to symbolize the continuous of the life cycle.

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Lekgothoane's praise poetry: an aesthetic discourse

Abstract:

In this article, Shika Kgomedi Lekgothoane's artistic poetic works collected in 'Praises of Animals in Northern Sotho' (Van Warmelo, 1937) are assessed on three parts: a biographical sketch, a text and a reader in order to give a map to negotiate his creative skills. Lekgothoane is a traditional praise poet. His praise poetry falls within the delimitation of nature, which is not associated with leadership as is expected in this type of poetic work. The article proposes that nature as recited by him, enables the reader to understand fully the whole universe including its living things (animals). This indicates that Lekgothoane's environment is the place where cultural and traditional behaviour, customs and humanity are taught. His poems thus evoke a spirit of nationality.

Introduction

This article focuses on three aspects of the praise poetry of the Sepedi poet, Lekgothoane, namely (a) the author (b) a text and two reasons which justify the existence of a text and (c) a reader. It is important to begin with a biographical survey of the author as this will provide a map to negotiate the written works. In such succinct discussion about the author, an attempt is made to determine the poet's motivation and passion for writing in the preferred style and to delve into his personal background, his experience, as that often determines his understanding and language.