Sol Plaatje's Shakespeare: Translation and Transition to Modernity

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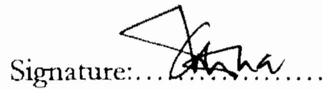
DECLARATION

I declare that *Sol Plaatje's Shakespeare: Translation and Transition to Modernity* is my original work and has never been submitted in part or whole to any institution for assessment or award for any degree. Quotations and references have been attributed to their authors or sources.

Signature:

Ndana Ndana

Date..28.11.05...

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DEDICATION

Dedicated to Ogomoditse, Shozi, Maanga and Rungwe (wife, daughters and son respectively) for their patience, love and motivation

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To the memory of Miringa and Sirishebo who did not live long enough to see this document. May their souls rest in peace.

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines Plaatje's two surviving translations of Shakespeare—*Diphoshophosho* (*The Comedy of Errors*) and *Dintshontsho Tsa Bo-Juliuse Kesara* (*Julius Caesar*). Translation is the major concept with which I approach the Plaatje-Shakespeare relationship. Adopting the notion of translation as transformation, the thesis illustrates how Plaatje appropriated, manipulated and adapted Shakespeare's dramas for his own social, political and cultural agenda. Largely, this agenda entails the preservation of Setswana language and culture, by recording and contextualising its proverbs, metaphors and vocabulary through an "appropriate orthography". These literary/linguistic schemes are part of Plaatje's major political ideal of a democratic, multi-cultural, and tolerant society. Modern South Africa is a fulfilment of Plaatje's vision. Despite Plaatje's noble aims, the power of these translations is yet to be fully explored by scholars and educators. The thesis concludes by asking whether these translations have a place within the general context of mother tongue education?

Plaatje translated *The Comedy of Errors* (a satirical deflation of superstition, the rule of inhuman law and the cruelty of the master-servant relationship), *Julius Caesar* (a cynical power play, from which many of the portents—like the lions and the comets—of *Mhudi* are derived), *The Merchant of Venice* (the underdog's dignity), *Othello* (with its savage anthropophagus and bogyman revealed in profoundly human terms) and *Much Ado About Nothing* into Sechuana...Plaatje noted that Shakespeare, while largely involved with the enormous mass of English experience in England, also contains from *his* sources the odd African detail. Shakespeare does have his lions, hyenas, jackals, tigers, rhinoceroses, cormorants, deserts, gold, ivory, ebony and even baboons. Plaatje...merely footnotes Shakespeare from an African point of view---Stephen Gray, 1976.

Many Englishmen hold the belief that Shakespeare's language and ideals are above the intellectual scope of Africans and they defy translation into any African language because they argue, European and African tongues, notions, and outlook, differ so irreconcilably that Shakespeare's elevated ideas must remain to the African an impenetrable mystery, even to those who have secondary training. It will be well for such sceptics to see how successfully a self-educated man has translated Shakespeare's 'Comedy of Errors' into Sechuana. On seeing 'Diphosho-phosho' they will revise their conclusions---David Ramoshoana, 1930.

Through Shakespeare, Plaatje adopted the strategy of preserving the threatened forms of life of his people by exploring and displaying their 'equivalents' in the supposedly superior languages of the colonisers...Shakespeare seemed to him to be an ideal vehicle...a text to be mobilised in his struggle to display and preserve the richness of Setswana as language and culture...The translation of Shakespeare into Setswana, which involved finding an equivalence of poetic expression in both the target language and its forms of life, could achieve two things: it could show, against the racist prejudices of those who claimed Shakespeare as their own, that whatever could be expressed in Shakespeare's text and language could be equalled by the power and subtlety of Setswana. It could also mobilise the undoubted linguistic and cultural resources of the Shakespearean text to record and preserve in writing the power and subtlety of an oral vernacular under immense threat from 'English', in all its senses, itself. In a very real sense, then, Plaatje's appropriation of Shakespeare was less an effort to introduce the bard to a backward, rural people than to harness Shakespeare as a vehicle of African language and culture: both to preserve that culture through Shakespeare and to show its value by reading Shakespeare and his society in its own terms---David Schalkwyk & Lerothodi Lapula, 2000.

In the beginning of this century I became a journalist, and when called to comment on things social, political, or military, I always found inspiration in one of other of Shakespeare's sayings...It is to be hoped that with the maturity of African literature, now still in its infancy, writers and translators will consider the matter of giving to Africans the benefit of some at least of Shakespeare's works. That this could be done is suggested by the possibility that some of the stories on which his dramas are based find equivalents in African folk-lore---Sol Plaatje, 1916.

INTRODUCTION.

> *His translations of Shakespeare, in a way a natural extension of interpreting, are regarded as amongst the best of written Setswana. It still remains for a mother-tongue speaker to delineate the ins-and-outs of Plaatje's skill---Tim Couzens, 1988.*

Solomon Tshekisho Plaatje (1876-1932) was one of South Africa's multi-talented, highly motivated and energetic citizens. With only a basic education of up to primary three or four, he had an illustrious and hectic, albeit financially unrewarding, career: teacher, messenger, court interpreter, journalist, historian, cultural activist, social worker, politician, essayist, polemicist, novelist, ambassador, translator, diarist, linguist, biographer, recruitment agent, musician, and above all, a husband and father. It is not surprising, therefore, that this illustrious man has been honoured as a national icon, his name adorning not only a municipality in his home town of Kimberley, but also two primary schools and the Education Building in Pretoria. Plaatje's name is, rightly, synonymous with the existence of the South African Native National Congress, the precursor of the modern African National Congress and the ruling party in the modern, democratic South Africa. It is thus in order to remember Plaatje as a politician and contributor to the attainment of democracy in this country. His appeal to foreign intervention in what he believed to be the South African problem and insistence on non-violent/constitutional means of resolving disputes, must have "set a precedent which the ANC was to pursue more actively after 1960, with ultimately spectacular results" (Couzens 1996:182).

Plaatje's success (or lack of it) in the political arena has tended to cloud his pioneering literary work, and specifically his seminal translations of Shakespeare into Setswana. Mazisi Kunene's polemical response to Stephen Gray's essay on Shakespeare and Bunyan's influence on *Mhudi*, elevates Plaatje's success in politics over literary ventures:

> Plaatje, to survive as a creative writer, will need patrons from the Rand School because insofar as the true authentic classics of African literature are concerned, he will always be counted a borderline case, even then only because of his great political background (1980:247).

For Kunene, Plaatje's literary ventures, particularly the translations, are anything but political, hence they are guaranteed to be transient. Of the translations, he notes:

> The truth of the matter is that even his translations of Shakespeare had little or no impact on Tswana literature. It was rather the English newspapers that highlighted these translations as a historic act (246).

Writing a decade later, Shole confirms the neglect attending translations in general, and Plaatje's in particular.

> Not much attention has been given to translations in Setswana, either as translations or works of art on their own, despite the role they have played. Even among our reading sector, which consists mainly of students, these translations suffer neglect...This is rather unfortunate, because the mere fact that translations have played a vital role in the beginnings of many a literature, qualifies them for a respectable place in discussions about specific literatures. Comparative criticism cannot do without them (1990/91:51, see also Starfield 2001:857).

To date, Plaatje's translations remain an obscurity, and it is time a fuller investigation is done to explain this neglect. It was this state of affairs that prompted Couzens's remark in the epigraph, and later, Schalkwyk's call for a paradigm shift in Plaatje scholarship (1999:28). This shift entails dusting off his translations and other writings in the vernacular and offering them as possible sites for original scholarly inquiry. Convinced that these translations are indeed the undiscovered treasure in Plaatje-Shakespeare scholarship, this study responds to Couzens and Schalkwyk's call for a paradigm shift. It seeks to rehabilitate the translations with the hope of providing a foundation on which new avenues and pathways into the Plaatje-Shakespeare criticism will be opened. The academic wealth of these translations partly lies in the fact that they resonate with politics through and through. If Kunene's emphasis on Plaatje's "great political background" is allowed some validity, even a preliminary assessment of the translations, like the one I provide in chapters four and five, reveals how politically programmatic they are. As Schalkwyk suggests,

> Plaatje's relentless attempts to preserve specifically Tswana forms of life, through the translations of Shakespeare, the collections of proverbs and folktales, and his bitter opposition to the new orthography...should not be seen as a diversion from politics, but perhaps the most intimate and committed of Plaatje's political campaigns (1999:23).

Or, as Schalkwyk and Lapula remarked a year later,

> there is no radical difference between Plaatje's work on preserving vernacular forms and his translations of Shakespeare. They form part of the same project of saving what seemed to him to be a threatened culture and the forms of life that were carried in its language from destruction (2000:24).

Clearly, Plaatje's entire career is political in all senses of the word. A fuller understanding of this career depends therefore on a consciousness of the synergy generated by its

manifold and intertwined aspects. Put differently and rhetorically, what isn't political about the translations that they should be passed over as acts of historic curiosity?

To arrive at generating interest in Plaatje's translations, I open with a theoretical framework in which I isolate concepts material to my argument. I approach the Plaatje-Shakespeare conjunction by looking at the theory of translation. As I demonstrate, this relationship is fraught with difficulties as translating Shakespeare retains the double connotation of 'colonial' (dis)entanglement. That is, Plaatje's fascination with and subsequent translation of Shakespeare are ambivalent, retaining the potential to be understood as a simultaneous entrenchment of and resistance to colonial discourses. Plaatje's interest in Shakespeare is a metaphor for his coexistent fear and hope, uncertainty and trust, anxiety, embrace and resistance to the modernity Shakespeare represents.

Chapter two sketches the biographies of Plaatje and Shakespeare respectively, highlighting areas of equivalence and difference as the basis of Plaatje's personal self-imaginations and translations. Shakespeare's biography is a re-translation of the one Plaatje provided in the Introduction to *Diphoshophosho.* This sketch, Schalkwyk argues, is modelled not on the scholarly biography of Shakespeare, but on Plaatje's ideal biography (1999:24). It is clear why Plaatje variously translates himself into his mentor. From the outset, Plaatje seeks to domesticate and transform Shakespeare by removing him not only from the academy, but also from being the icon of Englishness into the quotidian concerns of indigenous Tswana forms of life. This chapter traces the trajectory of transformation in Plaatje's life, and shows how he superimposes it on his mentor.

The paucity of literature on Plaatje's translations prompted and imposed the need for an exploratory chapter which serves as a preamble to the discussion of the translations. This chapter centres on three related questions, namely: what attracted Plaatje to Shakespeare and resulted in the translations; what was Plaatje's theory and practice of translation; and how do we evaluate these translations? With tentative answers to these questions sought, I examine the surviving translations—*Diphoshophosho/The Comedy of Errors* and *Dintshontsho Tsa Bo-Juliuse Kesara/Julius Caesar.* This is the subject of chapters four and five respectively. What emerges from these chapters is that the translations

were carried out for specific cultural and political reasons germane to Plaatje's career. That is to say, the translations reveal a discernible political programme consistent with Plaatje's major struggles and the tensions of his time. Other than preserving Setswana as both language and culture, Plaatje hopes to prove, contrary to current racist opinion, the agency of the "native" in shaping and determining his/her destiny. My use of the term "native" is informed by Plaatje's: to refer to the black inhabitants of South Africa prior to European contact. Originally an innocuous term, it later resonates with politics when it signifies the disadvantaged and discriminated people, following the formation of a white-dominated government.

If Shakespeare was perceived as the symbol of Englishness and cultural sophistication, Plaatje shows the extent to which this complexity is socially and ideologically constructed, leading to infinite re-constructions and appropriations. Plaatje's people translate the name "Shakespeare" into the vernacular as "Tsikinya-Chaka", the accomplished story-teller who reminds them of their great speakers. They transform him from an inaccessible symbol of Englishness to something closer to their indigenous oral forms. Furthermore, if Shakespeare's language poses some difficulties to natives (see Willan 1984, Johnson 1996), Plaatje's translations reveal that Setswana is not easy either. It abounds with complex grammatical and metaphorical constructions just as Shakespeare's English does. While Plaatje remains loyal to the original texts, his innovations mean that it is more appropriate to regard the original as source (Distiller 2003:122) for what could be rightly called original Setswana texts. Plaatje's texts illustrate how original texts stand to be enriched or even degraded when transmitted into different cultures.

The study closes in an open-ended way by raising questions intended to serve as a springboard for subsequent investigations. Granted that these translations are neglected, the logical question(s) is where do we go from here; what pointers do we gather from Plaatje as potential trajectories as we re-map this relatively uncharted terrain of academic inquiry? Is the notion of stories useful or, to turn Kunene's statement into a question: how could the knowledge that "Shakespeare was writing about a feudal England that corresponded very much to the nineteenth century turbulence of African nationalism in southern Africa" (1980:245) open up new pedagogical avenues of consuming Shakespeare in our schools? Should translations replace so-called originals; what is the

value of these texts to current debates on mother tongue education? These and many more questions should provide a framework within which to chart a way forward.

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Chapter One: Conceptual Framework.

> *Translation is...a rewriting of an original text. All rewritings, whatever their intention, reflect a certain ideology and a poetics and as such manipulate literature to function in a given society in a given way. Rewriting is manipulation, undertaken in the service of power, and in its positive aspect can help in the evolution of a literature and a society. Rewritings can introduce new concepts, new genres, new devices and the history of translation is also the history of literary innovation, of the shaping power of one culture upon another. But rewriting can also repress innovation, distort and contain, and in an age of ever increasing manipulation of all kinds, the study of the manipulative processes of literature as exemplified by translation can help us towards a greater awareness of the world in which we live (Susan Bassnett and Andre Lefevere, 1990).*

> *Translation properly understood, is a special case of the arc of communication which every successful speech-act closes within a given language...Inside or between languages, human communication equals translation. A study of translation is a study of language (George Steiner, 1975).*

> *Language is not neutral and insofar as language is the translator's tool, the act of translating is not neutral either. Translation shapes the way in which a given society receives a work, an author, a literature, or a culture; therefore it is necessary to locate the subversive aspect of translations in the larger framework of social interaction. Translation can never be neutral, as it is charged with ideology and 'games of power' (Roman Alvarez and M. Carmen-Africa-Vidal, 1996).*

In this chapter I lay the theoretical foundation on which Plaatje's *appropriation*, *possession*, *domestication*, *mimicking*, *monkeying*, *hybridization*, *assimilation*, *adaptation*, *cannibalization*, *calibanization* and *carnivalization* of Shakespeare's plays, as claimed by the main title of the study, might be appreciated. Translation, the very process to which Plaatje subjected some of Shakespeare's plays, is the concept with which I approach this relationship. As a bridge between languages and therefore cultures, translation, as the epigraph from George Steiner states, is an integral part of human communication. In fact, by mediating between unlike languages and cultures, translation not only "accrues to itself the greatest power" as Johnson's (1996:147) reading of Marx claims, but also generates, in Benjamin's words, "a reciprocal relationship between languages" (in Johnston 1992:44), or to borrow Derridean phraseology, a "network of reciprocal relationships" (Derrida 1978:24, cited in Goddard 1990:87).

The idea of reciprocity is not uncontested, for as the first epigraph to this chapter states, translation as rewriting is problematized as a phenomenon with both positive and negative aspects. Hence it is credible to suggest that the relationships generated by

translation are not always reciprocal in the positive sense, but rather contentious. Sherry Simon (1992), for example, argues that

> Translation brings into play concepts of cultural difference which result in the construction of implicit (sometimes explicit) relations of alterity through language. These relationships are far from static and come to materialize the changing values with which language is invested (162).

Why translation inaugurates such a series of relationships is not hard to imagine because it brings into contact 'actors' and 'audiences' from various sectors of human society. These 'actors' include not only the languages which are the media through which translation is performed, but also the authority figures who commission the translations, the consumers or readers who are to benefit by these translations and the actual translators who carry out the process of mediating between languages/cultures (Lefevere, 1990:15*ff*). Because of the diverse ideological inclinations associated with each 'actor', the babble of voices and relationships arising from translation is therefore not surprising. Consequently, translation also initiates diverse reactions and responses, ranging from trust and acceptance to total rejection, mistrust, suspicion and even death. Without getting ahead of my story, two examples by way of illustrating the point are in order. On the extreme side, reactions to perceived mis-translations could be fatal. Lefevere records that a French poet, translator, printer and publisher, Etienne Dolet (1509-1546) was "burnt at the stake because his translation of Plato contained errors" (1992:27). On the other hand, and less fatally, translation invites interventions which seek to restore the power or integrity of original texts. The intervention of white academics—Professors Doke and Lestrade--in the publication of *Dintshontsho Tsa Bo-Juliuse Kesara*, Plaatje's rendition of *Julius Caesar*, is an example of restorative interventionism.

From the outset, Plaatje's translations of Shakespeare must be understood against the background in which translation engenders complex relationships and reactions/responses to produce what, in Simon's words, are "new forms of knowledge, new textual forms, new relationships to language" (1999:160). Thus, the translations are functional and a double-edged tool. They lend themselves to be interpreted either as tools of resistance to, or else an embrace of modernity, which as I show later, promiscuously flirts with colonialism. This doubleness of purpose is to be expected, as Plaatje--and the same could be said *mutatis mutandis* of his mentor Shakespeare--exhibited in his life and career the duality of being in two worlds at the same time--the world in which the oral and the modern interact and compete. As Couzens claims,

> both Shakespeare and Plaatje matured at the time of a great revolution--when oral culture was being largely transformed to a written one (1988:63).

To achieve the purpose of this chapter, I proceed as follows. I begin by sketching the major concepts in the title of this study, namely modernity, transition and translation. The reason for this methodological procedure is to attempt to create, though in reverse order, a temporal and spatial dimension already embedded in the concepts themselves. Modernity, appearing first, is not the point of departure, but rather the point of rest or destination with transition and translation as the means and processes of conveyance to this destination.

The three concepts--translation, transition and modernity--are themselves sites of on-going scholarly debates, and collocating them in the limited confines of this study is to invite and even anticipate the problematics associated with the deployment of these concepts. Even more daunting is the task of contextualizing, or what Richard Jacquemond (1992) calls "naturalization", of these concepts to the task at hand. I cannot hope to do justice even in sketching the bare preliminaries of these concepts. I shall borrow from the debates on these concepts some of the cornerstones on which I can formulate working definitions as points of departure for this argument. Hence the definitions I propose in this section are deliberately open-ended, sometimes vague and reductive.

While yoking together the concepts of translation, transition and modernity may appear problematic, they will be shown to intertwine and illuminate one another, at least for the purpose of this study. The definition of concepts will be followed by a discussion of Shakespeare's role in the colonial enterprise, and consequently his deployment in the postcolonial context. Plaatje's translations should thus be viewed as part of the larger postcolonial project of carnivalizing and transforming western metropolitan texts of which Shakespeare is an integral part. Thus, the Plaatje-Shakespeare conjunction is an appropriate metaphor for the complex relationship between coloniality and postcoloniality, both as historical epochs/periodizations and as critical/philosophical standpoints. As a consequence of this discussion I will end the chapter by examining how Plaatje's translations are an ambiguous response to Shakespeare and the colonialism in which he is implicated. The ambiguity lies in the fact that at one point the translations

can be seen as a tool of resistance, and at the same time a fetishization of colonialism and the culture it promoted. Put differently, the last section of this chapter seeks to find answers to the question of the implications of Plaatje's translations: how are the translations evidence of Plaatje's embracing of or resistance to modernity; how are the translations a re-inscription or interrogation of Shakespeare and western literary traditions?

Definition of Concepts: Modernity.

Definitions, as Erasmus' (1511) Folly has long cautioned, are problematic. "Modernity", scholars have observed, is not an easy term to define. In *Theories of Modernity and Postmodernity* (1990), Turner admits:

> It is not possible to impose, by a definitional fiat, an agreed set of terms for debate, precisely because these issues (modernity and postmodernity) are essentially contested. There are no agreed terms of reference, which would be binding on the contestants and which could bring about some practical outcome (1990:1 *cf.* Hawthorn 2000:211*ff*, Childers and Hentzi 1995:191*ff*).

Similarly, in *Political Theory, Modernity and Postmodernity* (1995), Rengger concurs:

> Modernity is a concept that does not have a fixed, easily delineated meaning or provenance. As it has been increasingly used of late, by an increasingly wide variety of writers, this is not, of course very surprising (39).

Years later, the definitional problems (of modernity) are yet to be resolved. In fact, the frequent use of the term (modernity) coupled with the proliferation of cognate terms have, in addition to illuminating the concept, also compounded its problematics. In a collection of essays on Shakespeare and modernity, Grady agonizes over the problem as follows:

> Of course, just what we mean by modernity is itself a crucial issue within several contentious debates of contemporary critical theory. In fact, it has by now become so complex and variegated a matter (especially since the acceleration of technical and social change characteristic of the past century) that words with the stem or root 'modern' have proliferated. We now speak of the modern, modernity, modernism, modernization and the postmodern (with a number of possible variations for this last), sometimes as rough synonyms, sometimes to designate specific aspects of the cluster of ideas that has developed around the term. The result has been a confusion of terminology and a corresponding confusion of ideas (2000:1).

In moving towards a definition, the etymology of the term provides a helpful point of departure as the following quotation from Turner (1990) states.

> Following Habermas (1987), Barry Smart points out that the term 'modern' can be traced back to the fifth-century Latin term *modernus* to differentiate the Christian from the pagan era. He also notes that the contemporary use of the term has its roots in Kant's conception of a universal history, which would be a distinctive break with the past (3).

Wagner's *Theorizing Modernity* (2001) provides a perceptive definition which recognizes, in his words, "a double connotation". For him, modernity "is always both philosophical and empirical...both conceptual and historical"(4). His full explanation of the doubleness of modernity is instructive.

> *Conceptually*, I will understand modernity as a situation in which a certain double imaginary signification prevails. The two components of this signification, ambivalent on their own and also tension-ridden between them, are the idea of the *autonomy* of the human being as the knowing and acting subject, on the one hand, and the idea of the *rationality* of the world, i.e. its principled intelligibility, on the other. To put it briefly, modernity refers to a situation in which human beings do not accept any external guarantors, i.e. guarantors that they do not themselves posit, of the certainity of their knowledge, of the viability of their political orders or of the continuity of their selves...*Historically*, modernity often refers straightforwardly to the 'history of the West'. More specifically, it refers to the history of Europe, and from some time onwards also of North America. Modernity then, to cut across the range of views, begins at the earliest in the mid to late fifteenth century with the Renaissance, the invention of movable type and the voyages of discovery (2001:5-6).

These passages raise important issues worth emphasizing to create a framework within which Plaatje's perception and reactions to modernity will be grounded. First is Wagner's "double connotation" of modernity as philosophical and material, as ideology and practice. Concept and material are not dichotomous, but inseparably intertwined, so that isolating them is in Grady's words, a "convenience of writing, [a] way of thinking that helps us see connections or constellations" (2000:7). A working definition must therefore take into account this double connotation to allow us to appreciate how philosophy translates and manifests in the material conditions of society and vice versa. In other words, we will see how a set of ideas informs lived practices that Plaatje simultaneously admired and suspected.

Second, in modernity is embedded the notion of progress, process, transformation and transition from pre-modernity via modernity to post-modernity and subsequent phases yet to be defined. Put differently, as both philosophy and history, modernity presupposes (an) earlier state(s) of being or conditions, best described as "pre-modern/ity", from which modernity is a logical and consequent outcome. As Wagner

puts it, "thinking about modernity is...always marked by a clear conceptual distinction between a before and an after"(2001:84). Modernity, we can therefore define as a constellation of ideas, symbols and practices that emerged in Europe and were transmitted to the other via, among other means, European voyages of 'discovery' and exploration. In view of this, it is imperative to assess the "before" and "after" not only in western societies but in Plaatje's as well. This assessment is necessary to prepare us for some of the problems and prospects associated with applying the concept of modernity to the excluded other in its definitions. Connolly's conception of modernity offers us glimpses of these states/conditions.

> Even if modernity is not unique...it is at least distinctive. In its optimistic moments, it defines itself by contrast to earlier periods which are darker, more superstitious, less free, less rational, less productive, less respectful of the individual, less scientific and less developed technically than it is at its best. Its opponents often endorse these differentiations while grading them differently. Modernity has lost a world of rich tradition, a secure place in the order of being, a well-grounded morality, a spiritual sensibility, an appreciation of heirarchy, an attunement to nature; and these vacated places have been filled by bureaucracy, nationalism, rampant subjectivism, an all-consuming state, a consumer culture, a commercialized world or, perhaps, a disciplinary society...Modernity is an epoch with no well-defined beginning or end; but once consolidated it gives modern articulations to persistent questions of meaning, the relation of human life to nature, the relation of the present to the past and the future, the form of a well-grounded order, and the relation of life to death (1988:1-2).

Emerging from Connolly's passage is modernity's capacity to be simultaneously a resource and problem, optimistic and pessimistic, positive and negative or utopic and dystopic. It therefore retains the capacity to enchant and disenchant. These should not be treated as stable, fixed and monolithic identities/categories, but rather, as internally heterogeneous, thus enabling us to appreciate the complex tensions and confluences and the simultaneous acts of enchantment and disenchantment of modernity.

Third, the geographical and historical specificity of modernity not only adumbrates the excluded other, but establishes patterns of flow and encounter between Europe and its others. In fact, the patterns of flow and encounter engender the dynamics of the "contact zone", that symbolic space in which hitherto separated cultures and languages interact to produce an array of relationships (Pratt 1992:6). Or as Loomba and Orkin claim, this encounter "generates a wide and complex spectrum of relationships (1998:10). This spectrum, reminiscent of the complex relations and dialogues engendered by translation, has been the subject of massive epistemological interest. It is within this

broad spectrum of tensions and dialogues between Europe and its other that we locate and appreciate the role of translation in all its transformative manifestations. It is explicit in Cheyfitz when he insists that "translation was, and still is, the central act of European colonization and imperialism in the Americas" (1997:104), and implicit in Comaroff's four-fold mandate of European governance in the other:

> Pragmatically speaking, it [European governance] set itself a fourfold mandate. First was the 'discovery' of dark lands, which were conceptually emptied of their peoples and cultures so that their 'wilderness' might be fixed and named and mapped by an officializing white gaze. Then came the pacification of 'natives' seen to be endemically unruly and hence requiring, even desiring, Pax Britanica. Third was the facilitation of commerce...thus to civilize the savages, to draw them into the beneficence of empire, and, simultaneously, to enrich the 'mother country'; and fourth, rational administration, itself taken everywhere to be the prerequisite for economic 'management'...(2002:109).

If modernity has the West as its epicentre (see Giddens 1990, Grady 2000:2), or is the 'hisory of the West' as Wagner (2001:5-6) puts it, a set of questions arises: how did modernity reach the excluded other; what were the effects of this contact; what was the ontological status of the other prior to the advent of western modernity; and can we talk of other modernities outside European modernity? Plaatje and his society are to be located in the geograhical/historical other of European modernity. This allows us to narrow our set of questions: what is the connection between western modernity and Plaatje, how did it affect him, and what was his take on it? A brief sketch of Plaatje's conjunction with modernity is essential and is traceable to fifteenth-century voyages of European exploration and exploitation.

European voyages of discovery or exploration are perhaps the major means by which western modernity was transported to Europe's other. As I will illustrate in slightly more detail below, the establishment of a fort at Table Bay in 1652 by the Dutch East India Company was the seminal event in the formation of modern South Africa (see George 2002, Worden 1994, Thompson 2001). Initially intended to provision vessels transiting to the Far East, the establishment of the fort set the stage for capitalist economy, introduction of western technology, culture and later colonial modernity in South Africa. Comaroff's schematization of South African history from this event enables us to appreciate this point.

> the story of the colonial state in South Africa is usually divided into four periods: 1652-1806, the phase of Dutch mercantile rule, interrupted briefly by English takeover; 1806-c. 1870, the early British years, in which imperial governance was

> restricted in geographical and administrative scope, and during which two breakaway white settler republics were established in the interior; 1870-1910, the age of the mineral and industrial revolution and the scramble for Africa, when the United Kingdom sought to extend its control over the sub-continent as a whole; and 1910-94, the epoch of the Union of South Africa, a dominion within the British Commonwealth, which culminated in the rise and fall of aparthied (2002:110).

Plaatje's direct conjunction with modernity can be located in Comaroff's third phase, marked by the start of industrialization in South Africa following the discovery of minerals. As chapter two will show, Doornfontein and Pniel, Plaatje's places of birth and childhood respectively, lay within seventy miles of Kimberley, the birth place of the industrial revolution in South Africa (Couzens 1988:63). It will also show how at the time of his birth and maturity, western ideas and practices—education, technology, missionisation—were already a familiar aspect of South Africa's social, political, cultural and economic landscape. Briefly, he appeared during the early stages of modernization, and, as Couzens characterizes it, in a time of great revolution (1988:63).

If western modernity reached its other via voyages of exploration, what did the explorers find; what was the state of the other; or in Wagner's words, what was the 'before' of these nations; was it, to turn Achebe's famous remark into the interrogative voice, "one long night of savagery from which the first Europeans acting on God's behalf delivered them?" (1988:30). Using West Africa as a case study, Rathbone argues that African cultures and economies were already developed prior to foreign intervention, and specifically colonial imposition. In his words,

> neither Muslim teachers nor European traders intruded into a universe that was an unsophisticated *tabula rasa.* African economies and cultures were formidable and, as importantly, in constant flux (2002:21, see also Thompson 2001:2).

Rathbone's remarks are corroborated by Plaatje who shows European influence as the third force in the evolution of indigenous societies. *Mhudi*, arguably a novel that traces the modernization of Rolong society— the novel begins with a traditional society heavily reliant on nature and progresses to the acquisition of the technology of firearms before closing with the inheritance of an old wagon, a symbol of migratory flux--opens with an idealized reconstitution of the "before" of Tswana societies.

> Two centuries ago the Bechuana tribes inhabited the extensive areas between Central Transvaal and the Kalahari Desert. Their entire world lay in the geography covered in these pages.

In this domain they led their patriarchal life under their several chiefs who owed no allegiance to any king or emperor. They raised their native corn which satisfied their simple wants and, when not engaged in hunting or in pastoral duties, the peasants whiled away their days in tanning skins or sewing magnificent fur rugs. They also smelted iron and manufactured useful implements which today would be pronounced very crude by their semi-westernized descendants.

Cattle breeding was the rich man's calling and hunting a natural enterprise. Their cattle which carried enormous horns ran almost wild and multiplied as prolifically as the wild animals of the day. Work was of a perfunctory nature, for mother earth yielded her bounties and the maiden soil provided ample sustenance for man and beast.

But woman's work was never out of season. In the summer she cleared the cornfields of weeds and subsequently helped to winnow and garner the crops. In winter times, she cut the grass and helped to renovate her dwelling. In addition to the inevitable cooking, basket-making, weaving and all the art-painting for mural decorations were done by women. Childless marriages were as rare as freaks so, early and late in summer and winter, during years of drought and of plenty, every mother had to nourish her growing brood, besides fattening and beautifying her daughters for the competition of eligible swains.

Fulfilling these multifarious duties of the household was not regarded as a drudgery by any means; on the contrary, the women looked upon marriage as an art; the daughter of a well-to-do peasant, surrounded by all the luxuries of her mother's home, would be the object of commiseration if she were a long time finding a man. And the simple women of the tribes accepted wifehood and transacted their onerous duties with the same satisfaction and pride as an English artist would the job of conducting an orchestra.

Kunana, near the present boundary between Cape Colony and Western Transvaal, was the capital city of the Barolong, the original stock of the several tribes, who also followed the humdrum yet interesting life of the other Bechuana Natives. They planted their stations in different directions over scores of miles; and it was often easier to kill wild animals nearer home than to go to the cattle-post for meat. Very often the big game ran thalala-motse (when wild animals continued their frolics straight through a Native village) when there would be systematic slaughter of antelopes and orgies of wild-beef eating.

Barolong cattlemen at times attempted to create a new species of animal by cross-breeding between an eland and an ox. One cattle-owner, named Motonosi, not very far from Kunana, raised two dozen calves all sired by a buffalo. The result proved so disastrous that Barolong tradition still holds up this achievement as the master-piece of folly, and attempts at cross-breeding thereafter became taboo...

Strange to relate, these simple folk were perfectly happy without money and without silver watches. Abject poverty was practically unknown; they had no orphanages because there were no nameless babies. When a man had a couple of karosses to make he invited the neighbours to spend the day with him cutting, fitting in and sewing together the sixty grey jackal pelts into two rugs, and there would be intervals of feasting throughout the day. On such an occasion, someone would announce a field day at another place where there was a dwelling to thatch; here too guests might receive an invitation from a peasant who had a stockade to erect at a third homestead on a subsequent day; and great would be the expectation of the fat bullock to be slaughtered by the good man, to say

> nothing of the good things to be prepared by the kind hostess. Thus a month's job would be accomplished in a day (1978:25-28).

It was necessary to reproduce this picture of "pre-modern, traditional and uncivilized" Rolong existence for a variety of reasons. First, this edenic paradise is about to fall because of the descent of Ndebele upon it. Even more important, Ndebele occupation of idyllic Kunana sets the stage for the introduction of the Rolong to other civilizations, including western modernity. Dispersed, the Rolong (symbolized by Ra-Thaga and Mhudi) move in different directions, encountering the Koranna and later the trekkers and other branches of the Barolong kingdom, specifically the Seleka under Moroka. It is from the encounter with the trekkers that Ra-Thaga and wife inherit an old wagon, a symbol of modernity and his society's transition to embracing change. This embrace is conveyed to us through Ra-Thaga's metaphoric musings:

> He mused over the hallowed glories of being transported from one end of the country to the other like the White people, in their own wagon.
>
> Gone are the days of their primitive tramping over long distances, with loads on their heads. For them the days of the pack-ox had passed, never to return again. The carcase of a kudu or any number of blesbuck, falling to his musket by the roadside, could be carried home with ease, leaving plenty of room in the vehicle for their luggage. Was it real, or was it just an evanescent dream? (1978:187-88).

The migratory flux with which *Mhudi* ends signifies the 'migration'/transition from pre-modern(ity) to the technologized modern conditions with all its promises, progress, and uncertainities and anxieties, if the rhetorical question is anything to go by. We are therefore offered glimpses of aspects of modernity Plaatje admired and suspected at the same time.

In other words, the destruction of Kunana engenders more than physical encounters between the Barolong and other nations; it engenders a spectrum of encounters and flows reminiscent of European modernity's encounter with its others, inaugurated by the voyages of discovery already referred to. Second, this description offers traces of a considerable level of economic, cultural and social sophistication in the Rolong polity. While Plaatje considers this existence "humdrum, simple, monotonous" in contrast to the making of history in the Americas, it is nevertheless evident that transformation, experimentation and progress—evidence of modernity as per the definitions above—are under way within Africa, and South Africa in particular, prior to European contact. The desire to advance and progress is thus intrinsic in any human society as evident in the

smelting of iron, production of "useful implements" and the original but obviously dangerous innovations in animal breeding. In short, modernization was already underway before the advent of European modernity. Evidence of modernization and observable political structures in Tswana societies problematize Plaatje's initial clamour and faith in western institutions, specifically the legal and non-racial Cape franchise. His faith in these institutions, coupled with his sharp criticism of local practices of lobola and initiation, seem to credit western modernity as the initiator of progress among his people. As I will show in a moment, the loss of the franchise saw Plaatje's return to pre-colonial political structures and oral forms as critiques of the emerging racialized state. The point to underscore is that Plaatje's attitude towards both modern and traditional institutions defies a manichean analysis of approval or disapproval. It is ambivalent and thus requires continuous contextualization.

Third, with its nostalgic overtones, this passage serves as a backdrop against which to understand both negative and positive consequences of modernity. On the negative side, this picture will provide, in Grady's words, the standard against which to measure modernity's fall from grace (2000:4). In light of Plaatje's career, the pre-industrial condition of his society served at least two major purposes. First, when the promise of a non-racial and egalitarian society was dashed by the loss of the non-racial Cape franchise, the old dispensation provided something to fall back on. Personally, after his loss of political clout as a "leader without a people"(Willan 1984:294*ff*), Plaatje devoted his energies to ethnic scholarship as a means of reclaiming his lost status as a leader of his people (see chapter four). Following from this, he was enabled to use what he perceived as a fast-disappearing culture both to mobilize his people against the falling moral standards occasioned, as he believed, by some aspects of modernity, and to build political allegiances. He hoped ultimately to mobilize his people against the emergent racialized state following the unification of independent South African republics in 1910. Plaatje's reclamation of past Tswana forms of life is to be understood as a response to modernity as well as an attempt to reclaim lost personal glory. This is the basis for his faith in ethnic tradition, history and identity as the foundation for modern politics. Finally, in his imagined utopia of equivalents and differences, Plaatje's people will draw from their oral forms aspects which they will contribute to the new world. Put differently and metaphorically, aspects of their culture will act as provisions on a long journey to modernity.

On the positive side, if modernity entails progress, as I will show shortly, then pre-modernity or tradition serves as Huxley's (1954) "savage reservation" that justifies/legitimates the inauguration and sustenance of the "brave new world". In simple terms, the past stands for our "humdrum, simple, monotonous" and unsophisticated state from which modernity has delivered us. In maintaining this dual significance of the passage, I suggest that for Plaatje, as for Connolly, modernity retains the potential of simultaneously being a resource and problem. In Plaatje's passage, we get glimpses of his contrast between the "before" and "after". For example, the change in the status quo comes with the advent of poverty, orphanages, cash economy and its penchant for exorbitance and destruction of collective labour. In total, therefore, Plaatje's reconstruction of pre-modern existence is instrumental in illustrating what he admires and suspects about the past and the modern. In view of this, we will appreciate the philosophical foundation of his utopia, one that combines the old and the new. Duality is therefore a leitmotif worth emphasizing in Plaatje's life and career.

Lastly, the rural and pre-modern conditions of Plaatje's society illuminate the rural background he found in Shakespeare's dramas and on whose basis he partly appreciated and subsequently translated the dramas. In fact, Plaatje's picture of pre-industrial Tswana society has echoes in Youings's description of sixteenth-century English life.

> In fact throughout the sixteenth century the overwhelming majority of the country's inhabitants were engaged primarily in providing from the land, for themselves and their families, the basic needs of food and shelter.
>
> Farming itself was not one occupation but many, for besides growing their crops and rearing their stock the farmer and his family were masters of many skills. Not only did they process from their own raw materials virtually everything they ate, drank, wore, and used for fuel, but they built shelter for themselves and their animals, and fashioned most of their tools and implements (1984:25).

Yet another striking comparison: Plaatje's remark that Tswana shepherds "command a large vocabulary...are familiar with an enormous number of technical terms" (1916:7) is comparable to the following:

> Keith Thomas has shown in...*Man and the Natural World* (1983) that the agricultural workers of our period had a large vocabulary which enabled them to draw subtle distinctions between various kinds of flora and fauna. They had a detailed knowledge of the natural world...which could be handed on from generation to generation (Reay 1988:5).

Clearly, pre-industrial English and Tswana societies have common modes of existence which derive directly from their reliance on the land. Thus, an assessment of Shakespeare's pre-modern society, or the society about which he wrote, is material in establishing not only equivalences between his and Plaatje's society, but also the differences, providing the pillars of his imagined world of human interdependence. In fact, a comparative examination of the pre-modern status(es) of both Plaatje and Shakespeare's societies would enable us to appreciate Couzens's tantalizingly brief delineation of equivalences between Plaatje and Shakespeare, a matter that deserves fuller investigation. Couzens notes the following: both were countrymen; both matured at the time of great revolution—when oral culture was being largely transformed into a written one; both could draw on a deep well of sayings, riddles, proverbs, folk-tales, songs, and country lore (1988:62-63). The traditional economies associated with the land produced accomplished native speakers who command a rich vocabulary. Not surprisingly, it is from the pastures that most of Setswana proverbs derive (Plaatje 1916:x). These remarks will form the basis of further comparisons in chapter three.

Given that modernity is a constellation of ideas, symbols and lived practices which emerged from the west, we are enabled to assess which apsects of this phenomenon earned Plaatje's admiration and suspicion. In general, he was attracted to western modernity because of its central ideal of progress, both philosophically and materially. Willan's remarks on the African intelligentsia Plaatje joined in Kimberley are a worthwhile starting point.

> Generally speaking they were committed Christians and church-goers and believed in the ideals of 'progress', 'improvement' and individual advancement through education and hard work. They also tended to be strong supporters of the institutions of the Cape Colony: in particular the non-racial Cape Franchise (the vote was open to any male citizen who possessed property worth £75 or received an income of £50 a year, and who could fill in a registration form); and a judicial system which claimed to uphold the principle of equality before the law, regardless of racial or other distinctions. They generally identified themselves, moreover, with the cause of the British Imperial Government, to whom they looked for the protection of both the rights and liberties they enjoyed (Plaatje 1996:7).

This passage is helpful in providing a connection between the conceptual and material, ideal and the concrete. For example, it shows means or steps with which the ideal of progress could be achieved. The passage identifies education and the non-racial franchise as aspects of the modernity Plaatje admired. Let us consider these aspects to

illustrate their use-value and, consistent with the double connotation of modernity, their potentially destructive consequences.

Plaatje and other members of the African intelligenstia admired colonial education as a major means of human progress. Lovedale and Morija—missionary institutions—were praised as "the pioneer civilizing agencies…without which our people would drop a 100 years down the progressive ladder" (Plaatje 1996:101). From modern education Plaatje obtained the skill of literacy (Willan 1984:11*ff*) which liberated his pre-modern society from its heavy reliance on memory for the storage of information. When Plaatje first wrote down his family tree, which had hitherto been passed onto him by word of mouth, he was proud to be "the first to put memory to paper" (cited in Couzens 1988:63). The skills of reading and writing he mastered were later utilized not only in his interaction with, consumption and transformation of Shakespeare and the modernity he represented, but also in restoring his Setswana language and culture (Willan 1984, Schalkwyk and Lapula, 2000).

Concerned that his language and culture were under threat from modernity, Plaatje engaged in various projects aimed at rescuing his rich tradition from extinction. Some of these projects include the recording of Setswana proverbs, culminating in the publication of *Sechuana Proverbs with Literal Translations and their English Equivalents* (1916) and his translation of Shakespeare's *The Comedy of Errors* (1930), which he used to disseminate his preferred version of Setswana orthography. Plaatje's fears that his language and culture might fall into disuse were real, because during his lifetime the Koranna language disappeared (Willan, 1984:326, *cf.* Schalkwyk and Lapula, 2000:24). It is not surprising therefore that part of his career was devoted towards documenting aspects of his language and culture. Plaatje's publications, especially those intended to be school readers, are to be understood as part of his embrace of western education which he sought to entrench in his society as a means of social advancement. Such a project was of course fraught with problems as I illustrate in this study.

Western education had an important consequence of liberating Rolong society from old-age traditions which Plaatje found to be obsolete and redundant. In contrast to the admirable role played by Lovedale and Morija, we can cite the traditional education

system of *bogwera* (boy initiation). His excitement with modern schooling was equalled by a correspondingly strong indictment of traditional education which we expect to find in the pre-modern society he imagines at the beginning of *Mhudi*. Plaatje has this to say about initiation.

> In some pity we record that during this, the fourth month of the third year of the twentieth century, the Barolong have revived the ancient circumcision rites which had long since gone down beneath the silent prayer of Christian civilization...
>
> The fact that in the year A.D. 1903 the sons of Montsioa can safely solemnise a custom the uselessness of which was discerned by their fathers and which the rest of Bechuanaland has for years relegated to the despicable relics of past barbarism, shows that someone has not been doing their duty (Plaatje 1996:71-73).

I return to this passage later, but for the present let me emphasize that according to Plaatje, circumcission is out of time and place as the Barolong are expected to have moved up the 'progressive ladder' aided by modern education. Reviving this practice belies and undermines the civilising influence of modern educational institutions of Morija and Lovedale.

In addition to serving as a contrast or even foil to the 'civilized' state of his people, this passage illustrates aspects of Plaatje's culture which he did not admire. Moreover, the tension between 'tradition'/pre-modern/old and the modern/civilization/new, pointed to the ambivalent position of the new elite in society, and Plaatje's in particular. In other words, Plaatje's modern education contradicted certain aspects of his culture, resulting in tensions between him and the people whose cause he wished to advance. To condemn initiation and yet wish to salvage the culture of which the former is a part, promises to be a tension-ridden mandate. This tension crystalized in the leadership debate discussed in chapter four. By straddling two worlds, at times Plaatje seemed to contradict himself in his career, speaking for and against modernity and tradition at the same time. An assessment of Plaatje must therefore demonstrate an awareness and even appreciation of the tensions of his socio-economic and political context. It was probably due to these tensions that Plaatje proposed a reconstituted world in which the old and the new co-exist in democratic embrace. More on this in due course.

While western education was considered a means of progress, it was also a potential danger to indigenous forms of education. This is true if what is taught in the school system does not reflect the needs of the people that school system is intended to serve.

The orthography issue I will discuss later is a good example. For now, let us note that Plaatje was intensely worried that the many spellings of Setswana would result in the production of what he termed "SeRuti", the kind of Setswana spoken by missionaries (Plaatje 1996). In subsequent developments regarding this matter the opinion of native speakers on how to spell their language was sidelined. Obviously, this meant that what was conveyed through the school system was contrary to what its "beneficiaries" expected. Thus the school system which was intended to serve the people became an instrument by which their language was supposedly destroyed. Plaatje's translation of Shakespeare was partly aimed at restoring what he considered to be authentic Setswana.

The remarks on education, its usefulness in advancing the human spirit, together with its potentially destructive consequence of effacing indigenous forms of knowledge, take us to another correspondingly admirable aspect or symbol of modernity, namely Shakespeare—literally and symbolically. It is necessary to sketch Shakespeare's position within the general phenomenon of modernity; delineate his transmission to the other; isolate aspects which made him admirable and useful to Plaatje's cultural and politcal concerns; and lastly define his potential threat to indigenous culture.

The actual commencement of modernity is difficult to establish, although it is variously assigned to the late medieval period, the Renaissance, or the Enlightenment (Grady 2000:2). Burke suggests that "the Renaissance inagurates the modern world" (1964:10). The Renaissance, in which modernity is believed to have begun, was a time of great revolution, rebirth and rediscovery. Ngugi wa Thiong'o notes:

> European renaissance involved not only exploration of new frontiers of thought but also a reconnection with their memory with roots in ancient Greece and Rome. In practice, it meant a disengagement from the tyranny of hegemonic Latin and discovery of their own tongues. But it also meant a massive and sustained translation and transfer of knowledge from Latin and Greek into the emerging vernaculars including English. There was also a lot of inter-vernacular translation of current intellectual production among the then emerging European languages, for instance, from French into English and vice versa (2003:11).

Within this context of general cultural (political and economic) translation and transformation Shakespeare emerged (Couzens 1988:63), leaving, as Loomba and Orkin suggest, an "imprint on cultures across the globe" (1998:1). The translation of Greek and Roman narratives into European vernaculars, including among others Plutarch's *Lives*, a major source for Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* (Daniell 1998), helps us to appreciate

his participation in the emergent cultural renaissance. Shakespeare's works came to constitute part of the larger and complex phenomenon called English Literature, endowed with specific political, cultural and economic functions implicatable in the colonial project (see Johnson 1996). Moreover, Shakespeare not only participated in the formation of English culture, he is credited by Hegel as the inaugurator of modernity (see Grady 2000:3). As Grady elaborates

> For him [Hegel], Shakespeare, with his strikingly individualized characterizations, stood as a figure representative of an epochal new individualism and subjectivity characterestic of modernity (3).

This enables us to explore how Shakespeare's characters earned Plaatje's admiration and even served as tools in his response to the tensions of his time. It is thus possible to see Shakespeare not only as an aspect of modernity, but also as its symbol.

If Shakespeare emerged from the same context as modernity and even inaugurated it as Hegel claims, it is possible to address the question of his transmission to and subsequent effect not only on the other, but also on British people. However, both the transmission and effect must be informed by specific social functions he is expected to serve. In a superb examination of the institutionalization of English Studies in both England and its colonies, Johnson identifies four overlapping social functions with which imaginative literature—Shakespeare occupying a central position--was invested:

> The missionary position, which sees literature as a proselytizing aid and occasional substitute for scripture; the utilitarian position, which sees it as something of limited use-value in the emergent capitalist social order; the romantic position which sees it as a repository of profound spiritual truths; and the imperial position, which sees it as a means of constructing and securing British identity (14).

At the centre of these four positions is a political agenda which stressed the superiority of English language and culture, to be shared with the inhabitants of the colonies via an education system. For example, Sir John Herschel held that England's superior educational system should be the model for the Cape Colony and that English should be the means of "communication and of instilling a love for England in the subject peoples of distant lands" (Johnson, 25-26). As I will illustrate in the discussion on colonial education, "instilling a love for England in the subject people" entails erasure, transformation, translation and dislocating the native from his indigenous forms of learning. That is to say, cultivating a love for England implies a simultaneous process of

un-loving or dis-loving one's country, culture and identity to acquire a new one. These prefatory remarks will enable us to appreciate how Shakespeare is a potential threat to indigenous forms.

It is necessary to establish how Plaatje, the other, received Shakespeare and the uses to which he put him. This will illuminate his interest in and subsequent translation of Shakespeare. Ultimately, with Shakespeare's connections to western modernity, we can determine how the translations are either an embrace of or resistance to modernity. We will determine how the translations are a sign of "love for England", or for Tswana forms of life, or both. To achieve this, Plaatje's "A South African's Homage" is the best place to turn and, because I return to this document later, two points are sufficient by way of illustration.

To begin with, Shakespeare's rich oral tradition reminded Plaatje of Tswana oral forms that he believed to be threatened by European ideas. This illustrates the dual effects of modernity, as simultaneously a resource and threat. By reminding Plaatje of his pre-modern traditions, Shakespeare served as a powerful tool towards reclaiming Rolong culture, paradoxically against the effects of the modernity Shakespeare represents. Thus translating Shakespeare is fraught. It raises the question/logic/validity of whether the master's tools can be appropriated to dismantle the master's house (Loomba and Orkin 1998:8)? It could further be suggested that the appropriation of the symbols of modernity to reverse its effects on indigenous forms is a re-inscription and acknowledgement of its power and influence. Strictly speaking, modernity is not dismantled or countered, but re-constituted to 'tolerate and accommodate' the subaltern. In brief, the translation of Shakespeare engenders a hybridized, modern condition in which the old and the new co-exist without necessarily curtailing the influence of the latter on the former.

Second, in Shakespeare Plaatje found an expression of ideals consistent with his political vision. These ideals include the call for a common humanity and justice for all, the individual's autonomy as the knowing and acting subject and a break with obsolete traditions. By allowing the subaltern a platform from which to complain against injustices (Skura 1989:58) through the likes of Caliban and Shylock, Shakespeare earned

Plaatje's admiration as an advocate for justice, common humanity and tolerance. In a society that was increasingly racialized, Shakespeare functioned as a resource to be mobilized against oppression, prejudice and other forms of racial intolerance. Plaatje's remarks on *Romeo and Juliet*, illustrate our point:

> It may be depended upon that we both read *Romeo and Juliet*. My people resented the idea of my marrying a girl who spoke a language, which like the Hottentot language, had clicks in it; while her people likewise abominated the idea of giving their daughter in marriage to a fellow who spoke a language so imperfect as to be without any clicks (Plaatje 1996:211).

Plaatje must have found the tragedy of Romeo and Juliet a double-edged tool. While it was an expression of a past practice with equivalents to Plaatje's culture, it was also an indictment of endogamy with its elevation of community interests vis-à-vis those of the individual. For Plaatje, this story insists upon and encourages individual freedom and the need for choice if tragedies of such magnitude are to be avoided. In Wagner's words, this story calls for the "autonomy of the human being as the knowing and acting subject" (2001:5). By marrying Elizabeth, against his people's will, Plaatje expressed his autonomy as a knowing and acting subject. The marriage also points to the possibility of the individual's liberation from the clutches of a collective mentality characteristic of pre-modern societies where "man was conscious of himself only as a member of a race, people, party, or corporation--only through some general category" (Burke 1964:11-12).

In Plaatje's circumstances, the "double tragedy" in Shakespeare's story was prevented, thanks to the "civilized laws of the Cape." This point deserves further commentary to illustrate the connection between Shakespeare's fictional world and the material institutions of English society that Plaatje admired. The ideals of tolerance, justice, individual freedom, and the break with traditions that Shakespeare fictionalizes in this drama manifested themselves in the material conditions of the British Empire, in particular the legal and political franchise in operation in the Cape Colony. Undoubtedly, this connection must have strengthened the African intelligentsia's loyalty to and admiration of British rule and symbols. Shakespeare emerged as one of those symbols. In Willan's words, "Shakespeare was always the supreme symbol of all that was of value in English civilisation and culture" (1984:331).

However, none of all this should make us forget that this admiration is a contested field. Plaatje simultaneously admired and supported traditional political structures because of

their democratic inclinations. His support for traditional structures became prominent with the loss of the non-racial Cape franchise. Plaatje's valorization of the Cape franchise was at times exaggerated to the point of implying that democracy only came with European modernity.

While Shakespeare was a means of reclaiming a disappearing culture, he was also a potential danger to that very culture. To appreciate this threat, let us place him within the larger apparatus of colonial education and administration which emphasized the superiority of Englishness, thereby denigrating other cultures as wholly or partly inferior. Shakespeare was the defining coordinate of this Englishness. The following passages from Johnson (1996, 1998) forcefully illustrate the point. Sir Arthur Quiller Couch, Professor of English at Cambridge, described Shakespeare's dramas as expressing

> the fierce joy to be an Englishman and a handbook to patriotism, should that sacred passion need one (1899:xi. Qtd in Johnson 1996:80-81).

In *Shakespeare in Time of War* (1916) Colmer singles out Shakespeare as the

> only poet who has identified himself deeply with the nationality of our race and who has made himself the mouthpiece to interpret it in every mood and aspiration, who is himself, indeed the typical Englishman. Our one and only *national* poet is William Shakespeare,--national, not in an insular, but, one might almost say, in an imperial sense (1916:xii. Qtd in Johnson 1996:81).

Murray (1929) extends the use-value of Shakespeare in a telling statement: "it seems unreasonable to introduce rotation of crops and to withhold Shakespeare" (1929:326. Qtd in Johnson 1998:222). As we will see, the introduction of England's "national poet", and by extension the culture for which he stood, was perceived as a "novel and somewhat daring experimentation" (Willan 1984:40), thought likely to fail because natives were lacking in intellectual capacity to appreciate his power. Invested with such cultural power and agency through education and other colonial administrative structures, Shakespeare threatened, in subtle ways, to efface and displace indigenous forms of learning from which moral guidance and national pride/identity were obtained. Trained to look to England and its symbols, the native had lost his/her indigenous symbols.

It is perhaps Shakespeare's cultural capital—his ability to instill or invoke a sense of indigenous interiority--that makes his threat even more real. Joughin for example, has noted the variety of 'Shakespeares'. In his words, Shakespeare

> featured in the construction, refashioning and articulation of a diverse range of other cultures and identities too. Indeed, Shakespeare has become the national poet of a variety of countries in particular forms. There is, and was, a German Shakespeare (East and West); there is the contested legacy of a colonial Shakespeare in former British possessions; there is the post-national 'Shakespeare' who has served to focus debates concerning multi-culturalism etc (1997:1).

If Shakespeare participated in "refashioning" many cultures, and has become the "national poet of a variety of countries", it follows that he has "displaced" indigenous poets, and is now the new cultural icon. It is not surprising, therefore, that educated natives use him to embellish their speeches, and that the Batswana have given him the name 'Tsikinya-Chaka' and valorize him as "the white man who spoke so well". If the elite--Ngugi's "keepers of memory of the community" (2003:7)--are attracted to Shakespeare (Willan 1984:331) and use him to "embellish their speeches" (Plaatje 1996:210), what fate--following Ngugi—awaits a culture whose custodians are dazzled by the spokesperson of the invading culture?

This takes us to the last aspect of modernity I wish to consider, namely urbanization as a result of the 'mineral revolution' (Worden 1994, Pampallis 1991, Thompson 2001): the discovery of diamonds and gold at Kimberley and Johannesburg in 1867 and 1886 respectively. Kimberley, the first urban centre in South Africa, brought with it mixed blessings for the country and its inhabitants. In fact, the discovery of minerals resulted in a ripple-effect of promises and problems. On the positive side, the discovery of minerals and the resultant urbanization promised massive economic prosperity. For example, mining stimulated the growth of "several smaller industrial establishments" to produce "commodities required by the core mining industries" (Thompson 2001:111). The growth of towns also attracted huge populations which in turn provided "a market and stimulated the growth of various small, consumer-goods industries: clothing, leather" (Pampallis 1991:32) and also resulted in great demand for agricultural products. In consequence, the agricultural sector was stimulated to grow in order to meet this demand. The emergence of mining towns also resulted in the growth of ports, Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, East London and Durban, to "cope with the increased traffic in

goods and people moving in and out of the country following the birth of the mining industry" (Pampallis, 32). In general, this economic prosperity together with its associated infrastructural development promised great changes and progress in the provision of jobs, alternative living conditions, and opportunities for personal and collective advancement. The Kimberley Post Office to which Plaatje became attached as a messenger and the enabling environment in which he did private studies and got exposed to Shakespeare, are to be appreciated within the context of general progress occasioned by the mineral revolution. It will be shown in the next chapter how the context of change enabled Plaatje and the rest of the African intelligentsia to participate with a self-imposed twin mandate of improving themselves and the lives of their communities.

Alongside the prosperity and promise of a better existence, there were correspondingly negative aspects. In general, industrialization and urbanization signalled a rupture with pre-industrial forms of existence we noted in the passage from *Mhudi*, as the "whites were incorporating Africans into a capitalist, white-dominated economy" (Thompson, 111). While industrialization was under way, Thompson tells us, whites were conquering Africans, taking land away from them. The loss of land set in motion a spectrum of dependencies resulting in massive impoverishment, moral degradation and humiliation of Africans. To reduce the native to helpless dependency, the white establishment introduced a series of measures. One such was the imposition of taxation. Since taxes had to be paid in cash, most people had to work as wage earners on farms, mines, and factories in order to obtain the needed cash (Pampallis, 24). A stage was thus set for the emergence of the migrant labour system, yet another measure by which natives were reduced to dependency. Under the migrant labour system, men left their homes to work on the mines for periods ranging from three to twelve months before they returned to their families (ibid, 23). Away at the mines, the men left "the women with greatly extended responsibilities for the household economy" (Thompson,111).

To accommodate the miners, the (in)famous compound system was introduced, benefiting the employer more than the employee. Thompson writes,

> The stated reason for this was to prevent them from stealing diamonds. Diamonds were entering the market illegally, and illicit diamond buying was a serious threat to the industry. But compounding also gave the companies

> inordinate control over their African workers, as well as economies of scale in lodging and feeding them (2001:119, see also Pampallis, 28, Worden, 39).

Conditions in the compounds were appalling, both physically and psychologically. As to how many a small room accommodated, the estimation varies. Rall puts the number at twenty to twenty-five (2003:25), while Thompson estimates it at fifty. In his words,

> They were clustered together, as many as fifty to a room, where they slept without beds in double-decker concrete bunkers (2001:121).

In such crammed rooms, the men had no privacy, were under stringent rules and had to adjust to being away from their families to which they returned only at the end of their contracts (Pampallis, 29). At the height of illicit diamond buying, these men suffered the indignity of being stripped for intimate body searches (Thompson, 119, Worden 1994:38) to ensure that they did not steal any valuable gems. The punishment for possessing diamonds without any satisfactory reasons attracted as many as fifty lashes (Thompson, 118). The conditions in the compounds were further complicated by increased alcohol consumption. Rall, for example, notes that between 1886 and 1888, a large number of canteens supplied 'Cape Smoke', a cheap and viciously potent brandy (2003:24). It was during this time that the conditions in the compounds prompted John Merriman, one of Plaatje's patrons, to declare in a letter to his wife, that the compounds were "a disgrace to humanity" (Rall, 24).

Evident from the preceding discussion is a clear illustration of the double-effect of modernity, as a promise for better existence and harbinger of social problems at the same time, or as simultaneously constructive and destructive. The introduction of industrial modernity was in Setai's (1998) words, "the making of poverty in South Africa". To borrow Plaatje's metaphors, modernity introduced "orphanages, poverty, and nameless babies". While poverty, moral degeneration and other social ills existed in pre-industrial/modern times, they were exacerbated by the emergence of towns and cities. We can understand the Westphals'—Plaatje's surrogate parents at Pniel--anxieties about his migration to Kimberley. They were concerned, along with members of Plaatje's family, as Plaatje recalled later in life, lest "he should fall an easy prey to the temptations of city life" (Willan 1984:26). "They regarded", Willan continues, "the mining town of Kimberley as a den of vice and iniquity, full of pitfalls for the unwary" (1984:26). After all, they had not only experienced the effects of urbanization in Europe, and Germany in

particular, but before settling at Pniel had also worked in Kimberly for some months (Willan 1984:18). Their fears were therefore real.

References to alcoholism enable us to appreciate Plaatje's general concern with what he felt to be the declining moral standards, breakdown in parental control, and lawlessness amongst his people (Plaatje 1996:307-308). Alcohol, one of the manifestations of moral decay, did not receive his approval and, as he increasingly got frustrated with the ill-treatment of the natives, it became a synecdoche for modernity. When a government nominee appealed to blacks to "remember all the blessings the white man has bestowed upon" them, Plaatje retorted, "I do, always I do, especially *brandy* and *syphilis*" (Willan 1984:374)(emphasis added). For Plaatje, these two were the white man's "blessings", emblematic of the hopelessness, despair, dis-ease, and moral decay that has come with modernity.

His own family did not escape the scourge of alcoholism as his sons--St Leger, Richard and Halley--despite being "able and talented" young men, drank in opposition to their father's teetotalism and the strict moral standards to which he tenaciously adhered. Proverb number one-hundred-and-seventeen in his *Sechuana Proverbs*, "*E mashi ga e itsale*", literally translated as "a good milch-cow (*sic*) does not always bear itself (i.e. bear a calf that grows up to be a milk-yielder" (*sic*) (Plaatje 1916:32), is perhaps an appropriate metaphor for Plaatje's frustrations with his sons' over-indulgence in liquor and their general cavalier attitude towards life. His attitude towards alcohol consumption must therefore not surprise us. In the face of this general decline in moral standards, we can understand Plaatje's impassioned attempts to rekindle his people's interest in their oral traditions and involvement in temperance work as means of arresting the situation (Willan 1984:326-327, 318*ff*). How successful these projects were, will be highlighted in due course.

In concluding this discussion on modernity, it is proper to mention Plaatje's role both in its constructive and destructive capacity. The former is fairly obvious from his general mobilisation of the tools of modernity (the use of print culture for example) in safe-guarding what he perceived to be threatened forms of existence. The latter is not very obvious. Pushed by financial hardships, Plaatje was forced to become a labour

recruitment agent for Mines Labour Supply Company, "whose speciality was recruiting labour for the coal mines in the Transvaal" (Willan 1984:137*ff*). Recruitment agents are implicated in a clearly orchestrated scheme of labour management and its consequent exploitation of African labourers. Worden notes:

> Another device to reduce wages was to use agents to recruit workers in the rural areas where contracts were signed and terms fixed without giving the worker the opportunity of playing off one employer against another (1994:40, see also Pampallis, 25-26).

Pampallis points out "dishonest recruitment practices" in which workers were enticed with "false promises of high wages and good working conditions" (1991:25). Furthermore, local shop-keepers participated in the entrapment of potential signees by allowing them credit on "imported goods such as hoes, ploughs, blankets, cooking utensils, clothing etc", thus luring them to sign up as migrant workers to earn the money with which to settle these debts (26).

Given all this and the unsavoury conditions miners faced, Plaatje's involvement in recruiting mine workers implicates him in the exploitation, impoverishment and degradation of his own people. In Distiller's terms, he is "an agent of imperialist exploitation" (2003:119). Modernity is most destructive when it turns one to prey on his own people, despite Plaatje's conscious attempts to be their voice for better treatment.

Transition.

Transition, like modernity, entails transformation. *The New Oxford English Dictionary* defines it as "the process or a period of changing from one state or condition to another"(1998:1969). It therefore presupposes literal and symbolic spaces between which transformation takes place. Thus, as in modernity, we can conceive of points of *origin* and *destination*, enabling us to examine changes, their effects, and the historical period within which such general transformation occurs. Put differently, points of origin and destination impose both temporal and conceptual dimensions within which to assess transformation. Thus we can talk of broad and narrow periodisations such as ancient, medieval and modern, as Hegel has suggested (in Grady 2000), or early modern to late-modern. In this study, transition is deployed with its double connotation as both the act of changing from traditional to modern conditions and as the sum-total of ideas, practices and processes of transformation. Plaatje's translations could thus be considered

as the stimulus of change and as signs of transformation as well. In translating, Plaatje could be understood as initiating and embracing or accepting modernity in his society.

Translation.

I now turn to translation by way of concluding the definition of concepts. The following quotation from Octavio Paz, a translation theorist and practitioner, offers a helpful starting point.

> On the other hand, the world is presented to us as a collection of similarities; on the other, as a growing heap of texts, each slightly different from the one that came before it: translations of translations of translations. Each text is unique, yet at the same time it is the translation of another text. No text can be completely original because language itself, in its very essence, is already a translation--first from the nonverbal world, and then, because each sign and each phrase is a translation of another sign, another phrase (cited in Alvarez and Vidal 1996:12).

Paz perceives the human world as a conundrum in which similarity and difference co-exist. His conception of the human world as "a growing heap of texts", has temporal/spatial and ideological implications. The continued production of texts implies that translation is a continuous process by which texts are made available in contexts they hitherto did not occupy. Or, where they existed before, they are being re-translated and re-fashioned for specific purposes. At the core of these translations and re-translations, lie ideological impulses. The continued production of texts conjures up Pratt's (1992) contact zone and the resultant processes of trans-culturation and trans-textualization (Alaman Mazrui 1996), and to some extent Ali Mazrui's (1973) trans-nationalism. I return to these issues later in this chapter. Among this "heap of texts" are past narratives or stories which seem to require translating and re-translating or re-telling presumably because of their intrinsic moral or aesthetic value. Shakespeare's dramas and indigenous folk-tales, we can suggest, constitute part of Paz's "growing heap of texts".

The accumulation of these fictions as a result of re-telling posits the human world as largely fictional. In other words, it is a world of stories and storification. Through translation and re-telling of past narratives, we make fiction, from which we derive moral guidance and aesthetic gratification. As Achebe has famously remarked, "the story is our escort; without it, we are blind" (1987:124). These stories are simultaneously similar and different. Similar in that each text is a translation of the one before it and therefore

retains some of the 'original's' characteristics. Difference lies in the fact that each translation entails transforming the previous text or original. Thus there is no perfect homology between original and copy. If human language—the medium of translation—is already a translation or copy, we should therefore not expect a pristine or authoritative original. In fact, the authority or integrity of any text is constructed and not a given. Consequently, each translation or language deserves respect and recognition, as they yearn for the unattainable authoritative language or original. These remarks prepare us for the appreciation of Derrida's notion of "undecidable originals"(Derrida 1978) and Benjamin's idea of the "pure language"(Johnston 1992), all of which encompass diversity and resemblance. Translation therefore simultaneously manifests similarities and differences between originals and translations/imitations. This is a point worth bearing in mind throughout this study because it is useful in explaining what translation can bring to the original, or how both the target and source languages/texts can be enriched or transgressed during translation.

The idea of stories and texts which are simultaneously similar and different is useful in explaining how Plaatje found Shakespeare accessible. Both Plaatje and Shakespeare came from societies with rich oral traditions. As Couzens suggests, "both Plaatje and Shakespeare could draw on a deep well of sayings, riddles, proverbs, folk-tales, songs, and country lore" (1988:63). Plaatje found Shakespeare accessible because he was an accomplished story-teller like the people in his own community. The equivalences in both cases can be explained by Walter Ong's assertion that

> texts are essentially intertextual. A novelist can write a novel only because he or she has read other novels, or something approximating novels (1986:149).

As Paz tells us, these texts are translations of those before them. Put differently, all texts, stories and tales gesture towards the possibility of a common ancestry/origin of "pure language" or pre-Babelian-status which, though unattainable, Benjamin asserts, "lies concealed in concentrated fashion in translations" (in Johnston 1992:44). Translation as a mediating factor between languages "allows us" therefore, as Benjamin further suggests, "a glimpse of the pure language" (44).

Let me explain briefly the notion of the pure language and thereby create a basis on which it could illuminate Plaatje's translations. For Johnston (1992), Benjamin's notion of the pure language serves a double function: First, "it designates a language of pure

meaning and univocity unobscured by the mediation of any particular language" (45). In its purity, "it implies a theological view of language" (45). This is the language we expect to find in the pre-Babel context, and it is the language which in Brink's words, commanded the universe into existence (1996). This is the mother or "totalization of all languages" (Cheyfitz 1997:134). Such a language is therefore unattainable and an ideal that is lost following the multi-lingualism of the post-Babel situation. This then takes us to the second function, "as a means by which to grasp the differential and diacritical nature of all language, and the fact that the essential nature of language...only becomes visible in and through differences in particular languages" (46). The pure language therefore symbolizes the source or core to which we can trace the multiplicity, significance, uniqueness, infiniteness and diversity of languages. It therefore encompasses, paradoxically, sameness and difference. The dynamics of the contact zone, Paz's interplay of similarity and difference, Derrida's idea of incompletion, and later, Plaatje's idea of equivalence, trace their origins to the "pure language".

Despite their common origins, texts differ. This is to be expected because every translation becomes an original and therefore is different from the one before it. Describing some of the developments in translation studies, Bassnett (1996) remarks that

> The idea of the origin came under scrutiny, and both Derrida and de Campos, by rereading Benjamin, formulated the concept of translation that *becomes* the original by virtue of its coming into existence after the source. Benjamin argues that because it comes later than the source...the translation marks the continued life of the text at another moment in time (22).

As a mediating factor between languages, translation highlights in Benjamin's terms, "the central reciprocal relationships between languages" (1992:44), and therefore cultures. Plaatje's translations of Shakespeare are to be understood against this background of manifesting the kinship/equivalence between languages and cultures, and the originality of each translation. Professor Lestrade's revision of Plaatje's translation of *Julius Caesar*, rather than being a correction of the supposedly numerous errors and mistranslations Plaatje committed, is a patronizing celebration of the seRuti victory in the current orthography debate, and an attempt to monopolize Shakespeare. A full discussion of Lestrade's 'corrections' follows in chapter five. Plaatje was a man ahead of his time, and of Lestrade, who insisted that the translation must show slavish fidelity to Shakespeare's text. As originals in their own right, Plaatje's translations gave (or should have given) Shakespeare a new lease of life in the colonies, among Tswana readers in particular, and

thereby increased his currency. Couzens suggests that by "extending Shakespeare into another language and into new literary forms he was enriching Shakespeare in the process" (1988:65). Examples will follow in chapters four and five, but for the moment we can mention that by introducing proverbs and idioms where they do not exist in the original, Plaatje makes the original poetically richer. It could be suggested as well that introducing these figures of speech offers alternative forms of expression. This study adopts the notion of translation as transformation in which both the original and copy stand to gain or lose in the process of being extended into different languages and cultures. The very fact that Shakespeare's dramas are transported into another lingo-cultural space marks the beginning of a new life as we have just heard from Bassnett. But these translations have largely been ignored by decades of scholars and readers (Shole 1990/91, Starfield 2001). This is evident in the paucity of studies on them, save for Shole's 1990/91 paper which briefly compares *Diphoshophosho* to Raditaldi's translation of *Macbeth*. It is possible to conclude that the translations merely mimic or extend the political power of Shakespeare's texts. But as I will show later, they can be read as a subversion of this political power.

If the human world is a series of translations *ad infinitum*, the idea of perfect origin or source is, as Derrida has famously remarked, "undecidable", "illusory" and "heterogeneous" (Derrida 1978:290). Coupled with the idea that human language, the very medium through which meanings and reality are constructed, is in essence a translation, thus implying its continous mutation and transformation, the discussion of Plaatje's translations of Shakespeare takes on added significational value. In line with poststructuralist and postcolonial interrogations of "origins" and Derridean undecidability, it is possible to see translation as a process by which privileged texts are carnivalized, calibanized and cannibalized to show their heterogeneity. That is, they are destabilized or even humbled as "translations of translations of translations" *ad infinitum*. Consequently, it is to be expected that meanings will tend to be fluid/unstable, as Bassnett's reading of Derrida concludes.

> Translation serves to remind us that there is no absolute meaning, no uncontested original (1996:11).

I mention in passing here that Plaatje's translations serve as a reminder of the heterogeneity of Shakespeare's plays and as a result, his canonical status can only be a matter of continous negotiation.

With the Derridean caution in mind, I am inspired to avoid imposing closure on meanings, but rather to see them, in Brink's terms, as "pointing elsewhere" (1996:4). This is an important point to note because Plaatje's translation of Shakespeare lends itself to various interpretations. For example, it could imply an embrace or interrogation of western literary traditions. That is, translation is not an end in itself, but a means to other debates. Further, the use of terms such as "original", "copy", and "translation" is not unproblematic. With their elaborate commentary and editorial intervention, Shakespeare's texts are translations or copies of some sort, and are thus a departure from how the playwright first conceived them.

Translation, like the human language it targets and focuses on, is a universal human activity. As Venuti (1992) remarked:

> Translation continues to be an invisible practice, everywhere around us, inescapably present, but rarely acknowledged, almost never figured into discussions of the translations we all inevitably read (1).

This universality, like the Erasmian Folly cited earlier, seems to compound the difficulties, to borrow Erasmian terminology, of "dividing, reducing, and circumscribing" into narrow definitions a phenomenon of universal proportions.

As both theory and practice, translation engenders a universe of discourse wherein complex relationships are produced. As an intergral part of human communication (Steiner, 1975, Hornby 1990), translation engenders complex verbal and non-verbal exchanges by bringing together "actors" and "audiences" from diverse backgrounds (Lefevere, 1990:14). Similarly, according to Tabakowska (1990)

> Linguistic models of an act of verbal communication are always seen as a triad consisting of the sender of the message, the message and the receiver of the message (71).

In this study, the triad consists of Plaatje (the sender), Shakespeare's plays (the message) and the readers, amongst whom we include his Tswana audience and white academics. This triad explodes into a multiplicity not only of voices as in post-Babelian situation, but also of reactions and responses, since as Alvarez and Vidal (1996) aptly remind us,

> Translation can never be neutral, as it is charged with ideology and 'games of power, (blurb of book).

Definitions of translation must therefore show sensitivity not only to the process as traffic or exchange between languages or *carrying across* as Tymoczko (1999:19) prefers, but also to translation as an essential aspect of human communication (Steiner 1975, Hornby 1990) from which a babble of voices, emotions, reactions, power relations, knowledge and discourse emanate. What translation theorists (Benjamin, Derrida, Bassnett, Lefevere, Hermans, Tymoczko) are unanimous over is Benjamin's idea that translation intends language. That is, translation is first and foremost a linguistic exercise. Hence the following conception of it:

> What is generally understood as translation involves the rendering of a source language (SL) text into the target language (TL) so as to ensure that (1) the surface meaning of the two will be approximately similar and (2) the structures of the SL will be preserved as closely as possible but not so closely that the TL structures will be seriously distorted (Bassnett 1992:2, *cf.* Lefevere 1999:75).

This is the traditional definition of translation--as a purely linguistic transfer from one language to the next. For the purposes of this study, this definition is simultaneously adequate and inadequate. It is adequate because Plaatje translated some of Shakespeare's plays from English to Setswana. That is, the definition captures Plaatje's transfer of Shakespeare's plays into Setswana. Hence, as Benjamin suggests, translation reveals the kinship between languages (in Johnston1992:44).

To complicate this definition however, let us be reminded of Steiner's (1975) postulation of translation as part of human communication and consequently as a stimulus for polyvalence and pluralivocity. Even at the basic level of linguistic transfer, translation brings into communion and dialogue (and conflict) at least two languages, in this case, English and Setswana. This contact initiates 'dialogue' in which the 'kinship' between the two languages is manifested. The most famous outcome of this dialogue is the term 'equivalence' which is a central tenet to Plaatje's theory and practice of translation (Schalkwyk and Lapula 2000:14). In translating between the two languages, therefore, Plaatje sought to delineate equivalences between them, and hence his translations are in part made to prove Setswana's capacity as a language of literary expression just as English is (Shole 1990/91).

However, the above definition is inadequate. This view of translation derives from what Venuti (2000) calls "an instrumental concept of language" which as he notes,

> Leads to translation theories that privilege the communication of objective information and formulate typologies of equivalence, minimizing and sometimes excluding altogether any question of function beyond communication (6).

The scienticist view of language as a conveyor of objective information implies a neutrality of language which Alvarez and Vidal deny: "language is not neutral" (1996). Developments in translation theory occassioned by what Mary Snell-Hornby (1990) has called the "cultural turn", together with insights from post-structuralist and deconstructionist ideas, have problematized the scienticist notions of language, leading to modifications to the conception of translation. Derrida, for example, has argued that meanings do not exist outside language, but are rather constructed by language. Meanings are therefore a matter of negotiation and not objective and given truths. Nietzsche's famous statement that "there are no facts, only interpretations" (cited in Barry 1995:63) problematizes the issue of meanings and language. This post-structuralist scepticism about language as a conveyor of objective truths has a vital bearing on the conceptualization of translation. As Alvarez and Vidal (1996) have already told us, language is riddled with 'games of power'. Translation will therefore not be a neutral operation as it reflects these 'games of power'.

The 'games of power' are further complicated by the fact that languages and their cultures are not homogeneous entities, but an ensemble of sub-cultures with various ideological interests. Steiner claims,

> Any body of language, spoken at the same time in a complex community, is in fact rifted by much subtler differentiations. These relate to social status, ideology, profession, age and sex. Different castes, different strata of society use different idioms (1992:32).

Consequently, as Steiner continues,

> Languages conceal and internalize more, perhaps, than they convey outwardly. Social classes, racial ghettoes speak at rather than to each other (33).

These differences result, in some cases, in suspicions, prejudices and even animosity between the various groups. This obviously has a bearing on the meanings derived from language. As an educated person, Plaatje was likely to be seen as promoting an elitist culture which may be out of touch with the rest of his people. The failure of his own people to contribute towards the publication of some of his writings could be viewed in this light. He later realised that his own people considered an educated leader as a "clever actor on the stage--to be admired, not followed" (Willan 1984:317).

Consequently, his efforts at cultural reconstruction reflect a certain ideology, and so do his translations of Shakespeare.

If language is more than communication, what other functions does it serve? Ngugi wa Thiongo believes that

> Every language has two aspects: one aspect is its role as an agent that enables us to communicate with one another in our struggle to find the means for survival. The other is its role as a carrier of the history and the culture built into the process of that communication overtime (1993:30, *cf. Decolonising the Mind*).

Similarly, Edward Sapir states that

> Language is a guide to social reality...No language can exist unless it is steeped in the context of culture; and no culture can exist which does not have at its center the structure of natural language (cited in Bassnnet 1992:14).

Bassnett (1992) concludes

> Language, then, is the heart within the body of culture, and it is the interaction between the two that results in the continuation of life-energy. In the same way that the surgeon, operating on the heart cannot neglect the body that surrounds it, so the translator treats the text in isolation from the culture at his peril (14).

These passages highlight an important point omitted in the traditional definition of translation, namely that language cannot be divorced from culture. According to Bassnett, culture is unimaginable without language. Thus translation, even as a purely linguistic exercise, is implicitly a transfer of culture. As Alvarez and Vidal suggest, translation is

> Not merely passing from one text to another, transferring words from one container to another, but rather transporting one entire culture to another with all that this entails...(1996:5).

Similarly, Bassnett and Trivedi argue that

> the act of translation always involves much more than language. Translations are always embedded in cultural and political systems, and in history. For too long translation was seen as purely an aesthetic act, and ideological problems were disregarded. Yet the strategies employed by translators reflect the context in which texts are produced (1999:6).

A revised definition of translation must therefore go beyond mere linguistic transfer to incorporate the cultural transfer that goes with every linguistic transportation. In view of the cultural dimension inherent in translation, the following definition from Thomas Sebeok's *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Semiotics* is an encompassing one.

> An act (or process) which is performed (or occurs) over and across systemic borders. In the widest of its possible senses it is a series of operations, or procedures, whereby one semiotic entity, which is a constituent (element) of a certain cultural (sub) system, is transformed into another semiotic entity, which forms at least a potential element of another cultural (sub) system, providing that some informational core is retained 'invariant under transformation', and on its basis a relationship known as 'equivalence' is established between the resultant and initial entities (qtd. in Hermans, 1996:44-45).

This definition goes beyond the traditional emphasis on linguistic transfer to incorporate the significance and centrality of cultural exchange as well. Put differently, it highlights the fact that linguistic transfer is also accompanied by cultural exchange. Language is, as we have seen above, a container and medium through which culture is transmitted. By emphasizing the cultural exchange as well, the definition serves as an important point of departure towards appreciating the political/ideological biases and reactions associated with translation. Translation is thus not an innocent exchange between innocent or neutral languages, but a highly political operation, riddled, as Alvarez and Vidal (1996) have already suggested, "with games of power". Or as Bassnett and Lefevere write,

> Translations are never produced in an airlock where they, and their originals, can be checked against the *tertium comparationis* in the purest possible lexical chamber, untainted by power, time, or even the vagaries of culture. Rather, translations are made to respond to the demands of a culture, and of various groups within that culture (1990:7).

Consequently, we can appreciate not only Plaatje's translations of Shakespeare, but also the basis for Doke and Lestrade's intervention in Plaatje's rendition of *Julius Caesar*. The definition also introduces 'equivalence', a central notion in Plaatje's theory and practice of translation and his fascination with and negotiation of Shakespeare's cultural and political power.

What does "equivalence" entail, and how does Plaatje use it in his struggles that are informed partly by Shakespeare? This definition offers us an idea. The point of untranslatability at which some "informational core remains invariant", implies similarity, resemblance and the presence of common features in the languages or cultures under consideration. That is, the "invariant" features remain the same in the contexts in question. However, this similarity, does not necessarily imply perfect replica or homology. In fact, it anticipates the plurality or diversity we saw in the pure language. Equivalence, like the pure language, encompasses a paradox in which sameness and

difference coexist. Plaatje's use of equivalence recognizes and emphasizes this double connotation. As Schalkwyk and Lapula tell us, the notion of equivalence

> holds two things, essential to Plaatje's vision, in balance: first, a universal humanism that finds the legal system of the Cape Colony attractive precisely because of its ostensive claims to equality and justice for all; and second, a deep sense of ethnicity which recognizes that the specificities of culture, history, and translation are both valuable in themselves and obstacles to mere translation (2000:14-15).

The paradox of equivalence is perhaps forcefully expressed by Peter Sebina, a teacher in the Bechuanaland Protectorate, in his dissatisfaction with "the way in which books written in Sesotho were being recommended as reading matter in schools in Bechuanaland" (Willan 1984:326):

> Bechuana children are not Basuto children, nor are English children French children. Their colour may be the same, but not their languages (in Willan 1984:326).

Sebina's view, endorsed by Plaatje and Ramoshoana, undermines Lestrade's choice of Mangoaela in preparing *Dintshontsho* for publication. As I will show in chapter five, instead of Ramoshoana, Mangoaela, a Mosotho was chosen to assist Lestrade and Doke in revising this translation.

This study adopts the notion of translation as both literal and symbolic transformation that initiates an array of exchange, enrichment, denigration and 'violation' not only to the text being mediated, but also to the language into which it is being transported. This paradox is evident in Victor Hugo's observations: "to translate a foreign writer is to add to your own national poetry" (in Lefevere 1992:18) and "when you offer to a nation a translation, that nation will almost look on the translation as an act of violence against itself" (in Lefevere 1992:2). In Plaatje's context, this transformation takes on various forms. In general, it entails the appropriation of Shakespeare's texts for specific cultural and political ends. More specifically, these texts are used to preserve Setswana language and culture by recording and contextualizing its proverbial and idomatic richness, and to disseminate what Plaatje felt to be its authentic orthography.

The transformation has other consequences. The transportation of a text into different linguistic and cultural environments ensures its continued survival. Similarly, the target language offers the original alternative forms of expression by introducing proverbs,

idioms and phrases where none existed before. Effectively, this illustrates the affinity of languages where as Benjamin suggests, they need one another to fulfill their expressive functions. By expanding, shrinking, and rewriting the original, translation undermines and challenges the perceived political power and integrity of privileged texts. Given Paz's claim that human language is already a copy/translation, and therefore originals are "undecidable", as Derrida claims, then each translation or language is as important as the rest. This is encapsulated in Plaatje's notion of equivalence where sameness and difference co-exist. In transforming Shakespeare's dramas, Plaatje wants to highlight this equivalence necessary for the realization of his political ideal. His translations must therefore be assessed for what they can offer or tell us about his mentor, as Schalkwyk has claimed. They should also be considered for what they contribute to the development of Setswana language and culture.

Let us also bear in mind that translation also promises to denigrate the source and target languages and cultures. This is a large topic on its own, but one can mention here (and later in the chapter) that mimicking Shakespeare—a symbol of Western modernity—illustrates the native intellectual's translatability into what Bhaba calls "authorized versions of otherness" (1994:87). In other words, while Shakespeare could be roped in to preserve a threatened culture, his invocation in the same struggle could be self-deprecating. Such a paradox points to the ambivalence of resistance which I will discuss later.

To conclude the definition of concepts, I wish to emphasize their semantic complementarity. All three concepts encapsulate transformation which resonates in all the chapters of this study. The texts under consideration reflect in part Plaatje's ambivalent response to a complex phenomenon known as modernity. The transformation embedded in these concepts bears some relationship to the colonial enterprise, which also aimed at transforming both the colonizer and colonized. I single out Shakespeare as a symbol of modernity and discuss his role in the colonial and postcolonial ventures respectively.

Shakespeare and the Colonial Enterprise.

In the following section I focus on Shakespeare and the colonial enterprise in which rightly or wrongly, he has been implicated. This will create the backdrop against which to appreciate Shakespeare's impact on Plaatje and the latter's subsequent response to his mentor's 'colonising' influence. Ben Jonson's declaration that Shakespeare is a man not of "an age, but for all times" (in Quayson 2000:159), is not an unproblematic assertion. For one, it raises a host of questions: what do we mean by Shakespeare; is the concept 'Shakespeare' static; what makes Shakespeare a man for all times; is this amenability/relevance a given or a constructed phenomenon? If we borrow Hegel's notion of human history as divided into three epochs—ancient, medieval and modern (see Grady 2000:1), or into two broad phases of cultural encounters—colonial and postcolonial--the problem involves finding out what makes Shakespeare relevant to these contexts and encounters, themselves progenitors and sites of conflicting debates. Joughin has aleady shown us the multiplicity of 'Shakespeares', and therefore, his usefulness to different ages, as Jonson has claimed. It is therefore correct to see this relevance as socially and ideologically constructed. To discuss Shakespeare's implicatedness in the colonial project is also to invite questions of how he was involved, and what is meant by colonial enterprise.

These are questions for which answers must be sought, and, in attempting to provide tentative answers, some working definitions--much in the spirit of the preceding section of the chapter--are in order to establish parameters and contours of meanings within which such concepts as 'Shakespeare', 'colonialism' and its offshoot 'postcolonialism' might be appreciated.

The concept 'Shakespeare' encodes at least two overlapping ideas/notions worth outlining in making a case for his involvement in the colonial adventure. These ideas are so overlapping that it is not easy to distinguish one from the other. I isolate them here for analytical purposes. First, Shakespeare refers to a sociological entity, a historical personage locatable within specific historical, sociological and spatial milieu. That is, Shakespeare as the Stratford-born figure (Schoenbaum 1991, Rowse 1963) whose later success as dramatist continues to influence world literature to date, a person whose influence, like that of colonialism in which he is implicated, has according to Loomba

and Orkin (1998), left an indelible "imprint on cultures across the globe" (1). Understood this way, the question then arises as to how he was personally involved in colonialism.

His involvement as a person is debatable, at best it is implicit. Couzens, for example, characterizes Shakespeare as "without any personal political ambition" (1988:64). Similarly, in her essay on *The Tempest*, Meredith Anne Skura (1989), suggests that Shakespeare "had no direct stake in colonization" (58). He was however aware of the great interest in colonial activity taking place at the time. In particular, he was aware of the regularly cited historical incident of 1609 in which

> nine ships had left England to settle the colony in Jamestown, Virginia, and the *Sea Adventure*, carrying all the colonial officers, had disappeared. But its passengers reappeared in Virginia one year later, miraculously saved; they had wrecked off the Bermudas, until then believed demonically dangerous but now found to be providentially mild and fruitful (Skura 1989: 43)[1].

These events, Skura continues, "much in the news in the year just preceding *The Tempest*, have long been seen as relevant context for the play"(43). Clearly, colonial activity was under way during Shakespeare's time, and he was aware of it. What remains a difficulty however, is to establish his stake in it. Even his "patronal relations with members of the Virginia Company and to the circumstances of the play's initial production at the expansionist Jacobean court in 1611 and 1612-13" (Brown 1985:48) are not compelling evidence for his direct involvement in the colonial project. As Skura tells us, "the play is notoriously slippery" (Skura, 48). Shakespeare's involvement—directly and indirectly--is therefore conjectural and constructed.

The second notion of 'Shakespeare' follows from the first one. I borrow my working conceptualization of it from Johnson who writes

> 'Shakespeare' is a body of texts produced, disseminated, contested, institutionalized, performed, and criticized over a long period of time by a wide variety of social agents (1996:5).

[1] By this time, Ireland was already in the process of being colonized by the English. It was, according to Michael Neill, "a proving ground for methods of 'plantation' that would be applied in Virginia and elsewhere" (1994:4). For further discussion on Ireland as part of the English colonial enterprise, see Michael Neill "Broken English and Broken Irish: Nation, Language, and the Optic of Power in Shakespeare's Histories" *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 45:1(1994), 1-32.

Looked at this way, Shakespeare assumes significational value beyond the personal to that of an ideological construct and cultural symbol/artefact--"not", Johnson again,

> The 'greatest living writer', but rather a corpus of texts forged over a long period by a variety of cultural institutions to become *'the gold standard of literature'* (560)(1996:4)(emphasis added).

This body of texts is invested with vocabularies of power, integrity, authority and value to become the touchstone by which other literatures and cultures are evaluated. As Cartelli points out,

> Shakespeare functions in such political transactions as an unassailable source of moral wisdom and common sense, as a touchstone not only of what is right and just but also of what is necessary and practical. His name lends both respectability and moral probity to the positions his appropriators wish to advance (1987:98).

Similarly, Anthony Quayle refers to him as

> a man whose words and whose characters have become a very part of our subconscious lives, a man whose writing is so potent that it would be hard to say whether he interpreted more than moulded the English character...While the English tongue is spoken on this earth his works will stand, a mysterious and enobling human document (qtd in Neill 1998:165).

His authority, universality, integrity and power make him in the words of Loomba and Orkin, "the site for colonial and post-colonial encounters"(1998:17).

In exploring how this notion of Shakespeare is an accomplice of colonialism, it is fitting to understand what colonialism and postcolonialism are. They too are sites of contentious debate where more questions than answers continue to be generated. Hawthorn, for example, asks:

> Does the 'post' imply temporal supersession or ideological rejection? (If the latter, then clearly one can have postcolonial literature in the lands which are still experiencing colonial rule.) So far as 'colonialism' is concerned, should one extend this to lands such as Australia, Canada, and the United States--which after all did emerge as independent nations after periods of colonial rule? Should 'colonialism' include 'neo-colonialism'--in other words that pursuance of the political objectives of colonial rule by means which (at least not overtly) do not involve the exercise of direct political sovereignty backed up by military might? (2000:269-70).

Answers to these pertinent questions continue to be sought. What is clear for the purpose of this study, are two overlapping and interlocking points about colonialism and postcolonialism, namely: that they encode temporality/spatiality and ideology. I use

them here with this dualism in mind. Johnson is more bold and simplistic in his deployment of the concepts as "historical" and "changing fashions in literary criticism"(1998:218). Postcolonialism for example, with or without hyphenation, will thus be used to denote both notions of time and ideology. Or in Leon de Kock's words, "implicit in this *post*...is both a temporal and an oppositional element" (1996:5).

Following John Southard's (1997) defintion of colonization as a process involving "one nation or territory taking control of another nation or territory either through the use of force or by acquisition" (1), colonialism becomes the sum-total of all strategies geared towards the creation and control of colonies. Put differently, colonialism encompasses all efforts of colonial subjectification. Postcolonialism should thus be understood as encompassing all ideas, practices and strategies aimed at colonial (dis)entanglement. Both colonial subjectification and disentanglement have temporal and ideological implications, taking place within specific historical conditions and informed by specific ideologies/philosophies.

As both person and corpus of texts, Shakespeare was transported to the colonies through among others, colonial education and itinerant theatrical companies such as the De Jong Havilland (Willan 1984:40). Like the modernity I discussed earlier, Shakespeare as an English dramatist and symbol of Englishness (Johnson 1996) has a point of origin from which he was transported to the colonies as part of a complex set of ideas and lived practices known as English colonialism (Skura 1989, Brown 1985, Johnson 1996). To this extent, he has a subtle role in the establishment of formal empires, especially if we consider the vocabularies of power and authority with which he was invested during transmission. I look at some of these, but before that, some general and simplified remarks on colonial education are in order.

Reasons for setting up colonies are varied. In "Reasons for Colonization" Richard Hakluyt (1585) lists thirty-one, among them economic, religious and political: "to plant Christian religion; to traffic; and to conquer" (in Graff and Phelan 2000:129). Economically, colonies provided the much-needed raw materials for emerging capitalist economies in Europe. To ensure a continued supply of these raw materials, it was imperative to control colonies. Hence military might was an available option to back up

colonial interests in the New World. In *The Tempest*, Prospero uses the technologies of violence--"cramps" and "stripes"--to keep Caliban under constant surveillance and control.

Besides the unashamed violence of military might, there were other means of controlling colonies. These options required the voluntary consent of colonial subjects. This is where colonial education comes into play. Colonial education is an inclusive term for an ensemble of discourses, processes, practices and vocabularies through which Western ideas filter to the colonial subjects via an established "central intellectual location, the school system"(Southard 1997:1). This education is a process of dis-location, erasure, translation and transformation, which

> Strips the colonised people away from their indigenous learning structures and draws them toward the structures of the colonisers (Southard,1).

The aim is to dominate and control them not by force, but by making them accept their subjectification willingly. Thus the colonial subjects are converted, as Rafael suggests, to "the domain--territorial, emotional, religious, or cultural--of someone else and claiming it as one's own" (1993:xvii). Plaatje's condemnation of traditional institutions and praise of modern ones could be understood as part of the dis-location and transformation of colonial education.

Colonial education is closely linked to missionary activity in the colonies (Altbach and Kelly 1978:2*ff*, Johnson 1998:221*ff*). In fact, Altbach and Kelly argue that "missionary groups often had substantial control over educational policy" (1978:2). The primary goal of missionary activity was to spread Christianity to the colonies and thus indirectly to spread "Western civilization...end ignorance and 'barbarism'...and bring the torch of European enlightenment to 'dark and backward' societies" (Mazrui 1978:332). Inhabitants of colonies were stereotyped as "childlike", "uncreative", "mentally undeveloped" and therefore "uneducable" (see Vail and White 1991:6*ff*, Johnson 1998:222). Dudley Kidd (1904) is quoted by Vail and White as having said the following about the Batswana, Plaatje's own people:

> To them thought is dead, so to speak, or at any rate they cannot raise it above the things of sense...they are boors whose god is their belly (1991:10).

The work of missionaries and other secular evangelists was therefore to liberate the natives from such backwardness. Thus schools were established. What was to be taught and reasons for teaching that content were however a matter of controversy between missionaries and colonial administrators (Altbach and Kelly 1978:2*ff*, Johnson 1998:221*ff*). Missionaries emphasized religious and moral education while colonial administrators emphasized literacy and vocational education. The main aim of colonial administrators was to produce clerks destined for colonial service. The goal was thus to produce in Rushdie's words, "translated men" or in Carey-Webb's terminology, "re-educated" people, who would further the aims and goals of the occupying forces. Macaulay states the point more boldly:

> We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect (cited in Southard 1997:1).

At the heart of colonial education lies the idea of transition, translating or transforming and re-educating the natives to embrace colonialism with all its hierarchies.

Remarks on colonial education and missionary activity are material to the appreciation of Plaatje's conjunction with missionary activity and Shakespeare, and therefore Shakespeare's role in the colonial enterprise. A detailed description of this conjunction follows in chapter two, but for the moment I highlight the following: it is not by coincidence that when Plaatje was born towards the end of the nineteenth century, missionary activity was already an established feature of the South African political, economic and cultural landscape. It is equally not by coincidence that his birthplace was an outstation of the Berlin Mission Society's main mission at Pniel. It is also not by coincidence that Plaatje received his formal education at a mission school where he established a lasting association with the Westphals, a missionary couple in charge of the school. It is from this association with the Westphals, particularly Elizabeth Westphal's extra-tutoring, that Plaatje got his first exposure to Shakespeare, an introduction which became the basis for later encounters with Shakespeare in Kimberley. Willan writes:

> In due course, so Erna Westphal recalls, her mother introduced Plaatje to many of the best-known figures in English literature—Shakespeare and Sir Walter Scott were two names Miss Westphal particularly remembers her mother mentioning (1984:21).

It is this somewhat brief and negligible (because Plaatje does not mention it anywhere) introduction that constitutes Plaatje's "vague idea of Shakespeare" when he "went to see *Hamlet* in the Kimberley Theatre" in 1896. This performance—another means by which Shakespeare travelled to the colonies—crystallized Plaatje's interest in Shakespeare and eventuated in the translations.

Transported to the colonies through colonial education and itinerant theatre companies, Shakespeare undoubtedly became part of the larger and complex discourse and phenomenon of colonialism. Shakespeare was transmitted not as an ordinary playwright or body of texts, but was invested with vocabularies of power, ideology and purpose. Colonial subjects were confronted by a symbol of cultural superiority, authority and a standard by which their cultures would be measured. In other words, Shakespeare was invested with contradictory political power. As Johnson notes:

> The William Shakespeare Sol Plaatje might have encountered in the Cape Colony in 1916 was a figure of contradictory qualities. At least three aspects of his identity emerge in descriptions of him current at the time: his status as quintessential English hero defending Albion from the Germans; his universal humanity transcending national boundaries; and his unique abilities as instructor of youth in ways of obedience and moral rectitude (1996:80, Johnson 1998:223).

Johnson provides illustrations of these contradictory identities. I return to them shortly after this example. The performance of *Hamlet* at the Kimberley Theatre was by the De Jong-Haviland Company. This was "a touring theatrical company from England responsible, so the *Diamonds Field Advertiser* reported, for the *'novel'* and somewhat *daring experiment* of importing Shakespeare into South Africa" (in Willan 1984:40)(emphasis mine).

The colonial context in which Shakespeare was introduced is characterized by discernible hierarchies. The missionaries, colonial officers, and the ideas for which they stood--Shakespeare included--constitute an ensemble of ideas, discourses, and vocabularies of a dominant and colonising culture which lorded over the colonial subjects. As an icon of cultural and literary excellence and sophistication, Shakespeare's introduction into South Africa can only be a 'novel' and 'daring experiment' haunted at every step of its execution by the possibility of failure. Invested with such political and cultural power, Shakespeare's links to the English court are not surprising. By being present at Shakespeare's commemorative celebrations (Johnson 1996:80), the King and Queen

drew Shakespeare into the arena of English politics and its colonialist adventures overseas.

When Elizabeth Westphal introduced Plaatje to Scott and Shakespeare (Willan 1984:21), this action was not an innocent one, but one resonating with a complex European imperialist discourse. Elizabeth Westphal was German, and so Shakespeare could not have been for her a symbol of nationality. As Schalkwyk and Lapula suggest, for her "Shakespeare would not have been the epitome of Englishness" (2000:14). But her conjunction with Shakespeare, along with her subsequent transmission of him to Plaatje and South Africa, could be evidence of Shakespeare's global influence. That is, Shakespeare's influence and power extends beyond the borders of England and could be seen as the epitome of European imperialistic values. Joughin suggests that "there is, and was, a German Shakespeare (East and West)" (1997:1). Plaatje's later fascination and thirst for Shakespeare must therefore promise a fertile field for academic investigation to establish Shakespeare's re-constellation as South Africa's "national poet".

Shakespeare came to the colonies fully invested with a certain amount of cultural and literary superiority/power, all of which were tools deployed in the colonisation of the natives. Some of the ideas he dramatises--ambition, order and hierarchy, unity, master-servant relationship--lend themselves to being interpreted as both endorsing and challenging existing hierarchies associated with colonialism. For example, while the Prospero-Caliban relationship reflects and even entrenches colonial conditions, it is nevertheless complicated by Caliban's implicatedness in colonial usurpation. That is to say, Caliban's (in)famous claim to the island should not delude us into treating him as a typical third-world victim of colonial displacement. Through his mother, he is implicated in the colonial victimization he constantly accuses Prospero of:

> Caliban was not alone when Prospero arrived. Ariel either came to the island with Sycorax or was already living on the island...when Sycorax arrived and promptly enslaved him, thus herself becoming the first colonialist, the one who established the habits of dominance and erasure before Prospero ever set foot on the island (Skura 1989:50).

It is therefore reasonable to imagine with Brown that *The Tempest* "is not simply a reflection of colonialist practices but an intervention in an ambivalent and even contradictory discourse" (1985:40). References to *The Tempest* illustrate the complexity of

colonial discourse and Shakespeare's involvement in colonialism. In fact, his participation, like his cultural capital, is socially and ideologically constructed.

In conclusion, it is possible to make a case for Shakespeare's participation in the colonial enterprise, both as a sociological personage and as a corpus of texts. As a person and as a body of texts, Shakespeare commands great power and authority. Colonial education was a major conduit through which Shakespeare filtered into the colonies. His introduction was therefore not an innocuous activity, but a nuanced extension of the colonial affair wherein his works entrench the superiority of English culture (see Johnson 1996). However, Shakespeare retains the potential of being deployed in oppositional contexts. Several essays have been written to show how he participated and intervened in the discourse of colonialism, with his *Tempest* receiving extensive scholarly attention in this regard. Some of those works include: Deborah Willis' "Shakespeare's *Tempest* and the Discourse of Colonialism" (1989), Thomas Cartelli's "Prospero in Africa: *The Tempest* as Colonialist Text and Pretext" (1987), Paul Brown's "This thing of darkness I acknowledge mine: *The Tempest* and the Discourse of Colonialism" (1985), and Paul A. Cefalu's "Rethinking the Discourse of Colonialism in Economic Terms: Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, Captain John Smith's Virginia Narrative, and the English Response to Vagrancy" (2000), and Skura's "Discourse and the Individual: The Case of Colonialism in *The Tempest*" (1989).

If Shakespeare belongs to no one and everybody at the same time, to no particular age but all ages, it is fitting to examine how the colonised people on whom Shakespeare was imposed reacted and responded; that is, how Shakespeare can be deployed and transformed as part of colonial (dis)entanglement. This is the subject of the next and last section of this chapter.

Shakespeare and Post-Colonial Dis/Entanglement.

Let me begin with a helpful digression from which I hope to draw useful insights in discerning the implications of Plaatje's translations of Shakespeare. That some of Shakespeare's dramas are not immune to colonalist discourse is now a commonplace trajectory in literary criticism, more particularly in that branch of literary criticism which

styles itself as postcolonial or anti-colonial in orientation. For example, in "National and Colonial Education in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*," Allen Carey-Webb notes that:

> Set on an island off the European mainland, and connected by historical and verbal links to the new English colonies in the Virginias, *The Tempest* has been recognised as presenting a model of colonial relationships and a metaphor of colonial history. Deriving its plot from letters from the New World, and drawing on European conceptions of "New World" peoples, the play is widely understood to enact a colonial--or as Gonzalo calls it a "plantation"--economy. Indeed, the play has served a pivotal role in the analysis of colonial history by twentieth century intellectuals, from Uraguaian Jose Enrique Rodo (*Ariel*) to the Italian Octave Mannoni writing about Madagascar (*Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization*) to the Cuban Roberto Retamar ("Caliban: Notes Toward a Discussion of Culture in Our America"). Since at least the mid 1980's, *The Tempest* has been a focal point for exploring politics and colonial discourse in literature (1999:2).

The Prospero-Caliban relationship is commonly cited as reflective of colonial dichotomies of master/servant, colonizer/colonized, white/black, us/them, civilized/barbaric, human being/beast. Prospero as coloniser and usurper takes, with all the necessary force at his disposal, from Caliban the island which the latter claims belongs to him in accordance with the rules of primogeniture: "This island's mine, by Sycorax my mother,/Which thou tak'st from me" (I.2.334-35). Prospero as civilising agent, teacher or "schoolmaster" as he refers to himself--educator, and translator *par excellence*--attempts with varying degrees of success to transform and translate Caliban and therefore produce in Macaulay's view, "a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and intellect" (cited Southard 1997:1). Or Homi Bhabha's "mimic man" and "authorized versions of otherness" (1994). In conjunction with his daughter Miranda, Prospero teaches Caliban language, the colonial master's language to be precise, which language the Bishop of Avila (1492) declared as "the perfect instrument of empire" (cited in Hulme 1986:1). Their aim was to free him from a speechless past in which he only "gabble[d] like/A thing most brutish" (I.2.359-360), turning him into someone who can construct meanings in a language that is at best an anathema to him. Caliban learns the master's language, but for purposes which are at variance with his teachers: "You taught me language, and my profit on 't/Is I know how to curse. The red plague rid you/For learning me your language!" (I.2.366-368). The lingering question here is whether the civilising mission succeeds. This is the question I will pose differently when I consider Caliban and other colonial subjects' reactions to the colonising mission. As yet another response to Prospero's civilising mission, Caliban reportedly attempted to rape Miranda, an offence for which he is rebuked. He responds:

> O ho! o ho! Would 't had been done!
> Thou didst prevent me; I had peopled else /This isle with Calibans (I.2.352-54).

The polar identities of master/servant, human/beast are helpful only as springboards towards understanding the complex relationships between Prospero and Caliban, and therefore between the coloniser and colonised. While their relationships can be explained by economic, political and sociological circumstances, complex psychological factors also come into play more subtly and powerfully. Remi Clignet's reading of Mannoni in an essay entitled "Damned If You Do, Damned If You Don't: The Dilemmas of Colonizer-Colonised Relations" observes that:

> The participation of the coloniser in the colonial situation reflects his inability to establish an adult system of interaction with others. Regardless of the overt reasons that he gives to justify his calling (altruism, desire for travel, aspirations to upward mobility, etc), he is in effect unable to cope with the demands of his immediate social surroundings. The loneliness that he experiences in Africa and the distance that separates him both from the colonised and from his counterparts in the metropole enable him to project onto the local people the dehumanized images of charming or cruel ghosts and shadows that he has been unable to control during his childhood. In short, the colonizer is the Prospero of *The Tempest*. The colonial situation, however, develops only insofar as the colonised accepts the demands imposed upon him by the colonizer. According to Mannoni, the social arrangements that prevail in colonised societies induce types of child-rearing practices that foster personalities characterized by marked feelings of dependence and inferiority. Initially directed toward ancestors, such feelings are easily transferred to the colonizer, who is often perceived as a source of stable--and hence reassuring--power. In short, the colonised is the Caliban of *The Tempest* (in Altbach & Kelly 1978:125-26).

The Hegelian reciprocity between these two complexes is clearly illustrated in the play by the following incidents. First, is the one in which Prospero confesses to Miranda how useful Caliban is to their welfare:

> But as 'tis,
> We cannot miss him. He does make our fire,
> Fetch in our wood, and serves in offices
> That profit us… (I.2.313-316).

While this relationship is clearly functional, Prospero's later comment that he lodged Caliban in his (Prospero's) cell and therefore raised him as his own child (I.2.349-350), defies the utilitarianism in the above quotation. It points, rather to a deeper sentimental attachment between the two. Mwikisa's comment that "the fact that he is raised in Prospero's household together with Prospero's own daughter, Miranda, in circumstances which belie any hints of the slavery or servitude which later became his lot" (1996:29-30),

points to complex psychological relations. It is not surprising, therefore, that at the end of the play Prospero introduces Caliban to Alonso thus: "this thing of darkness, I/ Acknowledge mine" (V.1.275-276). With all its ambiguities, this statement points to a deeper connection between the two than we are made to believe in the master-servant dichotomy. Assuming as Mwikisa does, that Caliban is Prospero's child, it is still possible to view their relationship as that of master and servant; after all, children can be conceived of as servants to their parents from whom they receive--as is the case in *The Tempest*, *Othello*, *The Merchant of Venice*--commands, blessings and even curses.

When his treasonous rebellion against Prospero is quashed, Caliban admits:

> Ay, that I will; and I 'll be wise hereafter
> And seek for grace. What a thrice-double ass
> Was I to take this drunkard for a god
> And worship this dull fool! (V.1. 295-298).

undermining, as Deborah Wills suggests, "Prospero's statement that "nurture can never stick" upon the "born devil" (1989:285). Caliban is therefore educable and for this Prospero must be thanked. In a way Caliban needed Prospero to civilize and educate him to "acquiesce to the rule of culture over nature" (Graff & Phelan 2000:95).
However, Miranda and her father deserve re-education as well against the racist stereotype of Caliban's uneducability. Miranda remarks:

> When thou didst not, savage,
> Know thine own meaning, but wouldst gabble like
> A thing most brutish, I endowed thy purposes
> With words that made them known. But thy vile race,
> Though thou didst learn, had that in 't which good
> natures
> Could not abide to be with (I.2.358-364).

In brief, Caliban is beyond education because he belongs to a "vile race" which resists education, translation and transformation. This sweeping conclusion, characteristic of current stereotypes against the peoples of the colonies, is problematic because it fails to recognize Caliban's complexity of character as Deborah Wills describes it:

> descriptions of Caliban in the text are varied and suggest that indeterminacy is an essential feature of his character. He crosses several boundaries: half-human, half-devil, or perhaps half-human, half-fish; abnormal mentally and physically; savage, "strange beast", and "moon-calf." As "wild man", he is also a composite, possessing qualities of the "noble savage" as well as the monster. He is capable of learning language, of forming warm attachments; he is sensitive to beauty and music; he speaks--like the aristocratic characters--in the rhythms of verse, in

> contrast to the prose of Stephano and Trinculo; he can follow a plan and reason; yet he is also physically deformed, "vile," credulous, and capable of rape and brutality (1989:284).

Contrary to racist prejudices of uneducability, cruelty, and barbarism, Caliban demonstrates his intellectual capacity to learn language and his sensitivity to the charm of music and beauty. Consistent with the reconciliatory ending of the play, Caliban admits his guilt, thus demonstrating that he is not beyond redemption. As a result, Miranda and Prospero need to revise their earlier views on his character. It is thus valid to argue that besides the chores he performs for them, Caliban contributes, in a subtle way, to Miranda and Prospero's education in human relations. Not only that, their survival on the island depends to a large extent on Caliban's knowledge of the place and which he lovingly shared with them: "And then I lov'd thee/And show'd thee all the qualities o' th' Isle/The fresh springs, brine pits, barren place and fertile" (I.2.8-10). Caliban forces Prospero to re-examine his imperialist project with all its associated betrayal and treachery. Prospero's complaint about his brother's usurpation, betrayal and treachery, is unashamedly hypocritical as Prospero usurped and betrayed Caliban. Education is therefore a mutual, and not a uni-directional, process as Prospero and Miranda want us to believe. In view of the preceding, transformation affects both the original and the copy.

These references to *The Tempest* enable me to foreground the following issues worth bearing in mind in the discussion of the Plaatje-Shakespeare conjunction: the Prospero-Caliban relationship as a helpful metaphor for appreciating the complexity of colonial relationships; the responses and reactions to occupying powers; the dialogues and monologues arising from the encounters; the technologies and strategies by which colonial subjects are kept under constant surveillance and control; and the strategies of resistance. This relationship also demonstrates the interplay between coloniality and postcoloniality, so that reducing them to binary thinking is problematic. Colonization and the reactions to it are coexistent as seen in the interaction between Prospero and Caliban. It is against this background that I wish to examine the Plaatje-Shakespeare conjunction, the relationships arising from it, and the implications of Plaatje's responses to Shakespeare as an occupying force.

The Plaatje-Shakespeare pair, like the Prospero-Caliban one, conjures up colonial contexts and their associated relationships. Confronted with Shakespeare, Plaatje, like Caliban, responds or reacts to this foreign stimulus in ways worthy of academic inquiry. Both Caliban and Plaatje must be understood as part of a major project in which hitherto marginalized figures from previously colonised places of the world respond and react to Shakespeare and the colonialism with which he is associated. This project includes among others, re-interpretations of Shakespeare's plays as exemplified by the work of Paul Brown (1985), re-writings of the dramas such as that by Aime Cesaire (1969), and translations, as in the work of Nyerere and Plaatje. In fact, responses and reactions are as varied as there are intellectuals, artists, and politicians reacting. In their Introduction to *Post-Colonial Shakespeares*, Ania Loomba and Martin Orkin (1998) note the following responses:

> Intellectuals and artists from the colonised world responded to...Shakespeare in a variety of ways: sometimes they mimicked their colonial masters and echoed their praise of Shakespeare; at other times they challenged the cultural authority of both Shakespeare and colonial regimes by turning to their own bards as sources of alternative wisdom and beauty. In yet other instances, they appropriated Shakespeare as their comrade in anti-colonial arms by offering new interpretations and adaptations of his work. In recent years, both Shakespearean scholars and critics working within post-colonial studies have increasingly begun to scrutinize the ways in which the colonial and racial discourses of early modern England might have shaped Shakespeare's work, and also the processes by which Shakespeare (in performance and study) later became a colonial battlefield (2).

These responses correspond to Fanon's three-phase-response of the native intellectual to colonial experience: unqualified assimilation; "qualified" assimilation and the fighting phase (Fanon 1963).

Caliban responds by using the master's discourse to curse, a somewhat violent exercise approximating the rape he reportedly attempted on Miranda. Caliban's violent response deserves extended mention. The colonialism to which he is reacting is, as Fanon insists, a violent process, maintained by violence, and so must be countered with absolute violence (Fanon 1963:36*ff*). As mentioned earlier, Prospero uses violent "cramps" and "stripes" to keep Caliban under control. Caliban responds through the language of violence by cursing, rebellion and rape. His alleged sexual violence is necessary because it seeks to undo current hierarchies, inhibitions and the distance between him and Miranda, and hopes to inaugurate a world of *mestizos*, or "Calibans" as he prefers, who can straddle, and be a hybrid mixture of, both the occupying and native cultures. Like

the carnival and contact zone I examine later, Caliban's world seeks to deconstruct hierarchies and produce a "brave new world" free from inhibitions of rank.

Plaatje, like Caliban, responds 'violently' to "colonising culture". Plaatje translates Shakespeare's plays, thus in a way violating them in order to possess them. Translation can be understood as a violent process in which an original text is mutilated or transformed in order to produce a new and *re-written* copy. The first epigraph to this chapter reminds us that translation is a re-writing. The most vivid illustration of translation as violence is the metaphor of translation as cannibalism or cannibalization. The cannibalistic notion involves the "devouring" of the "great original" beyond recognition (Bassnett & Trivedi 1999:5). This destruction is not an end in itself, but the basis on which a new phenomenon is brought to life. The "devouring" destabilizes, and destroys the dichotomies of original/translation, original/copy, Europe/colony and produces a text in which both the original and local cultures are represented as equals and not as master and servant or superior and inferior. Like the carnival and contact zone, the devouring of originals leads to dialogue between the concerned spaces, leading to mutual benefit and new modes of expression free from the vocabularies of power, authority and decorum. This is the subject of the remainder of this chapter.

What Plaatje's translations imply is as complex and centrifugal as Caliban's character. Rather than pointing to a stable meaning, the translations lead to other issues. To appreciate the ambiguity or complexity of Plaatje's translations, let us recall his fascination with Shakespeare where he tells us, partly, that "reading a number of Shakespeare's works" gave him "a fresh story to tell" (Willan 1984:40). He later found more uses for Shakespeare. For example, he got from Shakespeare the language with which to express his innermost feelings for a woman who became his wife.

> While reading *Cymbeline*, I met the girl who afterwards became my wife. I was not then as well acquainted with her language--the Xosa--as I am now; and although she had a better grip of mine--the Sechuana--I was doubtful whether I could make her understand my innermost feelings in it, so in coming to an understanding we both used the language of educated people--the language which Shakespeare wrote--which happened to be the only official language of our country at the time...For command of language and giving expression to abstract ideas, the success of my efforts was second only to that of my wife's, and it is easy to divine that Shakespeare's poems fed our thoughts.(*English in Africa* 1976:7-8)

Plaatje's fascination with Shakespeare calls to memory another example in which the colonial subject is fascinated with foreign knowledge. In *On the Education of the People of India*, Charles Trevelyan reports:

> The passion for English knowledge has penetrated the most obscure, and extended to the most remote parts of India. The steam boats, passing up and down the Ganges, are boarded by native boys, begging, not for money, but for books...Some gentlemen coming to Calcutta were astonished at the eagerness with which they were pressed for books by a troop of boys, who boarded the steamer from an obscure place, called Comercolly. A Plato was lying on the table, and one of the party asked a boy whether that would serve his purpose. "O yes", he exclaimed, "give me any book; all I want is a book." The gentleman at last hit upon the expedient of cutting up an old *Quarterly Review*, and distributing the articles among them (cited in Niranjana 1992:1).

Plaatje's fascination with Shakespeare, like the Indian boys' clamour for books (even if mutilated), can be read as the crowning moment of success in colonial education's translation, transformation, re-education, conquest and conversion of the colonial subjects. The results of the project are clearly visible. Educated natives have embraced Shakespeare by "embellishing their speeches with quotations" from his works (Willan 1984:40). According to Joughin (1997:1), Shakespeare has become their national poet. As a symbol of what is superior, Shakespeare is used by these natives to spice their speeches and therefore distinguish themselves from other members of society. In Rafael's words, the Indian boys, Plaatje and the educated natives, have "crossed over into the domain--territorial, emotional, religious, or cultural--of someone else and claiming it as one's own" (1993:xvii-xviii). They have in Rushdie's words become "translated men" (1991:17 in Prasad 1999:41) who monkey Shakespeare, as if in search of recognition and acceptance/admission to the new culture. This corresponds to Fanon's phase of unqualified assimilation and the first response in Loomba and Orkin's scheme of things.

Plaatje's translation can be read as an extension of monkeying and giving Shakespeare a new lease of life by making him available in the Setswana language as part of what Mazrui (1996) has called *transtextualization*--"the transfer of texts from one lingo-cultural universe to another" (73).

Plaatje's declaration that Shakespeare provided him the language in which to express his innermost feelings, and that his dramas are universal, imbue Shakespeare with more power and authority. It is possible to argue that Shakespeare is elevated to a *deus ex*

machina-like status who appears to emancipate Plaatje from a sterile situation of storylessness to that of bewildering abundance in which every reading of Shakespeare provided him a "fresh story to tell" (Willan 1984:40). Given that Plaatje and Elizabeth spoke different languages, Shakespeare's language provided a medium between indigenous languages. Or as Lemmer puts it, "Shakespeare can provide a bridge between past and present and between one culture and another" (1988:72). Consequently this may serve to confirm current stereotypes about natives not having a culture, so that they are ready to take up what is on offer even if mutilated, as in the case of Indian boys. According to Loomba and Orkin's set of responses, Plaatje, educated natives and the Indian boys "mimic the colonial master and echoed their praise for Shakespeare" (2). In the process, this mimicry produces "black semblances", "mimic man" "authorized versions of otherness" (Bhabha 1994:87) or Rushdie's "translated men" who, in Macaulay's words, are intermediaries between colonial authority and its subjects (see Bhabha, 87).

This translation or "anglicization"--and indeed the whole of colonial education--dislocates and results partly in 'mockery'. Irrespective of how much the colonial subject churns out passages from Shakespeare or the dominant culture, he can never become English. As Bhabha notes, "to be Anglicized is *emphatically* not to be English" (87). In this sense, while pointing out equivalences, translation emphasizes difference and the unattainability of sameness resulting in perpetual in-betweeness: "a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite" (86) or "almost the same but not white" (89).

While the fascination with Shakespeare can be a manifestation of the translatability of the colonial subjects, his universal appeal and mimicry of dominant culture, it is also valid to read it otherwise. As a *re-presentation* of dominant culture, mimicry promises to be oppositional and menacing, necessitating continued surveillance of the "mimic man". Not surprisingly, Caliban's presence and claim to the island are a continuous threat to colonial identities and authority, and hence are in need of policing. Similarly, Plaatje's mimicking of Shakespeare is perceived by Doke and Lestrade as a transgression of his (Shakespeare's) power, hence they intervene to restore the latter. Quoting Shakespeare as the educated natives do, can be seen as Fanon's qualified assimilation in which they use only what is of relevance to their situation. Like Caliban, they adapt the master

discourse for their own purposes. Plaatje's thirst for more Shakespeare and the consequent translations point to the translatability, adaptability and learnability of Shakespeare. If the Caliban metaphor is set as an example, this proposition becomes clearer. Stereotypes against natives, as represented by Caliban, are greatly destabilised. Miranda suggested that Caliban's uneducability lies in his belonging to a "vile race" which resists transformation. But as is evident in the play, and as Willis suggested earlier, Caliban "is capable of learning language" (1989:284). More than that, he manipulates it for his purposes--to curse. Like Caliban, Plaatje demonstrates, contrary to racist prejudices of the time, the intellectual capacity of the natives to appreciate, understand and even adapt Shakespeare. Plaatje's translations were used to demonstrate, contrary to an earlier reading, Setswana's capacity as a language of literary expression and complex romantic expression. As Bassnett and Lefevere argue,

> Translation...becomes one of the means by which a new nation 'proves' itself, shows that its language is capable of rendering what is rendered in more prestigious language—as when Julius Nyerere, for instance, translates Shakespeare into Swahili. Translation, in this case, amounts to a seizure of power, more than anything else, any transfer of anything at all (1990:8).

Plaatje's translation of *The Comedy of Errors* for example, is a vehicle through which he disseminates his preferred variant of Setswana orthography. His deference to Shakespeare for the language of courtship could be destabilized here for its other uses. Given that Plaatje and Elizabeth spoke different languages, Shakespeare was a useful bridge between indigenous languages. He thus became a stepping stone towards Plaatje's mastery of his wife's language, a skill which became useful in his vocation as an "essential interpreter" who could mediate in nine languages. Plaatje therefore does not necessarily reproduce Shakespeare and his superiority; instead he appropriates him in his struggles. Thus he conflates Fanon's last two phases.

As is evident from Bassnett and Lefevere, the late Julius Nyerere, another organic intellectual and former president of Tanzania, translated Shakespeare for purposes very much in congruity with Plaatje's. As Mazrui writes:

> Nyerere, himself a great advocate of the Swahili language, may, in fact, have viewed the prestige of Shakespeare as a literary aid in his own efforts to promote and consolidate the place of Swahili in his native Tanzania (1996:71).

Colonial subjects find Shakespeare learnable or accessible because he reminds them of their rich fund of oral forms. They therefore literally see themselves in Shakespeare's dramas. Laura Bohannan's 1966 piece "Shakespeare in the Bush", in which elders in Tiv society of West Africa make corrections and comments to the Hamlet story, is a good example. One of them confidently remarks, "I told you that if we knew more about Europeans, we would find they really were very like us" (no page numbers). Plaatje's own people were "natural story-tellers...good listeners" whom "legendary stories seldom fail[ed] to impress" (Plaatje 1996:211). He therefore saw Shakespeare as an accomplished storyteller to whom he could relate. Hence the suggestion that Africans be exposed to some of Shakespeare's works on the grounds that "some of the stories on which his dramas are based find equivalents in African folk-lore" (*English in Africa* 1976:8). This is an important point because it explains in part why translating Shakespeare was a natural thing to do. To Plaatje, Shakespeare was familiar terrain.

The resultant translations, natural as they are, can be read as an act of conquest and domestication. To achieve this, Plaatje must first understand and internalise Shakespeare. This involves dis-membering and then re-membering the pieces that constitute Shakespearean drama. The prerequisite knowledge of what is to be translated and therefore conquered is recommended by Etiene Dolet's five rules for the translator. In his *La maniere de bien traduire d' une langue en aultre* (1540), Dolet stipulates the following as the basis for good translations: the translator must understand perfectly the meaning and the subject matter of the author to be translated; must have perfect knowledge of the source language; must not enter into slavery by translating word for word; must be bold enough to use the language of common currency; and must observe the figures of speech (in Bassnett 1996:14). As I will illustrate, Plaatje demonstrates fidelity to these rules, and therefore belies Lestrade's accusation of not understanding English well in the revised edition of Plaatje's translation of *Julius Caesar*. In the spirit of the first epigraph to this chapter, Plaatje re-writes Shakespeare's plays, as will be demonstrated in the textual analysis. By dis-membering Shakespeare's dramas, Plaatje illustrates in various ways the Derridean heterogeneity of originals and also the inter-textuality between English and Tswana oral forms.

In Antonio Gramsci's framework, Plaatje qualifies as an "organic intellectual". Starfield, for example, suggests that "the term 'organic intellectual' might have been made for him"

(1991:7). Organic intellectuals are "cultural or educational workers...who emerge in response to particular historical events" (Mayo 1999:41). These intellectuals, Edward Said (1994) suggests, "are actively involved in society...they constantly struggle to change minds and expand markets" (in Mayo 1999:41). The cultural regeneration and advocacy for a specific orthography to which Plaatje put the translations are examples of changing minds.

To be effective in their efforts, organic intellectuals must have a comprehensive knowledge or mastery of the social phenomenon to be transformed and conquered. This mastery is represented in this case by Plaatje's fascination with Shakespeare inspiring him to learn more about him. This constitutes the starting point for an effective translation. Gramsci "advocates for the mastery of the dominant hegemonic language by members of the 'subaltern' classes so that they do not remain at the periphery of political life" (Mayo 1999:51). It is through the mastery of this language that the colonial subjects can transcend, translate, transform and therefore domesticate and control the so-called dominant discourse. Caliban does the same. He learns and masters the master's language and then uses it to curse, literally and metaphorically. Thus he transforms, temporarily though, the dominant language to suit his revolutionary agenda. This is how (via translation) for Plaatje, Shakespeare becomes an important means to an end. By translating Shakespeare, Plaatje shows how Shakespeare becomes deployable in different contexts and therefore in one sense "a man for all ages". For example, his translations deploy Shakespeare in the preservation of Setswana culture which is under threat from the encroaching English culture represented by Shakespeare himself. This recalls the contradictory qualities of Shakespeare as outlined by Johnson: the quintessential English man and the universal figure who belongs to all times. Shakespeare is paradoxically the oppressor and liberator, threat and opportunity, at the same time. Niranjana is right to suggest that "translation has the potential of being a strategy of resistance" (1992:6), and Plaatje gestures towards this potential.

If Shakespeare is looked upon as the great English poet "whose tears and laughter hold the world in thrall" as Zangwill suggests, or as the literary canon, the study of Plaatje's translations of Shakespeare can benefit from the Bakhtinian notion of the carnivalesque. Plaatje lowers Shakespeare from the pedestal to a temporary topsy-turvydom or "mingle-mangle" (Weimann 1978), resulting in a blurring of hierarchies as Shakespeare interacts

on equal footing with Tswana oral forms. The "topographical upward and downward" movement of the carnival takes him to the lower stratum for regeneration, renewal and birth. By being lowered via translation, Shakespeare is "degraded", which implies

> not hurling [him] into the void of non-existence, into absolute destruction, but to hurl it down to the reproductive lower stratum, the zone in which conception and a new birth take place (Bakhtin 1968:21).

The product is therefore a re-written and re-newed Shakespeare. The temporary "death"--with its destructive violence--during translation is therefore a necessity.

Plaatje's translation brings Shakespeare and Tswana oral forms into what Marie Louise Pratt (1992) has called the "contact zone". This is a symbolic place

> in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict (1992:6).

The carnival, the contact zone and Caliban's "isle peopled with Calibans", with all their utopianism, are sites for new relationships and new modes of expression and language, which in Bakhtin's words, "permit no distance between those who came in contact with each other and liberating from norms of etiquette and decency imposed at other times" (1968:10). Translation is a useful springboard in delineating these new forms of expressions. In addition, by bringing together oppositional phenomena into the contact zone and carnival, translation undermines binary identities of original/copy, centre/colony, master/servant and helps portray our shared humanity and its heterogeneity. In Plaatje's case, translation transforms oral culture into print culture, attended by the accompanying embrace and suspicion we detect in his career. Thus translation is an ambivalent response to both modernity and his oral culture.

Further, Plaatje's translations raise pertinent issues/questions which might be the basis for future studies. These questions are of a pedagogical nature, and I return to them in chapter six. Some of these are: if, in translating not only Shakespeare, but also Setswana proverbs and oral culture, Plaatje shows the capacity of the Setswana language to express human thought that the language of Shakespeare is famous for expressing, how does this illuminate the teaching of Shakespeare to people who are likely to be put off by his language, and by his cultural and historical distance; how useful are Plaatje's texts in mother tongue education? How do we teach Shakespeare in our schools; do we teach

both the English and vernacular versions at the same time, or do we privilege the vernacular? These and many more questions must continue to engage Plaatje's scholars particularly with the view to enhancing classroom discourse. It is regrettable that the pedagogical implications of Plaatje's translations are yet to be researched.

Let me conclude this section by posing a question which I raised earlier. This is a question that lingers throughout the study. The question is, is liberation possible; does Caliban succeed in liberating himself; how effective are his curses? The answers are debatable. In fact he fails because his attempts to free himself from Prospero land him with yet another master in the Trinculo-Stephano pair, before Prospero takes over again. Caliban's situation points to a major difficulty: liberation is elusive because no sooner have you freed yourself from one master than you take up another one. "Imprisonment" is a vicious circle from which liberation seems impossible. This is the dilemma with critical paradigms: the perceived freedom from a colonialist paradigm to liberatory postcoloniality "enslaves" one further. This is illustrated in Loomba and Orkin's introduction to *Post-Colonial Shakespeares*, a compilation whose problem Garuba notes:

> The problem with *Post-Colonial Shakespeares* and other critical volumes of this nature, however, is that, despite their noble objectives, they inadvertently end up reinventing the hierarchies they seek to problematize or question by using Shakespeare as the privileged site for thinking about non-western subjectivities. As the editors say in their introduction, Shakespeare's plays "regularly provided a vocabulary for theorizing the colonial encounter and psyches" (10) (2002:220).

The question can be posed differently again: is it possible to liberate ourselves from Shakespeare; or has *Post-Colonial Shakespeares* succeeded in *postcolonising* him? Mwikisa is not optimistic:

> ...it stands to reason that much as rereading Shakespeare may have some value in debunking traditional assumptions and established ways of reading him which have tended to entrench gender, class, racial and ethnic privilege, such an exercise is, at best, academic and at worst, implicatable in the promotion of the very hegemonic designs of the West we seek to resist. Rereading the canon in non-canonical ways is simply part of the buzz in the promotional activity which is intended to increase the currency of these texts on the cultural market-place. Our own role as Third World critics would be essentially supplicatory, seeking to partake in the privileges of the centre (1996:28).

In Plaatje's context, the question of success remains pertinent: is his cultural renaissance that is informed by Shakespeare effective; are the translations being read or taught; do they achieve their intended purpose; how effective are they as strategies of resistance; or

do they merely refurbish Shakespeare? How successful is Plaatje in responding to modernity?

This chapter set out to lay the foundation on which to anchor the examination of Plaatje's translation by: defining the concepts in the title; outlining Shakespeare's role in the colonial enterprise; and concluding with an examination of how, in what may be called the postcolonial context, colonial subjects respond to and transform Shakespeare, and what issues can be drawn from these reactions and transformations. In the next chapter, I sketch the biographies of Plaatje and Shakespeare.

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Chapter Two: Sol Plaatje and William Shakespeare: 'Popular Lives.'

> *Sol Plaatje was a humanist, a democrat, and a citizen of the world. He had pride in his origins and he knew his worth. He bent his knee to no man. He detested injustice, especially injustice practised by the powerful upon the weak---Professor Kader Asmal, 15/06/2000.*

> *A great patriot, he devoted his great talents to the service of his people and country. In his service he did not spare himself, but worked day and night. He lived not for himself, but for others, and ultimately laid down his life on the altar of national interests--- Reverend Z. Mahabane, 21/06/1932*

> *Both Shakespeare and Plaatje matured at the time of great revolution--when oral culture was being largely transformed to a written one---Tim Couzens, 1988.*

> *The sketch is modeled more on Plaatje's ideal autobiography than accurate scholarship of Shakespeare's life---David Schalkwyk, 1999.*

In this chapter, I sketch the biographies of Sol Plaatje and William Shakespeare with the aim of teasing from their lives biographical, historical or experiential points of contact on whose basis Plaatje found Shakespeare accessible and therefore translatable. These points of contact are also helpful in explaining Plaatje's various moments of self-translation into a Shakespeare. From Plaatje's biography I hope also to carve out his theory and practice of translation, imbricated with his struggles for democracy, justice, and human coexistence. The chapter traces the trajectory of transformation in Plaatje's life and how he superimposed it on his mentor.

The sub-title of the chapter is an inflectional pluralization of Gary O'Connor's (2000) sub-title to his biography on Shakespeare. I use it here in its plural form as an appropriate description of the lives of these men who, to borrow Shakespeare's terminology in *Twelfth Night*, "achieved greatness" (2.5.120), and whose legacy continues. But this sub-title also points to a problem: two popular lives like the ones under scrutiny cannot be successfully sketched within a limited chapter like this one without making some sweeping generalizations and bare summaries. For one, the shortest biography of Shakespeare, Fido Martin's *Shakespeare: An Illustrated Biography* (1985), is more than hundred pages long, while the only available biography on Plaatje, by Brian Willan (1984), is well over three hundred and fifty pages. Condensing the lives of these great men in less than fifty pages is problematic. The biographical sketch of Shakespeare will be a re-translation of the sketch Plaatje offers in the Introduction to *Diphoshophosho*. As Schalkwyk remarks in the last epigraph to this chapter,

> The sketch is modeled more on Plaatje's ideal autobiography than accurate scholarship of Shakespeare's life (1999:24).

I use Plaatje's biographical sketch of Shakespeare in order to heed Schalkwyk's call for a paradigm shift in Plaatje scholarship (1999:28, Schalkwyk & Lapula 2000:13).

The South Africa in which Sol Plaatje was born in the nineteenth century, was a place of great political, economic and social transformation. Without a central political authority, as Willan notes, the country--if country it was--consisted of a variety of scattered and somewhat independent ethnic groups each with its own political, economic and social systems. Each ethnic group had its own form of government consisting of kings/paramount chiefs with their councillors. Economically, their major activities included agriculture, hunting and iron smelting. Thompson writes: "besides possessing sheep and cattle, hunting the abundant game population, and gathering indigenous plants, the farmers cultivated sorghum and made, used, and traded iron tools and weapons and copper ornaments" (2001:16). These products were traded with goods from other ethnic groups. As Thompson remarks, "indigenous Southern Africans were not a tabula rasa for white invaders or capitalists to civilize or to victimize" (2001:2).

Besides ethnic groups of African descent--Zulu, Xhosa, Tswana, Venda, Khoisan and others--there were also European groups whose association with the country dates back to the 15th century when a Portuguese expedition under Bartholomew Dias rounded the Cape peninsula and landed at Mossel Bay in 1487 (Thompson 2001) through to 1652 with the landing at the Cape of Jan van Riebeck and his troupe. This year (1652), scholars, among them Olakunle George, believe to be the starting point for the development of a modern South Africa. In George's words, "the formation of the modern South Africa was set in motion by the establishment, in 1652, of the Cape Colony" (2002:11). A brief historical sketch of some of the major events from 1652 up to the 1800's is in order to create a basis on which we can appreciate the economic and political transformation Plaatje found and their influence on his career. I will focus on those events which are useful in shaping Plaatje's outlook. For this purpose, Thompson's *A History of South Africa* (2001) is useful in narrowing an otherwise vast historical period.

Jan van Riebeck's instructions from the directors of the Dutch East India Company were very clear: "to build a fort and supply Dutch fleets with fruit, vegetables, and meat" (Thompson 2001:32). This seemingly innocuous instruction set in motion a series of events which produced a complex social and political entity that we now call South Africa. From 1652-1795, the Cape experienced great economic and demographic transformation. To achieve the purposes for which the fort was to be established, the company released some of its employees from their contracts, gave them land and granted them free-burgher status to produce vegetables and meats needed by Dutch fleets en route to the East. Indigenous peoples were robbed of their pastures, forcing them to either resist or become servants to the invading Dutch farmers. The struggle for land, and its associated politics, were thus set in motion. The increased agricultural production required more land, hence farmers were forced to move further inland from the coast and founding new settlements such as Stellenbsoch. Further, increased agricultural production resulted in the need for labour. Slaves were imported from India, Ceylon, Indonesia, Angola, Mozambique and Madagascar (Thompson 2001:36). Thus, the demographics of the Cape resulted in a cultural and linguistic Babel. The linguistic and cultural mosaic in Plaatje's South Africa could therefore be traced to the early stages of the founding of modern South Africa. This mosaic continues today, encapsulated by the reference to South Africa as the "rainbow nation" with eleven official languages.

The Cape remained a Dutch Colony up to 1795 when the British conquered it. By now it had become a more complex society than the directors had envisaged. By 1793 the slave population constituted the majority of the Cape's population, with "14,747 slaves (9,046 men, 3,590 women, and 2,111 children), compared with the 13,830 free burghers" (Thompson 2001:36). (The slavery that Plaatje makes reference to in *Mhudi* is traceable to this period.) Following the political turmoil sparked by the French Revolution, Britain "occupied the Cape peninsula to prevent it from falling into the hands of the French" (Thompson 2001:52).

The occupation of the Cape by the British had several consequences which are worth highlighting because of their later influence on Plaatje's career. First, the population of British citizens increased. In 1820 British settlers arrived at the Cape after the British government approved an amount of £50,000 to cover transport costs for "nearly four thousand men, women and children from among eighty thousand applicants" (2001:55)

An additional thousand travelled at their own expense. The anglicization of the Cape gave rise to subsequent clashes between them and the Afrikaners of Dutch descent who were already established at the Cape. Precipitating the clashes, the British outlawed slavery and introduced a liberal constitution whose franchise covered all citizens of the British Empire irrespective of colour and nationality. Such reforms are useful in appreciating the subsequent Afrikaner migration from the Cape in what is now known as the Great Trek of 1835-40, to which Plaatje makes reference in his novel, and the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902, which Plaatje chronicles in *The Mafikeng Diary* (1973). The liberal political and legal institutions of the Cape, together with the traditional chiefly rule's democratic orientation, were decisive in influencing Plaatje's political outlook. As will become clear later, such institutions formed the basis of his political struggles in which he envisaged a collective nationalism beyond colour, creed and nationality.

Alongside these major historical transformations at the Cape, there were other changes taking place in the interior. Of particular relevance to us are the inter-tribal wars famously known as the *Mfecane*. In brief, the *Mfecane* wars were closely associated with the emergence of a militarised Zulu state under Shaka's leadership. He conquered, subdued and incorporated other nations to form a powerful kingdom which by the 1820's stretched "from the Pongola River in the north to beyond the Tugela River in the south and from the mountain escarpment to the sea" (Thompson 2001:83). Plaatje alludes to these wars in *Mhudi* as some of the major historical events prior to the intervention of the white invaders in indigenous politics. As I show later, African history did not begin with the contact with Europeans, and this is the major thrust of Plaatje's re-interpretation of history in his novel.

The *Mfecane* wars contributed to the scattering and dispersal of various peoples on the sub-continent. In Willan's words, this was a time

> of forced migrations of the 1820s and 1830s which did so much to create the identities of the different African peoples of the sub-continent. For this was the heroic age of African history: a time that saw the great leaders arise, brave exploits performed, a time when nations could be created or destroyed (1984:367).

From this brief historical outline, the following issues must be singled out because they influence Plaatje's life and career. First, among the scattered ethnic groups was the Barolong tribe or nation. It is to this nation that our Plaatje was born and from whom

he acquired his first language. Secondly, within the European community was a group of missionaries from various denominational societies: Wesleyan, American, London and Berlin Missions. Missionary activity was at the time of Plaatje's birth a common aspect of South African political, economic and social life, hence it is not surprising that he was born and raised at a mission farm and educated at a mission school. Specifically, Plaatje was raised on the mission station belonging to the Germans. The country was also undergoing transformation with the discovery of minerals--first diamonds in Kimberley in the late 1860s, and later gold in the Witwatersrand in the 1880s. Lastly, the non-racial Cape franchise is significant in appreciating Plaatje's political career.

Solomon Tshekisho Plaatje.

According to Brian Willan (1984), Solomon Tshekisho Plaatje was born on the 9th of October 1876 at Podisetlhogo on a farm in Doornfontein. Podisetlhogo was an outstation of the Berlin Mission Society's main mission at Pniel. He was the sixth son of Johannes and Martha Plaatje, both of whom were Barolong and devout Christians.

About seventy miles away from Doornfontein, and only seventeen from Pniel, lies the mining town of Kimberley where diamonds were discovered in 1867, six years before Plaatje was born. The discovery of diamonds in Kimberley resulted in major political, economic and social changes in a country that was largely rural and pre-industrial. Thousands of fortune seekers from all over the world converged on Kimberley, and transformed Nicholas de Beers' otherwise not so profitable farm into a hub of diverse demographic interaction and economic activity, and consequently into what Couzens (1988) has referred to as "the birth place of the industrial revolution in South Africa" (63). An otherwise rural country was slowly embracing urbanisation, industrialisation and general social transformation. Plaatje, therefore comes onto the scene at Couzens' "time of great revolution—when oral culture was being largely transformed to a written one" (1988:63). This dualism comes to play a crucial role in his life and career.

Family names, and in particular the young Plaatje's, reflect the dual identity of the Plaatjes: as Christian converts and Africans or Batswana of Rolong extraction. Their names reflect the synergy between indigenous African and European cultures. The names of all the Plaatje children--Simon, Andrew, Samuel, Moses, Elias, and now

Solomon--all Biblical names--reflect their devotion and translatability to the new Christian faith and consequently their embracing of western civilization and modernity. As Rafael has already said, they crossed into the domain of European religion and now claimed it as their own.

The young Plaatje's names illustrate a point further. Solomon is the name of the wise king in the Bible, and the choice of the name for the young Plaatje is probably a premonition that the boy will grow up into a wise man, whose wisdom matches his Biblical namesake. Nowhere is the dual identity (as Christians and Barolong) of the Plaatjes more clearly reflected than in young Plaatje's second name--Tshekisho. Willan translates Tshekisho as "judgement", although it can also mean "persecution" or "prosecution" especially in the context of Martha Plaatje's expectations of a baby girl. The name--a Setswana/Serolong word--shows the Plaatje's respect for their language and culture as Barolong, whose identity must be reflected, among other things, in the names they give to their children. The name is also a reflection in the Setswana language, of an aspect of their Christian faith, particularly Martha's. Willan writes that Martha had anticipated a girl-child, after receiving five boys. But when the sixth child turned out to be another boy, Martha gave him the name Tshekisho "in repentance, and recognition of the righteousness of God's judgement" (1984:4). The name therefore stands for Martha's admission that God has "persecuted and prosecuted" her for anticipating His will, and the verdict or "judgement" turns out to be another boy child. Martha admitted and accepted the strangeness and unpredictability of God's ways.

The family name--Plaatje--also has meaning and a history of its own, as Willan writes:

> Family tradition has it that it was while living at Philippolis that Plaatje's forbears first acquired the name 'Plaatje.' Meaning 'flat' in Dutch, the name was reputedly given to Selogilwe, Plaatje's grandfather ('Au Plaatje'), by a Dutch-speaking Griqua farmer on whose land they lived. 'Au Plaatje' was supposed to have a flat-looking head, and the Griqua to have been either unable or unwilling to pronounce the family name of Mogodi correctly (1984:10).

While the quotation is helpful in explaining the origins and meanings of the family name, it also highlights two other important and related ideas: first, the process of transformation or symbolic translation of cultures as a result of continued interaction between different ethnic groups, thus throwing some light on historical contacts and alliances of the period. A word that was originally Dutch is now transformed, socialized,

domesticated or even colonized as a family label in another language, and specifically Setswana. The symbolic translation noted here might be a foreshadowing of the various forms of translation the young Plaatje was going to engage in his life and career. Secondly, the ethnic and linguistic diversity of the country is further highlighted.

Although young Plaatje's baptism took place at Bethanie, it was at Pniel that Plaatje spent most of his childhood days and did all his formal education "up to standard III or IV" (Willan 1984:26). His parents, Willan writes, were materially well off. His father, a livestock farmer who owned sheep and cattle, enjoyed a position of pre-eminence in the community at Pniel.

> Collectively, the Plaatje family occupied a pre-eminent position in the social and religious life of the mission. Together with representatives of a half-dozen or so other families living at Pniel, Johannes and Simon Plaatje in particular occupied positions of responsibility and influence that set them apart in many ways from the other residents of the mission. For at Pniel, as on other mission stations in southern Africa, the maintenance of the authority of the missionaries, in temporal as well as spiritual matters, depended upon the support they received from families like the Plaatjes: it was they who provided the deacons, elders, 'native helpers', the interpreter, the men and women whose job it was to help maintain discipline, to ensure the regular payment of dues, to support the missionaries with help and advice, visit the sick, admonish the weak in spirit (Willan 1984:15-16).

Living on a farm, on which their livestock grazed, the young Plaatje, like any small boy growing up in an agrarian community, had the opportunity to tend the family's livestock. From such domestic chores, he acquired some of his early lessons about his people's modes of existence and language. As he was to remark later on in life,

> Breeding and tending of cattle is the occupation most honoured among the Bechuana, and that those who follow it command a large vocabulary, not merely because they are shepherds...but because they are likely to be the most intelligent and the best informed members of the community (Plaatje 1916:6).

Part of his early education, particularly family and tribal traditions, language and customs came from the women around him as he grew up at Pniel. He later wrote about the importance of parents in the early education of their children:

> In the days when neither schools nor books existed in the country, they would acquire this vocabulary--and learn to use it with purity and correctness, from their parents, and especially from their mothers. The best Sechuana speakers known to me owe their knowledge to the teachings of a grandmother, or a mother, or both, just as I myself, as a pioneer Sechuana journalist and translator, am indebted to the teachings of my mother and two aunts. Again most of the

> prominent Bechuana have, like myself, been shepherds for some period of their lives, if not the whole (1916:7).

One such woman who made an impression on the young Plaatje was Au Magritte or Granny Masweamotho who

> was a fund of family history and tradition, and it was from her, so Plaatje recalled later, that he first derived 'complete information' about the details of his own ancestry (Willan 1984:15).

Plaatje seems to have begun and completed his formal education at the mission school at Pniel, but David Ramoshoana, teacher, collaborator and close friend to Plaatje has evidence that Plaatje attended school at Beaconsfield as well (Willan 1984:20). His close association with Plaatje makes him a credible source. Plaatje might have attended at Beaconsfield when the Westphals (with whom Plaatje had a close association) were there to stand in for Reverend Carl Meyer when he was on leave in Germany. The Westphals are likely to have taken the young Plaatje with them to attend at this highly regarded school (Willan 1984:20-21). Plaatje's possible attendance at Beaconsfield could be further evidence of the Westphals's great interest in young Plaatje's education and general welfare. To Plaatje they were like his parents, prompting him to inscribe the words "with the author's *filial* compliments" (in Willan 1984:21) in a copy of *Mhudi* he presented to Mrs Westphal. Except for this short stint at Beaconsfield, Plaatje's schooling thus began and ended at Pniel where his association with the Westphals began.

Two very crucial lessons came out from his attendance at Pniel, lessons, which subsequently had a powerful bearing on his career. First, the school was linguistically diverse:

> The language of instruction in the classroom was generally 'Cape Dutch'...the reading and dictation was mostly in English...the children spoke amongst themselves in Koranna, Setswana, Herero or Sesotho...the teachers spoke to one another in German or heavily accented English (Willan 1984:19).

The linguistic mosaic, reflective of the ethnic diversity of the country, must have been a great challenge to the learners. But for some like Plaatje, it was a blessing. It is safe to assume, as Willan does, that Plaatje must have developed his gift for languages at this early stage, a resource he put to great use later as a court interpreter who spoke nine languages. The ability to speak nine languages was not only useful in the law courts, but also in other aspects of his career such as politics and journalism in which he was energetically involved. All these aspects required mediation of some kind. More

importantly, his ability to use several languages enhanced his role as translator/mediator in all its manifestations.

His association with the Westphals had a further consequence. A keen student like Plaatje attracted the interest of the Westphals, in particular, Elizabeth who realised the great potential of young Plaatje and took keen interest in his education. Over and above the formal lessons he received at school, Plaatje also received extra lessons from Elizabeth. These lessons included music and English literature, both of which constituted, later in life, part of his hectic career. It was from these lessons that Plaatje got introduced "to many of the best-known figures in English literature-Shakespeare and Sir Walter Scott" (Willan 1984:21). This early conjunction with Shakespeare was to become part of Plaatje's lifetime commitment and central in his linguistic and cultural revivalism. About eight years after this introduction, Plaatje's fascination with Shakespeare, akin to a child's recent discovery of the joys of speech, is recorded in "A South African's Homage" (Plaatje 1996:210-212).

Plaatje completed his formal education at Pniel, attaining standard three or four which qualified him for secondary education. But he never went to secondary school. Around the age of fourteen or fifteen, Plaatje was offered a teaching assistantship which involved instructing the youngest children while he continued with his own education (Willan 1984:22). After two more years at Pniel, Plaatje left in 1894 to take up a letter-carrier or messenger's job with the Post Office in Kimberley. Thus began the start of an illustrious, hectic, and demanding, but financially unrewarding career, which included overlapping times of letter-carrying, court interpretation, journalism, politics, linguistics and literature. These activities were held together by Plaatje's major concern of demonstrating to the world that blacks are capable human beings who only need to be given opportunities to advance themselves. To achieve this ideal, Plaatje had to dedicate and sacrifice his time, energy and finances, sometimes bordering on a dereliction of his family responsibilities.

His departure from Pniel was not without opposition from his family and the Westphals. "They regarded," Willan writes, "the mining town of Kimberley as a den of vice and iniquity, full of pitfalls for the unwary" (1984:26). They were worried that the rural-born

Plaatje might fall victim to such vices. But Plaatje was determined, and justifiably so, to leave in spite of these anxieties. This journey, both physical and symbolic, was a maturing process that Plaatje had to embark on sooner or later.

He started his new job with the Kimberley Post Office on March 1 1894, and there began a new journey into self-discovery and understanding of the country and people around him. Kimberley provided him with an appropriate platform on which to mature and discover his capabilities. First, the employment of blacks as messengers with the Post Office was disapproved of by some whites who were now out of employment. Hitherto, these whites could find employment in more profitable jobs during Kimberley's boom days. Due to great unemployment amongst the whites, "there developed…an intermittent campaign, led by a clergyman by the name of James Morgan, to replace African telegraph messengers and letter-carriers by whites" (Willan 1984:30). Such attitudes foreshadowed what was to become a common feature of the South Africa that embraced the Union and the apartheid system of government in which skin colour was a passport to a better or worse life. Plaatje was at an early stage forced to contend with such attitudes. In fact, these attitudes hardened blacks in their resolve to prove to their detractors that they are capable and so deserve to be given opportunities. This strengthened Plaatje's conscientiousness.

Secondly, Kimberley introduced Plaatje to a group of Africans marked by a diverse ethnic and vocational composition. Ethnically, it consisted of Mfengu, Xhosa, and now Plaatje, a Mochuana, variously employed as clerks, messengers, teachers, and interpreters. Equipped with missionary education, this group constituted the African intelligentsia and was therefore actively involved in the social, political, sporting and religious affairs of Kimberley. This group was held together by a common ideology, consisting of a firm belief in the idea of progress, the virtues of education, hard work and individual achievement. They also admired the institutions of the Cape Colony, singling out in particular, its idea of equality before the law irrespective of colour or creed, and the non-racial Cape franchise (Willan 1984:33-34). This group offered Plaatje the social and intellectual companionship and home he needed in an unfamiliar environment. Later he became involved in its activities.

The group aimed to show, contrary to racist scepticism within certain white quarters, that they were indeed capable and worthy members in a society that had stacked barriers against them. Equally important was the group's sense of responsibility towards their own people. They saw themselves as leaders of their own people. Their ambition to advance themselves resulted in the formation of the South Africans Improvement Society in June 1895, whose aims are:

> firstly, to cultivate the use of the English language, which is foreign to Africans. secondly, to help each other by fair and reasonable criticisms in readings, recitations, English compositions, etc. etc. (Willan 1984:36).

The society's name, Willan suggests, "seemed to emphasise an aspiration towards an identity in which nationality rather than race was the defining factor" (1984:36). To this group, English was to be mastered for it was the passport or key to self-improvement. Put differently, to improve themselves, Africans, like Caliban, had to conquer and colonize the English language, the very means by which they were being constructed as incapable beings. It was through his association with this group and its ideals that Plaatje was motivated to improve himself, especially because most of his colleagues had some secondary education, unlike himself. It was also during this time that he did a great deal of independent study, and read voraciously. It is fair to assume that he read more Shakespeare, especially after seeing the performance of *Hamlet* in the Kimberley Theatre. Attending the debates of the South Africans Improvement Society also assisted him in sharpening his reading, public speaking and writing skills and confidence.

Finally, Kimberley also introduced Plaatje to Elizabeth M'belle, the younger sister to his friend and confidante Isaiah Bud-M'belle. She became his wife after he had deferred to Shakespeare for the appropriate language of romantic expression. As Plaatje tells us, Elizabeth was also knowledgeable in Shakespeare, and so their courtship was duly conducted in the language of educated people (*English in Africa*, 1976:7). She fended for the family during Plaatje's numerous periods of absence from home. Plaatje and Elizabeth married on January 25 1898 just before he moved to Mafikeng to take up a new job as court interpreter.

He began his new job as court interpreter in the Mafikeng magistrate's office on October 14 1898, after some delay due to illness. Five weeks later, he received news from Pniel

that Elizabeth gave birth to a baby boy on November 23 of that year. He named the baby Frederick York St Leger, who according to Willan, was

> the well-known founder and editor of the *Cape Times*, a man whose liberal views on the 'native question' were evidently held in high esteem by Plaatje and many of the friends he had left behind in Kimberley (1984:64).

Plaatje joined an under-staffed magistrate's office headed by Charles Bell, an industrious and liberal man who took an active part in the social affairs of the people over whom he presided (Willan 1984:65-66). Working with such a man, Plaatje was inspired to show, as he did in Kimberley, his capabilities and dedication to his job. Bell's liberalism helped Plaatje settle in his new job. In fact, Plaatje's relationship with Bell "was comparable to his relationship with the Reverend Ernst Westphal during an earlier part of his life, for he learnt--in different ways--a great deal from both men" (Willan 1984:65). For example, as a concerned superior, Bell orientated Plaatje to his new job by cautioning him that

> interpreting in court and interpreting at the sale of a cow were two different things entirely, and that it was necessary to cultivate the art as to acquire knowledge of the respective languages (Willan 1984:68).

Given the great responsibilities that go with dispensing of justice, and of course Bell's cautionary note, Plaatje developed, in his own words, into the "essential interpreter" who gained the approbation of his superiors. Plaatje describes in part his art of interpreting:

> I took much pains in eliciting my facts and getting the deponent to revise his sentences if they contained a phrase of the meaning of which I was not quite certain. This retarded the proceedings in an unmistakable manner and my renditions, usually noted for their expeditiousness, were clearly boring. I felt that it was a tedious performance taking up the time of the court to ascertain minute details which could easily be left unresearched; however, I threw the approbation of the Court and its loafers to the winds and centred my attention in the correct administration of justice only (Willan 1984:69).

Such meticulousness in the proper administration of justice received its due approbation from the superiors and distinguished Plaatje as the "essential interpreter". As he wrote,

> It transpired in the end that this did deserve the approbation of the Court, for in conversation with his worship the mayor, the magistrate expressed his satisfaction with his new interpreter, who, unlike some that he had had, preferred to be understood when he translates and who visibly feels grave and took extraordinary pains when interpreting into and from languages not known to any others, and when he knows that the course of justice depends on him entirely (Willan 1984:69).

Plaatje's meticulous attention to detail as one important means of the proper dispensation of justice is illustrated more clearly than anywhere else in his translation of a five –word phrase of "You are committed to trial" into forty-six words:

> *Kgetse ea gagu yaka e koaliloe e tla romeloa koa masekising eo mogolo koa Teemaneng, fa a sena go a bala ke ene o tla boleling fa u tla sekisioa ke magesetrata, kgona ke liyoche eo o tla tlang, lefaele gore ga nke n Sekisioa gope* (Plaatje 1996:58).

Translated as:

> Your case as recorded will be sent to the crown prosecutor at Kimberley. After reading it he will say if you are to be tried by the magistrate, by the next circuit judge or if you are not to be prosecuted at all (Plaatje 1996:58).

While the job of interpreter was demanding (for Plaatje was junior clerk and court interpreter at some point (Willan 1984:65), the remuneration was nothing more than what Plaatje had earned as messenger with the Post Office. Thus he was not able to maintain his standard of living. His letter to the resident magistrate, dated June 6 1900 reads in part:

> I most respectfully beg to apply that my salary should be augmented by the addition of a local allowance, in order to enable me to cope successfully with the high prices of life necessaries ruling here (Plaatje 1996:48).

This financial frustration is just one example of the myriad of financial disappointments that were to dog Plaatje's life and career, disappointments which pushed him to dig deeper into his own coffers to the detriment of his family. However, working in the law courts had its own reward in the form of Plaatje being a key player in the administration of justice. We need only recall the African intelligentsia's faith in the law as the impartial arbiter in human affairs. Plaatje too had great faith in the legal system, faith which at times seemed to border on naivety. "The law", he wrote in the "Essential Interpreter", "guarantees protection to the man with a black skin as much as it does to the man with a white skin" (Plaatje 1996:53). He was to discover later that the law could be invoked to deliberately disenfranchise the black population, as became the case with the Natives' Land Act of 1913.

Two other aspects of Plaatje's stay in Mafikeng deserve mention. First is his association with Silas Molema, with whom he stayed. Silas Molema, Willan tells us, was "a Barolong headman and member of a family who occupied a very special position in the affairs and history of his people, and was soon to play a decisive part in Plaatje's life" (1984:62). The Molemas offered to Plaatje the social and intellectual companionship, which in Kimberley was provided by the South Africans Improvement Society. Being in Mafikeng, Plaatje came to appreciate the simultaneity of two systems of justice: the European one for which he worked, and the traditional one epitomized by Silas Molema.

Ensconced within the wealthy and aristocratic Molemas, Plaatje gained further insights into the operations of the institution of chiefship and its physical and symbolic centrality in the affairs of the natives, in particular of his Barolong nation. This exposure explains Plaatje's respect for this institution and his later involvement in it as spokesperson/interpreter for the Barolong chiefs. His alliance with Molema also explains Plaatje's subsequent appeals to him for financial assistance towards his efforts in publishing his works. Silas Molema was a man interested in the education of his people. Willan writes, he

> had returned to Mafikeng in 1878 to set up a school. He combined this task with the other chiefly duties that he was expected to perform, and regarded it as his duty to use the position he had inherited to spread a knowledge of western ideas among his people. Not that he ever neglected his more traditional functions (1984:62-3).

Finally, Plaatje's collaboration with Silas Molema explains the emergence of *Koranta ea Becoana*, a bi-lingual newspaper whose editorship Plaatje assumed.

The other aspect is the siege of Mafikeng which lasted for about seven months. Plaatje recorded the events of this historic period in his diary, and later first published in 1973 as the *Mafikeng Diary*. Here Plaatje chronicles from an African perspective the events of the siege, its impact on the Barolong people and, contrary to the dominant Eurocentric views, the contribution of the Barolong and other blacks to the defence of Mafikeng. The following illustrates the point:

> Morena,
> 20 Barolongs, under Paul, accompanied 80 troopers of the Protectorate Regiment during the small hours of the morning and went to about 400 yards from the laager down Molopo, from where they maximmed and musketted it (Willan 1984:83).

It was during the siege that Plaatje also met with the war correspondents assigned to report the events (of the siege) as they unfolded. In particular, he developed a friendship with Vere Stent, the Reuters correspondent, a relationship which continued beyond the siege. It is his association with Vere Stent and the other war correspondents that must have offered Plaatje some insights into the world of journalism. Stent was to write to Plaatje that if he "steered clear of race hatred" he would "some day be a power amongst" his people (Willan 1984:109). While the siege acted as Plaatje's window into the world of journalism, it nevertheless had negative consequences. In addition to being cut-off from his family, he was prevented from taking the civil service examinations.

Prospects for advancement in the Cape Civil Service remained unpromising, and by 1901, there were already indications that Plaatje was searching for a new job, as Willan puts it,

> a more challenging career: one that promised to provide greater scope for the expression of his talents and ambitions; that would enable him to use his abilities more directly in the service of the people amongst whom he lived (1984:98).

This opportunity presented itself in the form of a Tswana newspaper, *Koranta ea Becoana* or *The Bechuana Gazette*. This paper started appearing at the end of April 1901. *Koranta* became a full-scale enterprise in 1902 with the purchase of printing machinery and the securing of a building from a certain Russell Paddon of Mafikeng, in which the printing press was housed. In March 1902, in anticipation of the arrival of the machinery, Plaatje handed in his resignation from the Cape Civil Service. Reasons for his resignation include financial frustrations, lack of advancement and the need to try out his skills in the somewhat more fulfilling world of journalism. Even before he came to Mafikeng, Plaatje was conscious of the powerful role Jabavu's *Imvo* played in Kimberley, and so the idea of becoming a journalist might have been mooted then. That same year (1902), he became editor of *Koranta ea Becoana* and was to remain editor over the next three years.

Plaatje's role as editor of a newspaper consisted of two major tasks. In Willan's words:

> as editor of *Koranta* Plaatje saw himself with a two-fold task: to encourage education and advancement of his people along 'progressive', Christian lines, and to fight, by strictly constitutional methods, with caution and moderation, for their just rights and fair treatment by the white authorities who exercised political power, to ensure that 'native opinion' became a factor to be taken into account in the political future of the country in which he lived (1984:112).

Determined efforts of great personal sacrifice by both Plaatje and Silas Molema failed to keep *Koranta* afloat, because in 1909 the paper went under. With the collapse of the paper, Plaatje needed other means of income to help out in his already precarious financial situation. So serious were his financial problems that summons were issued against him. He resorted to recruiting labour for the Mines Labour Supply Company, which specialized in recruiting labour for the coal mines in the Transvaal (Willan 1984:137). This project did not succeed, and ultimately Plaatje left Mafikeng with his family in May or June 1910, returning to Kimberley to take up a job as editor of another newspaper *Tsala ea Becoana.*

Politically, 1910 was an important year in the affairs of the country. With the reconciliation between the Boer and the Briton, there was agreement to form "a unitary, self-governing state, and a coming together of the four colonies in a Union of South Africa" (Willan 1984:139). The prospects of a central political authority in the country posed great threat to the non-racial franchise of the Cape Colony which natives had hitherto enjoyed. Secondly, during the negotiation about the formation of the Union, blacks were excluded, and this further indicated that they would be greatly disenfranchised in the forthcoming political dispensation. To counteract this disenfranchisement, the South African Native Convention was held in Bloemfontein from 24-26 March 1909. The convention resolved, Willan tells us, to protest against the Union and to request the British government to intervene on behalf of the black population of South Africa. Further, the convention expressed support for the

> extension of the Cape franchise throughout the proposed Union, pressed for more rigorous safeguards to protect their franchise in the Cape itself, and demanded the removal of the colour bar in the Union parliament (1984:139).

Although Plaatje did not attend this important convention, probably due to illness as Willan supposes, he nevertheless was to play a key role in native affairs in the new political atmosphere. He thought that as a newspaper editor and based in Kimberley, he would be better placed to continue to play his mediatory role between the authorities and his people. A newspaper was therefore the perfect tool for those people disenfranchised by the political climate in the Union. In fact he used his paper to address political matters, as Willan tells us,

> the main concern of its early editions was with the new circumstances of Union, with the first general election (held in September 1910), and then with the behaviour of the new government formed by General Botha's South African Party (1984:145).

Although *Tsala* appeared for some two years, and was influential in its reporting of the political affairs of the country, its financial situation was less than satisfactory. For example, Joel Goronyane's letter to Silas Molema on the financial situation of the paper reflects a bleak future. It reads in part: "I herewith beg to report that the scheme on the Bechuana Friend is not well carried out since the £250 [that] was borrowed from Mr Masisi was consumed" (Willan 1984:149). Once more Plaatje was in serious financial trouble, especially since he needed money to repay his debts in Mafikeng. He was forced to take additional work as regular contributor to Vere Stent's *Pretoria News* and also as an insurance agent (1984:149).

During his editorship of *Tsala* the political situation in South Africa continued to deteriorate. Unemployment amongst blacks was on a steady increase as they were replaced by whites in the civil service. Even liberal ministers and government officials Plaatje hoped would intervene were now helpless. For example, J.X. Merriman had this to say to Plaatje after the dismissal of black waiters on South African Railways: "what can I do? I can only talk and that does not seem to help your people at all" (Willan 1984:150). It was against this bleak political background that the South African Native National Congress (the precursor of the modern African National Congress) was formed in January 1912. Sol Plaatje became its first general secretary, "saddled with nearly the whole of the secretarial work", as the February edition of *Tsala* reported (Willan 1984:154). In March that year Plaatje travelled to Cape Town ahead of SANNC president John Dube to arrange for meetings with various government ministers.

The great responsibilities of being general secretary of the newly formed SANNC and financial problems weighed heavily on the publication of *Tsala*. Absent from Kimberley for most of March, April and May 1912, the paper barely staggered through to the June edition, after which, like Shakespeare's poor player who "frets and struts his hour upon the stage", it was heard of no more (Willan 1984:157-58). Three months later, Plaatje was however back in business with a new paper and a printing press of his own. The paper was known as *Tsala ea Batho* or "The Friend of the People", acquired after the bankruptcy of a short-lived Johannesburg paper, *Motsualle oa Babatsho* (Willan 1984: 158).

Although 1912 could be regarded as an optimistic year because Plaatje now owned his own paper and printing press, the political circumstances were far from being optimistic. During that year, General Hertzog, now minister of Native Affairs, promulgated a bill to deal with the 'native problem'. This bill, the Natives' Land Act of 1913, as it came to be (in) famously known, had a lasting impact on Plaatje's career. In fact, Plaatje spent the subsequent four years campaigning against this legislation. Willan records its importance thus:

> The Natives' Land Act was important above all for introducing into the legislation of the Union the principle of territorial separation, or segregation. Its central provision was to deprive Africans of the right to acquire land outside their existing areas of occupation, and to prohibit whites from acquiring land within these areas, now defined as 'Scheduled Native Areas' (1984:159).

When it became clear what the bill set out to achieve, the reaction from the likes of Plaatje was that of disbelief and utter shock, after which they were flung into action against it. It became clear that the newly formed SANNC needed to be mobilised towards opposing the Land Act. So great was the opposition to the act that the Congress resolved to send a deputation to England to solicit the support of the British government and public. Despite financial problems, on May 16 1914, the congress deputation of Dube and Rubusana departed from Cape Town, to be followed the next day by Plaatje, Mapikela and Msane (Willan 1984: 173). Plaatje remained in England longer than the rest of the deputation. It was during this extended stay in England that, besides meeting government officials, charity organisations, influential people, and addressing meetings and delivering lectures/talks, he published his *Sechuana Proverbs with Literal Translations and their European Equivalents* (1916), *Native Life in South Africa* (1916), he helped in editing Israel Gollancz's *A Book of Homage to Shakespeare* (1916), and with Daniel Jones of University College, London, produced *A Sechuana Reader in International Phonetic Orthography (with English Translation)* (1916). Lack of financial support, inspite of his great campaign for assistance, hampered the publication of his other works, resulting in their loss beyond recovery.

On January 27 1917, Plaatje left England and returned to South Africa, and due to war conditions, the journey took twenty-nine days instead of the usual seventeen days (Willan1984: 205). It was during these long voyages that Plaatje busied himself with translating Shakespeare's plays. On this particular journey he worked on his translation of *Julius Caesar* published twenty years later, and revised/edited by G.K.Lestrade (1937), whom Plaatje met as a student in England in 1922/3. Plaatje remained in South Africa over the next two years, in which period he continued his campaign against the Land Act by travelling extensively in the country gathering information on the effects of the Act. Meanwhile, efforts continued to be made to raise funds for the publication of his collection of stories, dictionary and hymns. Funds were also being raised for the second deputation to England to further gain the sympathy of the British government and public.

In June 1919, Plaatje left South Africa to assume leadership of the second congress deputation in England. Other members of the deputation included Selope Thema, Levi Mvabaza and Henry Ngcayiya who by the time Plaatje joined them, "had acquitted

themselves creditably since arriving in London" (Willan, 233). Plaatje remained in England until 1920 before he proceeded with his campaign to Canada and the United States of America, where he continued to meet leaders of brotherhood movements and other organisations, give talks and lectures about the "Negro situation" in South Africa, attend meetings, and request material as well as moral support for his efforts.

He returned from his overseas trips in 1923 having been away for almost four years. On his return trip he completed his translation of *Othello* into Setswana. He returned a disappointed man who had not obtained the financial support he had hoped to garner in order to finance the publication of his many writings. Not only did he come home without much success financially, but also he found his family "living close to nothing," as he famously put it. His house had had to be sold to raise money for his family's subsistence, and they were now accommodated in his brother-in-law's house (Willan1984: 294).

Despite his financial problems, Plaatje continued with his political activities, travelling within the country and to other places within Southern Africa. He devoted his time to several projects, such as the participation in the Independent Order of True Templars and involvement in the educational affairs in Kimberley. For example, he was involved in discussions with the Department of Native Education to provide secondary education facilities at Lyndhurst Road School (Willan1984: 385*ff*).

The greatest project that concerned Plaatje after his return from Europe is a literary one. As Willan clearly puts it,

> Plaatje's most urgent preoccupation was with what could broadly be described as literary concerns: working upon his Shakespeare translations, his collection of Tswana folk-tales, the new edition of the *Sechuana Proverbs*, collecting data for his dictionary, writing – perhaps researching – his epic on the history of the Baca; arguing his case over Tswana orthography; and, probably most time-consuming of all, seeking the whole time to raise the funds to print and publish all this work, and then dealing with the various printers and publishers he approached (1984:372).

Plaatje, as Willan tells us, always displayed a keen interest in the language, history, and cultural traditions of the Tswana people. His political and journalistic commitments might have given him little time in which to pursue these interests. The final years were

thus devoted to this important aspect. By 1929, Plaatje had several manuscripts ready for publication: translations of Shakespeare's *The Comedy of Errors*, *Julius Caesar*, and *Much Ado About Nothing*; a book with the title "Traditional Native Folk Tales and Other Useful Knowledge", and a new, enlarged, edition of his *Sechuana Proverbs* (Willan 1984:327). Regrettably, not all of these reached the publishers. His translations of *The Comedy of Errors* and *Julius Caesar*, his *Sechuana Proverbs*, the novel *Mhudi* and some of his correspondence, do survive to tantalize his readers. More importantly, his phenomenal dedication to work and service of his people, monumental amounts of energy and drive, his profound preparedness to sacrifice, and his Faustian determination constitute an enduring legacy Plaatje left after he succumbed to double pneumonia on June 19 1932. And so "cut is the branch that might have grown full straight" (*Doctor Faustus*, V.iiii. 1). Or may we wish with Macbeth that he "should have died hereafter" (V.5.17)?

William Tsikinya-Chaka.

Plaatje's bio-sketch of Shakespeare consists of eleven sub-sections: ***Sephaphela***/Preamble; ***Batsadi ba gagoe***/Parentage; ***Matsalo a gagoe***/Birth; ***Bosimane joa gagoe***/Youth; ***Nyalo ea gagoe***/Marriage; ***Fa a tla fuduga mogae***/Relocation; ***Tumo ka Dikico***/Fame; ***A rata ba gagabo***/Love for his people; ***Dibuka tsa gagoe le lotsalo***/His works; ***Losho loa gagoe***/Death; and ***Tebogo ea makgoa***/Tribute by his people (Plaatje 1930:v-x).

The structure of this biography deserves commentary because it is useful to the appreciation of two essential issues: Plaatje's self-translations into a Shakespeare and Plaatje's efforts to introduce Shakespeare and his works to the Tswana people (translatability). Breaking the biography into sections or organizing ideas provides an important basis on which the confluence and divergence between Shakespeare and Plaatje's lives may be appreciated. For Plaatje, this schema was deliberately formulated as a basis for the various incidents of self-translations into a Shakespeare, and therefore for establishing equivalents necessary in the creation/formulation of a non-racial world. Schalkwyk's remarks are germane here.

> It is clear that Plaatje saw more than a superficial resemblance between his own life and Shakespeare's. Plaatje saw in the conditions and trajectories of his own life a like process at work. The story that Plaatje tells of Shakespeare is of a village boy who moves to the great city to make good, bringing renown to the

> rural community of his birth, meeting and influencing influential people from all walks of life, including royalty (1999:24).

By establishing equivalents between himself and Shakespeare, Plaatje demystifies Shakespeare the man, and by extension the dramatist and corpus of texts, all of which had hitherto been constructed and presented as beyond the intellectual capacity of natives. This is particularly significant when we recall Shakespeare's role in the colonial enterprise. Through this schema, Plaatje emphasises the notion of equivalence further by inviting his readers to establish points of contact and divergence between their lives and that of Shakespeare, thereby narrowing the cultural divide between Tswana and English societies. Shakespeare's achievements, despite his rural background, could inspire readers to understand, in Shakespeare's own words in *Twelfth Night,* that "some are born great, some achieve greatness, some have greatness thrust upon 'em" (2.5.120-121). Tswana readers could therefore be inspired to exploit their potential, just as Shakespeare rose from humble, rural backgrounds to become an international figure.

This structure, evident in the text, has pedagogical implications. The use of organising ideas or sub-headings could be part of Plaatje's attempts at producing readers for Bantu schools. As a former teacher, he must have thought this structure to be helpful as stages in introducing Shakespeare to young Tswana readers. This simplified biography was intended to inspire his young readers as well as reminding them of prominent Tswana personalities. In a sense, this bio-sketch reminds us of the genre of obituaries and biographies of famous people Plaatje compiled. Finally, this structure—non-existent in the other translation—illustrates how a comparative examination of the two translations reveals Plaatje's presence/immediacy/experimentation in *Diphoshophosho* vis-à-vis his "absence/displacement" in *Dintshontsho.* Such an analysis constitutes the subject of chapters four and five, and promises to open up a rich area of academic inquiry. This structure is one clear example of what could happen to a text when it is transported into another language and culture. It could also be read as a transgression and carnivalization of privileged originals and metropolitan texts. These remarks take us closer to Plaatje's bio-sketch, and following his structure, I offer its re-translation.

"SEPHAPHELA/Preamble

John Shakespeare, Tsikinya-Chaka's father, was a merchant who traded in hand-crafts.

BATSADI BA GAGOE**/His Parents**

John Shakespeare was not a well-off man. But in spite of his economic status, he married the daughter of Sir John Arden, a rich land-owner. John and his wife married in 1557, and in the following year, they received their first born girl child, Joan. They lived in Stratford, a small English town along the river Avon. John Shakespeare later bought a house in which they moved. In this house their second child, Margaret was born. Joan died in infancy. John became an influential man and was later appointed to the local municipality as one of the magistrates.

MATSALO A GAGOE**/Birth**

On April 23, 1564 John Shakespeare's boy-child was born. His birth coincided with the St. George festival, the patron saint of England. He was baptized on April 26, 1564, and given the name William. Two months after his birth, Stratford suffered from a severe outbreak of bubonic plague which killed more than two hundred people. As his mother struggled with the baby amidst several deaths, little did she know that her son would become famous world wide, and in all places where people could read, thus making their otherwise insignificant town famous through his intellectual sharpness, full of comedy and wit, and through his skilful hand that organized ideas.

BOSIMANE JOA GAGOE**/Youth**

By 1570 William was already at school where he showed great interest in education and out-performed other boys. By then, his parents had been blessed with two more children, Gilbert in 1566 and Joan in 1569. At school, William showed great interest in theatre. Two more children were born into the Shakespeare family, Richard in 1573 and Edmund in 1580. Meanwhile, Queen Elizabeth paid visits to the Earl of Leicester at Kenilworth Castle, a town next to Stratford. Here, boys used to congregate to witness actors from London who came to entertain the Queen. William's interest in theatre took shape.

NYALO EA GAGOE**/Marriage**

In 1582, William Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway of Stratford, and in May 1583 they received their first-born child, Susannah. William became a teacher in a local school. Some believe he worked as a clerk in a law firm, hence his knowledge of the law. Others believe he studied law while employed as a teacher, during his visits to Thomas

Greene, a Stratford lawyer's son then employed by the local municipality. William is said to have spent his free time reading law, and this explains his great knowledge of the subject. Even if it was possible to reconstruct the Shakespeare-Greene relationship, Greene's statement "when I was in London I went to the Globe Theatre to see my cousin Wm. Shakespeare", is sufficient evidence for their close relation.

FA A TLA FUDUGA MO GAE/His relocation from home

In January 1585, Annie (Mrs Wm. Shakespeare) went into labour and gave birth to twins, a boy and a girl, Hamlet (*sic.*) and Judith. In 1586, Shakespeare's interests forced him to leave Stratford and seek fame and prosperity in London. The city had began attracting merchants, traders and intellectuals of different nationalities who arrived by ships from France and Italy, German, Holland and Scandinavia. In London, William met highly educated people, renowned theatre practitioners who excelled in progressive theatre performances which continue to impress visitors to the major western cities of London, Paris, Berlin, New York and others. In no time, Shakespeare became a famous and skilful theatre practitioner.

A TUMA KA DIKICO/Fame

His intelligence made him famous and endeared him to princes, governors and to Queen Elizabeth and King James, both of whom ruled England during Shakespeare's time. His brilliant dramas stunned the educated and made England famous. Lord Southampton presented him with a gift of £1000.00. During that time, even £100.00 was a generous gift, seeing that by then houses which currently cost thousands of pounds, were worth only £140.00.

A RATA BA GAGABO/Love for his people

During all this time, the educated Shakespeare did not forget his people and parents who raised him. His father's fortunes declined, he lost his estate and position in the local municipality. William returned home, bought an estate on which he re-settled his parents before returning to London. God said, "honour thy father and mother, so that your days on earth could be extended". We are now approaching four hundred years since Shakespeare died; but his fame continuous to grow in the world, and dwarfs the fame of

English people now alive. He is now being read by Becoana who gave him the name **Tsikinya-Chaka**.

Were it not for Shakespeare, the small town of Stratford would not be known. Stratford has a big theatre built in memory of Shakespeare. Educated and experienced actors from London were selected and relocated to Stratford where they entertain visitors to England with performances of Shakespeare's talent that approximates that of Solomon, the son of David. In Stratford, the Translator saw a group of ladies and gentlemen perform with great skill some of Shakespeare's dramas such as *Julius Caesar,* and others, during the tercentenary celebrations of his death. His house, together with his photographs have been preserved for visitors to see. Here you can see Shakespeare's books in his handwriting and others written for/to him in 1600.

DIBUKA TSA GAGOE LE LOTSALO/His works and birth?

In 1601, Shakespeare's published works included *Much Ado About Nothing, The Merchant of Venice, Romeo and Juliet* and others. That same year, John Shakespeare (Tsikinya-Chaka's father) died and was buried in Stratford. After that, Thomas Whittington, the servant to the Tsikinya-Chakas's in-laws, died and bequeathed his £2 estate to the poor.

By this time, Tsikinya-Chaka's fame was known world-wide, with his dramas performed in Germany and Italy. He continued to invest in estate property in Stratford while in London, and succeeded in getting an appointment to the Stratford municipality.

1607 was a year of mixed blessings for Shakespeare. In Summer (June 5), his daughter Susannah married Dr. John Hall, and in Winter (December 31), his youngest brother Edmund died. In 1608, Tsikinya-Chaka's daughter gave birth to a girl, Elizabeth. That same year, Mrs John Shakespeare, the mother to the talented William, died.

In London, next to Parliament, he fought for the rights of his people. People from Stratford stayed at his place when they visited London. In London he nursed and buried his younger brother.

***LOSHO LOA GAGOE*/Death**

In 1612, Tsikinya-Chaka left the bustle of London and returned to the quiet and rural village in which he was born and in which he had invested in estate property, to end his remaining days with his people. He remained at Stratford where he buried his younger brother Richard who died in 1613. His educated and royal friends from London continued to visit him in Stratford until his death and burial in 1616. In January of 1616, Tsikinya-Chaka married his daughter Judith to Thomas Quincey. At a meagre 52 years of age, Tsikinya-Chaka seems to have foreseen his death, as he drew up a will that same year.

***TEBOGO EA MAKGOA*/Tribute by his people**

The great intellectual and author died in Stratford on April 23, 1616. His people showed their great love at his death when they decided to bury him before the altar inside their church (which survives to date), instead of the cemetery. They did that because he immortalized their name."

From the previous biographical sketches, certain points—even as generalisations—stand out and are worth highlighting by way of conclusion. Both Plaatje and Shakespeare are products of a pre-industrial, country background largely dependent on agriculture as the major economic activity. This equivalence in rural background is noteworthy because it provides both with materials useful in their careers. Alongside this rural background, there are already signs of an emerging industrial culture emblematized by the towns of Kimberley and London to which Plaatje and Shakespeare relocate respectively. Here they meet and influence influential people. Neither of them turn their backs on their people, and both showed great interest in the law. In contrast however, Plaatje's career is not as financially rewarding as Shakespeare's. Little wonder that his bio-sketch of Shakespeare is a re-enactment of a life he would have preferred. Plaatje's reference to Shakespeare as Tsikinya-Chaka (seven uses of this name) reflects his domestication of the Bard. As Schalkwyk and Lapula suggest,

> This translation of the proper name into the vernacular, indicat[es] a readiness to disseminate it into a system of cultural equivalences and differences rather than to preserve it as a unique sign of authorial and authoritative integrity (2000:18).

Plaatje therefore introduces to his Batswana readers a different brand of Shakespeare to the chagrin of white academics who take it upon themselves to restore Shakespeare's cultural power.

The points I have just summed up are useful in explaining why to Plaatje Shakespeare might be considered familiar terrain, and consequently why he (Plaatje) constantly translated himself into his mentor. I return to these issues in the next chapter when I discuss Plaatje's theory and practice of translation as a preamble to the analysis of the actual translations.

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Chapter Three: Translatability, Theory, Practice and Evaluation.

> *Reading a number of Shakespeare's works, I always had a fresh story to tell---Sol Plaatje.*

> *To add anything from the interpreter's own knowledge that would lead the court to liberate an unfortunate prisoner is as bad as the other way about it...Additions by an interpreter to secure the discharge of a prisoner are as deplorable as incomplete translations by which the innocent suffer---Sol Plaatje.*

> *Does translation have to be faithful, or does it have to be free? For the sake of the idiomatic relevance of the target language, it has to be free; on the other hand, it has to be faithful, to some extent to the original---Walter Benjamin.*

This chapter--with its inelegant title--serves as a preamble to the discussion of Plaatje's translations by discussing three major overlapping issues, suggested by the epigraphs to this chapter. These are Shakespeare's translatability, Plaatje's theory and practice of translation, and the evaluation of these translations. These issues give the chapter its structure. In the first section, I follow up on some of the remarks in the previous chapter by discussing in slightly more detail aspects which rendered Shakespeare's plays familiar, accessible and therefore translatable. Such aspects hinge on the idea of stories and their formal elements of language, character, and imagery. In the second section I map out what could be regarded as Plaatje's theory and practice of translation. I deploy theory and practice not as opposites, but rather as interconnected and interpenetrating concepts in which theory informs practice and the latter shapes and sharpens theory. To borrow Loomba and Orkin's phraseology, "they constitute each other"(1998:2). In outlining Plaatje's general principles, or what is hereafter referred to as theory or conception of translation, it is imperative to return to his life, career and struggles, in particular, to his vocation as court interpreter from which the translations of Shakespeare are a logical outcome. As Couzens suggests, "his translations of Shakespeare," are "in a way a natural extension of interpreting" (1988:63). In the last section, I attempt to formulate yet another theory, by setting out tentative criteria by which the translations might be evaluated. The reason for this is a profound one. Except for Shole's 1990/91 essay on "Shakespeare in Setswana" and scattered references in other places, Plaatje's translations have suffered neglect for decades. A study—like this one—that sets out to rehabilitate these translations faces this paucity of criticism. Consequently, it is compelled to preface the analysis of the translations with a discussion of at least tentative principles by which the actual analysis will proceed. In this section, I will return to some of the ideas on translation raised in the first chapter. Put differently and more precisely,

this chapter seeks to answer three main questions: what made Shakespeare's plays translatable; what was Plaatje's theory and practice of translation; and finally, how might Plaatje's translations be evaluated or assessed? These are issues to which I will return in the next two chapters, which discuss *Diphoshophosho/The Comedy of Errors* and *Dintshontsho Tsa Bo-Juliuse Kesara/Julius Caesar* respectively.

Shakespeare's Translatability.

In discussing Shakespeare's translatability, Plaatje's 'A South African's Homage'--his contribution to Israel Gollancz's *A Book of Homage to Shakespeare* (1916)--is a valuable point of departure, because as Willan tells us, it

> reveals much about the reasons for Plaatje's enthusiasm for Shakespeare, and helps to explain why Plaatje was subsequently to devote much time and effort in translating Shakespeare's plays into Setswana, and in raising the funds necessary to get them printed (Plaatje 1996:128-29).

I quote extensively from this document to explain Shakespeare's translatability. Plaatje tells us of his fascination with Shakespeare thus:

> I had but a vague idea of Shakespeare until 1896 when, at the age of 18, I was attracted by the press remarks in the Kimberley paper, and went to see *Hamlet* in the Kimberley Theatre. The performance made me curious to know more about Shakespeare and his works. Intelligence in Africa is still carried from mouth to mouth by means of conversation after working hours, and, reading a number of Shakespeare's works, I always had a ***fresh story*** to tell. I first read *The Merchant of Venice*. The characters were so realistic that I was asked more than once to which of certain speculators, then operating round Kimberley, Shakespeare referred as Shylock. All this gave me an appetite for more Shakespeare, and I found that many of the current quotations used by educated Natives to embellish their speeches, which I had always taken for English ***proverbs***, were culled from Shakespeare's works...For command of language and giving expression to abstract ideas, the success of my efforts was second only to that of my wife's, and it is easy to divine that Shakespeare's ***poems*** fed our thoughts...Shakespeare's dramas...show that nobility and valour, like depravity and cowardice, are not the monopoly of any colour...It is hoped that with the maturity of African literature, now still in its infancy, writers and translators will consider the matter of giving to Africans the benefit of some at least of Shakespeare's works. That this could be done is suggested by the probability that some of the ***stories*** on which his dramas are based find equivalents in African folk-lore (Plaatje 1996:210-212)[emphasis added].

Plaatje's fascination with Shakespeare reveals a crucial tenet around which the discussion of Shakespeare's translatability will hinge. This is the concept of story or stories, a word

he mentions twice in the passage. David Ramoshoana, Plaatje's friend and collaborator argues against the belief

> that Shakespeare's language and ideals are far above the intellectual scope of Africans and they defy translation into any African language because…European and African tongues, notions and outlook, differ so irreconcilably that Shakespeare's elevated ideas must remain to the African an impenetrable mystery, even to those who have secondary training (Willan 1984:331).

Plaatje, a self-educated man, proves such sceptics wrong. He demystifies Shakespeare's dramas by reminding us of their storicity/storiness, or that they are a series of stories which have equivalents in African cultures. In a newspaper article following the publication of Plaatje's translation of *The Comedy of Errors*, Ramoshoana refers twice to the play as a story (Willan 1984:330). This is, not however, to suggest that stories are an unproblematic, simplified and demystified genre free of complexity and mystery. Rather, the concept of stories helps us to explain Shakespeare's familiarity to Plaatje.

Plaatje was not alone in perceiving Shakespeare's dramas as stories, or having foundation in stories. The Bard himself was fascinated by the idea of stories and their aesthetics. Brink's remarks and examples illustrate our point with great force.

> That Shakespeare had always been fascinated by the phenomenon and the processes of story is evident from any haphazard bouquet of references plucked from the moments of greatest intensity in many plays: "For God's sake, let us sit upon the ground/And tell sad **stories** of the death of Kings" (*Richard II* III.ii. 155-156); "for never was a **story** of more woe/Than this of Juliet and her Romeo" (*Romeo and Juliet* V.iii. 309); "it is a **tale**/Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,/Signifying nothing" (*Macbeth* V.v. 26-28); "And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain,/To tell my **story**" (*Hamlet* V.ii.340-341); "Come let's away to prison./We two alone will sing like birds I'th' cage./When thou dost ask me blessing, I 'll kneel down/And ask of thee forgiveness: so we'll live,/And pray, and sing, and tell old **tales**, and laugh/At gilded butterflies" (*King Lear* V.iii. 8 etc); "This **story**/The world may read in me" (*Cymbeline* III.iii.55); "Pray you, sit by us,/And tell's a **tale**./Merry, or sad shall't be?/As merry as you will./A sad **tale**'s best for winter" (*The Winter's Tale* II.i.22 etc)…(1996:33)[emphasis mine]

Granted that Shakespeare's dramas have their origins in stories, and are *ipso facto* stories, the crucial issue to address is what a story is, its value/uses, what its (formal) components are and how all these make Shakespeare familiar terrain for Plaatje to navigate. A working definition of story is therefore necessary and I proceed to offer the following. A story is any narrative constructed by human beings about themselves, their surroundings, or around any particular subject or theme, to fulfil specific social and

aesthetic functions. In *Anthills of the Savannah*, Chinua Achebe states the purpose of stories as follows:

> So why do I say story is chief among his fellows?...Because it is only the story that can continue beyond the war and the warrior. It is the story that outlives the sound of war-drums and exploits of brave fighters. It is the story, not others, that saves our progeny from blundering like blind beggars into the spikes of the cactus fence. The story is our escort; without it, we are blind (1987:124. In Obiechina 1993:126).

Put laconically, a story, as Achebe says somewhere else, "entertains, informs and instructs" (in Agatucci 1998). For Stan Koki (1998), stories are a means of organizing experiences and recording important happenings. Consequently, it is not difficult to appreciate how stories become an essential accompaniment of human [hi]story as a guide, escort, and mirror through which humanity sees itself as it ploughs through the quotidian struggles for survival.

Stories are an integral part of all human societies, both oral and literate. The urge to compose and tell stories is a necessary human activity. The reasons for this are many, but I cite here that the urge for creating stories seems to derive from the fact that human life is in essence an act of storification or narrativization from which subsequent stories derive. In predominantly oral societies, stories, as Obiechina tells us, are "a primary form of conveying culture, experience, and values and as a means of transmitting knowledge, wisdom, feelings and attitudes" (1993:124). Plaatje and Ramoshoana see Shakespeare's dramas as stories precisely because they come from a society where stories are part of, if not the central aspect of, human interaction. Plaatje reminds us in "A South African's Homage" that "besides being natural story-tellers, the Bechuana are good listeners, and legendary stories seldom fail to impress them" (Plaatje 1996:211). We also need to recall that part of Plaatje's early education about family traditions was passed on to him via stories told to him by his mother and grandmother (Willan 1984:15).

When Plaatje later wrote down this family history, he was excited to be the first person in his family "to put memory to paper" (Willan 1984:15). Plaatje therefore transformed oral traditions into written culture, thereby immortalising and turning them into fiction or stories to be read.

Conscious of and familiar with the role of stories in his society, Plaatje finds in Shakespeare a series of stories to which he can easily relate. His task is to search for equivalents or parallels between Shakespeare's stories and stories from his own society. He sees Shakespeare as a scribe and good story-teller (just like himself) through whom society's greatest stories or memories are recorded in print for posterity. Shakespeare ultimately inspired Plaatje to preserve stories, proverbs and culture of his Barolong people. Hence, as Schalkwyk and Lapula (2000) put it, Shakespeare became for Plaatje a powerful tool or resource to be deployed in the preservation of his indigenous culture. Ultimately, his translations can be seen as a powerful means of demystifying Shakespeare, or better still, a powerful way of saying, in Ramoshoana's words, that Shakespeare is not "above the intellectual scope of Africans" nor are "European and African tongues, notions and outlook…irreconcilable"(Willan 1984:331). In fact, the translations, through which equivalents are delineated, show, as Schalkwyk and Lapula suggest, that "Tswana and British forms of social organisation and expression, although ostensibly unequal, were in fact commensurate" (2000:15). It is thus possible to conclude that the translations act as a window into the common humanity between Africans and Europeans, a humanity Plaatje valorises Shakespeare for dramatizing. This is a potential area for insightful pedagogical debates where interesting questions—such as how could the teaching of Shakespeare in Southern Africa benefit from Plaatje's ideas--could be raised. This is the subject for chapter six. Translating Shakespeare has a carnivalising effect of lowering his dramas from being the epitome of English culture to the level of indigenous forms, which hitherto have been perceived as "uncivilised", and therefore candidates for a "civilising" transformation via amongst other things, Shakespeare. In accordance with Plaatje's political vision, a common humanity should translate into the creation of a democratic society of equality and tolerance.

The idea of stories deserves further exploration. To be able to perform their various functions, stories must, in Obiechina's words, be "complete…self-contained and adequate" (1993:126) in order to conjure a world to which human beings can relate. Put more precisely, stories must be about typical human situations. What then are the aspects of stories common in both Plaatje and Shakespeare's society? If, as Agatucci (1998) suggests, stories are created by human beings "as a way of making sense of the world", then it follows that these are stories in which human beings are directly or indirectly involved as *dramatis personae*. To this extent, the stories will be created to

project the hopes, anxieties, aspirations and failures of human society. The crucial aspects of the human world contained in stories include: the language through which the characters communicate; problems or issues that they grapple with; and specific social circumstances in which they are located. I select character, problem, social circumstance and language to illustrate how Shakespeare became familiar and translatable material for Plaatje.

The first Shakespearean play Plaatje read was *The Merchant of Venice* (Plaatje 1996:210). He discovered that Shakespeare presented in this drama characters, issues, and circumstances to which he (Plaatje) could relate. For example, Shylock was so realistic to him that he was reminded of speculators operating in his own society of Kimberley. In fact, Shylock presents to Plaatje a double-edged tool as Schalkwyk and Lapula write:

> Shylock served a double purpose in Plaatje's dissemination of Shakespeare: as a typical example of the extortionate white 'speculators' then operating in Kimberley, and at the same time as a source for Plaatje's plea for the common humanity of all people, especially in his paraphrase of Shylock's speech ('hath not a Jew eyes?), which replaces 'Jew' with Mochuana (2000:17).

We can add too that Shylock signifies the modern capital economy without which Plaatje's pre-modern society was perfectly happy. As seen in chapter one, the advent of a capital economy resulted in urbanization and industrialization with their associated problems of orphanages, destruction of communal labour and other traditional structures which gave society stability.

Plaatje therefore sees in Shakespeare's dramas characters whom he not only can identify with, or who at least have equivalents in his own society, but also powerful tropes he can deploy in negotiating his increasingly hostile and racialized environment, in which colour is used to disenfranchise others. Shakespeare attracts Plaatje because of his (Shakespeare's) progressive ideas of allowing marginalized citizens to complain against injustice. According to Skura,

> Shakespeare was the first to show one of *us* mistreating a native, the first to represent a native from the inside, the first to allow a native to complain onstage (1989:58)

To Plaatje therefore, Shakespeare is a comrade in the struggle against injustice and other forms of racial or ethnic intolerance. Equally important is the fact that Shylock's extortionate practices—symbolic of the emergent capitalist milieu--deserve

condemnation because they are exploitative, inhumane and impoverishing. Paradoxically, the Christians seem to need Shylock's practices as a foil by which their virtues could be elevated. Shylock symbolises the ambivalence or double connotation that pervades Plaatje's career: speaking for and against the underprivileged at the same time.

The witches in *Macbeth* have equivalents in Plaatje's society. During one of his visits to Mafikeng, he in Willan's words, "managed to steal into Chief Montshiwa's council and listened, fascinated to the proceedings of a court case being heard" (1984:24). "The case in question", Willan continues,

> arose out of a man being accused of stealing the affections of another man's wife. Of particular interest was the way in which the married man resorted to witchcraft to catch the adulterous couple in the act (1984:24).

Witchcraft was a common practice in both Tswana and English societies. In *Mhudi,* Plaatje uses witchcraft to make subtle political statements. He uses it, in Stephen Gray's words,

> to remind English whites of South Africa that they did not need to look down on black society if their own great writer was also full of witches, sorceresses, chimeras, omens, bloodletting and general savagery—the wars of the Roses was their Mfecane (1976:13).

Related to the above, characters in Shakespeare's dramas act out universal, relevant and familiar issues and concerns. Plaatje's views on *Romeo and Juliet* illustrate the point.

> It may be depended upon that we both read *Romeo and Juliet.* My people resented the idea of my marrying a girl who spoke a language, which like the Hottentot language, had clicks in it; while her people likewise abominated the idea of giving their daughter in marriage to a fellow who spoke a language so imperfect as to be without any clicks. But the civilized laws of Cape Colony saved us from a double tragedy in a cemetry, and our erstwhile objecting relatives have lived to award their benediction to the growth of our Chuana-M'Bo family which is bilingual both in the vernaculars and in European languages (Plaatje 1996:211).

Plaatje relates to this drama because the conflict between the Capulets and the Montagues over Romeo's love affair with Juliet reminds him of the conflict between his parents and Elizabeth's. The practice of endogamy is therefore not confined to the fictional society in *Romeo and Juliet,* but applies to human society in general, including Plaatje's. The self-translating Plaatje must have seen himself as a Romeo. However, Plaatje's marriage to Elizabeth differs from Shakespeare's story in that it does not end tragically. Thus Plaatje transforms the Romeo story to end happily. Plaatje's marriage

celebrates a break with age-old traditions, and promotes the ideal of tolerance which both Plaatje and Shakespeare seem to espouse. As we noted in chapter one, Shakespeare's story, while representing a common traditional practice of endogamy, is also an indictment of this practice. Plaatje would have seen as its lesson that society should allow its members the autonomy to choose partners. Consequently, Shakespeare and his characters are to Plaatje tropes for a new individualism which seeks to break away from the demands of tradition. In this case, they are symbols of the human desire to be free and autonomous. By invoking Shakespeare's story in his own marriage Plaatje calls for a re-assessment of human culture with the view of discarding what is out of tune with modern circumstances.

To this extent, the Romeo-Juliet story educates and even challenges society by presenting realistic issues, circumstances and characters. Shakespeare's dramas could therefore be said to be universal in their appeal. Hence Plaatje remarks that "Shakespeare's dramas...show that nobility and valour, like depravity and cowardice, are not the monopoly of any colour" (Plaatje 1996:212). Stephen Gray remarks that "Shakespeare's themes of war and peace, justice and honor and power, are Plaatje's too" (1976:10). Consequently, Plaatje concludes:

> It is to be hoped that with the maturity of African literature, now still in its infancy, writers and translators will consider the matter of giving to Africans the benefit of some at least of Shakespeare's works. That this could be done is suggested by the probability that some of the stories on which his dramas are based find equivalents in African folk-lore (Plaatje 1996:212).

The other aspect of Shakespearean drama that rendered it familiar territory to Plaatje is language, specifically proverbial and figurative language. Robert Weimann writes that "of the proverb alone in Shakespeare no fewer than 2,923 uses have been counted" (1978:206). The abundance of proverbs in Shakespeare's dramas explains the reason why Plaatje does not, in Schalkywk and Lapula's words, relinquish the

> sense of Shakespeare as a series of 'sayings' or proverbs, equivalent to the rich stock of folk wisdom and expression that had been passed down via his mother and grandmother through the Setswana language and folk-lore (2000:16).

What are proverbs, their form and functions? Proverbs, like poetry, folktales, and riddles, are part of the rich oral traditions of Plaatje's Tswana people. That his language has a rich corpus of proverbs is clear from his writings. For example, in *Sechuana Proverbs*, he tells us

> that there are many more unrecorded proverbs I have no doubt. For it will be observed that many of the maxims in this collection are of pastoral origin and refer to all kinds of game; yet (with the exception of the allegorical reference to the buffalo...) I cannot recall any proverbs referring to the *Nare* (Buffalo), the *Phofu* (Eland), the *Kukama* (Oryx) and the *Tshephe* (Springbok).

In 1929 he informed the Registrar of the University of the Witwatersrand that

> I have completed my collection of proverbs for the second edition of *Sechuana Proverbs and their European Equivalents*...The first edition, now out of print, came out in 1916 and had 730 Sechuana proverbs with translations and equivalents. They were written from memory while I worked alone in London. Your grant, I am grateful to add, helped in collecting nearly 400 additional Native saws so that the edition now under preparation will certainly contain over 1,000 Sechuana proverbs (1996:378).

The study of proverbs, as indeed the study of oral forms, is fraught with difficulties. For example, proverbs are, as Finnegan argues, "closely interwoven with other aspects of linguistic and literary behaviour" (1970:392). Hence it is sometimes difficult to distinguish them from other oral forms. In her words,

> The close connection of proverbs with other literary forms raises a difficulty. How, particularly in an oral culture, can we distinguish proverbs from other forms of oral art? Or, indeed, from ordinary clichés and idioms, and from such related but different forms as maxims and apophthegms? (1970:393).

Finnegan's remarks point to problems of definition and distinction between genres. My purpose is not to engage in the polemics of definitions, but to acknowledge these difficulties as I deploy working definitions of the proverb form in this study. In view of Finnegan's remarks, I will provide definitions of both proverbs and idioms, as the distinction between the two is sometimes tenuous, precisely because they interpenetrate in complex ways. Thus it becomes fairly clear that while Plaatje renders Shakespeare's plays in prose as opposed to verse in the originals, his inclusion of proverbial and idiomatic expressions makes them poetic. As Shole imagines, the "prose of Plaatje is as highly poetic and as highly idiomatic as the original, if not better" (1990/91:60).

The Oxford English Dictionary defines proverb and idiom respectively as:

> A short pithy saying in common and recognized use; a concise sentence, often metaphorical or alliterative in form, which is held to express some truth ascertained by experience or observation and familiar to all; an adage, a wise saw (1989:712).

> A form of expression, grammatical construction; a peculiarity of phraseology approved by the usage of a language, and often having a signification other than its grammatical or logical one (1989:624).

Both are known expressions with deeper meanings, and have aesthetic and moral functions to which I now turn.

The functions of proverbs are varied depending on the contexts in which they are used. Unlike other oral forms such as praise poetry and riddles, Starfield suggests that "proverbs are seldom reserved for particular occassions" (1991:5). Instead, they are part of every day speech. Achebe, for example, sees them as the "palm oil with which words are eaten" (1986:5). This makes them amenable to various contexts of social transaction. Campbell's (1972) list of proverbs covers among others, the following areas: settlement of disputes; people's behaviour; warnings; rearing of children; and family relations (1972:123, see also Moilwa 1975, Guma 1967).

The general truth in proverbs is conveyed through several means, as Finnegan tells us. Amongst these are the following: "more or less literally, through a simile, or (most commonly) through a metaphor" (1970:395). This is an important point to bear in mind because it enables us to appreciate in part the imaginative, picturesque, vivid and poetic nature of Plaatje's prose. Thus, the figures of speech he utilizes enable him to produce successful translations by matching Shakespeare's poetry with its Setswana equivalent.

The proverb "*Kgosi keKgosi ka morafe* or *Kgosi keKgosi kabatho*/The Chief is Chief on account of the Tribe" (Campbell 1970:124; Mitchison and Pilane 1967:265; Plaatje 1916:47) illustrates some of the functions and contexts of proverbs. Campbell suggests the context of the proverb as the "*kgotla*/traditional assembly" and the equivalent of the modern parliament. He writes:

> A proverb voiced in the *kgotla* when the Chief does not follow the wishes of his tribe. This is said to be a very old proverb and the basis upon which Tswana democracy is built. It is only because the people of the Tribe exist that the Chief can be a Chief; he personifies the thinking of the Tribe and must ensure that the tribe's wishes are carried out. Should he make unpopular laws, he is unable to enforce them without the backing of the Tribe (1972:124).

These remarks help us to appreciate Plaatje's interest in oral forms, proverbs in particular, as building blocks for formidable political organisation. First, while proverbs are amenable to many contexts of social communication, they do have special contexts in which they are effective in "resolving social and political ambiguities" (Lieber 1984:424 in Starfield 1991:5). The context of the *kgotla*, the highest political assembly in traditional

Tswana life, is indeed an appropriate context for proverbial use, as "it requires strategic thinking and speech heightened above the colloquial" (Seitel, in Starfield 1991:6). It should be expected therefore that the *kgotla* meeting at which the Barolong debate whether to assist the trekkers, is characterized by a noticeable increase in proverb use (*Mhudi* 1978:110-113). Couzens's "five proverbs in five pages" (1973:5) is an under-estimation as I counted six proverbs in four pages (1978:110-113).

The increase in proverb use at this crucial political gathering confirms Finnegan's remarks that

> Though proverbs can occur in very many different contexts, they seem particularly important in situations where there is both conflict and, at the same time, some obligation that this conflict should not take on too open and personal a form (1970:411-412).

In predominantly oral societies, proverbs are instrumental in conflict resolution. Hence Crocker terms them social "shifters" (Crocker 1977 in Starfield 1991:3) while Burke sees them as "strategies for dealing with situations" (Burke 1957:256 in Starfield 1991:3).

Besides warning an errant chief, the proverb expresses Tswana political philosophy in which social governance is a collective enterprise between ruler and subject. Thus the proverb reminds both of their responsibilities in maintaining democracy. Similarly, the proverb is an allusion to the partnership between the ruler and the ruled in dealing with the existential problem of what it means to be alive. It is by perceiving one another that they confirm and assign meaning to their existence. Mitchison and Pilane observe that

> This (proverb) can be used as a warning to an obstinate Chief who is not attending to his people's wants. But it can also be said as a matter of pride and truth (1967:265).

The chief derives pride from his subjects' perception of his existence. It is therefore a reality that without them he is nothing. Hence, the proverb "*Tlou yare gotlola molapo yabo esatlhole eletlou ketlotswana*/An elephant after crossing a river is only called a little elephant" (Campbell 1972:130). A chief becomes an ordinary person outside his territory.

Mzilikazi's statement in *Mhudi*, with all its tentativeness and manipulation, seems to state clearly the existential relationship between king and kingdom.

> One cannot exist without the other. Without you, I could be no king, and without me you could be no nation (1978:58).

The proverb also explains the coordinates on which Tswana democracy and justice are premised. In this way proverbs are, as Starfield suggested,

> an historicising form, in that they enable the transmission of accumulated life-experience from one generation to the next (1991:4).

Starfield's point becomes clearer when read in conjunction with Plaatje's *Sechuana Proverbs* in which he tells us that

> A reference to the following pages will show that most of the proverbs originated on the pastures or the hunting-field, and the wealth of the Sechuana vocabulary lies in the same direction. For instance, one can easily translate into Sechuana such outdoor phrases as "a group of boys," "a band of harvesters," "a herd of cattle," "a flock of sheep and goats," "a flock of springbok," "a troop of hartebeest," and "a herd of wildbeest" (1916:8).

Proverbs originating from the pastures are indeed 'a historicising form' in that they illuminate the modes of existence of the Batswana. In this way, they teach subsequent generations their forebears' origins, experiences, modes of existence and how these have evolved over time. Like folk-tales which employ exoticness, proverbs are containers of the history, philosophy and language of the people. Hence, Starfield concludes that "proverb systems distill, record and restate a society's cultural and social beliefs" (1991:5).

By emphasizing partnership between the ruler and ruled, this proverb comments on and furthers Plaatje's ideal civil society which relies on collectivity for its success. This partnership is further shown in yet another proverbial logic of his people, "*lecogo le tlhapisa je lengoe*/one hand must wash the other" (Plaatje 1916:49). We can therefore appreciate with Starfield how and why Plaatje invested the proverb form with significant political agency. We also can appreciate the philosophy underpinning Plaatje's efforts in recording and translating Setswana proverbs and how this project is not only extended in the translation of Shakespeare's dramas, but contextualized as well. By contextualising English proverbs, the dramas offer Plaatje a superb vehicle through which to present Setswana proverbs and idioms.

However, Plaatje's use of the technology of print to preserve proverbs for posterity is problematic. Starfield notes,

> in "writing down" oral forms, he was using a technology of storing information unknown and unavailable to most black South Africans. While he hoped writing would preserve Setswana oral forms and the contexts that gave them meaning,

> writing inadvertently placed Setswana proverbs in a new context...The new situations Plaatje gave each proverb were firstly, a direct English translation and, secondly, one (or more) European equivalents. This paper argues that writing itself was a new context, anticipating a future readership who had lost contact with the oral performance and usage of proverbs (1991:2-3).

Starfield raises issues concerning the relationship between orality and literacy, to which no immediate solutions could be found in the limited contexts of this study. Her remarks are valid considering that Plaatje employs a tool of modernity to reverse what he considered to be its negative effects on his oral culture. A contradiction indeed. Let me, however, respond as follows to Starfield's remarks. To begin with, let us recall from chapter one that for Plaatje, modernity was a janus-faced phenomenon with the potential of simultaneously being a resource and a problem. Writing and/or literacy, while hitherto unavailable, seems to be an unavoidable means of communication to be adopted. What remains at issue is only a question of time. Plaatje thus sees it as a resource that can be utilized to restore, as he believes, threatened oral forms. If we invoke Anderson's logic that the growth of nations or modernity is dependent upon the massive re-organisation of old communities (Anderson 1983:86-87 in Starfield), we can appreciate Plaatje's faith in print as a partner to oral forms. For Plaatje, writing is therefore a re-interpretation and re-organization of the old systems of oral communication. Lest we be tempted to assume that Plaatje was not aware of the dangers of writing on oral forms, let us recall his acknowledgement of the problems of translation in several of his writings. In *Mhudi*, for example, after admiring Chief Moroka as a great philosopher of "witty expressions and dry humour" whose "speeches abounded in allegories and proverbial sayings, some traditional and others spontaneous" (1978:111), he admits "that much of the charm is lost in translation" (1978:112). This is a difficulty he contends with throughout his translation career. The Setswana versions of the Preface and Introduction to *Sechuana Proverbs* are littered with proverbs which unfortunately are lost in the English versions. After the publication of *Diphoshophosho*, Plaatje had this to say:

> It is only natural that the translator must experience great difficulty in finding the equivalents for some of Shakespeare's phrases, in which case he has to rely on the general sense of the passage to render the author's meaning in the vernacular, and that has been my difficulty (in Willan 1984:329).

Such are the problems associated with the appropriation of new forms of cognition and communication.

Further, if employing writing to save oral forms is considered contradictory, let us remember Couzens' "cheeky Kaffir stance" in which the opponent is answered in his own language (1973:4). Writing as a tool of modernity is an appropriate means of responding to the opponent in a language he understands.

The "cheeky Kaffir stance" has foundations in the proverbial wisdom of the Batswana. The debate whether to assist the trekkers in *Mhudi* illustrates the point. One old man remarks:

> What a truthful thing is a proverb. According to an old saying, 'lightning fire is quenched by other fire'. It seems a good idea then to fight the Matabele with the help of the women, for they always kill women in their attacks. If Sarel Cilliers' women had not helped the Boers, they would not have defied Gubuza's army and Schalk would not be here to tell the tale (1978:110).

The proverb 'lightning fire is quenched by other fire' serves two purposes: first it lends moral credibility to the old man's views. Should the assembly dismiss his opinion, it will not be rejecting him as a person, but the shared wisdom which the proverb conveys. Should that happen, they will live to regret the consequences of ignoring such wisdom. Secondly, it provides a moral foundation/justification for the "cheeky kaffir stance" in which an enemy is answered back in his/her language. The Batswana believe that an enemy's tools/strategies must be used in resisting him/her just as women are to be used in fighting the Matabele. Plaatje's use of writing in his political and cultural struggles is therefore consistent with the "cheeky Kaffir stance". Just as "lightning fire is quenched by other fire', Plaatje employs writing (a tool of modernity) to respond to its potential threats.

Using the tools of modernity to resist its perceived destructive effects points to the ambivalence, complexity, and subtlety of resistance to dominant culture, and by extension, the unstable position of the native intellectual or activist. As Aschroft states,

> Resistance…need not *necessarily* mean rejection of dominant culture, the utter refusal to countenance any engagement with its forms and discourses. Indeed, not only is such isolation impossible but the most effective post-colonial resistance has always been the wresting, from imperial hands, of some measure of political control over such things as language, writing and various kinds of cultural discourse (2001:47).

These remarks, together with Bhaba's notion of mimicry, Pratt's contact zone, and Bakhtin's carnival, will be useful when I consider the ambivalence of the educated natives' use of Shakespeare to embellish their speeches.

The next point, by way of responding to the issue of contradiction, comes from Plaatje's perception and handling of history. Once more *Mhudi* illustrates the point. One of the objects of the book Plaatje tells us, is "to interpret to the reading public one phase of the back of the Native mind" (1978:21). Precisely, the book is a re-interpretation of history from the perspective of his Batswana people to counter available versions.

At the core of this re-interpretation is the two-sidedness of every matter. In *Mhudi* Plaatje reminds us of this duality via several characters, and therefore of the varying purposes to which they put it. Cilliers, the trekker leader tells us pointedly that

> there are always two points of view. The point of view of the ruler is not always the viewpoint of the ruled. We Boers are tired of foreign kings and rulers (1978:84).

Mzilikazi defends Gubuza in the following metaphoric passage:

> If Gubuza had not spoken I should have been very sorry. You see, a man has two legs so as to enable him to walk properly. He cannot go far if he hops on one leg. In like manner a man has two hands; to hold his spear in the one and his shield in the other. With a spear in his right hand, without the shield in his left, be he ever so agile, he is entirely at the mercy of his opponent. For the same reason he has two eyes in order to see better. A man has two ears so as to hear both sides of a dispute. A man who joins a discussion with the facts of one side only, will often find himself in the wrong.
>
> In every grade of life there are always two sides to every matter. There are riches and poverty; beauty and ugliness; health and sickness; wisdom and folly; right and wrong; day and night; summer and winter; fire and water. One cannot exist without the other. Without you, I could be no king, and without me you could be no nation; and it was wise of Gubuza to remind us that side by side with our infectious joy there is such thing as sorrow (1978:58).

The double-sidedness of issues explains the apparent contradictions in Plaatje's deployment of the tools of modernity to respond to its effects on his oral culture. Similarly, it is consistent with Plaatje's ideal civil society in which difference is complementary as in Mzilikazi's hands, eyes, legs and ears.

The contexts into which writing is committing oral forms, seem to be welcomed by the very people Starfield fears have no access to this new mode of communication. Plaatje illustrates this.

> During the first week of each month the native peasants in Bechuanaland, and elsewhere, used to look forward to its (*Mahoko a Becwana/The Bechuana News*) arrival as eagerly as the white up-country farmers now await the arrival of the daily papers. How little did the writer dream, when frequently called upon as a boy to read the news to groups of men sewing karosses under the shady trees outside the cattle fold, that journalism would afterwards mean his bread and cheese (1916:5).

The enthusiasm of these groups of men, reminiscent of the Indian boys' craving for books discussed in the first chapter, is an indication that writing is a viable basis for oral dissemination, just as Shakespeare's theatre rekindles Plaatje's interest in his oral culture. Even though writing will place them in different contexts, at least there will be something salvaged. Further, the availability of these forms in different contexts will constantly remind the audience of their oral contexts. As a result, writing will not necessarily anticipate a readership that would have lost contact with the oral performance of these forms. One can also add that the proverb form in particular is resilient and adaptable to new situations where it continues to invoke its original contexts. This particular proverb can be applied to the modern political context where ministers and parliamentarians have largely taken the powers of chiefs. The proverb could be used, through invoking its original contexts, to remind the modern politician that he or she owes his/her position to the electorate's vote. The adaptability of the proverb form will be clarified with examples from the translations.

By placing himself between the groups of men and the news he read to them, Plaatje alludes to his later career as translator *par excellence.* He is therefore at an early age an interpreter of the new culture, and in Couzens' words, possesses "a skill which reversed the order of wisdom between the old and the young" (1988:63). Further, this literal and symbolic position of *in-betweeness* results in a split identity which, as will become evident, haunts and compromises his projects.

By translating Setswana proverbs into more than two European languages, Plaatje makes an important political pronouncement, namely that human languages and cultures are

simultaneously different and equal. No language or culture should therefore be considered superior to the others. In the proverbial wisdom of the Ila of Zambia,

> "we do not like the pride of a hen's egg": eggs in a nest are all equal, so one of them should not be proud (Finnegan 1970:410).

Setswana oral forms are as important as their European counterparts and therefore worthy of respect, recognition and preservation. Plaatje uses this equality and the technology of writing in order to preserve Setswana oral forms, paradoxically, against "European cultures that were so rapidly writing themselves across Southern Africa" (Starfield 1991:5). In preserving them as the equivalents of European forms, Plaatje engages them in "imagining" an ideal cultural world which recognizes, celebrates and transcends race, distance and language. The Brotherhood movements he was actively involved in are to be understood as part of this utopian imagination.

The notion of equivalence is invested with further political agency in the form of generating his people's pride in their oral forms. This, he hoped, will act as a launch pad into supra-ethnic politics. Plaatje came to be concerned with the general moral decay amongst his people, and felt that oral forms could be used to respond to the destructive effects of modernity. Willan's remarks on this concern are worth reproducing because of their succinctness in stating the problem and how the preservation of oral forms was perceived by Plaatje to be a viable mitigation strategy.

> Plaatje's intense concern for the condition of Setswana was in part a product of his increasingly pessimistic observations of the effects of social and economic changes upon the lives of his people--the lawlessness, alcoholism, the breakdown in parental control, a disrespect for authority, the disintegration, in other words, in all spheres of African communal life about which Plaatje had written a great deal in the press. In the preservation of Tswana language and culture Plaatje saw a means of cultural regeneration, to enable the Tswana people at least to resist the consequences of what he perceived to be happening to them. Only then, as Plaatje saw it, could they feel pride in their customs and traditions, and only then could that process of moral regeneration, to which Plaatje was so committed in other spheres, be set in motion (Plaatje 1996:307-8).

Pride in their customs and traditions depends in part on the understanding that they are equal to other cultures to which they can be enticed. If their customs are perceived as inferior, they are likely to abandon them for the so-called superior ones, with potentially disastrous consequences. A sense of pride in their oral culture, Plaatje had hoped, will encourage his people to support his various cultural schemes. For example, he had hoped that his people would readily finance the printing of his translations of

Shakespeare, seeing that they would be written in their language which they had feared would fall into dis-use. But alas, his people did not support such efforts, and this was a disappointment against which he lashed out in the Introduction to *Diphoshophosho.*

By generating a sense of pride and confidence in his people, Plaatje also hoped to draw them into the political struggles of the time. For him, the political developments following the unification, the introduction of the Land Act with its concomitant dispossession of the natives, and subsequent attempts to impose a homogenizing orthography for all African languages, posed a great danger to the identities and survival of individual ethnicities in South Africa. Through oral forms, Plaatje hoped to rekindle ethnic pride in his people with which they will rally together against such political developments. Starfield writes,

> He feared that the economic and administrative unification would rapidly erode regional and ethnic boundaries and entrench the domination of English and Afrikaans-speaking whites over the country's black peoples. For him, the first step to resisting Tswana custom's decline was to assert its right, (and its speakers' rights) to an equal say in the country's transformation. The second step was to preserve Tswana language and custom from within, by, for instance, using proverbs, as a continuing 'critique' and interpretation of the increasingly "modern" world in which the Tswana found themselves (1991:7).

The proverb on chiefs and its emphasis on consensus-politics is an appropriate idiom for this criticism. The post-unification government introduced repressive laws such as the Land Act precisely because it did not consult the majority of blacks who would bear the brunt of this legislation. Through this proverb, Plaatje indicts the white government for not premising its rule on chiefly rule and its democratic principles. Similarly, this proverb can be invoked to contrast the two systems of government, with modern rule as a foil to its traditional counterpart. Consequently, people will be inspired to oppose the current government. But as Starfield argues,

> Plaatje found the Rolong, and indeed, other Tswana communities he knew, little concerned to build political organisation around cultural and ethnic issues (1991:4).

Therefore, his became a lonely struggle waged to save the very people who seemed not to be bothered. However, the failure of this project was to be expected. In emphasizing language and culture, Plaatje failed to appreciate the complexity of building political alliances. Economics, a factor Plaatje overlooked, is equally significant in the formation of political allegiances. This is evident in his opposition to socialism and his support of

De Beers and its capitalistic tendencies (Plaatje 1996:232-39, 376-77). Given the appalling conditions at the mines (see chapter one), speaking and recruiting for De Beers compromises and betrays Plaatje's principles of championing the cause of "his people". Plaatje colludes with capitalism in impoverishing his people. By consorting with "the enemy", Plaatje symbolizes the dilemma of subsequent generations of indigenous politicians who in spite of leading their countries to political independence, remain economically enslaved by their former colonial masters' capitalist ventures. It is therefore clear how economics is much more powerful than cultural considerations in creating political allegiances. I illustrate further how Plaatje's split identity compromised his ideals.

On a personal level, Plaatje's concern with the writing and preservation of Tswana oral forms is one incidence of numerous self-translations and counter-translations. Through the utilization of print media, in Starfield's words, Plaatje

> saw himself as a latterday Robert Moffat, the early 19th century missionary who laboured to make Setswana a print language. While Moffat's aim was evangelical, Plaatje's was historical and nationalist: he wanted to show that the history of the Rolong was as significant as that of any other African or 'European polity' (1991:7).

In Finnegan's words, "besides...relatively utilitarian aspects" proverbs have "what might be called a purely literary aspect" (1970:414). Finnegan continues,

> Of the proverbs in many African societies we are told that they are consciously used not only to make effective points but also to *embellish* their speeches in a way admired and appreciated by their audiences...*Proverbs are also used to add colour to everyday conversation* (1970:415)[emphasis added].

With their use of similes and metaphors, proverbs do indeed "add colour to everyday conversation". I emphasize "embellish" because Plaatje uses it in "A South African's Homage", and it is in order to recall that statement here. Reading more of Shakespeare's plays, Plaatje found

> that many of the current quotations used by educated Natives to *embellish* their speeches, which I had always taken for English proverbs, were culled from Shakespeare's works (Plaatje 1996:210)[emphasis added].

But why do educated natives embellish their speeches with Shakespeare, what purpose does this embellishment serve? First, it could be said that the use of Shakespeare by these natives is an act of self-definition in which they identify themselves with colonizing culture. With an education, this group clamours for the symbols of a new culture of

which Shakespeare is a defining factor. By quoting, 'repeating' and 'mimicking' Shakespeare, the native intellectual reveals his translatability, assimilation, co-option and absorption into western culture and its values. The use of Shakespeare therefore marks the crowning success of colonial education in producing Macaulay's in/famous group of intermediaries (qtd. Bhabha 1994:87).

Distiller (2003) explores how the liberal humanist education received by the native intellectuals was simultaneously empowering and alienating. It placed them in an unstable position, "allowing them to cross over to the working class on the one hand if such a move was expedient, and to aspire to bourgeois status on the other hand" (2003:108). My concern here is how this education alienated the educated native from his community. Plaatje's potential readers perceived an educated leader as "a clever actor…to be admired, not followed" (Willan 1984:317), whose tireless work on books is "witchery" (Plaatje 1996:385). I return to this point in chapter four, but for the moment, let me emphasize that quoting Shakespeare has the potential of pushing the educated native further from his community.

Such embellishment has political implications illuminated by the dynamics of the contact zone and its associated transformation, cannibalization, calibanization, possession, mimicry, carnivalization, transculturation, menace, translation, subversion and violation. To begin with, the native's use of Shakespeare reflects, contrary to racist opinion, his intellectual capacity to learn and relate to the symbols of the colonizing culture as in Caliban's use of language, despite all odds. Herein begins the native's capacity to appropriate these symbols for struggles hitherto unimagined by the dominant discourse. Plaatje's fascination with and subsequent translation of Shakespeare subjects him (Shakespeare) to both literal and symbolic transformation. By mimicking Shakespeare, Plaatje points to the infinite possibility of appropriating him in numerous political and cultural struggles. Hence to him Shakespeare was a resource to be appropriated for specific purposes. Little wonder therefore that his 'mimicry' prompted academic surveillance from people who "knew" Shakespeare's intentions and so could claim him as their own. This study is a modest outline of the complexity of Plaatje's mimicry, translation, and transformation of Shakespeare.

Finally, this embellishment has aesthetic functions which are nevertheless consistent with the political appropriation of Shakespeare. Famous for his linguistic aptitude (see Brink 1996:10) Shakespeare appeals to the native intellectual whose society recognizes and values the aesthetics of words, good speech and other linguistic manipulations. Finnegan has told us how proverbs are used to beautify or "colour" speeches. Shakespeare therefore, merely re-connects the native intellectual with his oral culture, or at least makes him see the rhetorical beauty of languages, and his in particular. Consequently, Shakespeare serves as a starting point for reclaiming that oral culture. As already noted, Shakespeare was admired amongst Plaatje's people as "the white man who spoke so well". The emphasis is on "talk", hence, as we must be aware by now, sayings. Shakespeare is a good speaker and user of words just like Plaatje's Tswana speakers such as poets (see Vail and White 1991:71 on poet's linguistic manipulation) and chiefs. Plaatje endows his characters in *Mhudi* (Mzilikazi, Dambuza, Gubuza, Moroka, Sitonga) with exceptional linguistic aptitude and love for words. In Dambuza's words, these "are men who can talk" (Plaatje 1978:57). Plaatje's eloquence assists him in appreciating the oratory in *Julius Caesar.*

Plaatje's familiarity with proverbs and their uses enabled him to appreciate Shakespeare's dramas. Reading these dramas reminded Plaatje of the rich proverbial wealth of his Setswana language. The dramas therefore *re-proverbialized* Plaatje, and consequently, inspired him to preserve Tswana proverbs by collecting and publishing them in *Sechuana Proverbs with Literal Translations and their European Equivalents* (1916) and in the translations as well. It is regrettable that despite his commendable pioneering efforts this book suffers benign neglect, languishing

> under lock and key, not because it offends against any vicious South African censorship laws, but because it is an old book that needs protection...nor do readers in libraries or open market make any significant requests for it (Starfield 1991:1).

As Starfield laments,

> This state of affairs is, unhappily, not what Plaatje intended when he set out to save these proverbs from the likely oblivion of orality, by writing them down. This was the trap into which writing enticed many of its practitioners among the African elite (1991:1).

The translations of Shakespeare were partly intended to record, contextualise and preserve Setswana proverbs. Like his collection of proverbs, these translations have also

not received significant attention from readers and scholars (Shole 1990/91, Starfield 2001).

In addition to the notion of stories and their formal elements, the predominantly agrarian economies of Plaatje's and Shakespeare's societies, together with their shared transition to modernity, proved to be useful tools in the translatability of Shakespeare's dramas. These parallels have been dealt with in the previous chapter and should not detain us. Suffice to mention that Shakespeare's rural background, together with the transition to modernity constituted part of the foundation on which his dramaturgy was to be based. That is, his dramas reflect the synergy between rural and modern, orality and literacy. John Shakespeare's inability to write—"signing documents with a cross" (Scarfe 1964:20, *cf.* Schoenbaum 1991:8)—in contrast to William Shakespeare's success as a theatre practitioner—playwright and actor—are poignant metaphors of the interface of oral and literate culture. In spite of urbanization, Shakespeare was "a countryman through and through" (Rowse 1963:52).

Robert Weimann's *Shakespeare and the Popular Tradition in the Theater* (1978) demonstrates how Shakespeare's theatre traces its origins to oral culture, with its strong agricultural economies that we have already mentioned. The book opens with the discussion of "The Mimus" and then "The Folk Play and Social Custom"; "The Mystery Cycles"; "Moralities and Interludes"; "The Elizabethan Drama"; and concludes with a chapter on "Shakespeare's Theater: Tradition and Experiment". This structural organization imposes a strong temporal dimension, illustrating the extent to which Shakespeare's theatre is an organic product of popular folkloric and dramatic tradition. An appreciation of Shakespeare's dramas must therefore take into account the social contexts in which they emerged. As Weimann claims,

> It is only when Elizabethan society, theatre, and language are seen as interrelated that the structure of Shakespeare's dramatic art emerges as fully functional—that is, as part of a larger, and not only literary, whole (1978:xii).

The social contexts of the dramas, with their equivalences to Plaatje's society, are useful in our appreciation of the translatability of Shakespeare's plays. Rooted in rich oral traditions, Shakespeare's plays appealed to Plaatje, whose background although not a direct replica of Shakespeare's English society, is nevertheless commensurate with its incipient modernity and provides useful equivalences on which comparative studies

could be based. Couzens, for example, observes that in every Shakespearean play, "there is the knowledge of ancient crafts, the smell of the forests, the sweat of the hunt" (1988:63). Plaatje's own background is thus a useful resource in negotiating the complexity and richness of Shakespearean drama. So that, for example, Goneril's reference to Lear's return from hunting (*Lear* I.iii.8), reminds us of the hunting Plaatje describes at the beginning of *Mhudi*. As he tells us, it was "a national enterprise" (25), in which his people would rather

> kill wild animals nearer home than go to the cattle-post for meat. Very often the big game ran thalala-motse (when wild animals continued their frolics straight through a Native village) when there would be systematic slaughter of antelopes and orgies of wild-beef eating (27).

While in Plaatje's circumstances hunting seems to be open to all men, in Shakespeare's society it is hierarchized as the preserve of the aristocracy or Gascoigne's "gentle bloods" (as Lear's hunt illustrates). According to Reay,

> The gentry were the patrons of sport...They rode in the hunt and shot the game. The plebs, for their part, watched. They cheered. They followed the hunt and beat the game (1988:16, see also Palliser 1992:412).

Not surprisingly, George Gascoigne, remarks that

> The paine I leave for servants such,
> as beate the bushie woods
> To make their masters sport (in Reay, 16).

Plaatje seems to have inherited the ancient sport of hunting, (unlike his mentor who is alleged to have been a poacher (Graff and Phelan 2000:5). Willan provides a photo (no. 42) in which Plaatje has a gun with the following caption:

> Hunting small game was one of Plaatje's few forms of relaxation, and he had a reputation as a crack shot. Here he is shown with the proceeds of one outing. The photograph is undated, but was probably taken around 1905 or 1906 (1984:n.p.)

The photo deserves commentary because it reflects the conjunction of tradition and modernity. An ancient practice (hunting) is accomplished with the modern technology of guns. As a member of the salaried elite Plaatje could presumably afford the use of a gun in contrast to the majority of his people who probably relied on the use of dogs, spears, arrows and other traditional means of hunting. The point to emphasize, however, is that the equivalence in cultural, economic and social activities enables Plaatje to translate Shakespeare's dramas. Plaatje and Shakespeare, one can suggest, are symbolic of the interface between the old and the new, as their careers reflect what in

Weimann's words is "a cultural synthesis of old and new" (1978:161). By drawing on traditional forms (stories, proverbs, songs, and other forms) in their careers and at time of great change, they reflect this cultural synthesis.

Within this general traditional background is to be found the social and political organization of societies. Shakespeare's characters reflect among others the family and political structures of the societies about which he wrote. The history plays for example, reflect the political structures of traditional societies, and in particular the centrality of the monarchy and the likely consequences of modernity on this ancient institution. As I will demonstrate in more detail, such institutions found equivalences in Plaatje's society. For example, Shakespeare's history plays find equivalences in Plaatje's chiefly biographies. Plaatje traced his ancestry to ancient Rolong chiefs, and he spoke for and against traditional chiefly rule as a potential basis for a new nationalism based on racial equality.

From the previous discussion, it is possible to appreciate factors which rendered Shakespeare translatable. Let me conclude this section by quoting Willan's statement because it sums up what this chapter hopes, in part, to achieve.

> Plaatje had his own reasons for being interested in Shakespeare; he admired Shakespeare precisely because he found in him a humanity that transcended boundaries of race and colour in a way that so many later English writers conspicuously failed to do; he believed that many of the themes with which Shakespeare was concerned...had a very direct resonance with the traditions to which they had been brought up; and in the act of translation he had sought not to reproduce directly the poetic qualities of Shakespeare's language, but to match it and thereby demonstrate the qualities of his own language in its richness of tone, vocabulary and wealth of expression (1984:332).

Plaatje's Theory and Practice of Translation.

In this section I draw from Plaatje's biography aspects which might constitute his conception and practice of translation.

Attempts to discuss Plaatje's conception of translation are fraught with problems. One obvious difficulty is deciding on which aspect of Plaatje's life and career to anchor his idea of translation for the reason that his entire life--directly or indirectly--can best be described as that of mediation, translation or interpretation *par excellence.* His parents' dual identity as traditional Barolong and Christians at the same time; the Plaatje name

(originally a Dutch word meaning flat), his attendance at Pniel mission school where at least four languages were in current use, his association with the African intelligentsia of Kimberley with its ethnic and vocational diversity, his court interpretation, his editorship of bi-/tri-lingual newspapers; his political activism, and the vernacularisation of Shakespeare are all tinged with the idea of mediation, interpretation or translation. Plaatje was a 'lawyer', mediator and go-between *par excellence.* Laura Chrisman states,

> Plaatje...was...in all respects an extremely litigious man. Throughout his discursive and political activities he positions himself as a lawyer: for the defence, representing African people; and for the prosecution, attacking white racism, its injustice, poor reasoning, and double standards (2000:169).

The pervasiveness of translation in Plaatje's life and career poses difficulties in choosing specific aspects on which to centre his conception of translation. What is inevitable though is the fact that such a theory must be embedded in the social reality of his existence, for as Bassnett and Trivedi remind us, translations never take place in a vacuum (1999:2).

The pervasiveness of translation in Plaatje's life notwithstanding, I wish to hinge the construction of his theory upon his career as court interpreter in Mafikeng from 1898 to 1902. This is not to relegate other aspects of his life to the background, for to do so fails to appreciate how the synergy between his various activities enriches his career as a translator. His position as court interpreter is the defining moment of his career as a translator. He acknowledged that "a term of five years as interpreter in the law courts and ten years as editor of a trilingual paper" (*English in Africa* 1976:9) helped him in his translations of Shakespeare. His friend Ramoshoana also suggests that court interpretation helped Plaatje in his vernacularization and domestication of Shakespeare (Willan 1984:330).

Plaatje's South Africa was a multi-ethnic society. This diversity manifested itself at various points of his life and career: at Pniel, in Kimberley, Mafikeng, and during his international travels to England, Canada and the United States of America as a member of the SANNC deputation. I want to suggest that it is to this ethnic diversity and its implications or consequences that one should trace the emergence of Plaatje's conception of translation. But before I do so, let me recall two aspects of his stay in Kimberley during his tenure as messenger with the Post Office. These are aspects which

link with the ethnic diversity and Plaatje's later job as court interpreter, and are thus material to the appreciation of his theory and practice of translation.

When Plaatje took up the job of messenger in Kimberley, he joined a group of Africans, mainly from "the Fingo or AmaXhosa tribes." This group, was also marked by its vocational diversity--its members employed as "messengers, teachers, police constables, interpreters" (Willan 1984:29). This group constituted the African intelligentsia, or Gramsci's 'organic intellectuals', who strove to make changes to their lot. According to Willan, this group consisted of

> committed Christians and regular churchgoers, firm believers in the idea of progress, in the virtues of education, hard work and individual achievement, and they had a warm admiration for the institutions of the Cape Colony and the British Empire. Two such institutions in particular they always singled out for special praise: the notion of equality before the law, regardless of racial or any other distinctions; and the non-racial Cape Franchise, the right to vote, enshrined in the laws of the colony, and open to any male citizen who possessed property worth £75, or an income of £50 a year, and who could fill in a registration form in either English or Dutch (1984:32-33).

Three essential issues--not unproblematic though--deserve emphasis because of the role they play in Plaatje's theory of translation. Coming to Kimberley brought Plaatje face to face once more with the ethnic diversity (and its implications) of the country which he had experienced in part at Pniel; it brought him into contact with the justice system which promised equality before the law irrespective of ethnicity; and it introduced him to the Cape franchise which accorded electoral privileges to all, albeit with strict property qualifications. These privileges and the ostensible objectivity of the legal system, could explain in part why Plaatje came to develop great faith in the law—an aspect of western modernity--as the impartial arbiter in human affairs, and in part why he was motivated to become an interpreter in the law courts. In his address "The Treatment of Natives in Courts" to the 1924 Joint Councils Conference in Pretoria, he discloses his long interest in the law: "as a boy I was tremendously fascinated by the work of the Supreme Court" because of what he felt to be its impartiality in dispensing justice (Plaatje 1996:336*ff*). The strong sense of democracy and justice for all underpins Plaatje's career and struggles. Plaatje projects his fascination with the law onto his mentor in the Introduction to *Diphoshophosho*. Shakespeare's dramatisation of justice, tolerance and individual freedom, Plaatje must have thought, could be a product of somebody who had a keen interest in law.

The three aspects outlined above combine to form a basis for his theory of translation. The liberal context of the Cape Colony, Plaatje must have thought, promised every citizen irrespective of race some space and opportunity to demonstrate his or her abilities. Further, Plaatje thought this context to encourage and tolerate diversity. But as noted in chapter two, efforts were being made to replace black people in the civil service. Plaatje and colleagues were therefore misled into believing that they were welcome citizens in the Cape Colony. If human beings are treated as equal before the law, then their languages and customs are equally so under what Chrisman calls "the law of the universal equivalence of languages"(2000:170). This equivalence is essential to Plaatje's conception of a nation of inter-ethnic solidarity.

If the very society in which Plaatje lived was and continues to be ethnically diverse, then mediation or translation is necessitated by that very social reality. The administration of justice in such circumstances is not only a crucial but also a delicate matter requiring due care, seriousness and commitment from all the participants. This is so because, as indicated earlier, it is the law that holds together the diverse ethnicities in harmony and promises them equal treatment. Ideally, all are equal before the law, thereby eliminating all attempts to disenfranchise anybody during the administration of justice. The law must, therefore, be applied fairly and fearlessly to all. In his manuscript "The Essential Interpreter" Plaatje identifies the uniqueness of the administration of justice in South Africa:

> The administration of justice in South Africa is something entirely different from the same thing in Europe, where judge, plaintiff, defendant, counsel and witnesses all speak the same language. In South Africa, where the inhabitants are Englishmen, Dutchmen, and Kafirs of various races, there is hardly any court of law without its interpreter (Plaatje 1996:50).

For Plaatje, the administration of justice is a collective enterprise in which various participants are involved: judge, plaintiff, defendant, counsel, witness, court interpreter and audience. It also should transcend colour, status and other human distinctions. To this extent, the administration of justice, like translation, is a dialogic social event that engenders a series of complex relationships with the underlying ideal of fair and fearless delivery of justice. In multi-lingual and multi-cultural South Africa, the situation is even more complex because linguistic and cultural equivalences have to be sought to aid the justice system. The need not merely for interpreters, but "essential interpreters", is therefore a jurisprudential imperative. What qualities an "essential interpreter" needs to

possess will be discussed shortly. Some general remarks will, by way of transition to those qualities, suffice in the meantime. In discussing his theory, the terms mediation, translation and interpretation will be used interchangeably.

Plaatje's conception of mediation begins from a somewhat commonplace idea, namely that mediation is an inescapable aspect of humanity, imposed on us by the very diverse ethnic and linguistic composition of human society. Lawrence Venuti has referred to translation as the "invisible practice, everywhere around us, inescapably present, but rarely acknowledged" (1992:1). If the great responsibility of translation is imposed on us by our very social reality, and therefore something we do not choose to do or not do, then what we can choose is how we translate and for what purpose we do so.

Any form of mediation, Plaatje will contend, must be rooted in the philosophy of equivalence, provided for by the nature of human diversity and respected by the legal and electoral institutions of the Cape Colony. Interpretation must be democratic by recognizing difference not as a basis for constructing the polar identities of them/us, but a fertile ground on which a common humanity can be nurtured. Plaatje insists on this democracy because it is a basis for a common human coexistence characterized by equality and justice. Consequently, he is weary of supremacist interpreters

> who carry into the courtroom an exhibition of the extreme superiority of their race over that of the unfortunate wretches for whom they have to interpret (Plaatje 1996:53)

because "their translations are then just a matter of form regardless of the interests of justice or the consequences of their callousness" (Plaatje 1996:53).

Interpretation rooted in the philosophy of the superiority of one race over the other leads to the miscarriage of justice, and is anathema to the liberal institutions of the Cape Colony. Such interpretations are mis-interpretations guided by deliberate attempts of one race to defy the law of the equivalence of human beings and languages. Ironically, this was the reality of Plaatje's circumstances, particularly after the Union, because as Schalkwyk and Lapula claim, it

> was to dawn on him later...when the law itself, far from being the vehicle of justice and the haven of the dispossessed, was quite openly turned into the vicious instrument of dispossession and suffering (2000:14).

Plaatje's vision of a world in which human beings coexist under an impartial law of equivalence therefore becomes quixotic and mere wishful thinking. He was naïve to believe that laws in which his people had no say could remain responsive to their needs. Law, far from being impartial, is informed by the ideology of the dominant social group for whom it is employed to safe guard its interests.

Plaatje—in yet another example of naivety--proposes that black interpreters should interpret for black litigants, with the hope of minimizing the mis-translations or faulty interpretations of supremacist white interpreters.

> The law guarantees protection to the man with a black skin as much as it does to the man with a white skin, and until you get black interpreters to translate for black prisoners, that guarantee exists in theory only and not in practice (Plaatje 1996:53-54).

While it may be true that black interpreters will translate fairly well for black prisoners, Plaatje's assertion borders dangerously on reductionism. The following example will show how naïve and simplistic it is. Plaatje discovered that ethnicity is not necessarily a uniting factor. In a more symbolic form of translation, Tengo Jabavu the editor of *Imvo* and self-appointed leader of the people just as Plaatje was, came to support the Natives' Land Act of 1913 to Plaatje's chagrin:

> How unlike the callous indifference of the alleged Native paper of Kingwilliamstown, edited by a gentleman, who, I am told, never attends Native meetings and has to depend on Englishmen for the information about the life of his (?) people. The *Imvo* is trying to discount the importance of the meeting, and belittle its representative character, as it has for months past endeavoured to underrate or ignore the hardships of our people under the harsh provisions of the Natives' Land Act. They have told me that the editor of *Imvo* is the embodiment of selfishness. That this quality is not wholly foreign to his nature is demonstrated in the current issue of *Imvo*. After bolstering up the Act for all it is worth, and railing the Natives for organising an appeal against it, your acrobatic contemporary tells its readers that the only flaw in the Act 'which is occasioning a manifest hardship is that relating to lending money' (Plaatje 1996:159-161).

The Natives' Land Act made prisoners out of the black people in South Africa and for a black spokesperson in the character of Tengo Jabavu to endorse the imprisonment of his people belies Plaatje's proposition that blacks should interpret for black prisoners. This incident perhaps foreshadows the role that ethnicity and self-centredness were going to play in South African politics. Plaatje's Tswana-speaking people failed to contribute money towards the publication of his translation of *The Comedy of Errors*. Their reluctance to support Plaatje's efforts further undermines his proposal that blacks should interpret

for other blacks, and by extension, his firm conviction that blacks should be masters of their destiny. Colour or race is therefore not an adequate unifying principle: blacks will not necessarily support and rally behind one of their kind. This is one of the bitter lessons Plaatje learns during his struggles.

The philosophy of equivalence places great responsibility on the participants in the administration of justice. The responsibility imposed on the translator or interpreter is by far the greatest. Plaatje writes, in part that

> This translation, re-translation and cross-translation is kept up by the interpreter in an audible voice so rapidly and intelligently that, although he is carrying it on through three languages, he should keep nobody waiting; the only person whose convenience is studied being the occupant of the bench (Plaatje 1996:57).

To search for equivalences in three languages as shown above is an onerous task. This is exacerbated by the overarching moral responsibility the fair delivery of justice imposes on the participants. The translation of Shakespeare also involves multiple and cross translations as chapters four and five will show.

This discussion of the philosophy of equivalence provides a basis on which to discuss Plaatje's practice, that is, a list of what in Plaatje's conception are the things an interpreter must do to facilitate the administration of what he calls "substantial justice". The qualities of an essential interpreter derive logically from the theory and philosophy of equivalence, hence it is clear how theory and practice are complementary concepts. Isolating the qualities is thus done for analytical purposes only.

First, the interpreter must be well versed in the languages spoken by all the participants involved in the administration of justice. This will enable him or her to mediate between the judge, plaintiff, counsel, defendant and the court audience. In his words, the interpreter must be an "efficient linguist" who understands "the respective dialects" in use to enable him to keep up "this translation, re-translation and cross-translation" in which "he should keep nobody waiting" (Plaatje 1996:57). Plaatje's polyglot versatility obviously qualified him as an "efficient linguist".

Secondly, the interpreter must accept the great possibility for errors because interpreters are human beings who are by nature not infallible. The fallibility of the interpreter, I can

infer, imposes on him or her certain requirements. S/he must not be arrogant as some of the supremacist white interpreters Plaatje observed in the Transvaal Courts were (Plaatje 1996:53). Rather, s/he must be humble and willing to learn, as Plaatje learnt from magistrate Bell the art of court interpretation (Plaatje 1996:56).

Thirdly, an interpreter must pay meticulous attention to details in order to reduce chances of mis-translations. Mis-translations in Plaatje's case result in the miscarriage of justice. In order to leave "no loophole for the slightest error", Plaatje

> took much pains in eliciting...facts and getting the deponent to revise his sentences if they contained a phrase, the meaning of which...was not quite certain (Plaatje 1996:54).

Such meticulous attention to details has its own inconveniences, such as the undue delay of the court proceedings, keeping the magistrate waiting, not to mention the fact that the "renditions ...were clearly boring" (Plaatje 1996:54). But delays are risks worth taking if justice must not only be done, but, be seen to be done. As he tells us, in one situation he "threw the approbation of the court and its loafers to the winds and centred my attention in the correct administration of justice only" (Plaatje 1996:56). Plaatje was ultimately rewarded for his painstaking attention to details, tedious revisions and delays (Plaatje 1996:56).

Fourthly, given the great potential of ethnic and linguistic alterity as a problem to translation, the translator must not "gloss over" details or "cut...short", for the sake of brevity, the common forensic phrases of court proceedings. The common example is the five-word-sentence "You are committed to trial" which Plaatje feels is often "slaughtered by interpreters" who

> finding this sentence so short in the official language, consider it tiresome to explain its meaning in too many words. They prefer to cut it short at the expense of the prisoner's information. I heard one interpreter tell a prisoner what would literally be 'The magistrate says that you will wait for the judge'- truly a serious error (Plaatje 1996:58).

That crucial sentence, Plaatje insists, deserves fuller explanation even if in a "round-about" manner. Plaatje renders this five-word-sentence into forty-six words in Setswana (Plaatje 1996:58).

This meticulousness and attention to detail are not arbitrary, as Plaatje's own experience demonstrates.

> I have often found English prisoners, after being told in this pithy official language, and despite the fact that the phrase is in their mother-tongue, that they scarcely understood their fate as they did not know if 'committed for trial' was something round or square (Plaatje 1996:58).

Plaatje's point is that mediation is not only important across languages (interlingual transfer), but also within languages, as intralingual mediation. Not having interpreters translating within languages is equally a contribution to the miscarriage of justice as are other forms of mis-translations and the use of amateur interpreters. Intralingual mediation as exemplified above, helps in demystifying common statements presumed to be commonplace knowledge for all. Indeed justice will be seen to be done if intralingual translation becomes part of courtroom discourse. The quality that Plaatje is emphasizing is that the interpreter must have a deeper understanding of all the languages involved in order to decipher their intricacies. Similarly, s/he also needs to understand the positions, assumptions and limitations of the people for whom he is translating. Hence, the social, political, economic and psychological contexts in which translations are carried out are of great significance.

The interpreter must always strive to be impartial by interpreting correctly what is before him or her. That is, s/he must have a strong conscience to guard against additions and subtractions to what is under presentation because all will have the effect of mis-translations and therefore lead to a miscarriage of justice.

> To add anything from the interpreter's own knowledge that would lead the court to liberate an unfortunate prisoner is as bad as the other way about it. If such knowledge exists, and he fears that an unfortunate person was likely to suffer on account of his ignorance it would be better for the interpreter to enter the witness box and give evidence on it. Additions by an interpreter to secure a discharge of a prisoner are as deplorable as incomplete translations by which the innocent suffer (Plaatje 1996:57).

Plaatje was so conscious of the need for unbiased translations in securing justice that he became witness in the Maritz and Lottering case. The duo, operatives of the Boer army during the siege of Mafikeng, were charged with the murder of Monthusetsi, an African. Plaatje's testimony saved the duo from receiving the death penalty, to the disapproval of Africans in Mafikeng, among them Joseph Gape who lashed out at Plaatje as follows:

> The three judges, the murderers' advocates and everybody else had given up hope and it only remained for the death sentences to be passed when, at

> nobody's invitation, you came forward and gave the most undesirable evidence which capsized the whole case, and the fiercest criminals were let loose (Willan 1984:97).

Mr. Gape will not be convinced that Plaatje's strong sense of belief in "substantial justice" invited him to testify.

Finally, it must be clear by now that for Plaatje, an unbiased interpreter, is a key player in the administration of justice. S/he must be an "unbiased", articulate, and conscientious person because as Plaatje tells us, is "the judge's mouth-piece" (Plaatje 1996:60). Like the judge, an interpreter is appointed on permanent basis: "like the judge (of whom he is the mouthpiece), when once appointed is interpreter for life" (Plaatje 1996:59). Plaatje cleverly equates his role to that of judge probably to emphasize the interpreter's indispensable role in the justice system. This was also a negotiation strategy for what he believed was a well-deserved and long overdue salary increment. With such great responsibilities, equivalent only to the judge's, it is imperative that an interpreter must be remunerated accordingly. But alas, this ploy failed. He stormed rhetorically as follows:

> You pay a good sum for the best horse to do your work. You do not get the scum of the British bar to adorn the bench, you get the best blood, so why then should you get the refuse of Native society to act as his [judge's] mouthpiece? (Plaatje 1996:60).

For Plaatje therefore, translation is a delicate operation in which equivalences are and must be delineated without fear or favour. Translators should not allow their biases to cloud their translations. Embellishments are to him an anathema, and impartiality the guiding principle. It is therefore possible to expect on the basis of the foregoing discussion that in translating Shakespeare's plays, Plaatje did the best he could to be as objective as is humanely possible. "Perfect homology between translation and source", Tymoczko reminds us, "is impossible" (1999:23) and so we should not expect Plaatje to have produced exact replicas of Shakespeare's dramas. Bassnett also tells us that "exact reproduction across linguistic boundaries is never possible" (1997:2).

Plaatje's impartiality, accuracy and objectivity in translating Shakespeare deserve scrutiny, since the translations involved translating his culture, a phenomenon he struggled to preserve. In fact, Plaatje's insistence on accurate translation in court as a basis for true justice, is qualified by the translation of Shakespeare. Plaatje transformed Shakespeare's dramas in several ways, thereby "challenging" the theory we have been piecing together.

What then is the reason for this "departure" from the accurate-translation-stance?. There is a fine distinction between court interpretation and literary translation. While both trigger various reactions, faulty court translations are likely to disadvantage or endanger human life, hence the need for accuracy. Plaatje illustrates:

> I once visited a town where there had been insistent complaints against the work of the circuit court interpreter. The court was sitting at the time and I attended in order to verify the facts. I took notes of a very short case, that is, what the judge said and what the interpreter said. Two different things indeed; also the prisoner's answers and the interpreter's version: two different things again. On that faulty interpretation a man had got 12 months' hard labour (Plaatje 1996:337-338).

Plaatje came to realize that literary translation differs from court interpretation. While the latter insists on the accurate and objective translation of the facts of cases under consideration, literary translation allows for some creativity for which no human life may be endangered. For one, literary texts are not factual or historical documents, but rather, imaginative manipulations of history or facts. Consequently, translating literature allows cultural biases. As I show in the next chapters, Plaatje's use of local symbols is, in court translation, a mistranslation that is likely to result in the miscarriage of justice. For example, the English version's "forty ducats" becomes "twenty pounds" in the translation. Legally, these are not similar amounts, and this could influence judgement. In view of Plaatje's desire to make the play accessible to his audience, the translations of Shakespeare could not be objective but rather, transformative, creative and imaginative as I will demonstrate below.

From the previous discussion, there is some clarity as to what Plaatje was doing in vernacularizing Shakespeare: bringing out equivalents between Tswana and English societies. It remains to isolate how Plaatje highlights these equivalences in his translations and what general statements could be drawn from these equivalences. Equivalence, we must bear in mind, encompasses a plurality in which similarity and difference coexist. Translation seems to open us to our common humanity while also emphasizing our deep sense of ethnicity as a potential for both mutual benefit and strife. How to evaluate these translations is the subject of the next section.

Towards a Criterion of Evaluating Translations.

Answering the question of how to judge, assess or evaluate the translations is fraught with insurmountable problems, temptations and politics. There is for example the need to qualify *ad infinitum* and *ad nauseam* value judgements that one makes. For example, the statement that "Plaatje's translations stayed close to the English versions" invokes its own politics. It raises several questions such as why translations should be evaluated on the basis of their fidelity to the originals; is the concept of 'original' tenable considering the work of Benjamin, Derrida, Bassnett, Niranjana, and Cheyfitz? What should be the role of the translator; is s/he "free" to transform the "original" or should s/he "reproduce" it; can a translation produce an exact replica of the its original?

I cannot successfully address these questions without deviating from the purpose of this chapter and study. What is worth acknowledging is the fact that coming up with a set of criteria by which to evaluate translations is not an unproblematic task. In fact, that process does not escape the politics and debates which have come to be associated with translation and translation studies, debates and politics which take us back to the Babel project, which, according to Derrida, simultaneously represents God's inauguration and inhibition: it "imposes and forbids" translation (1985:170). Consequently, the Babel project is about power, domination, perpetual exile, linguistic and colonial violence, problems of completion and closure, or as Derrida puts it, "the 'tower of Babel' does not merely figure the irreducible multiplicity of tongues; it exhibits an incompletion, the impossibility of finishing, of totalizing" (1985:165). Lefevere states that

> Translation has to do with authority and legitimacy and, ultimately, with power, which is precisely why it has been and continues to be the subject of so many acrimonious debates (1992:2).

References to Derrida and Lefevere raise two points. Read together with Paz's idea of language as translation, the Babel project entails a multiplicity or plurality of translations. No text or language can claim any pristine condition. The multiplicity also entails continuity of translation, or what Derrida calls "the impossibility of finishing, of totalization". Finally, translation also involves power and authority. If language is already a translation, then the authority or power of each translation is a matter of negotiation or positioning. This may imply the loss or acquisition of power or authority. That is, translation could restore the power and integrity of a text/language or take them away. In brief, the multiplicity implies that each text is as significant and authoritative as the rest. Plaatje's translations manifest this multiplicity.

The difficulties notwithstanding, the question of how to assess translations is as unavoidable as the process of translation itself. It is therefore imperative that a tentative set of criteria be attempted for the purposes of this study. In doing so, I cannot escape returning to some of the ideas raised in chapter one, in particular Bassnett and Lefevere's idea that translation is a re-writing (1992:xi) and Niranjana's idea of translation as retaining the potential of being a strategy of colonial de-subjectification (1992:6).

A theory of how to evaluate translations, it seems to me, must be rooted in the status accorded translation and the accompanying social and political contexts in which that status is grounded. Two extremes--though not mutually exclusive--readily come to mind: first, translation as an exercise accorded a lower status than the production of the "original", and second, as a creative phenomenon. These extremes could, for argument's sake, be thought to correspond to the colonial and postcolonial contexts respectively. Consequently, the perceptions of translation in these contexts will greatly influence the manner in which translations are judged.

The history of translation reveals at least two major attitudes towards the relationship between the "original" and the translation. The first is that of equality between the two. Bassnett and Trivedi note that "medieval writers and /translators were not troubled by this phantasm—the concept of high status original" (1999:2). The second attitude, which according to them is a recent phenomenon, is the view of the translation as inferior to the "original". Bassnett observes that in the nineteenth century, the master-servant relationship characterized the conception of translation (1992:xv). In "The Task of the Translator" Walter Benjamin writes:

> Any translation is always second in relation to the original, and the translator as such is lost from the very beginning. He is per definition underpaid, he is per definition overworked, he is per definition the one history will not really retain as an equal...(in de Man 1986:80).

Similar sentiments must have led one of the early translation apologists, Dillon Wentworth, the Earl of Roscommon (1633-1685), to react as follows:

> 'Tis true, Composing is the Nobler Part,
> But good Translation is no *easy* Art
> For tho Materials have long since been found
> Yet both your Fancy and your Hands are bound
> And by Improving what was writ before,
> Invention labors less, but Judgement more
> (cited in Lefevere 1992:43).

In part of a passage I will use later in this chapter, Peter Bush extols translation in the metaphorical language of travel:

> Translation is a continuation of what Jean Genet called the adventure of writing as opposed to the familiar and prosaic bus journey, and it cannot but include subjective, imaginative transformation (1996:11).

Clearly, the status accorded to translation is of great consequence to how translations are to be evaluated. If translation is a second-rate and an unoriginal exercise, then its product is to be judged by its fidelity to the original.

Niranjana, Rafael, Cheyfitz, have demonstrated translation's complicity in colonialism. Rafael has demonstrated how translation was used by the Spaniards to reduce native Tagalog "language and culture to accessible objects for and subjects of divine and imperial intervention"(1988:213). Niranjana writes that

> translation as a practice shapes and takes shape within the asymmetrical relations of power that operate under colonialism. What is at stake here is the representation of the colonized, who need to be produced in such a manner as to justify colonial domination, and to beg for the English book by themselves (1992:2)

Cheyfitz laconically states the purpose of his book as to show "that translation was, and still is, the central act of European colonization and imperialism in the Americas" (1997:104). He proceeds to demonstrate the interplay between translation, usurpation and transportation in the totality of European colonization.

What the three citations help to underscore is the Derridean idea of translation as transformation (1981:20). This transformation is both a resource and problem in the evaluation of translations. It retains this doubleness because of its flirtation with both colonial and postcolonial contexts.

In colonial contexts where native identity has been or continues to be "disarticulated", "translated", "transformed" and "displaced", or in Cheyfitz's words, where the native is translated "into the terms of the empire", the native looks and defers to the colonial master for guidance and legitimation. Here the transformation is used to entrench and legitimate the master-servant relationship in which, as Bassnett rightly points out, "the translator approaches it [the text under translation] with humility and seeks to do it homage" (1992:xv). To achieve this faithfulness to the text, the translator must have

been translated first by the discourses of colonialism into a colonial subject, or to quote Niranjana, "translation reinforces hegemonic versions of the colonized, helping them acquire the status of what Edward Said calls 'representations, or objects without history" (1992:3).

If a translator is not expected to be creative because his or her role is supplicatory to that of the colonial or master text s/he is translating, then it becomes clearer why s/he is suspected, in the words of Bassnett, to be "a betrayer of the pure source text" (1996:11). Due to this "betrayal" the fate of the translator can range from condemnation, acceptance (if s/he parrots the original), to death if the translation is considered heretical. Etienne Dolet (1509-1546), a French poet, translator, printer and publisher was "burnt at the stake because his translation of Plato contained some errors" (Lefevere 1992:27). Dolet met his terrible fate six days after the publication of his *De la maniere de bien traduire d'une langue en autre* (1540). The status of translation under the asymmetrical powers of colonialism will be useful in the discussion of Plaatje's translation of *Julius Caesar*, published after Plaatje's death and revised by Professor Lestrade.

In the first extreme I have considered, translation is a menial exercise of low status in which there are 'pure originals' which translators attempt to reproduce. Translation is here considered as an act of homage in which the translator strives to the best of his or her ability to reproduce the original. Since the assumption of a pure original is the starting point, the evaluation of the copy will assess the extent to which it has reproduced the original. In the larger colonial context, the colonial master is the original, starting point and centre, and the colony the periphery, translation or copy. Doke and Lestrade's intervention begins with the notion of a "pure and authoritative Shakespeare" whom Plaatje must reproduce and pay homage to. But since Plaatje fails to do so, they intervene to restore Shakespeare's power and integrity.

The second extreme to be considered is the context in which translation could be understood as re-writing, transformation and manipulation underpinned by specific liberatory ideological thinking. This extreme corresponds to the postcolonial situation. Here transformation is utilized as a strategy for dealing with the problems of colonial subjectification. This context benefits from the work of Benjamin through to Derrida and current translation theorists such as Johnston, Bassnett, Lefevere, and postcolonial

translation scholars such as Simon and Tymoczko. Derrida's contribution to translation theory could be generalized under the phrase 'heterogeneity of original', or "undecidability of the original" (in Niranjana 1992:9*ff*). Or as Bassnett suggests, "Jacques Derrida argues that the translation process creates an 'original' text, the opposite of the traditional position whereby an 'original' is the starting point" (1992:xv). Consequently, the notion of 'pure originals' is an illusion. In Derrida's words, "we will never, and in fact have never had, to do with some 'transport' of pure signifieds from one language to another" (1981:20). Benjamin's "The Task of the Translator", which is the basis of Derrida's thinking on translation, posits that a good translation strives to "express the central reciprocal relationship between languages" (Munday 2001:169) by exposing the "pure language" which maintains a ghostly appearance in every translation. As noted, the pure language stands for the ideal and unattainable source of the pre-Babelian monolingualism. Translation is thus a yearning for this beginning to which we cannot return nor reproduce. Translation therefore begins not with pure sources, but "undecidable and heterogeneous" ones, thereby making each text an "original". Each translation reflects the multiplicity of languages and translations and the problem or impossibility of attaining pure originals.

Benjamin and Derrida's ideas are therefore significant to how translations are to be evaluated. The Barthesian idea of 'the death of the author', which may be taken to imply the death of the original, combines with Derrida's undecidability and heterogeneity of originals and Benjamin's idea of the *ur*-language to influence the way translations may be judged. Every text, including the presumed original is, as Paz has famously remarked, "a translation of translation of translation". In a post-Babelian situation, each translation deserves recognition because as Benjamin shows us, it affords a glimpse of the unattainable "pure language"--akin to the Babelian monolingualism--which bursts in all translations. Translations therefore are not supplicatory to any master text, even to the pure language. Each creates a world of its own for which it must be listened to and respected. This discussion raises an important question about the "originality" of Shakespeare's texts as currently studied in academic institutions. As suggested earlier (see page 35), scholarly editions of Shakespeare "with partially modernised text and elaborate commentary" are distinct from what the playwright produced in his lifetime (see Cloud 1991). Thus, they are not "pure originals", but rather, translations of some sort.

Evaluating translations with the foregoing discussion in mind entails at least two things. First, that translations are re-writings and therefore must be evaluated for what they introduce to the so-called original and the equivalents they offer. Second, they are disruptive, manipulative and try to liberate themselves from the master discourse to which they were subjected. In view of this discussion, it could be suggested that translation retains the potential of being deployed in both colonial and postcolonial contexts for various purposes. In the former, it is a means of subjectification, while in the latter it is as Niranjana has suggested, to be deconstructed and reinscribed for its potential as a strategy of resistance (1992:6). To this extent, postcolonial literary composition is, as Tymoczko (1999) shows us, a form of translation in which the culture of colonial subjects becomes the text being re-written to counteract the mis-translations of colonialism. The translation here, more metaphoric than literal, is intended to correct colonial mis/translation.

In postcolonial discourse translation is largely conceived of in metaphorical terms. One such metaphor is the Brazilian notion of cannibalism in which "the translator is a cannibal devouring the source text in a ritual that results in the creation of something completely new" (Bassnett 1992:xiv). As a strategy of resistance, the cannibalistic notion of translation promises disentanglement to both the colonial subject and the master by blurring and undermining the binaries of source/copy, original/translation characteristic of colonial discourse. Translation could also be seen as carnivalizing the master texts. It becomes a means of writing back at colonial discourses, and in this way, Tymoczko is right to see postcolonial literatures as analogues of symbolic translation in which the text under transposition is the culture of the colonial subject. With translation understood as re-writing, new strategies are therefore needed in evaluating its products. Bush is right in arguing that

> It is high time our attention to (and reviewing of) literary translation moved on from patronizing chatter about deftness, readability or errors…to focus on the nature and quality of that transformation (1996:11).

In keeping with the task at hand, the call for different ways of evaluating translations has been stated more pointedly by Schalkwyk and Lapula when they suggest that it is time critics "listen to Plaatje's voice vis-à-vis Shakespeare rather than to look for Shakespeare in his" (2000:13).

The liberatory impulses of cannibalization are however problematic. Bassnett and Trivedi remind us that the cannibalization of Father Sardinha by the Tupinamba--a violent reaction against Catholicism, and therefore consistent with Fanon's idea of counter-violence as the means of decolonization--is also an act of homage (1999:1). Consequently, it risks re-inscribing, in Garuba's (2002) terms, the very hierarchies it seeks to deconstruct. Also problematic is the fact that if it is exaggerated, cannibalization as a postcolonial strategy risks obliterating the various histories of both colonial subjects and their masters, histories which for good or for worse, seem worth maintaining as points of departure into a globalized cultural subjectivity. Plaatje insists that individual ethnic identities must be retained as the basis for a new democracy.

From the discussion of two extremes, my theory of evaluating Plaatje's translations seeks a middle-ground position, or what Homi Bhabha has referred to as "Third Space" in which "we may elude the politics of polarity"(1994:38-39). In seeking out the "Third Space" I hope to benefit from the synergy between the two positions, a benefit lost when polar positions are adopted.

I will therefore assess the translations bearing in mind the following: that fidelity to the 'original' is unavoidable, and perhaps the starting point for any evaluation. Checking the translations against the 'originals' will enable us to appreciate Plaatje's idea of equivalence, his transformations and the cultural implications of such re-writings. I will also bear in mind the fact that translation is also a re-writing, transformation and an act of becoming, which should not be slavishly held to the 'original's' demands. This will help to highlight aspects that Plaatje introduces in his translations to render Shakespeare accessible to his readers, and consequently show the creativity of translation through their language. Lest we forget, some of the reasons why Plaatje translated Shakespeare are "to share his experience of Shakespeare with his people, as well as to prove that Setswana is a literary medium capable of carrying what Shakespeare says in English" (Shole 1990/91:51).

Translation must be seen as a mutual process in which both the source and target languages and cultures stand to benefit or lose. First, Benjamin's idea of the pure language helps to highlight the relationship between languages, and therefore cultures.

This enables us to determine equivalences, considering its paradoxical double connotation. We will therefore determine what aspects of his culture Plaatje introduces to match those of Shakespeare. The idea of the community of languages also points to the languages' common sense of purpose. Cheyfitz remarks:

> For Benjamin, "these languages supplement one another in their intentions" in the sense that "no single language can attain [its intention] by itself" but "only by the totality of their intentions supplementing each other: pure language" (74)...Ideally...translation envisions the totalization of all languages in a pure language (1997:134).

Supplementing each other's purposes begins by acknowledging differences, problems and possibilities of languages and cultures. To this extent, translation acts as a prism through which these are isolated. When not reduced to binary processing, the differences, problems and possibilities of languages and cultures have the potential of creating Homi Bhabha's "Third Space", that area of in-between-ess from which fruitful cultural exchanges and intellectual inquiries could be derived. Jasper's comments shed more light on this point.

> the differences themselves provide the sparks, the possibility of growth and the often-painful recognition of the beauty of otherness...we recognize the otherness of the other, start to learn something more ourselves, and often with pain and conflict, draw nearer to a mystery in world and vision (1993:2-3).

We can also conclude from the above that all languages are equal, and so there is no master language that translates others. This is an important point because it links with Plaatje's democratic ideals. Thus, translations are worth the serious attention that so-called originals receive, especially because each translation becomes in Derrida's thinking, an original: first, by coming into existence after the original, and second because it is never an exact replica of the former on which it is based.

If the benefits derived from the community of languages are more philosophical and abstract, then the following promises to be more concrete. Translation is likely to benefit both source and target by bequeathing to both new forms of expressions and vocabularies. We need to recall here Bakhtin's carnival, Pratt's contact zone, and Caliban's utopian island of calibans. All these contexts promise democracy in which hitherto separated languages and cultures meet in dialogic embrace. Such contexts produce new forms of expression reflecting equality and communion, and these vocabularies enter the cultures and languages involved. Such vocabularies will reflect the hybridity resulting from the equal embrace of languages and cultures, and thus a

contribution to a global language and culture. (With the publication of *The Oxford South African Dictionary of English*, linguists and literary scholars may want to examine Plaatje's writings to assess how some of his vocabulary might have contributed to this lexicon).

Lastly, translation gives the 'original' and 'copy' a new lease of life. The 'original' enters into hitherto uncharted territories via transculturation and transtextualization (Mazrui 1996:73), thus becoming a 'citizen of the world.' In its 'original' state, it remains a potential candidate for further translations into other languages. In fact, once translated, a text continues to attract further translations. This makes the 'original' a masterpiece that will continue to generate interest from translators. Benjamin's notion of the community of languages, together with the Derridean undecidability of originals, allows us to appreciate further how the original benefits from translation. Translation becomes a humbling process in which original languages realize that they are successful only through the assistance of other languages. New forms of expression cross the boundaries of the two languages and thus enrich both languages. The target languages into which the 'original' is translated benefit in ways best summarized by Victor Hugo when he remarks that "to translate a foreign writer is to add to your own national poetry" (in Lefevere 1992:18).

One can conclude this discussion of benefits by stating that explicitly or implicitly, translation promises to enrich both source and target languages and their literatures. For example, in translating Shakespeare's plays, Plaatje contributed to the growth of a corpus of literary texts in Setswana. Similarly, he showed the capacity of the Setswana language as a literary medium, contrary to racist opinions of the time. Had the translations not been largely ignored, translating Shakespeare would have had the potential of triggering more translations thus giving the plays more currency. We may recall here the processes of transtextualization and transculturation through which cultures enrich one another. In the context of Plaatje's struggles, translations are a point of departure towards realizing an ideal of creating a world of interdependence. Ezra Pound's remark that "a great age of literature is always a great age of translations" is very much to the point.

Ultimately, the very aspects that rendered Shakespeare translatable will be called on as part of the means of evaluating the translations. These aspects hinge on the idea of story

with its figurative language, imagery, characterization and setting. The social backgrounds of both Plaatje and Shakespeare provide a necessary backdrop. These aspects remain a crucial basis for equivalence.

In this chapter, I set out to provide background information to the discussion of Plaatje's translations of Shakespeare by discussing three major issues: why Shakespeare was translatable; Plaatje's conception and practice of translation; and finally, how the translations might be evaluated. I showed that Plaatje's oral culture, together with his experience as a court interpreter helped him to appreciate and appropriate Shakespeare's dramas. Evaluating the translations takes into account the fact that translation is transformation, and thereby must highlight what Plaatje introduces into the texts and for what purpose. All these ideas combine under the phrase "what to look out for" when discussing Plaatje's hitherto neglected translations. In the next two chapters I expand on the ideas raised here with illustrations from the translations of *The Comedy of Errors* and *Julius Caesar,* respectively.

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Chapter Four: *Diphoshophosho/The Comedy of Errors.*

What in God's name the Bechuana want to read Shakespeare for I don't know, unless it is that they want to feel more like worms than ever. Shakespeare, to my mind, is literature only, poetry only, and therefore untranslatable, because poetry is as much in the music of the poet's words as in any thought or ideas. This is very trite, but I can never understand why people want to translate Shakespeare---Stephen Black, Sjambok.

Last month I read in the press that Morija Printing Works had just issued a Shakespearean translation by Mr Sol Plaatje of Kimberley. A group of us, Bechuana working along the Orange River, decided to order a copy and see how Shakespeare's old story had been rendered in our mother tongue. We have come to the conclusion that it is a gratifying success. The translator not only demonstrated his remarkable ability in English and complete mastery of the Sechuana language—a rare thing in these days—but he has also shown a clear understanding of the author's aims. Mr Plaatje has rendered the entire story in a language which to a Mochuana is as entertaining and amusing as the original is to an Englishman.

As far as I know, the translation is the first attempt to introduce Shakespeare to Bantu readers in the vernacular, and the translator has kept alive the sportive tenor of the play without distorting the author's ideas in any way, and without corrupting Sechuana idioms... When reading 'Diphosho-phosho' one feels as if one were reading the language of a Mochuana who happened to live in England. The pleading, or defence, of Aegeon before the Ephesian Court; the jokes, the treatment of servants and language in which they were ordered about, are very similar to the ways of the Bechuana of the last century. This is one of the features which make Mr Plaatje's translation so pleasant and entertaining—D.M. Ramoshoana-Umteteli wa Bantu, October 1930.

Of all the five-and-half or six translations Plaatje completed, only two—*Diphoshophosho* and *Dintshontsho Tsa Bo-Juliuse Kesara*—have survived. Chapters four and five examine these texts. Adopting the notion of translation as transformation (Derrida 1981), these chapters seek to reveal Plaatje's presence or displacement/absence in these texts. Put differently, the chapters seek to answer the questions of what Plaatje does with Shakespeare's dramas, to what extent each translation reflects Plaatje's presence, and if not, why is it the case. Presence, broadly entails the general experimentation with or transformation of Shakespeare's texts to suit Plaatje's political and cultural agenda. This agenda encompasses Plaatje's use of the translations to preserve Setswana language and culture by recording and contextualizing its proverbs; to disseminate what he felt to be its appropriate orthography; present its efficacy as a medium of literary expression just as Shakespeare's English is and finally, to deal with what he felt to be his people's cavalier attitude towards their language and culture. This attitude is evident in their reluctance in supporting his cultural and political projects in a world that was increasingly stacking odds against indigenous people. Through the translations, Plaatje hopes to rekindle his people's interest in their oral forms, and hopefully motivate them to rally behind his projects. Ultimately, Plaatje hopes to inaugurate a world of human interdependence,

hereafter referred to as the Plaatje project. This is a society where, in Plaatje's graphic metaphors,

> The white race can no more do without the black, and the black without the white, than the right hand can do without the left. In fact, if all the Natives of this country had the option and they were willing to migrate to the planet of Mars, the whites would stop them even if they had to use machine-guns, just the same as the Natives would do, were the whites to rise en masse and attempt to leave for Europe (Plaatje 1996:77).

So committed was Plaatje to this political ideal that his speeches, campaigns, journalism and writings, including his translations of Shakespeare, are in various ways aimed at achieving this ideal republic. Schalkwyk makes this point by arguing that:

> Plaatje's relentless attempts to preserve specifically Tswana forms of life, through the translations of Shakespeare, the collections of proverbs and folktales, and his bitter opposition to the new orthography on the grounds that it was an imposition by non-native speakers, should not be seen as a diversion from politics, but perhaps the most intimate and committed of Plaatje's political campaigns (1999:23).

Plaatje and Schalkwyk's remarks reveal two important features of Plaatje's ideal society, and are worth isolating by way of problematizing it. First, this ideal society recognises and accepts difference as a basis of mutual dependence and co-existence. The metaphor of hands and their inter-dependence derives from the proverbial wisdom of Plaatje's people (see for example proverb 279, Plaatje 1916:49). By invoking this wisdom, Plaatje perceives both whites and blacks as limbs of the same human body. This forces them to cooperate for the good of the whole body. Plaatje's ideal society therefore emerges from the interplay of sameness and difference, embodied in his notion of equivalence. In Achebe's metaphor, this is a world where

> every people bring their gifts to the great festival of the world's cultural harvest and mankind will be all the richer for the variety and distinctiveness of the offerings (1988:60).

Secondly, Plaatje's ideal is achievable through a re-organisation of the old world, to accommodate new forms of communication and social intercourse. Specifically, this ideal world is possible through the employment of print culture to preserve oral forms. Plaatje hopes that by preserving oral culture through the medium of print, he will generate his people's pride in that culture and thus offer them a springboard on which they will launch into a new world that embraces difference.

While these features offer a basis on which a new world could be founded, they are also potential problems to its establishment. The alliance between print and oral culture leads, in Starfield's opinion, to the decontextualization and displacement of oral forms, leading to the production of books which are seldom read. Plaatje's *Sechuana Proverbs* (1916), Starfield claims, languishes "under lock and key" at the University of the Witwatersrand "because it is an old book that needs protection". Neither "do readers in libraries or open market make any significant requests for it" (1991:1). That to date, neither *Sechuana Proverbs* nor the translations of Shakespeare has received serious academic attention, is testimony of the ineffectiveness of Plaatje's projects, in this case, of the alliance between print and oral culture as the foundation for his political ideal.

The notions of difference and equivalence are equally problematic. Ethnicity, Plaatje later discovered, was a complex phenomenon in the formation of political alliances. On board the ship to England in 1914, he felt a deep sense of "ethnic isolation" when "he felt pressured to yield to the demands of his Zulu (Dube and Saul Msane) and Xhosa (Walter Rubusana) companions" (Starfield 1991:12). Paradoxically, Plaatje's efforts to generate pride among his people as an entry point into supra-ethnic politics failed. Starfield again observes that none of Plaatje's Tswana communities was willing to "build political organisation around cultural and ethnic issues" (1991:4). His ambiguous attitude—probably influenced by his ambiguous social identity or split identity—towards ethnicity and therefore difference, further compromised its adequacy as a pillar for his ideal society. While he was appalled by the ill-treatment of servants in *Mhudi* and *The Comedy*, and by extension in his South Africa, his silence on serfdom among Rolong and the whole of Tswana society is deafening. The Tshidi branch of the Barolong for example, kept the Tloaro as vassals (Starfield 1991:16). The success of the utopia is partly dependent upon a fair and fearless criticism of all participants. To attack the trekkers and Antipholuses while conveniently ignoring Tswana societies compromises Plaatje's re-interpretation of history and the foundations of his ideal world. Further, Plaatje's emphasis on culture as the foundation for political organization, and therefore his ideal society, ignores real issues of economics and power. From its inception, the Plaatje project is therefore premised on shaky grounds. In spite of all this, this project is worth studying if only to reveal the man's philosophy, commitment, talent, tenacity and savvy in appropriating symbols of the colonising culture for his personal struggles.

These are issues worth bearing in mind as I map out the value of Shakespeare's dramas in Plaatje's political and cultural struggles. The uses to which Plaatje put these dramas should illustrate the complexity of his appropriation of Shakespeare.

Conscious of the many things that could be said about the translations, I focus on two broad issues: translatability (the delineation of equivalence and difference between Tswana or African and European societies) and language (its proverbs, orthography, and its efficacy as medium of literary expression). The translatability of Shakespeare--in which equivalents and differences between English and Setswana as both languages and cultures are highlighted—was to Plaatje a basis on which to mobilise and inspire political organisation with which his people could respond to an increasingly discriminatory world. The delineation of equivalence and difference reveals a common humanity, which in turn entails the respect, recognition and preservation of individual identities as a foundation for Plaatje's envisaged democracy. As I suggest later, emphasis on language and culture as the basis for political organisation reflects Plaatje's major political blindness, as he ignores economics and power as other equally significant aspects on which political allegiances could be premised. This study contends that in addition to the variety of Shakespeares Joughin (1997:1) draws our attention to, there is indeed a "Plaatje's Shakespeare" (hence the title of study), which he manipulated and appropriated in imagining a world in which both blacks and whites, like limbs of the same body, work in unison to create a just, tolerant and democratic world. These two chapters will therefore seek to highlight Shakespeare's value in Plaatje's struggles to reclaim Tswana language and culture en route to creating a society of equals.

In view of the above, I proceed as follows: invoking Plaatje's conception of Shakespeare's dramas as stories or texts that have foundations in stories, I begin by exploring issues that might have rendered *The Comedy of Errors* translatable. This will guide us in examining the appropriation of *The Comedy* in Plaatje's political and cultural struggles. That is, how do equivalences or differences between Shakespeare's fictionalised world and that of Plaatje's people reveal a shared humanity? I will then illustrate how *Diphoshophosho* is used to: preserve Setswana proverbs; disseminate Plaatje's preferred version of the Setswana orthography; preserve Setswana language by showing its capacity as a literary medium through which Shakespeare's complex thoughts and emotions could be conveyed; and problematize the relationship between modern leaders

and the people they intend to serve. In the last section, I illustrate, among other issues, how the original gets transformed during translation and the possible ideological reasons for this transformation.

The Comedy of Errors and Translatability.

Before discussing the translation, a plot summary is in order, and in keeping with the general spirit of this study--namely to listen to Plaatje's voice, rather than the other way round as has hitherto been the practice in Plaatje-Shakespeare scholarship--I re-translate the plot summary Plaatje provides in the Preface to *Diphoshophosho*. This summary is one example of Plaatje's presence in this text.

> In this book, Tsikinya-Chaka writes about two sets of identical twins, all born away from home. It so happened that when the master twins were born, in the same inn where their parents were lodged, a poor woman gave birth to two identical twins as well. Fearing that her sons will not be well looked after because she was poor, she sold them to Egeon, a Syracusan merchant to raise them and be servants to his twin sons. On his return home, along the shores of Corinth, Egeon was separated from his wife after a storm sank their ship. In his flight, Egeon took with him one of his two sons and one of the servant twins, and so did his wife Amelia, with each of them thinking the other to be dead. It appears Egeon once had a brother by the name of Antipholus, whose servant was called Dromio. Consequently, Egeon named his twin son Antipholus and gave the servant twin the name of Dromio. Likewise, Amelia also gave the two sons similar names. While the two sets of twins were identical, sharing similar names compounds the confusions dramatized in the play. Confusions begin when the twins are grown-ups. The Syracusan Antipholus and his Dromio leave home for Ephesus where their twin brothers are resident. Little do they know that their twin brothers are residents of this town. The Ephesians are equally not aware that the resident Antipholus and his Dromio are identical twin brothers to those who are not present. In Ephesus, the Syracusan pair is surprised by the familiarity of the Ephesians towards them. Confusions deepen when master and servant separate, the master meeting his twin brother's servant, and the servant meeting his twin brother's master. What causes great laughter is this: the masters do not meet, and nor do the servants. All keep on criss-crossing each other as if afraid of one another. One master meets his brother's servant and mistakes him for his own, and so likewise with the servants. Master and servant will only face one another at the end of the play (Plaatje 1930:x-xi).

The Comedy of Errors appealed to Plaatje because it is a story. The plot summary he offers conveys its storiness with the mention of formal elements such as character, setting, and technique. All these combine to produce a story which Plaatje finds worth translating into his language in order "to share his experience of Shakespeare with his people" (Shole 1990/91:51). Or as Plaatje himself suggests, "giving to Africans the benefit of some at least of Shakespeare's works" (Plaatje 1996:212). Unfortunately there is no

evidence that the story on which this play is based has "equivalents in African folklore" (Plaatje 1996:212). What is however important is that this story is worth sharing with his people because they "are natural story-tellers and good listeners" whom "legendary stories seldom fail to impress" (Plaatje 1996:211). Hence they will appreciate its aesthetic and moral value. More importantly, Plaatje hopes that this story will remind his people of stories from their culture and hopefully, inspire them to preserve that oral culture. Sharing with his people this story will confirm Shakespeare's status among some of his readers as "a white oracle", and in mediating this story for his people, Plaatje positions himself as a skilful story-teller, and therefore Shakespeare's equivalent. If Shakespeare is "a white oracle", then Plaatje is "a black oracle". But due to what Plaatje termed laziness, his own people did not contribute to the printing costs of this translation, and such a lack of seriousness contributed in subtle ways to the loss of Plaatje's other writings. Ironically, sharing with his people Shakespeare's hilarious story does not achieve the desired effects, and this is one moment among many when Plaatje's projects are ineffectual.

The setting, Shole agrees with Edmonds, "is highly exotic, with a somewhat 'mythical, magical air' about it (1990/91:59). If by 'exotic and mythical' is meant the play's Ephesian setting, which is distant to the Batswana and therefore imaginary or legendary, Plaatje narrows the gap between Ephesus and Southern Africa. Nor are the Batswana strangers to myths, legends and exotic places. As "natural story-tellers", his people's oral culture mitigates in complex ways the "exoticness and mythology" of the play's settings. The exaggeration, "mythical and exotic" settings in many animal stories in which they spoke as humans, the stories of giants (*madimo-majabatho*/human eating giants) and far-off places, the distant past to which his mother and aunt traced the Barolong origins, are some of the resources Plaatje invokes in mediating between two cultures. By exploiting this exoticness via Shakespeare's play, Plaatje reminds his people of their rich oral culture, and more specifically, how this exoticness mediates between the present and the distant past to which humanity traces its origins. Put differently, this exoticness is worth remembering and preserving because it reminds society of its past.

The opening "*Gatwe e rile*/once-upon-a-time" formula in many narratives (see for example *A Sechuana Reader* 1916:8 and also in this translation) told by the Batswana is one narrative strategy for dealing with the far-away, exotic and the mythical. The formula

embodies paradoxical functions in that, while it is a means of distancing the narrator from the story, the present from the past, it is simultaneously a means of connecting the narrator and his/her world to the distant past from which the present derives moral lessons. Put differently, the opening formula of story-telling locates the narrative in the collective consciousness dating back into human history, from which the present derives inspiration and guidance. Achebe's already cited praise of the story-form makes the point.

To relate to their distant past, human beings must therefore rely on their imagination. To the Batswana familiar with folktales, exoticness is therefore not a barrier, but a tool which enables them to relate to the unfamiliar just as it enables them to relate and connect with their past. Through stories, they establish this linkage. Hence they are likely to appreciate the exotic or strange settings of the play. Plaatje invokes this familiarity with oral narratives in his vernacularization of the play. For example, the narrative formula "*gatoe*/it said" and its variants are used in the translation as in Luciana's "Well, I will marry one day, but to try" (II.1.42), rendered as "***gatoe*** *kgengoe oa nna a lekoe* (p.11)/it is always good to try the *kgengoe*".

Two other factors are mobilized to supplement the oral culture. Ephesus, the stage where most of the action takes place is, while exotic, also familiar to Batswana via the Bible. Let us recall the dual identity of the Barolong (as Tswana speakers and Christians) symbolized by the Plaatje family. Having embraced Christianity, the Tswana must have had some familiarity with the Biblical Ephesus to which St Paul addressed one of his epistles.

If the biblical prominence of Ephesus was not common knowledge to his readers, then its association with witchcraft--with all its mystery and magic--brings Ephesus much closer to the lives of the Batswana, or takes the Batswana closer to Ephesus. Stanley Wells writes:

> Besides having connexions with St Paul, Ephesus was also biblically associated with witchcraft and magic, and this may have influenced Shakespeare in another important sequence of ideas that enrich the action (1995:31).

Following Wells, it could be said that witchcraft and magic may have influenced Plaatje in indigenising the exotic Ephesus. Stephen Gray identifies the political use to which

Plaatje puts the notion of witchcraft, namely that he must have been reminding the English-speaking people in South Africa not to look down upon black people because their great Shakespeare was full of witchcraft and sorcerers (1976:13). Through the "cheeky kaffir stance" Plaatje shows that his people and Shakespeare's audience share a common belief in witchcraft.

Witchcraft and magic are subjects with which every Motswana is familiar. Whether s/he believes in them is another matter, but what is undeniable is the fact that they are concepts about which s/he has heard and may have experienced. Previously, we noted that Plaatje attended a case in which the plaintiff used witchcraft to catch his adulterous wife with another man (Willan 1984:24). It is safe to assume that this was a familiar case. A Motswana reader or audience will therefore relate to Antifoluse wa Sirakuse's remarks:

> *Motse ono ga oa aga batho o agile bathakgathi (p.26)*
> There's none but witches do inhabit here (III.2. 164).

Or to Dromio's:

> *Thaka 'bo e kae! Amaruri re gorogile mo nageŋ ea ditlhamane. A jaana pholofolo tse re buaŋ naco tse e tsamile ke batho, a ga se tikoloshe, merubisi le badimo? Fa re sa ee nabo ba tla re thubaka, ba re hupetse meoa, ba re je naŋ, re thunya mebele (p.17).*
>
> O for my beads! I cross me for a sinner/This is the fairy land. O spite of spites/We talk with goblins, owls, and sprites/If we obey them not, this will ensue/They 'll suck our breath, or pinch us black and blue (II.2.197-201).

In contrast to the factual statements in the original, the translation uses rhetorical questions: "*A jaana pholofolo tse re buang naco tse e tsamaile ke batho, a ga se tikoloshe, merubisi le badimo?*/Are the creatures we are talking to human beings, are they not zombies, owls, and gods?" This is an example of how Plaatje transforms the original. Rhetorical questions serve two functions: to emphasize the gulf between the human world and the mysterious 'other' associated with witchcraft and magic; and to appeal to the beliefs of the reader or audience directly. A Motswana reader will therefore relate to Dromio's fundamental collocation of two worlds and their respective identities. In the translation, as in the original, the fairy-tale status of Ephesus is emphasized, underlining the intertextuality of narratives.

"M*erubisi*/owls" and "*tikoloshes*/goblins" are in both the original and the translation associated with the destructive forces of witchcraft and evil. Plaatje translates "sprites"

or "spirits" as "*badimo*/gods/ancestors", thus drawing on a familiar—albeit threatened by Christian civilisation--practice of ancestor worship among his people to enhance his translation. By collocating "*merubisi*/owls" and "*tikoloshes*/goblins" with "*badimo*/gods", Plaatje presents us with a problem. In Tswana mythology, owls and goblins are nocturnal creatures, and are usually associated with harmful forces such as witchcraft. On the other hand, the gods or ancestors are associated with preservative forces that govern human life (Shole 1990/91:54), and to connect them with owls and goblins would contradict this function. One way of getting around this problem is to argue that by collocating them, Plaatje presents them not as synonyms but as opposites to emphasize Dromio's wonder as to the kind of world he finds himself in. That is, is he in the world of the goblins and or in the world of gods? Surely, by mistaking the Syracusan duo for Ephesians, the people of Ephesus are like gods who create identities.

Thus witchcraft and magic are both in the world of the Batswana and the Ephesians invoked to explain incidents and states which baffle mortals. In the play where the Syracusans, barely two hours in Ephesus, are mistaken for locals and familiar personalities, nothing short of witchcraft and magic can explain to the visitors this familiarity. Belief in the occult is thus a common phenomenon in the culture of both the original and the translation and Plaatje retains this for the success of his rendition.

The Comedy of Errors must have also appealed to Plaatje because of its dramatization of the master-servant relationship; how masters treat their servants, and the question of why influential members of society need servants. In Shakespeare's play, this relationship takes different forms. At times the slave acts as his master's licensed fool as Antipholus of Syracuse admits: "Because that I familiarly sometimes/Do use you for my fool, and chat with you" (II.2.26-27). At times the relationship is marked by arbitrary treatment of servants, culminating in violence when the master strikes his servant, as happens during the confused moments in the play. Such treatment, coupled with the absence of structures to which the servants can appeal, leads Dromio of Ephesus to make this appeal (although in vain):

> Am I so round with you as you with me
> That like a football you do spurn me thus?
> You spurn me hence, and he will spurn me hither.
> If I last in this service you must case me in leather (II.1.82-85).

The concept of master-servant was a familiar one in Plaatje's Tswana society. Isaac Schapera writes:

> In Western Tswana tribes (e.g. Kwena, Ngwato, and Ngwaketse), there was...a large class of 'serfs', consisting mainly of the aboriginal Sarwa and Kgalagadi. These people (and their descendants) were permanently attached to the families of chiefs and other leading tribesmen, to whom they paid special tribute of hunting spoils and for whom some also had to work as herdsmen or domestic servants; marriage with them was considered degrading; if oppressed, as they often were, they had no access to the tribal courts; and they lacked many other civic rights, including participation in the tribal assemblies (1965:30-31).

Tshekedi Khama, the chief of Bamangwato in Bechuanaland, to whom Plaatje "wrote several letters...between 1930 and 1932" to solicit "support in his campaign against the work of the Central Orthographic Committee's proposals" (Plaatje 1996:404), "owned", according to Miers and Crowder, "some 1,300 malata" (1988:192).

The institution of serfdom in Bechuanaland was known as *bolata* or *botlhanka*. Mabunga Gadibolae offers helpful definitions:

> *Bolata* (serfdom) was an involuntary "servitude" in which persons were obliged to perform duties for others under conditions of social inferiority and restriction...It (*bolata*) was a system whereby Bamangwato demanded compulsory labour and other services from Basarwa who were the lowest people in Bamangwato social ranking...*Bolata* should not be confused with slavery and *botlhanka* which carries the meaning of inferior (*sic*) and dependency. The headmen of the chief can be called *batlhanka ba kgosi* [servants of the chief, my addition]. A father can refer to his children as his *batlhanka* (1984:5-6).

Lelata and *motlhanka* are singular for serf while *malata* and *batlhanka* are plural. In his rendition Plaatje uses both *lelata* and *batlhanka*. According to Miers and Crowder, *botlhanka* is a "Tswana name for institution of servitude similar to *bolata* in Ngamiland" (1988:197). For them, the distinction is a question of location and not degree, while for Gadibolae it is a question of degree or form. However, all these remarks are relevant in the discussion of Plaatje and the question of serfdom. As mediator between Barolong chiefs and the colonial government, Plaatje fulfils the role of "*motlhanka a kgosi*/chief's servant". In his translation, Messenger is rendered as "*mosimane wa kgosing*", literally "the boy of the chief" to capture the relationship between the chiefship and the people as service. Plaatje uses the phrase "your obedient servant" in some of his letters, including the one to Tshekedi Khama, to highlight the power relations between him and his patrons, and also as a negotiating strategy for specific goals. Plaatje therefore un/consciously draws on residues of the feudal system to "cement" his relationship with

his patrons. In the Tshekedi Khama case, he needed his support against the proposals of the orthographic committee. This kind of serfdom, which I will call 'service', is welcomed by Plaatje. The extreme form of serfdom invites ambiguous responses from him. In order to appreciate this point, an examination of the treatment of serfs is necessary.

Malata or serfs were literally the property of their masters at whose discretion their treatment and their welfare depended. Miers and Crowder inform us that

> Malata could not leave their masters (*beng ba bone*: sing. *mong wa bone*), whose heirs inherited them, often dividing up families on the death of an owner. They usually married other malata. Sometimes the women were used as concubines by their masters. Both labor and hunting goods could be exacted from malata, who were not paid except in kind. On the cattle posts, they were usually paid only with milk, and occasionally meat and the odd blanket. They met other needs by foraging. Malata who worked in the household were given food and clothing. All were subject to arbitrary punishment by their masters, and on the rare occasions when they were able to complain in the kgotla, the best they could hope for was transfer to another master. They belonged to their masters' wards, had no control over land and no absolute rights to property. Originally malata children could be sold, though this was stopped by Khama III...However, they could still be transferred as gifts or by inheritance from one master to another and could be moved about by their owners at will. Thus, the children of malata on the cattle posts, who still hunted seasonally, could be seized for work in the household, in the fields, or other cattle posts—wherever and whenever owners required them. Moreover, new malata could be taken by force from those Basarwa and other subject groups who still foraged in remote areas (1988:176-77).

The treatment of malata, like the treatment of servants in Shakespeare's play, was at times violent with fatal consequences. Gadibolae catalogues these gruesome incidents:

> Bolata in the Nata area was quite severe and physically demanding. Some Basarwa died as a result of their masters' floggings. For instance a certain Oitsile is said to have at one time flogged three Basarwa to death. As late as 1926, the Resident Magistrate in Serowe had accused Oitsile for murdering Basarwa and attempting to murder others. Mongwato Ketareng and Simon Ratshosa were also punished for culpable homicide and assault. In both cases the deceased were Basarwa. A family of Basarwa (Moleles) in the Nata area reported to Khama III that Oitsile was killing them as if they were dogs. They reported that their expectant daughter, Toto had been killed by Oitsile who cut her stomach open (1984:8).

We are assured that in *The Comedy of Errors* such blood-letting and extreme violence will not occur. Even with the threat on Egeon's life, the disaster at sea, and the beatings the Dromios receive, "we", in Dorsch's words, "know from the title and from our reading of

romances that in the end all will be well" (1988:14). However, sections from Miers and Crowder and Gadibolae read like sections from Shakespeare's play: the arbitrary treatment of servants; the sale of children by poor parents; the lack of civic rights; and the economic status of servants and its consequent effect of attaching them to the aristocracy. All these establish an equivalence between the world of the Batswana and the play world. Ultimately, depravity and power are, as Plaatje maintains, not the monopoly of any race, but for all races.

The treatment of the Dromios must have reminded Plaatje of the treatment of serfs in his own society, and enabled him to render it successfully for his readers/audience. The following example makes the point. Luciana's "Dromio, thou Dromio, thou snail, thou slug, thou sot" (II.2.203), typical of a master's contempt for the servant, is rendered by Plaatje as "*khukhu ko uɛna; seboko ke uɛna, sefafalele, seapu, seiaie k' uɛna*" (1930:17). Instead of rendering only the three words (snail, slug and sot) in the original, Plaatje exhibits an excitement with derogatory words by offering five—"*khukhu*/giant dung beetle"; "*seboko*/worm"; "*sefafalele*/careless person"; "*seapu*/fool"; "*seiaie*/idiot or moron". Besides being comical, this enthusiasm could suggest Plaatje's familiarity with the contemptuous treatment of servants.

To what uses Plaatje put the master-servant relationship in his political agenda is not always clear, and requires further analysis than I can here provide. I have shown how Plaatje conceives himself as a servant to his patrons, including the Tswana chiefs for and against whom he spoke. This self-conceptualization, like his writings, must be understood as a negotiation strategy to respond to what Chrisman calls "the exigencies of the political moment" (2000:187). This is one political use to which the master-servant issue was deployed, namely to obtain patronage and support in his numerous social and political ventures.

Despite the equivalence between the treatment of servants in Shakespeare's play and of malata in Bechuanaland, the absence of scathing attacks on bolata in Plaatje's writings, is worrisome. I am yet to come across evidence that Plaatje was unaware of bolata in Bechuanaland. Indications are however that he was aware of it. Tshekedi Khama, to whom he wrote, was a culprit in this matter. The publicity, as a result of what Miers and

Crowder refer to as "the Ratshosa Affair", which surrounded this issue was enough to have brought it to Plaatje's attention. Two Ratshosa brothers, Simon and Obeditswe, aristocrats and members of the royal family, attempted in a power struggle, "to assassinate the newly installed regent of the Bamangwato, Tshekedi Khama" (1988:181). In an attempt to discredit and embarrass Tshekedi, during the trial for the attempted assassination, "Simon Ratshosa ensured that the whole question of servitude among the Basarwa dominated the trial" (1988:182). The question of servitude reached the *Diamond Fields Advertiser* of February 1926 in the form of a letter to the editor alleging that "slavery was rife in the Batawana Reserve in Ngamiland" (1988:182). Avid reader that he was, Plaatje must have seen this issue of the *Advertiser*, a paper to which he contributed.

Furthermore, allegations of slavery in the Batawana reserve must have recalled the case of Sekgoma, regent to the Batawana throne and about whom Plaatje had written in "Sekgoma-The Black Dreyfus" (Plaatje 1996:105-119). Given all these, his silence over this issue, unmatched by his outrage at the justice system in Bechuanaland (Plaatje 1996:104-119), the revival of "*bowgera/* boy initiation" (Plaatje 1996:71-73) and the practice of lobola (1996:364), is cause for concern. Writing for the moment can perhaps best explain this apparent indifference. An attack on servitude was tantamount to an attack on Tshekedi, and this meant losing the patronage he needed in the orthography debacle.

I dwell on the serfdom issue in Bechuanaland to show its usefulness in the translation of *The Comedy of Errors*. My extended remarks on the possibility that Plaatje knew about the issue are not intended to blame him for his silence over the matter, but to highlight a fundamental issue to be borne in mind throughout this study, namely that Plaatje's attitude towards some of the major issues of his time is ambiguous, ambivalent, complex and even contradictory at times. Peter Limb is right in suggesting that "we should give Plaatje more than one reading" (2002:28). The Bamangwato serfdom surfaced in the 1920's, a period in Plaatje's career in which his biographer characterizes him as "a leader without a people" (Willan 1984:294 *ff*). This is a period of relative withdrawal from active public affairs because,

> Plaatje was becoming frustrated at the scant opportunities that existed for him to exercise any meaningful leadership in the political arena in an increasingly segregated society, shunned by a government that saw no place for educated

> Africans, and irritated at the same time by the increasing numbers and influence of the 'so-called native experts' (Plaatje 1996:308).

During this time, Plaatje focused on the preservation of his language and its literature, including translating Shakespeare's plays.

Plaatje's scathing attack on the treatment of servants comes out sharply in *Mhudi*, which is a continuation of his engagement with Shakespeare. The attack is directed at the voortrekkers, whose treatment of their native servants is a manifestation of their ingratitude. Having been literally rescued from Mzilikazi, the "tattered and footsore trekkers" treat their servants and the Barolong hosts in contemptuous and violent manner reminiscent of Gadibolae's chilling incidents. Plaatje writes:

> Outside one of the huts she observed a grizzly old Boer who started to give a Hottentot maid some thunder and lightning with his tongue. Of course Mhudi could not understand a word; but the harangue sounded positively terrible and its effect upon the maid was unmistakable. She felt that the Hottentot's position was unenviable, but more was to come. An old lady sitting near a fire behind the wagon took sides against the maid. The episode which began rather humorously developed quickly into a tragedy. The old lady pulled a poker out of the fire and beat the half naked girl with the hot iron. The unfortunate maid screamed, jumped away and writhed with the pain as she tried to escape. A stalwart young Boer caught hold of the screaming girl and brought her back to the old dame, who had now left the fireplace and stood beside a vice near the wagon. The young man pressed the head of the Hottentot girl against the vice; the old lady pulled her left ear between the two irons, then screwed the jaws of the vice tightly upon the poor girl's ear. Mhudi looked at de Villiers' mother, but, so far from showing any concern on behalf of the sufferer, she went about her own domestic business as though nothing at all unusual was taking place. The screams of the girl attracted several Dutch men and women who looked as though they enjoyed the sickly sight (1930:116).

Ra-Thaga, despite his friendship with de Villiers, and his people's generosity and hospitality towards the trekkers, is yelled at for drinking water from a vessel meant for Boers. The narrator tells us

> The cause of the rumpus, he said, was that Boers at their own homes never allow black people to drink out of their vessels. The Boers cannot understand why black people when visited by white men show no such scruples. De Villiers added that whenever Ra-Thaga had been served at the Hoek it was always from vessels reserved for the use of Hottentots, and were he not a Morolong he would have paid for this presumptuous action with a lacerated back (Plaatje 1930:118).

Through this representation of the relationship between the Boers, their servants and hosts, Plaatje exploits irony in attacking and exposing the ingratitude of the trekkers to the very people who saved them from hardships. It is indeed ironical that the trekkers

(the symbol of the white government) who are accommodated by the natives on the understanding that there is enough land to share, later promulgate a legislation which denies their hosts a piece of land on which to bury their dead. It is equally ironical that the trekkers who left the Cape Colony because, as Cilliers tells us, "the English laws of the Cape are not fair to us" and "oppression is not conducive to piety" (Plaatje 1930:83), are exposed for their insincerity through their treatment of servants. They disregard the biblical teachings of loving thy neighbour. Mhudi's "*my husband's friends*", a phrase later used to refer to the Boers, reflects Plaatje's sarcasm regarding the trekkers for being ungrateful and cruel to their hosts and servants respectively.

The attack on the trekkers is cleverly handled to avoid creating an impression that they are beyond redemption. Even the sceptical Mhudi

> retained a strong confidence in the sagacity of her husband who apparently had the sense to make friends with the one humane Boer that there was among the wild men of his tribe (117).

The voortrekker affair enables Plaatje to extend his attack to other races. Hopefully this places before them a mirror through which they can examine their own practices and customs. The gruesome treatment of the Hottentot girl reminds us of bolata. In all these contexts, such cruelty should be condemned, and only then can Plaatje's ideal civil society be possible. But while Plaatje may have used allegory to highlight the master-servant relationship, his failure to mention the malata issue with regard to the Barolong in *Mhudi* is highly problematic. In his re-interpretation of history, Plaatje exaggerates Rolong society as a utopian paradise where serfdom seems non-existent. Plaatje idealizes Tswana society as follows:

> Two centuries ago the Bechuana tribes inhabited the extensive areas between Central Transvaal and the Kalahari Desert...In this domain they lead their patriarchal life under their several chiefs who owed no allegiance to any king or emperor. They raised their native corn which satisfied their simple wants and, when not engaged in hunting or in pastoral duties, the peasants whiled away their days in tanning skins or sewing magnificent fur rugs. They also smelted iron and manufactured useful implements which today would be pronounced very crude by their semi-westernized descendants...Strange to relate, these simple folk were perfectly happy without money and without silver watches. Abject poverty was practically unknown; they had no orphanages because there were no nameless babies. When a man had a couple of karosses to make he invited the neighbours to spend the day with him cutting, fitting in and sewing together the sixty grey jackal pelts into two rugs, and there would be intervals of feasting throughout the day. On such an occasion, someone would announce a field day at another place where there was a dwelling to thatch; here too guests might receive an invitation

> from a peasant who had a stockade to erect at a third homestead on a subsequent day; and great would be the expectation of the fat bullock to be slaughtered by the good man, to say nothing of the good things to be prepared by the kind hostess. Thus a month's job would be accomplished in a day…(1978:25-28).

This idealization compromises his re-interpretation of history and the foundation of his ideal world.

The issues which rendered *The Comedy of Errors* translatable are fairly clear from this discussion. These issues also reveal Plaatje's presence in appropriating these issues for specific political agenda. These issues hinge on the notion of story and its constituent elements. To Plaatje it was a good story that dealt with issues that his people would recognise. By dealing with familiar issues, the play is useful in bridging the gap between Plaatje's and Shakespeare's societies. Consequently, it points to a common humanity on whose basis the Batswana could feel proud of their culture, and hopefully be inspired to preserve it. In view of this, Plaatje found this story worth sharing with his people. What other immediate purposes the translation served constitutes the remainder of the chapter.

Translation and the Preservation of Language.

If Plaatje was prompted to translate *The Comedy* because it was a story with aesthetic and moral functions to serve, there are other political, cultural and personal reasons for this undertaking. In the Introduction to *Diphoshophosho*, Plaatje reveals his presence, immediacy, and agency in transforming Shakespeare's text. The following passage reveals his motivation, and I quote the English translation:

> It has not been an easy task to write a book such as this in Setswana: it has been both difficult and intricate. But we are driven forward by the demands of the Batswana--the incessant and shrill cries of people exclaiming, 'Tau's Setswana will be of no use to us! It is becoming extinct because children are not taught Setswana! They are taught the missionary language! They will lose all trace of our language!' That is why we undertook to tackle this task. (Plaatje 1996:383-84).

This passage reveals the urgency and sense of purpose attending Plaatje's undertakings. He engages in a rescue operation aimed at saving his language from the threats of "se-Ruti", the Setswana version spoken by missionaries. This concern for the state of his language is neither a new phenomenon, nor an imagined concern. In *Sechuana Proverbs* (1916) Plaatje restates this concern:

> The object of this book is to save from oblivion, as far as this can still be done the proverbial expressions of the Bechuana people (1916:1).

Similarly, in the Preface to *Mhudi*, he writes

> The book has been written with two objects in view, viz., (a) interpret to the reading public, one phase of the 'back of the Native mind'; and (b) with the readers' money, to collect and print (for Bantu schools) Sechuana folktales, which, with the spread of European ideas, are fast being forgotten. It is thus hoped to arrest this process by cultivating a love for art and literature in the vernacular (Plaatje 1996:397).

In both *Diphoshophosho* and *Mhudi*, Plaatje situates himself as translator and interpreter *par excellence*, offering what he considered to be an authentic alternative to counter the adulterated version of language and history respectively as presented by western ideology. In *Diphoshophosho*, he responds to the cries of his Setswana readers by offering them "Tau's Setswana" (the authentic) vis-à-vis "the missionary language" (the adulterated). Concerns for the extinction of languages are real. It should be remembered that within Plaatje's lifetime, the Koranna language disappeared (Willan 1984:326, Schalkwyk and Lapula 2000:24). Plaatje transforms Shakespeare's text into a political document through which Setswana language is preserved. Had the translations not been ignored (probably because *The Comedy* is a minor play), this text might have attained canonical status among Tswana readers and in literary departments.

The preservation of Setswana language via Shakespeare held promises for success by triggering other linguistic projects. For example, the translation and publication of *Diphoshophosho* highlighted the urgent need for a Setswana dictionary. According to Willan,

> Once *Diphosho-phosho* was published there was an even greater demand for...a dictionary. Plaatje had made a point of using archaic and little known Tswana words in *Diphosho-phosho*, and once the book was in circulation he received a number of requests for a new dictionary from people who simply did not know their meaning, and had no means of finding it out (1984:339).

Archaic and unfamiliar words pose semantic problems which probably led to the unpopularity and neglect of the translation. In spite of this, including these words rescues them from total disappearance. Their continued presence is a reminder of the language's evolution, thereby making the translation a useful site for historical linguistic and lexicographic research. Further, by including these words, Plaatje expands the lexicon and thus enriches his language.

The passage from *Diphoshophosho* informs us that the translation of Shakespeare's play was purely a linguistic undertaking to save the Setswana language from extinction. There is another outcome of this linguistic exchange, namely to "prove", as Shole suggests "that Setswana is a literary medium capable of carrying what Shakespeare says in English" (1990/91:51). The following example makes our point. The story in *The Comedy of Errors* is based not on an 'exotic and regional' idea, but on a common and universal concept of identical twins and the problems of differentiation between them. I have not come across evidence of Plaatje having encountered identical twins in his lifetime, but such a possibility could not be easily dismissed. What is however not in doubt is the fact that the concept of twins and identical ones was and still is a familiar concept in Tswana society. Evidence for this can be adduced from the people's language describing such a phenomenon. Common Setswana words like *mafatlana*, *mawɛlana*, *dithulaganyane* and *dichoang-choang* are used in the translation as the equivalents of the English concept of twins.

If these words express only the idea of ordinary twins, the language is well resourced to express figuratively the idea of identical twins. Without getting ahead of myself, the following line from Agione's exposition of his misfortunes illustrates the point.

> …*maoɛlana ao a bo a choana fela jaka dipɛba, a farologaŋoa fɛla ka maina* (p.3)
> the twins were very similar like mice, differentiated only by names.

The simile of mice derives from a common Setswana proverb "*O itsetse fela jaka peba*/this child is as complete an image of its parent as a baby mouse is of its mother" (Plaatje 1916:78). The proverb describes a newly born baby's resemblance to the parent. Plaatje therefore draws from what Dolet calls the "language of common usage" (Lefevere 1992:28) an appropriate idiom in rendering the concept of identical twins accessible to his reader/audience. In this way, figurative language is used to mediate between the two worlds. The picturesque language of mice is also helpful in creating a strong foundation on which the mistaken identities of the play could be appreciated.

Plaatje introduces the metaphor of mice where it did not exist in the original: "And, which was strange, the one so like the other/As could not be distinguished but by names" (I.1.52-53). Shakespeare's unmetaphoric and matter-of-fact statement is therefore enriched by Plaatje's introduction of the metaphor of mice. This is one example of how an original could be enriched when transported into another language

and culture. It is also clear how the original is being transformed to record, preserve and contextualize Setswana proverbs. Unlike court interpretation, literary translation requires and insists that Plaatje introduces a metaphor to "colour" the original's otherwise dull statement. More examples will follow shortly.

Finally, the preservation of language has another important implication. The translation enables Plaatje to present the Setswana language in living contexts. According to Voloshinov, these contexts reflect the dialogic nature of human language in its specific social situations. In his words,

> human speech is a two-sided phenomenon; any utterance presupposes, for its realization, the presence not only of a speaker, but also of a listener...Hence it would be a futile waste of effort to try to understand the construction of utterances...without any reference to the actual social environments (situation) which has evoked them (1983:114-115).

In translating the play, Plaatje is able to portray not only the expressive wealth of Setswana, but also its inherent dialogic character and the sociological situations in which this expressive wealth is deployed. Readers are presented with living contexts in which their language functions as a means of social interaction. The proverb on mice for example, invokes the social context in which a newly born baby's resemblance to its parents is being discussed. The context is here adapted to describe identical twins and thereby fore-grounding the mistaken identities on which the drama is based. The medium of drama—in which there is an exchange between characters--is an obvious illustration of this dialogism. References to similes, proverbs and social contexts take us to the discussion of proverb use in the translation. This will illuminate the contexts and dialogism of language.

Translation and the Preservation of Proverbs.

Invoking Plaatje's general interest in proverbs, let me consider the translation's proverbial use. The reader of *Diphoshophosho* is struck by Plaatje's elaborate use of idiomatic and proverbial expressions. A quick count revealed a total of at least fifty of these expressions. It is possible that there could be more or fewer than this figure depending on how one defines these figures of speech. My view is that more of these abound in the translation. Their deployment serves several functions which I outline below.

First, the translation enables Plaatje to record, and thereby save from oblivion, more Setswana proverbs not included in his earlier collection, but which might have appeared in his expanded version had it seen the light of day. The following are some of the examples.

a. *Mala a nku a tla ka bogamo* (p.48) roughly meaning the "taste of the pudding is in the eating.
b. *Pelo e namagadi* (p.2) to mean generosity, compassion
c. *Go emela ka dinao* (p.3)/ to trouble, pester or insist on a particular request
d. *Go fologoa ke loleme* (p.6)/ to loose one's tongue, to divulge secrets
e. *Go gakisa mafoko* (p.30)/ to confuse, render speechless.

The translation also allows Plaatje the opportunity to place these expressions in living contexts. For example, the last one is embedded in a longer grammatical construction which serves as a sub-heading of one of the various sections Plaatje introduces in the translation. The statement is ***MAOELANA A SANTSE A TSHELEPANA A GAKISA BEN-GAE MAFOKO.*** "*Maoelana*" means "twins", "*a santse*" means "continue to", "*tshelepana*" means "criss-crossing" as if avoiding one another, "*a gakisa*" means "gag", "*ben-gae*" is "citizens/Ephesians", and "*mafoko*" are "words". This translates as "twins continue to miss one another with the consequence of confusing Ephesians". Further, by embedding this expression in a longer grammatical structure, Plaatje illustrates how such expressions can be used to embellish ordinary speech, or as Finnegan would say, "colour" it (1970:415). For example, instead of the expression "*gakisa mafoko*/render speechless", Plaatje could have used a common word "*tsietsa*/confuse". In fact, the delayed meeting of the twins does confuse Ephesians. By using the idiomatic "*gakisa mafoko*", instead of the usual "*tsietsa*" Plaatje renders the translation imaginative, emphatic, dramatic and as poetic as the original. This example also illustrates the point that proverbs are not necessarily reserved for special occasions, but could be used as embellishments of ordinary speech.

Proverbs also illuminate the major issues of the play. One of the major concerns of the play is the nature of marriage, its obligations, expectations and problems. We pick some of these issues from Adriana and Luciana's exchange. Adriana questions the privileges men enjoy in marriage vis-à-vis those of women. To her marriage is a kind of prison for women. Despite its problems, marriage remains a critical social institution and therefore worth maintaining or at least trying out.

Let us examine Adriana's and her sister's dialogues to highlight the issues they raise in relation to Plaatje's transformation of this play for specific purposes. The last two lines of Adriana's speech give us a starting point:

> But if thou live to see like right bereft,
> This fool-begged patience in thee will be left (II.1.40-41).

Plaatje translates these lines as follows:

> *A ko nyaloe re ke re bone gore a u tla* ***rua pelo telele*** *ea gago e gompieno ekete* ***telele-telele*** *fela jaka* ***telele*** *ea kgomo* (p.10)/Marry so that we can see whether you will keep your long heart which presently is as long-long as the large intestine of a cow. [emphasis added]

The translation illustrates Plaatje's attention to the aesthetics of and love for words. It should be remembered from the previous chapter that Plaatje's people placed emphasis on good speech in which the love for words was an important aspect. The pun on "*telele*" is an example. The word is used first as an adjective in the idiom "*rua pelo telele*/keep a long heart/be patient", and then repeated shortly for emphasis in "*telele-telele*/long-long". Lastly, the word is used as a noun in "*telele ya kgomo*/the large intestine/colon of a cow". Among the Tswana speakers, the "*telele*" is a delicacy for old people, as it is soft. It is not certain whether Plaatje intended this aspect of the "*telele*" in this context. Its use in this context implies two purposes: as a metaphoric commentary on marital patience, by highlighting and contrasting Adriana's impatience to her sister's appeal for patience. This metaphor illustrates perceptions of marriage as embodied by the two sisters. Secondly, the metaphor of "*telele*" introduces a specifically Tswana cultural symbol as the equivalent of the original's "fool-begged patience". In fact, Plaatje's translation passes over in silence the significance and context encompassed by the notion of "fool-begged". He therefore draws from his culture a familiar aspect to render the play appealing to the audience. Setswana readers or listeners will be misled into believing that Shakespeare specifically mentioned the large intestine of a cow, and thereby implying that among the English audience it is a delicacy just as it is among the Tswana people. For Plaatje, this transformation reminds people of their culture and helps to narrow the cultural gap between English and Tswana societies. It is therefore possible to see how a translation may never be a perfect replica of the original, and how each translation qualifies to be regarded as an original because it introduces new aspects.

Adriana and Luciana's dialogues are "interrupted" by yet another example of Plaatje's presence in and transformation of the original. Plaatje introduces a sub-heading:

"***DICHOANG-CHOANG, DIEA THOTENG DI SA BAPA***/Birds of a feather do not flock together". A full discussion of this sub-heading follows shortly, but for the present, let me mention that it is an example of the structure we saw in Plaatje's bio-sketch of Shakespeare. Luciana's response to her sister follows directly after this sub-heading. Luciana's "Well, I will marry one day, but to try" (II.1.42) attracts the following rendition:

> ***Baa pelo, gatoe kgengoe oa nna a lekoe.*** *Ke tla tsamea ke nyaloa le na* (p.11)/relax, it is said that the *kgengoe* must be tried. I will also marry.[emphasis added]

The rendition is longer and poetically richer than the original's. It opens with an idiom "*baa pelo*/relax/calm down" as an appropriate response to her sister's outburst and impatience with marriage. This idiom functions as an interjective, thereby showing the living and dialogic contexts in which the Setswana language could be employed. The original's interjective "well" is matched by its idiomatic Setswana counterpart. Luciana's appeal to her sister to "calm down" contrasts their temperaments.

Another feature to note in Luciana's response is the traditional narrative formula "*gatoe*/it is said". As we may recall, this formula distances and links her to the collective consciousness of stories and their elements. The use of this formula reminds the reader of the contexts of story-telling to which this translation is being appropriated. That is, Plaatje intended these translations to be read as stories and hoping that they would trigger his people's interest in their own stories and therefore preserve them. The formula will thus appeal directly to the readers/listeners and make them part of the re-telling. This short translation could be read to groups of people just as Plaatje read news to groups of old men sewing karosses under tree shades.

The formula inaugurates a proverb. Luciana is not the originator of the proverb, but links herself to it by deriving from it inspiration and moral justification for her intended action. The formula, Moilwa suggests, "attribute[s] their [proverbs] usage and composition to the older people or people of the past which gives them a detached and objective tone" (1975:50). Unlike in the original, the experimentation or trial Luciana intends by marrying is presented in the proverb "*kgɛngoɛ oa ne a lekoe*/It is best always to try the *kgengoe* by tasting it". "*Kgengoe*", he explains, is "a wild melon used in the Kalahari

desert for quenching thirst; one kind of it is too bitter for use". The European equivalent is "the proof of the pudding is in the eating" (1916:46).

The images of the melon and the desert conditions in which it has to be tasted illuminate the concept of marriage. If there is more than one type of melon, and one type is so bitter that it is unusable, then tasting the melons as the proverb suggests, is unavoidable in establishing the usable one. The desert conditions where water is a scarce resource, thus forcing the use of melons, further explains the need for proof. These conditions could be understood as a metaphor for the human world with its challenges and problems. Such problems should therefore not discourage people from living their lives to the fullest; after all they will not go away. If we recall from Starfield how proverbs were a tool used by the elderly to teach the young, the proverb under scrutiny is a good example. The old will use it to encourage the youth not to run away from marriage and other social challenges. In fact, they will teach their offspring that life is full of problems and unless you try, you can never be sure of your capabilities. The problems you encounter, like the bitter melon you taste, serve as challenges and when you have found the correct melon, the need to preserve and enjoy it is therefore understandable. Quality in life is therefore worth struggling for. In counselling sessions on marriage, this proverb will be accompanied by other dictums such as "*lenyalo ga se diketo*/marriage is not a game". But having made clear the problematics of marriage, a Motswana elder will then state, like Lusiana, that "*kengoe oa nna a lekoe*" as motivation to face up to the challenges. In the comic spirit of the play, these marital problems are temporary and intended to justify the happy ending.

Plaatje renders Luciana's--a young person's--speech poetic by assigning her the use of the idiom/proverb "*baa pelo*" and "*kegengoe oa nna a lekoe*". As Starfield implies, the proverb system remains open to the young, and by using it, they are elevated to the level of the old and the wise. Plaatje used proverbs in his correspondence with chiefs and thus reversed the order of wisdom between the young and the old. By using the proverb system, Lusiana locates herself in the discursive consciousness of the community and therefore justifies her wish for marriage as a social imperative. Plaatje's motivation to assign Luciana such proverbial expression could be understood in the general context of producing school readers and targeting young readers in the face of his despondency

with the elderly. The youth are therefore inspired to marvel at the richness of their language and hopefully they will rally behind Plaatje's cultural projects.

Plaatje's use of this proverb (and the same could be said for others) not only records the wisdom of the elderly, but also presents it in living contexts as a critique of social institutions. Albeit a necessary institution, marriage has its attendant problems. The proverb can thus be seen as a critique of the position of marriage in society. In Burke's (1957) words, the proverb is a "strategy for dealing with situations", by way of initiating the inexperienced into facing the challenges of marriage, and by extension those of human existence in general. The use of proverbial wisdom in living contexts not only underscores the fact that proverbs are an integral part of everyday social interaction, but are also a tool by which the cultural divide between the play world and that of the target audience could be narrowed. Their familiarity with the proverb form, Plaatje must have hoped, would make the translation more appealing and accessible. The accessibility of the translation will further generate pride in their oral forms and therefore inspire them to participate in projects—of which the translations are a good example--aimed at reclaiming and preserving their culture.

The translation also intends to display Setswana as a literary medium capable of expressing what Shakespeare says in English. The idiomatic and proverbial expressions found in the translation are useful in more than one way in establishing Setswana's efficacy as a medium of literary expression. First, because of their use of similes and metaphors, these expressions enable the translation to remain as poetic and dramatic as the original. Secondly, as Willan tells us, the act of translation was not necessarily meant to "reproduce directly the poetic qualities of Shakespeare's language, but to match it" (1984:332) with the expressive wealth of the Setswana language. That is, translation allows Setswana to display its own poetic qualities. In fact, at times the translation is more poetic than the original, and this, according to Plaatje's wishes, should inspire more confidence in his people.

The first two lines of the First Merchant's advice to Antipholus of Syracuse illustrate the idiomatic language of the translation.

> Therefore give out you are of Epidamnum
> Lest that your goods too soon be confiscate (I.2.1-2).

These lines are rendered in Setswana as

> ***Ipate*** *ure u coa Epidamnum; fa u ka* ***fologoa ke loleme*** *uare u coa Sirakuse, ba kakofa ba go gapela dithoto* (p.6)/Pretend you are from Epidamnum; if your tongue gets loose and you disclose you are from Syracusa, they will hasten to confiscate your property.

The Setswana version is longer than the original, but this does not make it verbose. If Plaatje translated literally, it would read "*Ipate gore u coa Epidamnum, fa u ka re o coa Sirakuse, ba kakofa ba go gapela dithoto*/Pretend you are from Epidamnum, if you say you are from Syracuse, they will hasten to confiscate your property". Plaatje makes his rendition longer by prefacing the subordinate clause with an idiom.

"*Ipate*" is the equivalent of the original's idiom "give out", meaning "pretend, claim or pose". Plaatje then proceeds in idiomatic language to render what in the statement can be described as the antithesis of "*ipate*/pretend". This is "*fa uka fologoa ke loleme*/should your tongue become loose". The choice of this idiom here reflects a rhetorical strategy with which Plaatje and his audience were familiar. Figurative language serves to enrich ordinary speech and as an important means of characterization, and this idiom serves those functions. Said by the merchant who is obviously older than Antifoluse, this idiom lends credence to his advice, backed by experience and located in the collective consciousness of society. It is, as Starfield told us, part of the rhetoric of the elderly who use such "rhetorically crafted wisdom to advise, educate and demonstrate their power over young men" (1991:4).

The merchant uses the idiom to lend credence to his warning to Antipholus of the inevitable dangers of a careless disclosure of his Syracusan identity. To further validate his warning, the merchant cites the case of another Syracusan merchant (incidentally Antipholus's father) who, in yet another example of highly imaginative and poetic idiom ("*etlare tsatsi le phirima dinca tsa Moshata di be di mo latlha*/by sunset, the dogs of the town will bury him"), faces the consequences of disclosing his Syracusan identity. To Plaatje's Tswana audience, the dangers of a "loose tongue" are made real by the idiom's allusion to the story of Fish and how he lost his tongue. Briefly, the tale is that because of his careless and slanderous prattle, Fish had his tongue removed by other animals. Humiliated by this experience, Fish went to live in water. Hence fish species have no tongues and continue to live in water. Fish was thus 'silenced and censored' permanently

because he 'abused' the instrument of verbal articulation and communication. It is possible to suggest further that in a situation like the one in which the young Antipholus finds himself, strategic thinking is of the essence and therefore heightened language characteristic of proverbs and idioms is, as Starfield has told us, required in resolving such situations. The merchant rises to this challenge, and given his age, and therefore experience, he strikes us as a master of the art of speaking, as he proceeds syllogistically to draw conclusions.

The image of the tongue alludes to other proverbs, the immediate example being "*O Loleme*/she has a long tongue/she is a wag-tail (or: Your tongue is made of very loose leather") (Plaatje 1916:79). It could be assumed that the constant reference to the tongue in the translation is effective. The tongue is the agent of speech (or linguistic production) which can be deceitful or honest. The Setswana proverb "*kgomo e tshwarwa ka kgole motho ka loleme*/you use a rope to tie a cow and tongue for a human being" reflects in part the function of the tongue as a tool of deception and of identifying individual character. In a play where speech is confused and mistaken, references to the tongue are therefore especially effective. In his rendition, Plaatje uses several idioms in reference to the tongue and speech. For example: "*phethekganya loleme* (p.13)/prattle or twist and turn one's tongue"; "*go inanatha* (p.12)/mumble"; "*loleme loa basadi* (p.46)/women gossip"; "*nenekeditse loleme* (p.36)/hold tongue/stop talking too much" and "*o nkgogile loleme* (p.43)/trick me into recognizing my own faults" (Wells 1995:176).

The examination of proverbs reveals another important aspect, namely their organic origins in folk-tales and therefore to Voloshinov's "social environment which has evoked them" (1983:115). (It is tragic that Plaatje's collection of folk-tales has not survived because we could draw from it some of the folk-tales to which some proverbs trace their origins). The Setswana proverb, "*go lelela kgama le mogogoro*/mourning for the hartebeest and hide" traces its origins to the second folk-tale Plaatje records in *A Sechuana Reader* (1916:4). This is a story of a Tswana traveller who on this particular journey in a "lonely region" sighted a "lame hartebeest running along in the forest". Placing the skin he was carrying on the ground, he ran after the animal the whole day. After failing to catch it, he returned to the spot where he had placed his skin only to fail to locate it. Therefore he lost both the hartbeest and the skin.

Plaatje introduces this proverb and the contexts it invokes in illuminating the relationship between the Courtesan and Antipholus of Ephesus. Shut out of his house by his wife, the latter goes to the Courtesan's for diversion from his apparent marital problems. On her he promises to bestow a chain "to spite my wife" (III.1.118). When she confronts the Syracusan Antipholus who denies any knowledge of the chain, the Courtesan is convinced he is mad. Plaatje assigns her this proverb:

> *Le fa go tlaa toe ke lotlhantse motho le mogatse, ke choanetse go ea go bolelela Adriana ka re Antifoluse o ntseetse mhitshana. Eseng jalo, nka tla ka* **lelela kgama le mogogoro.** *Mhitshana oa £20 ga se selonyana ke seoka; nka tla ka latlhagelwa thata* (p.35)/Even though I will be accused of setting a husband against his wife, I must go and tell Adriana that Antipholus took my chain. Or else I will mourn for the hartbeest and the skin. A chain worth £20 is no small thing, I would have lost a great deal/My way is now to hie home to his house/And tell his wife...This course I fittest choose,/For forty ducats is too much (IV.3.92-97).

The Courtesan is in a moral dilemma. Divulging the chain issue to Adriana is bound to cause conflict between husband and wife. Similarly, if the Courtesan lets sleeping dogs lie, she risks losing even what rightfully belongs to her. A married man like Antipholus is the hartbeest which lies in the realm of possibility, but is not yet hers and possibly will never be, and her chain is the skin, or 'the bird in the hand that is worth two in the bush'. The proverb is therefore invoked to resolve this moral impasse and to justify her disclosure of the chain affair to Adriana. By doing so, the Courtesan would have merely followed conventional wisdom in which it is folly to lose twice.

The Courtesan's monologue also illustrates Voloshinov's point that inner speech is also dialogic. Her moral dilemma, the desire to resolve it and the available resources in resolving it, reflect the dialogic context of speaker and listener in a specific social situation. Voloshinov writes:

> For as soon as we begin meditating about some question, as soon as we start to think it over carefully, our inner speech (which sometimes, if we are alone, is pronounced aloud) immediately assumes the form of questions and answers, assertions and subsequent denials, or to put it more simply...it takes the form of a *dialogue*...The dialogic form is most apparent when we have to take some decision. We hesitate. We do not know what is the best course of action. We argue with ourselves, we try to convince ourselves of the rightness of one decision. Our consciousness seems to be divided into independent and contradictory voices (1983:119).

These remarks make the Courtesan's internal conflict with great force. The proverb form, an available resource in the resolution of this dilemma, contributes in complex

ways to the dialogic nature of her monologue. We can thus appreciate how the translation allows Plaatje to cast his language in living contexts worthy of scholarly inquiry.

The Courtesan's speech also illustrates what could happen to a text when transported into another linguistic-cultural space. First, the original is enriched by the introduction of the proverb and its oral contexts. By invoking these contexts, Plaatje makes the translation appeal directly to his readers. Tswana readers will appreciate and sympathise with the Courtesan's predicament. In fact, they are likely to be persuaded by her reasoning and resolution. Secondly, the original's currency of forty ducats becomes twenty pounds. One reason could be that Plaatje did not know the symbol with which to represent ducats. He certainly did not want to use ducats. To render the story more meaningful and relevant to his audience, Plaatje substitutes the familiar currency of pounds. After all, South Africa was at the time of the translation part of the British Empire. The seemingly unimportant matter of currency could be an indication of the political alliances of the time. Further, it could be suggested that by not translating forty ducats as forty pounds, Plaatje was "conscious" of the "exchange rate" in which a pound equals two ducats. To date, among the elderly Batswana, "*ponto*/pound" is still perceived as the equivalence of say two rands or pulas. A Tswana reader will therefore appreciate Plaatje's awareness of the "exchange rate" in his translation of forty ducats to twenty pounds. Clearly, Plaatje brings into the text "local" and familiar symbols to make it appeal to his readers.

The following is another example of how proverbs allude to their oral foundation in folk-tales. Antipholus of Syracuse's single line statement "Yea, dost thou jeer and flout me in the teeth" (II.2.22) is elaborately rendered as:

> *A u nchotla ka bomo u ba* ***u ntsenya monoana mo leitlhong*** *molala koeana,* ***u mpala meno*** *ke ntse ke u lebile* (13-14)/You deliberately poke me, you push your finger in my eye you servant, you count my teeth while I look at you. [emphasis added]

Plaatje is not content with giving only one proverb. Instead, he uses the opportunity of translating the original's poetic language to provide an extra one, because he is conscious of his major project of rescuing proverbs from extinction. Such an ostentatious/exuberant display of the proverbial richness of Setswana allows him, in

Shole's words, to make "up for instances where he has to resort to a plain rendition of untranslatable idioms" (1990/91:61). In this example, he uses two proverbs (highlighted) to emphasize the servant's flagrant and presumptuous behaviour towards his master. This justifies the beatings inflicted on him as a way of restoring the hierarchy of the master-servant relationship Dromio's behaviour had violated. The emphasis in "*u mpala meno*/you count my teeth" is effective when we consider the oral contexts the proverb alludes to, namely the folk-tale of Ostrich and Lion. The two were friends who hunted together. With his speed and stamina, Ostrich specialised in the chase, while Lion lay concealed to ambush the prey. After a kill, Lion was always surprised by his friend's refusal to eat meat. The excuse was that the chase strained him, and so he could only take blood. After drinking blood, Ostrich retired to the nearest shade for a well-deserved rest. In his sleep, Ostrich left his mouth wide open, and his friend discovered that he did not have teeth, hence he could not eat flesh. Lion challenged Ostrich to a fight, which he could not accept because he lacks the necessary weaponry. Ostrich exclaimed: "*O ntlhodile meno* or *o mpadile meno*/he has counted my teeth/he has discovered my secret".

By invoking this folk-tale via the proverb, Plaatje imaginatively illustrates how Dromio's behaviour is out of line. He adds the phrase: "*ke ntse ke u lebile*/while I look at you" for further emphasis and contrast. In the story, Lion discovers Ostrich's secret by chance. Ostrich was tired from the chase, and opening his mouth occurred when he was not in total control of his body. He, therefore, is not necessarily to blame for his exposure. In the context of the play, Dromio's misdemeanour is flagrant, open, deliberate and not subtle. His master is left with no choice but to beat him. Thus, the cruel treatment of servants is justifiable, albeit that it is based on mistaken identities. Plaatje is enabled to emphasise to his readers the extent of the mistakes in the play and how they result in equally wrong conclusions. In this way, he makes the story enjoyable. Allusions to other oral forms reveal the richness of Tswana culture which Plaatje hopes to preserve.

One can mention here that though writing is bound to de-contextualize proverbs as Starfield imagines, these proverbs show that even within new contexts, proverbs can continue to command power by invoking their original contexts and significance. By alluding to their organic origins in folk-tales for example, proverbs illustrate at least two things: the difficulty in establishing concrete boundaries between them and other oral forms as Finnegan has already shown us; and the richness and complexity of the oral

cultures in which they are used. An exploration of these proverbs and the contexts they conjure reveals the complexity of Tswana oral philosophy which Plaatje wants to preserve via the translation. Further, these allusions promise to safe-guard Tswana culture as the discussion of proverbs will entail an examination of their oral contexts. In terms of teaching and research, the discussion of proverbs seems to be a starting point towards a complex discovery of Tswana language and culture. This is what Plaatje sought to achieve.

The translation also demonstrates the multiple transformations Plaatje does. He is transforming not only Shakespeare, but his own language as well: first by turning it from being an oral into a written language (in preparation for its use in schools) and then by adapting its proverbial wisdom to suit specific purposes. For example, he reveals how the proverb form could be adapted to new situations without losing its original contexts and purpose. In fact, it is by invoking its original context that its effectiveness becomes clearer in commenting on new situations. The sub-heading ***Di Choang-Choang Di Ea Thoteng Di Sa Bapa*** (p.11) is an inflection on a well-known Setswana proverb "*dichoang-choang, di ea thoteng di bapile*" (Plaatje 1916:28). I propose "birds of a feather flock together" as an appropriate English equivalent instead of Plaatje's "six of one and half a dozen of the other" (1916:28). Plaatje turns the proverb into a negative statement in which birds of a feather are separated or not flocking together. Drawing on the established knowledge that similar characters hang together as it were, Plaatje's slight departure from this commonplace by separating these characters (twins) enables him to prepare his readers for the consequences of such a separation. These consequences manifest themselves in the confusions and mistaken identities which are nevertheless necessary for dramatic purposes. These mistaken identities sustain the plot and contribute towards the play's happy ending. The ending not only clears the confusions and thus re-unites the family, it also restores the original proverbial wisdom of "birds of a feather flock together" as the Dromios "go hand in hand, not one before another" (V.1.426). The twist Plaatje has imposed on this proverb should be seen as a temporary measure for dramatic effect. But it also opens up a possibility in which the truth of that proverb could be altered in changed circumstances. This is true if we recall that there are always two sides to an issue, and so it should be with proverbial wisdom.

Plaatje's translation also reflects a substitution of the original's metaphors with local ones. At times, this substitution entails dropping the original's metaphors completely because they are likely to confuse and therefore have no effect on local readers. Shakespeare's "thousand marks" (I.1.22), the ransom to be levied for violating laws governing Syracusan and Ephesian merchants is transformed by Plaatje to "£50" (1930:3). This seemingly arbitrary figure is nevertheless significant because it recalls the minimum conditions stipulated by the non-racial Cape franchise: "a male citizen who earned a minimum of £50 and [was] capable of completing a registration form in either English or Dutch" (Willan 1984:32) was allowed to vote. Plaatje draws from his immediate surroundings metaphors with which to bring the story closer to his people. The strength of the "mighty rock" (I.1.102), which split the ship and separated the family, is dramatically rendered in the familiar metaphor of "*pholo* (p.40)/ox". To appreciate the size and strength of the rock, the reader must invoke the power of an ox, a familiar aspect of Tswana life.

Dromio of Ephesus's

> Your worship's wife, my mistress at the Phoenix;
> She that doth fast till you come home to dinner
> And prays that you will hie you home to dinner (I.2.88-90).

Is translated as:

> *Ke raea mogaco, Mrs Antifoluse eo* **o ikgatlhaleng mala ka tuku,** *ko lapeng, a lebile dijo ka matlho* **a coa pelo** *a gu letile. O ko gae koa, u rapela* **coe-coe** *u itlhaganelele dijo, le ene a bone* **go fitlhola** (8-9)/I mean your wife, Mrs Antipholus who has a cloth tied around her stomach at home, staring at food, salivating and waiting for you. She is at home, and begs please please you hurry home for food, so that she eats breakfast.

Tying a cloth around one's stomach is a common practice among the Batswana as a means of minimising the effects of hunger and a rumbling tummy. This is sometimes done when one is busy and does not want to break for a meal. Plaatje uses the traditional contexts of this practice to match the original's concept of fasting. He also expands on this practice to justify the request to the master to hurry home. Staring at food obviously makes Adriana to "*coa pelo*/salivate". She would be expected to tie her stomach with a cloth while she waits for her husband's return. Dromio's invocation of this practice is not only comical but also satirical of the master's apparent indifference to his wife, and women in general. The interjective "*coe-coe*/please-please" hopes to impress

on the master the urgency of returning home. "*Go fitlhola*" means to "have breakfast". The implication is that Adriana has not eaten since morning, if what she is staring at is dinner.

Plaatje's translation drops the metaphor of the "Phoenix" and contents itself with "*gae*/home". Other examples of substitution include the following. "Poland winter" (III.2.102) becomes "*maruru a kgoedi ea Seetebosigo* (24)/the cold of the month of June". *Seetebosigo* is a noun from an imperative statement: "*Se ete bosigo*/do not visit at night". Among Plaatje's readers, June is considered the coldest month. "Lapland" (IV.3.11), famous for its sorcerers is rendered as "*Kgalagadi*" (33). Plaatje refers to the Kalahari desert, whose harsh conditions inhibit human habitation. Previously we saw how the scarcity of water in the Kalahari necessitates the use of the "*kgengoe*" melon. Such conditions are the abode of sorcerers.

Lastly, Dromio's "beggar wont her brat" (IV.4.35-36) becomes "*mosadi oa Mokgalagadi a belege molalana* (36)/a female Bushman carrying on her back a small servant". "*Mokgalagadi*" reminds us of a particular section within Tswana society from which serfs were drawn (Schapera 1965:30-31, Moilwa 1975). The image of a "*Mokgalagadi* female" together with her "*molalana*" (diminutive form of *molala*/servant), conjures the master-servant situation with its assymetrical power relations. This is a reminder of *bolata*, on whose basis Plaatje partly found the play translatable. The story is made familiar and immediate.

It is evident from this discussion that proverbs convey the rich philosophy of Plaatje's people, making it obvious why he was interested in preserving them. It is equally evident how the translation furthers the preservation of proverbs. The success of this project is however dependent on the size of the potential readership and the extent to which the translations are read and enjoyed. Starfield's observation that *Sechuana Proverbs* is seldom used and that to date none of Plaatje's translations has attracted noticeable scholarly interest, point to the ineffectiveness of Plaatje's projects. It is also evident that in translating, Plaatje strove to render the story as familiar as possible by introducing local and familiar symbols and metaphors, while at the same time not forgetting that he was translating.

Translation and Orthography.

In this section I examine Plaatje's appropriation of Shakespeare to respond to the debate over how to spell his language. I show how he uses the translation to disseminate his preferred spelling. As Schalkwyk and Lapula argue,

> in addition to his use of Shakespeare as a way of saving the richness of Setswana as language and vehicle of a vanishing culture, Plaatje used Shakespeare to entrench and disseminate his particular variant of Setswana orthography, based on phonetic principles developed with the British phonetician, Professor Daniel Jones of London University (2000:21).

It is because of this purpose for which he employs Shakespeare that his Introduction to the translation opens not with a discussion or introductory remarks to the play nor with an introduction to Shakespeare's life or his fascination with Shakespeare, but rather with what Schalkwyk and Lapula call "a fairly lengthy disquisition on orthography" (2000:21). Put differently, the Introduction foregrounds the spelling issue as one reason for embarking on the translation.

To appreciate Plaatje's 'lengthy disquisition on orthography', it is necessary to rehearse some of the crucial issues on this matter. This will serve as background information against which to appreciate the spelling issue in relation to Plaatje's larger political and cultural concerns. As Schalkwyk and Lapula characterize the issue, "on the surface a dry, technical matter, it was in fact a deeply, and divisively, political one" (2000:21).

Plaatje's interest in his language was a lifetime commitment, having been cultivated at an early age by the rich oral culture of the language passed onto him by his mother and grandmother. It is the language which, as he says, "over 50 years ago I first learned to articulate" as a child and "into which I…translated some Shakespeare's dramas" (Plaatje 1996:401). Plaatje was clearly impressed by the richness of Setswana. This explains his subsequent interest in writing it down. However, efforts to write the language faced several difficulties, amongst which was the way it was spelt. Before *Diphoshophosho* was published, he expressed this orthographic concern in *Sechuana Proverbs*.

> One difficult point in regard to this language is presented by its different systems of orthography. These are five. We have firstly an Anglican spelling of Sechuana; secondly, a Congregational; thirdly, a Lutheran, and fourthly, a Wesleyan, besides the fifth spelling of Sechuana used by the Natives in their own newspapers (1916:13).

These variants, characteristic of Setswana only, came as a great surprise to the native speakers of the language because the same missionary organisations involved were the ones who in Plaatje's words "perfected the orthography of the Zulu, Xosa, Suto and Pedi" which are "Bantu languages in the same sub-continent" (1916:13). Why they never agreed on one spelling for Setswana remained a baffling issue for Plaatje and became the basis for his attempts to arrive at an acceptable orthography based on the interests of the native speakers, problematic as the idea of native speakers promised to be. To compound the problem of orthography, native opinion was deliberately sidelined. Plaatje's experience bears testimony to this.

> They invited the author to attend their conference and give his advice; but when the fact was announced, a sharp letter came from London regretting that the missionary agents invited the author to have a say in the deliberations over the method of writing his own language (1916:15).

The various spellings of the language coupled with the conscious exclusion of native opinion were

> responsible for the deplorable fact that Sechuana is systematically "murdered" in those schools where the vernacular is taught. The head teacher is usually the white missionary, who, even if a good linguist must, except in rare cases, have the accent and use the idiom of a foreigner, and the pupils invariably drop their mother's accent and speak the language "as teacher speaks it." In the course of time, when it is decided to impart the language through native tutors, the latter will be speaking a kind of "School Sechuana" with accents varying according to their tuition, but all equally alien to native speech (1916:15-16).

The consequence is therefore a production of what Plaatje calls "seRuti", "the language as spoken by (white) missionaries" (Plaatje 1996:420).

Given this state of affairs, Plaatje strove to reverse the catastrophic consequences that the lack of a standard orthography was imposing on his language. His journalism, political activism, linguistics and literary scholarship must therefore be understood against the background of being tools in a linguistic and cultural nationalism.

The choice of orthography was complicated by its associated politics, specifically subsequent efforts of creating a standard orthography for all the major languages of Southern Africa. Willan tells us how the matter of orthography continued to be an explosive battlefield:

> In fact the issue of orthography had ramifications beyond Plaatje's choice of orthography in his own writings, and it became a central issue for him during the last few years of his life. Between 1928 and 1932 Plaatje found himself at odds

with the moves being made, and sponsored by the government, in the direction of a standardized orthography for the major language groups in southern Africa, the ultimate goal being a single orthography for all of them. For Plaatje the direction these initiatives took amounted to unacceptable threat to the integrity and the very survival of Setswana, and he applied himself energetically to resisting them (Plaatje 1996:310).

A homogenising orthography is more than an issue of linguistics. It is the outcome of a political act through which natives are constructed as a homogeneous lot for which schemes can be devised. In fact, the attempt at homogenizing natives is, as Niranjana has pointed out, a strategy of colonialist discourse in which natives are translated as 'other' with the view to controlling them (1992:1*ff*). More immediately, a common orthography threatened individual identities on which Plaatje's ideal society was to be founded.

University academics and government officials championed the crusade for a common orthography, and this illuminates the political dimensions of the orthography issue. Willan's full remarks make the point.

> The new-found interest of both these groups in this issue of orthography of African languages (for it was not just Setswana) was a relatively new phenomenon, and it had diverse origins. It owed much to the growing consensus in governing circles in both the British Empire as a whole, and in South Africa itself, in favour of policies of indirect rule or segregation (in its South African form); and a concomitant realisation of the contribution that academics—the anthropologists and linguists in particular—could make to the accumulation of specialised knowledge about the customs, languages and traditions of indigenous peoples: knowledge that was perceived to be necessary if these forms of government and control were to be successfully implemented (1984:343).

In the South Africa after the Union, a homogenizing orthography was distastefully paternalistic. University academics consciously excluded informed native opinion on the matter. It is not surprising therefore that after Plaatje's opposition to the scheme became evident at the February 1929 meeting, he was deliberately excluded on the October committee of the same year. Professor Lestrade justified this exclusion thus:"it is simply not done to consult people who are not expert in these matters, e.g. natives" (in Willan 1984:346).

His exclusion was therefore a conscious political act which contradicted his political vision of a world in which all races participated in the running of their affairs. Excluding

native opinion also contradicted the democratic principles enshrined in the traditional chiefly rule and its equivalent in the liberal political and legal institutions of the Cape Colony. To dis-empower people through their language, a gift from God, was therefore as destructive as the Land Act. Plaatje's opposition to a common orthography was therefore understandable as the following passages will show.

His frustration with the paternalism of the scheme is expressed as follows:

> It is to be regretted that at this end of the continent the scheme was attacked along real South African lines; i.e. the Natives know not what they need. So, let university professors lay down a scheme, in the light of science; and Native schools will have to adopt it or do without government grants (Plaatje 1996:398).

When he was left out of the Setswana committee he wrote, in part that:

> The constitution of the Sechuana committee, on the other hand, was its exact antithesis. Ten Europeans and two Natives met at Pretoria over a year ago; most of the former knew nothing about Sechuana, while the two Natives appear to have been selected by virtue of two outstanding qualifications, viz., (a) none of them ever wrote a Sechuana book or pamphlet; and (b) neither of them ever lived in Bechuanaland or in districts where the unadulterated Sechuana is spoken (Plaatje 1996:398).

Of the professors, Plaatje lashed out as follows:

> Personally, I have nothing but the highest respect for the sound learning of university professors. I yield to no one in my admiration of their academic distinctions and high scholarship. The only trouble with the professors is that they don't know my language and, with all due deference, how could a string of letters behind a man's name enable him to deal correctly with something that he does not understand? (Plaatje 1996:402).

About two months before his death in June 1932, Plaatje wrote:

> Thus we learn from the daily papers that white men met near Rustenburg a week ago to standardize the Sechuana language...All this would be commendable but for the disquieting fact that the Bechuana tribes, whose language is said to be standardized by Europeans, are not taken into the white people's confidence...The would-be menders of Native languages very truthfully tell their public that for half-a-century there has been argument and controversy of the spelling of this language; but the learned gentlemen forget to mention that these differences and controversies raged mainly among Europeans, and that educated Natives—Bechuana, Bapedi and Basuto—never had a difference of opinion as to the direction in which to modify the missionary spelling so as to make it give the clearest and most expression to the idioms of their mother tongue; and that, while Natives, without conferences, without arguments and controversies, wrote these three languages in the same readable orthography, outsiders chose to influence the Education Departments to ignore the correct Sechuana spelling in favour of discordant Se-Ruti versions so as to create an artificial problem—as a subject for a series of conferences (Plaatje 1996:419-420).

The spelling controversy, we gather from Plaatje's scathing remarks, was far from over. In fact, it continued even after his death. Plaatje died on June 19, 1932 with the controversy unresolved. His death is symbolic of his defeat and escape from the struggle. The posthumous publication of his translation of *Julius Caesar* by the University of the Witwatersrand, an example of academic institutions to which Professors Doke and Lestrade (Plaatje's university experts)--the editor and sanitizer of this rendition respectively--belonged marks the celebration and victory of the "discordant Se-Ruti" over what Plaatje believed to be the appropriate orthography of his language. With Plaatje dead, little opposition was expected. Thus colonialist discourses ultimately assert their dominance.

From this discussion we can appreciate Plaatje's concerns, reactions and feelings towards the orthography debacle. Plaatje was in principle in favour of orthographic reforms. The academic interest in the issue promised scholarly attention to his language, thus rescuing it from previous academic neglect (Willan 1984:343). What Plaatje loathed was the manner in which these reforms were to be implemented and the philosophy informing such implementation. As we have seen, he vehemently opposed the conscious neglect of informed native opinion, and the reasons for that are to be found in his general political philosophy of equality.

With this background, let me illustrate the deployment of *Diphoshophosho* as a weapon in the orthographic debate. The first and perhaps the most important issue raised in the Introduction is the statement of the problem, namely the description of the then orthography situation of Setswana. The problem consisted in the lack of "a standard orthography." Various missionary societies had adopted varying orthographies of the same language, and this resulted in "confusion among its native speakers" (Plaatje 1996:381). Even more problematic, was the apparent consensus among the missionary orthographies of not using the consonant "j". In a letter to the Registrar, University of the Witwatersrand on "Setswana Researches", Plaatje described in part the problem with missionary orthography as follows:

> One trouble of the missionary spelling is that it makes no distinction between the "j" and "y" sounds. Discarding the "j" entirely missionaries used the "y" to express both its own and the "j" sounds. The resulting ambiguities are often awkward, as for instance '*njaleld*'(give me some seed) and '*nyalela*'(marry my daughter). Missionaries write these words alike (Plaatje 1996:380).

The lack of distinction between the "j" and "y" sounds brings about problems in meanings. Hence it is not difficult to understand why missionary orthography was deemed inadequate and therefore in urgent need of correction and expansion.

Diphoshophosho was therefore a powerful means to an end. He deployed it to disseminate his preferred variant of the orthography, and it is not difficult to appreciate how in Schalkwyk's words,

> Shakespeare seemed to Plaatje to be a resource to be mobilized in his struggle to display and preserve the richness of Tswana language and culture (1999:25, *cf.* Schalkwyk and Lapula 2000).

What then did Plaatje's preferred variant seek to achieve? On the whole, it sought to expand the Roman alphabet system, because in his view, the twenty-six-letter system was "insufficient for Setswana." He therefore borrowed from the International Phonetic Alphabet letters which I shall mention in due course. But first let me address Plaatje's familiarity with the International Phonetic Alphabet, to underscore—contrary to Lestrade's earlier remark—the "expert" and scientific foundation of Plaatje's variant.

His contact with the system is deeply embedded in his political career, in particular his numerous travels as part of the SANNC overseas deputation. During his first visit to England Plaatje had the opportunity of visiting "the Phonetics Department of University College, London, where Mr Daniel Jones was conducting a class" (Plaatje 1996:220). This visit gave Plaatje the "acquaintance" with phonetics. In his usual upbeat manner he wrote,

> After some exercises I gave the students a few Sechuana sentences, which Mr Jones wrote phonetically on the blackboard. The result was to me astonishing. I saw some English ladies, who knew nothing of Sechuana, look at the blackboard and read those phrases aloud without the trace of European accent. The sentences included the familiar question...and *it was as if I heard the question put by Bahurutshe women on the banks of the Marico River.* I felt at once what a blessing it would be if missionaries were acquainted with phonetics. They would then be able to reproduce not only the sounds of the language, but also the tones, with accuracy. Their congregations will be spared the infliction, only too frequent at the present time, of listening to wrong words, some of them obscene, proceeding from the mouth of the preacher in place of those which he has in mind (which have similar conventional spellings but different tones) (Plaatje 1996:220-221)[emphasis mine].

The result of Plaatje's collaboration with Jones was the publication in 1916 of *A Sechuana Reader*, being "a collection of readings, mostly Tswana fables and folk-tales, reproduced

in Setswana (using the International Phonetic Alphabet), and with both literal and free translations into English" (Plaatje 1996:220).

For Plaatje, the panacea to the orthography problem lay in phonetics. In an obvious way, his implacable resistance to the proposed orthography was far from being that of a frustrated native wanting to pronounce on matters beyond his 'expertise', but rather an informed opposition which has a basis in the very science the university professors were using to design schemes for ignorant natives. However, Plaatje forgot that science is subject to political manipulation.

The letters Plaatje borrows are "ŋ" and "ɛ". As he writes in the Introduction, these letters are not strange as they "are very similar to existing Roman ones" and so no "readers will be taken aback when they see them" (Plaatje 1996:383). The value of these letters lies in their semantic distinction between homonyms such as "*mme*/but" and "*mmɛ*/mother" and "*serethe*/butter" and "*serɛthɛ*/heel" (Plaatje 1996:383).

Finally, Plaatje's variant also adds the letter 'j' to the missionary alphabet to make substantial semantic distinctions to a number of words. In his words,

> In this book we have added the letter 'j' to the missionary alphabet, so that we can distinguish words such as *nyalela* (marry my daughter) and *njalela* (give me some seed/plant for me). Had we not done this, readers would misunderstand Antifoluse when he said to his younger brother, '*U njetse tinare*'/'You have partaken of my dinner', and would think he was using vulgar language, when in fact he was not (Plaatje 1996:383).

It is clear from this discussion that Plaatje's presence is felt in his appropriation of Shakespeare's drama in one of his long and protracted battles of his career, as he uses it to address the spelling problem of his language. Evident from this appropriation is the statement of the problem with which the Introduction opens and the subsequent solutions he provides. Clearly, translation encompasses uses for which the original was not necessarily intended.

Translation and Leadership.

Plaatje's despondency with what he presumed to be his people for their lack of support for his projects, is one of the many uses to which he appropriates Shakespeare's drama.

He expresses his attack on the Batswana through the metaphoric language of proverbs. Before examining this attack, the following remarks on the relationship between the elite—to which Plaatje belonged—and the people for whom the elite spoke, are necessary to create a foundation on which to appreciate not only Plaatje's outrage, but the complexity of that relationship as well. I suggest that Plaatje is partially blind to the dynamics of this relationship, thereby making him place the blame squarely on his audience as lazy and not serious about the status of their language and culture. This foundation will also illuminate the development of Plaatje's frustrations, culminating in the leadership debate of the 1920s.

Often the connection between the modern leader and the led is not clear in a society where at least two forms of leadership are in existence: the traditional and the modern. Plaatje's modern leadership traces its origin to Kimberley. Let us recall from chapter two that Plaatje's journey to Kimberley to take up a job as messenger with the post-office, landed him amongst a group of Africans, known as the African intelligentsia. The group had several ambitions other than wanting to prove that Africans are worthy of the privileges the political and legal institutions of the Cape Colony offered. As Willan tells us,

> their personal ambitions were tempered by an often deeply felt sense of responsibility towards their own societies as well, towards the people they had left behind, as it were, and whose interests they claimed to serve and to represent (1984:34).

Willan's remarks point to some of the inherent problems in this leadership, particularly when contrasted to chiefly rule. Several questions are hinted at by these remarks: does this new leadership have the mandate from the people they want to lead; do they know their people's interests; does their education not create a gulf between them and their less educated countrymen; what is the organic relationship between the new leadership and its people? These questions problematize this kind of leadership and point to its failure and frustrations. Willan notes this inherent danger:

> For some it appeared as a contradictory and at times confusing responsibility. On the one hand they were faced with constant pressures to reject and disown many of the features of their own societies in order to 'prove' their worthiness of entitlement to equal treatment with whites. On the other, there was sometimes widespread suspicion of them on the part of their less well-educated countrymen for appearing to do precisely this; it was not always easy to find the right course to steer, socially or psychologically (1984:34).

The African intelligentsia is therefore caught between two worlds, capable of identifying with what they thought to be their people on the one hand, and aspiring to middle class values to which their education qualified them on the other. This confers on them a split identity (see Distiller 2003 for detailed discussion).

While Willan imagines that among the Kimberley group such tensions were not a problem, the difficulty of finding the right course to steer is a foreshadowing of what was to come given the on-going political changes. To illustrate Willan's observations, let me mention that the Christian faith of the intelligentsia puts them in conflict with some of the cultural practices of their people. Plaatje's unsympathetic remarks on *bogwera* or boy initiation illustrate this:

> In some pity we record *that during this, the fourth month of the third year of the twentieth century,* the Barolong have revived the *ancient circumcision rites which had long since gone down beneath the silent prayer of Christian civilisation.* Scores of young men have during the week been *taken away from their profitable occupations into the veld to howl themselves hoarse and submit to severer flogging than is usually inflicted by the judges of the Supreme Court.*
>
> *The fact that in the year A.D. 1903* the sons of Monstioa can safely solemnise *a custom the uselessness of which was discerned by their fathers, and which the rest of Bechuanaland has for years relegated to the despicable relics of past barbarism,* shows that someone has not been doing their duty. A startling state of affairs is that there are still to be found such a large number of *youths who, being accustomed to dress like Europeans and live on three meals every day, and other who have again been living under luxurious circumstances behind shopkeepers' counters and in white men's kitchens, willingly surrender their contentment and volunteer to expose themselves to all kinds of weather, in the open air, besides the thousand and one other tortures forming part of this ceremony, the nature of which ex-pupils of the weird hedonism are not permitted to tell us* (1996:71-73)[emphasis added].

I quote this passage in full because it brings into sharp focus the native intellectual/activist's split identity and its effect on the relationship between the elite and the people they hoped to lead. While Plaatje considers himself a leader of those people for whose interests he stands, the passage reveals him more of a spokesperson for the new culture. Dazzled by the institutions of the new culture, he is a 'translated' and 'dislocated' man whose leadership is bound to be problematic. His enthusiasm for this culture is clearly marked by the language he uses in reference to its institutions and symbols: the enunciation of the period in which this ceremony is being revived makes it an anachronism; "prayer of Christian civilisation"; "profitable occupations"; "judges of the Supreme Court"; "dress like Europeans"; "live on three meals a day"; "luxurious circumstances behind shopkeepers' counters"; "white men's kitchens". This vocabulary

contrasts sharply with the one used to describe the ceremony and its associated activities: "ancient"; "taken away"; "gone down under"; "veld"; "severer flogging"; "uselessness"; "relegated"; "despicable relics"; "barbarism"; "howl"; "submit"; "hoarse"; tortures"; "weird hedonism". The litany of terms, reminiscent of Lakunle's confused adjectives in Soyinka's *The Lion and the Jewel*, reflects Plaatje's contempt for *bogwera* among his people.

It is clear from the passage that the modern leader has a superficial understanding of both his and the foreign culture. He mistakes 'shopkeeper's counters, dressing like Europeans and white men's kitchens' for 'profitable occupations and contentment'. Neither does he understand why people find joy in a custom he calls weird. His conclusions on this custom are based on insufficient information as "ex-pupils are not permitted to tell us". The large number of volunteers belies the presumed "uselessness" of the custom. In fact, he is overwhelmed by this majority, implying that he is out of touch with the reality of what he presumed to be his people. Further, his shock at the revival of this ceremony reveals his assumption that his people had advanced significantly as to do away with such ceremonies. He is therefore shocked to discover that the ceremony has in fact not died out as he thought. More forcefully, it creates a foundation on which later gulfs are to be appreciated. In brief, the passage opens up the ironies of this relationship both in terms of interest, mandate and the general effectiveness of the activist/intellectual's projects.

Reference to Monstioa introduces the other form of leadership. Monstioa, one of the Rolong chiefs, represents traditional leadership based not necessarily on education, but more on heredity. However, let us remember that Plaatje traces his ancestry to several Rolong chiefs, making him straddle both forms of leadership. But while that is so, he, in Starfield's words,

> belonged to a newer, more modern style of leadership emerging among the small, but vocal, educated elite. His schooling and entrance, as a young man, into urban cultural (*sic*) and life made him receptive to the modern style (1991:7).

Reference to Montsioa invites us to assess the relationship between modern and traditional leadership. According to Chanaiwa, "the relationship between the educated elites and the traditional world of chiefs and masses was full of contradictions, ambiguities, and surprises" (1980:27). Modern leaders, despite their education, continued to revere and support chiefly rule for various reasons. Plaatje's association and

correspondence with chiefs Silas Molema and Tshekedi Khama are testimony to this reverence. Plaatje felt that chiefly rule deserves preservation, hence he became the spokesperson of Rolong chiefs. Starfield notes:

> He continued to revere chiefly rule as the backbone of his own and (by extension) every other ethnically-based community. He held that the cultural practices of chiefly rule should be the basis of the new nation and a new nationalism that gave equal respect to all South Africa's ethnic groups (1991:7).

To this extent, the political institution of chiefly rule is commensurate with the democratic principles enshrined in the institutions of the Cape Colony.

The respect and desire to preserve chiefly rule was also motivated by the need for patronage from traditional leaders. Starfield writes.

> The desire to preserve these chief's achievements for posterity was underscored by the new elite's practical dependence on the older leaders. Lack of material affluence rendered some of the new leadership more reliant than others on the resource of chiefs and ethnic communities (1991:8-9).

The birth of *Tsala ea Becoana*, a newspaper Plaatje edited in Kimberley after 1910, must be understood against this background. It was financed by

> a syndicate of wealthy landowners from the Seleka Barolong settlement in Thaba Nchu--most notably Chief J.M. Nyokong, head of the Matlala section of the Seleka; Jeremiah Makgothi, an elder brother of Isaiah (Willan 1984:143*ff*).

The elite's dependence on traditional leadership and the ambiguous relationship between the elite and the people they thought they led, are signs of impending problems. While traditional leadership also faces challenges visited upon it by political and economic changes, modern leadership is more vulnerable because it seems to lack an organic foundation in the lives of the people it hopes to serve. The split identity or bi-cultural nature of its leaders opens them to suspicion. Hence, the elite aligns itself with chiefly rule not only for material support, but also by way of establishing a firmer foundation for its type of leadership. Attacking chiefly rule will therefore amount to the proverbial folly of killing the goose that lays the golden egg or biting the hand that feeds you.

In spite of all these problems and ambiguities, the elite continued to articulate what they felt were the needs of their people. Plaatje, more than many of his colleagues, excelled in this regard. The introduction of the Natives' Land Act and the orthography debate, for example, illustrate vividly Plaatje's excellent leadership on behalf of what he perceived to

be his people. The publication of *Native Life in South Africa* (1916) and *Diphoshophosho* (1930) respectively is 'ocular proof' evidence of his opposition to these two issues and signs of his service to "his people". He was also part of the two deputations sent to England to campaign against the Land Act. On each of these deputations he remained behind to continue the campaign single-handedly.

While differences between the leader and the led seemed inevitable, matters came to a head after the second deputation. Remaining behind to continue the campaign as far afield as Canada and the USA, Plaatje returned in 1923 to a changed South Africa in which his influence had been swept from under his feet. His family was living on close to nothing, the congress, was in Willan's words, "dead", constitutional means of addressing grievances were now replaced by the militancy of working classes (what he disapprovingly called the "black Bolsheviks of Johannesburg" 1996:237), he had been displaced in his brotherhood movement, the *Tsala ea Batho* printing press had been sold, and new political alliances had been formed. Willan's characteristic reference to him as "a leader without a people" (1984:294*ff*), is a fitting label. So the leadership to which Plaatje had committed himself and dedicated his life, was waning and could no longer pretend to be anything but precarious.

As Willan tells us, during this time Plaatje focused his efforts on other ventures to earn a living. He contributed to other papers such as *Umteteli ua Bantu*, continued with his political campaigns but not as before, and was involved in temperance work, which he felt was a basis for self-upliftment. Increasingly he felt alienated and disillusioned with "his people" (1984:294*ff*). One of the issues on which he wrote, a topical one at the time, was the question of leadership. In 1925 he came to the conclusion that "Natives recognized only one form of leadership--the hereditary chiefs--and no other" (1996:347). About three years later he wrote:

> It would be impossible for any one to lead a train that is disinclined to follow. Natives as a race recognize only one leader, namely, their hereditary prince; and there being so many chiefs, all independent of one another, individual leadership even by one of royal blood, is impracticable. *A man may be a genius but the Native population will regard him very much like a clever actor on the stage--to be admired, not followed.* This admiration--like the popularity of a new jazz tune-will last until its novelty has worn off, when the people look for fresh excitement in the shape of a different 'leader'. But, be he ever so faithful and self-sacrificing, they will desert him at the first sound of the call of the tribal chief, even if the latter implied nothing but a tribal chief and clannish tyranny.

> I have always forestalled this fickleness by declining any position they offered me, such as the presidency of the Native Congress, preferring to serve-not lead-the sufferers among them, whose name is legion, and let the rest take care of themselves. The failure is not on the part of the leaders of whom we have had several of outstanding ability; the fault lies with the Native masses who by nature object to follow one who is not their tribal chief (in Willan 1984:317)[emphasis added].

Clear from this passage is a deep sense of frustration as a result of betrayal by the people he thinks he has given everything. We can also detect subtle bitterness towards tribal authority and its tyrannical hold on the people. Plaatje registers his frustrations with tribal authority for its delayed and rather unenthusiastic assistance (if any) in his projects. But putting the blame squarely on the people, with all the Shakespearean echoes in it, is to miss the finer points of the leadership issue. While Plaatje claims to have studied this matter, he continues to show the same superficial knowledge of "his people" as he did in his attack on initiation. The native's--whoever this is--support of traditional leadership is grounded in the historical foundation which has given society stability and meaning. By endorsing it as we have seen, Plaatje contributed to its entrenchment and continued hold on the people. He fails to appreciate the complexity of his split identity in explaining the problems faced by the black intelligentsia.

The above remarks provide a framework within which to understand Plaatje's frustrations with his Batswana people in their failure to support his political and cultural projects. The leadership issue became topical in the 1920's, years after *Diphoshophosho* was translated. This begs the question of how this translation could be said to participate in the debate. It is not certain where and when this translation was completed. It is probable that it was done during his sea travels between South Africa, England and the USA between 1917 and 1920. In a letter dated 19 December 1920 to Dr. Du Bois, Plaatje informs him in part that

> I have with me translations of Shakespeare's 'Merchant of Venice' and 'Julius Caesar' and 'Comedy of Errors' which will be very readable to the South African Natives (in Willan 1984:262).

The point to underscore is that the leadership issue was not an *event* of the 1920's, but a process that has its roots in the initial stages of adopting symbols and institutions of western modernity such as education, urbanisation, and the emergence of an urbanised, indigenous class of intellectuals/activists. The 1920 debate on leadership was therefore a culmination of a long and complex process. Let us remember that 'prior' to translating

The Comedy, or any Shakespearean text for that matter, Plaatje had already been overseas, from where he wrote desperately to his people appealing for financial assistance (see for example Willan 1984:184). His frustration with his people's lack of support is for example evident in a letter to Chief Lekoko dated 12 December 1914.

> Please help Morolong. I sometimes even regret having ever come here all the way from home to these foreign countries...I am in very difficult situation, and it seems to worsen every day...Please help me my Chief, before I go even deeper beyond redemption (in Willan 1984:184).

Clearly, by the time of *Diphoshophosho*, Plaatje was sufficiently despondent with the Batswana's general lack of support for his projects.

The Batswana to whom Plaatje dedicated his career, did not contribute (not even to loan him the money) to the printing costs of *Diphoshophosho* and other books, and this is a window into the problematic relationship between modern leaders and the people they lead. Plaatje viewed it as something of a scandal that "a foreigner, who could not even speak Setswana, had contributed money towards the printing of the manuscript" (Plaatje 1996:384). In the Introduction to the translation Plaatje voices his frustration and bitterness thus:

> *Bongoma jo bo kalo, joa go rata go direloa fela jaka nama (le fa thipa e bile ele ea bone) ke jeone bo kganelang coelelo-pele ea Becoana (*Plaatje 1930:iii*).*

Literally he is saying

> Batswana are very lazy, always wanting everything to be done for them like meat (even if the knife belongs to them). It is too much laziness that has prevented Batswana from progressing.

Willan's English translation "the lack of self-reliance on the part of Batswana is what is responsible for their backwardness" (1996:384), lacks punch and venom because it ignores the materiality of proverbs in Plaatje, for the venomous part of his attack is a proverbial expression: "*A u tla direloa fela u se nama*?/Are you going to be served (up) just like meat?/Do pigeons fly ready roasted into one's mouth?" (Plaatje 1916:20). Plaatje wishes to express in the most forceful way the dependency syndrome of his people. To appreciate Plaatje's scathing attack, it is necessary to pay close attention to his figurative language. This will also illustrate the richness of his language as a literary medium.

On the surface, the grammar of the Setswana version seems senseless, especially the statement in parathensis. "*Bone*" is a second or third person plural pronoun "them". The

reader might have expected the pronoun to be "*yone*/it" in order to agree with "*nama*/meat" to read "*lefa thipa e bile ele ea yone*/even when the knife belongs to it/to the meat". Plaatje shifts from the singular pronoun "*yone*/it" to the plural "*bone*/them", thus specifying the object of his attack. That is, if the singular pronoun was subtler and indirect in its reference, the plural is more direct. Two images stand out, 'meat' and 'knife'. Meat conjures associations of inactivity, lifelessness, and helplessness even in the face of available resources. It is therefore an appropriate metaphor for laziness. The knife invokes associations of sharpness, incisiveness, a tool or technology of survival, defence, and self-advancement. The two images imply that the meat (Batswana) cannot prepare itself even when it/they have the knife/resource or technology to do so. The Batswana are therefore so lazy and dependent that even with the technologies of self-advancement at their disposal, they fail to utilize them. The technology of the knife points to Plaatje (and his completed translation of Shakespeare's play) whose expertise on matters of language and literature, politics, oratory, equals the sharpness and incisiveness of a knife. The knife is therefore a metaphor of the modern leaders who are frustrated by the very people they want to serve, because this constituency (un)consciously fails to utilize available and informed native opinion on matters pertinent to their problems. In short, they 'refuse' to be guided. The imagery therefore conveys a great sense of frustration and despair. To Plaatje and others, this is a matter of grave concern because by failing to utilize available resources for self-advancement, the natives are playing dangerously into the hands of racist opinion, which, as seen earlier, maintains that natives know nothing and so schemes have to be devised for them. Therefore, they will be openly endorsing their disenfranchisement, and this is contrary to Plaatje's vision of a society of equals. Plaatje also fears that the sense of pride he is generating in his people will come to nought and thereby moral degeneration of his society will continue unabated. He therefore seeks to continue to empower his people by using the proverb form as a means of critiquing them.

The Batswana's cavalier attitude towards their language is perhaps demonstrated more poignantly by the old man whom Plaatje and his friend Ramoshoana approached for help over a puzzling Setswana language matter. The old man's question to the duo makes the point.

> What is it that you gain from your witchery, that after long and tedious journeys by train and lorry, you still spend sleepless nights with the lights on, working

> tirelessly on your books, when the rest of the people are asleep? (Plaatje 1996:385).

Ramoshoana's rejoinder is an appropriate justification for the labour

> There are presently about 300 African languages which have their own printed books. If I were to die having translated one of Shakespeare's plays into Setswana I shall rest in peace, because I will have done something for you (Plaatje 1996:385).

These passages are a forceful reminder of the tension between oral and print cultures. While the elite continues to revere and be fascinated by print culture and modernity, the old are sceptical about this "witchery". The metaphor of "witchery" implies power, mystery, fear, temptation and suspicion. To think that the old man represents the elite's potential readership and beneficiary, we can begin to appreciate the benign neglect Plaatje's translations have suffered. These passages also reflect the tension between modern leadership and the led and more significantly, the potential failure of the schemes the leadership hopes will uplift their constituency. In brief, the old man's remarks undermine the effectiveness of Plaatje's (elite) projects. By concentrating solely on linguistic and cultural matters, Plaatje ignores real issues of power and economics as we saw in his attack on socialism and embrace of capital.

This discussion has demonstrated how Plaatje appropriates Shakespeare's text in his direct attack on "his people" for not supporting his cultural and political schemes. With this attack he hopes to garner their support by bringing them back on the "path of righteousness". In the next section, I illustrate how Plaatje's transformation or re-writing of the original seeks to inspire his readers to rally behind his schemes.

Translation as Re-writing: Evaluation of *Diphoshophosho.*

The discussion of *Diphoshophosho* has up to this point centred around the notion of transformation. The introduction and contextualisation of proverbs where none existed in the original, the appropriation of the text to preserve language, disseminate its "appropriate" orthography, and to deal with personal frustrations, suggest a conscious process of re-writing and transformation to produce an "original". This section examines the outcome of Plaatje's translation. In brief, I attempt answers to the questions of what is the outcome of Plaatje's rendition; is it different from Shakespeare's, and if different why?

This assessment comes against the background of Plaatje's insistence during his court interpretation days, on the accuracy of translation as the basis for the dispensation of "substantial justice". In his words:

> To add anything from the interpreter's own knowledge that would lead the court to liberate an unfortunate prisoner is as bad as the other way about it...Additions by an interpreter to secure the discharge of a prisoner are as deplorable as incomplete translations by which the innocent suffer (1996:57).

The evaluation of *Diphoshophosho* threatens to undermine Plaatje's otherwise noble insistence on accurate translations. A cursory glance at the translation reveals that Plaatje transformed the play in several ways. This is to be expected because literary translation is imaginative.

Let us examine some of Plaatje's specific incidents of transformation and the possible ideological reasons for such re-writings. The title page is an appropriate point of departure. The general heading "***MABOLELO A GA TSIKINYA-CHAKA***/The Sayings of William Shakespeare" is the first sign of Plaatje's transformation of the original. Referring to Shakespeare's dramas as a series of 'sayings', speeches or a collection of wise statements on a variety of subjects, presents us with a potential problem in which the dramas are wrenched from theatre and performance into a series of speeches or utterances to be read and told. This poses a series of questions: is there any difference between drama and narrative; what is the effect of transforming dramas into narratives; and even more important to this study, what does Plaatje seek to achieve by this transformation? Answers to these questions open up a Pandora's box. Tentative answers are worth attempting nevertheless.

To begin with, performance and narrative are two complimentary forms of human interaction deployed in different contexts. Plaatje recognizes the difference between drama and narrative, and wants it appreciated. Recall that his world of equivalents is predicated on the recognition of differences as well. For Plaatje and his people, the story seems to be the superior oral form under which performance falls. As previously noted, among Plaatje's people, Shakespeare was regarded as a good story-teller/speaker, "the white man who spoke so well" and therefore "a reliable white oracle" (Plaatje 1996:211). Consequently for Plaatje, Shakespeare's dramas are stories, or at least have foundations in stories. If not, they have to be transformed into the story form or sayings with which

Plaatje's people are familiar in order for them to appreciate their (dramas) power and charm.

Plaatje's perception of Shakespeare's dramas as sayings takes on political significance. The theatre, in which Plaatje first saw the performance of *Hamlet*, and which became the basis for his fascination with Shakespeare, was a largely inaccessible architectural space for most of his Batswana people. To succeed in sharing with his people his experience of Shakespeare, it was necessary to transform the dramas from a largely theatrical material to the more accessible form of something to be read and told outside the theatre. Such a move has political connotations which run counter to the remarks in the press around the time of *Hamlet*'s performance. Outside the theatre, Shakespeare's dramas seem degraded.

In turning these dramas into material to be read or told, Plaatje had to contend with high levels of illiteracy among his people. The educated chieftains, one of whom translated Shakespeare's name into the vernacular as 'Tsikinya-Chaka', could assist in disseminating Shakespeare to their people through paraphrases and quotations. After all, Shakespeare was to them 'a white oracle, the white man who spoke so well'. The idea of sayings is therefore a helpful tool of mediation. Educated or literate youth will also transmit Shakespeare to their parents. This is accomplishable, as Plaatje himself used to read news to groups of men sowing karosses, implying that the old trade and new culture can co-exist after all. Finally, literate natives will read Shakespeare's sayings for themselves. Plaatje's perception of Shakespeare as sayings is not a new phenomenon. David Schalkwyk pointed out to me that Shakespeare's contemporaries lifted pertinent statements/'sayings' from his works and wrote them into commonplace books.

Through the notion of sayings, Plaatje anticipated an exponential growth in literacy with the consequent growth in readership. This would mean that Shakespeare could be read and enjoyed without necessarily going to the theatre, as is the case in many academic departments. More than seventy years later, Plaatje's anticipations seem to be confirmed. It remains to be seen how Plaatje's conception of Shakespeare's dramas as stories or sayings contributed to the non-theatrical consumption of his drama. It is equally worth discovering how the notion of sayings or stories could contribute to the teaching of Shakespeare in African schools, colleges and universities. The notion of sayings therefore

provides an alternative means of disseminating and enjoying Shakespeare outside the theatre.

By taking Shakespeare's dramas out of the theatre through the concept of sayings, Plaatje illustrates Johnson's (1996:11) utilitarian position in which Shakespeare is material to be appropriated for "potential use-value". As a corpus of sayings or narratives, Shakespeare is located at the heart of Tswana community life in which, as already evident, narratives are the central mode of human interaction. It is proper to emphasize that this difference is worth appreciating as a basis for inter-cultural dialogue. The educated chieftain who gives him the name Tsikinya-Chaka further establishes him as a citizen among the Batswana where he will interact with local story-tellers or oracles under a system of cultural equivalence and exchange. Reducing Shakespeare from being the symbol of Englishness, Plaatje draws him into a humanist political struggle which, in the proverbial wisdom of the Ila of Zambia, abhors "the pride of a hen's egg". In Bakhtin's terms, Shakespeare is 'lowered' or 'degraded' into Pratt's contact zone.

Other features of the title page illustrate further Plaatje's imposing presence in this text. The general heading of ***MABOLELO*** is followed by the Setswana title ***DIPHOSHOPHOSHO*** with its English rendition *COMEDY OF ERRORS*. Plaatje then indicates that he translated the "sayings" into Setswana. His full name, Sol. T. Plaatje is stated. He then indicates his other publications, namely *Sechuana Proverbs*. Conscious of his task of delineating equivalents, the Setswana title is also given. His postal address is stated, in anticipation of comments, criticisms from his readers. In the collection of proverbs, he appealed "to all students of Sechuana to":

> (a) communicate to him any Sechuana proverbs known to them which are not included in this book; (b) point out errors (if any) in the translations, or wrong readings in the originals; and (c) draw his attention to any European proverbs which would be better equivalents to the corresponding Sechuana proverbs given in this book (1916:ix-x).

All this meticulousness is in recognition of the inherent dialogue and relationships that Plaatje's documents, translations, and compilations are likely to trigger. In fact, Plaatje wanted to engage in such dialogues and relationships with his readers to ensure the success of his projects.

Plaatje's title page lists some of the Shakespearean translations he has completed. These are ***MASHOABI-SHOABI, MATSAPA-TSAPA A LEFELA*** and ***DINCHO-NCHO TSA BO JULIUS KESARA***. No English versions of these titles are provided, and I here provide them: *The Merchant of Venice, Much Ado About Nothing* and *The Tragedy of Julius Caesar* respectively. Following this list is a statement: "*Le Buka tse dingoe gape*" which translates as "And other books". Obviously, the entire title page is a profound self-advertisement and marketing strategy. Plaatje presents himself as a prolific writer, translator, and editor. Readers should therefore not be fooled into thinking that the current translation is his only product. On a sombre note, this page raises the reader's hopes which are nevertheless unfulfilled when the reality dawns that not all of Plaatje's works have survived.

The next page is equally revealing of Plaatje's presence and appropriation of the text. The translation is dedicated to the memory of Arthur Matlhala whom Plaatje describes as:

> My Colloborator in the Thankless Task of Championing the Cause of the Non-European People in the Union of South Africa.
> A Loyal Friend
> A Splendid Cricketer
> And an able Penman
> Who literally died of Over-work (1930:n.p.).

The capitalisation is intended for emphasis. Championing the cause of non-Europeans is indeed a "thankless" and frustrating venture as we saw in the previous section. Arthur Matlhala's skills—sportsman, writer and hard worker—are testimony to the versatility of the African elite. In dedicating this book to this illustrious person, Plaatje further appropriates Shakespeare's text to pay tribute to the work of the elite as they endeavour to improve the lot of "their people". Plaatje perceives himself as doing more than pioneering translation of Shakespeare, to producing something 'new' which he can deploy for purposes that the original was not necessarily intended. While he sees himself as translator by using the Setswana word "*fetolecoe*/translated" on the title page, in the Introduction he uses the word "*koala*/write" in his acknowledgement of the problems he encountered in producing the translation (1930:ii). A scrutiny of the name indexes of Willan's Plaatje biography and his edition of some of Plaatje's writings revealed no such figure as Arthur Matlhala. He is one of Plaatje's friends whom history will forget.

Shakespeare's text is therefore used to immortalise this "friend, cricketer, collaborator and penman".

I dwell on isolating the features of these pages in order to create a basis on which to contrast this translation to the next one. This will highlight Plaatje's "presence/displacement".

Let me examine the structuring of the translation as another illustration of transformation. If translation is a re-writing, re-presentation or even manipulation, then there is an extent to which such a representation is a consequence of a clear understanding of the original's intention. I want to contend as Ramoshoana did, that Plaatje demonstrates his understanding of Shakespeare's play, an understanding that enables him to render it, all the associated problems notwithstanding, into the vernacular. I suggest that the structuring of the translation, a feature that is evident in the Preface as well, illustrates the transformation process in which an original is cannibalized and then re-born (see Bassnett and Trivedi 1999).

In addition to the conventional divisions of dramas into acts and scenes and their associated stage directions, Plaatje introduces additional sections which for want of better terminology I call narrative and semantic units, for this is what they turn out to be. I insist on the phrase 'narrative units' to foreground the fact that this transformation emphasizes reading and not necessarily performance. These units are clearly marked in bold print, and consist of either brief statements, phrases or proverbs to serve at least two related functions: they either state the location or setting where the action within that unit is going to take place, or summarize and comment on the action or major themes of a particular unit.

In all there are seventeen of these units functioning as signposts of what is to be expected. This figure consists of four proverbs, six or seven locatives and six explanatory phrases: ***MO TLUNG EA KGOSI*** (1-2)/In the Duke's house; ***MAFOKO A MOSEKISIOA*** (2-6)/The accused's words; ***MO LOBATLENG*** (6-7)/In the open space; ***TSHIMOLOGO EA DIPHOSHOPHOSHO*** (7-9)/Beginning of mistakes upon mistakes; ***MO MARAKENG*** (9-10)/At he market; ***DICHOANG-CHOANG DI***

EA THOTENG DI SA BAPA (11-13)/Like birds do not flock together; ***KO GOORA ANTIFOLUSE OA EFESE*** (13)/At Antipholus of Ephesus's place; ***GA TLHAKA-TLHAKANA GAPE*** (13-16)/Mix-up-mix up once more; ***DITLHALE-TLHALE TSA LOBOA DI BONANA MONOKO-PELE*** (16-22)/Familiarity breeds contempt; ***MO FIFING GO SA CHORAGANOA KA DIKOBO*** (22-27)/In the dark you hold each other by the blankets; ***MARU A TLOGA, A DUMA KA DITHATLA*** (27-30)/Clouds rise and rumble; ***MAOELANA A SANTSE A TSHELEPANA A GAKISA BEN-GAE MAFOKO*** (30-35)/Twins continue to miss one another and confuse citizens; ***KO GAE*** (30-35)/At home; ***MARARANG A RARAANELA PELE*** (35-42)/Complications worsen; ***KO BOTSHABELONG*** (42-44)/At the refuge; ***FA PELE GA BA MAFATLA*** (44-48)/In front of twins and ***MALA A NKU A TLA KA BOGAMO*** (48-52)/The proof of the pudding is in the eating. These units are not discrete, but complement one another in various ways to sharpen characterization, language, plot and themes. I will select three, provide possible translations and short annotations of what they signify. I then suggest the possible ideological underpinnings of this structuring.

Unit one ***MO TLUNG EA KGOSI*** (1-2)/IN THE DUKE'S HOUSE is locative, and is followed by ***MAFOKO A MOSEKISOA*** (2-6)/THE ACCUSED'S STATEMENT. This signpost marks the point at which the actual narration of his story begins. Put differently, it marks his answer to the Duke's question regarding "what cause thou camest to Ephesus" (I.1.31). The opening statement "*Ke tsalecoe ko Sirakuse*/In Syracusa (sic) was I born..." marks his mini autobiography. The fourth ***TSHIMOLOGO EA DIPHOSHOPHOSHO*** (7-9)/THE BEGINING OF MISTAKES UPON MISTAKES is explanatory. It marks the beginning of errors upon errors when the Syracusan Antifoluse mistakes the Ephesian Dromio for his servant whom not long ago he dispatched to their lodgings to deposit their money. Dromio mistakes Antifoluse for his master whom he has come to invite to dinner. This heading enables the reader to identify the point at which confusions begin.

Why did Plaatje introduce these units, what did he hope to achieve? Answers to these questions take us back to Plaatje's reasons for translating Shakespeare. Perhaps it is in order to remind ourselves of those reasons. Shole tells us that Plaatje wanted to share with his readers his experience of Shakespeare and to prove Setswana's capacity as a

literary medium capable of expressing complex human thought just as Shakespeare's English did (1990/91:51). Plaatje's literary career was also a response to a paucity of appropriate reading material in Bantu schools, and specifically for young Tswana learners. His letter to the Secretary of De Beers makes the point.

> The Education Departments in all four provinces and also in Basutoland and Bechuanaland insist that, besides the official languages, there should be mother tongue instruction in all Native schools. There is no difficulty as far as the Xhosa and Sesuto classes are concerned...In the Bechuana language, however (the language of Griqualand West, Orange Free State and Bechuanaland up to Southern Rhodesia), there is hardly anything available besides the Bible and the hymn books of the different denominations and our teachers are up against a quandary trying to comply with the new departmental demands (Plaatje 1996:375).

The publication of *Sechuana Proverbs*, *A Sechuana Reader*, *Mhudi* and the translations of Shakespeare is intended to provide the necessary reading material for learners. Whether these books provided the much needed reading and teaching material remains to be investigated.

But why did he offer his books as school readers? Plaatje was already disappointed with his people's failure to support his projects. Consistent with the proverbial philosophy of "*Lore lo ojwa lo sale metse*/bend the twig while it is still green" (Plaatje 1916:53), Plaatje targeted schools as a constituency to be explored in furthering his linguistic and cultural projects. In exploiting this constituency, it was necessary to render reading material accessible to young readers. His experience as a teacher became useful at this point. I suggest that the narrative units in *Diphoshophosho* are intended to aid the comprehension of the story. The locative for example, will guide the learners as to where the action takes place and thereby make them aware of the various settings in the story. The explanatory ones, as "***TSHIMOLOGO EA DIPHOSOPHOSO***/the beginning of mistakes-upon mistakes", identify the point at which the story's confusions begin. Alternatively, these units can guide learners to specific places in the story for clarification. Learners could thus be asked to read particular sections, talk about them before proceeding to the next sections. In a way the sections act as stages through the comprehension of the story. Or they could be considered as mini-stories within a large story. Meanwhile proverbs introduce young learners to rich Tswana oral philosophy. However, the pedagogical effectiveness of these units deserves further inquiry than I

have here provided, because there is a possibility that they could cause confusion to the learners.

By presenting to them the richness of their language via proverbs and folk-tales, the readability of their language via what he perceived to be the most appropriate orthography, and the richness of their culture through the delineation of equivalents and differences to that which Shakespeare wrote about, Plaatje seeks to generate pride in Tswana youth with the hope that they will continue with the struggles he has initiated. In this way, the moral and social degeneration he worried about would be curtailed. Plaatje also wishes to inculcate in them his political vision of a world governed by the universal law of equivalence of languages and cultures. Targeting the youth is therefore a means of dealing with the disenchantment with the elderly people over the question of leadership and their lack of support of his schemes.

It could be suggested that Plaatje had not entirely given up on the elderly section of his audience. The narrative units could also be a means by which the illiterate section of the audience could be aided in appreciating 'Shakespeare's story', or at least Plaatje's reconstituted version of this story. Let us recall that Plaatje read news to groups of old people (1916:5). As previously suggested, the units will serve as small stories within a large story. Similarly, the structure Plaatje introduces promises to: improve literacy by enabling young learners practice as they read to their parents this enjoyable story and give the story currency as they insist on hearing it read to them.

With these remarks, let me end the chapter by looking at some of the literary aspects of the translation. Dromio of Efese's dialogue will serve as an entry point to some of these issues.

> *Ka lecoele ga a ka a ba a tlaila. O le lolamisitse fela a* ***ntlhanya****, jaka motho a itse se o se* ***tlhanyang,*** *gore le nna ke utloaleloe ke* ***tlhanyo*** *ea gagoe. Ka molomo ke gone o ntse a nna a tlaila ka se ka ka ba itse gore o ntse areng. Kea go bolelela, Misisi, mungoaka oa tsenoa. Ga ke ree gore o ja ditlhare ka meno, se se teng fela ga esi. Ke rile kare "tla gae", a nna a re "Chelete eaka e kae?'*
> *Kere, "he dijo di letile", are, "chelete e kae?*
> *Kere, "nama ea gago ea sha"; are "chelete eaka."*
> *Kere kare "tla gae", a nna a re "Chelete eaka e kae," are "Madi a kea go neileng a kae, Molala kooena?'*
> *Kare, "kolojane o shele; are "Chelete eaka e kae?"*

Kare kare, "Misisi, o go letile", a re "Misisi oa gagu, tsamaea ga ke mo itse, ga ke na ntlo, ga ke na mosadi." (1930:11).

The literal translation of this passage will be:

> With his fist he was not joking. He perfectly struck me like somebody who knew what he was striking, so that I also felt his strike. With his mouth he was joking so that I scarcely knew what he was saying. I tell you Madam/Miss, my master is mad. I do not mean he is chopping trees with his teeth (to go mad), the truth is, he is not alone. I tried telling him "Come home", he kept on saying "where is my money?"
> I said "food is waiting", he said "where is my money?"
> I said "your meat is burning?", he said "my money?"
> I tried saying "come home?", he kept on saying "where is my money?", he said "the money I gave you, where is it, you slave?".
> I said, "the piglet is burnt", he said "my money, where is it?"
> I tried saying "Madam is waiting", he said, "your madam, go I don't know her, I don't have a house, I don't have a wife".

The English version is:

> Nay, he struck so plainly I could too well feel his blows, and withal so doubtfully that I could scarce understand them. Why, mistress, sure my master is horn-mad.
> I mean not cuckold-mad, But sure he is stark mad.
> When I desired him to come home to dinner
> He asked me for a thousand marks in gold.
> ''Tis dinner-time,' quoth I. 'My gold,' quoth he.
> 'Your meat doth burn,' quoth I. 'My gold,' quoth he.
> 'Will you come?' quoth I. 'My gold,' quoth he.
> 'Where is the thousand marks I gave thee, villain?'
> 'The pig', quoth I, 'is burned.' 'My gold,' quoth he.
> 'My mistress, sir-' quoth I- 'Hang up thy mistress!
> I know not thy mistress. Out on thy mistress!' (II.1.52-68).

Plaatje introduces aspects of his culture in rendering English concepts to his readers. The notion of madness, in particular "cuckold mad" invites the Setswana idiom of "*go ja ditlhare ka meno*/chopping/cutting trees with teeth". It is not clear why Plaatje does not incorporate the kind of madness occasioned by being cuckolded. He is therefore re-writing for his own purposes. These purposes include the preservation and contextualisation of Setswna idioms.

The passage also illustrates the master-servant relationship, a matter of great significance in Plaatje's political concerns and on whose basis Shakespeare's play was partly translatable. While the passage's dialogism is obvious and need not detain us, we need to note the sociological context the passage invokes for our appreciation of its meaning. Plaatje's opens with a response to Luciana's question (assigned to Adriana in the

translation) as to whether the master spoke clearly for Dromio to comprehend. Dromio's response isolates two modes of communication between master and servant: verbal and violent, symbolized by the mouth (***molomo***) and fist (***lecoele***) respectively. Shakespeare's fictional world found parallels in Plaatje's South Africa. By emphasizing that his master struck him and therefore did not jest, Dromio highlights the violence of the master-servant relationship. The pun ***(ntlhanya, tlhanyang, tlhanyo***—to strike, striking and strike respectively) serves several functions. Frist, it shows Plaatje's attempt to retain the original's stylistic features while at the same time showing his own language's capacity to produce its own. Secondly, the pun is an emphasis on the violence that sometimes characterizes the master-servant relationship. Being onomatopoeic, the pun recreates the sound of blows, in particular that of a slap on one's cheek. The use of fists, Dromio suggests, is not sport/jest but pure violence. However, in the comic spirit of the play, this violence is temporary. But for Plaatje, this was probably a Trojan horse by which he dealt with similar treatment of the under-privileged in his South Africa. In assigning this long monologue to a servant, Plaatje allows serfs, just as Shakespeare did, a platform on which to make their plight (in vain) known. It is probable that Plaatje casts himself into a Dromio who champions the cause of the underprivileged. Through Dromio, Plaatje addresses the unfair and sometimes cruel treatment of malata. However, his silence over bolata reflects an ambivalent attitude towards the question of slavery among the Batswana, and therefore renders the serf's appeal for fair treatment ineffectual.

Plaatje's translation also abounds with other features worth mentioning. For example, Plaatje borrows words from other languages such as Zulu, Xhosa and English. Such borrowings remind us of his linguistic versatility as well as of the linguistic diversity of his society. Here are examples:

> *Bathakgathi* (p.26)---witches (Zulu)
> *Buti* (p.22)---brother (Xhosa)

Plaatje is therefore carrying out multiple translations between Setswana, Zulu, English and Xhosa. This should remind us of the re-translations and cross translations of court interpretation.

Some borrowed words are phonologically adapted, and have become part of Setswana vocabulary and are commonly used to date.

Konstabule (p.29)---constable
Misisi (p.7)---Miss
Kreste (p.8)---Christ
Sikispence (p.7)---sixpence
Mohaitane (p.8)---heathen
Diheleng (p.16)---hell.

Retaining these words in the translation is consistent with Plaatje's political vision of linguistic co-existence and complimentarity. Similarly, it is a confirmation that languages do supplement one another and no language can achieve its intentions without the others (Cheyfitz 1997:134*ff*). It is therefore logical that languages should borrow from one another. Finally, retaining these words enables Plaatje to show his readers the social contexts from which these words are derived. For example, while constable can be the equivalent of a Tswana chief's messenger, it should not be lost to the reader that it refers to a particular rank within a specific policing and law enforcement system.

The phonological adaptation of words is extended to place and character names, thus reproducing certain poetic features of the original. Alliteration, the repetition of particular consonants, is one feature that Plaatje's phonological adaptation retains. Examples include *Antifoluse*/Antipholus, *Sirakuse*/Syracuse, *Silonuse*/Solinus and *Efese, Efesuse*/Ephesus. The sibilant 's' is retained, and continues to give these words the hissing sound.

Plaatje's translation also reveals a great deal of creativity and imagination. For example, a police officer is referred to as "*nca ea molao* (p.27)/dog of law/messenger", and the expected death of Egeon is rendered in highly imaginative idiom as "*dinca tsa Moshata di be di mo latlha* (p.23)/the dogs of the town will bury him/state messengers will inter him", implying that he will have been killed. The concept of lateness in Luce's "Faith, no, he comes too late" (III.1.48) attracts the following proverbial expression: "*o di tlhaoletse di bekeroe* (p.19)/separating the rams from the ewes when they have already mated/locking the stable door when the steed is stolen" (Plaatje 1916:80). Rams and ewes allude to the economic and social modes of production of the Batswana. Plaatje thus seeks to make this story as close as possible to his readers.

This creativity is extended to the names of characters. The Courtesan is rendered as *Ma-Noko/Mma-Noko.* Obviously this is a transformation of the English name. It is not certain what Plaatje intended. *Noko* is porcupine and "*Ma*/mother or mrs", to read as *Mrs Noko* or *Mother Noko.* It is safe to assume that he is alluding to the adulterous story of the Noko and Poe women who stole each other's husband (*Mhudi*, 122*ff*). By alluding to this story, Plaatje enables his readers to appreciate the concept of courtesan. The reader is further enabled to appreciate the Courtesan's moral dilemma and her use of the proverb "*go lelela kgama le mogogoro*" in resolving this conflict. The name *Ma-Noko* acts as a summary of this adulterous story.

Plaatje's further attempts to transform English names earn Shole's, Doke's and Lestrade's disapproval. Dromio's "Maud, Bridget, Marian, Cicely, Gillan, Ginn" (III.1.31) becomes "*Dikeledi, Madipodi, Mosadi-oa-marope, Makomana, Kegomodicoe, bulelang kgosi ke e e gorogile*" (p.18)/Dikeledi…open for the king he has arrived". Shole complains:

> At times his freedom reaches ridiculous extremes…Dromio wa Efeso shouts comical Setswana names of female servants in place of the English names, but we cannot imagine Batswana girls in the world of Ephesians, Dromios and Antipholuses. The audience would enjoy this as a practical joke, but the names do not suit the milieu and the original ones should have been retained (1990/91:60).

Shole's remarks notwithstanding, Plaatje continues his search for equivalents between European and Setswana names. In *Sechuana Proverbs,* he translates English/European names into Setswana. Except for Marian whose Setswana equivalent is *Madipudi*, the other names do not appear on his lists. He thus uses familiar Setswana names to match the originals which he fails to translate: "*Dikeledi*/Drusilla"; "*Kegomodicoe*/Naomi"; "*Makomana*/Melicent" (1916:10). Plaatje's translation also reveals how he re-arranges the original's word order by adding details. He is not content with merely translating or reproducing the names of female servants without stating why their names are being shouted. He therefore adds the phrase: "*bulelang kgosi ke e e gorogile*/open the door for the king he has arrived" as the reason for shouting the names.

Two more examples will illustrate Plaatje's re-arrangement of the original's word order. Part of Balthasar's speech reads:

> Be ruled by me. Depart in patience,
> And let us to the Tiger all to dinner,
> And about evening come yourself alone

To know the reason of this strange restraint.
If by a strong hand you offer to break in
Now in the stirring passage of the day,
A vulgar comment will be made of it,
And that supposed by the common rout
Against your yet ungalled estimation
That may with foul intrusion enter in
And dwell upon your grave when you are dead (III.1.94-104)

This is rendered as:

> ***A re tsamae ka bonolo re ee ja ko oteleng,*** *me etlare maitseboa a go kanololele bokae le bocang joa madiridiri a nako e. Ja u ka thuba secoalo mongoa me,* ***batho ba loleme ba tla gasagasa leina ja gago ba gu balabalele ka dipalabalo tse di tla gu silafatsang, tshila*** *di be di ee go* ***leshoefatsa*** *lorole loa phuphu ya gago...* ***Tlogela re ee go ja ko oteleng dilo di tla sala di siama*** (p.21).

The translation produces its own punning as a rhetorical strategy to convince Antipholus not to break into his house. "*Batho ba loleme*/people have a tongue/people gossip", "*gasagasa*/broadcast/spread carelessly and maliciously", "*balabalele*/ to gossip", "*dipalabalo*/gossips", "*silafatsang*/to dirty/ to soil", "*tshila*/dirt" and "*leshoefatsa*/to spoil/make dirt/to soil/tarnish", are rhetorical "ammunition" with which Balthasar "defeats", "conquers" or prevails on the young Antipholus to protect his reputation. The punning is dramatic, forceful and persuasive. The initial request "*a re tsamae ka bonolo re ee go ja ko oteleng*/depart in patience..." is repeated "*tlogela re ee go ja ko oteleng dilo di tla sala di siama*/let us go to dine at the hotel and things will settle down" to conclude this eloquent speech. Antipholus can only respond by saying "*o mphentse*/you have defeated me". The rhetorical effectiveness of this speech is also enhanced by the use of terms of endearment as "*mongoa me*/my master". Besides placating and flattering Antipholus, this example also emphasizes the power relations between the two.

Plaatje also retains the comedy of the original by using local colloquialisms. The idiom "*semene mpona* (p.9)/bent back, save me" as the equivalent of the original's "I 'll take to my heels"(I.2.94). "*Semene/semenya*" refers to a body posture in which the body is not straight. "*Mpona*" is "see me". A bent back emphasizes the sudden rush and speed at which the person is running away from trouble as in Dromio's case. Plaatje could have translated the original as "*tlhanola direthe*/turn my heels", but chose the other one to retain the hilarity of the play. The translation of Luciana's "First, he denied you had in him no right" (IV.2.7) is another example:

Pele o latotse **a ba a bidikama,** *a re ga u na dichoanelo dipe tsa bosadi mo go ene* ***le fa ebile ele tse di kana ka nko ea lomao*** (p.31)/First, he denied until he wallowed on the ground, saying you have no marital rights in him, not even as big as the nose of a needle.

Plaatje expands the original by adding phrases: "*a ba a bidikama*/wallow on the ground" and "*le fa ebile tse di kana ka nko ya lomao*/not even as big as the size of the needle's sharp point" to emphasise Antipholus' denial. Besides being dramatic and emphatic, "*bidikama*/wallow on the ground" is also funny and humorous. The addition of details is also evident in the list of characters. Plaatje adds the phrase "*ga ba itsanye*/they do not know each other" to his description of the Antipholus and Dromio pairs. The effect of these details is to emphasise mistaken identities.

The title of the translation illustrates the Setswana language's expressive efficacy. It also serves as an example of what Nida called "the most natural equivalent" (in Shole 1990/91:59). Thus Plaatje's use of the term shows his mastery of both the source and target languages as to be able to render the original in what his vernacular readers would be familiar with. Shole comments.

> Instead of the literal translation of "comedy of errors", something like "*metlae/khomedi ya diphoso*", Plaatje chose a genuine Setswana word meaning "a series of blunders/mistakes upon mistakes" (1990/91:59).

The title is one example among many in which single Setswana words are used in contexts where phrases are used in the original. Not only are these words dramatic and emphatic, but are also "sweet-sounding" and therefore nice to pronounce. Examples include:

Tlhaka-tlhakana (p.13)---complications
Manyobo-nyobo (p.17)---complications
Dikhutsana-khutsana (p.26)---nitty-gritties
Kopa-kopana (p.51)---criss-crossing
Dichoaŋ-choaŋ (p.50)---identical twins
Matsapa-tsapa a kana-kana (p.41)---so much trouble.

Plaatje displays what he always believed to be the rich vocabulary of his language. Some of the words he hoped to reproduce and define in his dictionary.

The preceding discussion has concentrated on the positive aspects of the translation. That is in order because the translation is indeed a successful one, given the conditions of the time and Plaatje's basic formal education. In fact, no other Setswana translation of

The Comedy has appeared to challenge Plaatje's. However, the translation has some flaws, and I agree with Shole that luckily they are minor ones, mostly technicalities which do not adversely diminish its power. These include inconsistencies in spelling, labelling of acts and scenes, detail in stage directions and settings. It is possible that some of these were inherited from his mentor while others could have occurred at the printers. Plaatje did not revise the printed edition of the play because he was energetically involved in getting funds for printing other translations.

Focusing on translatability and language, this chapter set out to illustrate Plaatje's presence in transforming *Diphoshophosho* for his political and cultural struggles. I argued that the delineation of equivalents and differences between Setswana and English as both languages and cultures, reveal according to Plaatje, our shared humanity and therefore a foundation on which his ideal civil society could be anchored. The discussion further illustrated how the translation was deployed specifically in preserving Setswana language and culture through recording and contextualizing proverbs; responding to the orthography debate and dealing with the relationship between him and the people he hoped to speak for. Plaatje also uses the translation to pay homage to a friend and fellow activist whom history is likely to forget. Clearly, Plaatje's product is a refashioned, re-written and reconstituted version of Shakespeare's play, which he intended for specific aims. In Distiller's words, Shakespeare is "South Africanised" (2003:124). Given its length, this play would be cheaper to produce. This could explain why Plaatje seriously sought funds to have it printed. It is also clear why it was the first translation to be printed. Plaatje wanted to accomplish a lot in this translation, hence his imposing presence and experimentation. In the next chapter, I wish to assess the extent to which the political and cultural agenda of *Diphoshophosho* is dis/continued in his translation of *Julius Caesar.*

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Chapter Five: *Dintshontsho Tsa Bo-Juliuse Kesara/Julius Caesar.*

> *In his later career he did outstanding work by translation into Sechuana of several of Shakespeare's plays. Here he blazed a trail of his own in literary work which is destined to affect all South African Bantu literature. The outstanding achievement in this line was his publication of Diphosho-phosho, a remarkably good translation of Shakespeare's Comedy of Errors.* ***Another notable achievement in collaboration with Professor Lestrade, was his translation of Shakespeare's Julius Caesar***---*R.H.W. Shepherd.* [Emphasis added]

> *In the beginning of this century I became a journalist, and when called on to comment on things social, political, or military, I always found inspiration in one of other of Shakespeare's sayings. For instance, in 1910, when Halley's Comet illumined the Southern skies, King Edward VII and two great Bechuana Chiefs—Sebele and Bathoeng—died. I commenced each obituary with Shakespeare's quotation: "When Beggars die there are no comets seen/The heavens themselves blaze forth the death of princes."—Sol Plaatje*

This chapter examines *Dintshontsho Tsa Bo-Juliuse Kesara*, Plaatje's rendition of *Julius Caesar.* Following the previous chapter, I compare and contrast the two translations to assess whether the current translation manifests Plaatje's presence and experimentation we witnessed in *Diphoshophosho.* In other words, by comparing the two translations, I wish to find out whether *Dintshontsho* (dis)continues Plaatje's transformation and appropriation of Shakespeare's dramas in preserving Setswana language and culture; entrenching his preferred orthography; and how all these help him to cultivate his people's pride in their heritage as the launch pad and contribution to his ideal world of human interdependence.

To do so, I proceed as follows. I commence with a delineation of aspects that might have attracted Plaatje to *Julius Caesar*, therefore rendering it translatable. By delineating equivalences and differences, Plaatje wishes to emphasize the unique importance and contribution of each society to the realization of his ideal world. These issues will also illuminate Plaatje's numerous personal translations into a Shakespeare and the general use to which *Julius Caesar* was put in his political and cultural struggles. I will assess the extent to which *Dintshontsho*, like *Diphoshophosho*, is deployed in the orthographic debate and the preservation of proverbial and idiomatic wealth of Setswana. I will wind up the chapter by addressing some of the difficulties this translation presents us, given Lestrade's intervention against the unavailability of Plaatje's manuscript. In short, the structure of this chapter does not depart significantly from that of chapter four. In fact, the structural resemblance will facilitate the comparative and contrastive analysis of the two translations, a legitimate critical enterprise to pursue, considering that the translations appeared at two different times in Plaatje's life, thereby illustrating his

"presence" and or "displacement". Hence, as I will illustrate, they could be seen as representing different ends of Plaatje's translation continuum, and therefore raise significant questions regarding his political and cultural work.

Julius Caesar: Translatability and Plaatje's Presence.

What kind of story is *Julius Caesar*, what is its subject matter; what promise did it hold for Plaatje's political and cultural projects? These questions provide a framework within which to assess the translatability of this play and its utility in Plaatje's struggles. Four issues—history, politics, gender stereotyping and superstition—avail themselves for consideration. As in chapter four, let me begin with a plot summary. Unlike *Diphoshophosho*, *Dintshontsho* does not offer one.

Julius Caesar dramatizes among others the quest for absolute political power, political ambition and conspiracy and their concomitant tragic consequences. When the play opens, Rome is under constant threat of civil war. Caesar, a popular military commander and statesman, has just defeated Pompey's sons in a civil war that has been under way for some years. On Caesar's return from battle, the Plebeians are out on the streets to give him a hero's welcome, to the chagrin of the patricians who fear that Caesar plans to become king or emperor. They are concerned that Caesar's desire to become king and therefore with absolute power, is injurious to republicanism. Their concerns are increased when Mark Antony offers him a crown. Caesar's ascent to power is short lived when a conspiracy against him is hatched by Brutus and other conspirators, under the leadership of Cassius. The plan is to kill Caesar before he becomes king so as to rescue Rome from a dictatorship. Encouraged and tempted by Cassius, Brutus turns against Caesar, and the execution is planned for the Ides of March. The night prior to Caesar's execution, there is a violent storm, accompanied by strange and terrifying things on the streets of Rome. During this night, Caesar's wife dreams about her husband being killed. She thus persuades him to stay at home, but without success as Decius, one of the conspirators, convinces Caesar to go to Senate where he is to receive the crown. At the Senate, the case of the exiled Publius Cimber is raised for re-consideration. Caesar is requested to recall Publius Cimber, but Caesar flatly refuses by insisting that the exile should remain thus. This angers the conspirators who use this matter as a pretext for killing Caesar. In the ensuing disagreement, Caesar is stabbed to death. Mark Antony,

Caesar's close supporter arrives shortly, and wins the confidence of the conspirators to speak at Caesar's funeral. In an eloquent and moving funeral oration, he turns the Plebeians against the conspirators, forcing them to flee the city. Antony, Octavius and Lepidus form a triumvirate to rule Rome. Brutus and Cassius assemble armies to fight the triumvirs and this leads to another civil war in which the conspirators are finally defeated. A play that began just after Pompey's defeat in a civil war, progresses to the assassination of Caesar before closing with another civil war in which Brutus and other conspirators are defeated. Following T.S. Eliot's (1943:23) logic, in *Julius Caesar*'s beginnings lies its end.

The summary reveals a recurrence of deposition: Pompey's defeat leads to Caesar's and then Brutus's. Pompey's defeat—the past; Caesar's already under way—the present; and Brutus's,—the future—are a foundation on which the play's appeal to Plaatje can be grounded. Pompey's defeat not only haunts, but influences and determines the course of events in Roman society. The influence of the past on the present and future (or, to put it differently, the interplay between the past, present and future, hereafter referred to as history) is arguably the central issue in *Julius Caesar*. History provides the context for human struggles; and, these struggles constitute historical material. Therefore, *Julius Caesar*— based on some aspects of Roman history--dramatizes history. Plaatje was most likely attracted to this history.

The influence of the past serves both political and dramatic functions. As the conspirators kneel down to bathe in Caesar's blood, Cassius poses a question in which the past, present and future intertwine for political and theatrical effect.

> Stoop, then, and wash. How many ages hence
> Shall our lofty scene be acted over
> In states unborn and accents yet unknown? (3.1.111-113).

With Caesar lying dead at the base of Pompey's statue, the message is clearly that "the wheel is come full circle" (*Lear* 5.3.164), and Macbeth's "even-handed justice/Commends the ingredience of our poisoned chalice/To our own lips" (*Macbeth* 1.7. 9-12). Even more importantly, with the wheel coming full circle, another revolution has begun. Dawson comments:

> The assassination is the model for a potentially infinite series of future re-enactments, in both the actual world and on the stage, of which the Globe performance is one example, even while it presents itself as the original...The

> audience in the theatre is not only a witness to a re-enactment of a singular historical event, but is also encouraged to see the performance as part of a re-telling that was implicit in that originating event. Witnessing the process of re-telling in the performance before them, the audience recognizes that what connects them to the past is precisely that that past contained in it the seed of this future (1999:55).

The recurrence of deposition means that history repeats itself, and every event is a potential precedent for future occurrences. In *Julius Caesar*, Caesar's ambition to become king with absolute power is conspired against and removed so as to restore Rome's republicanism; it is then replaced by the Brutus-led government, which in turn is short-lived, cut short by Mark Antony's successful incitement of the Plebeians against it. Brutus's government is replaced by the triumvirate rule of Mark Antony, Octavius and Lepidus. The performance of any event is therefore a making of history, and the basis for future re-enactments and interpretations. The making of history is also accompanied by the formation of historical consciousness and /or memory and interpretation: does society remember the past; is memory finite and what are the consequences of (un)conscious social amnesia; how are events interpreted; how "malleable" are memories and interpretations; and what are the consequences of such interpretations? The rise of dictatorship not only threatens republican rule, but also challenges human memory and interpretation. Consequently, it assigns poets and historians the responsibility of reminding human society of its past and the prospects for its future. In the March 9, 1929 issue of *Umteteli wa Bantu*, R.V. Selope-Thema, Plaatje's contemporary and fellow activist, imagines the role of writers as follows:

> The duty of Bantu writers and journalists, as that of writers and journalists of other races, is to call the attention of the leaders to the things that are detrimental to the interest and welfare of the people. A writer who does not criticize and correct the mistakes of his people does not fulfil the purpose for which God endowed him with the power of the pen. A writer is a prophet, and his duty is not only to prophecy but also to rebuke, when necessary, the people for wrongdoing; to criticize, when occasion demands, the conduct and methods of the leaders of his race, and to point out the way to salvation (qtd in Plaatje 1978:19).

It is reasonable to assume that Plaatje saw himself as the conscience of his society and Shakespeare as the "prophet" of his own. If Roman history is characterized by tyranny, political conspiracy and ambition, a particular kind of historical consciousness and interpretation is necessary to break the circle of violence and restore republican rule. Unfortunately, this seems elusive given the open-endedness of *Julius Caesar*.

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Understood as both context and subject matter, history was the major issue that endeared Plaatje to *Julius Caesar*. I contend that other important issues such as politics, superstition and gender stereotypes are to be understood within the broad context of history, and as historical material. *Julius Caesar* probably made historical sense to Plaatje because he was in his own right a historian who showed a keen interest in the origins of his family and Rolong society. This interest was sparked by the oral tales told to him by his mother and grandmother. With this early instruction in Tswana history, Plaatje employed the technology of print in preserving family traditions. As he reflected, "regarding my ancestry I think I am the first to put memory to paper" (in Couzens 1996:7). Aided by the technology of print, this interest in history culminated in several publications--*Native Life*, *Mafikeng Diary*, biographies and *Mhudi*. The latter's subtitle—*An Epic of Native Life a Hundred Years Ago*--omitted in current editions, reflects his concern and interest in history.

Knowledge of history became in Plaatje's career a tool in negotiating an increasingly discriminatory world. As a humanist, Plaatje envisaged a world in which all races co-existed. To achieve this ideal world, a deep knowledge of ethnic history was a good starting point, not only in defining individual identities and destinies, but also in equipping each race with something to contribute to the larger polity. An increasingly segregationist world was a threat to this ideal as it was based on the supposed superiority of some races over the others. Plaatje's knowledge of history therefore became useful in countering racist opinion which held that prior to colonialism, Africans had no history. In fact he illustrated how Africans had a rich history comparable to that of Europe. It was from this history that he hoped valuable moral and political inspiration could be obtained. Conscious as he was of his society's rich history, *Julius Caesar* probably reminded Plaatje of some aspects of Rolong history. Consequently, a discussion of *Julius Caesar* could be enriched with close references to some of Plaatje's writings, and *Mhudi* in particular. In fact, sections of *Julius Caesar* read like extracts from *Mhudi*, Rolong and Southern African history.

Given Plaatje's interest in and familiarity with the evolution of his people, Pompey's defeat—the historical precedent of the bloodletting in *Julius Caesar*—might have reminded him of a historical precedent by which the Rolong nation was destroyed. This is the killing of Mzilikazi's emissaries—Bhoya and Bangela. In Plaatje's words:

In all the tales of battle I have ever read, or heard of, the cause of the war is invariably ascribed to the other side. Similarly, we have been taught almost from childhood to fear the Matabele--a fierce nation--so unreasoning in its ferocity that it will attack any individual or tribe, at sight, without the slightest provocation. Their destruction of our people, we were told, had no justification in fact or in reason; they were actuated by sheer lust for human blood.

By the merest accident, while collecting stray scraps of tribal history later in life, the writer incidentally heard of 'the day Mzilikazi's tax collectors were killed'. Tracing this bit of information further back, he elicited from old people that the slaying of Bhoya and his companions, about the year 1830, constituted the *casus belli* which unleashed the war dogs and precipitated the Barolong nation headlong into the horrors described in these pages (1978:21).

The assassinations of Pompey and of Bhoya and his companions were, to use Dawson's words, "models for a potentially infinite series" of bloodbaths in Rome and Kunana respectively. The tale of Bhoya, in many ways like Pompey's, is not only useful in explaining the politics of the fall of Rolong nation, but also serves as a starting point for Plaatje's artistic creativity. In fictional terms, these incidents are stories behind stories. Consequently, these tales influence not only the course of events, but also the moral and behavioural choices of societies. Furthermore, both incidents reflect false historical consciousness and interpretation, which if not righted, will perpetuate the circle of bloodshed. Put differently, these incidents highlight the problems of human memory and interpretation, (dis)remembering and the consequences of that process.

Julius Caesar opens with a carnival atmosphere to celebrate Caesar's triumphant return. The Plebeians seem to have forgotten that Caesar triumphed over another Roman and not a foreign enemy. They therefore "interpret" his unconstitutional rise to power as a victory worth celebrating and remembering. They seem to have "forgotten" that Caesar's rise to power poses a danger to republicanism. Hence, Merullus chides them "O you hard hearts, you cruel men of Rome,/Knew you not Pompey?' (1.1. 37-38). Pompey and the ideals for which he stood seem to have been forgotten. Their memories are therefore short. In *Mhudi*, history is equally manipulable, with the "cause of war invariably ascribed to the other side." The story of Bhoya is conveniently forgotten and not talked about, discovered only by "merest accident." Manipulating history through selective memory and interpretation (of the past), leads to disaster in both *Julius Caesar* and *Mhudi*. When the Plebeians celebrate Caesar's "triumph" they endorse tyranny and dictatorship, and therefore undermine republican values. Similarly, blaming the Matabele for the fall of the Rolong nation creates false historical consciousness and interpretation

in which the latter are projected as victims and not the villains. In fact, demonising the Matabele amounts, in part, to endorsing Chief Tauana's totalitarian decision to kill Ndebele emissaries. Tauana's dictatorship "contradicts" Tswana political philosophy of consensus-rule and the restraint of rulers. In both *Julius Caesar* and *Mhudi*, "memories and meanings are malleable, the act of interpretation potentially dangerous" (Dawson 1999:58).

It is because of this skewed historical consciousness that Plaatje engages in a corrective re-telling of history to warn about the dangers of manipulating history. Shakespeare's drama reminds Plaatje of certain aspects of his people's history which he fictionalises in *Mhudi.* Plaatje and Shakespeare, Plaatje must have thought, were engaged in similar tasks albeit at different times. Here we have a basis for Plaatje's multiple self-translations. It is possible to suggest that Plaatje projects himself into characters such as Gubuza, who maintains a Kent-like critical stance vis-a-vis Langa's destruction of Kunana, or the tribunes who are weary of Caesar's "triumphant" return. The Barolong team up with the Boers and Qoranna to destroy the Ndebele. As Gubuza predicts, history continues to repeat itself with a circle of revenges set in motion. Like Merellus' and Flavius' interruption of the Plebeians' carnival, Plaatje reminds his people that consciousness and correct interpretation of the past are crucial in shaping their future. But how much can we remember, is human memory not limited? These questions problematize Merullus's anger and Plaatje's corrective re-telling of history.

The killing of Pompey and Ndebele emissaries also differ. If *Julius Caesar* focuses on Roman history, and its associated political ambition, civil instability and conspiracy, Plaatje's historical focus goes beyond the confines of a single nation. The Bhoya tale not only involves Ndebele and Rolong nations, but also draws into the fray the Qorannas and the Boers. Juxtaposing Rolong history with that of other nations reveals the confluences and divergences of these histories as the foundation for Plaatje's ideal society. With its ethnic diversity, South Africa is already a model for this ideal. Translating Shakespeare extends the frontiers of this utopia to a global scale. Not only does translation allow Plaatje to bring into the picture ancient Roman society, but also Shakespeare's English society. This global ideal, Plaatje seems to be suggesting, is partially possible if all participants nurture an appropriate historical consciousness from which moral and political guidance will be obtained. In other words, this new world

needs and must be sustained by the exchange of histories and cultures. This is possible if all histories are recognised, respected and preserved. These histories, including those against Plaatje's democratic ideals, deserve preservation as reminders of what can happen if lessons from the past are ignored. Following Achebe, these histories become our "escort" without which "we are blind" (1987:124). In isolating equivalents and differences, Plaatje wishes to underscore the importance of ethnic history and how it can contribute to global or national consciousness.

We can therefore understand Plaatje's interest in ethnic history as the springboard for supra-ethnic consciousness. For example, he felt that chiefly rule must be preserved as it held valuable insights for modern politics, just as ancient Roman history could provide political lessons for modern democracies/societies. Plaatje himself symbolized the synergy between traditional and modern politics, resulting in a split identity. This identity posed problems. Translating Shakespeare's play enabled Plaatje to establish confluence and divergence between European and African histories, necessary in realising his political and cultural ideals. Appropriating Shakespeare in this political agenda is, we recall, ambivalent: resisting and embracing western modernity at the same time. In subtle ways, *Mhudi* is a continuation of Plaatje's appropriation of Shakespeare for his nationalistic concerns. *Julius Caesar* was therefore translatable because it dealt with issues that Plaatje thought to be relevant to his actual world.

These remarks on history as both context and subject matter offer us a backdrop against which to appreciate politics, superstition and gender stereotypes in the translatability of *Julius Caesar*. I deploy politics to describe an array of power relations in society: the fundamental bond between the ruler/king/chief and subject/kingdom/chiefdom, its basic tenets and overall implications for social governance. Let us recall that Tswana political philosophy is the subject of proverbial sayings in which emphasis is placed on consensus-rule, involvement of councillors and the general restraint of chiefs (Couzens 1978:7). A departure from these ideals ushers in totalitarianism. A king or chief who does not consult like Tauana or feels more important than his constituency is a dictator against whom measures ought to be taken to safeguard democracy. What these measures are and who should institute them, is a moral debate *Julius Caesar* presents.

The title --*Julius Caesar*—is a helpful entry point into the discussion of politics. Plaatje renders it as *Dintshontsho Tsa Bo-Juliuse Kesara*, literally translated as "Julius Caesar's several deaths". Even at the literal level, the ruler has several deaths. "*Dintshontsho*" reflects a recurrence of dying, and this is historically significant. Death, like history, repeats itself, and this is politically significant as will become evident shortly. The rendition is consistent with the Folio title, *The Tragedy of Julius Caesar*. "*Tsa*" is the possessive pronoun 'of' and "*bo*" pluralizes Caesar to show respect as well as to link and distance him from the speaker, audience or subject. Caesar is identified as the central character who is simultaneously distant from and closer to his subjects. "*Tsa*" and "*bo*" are therefore instrumental in our appreciation of Caesar's somewhat paradoxical social position.

To say Caesar is the central character is however not unproblematic, as Marvin Spevack notes:

> ...naming a play after a character does not necessarily confer hero status, as a handful of Shakespeare's histories demonstrates. That many of his plays are named for the main character or characters who do turn out to be the heroes or heroines does not of itself solve the problem of the title of this play. What is really at issue in the matter of the hero, especially since it is Caesar or Brutus who is proposed, is politics (1988:27).

My concern is not who the hero is, but rather, what he symbolizes. Both Caesar and Brutus are significant because they symbolise, in Spevack's word, 'politics' (the former an ambitious military general and statesman who is on his way to become a dictator and tyrant, and the latter a freedom fighter and leader of a popular patriotic front); and it was the politics of *Julius Caesar* that probably attracted Plaatje. His rendition of the title captures the complex politics or bond between ruler and subject. A familiarity with politics was therefore a *sine qua non*. To begin with, his Tswana society had a robust political system which placed the chief or king at the centre; he was the epitome of its ideals and around whom tribal life revolved (Schapera 1937:176*ff*). Several proverbs reflect the complexity of this political system. For example, "*Bogosi boa taga*/kingship is often intoxicating"; "*kgosi thutubudu e oleloa matlakala*/a chief is like an ashheap on which is gathered all the refuse" and "*Kgosi ke kgosi ka morafe*/a chief is a chief by grace of his tribe", not only establish the philosophical and organic relationship between ruler and subject in maintaining democracy, but also hint at the potential for deviance from these ideals. In *Mbudi*, this relationship is pointedly stated (and of course manipulated for

political expediency) by Mzilikazi: "without you, I could be no king, and without me you could be no nation" (1978:58).

Against this political background, Plaatje not only appreciates the symbolism of Caesar and Brutus, but is also enabled to draw parallels between Shakespeare's fictionalised world and that of his own social context. Both Caesar and Brutus would have reminded Plaatje of the political institution of chiefdom and African chiefs about whom he had written.

Although rulers are expected to uphold republican (in the case of Rome) and or democratic ideals (in the case of Plaatje's context) of society, both *Julius Caesar* and *Mhudi* point to the possibility of and threat to these ideals, as rulers turn out to be either republican/democratic or autocratic. In *Caesar*, the conspirators fear that undeterred, Caesar will become an emperor, with absolute power and therefore dangerously autocratic. Cassius describes him as a "colossus" with "huge legs" under which "petty men walk" (1.2.135-136), while Brutus sees him as an "adder" and "a serpent's egg/Which hatched would...grow mischievous" (2.1.32-33). Hence their conspiracy against him is necessary, so they think, to forestall his ambition and autocracy and to restore republican rule. As Brutus suggests, in this adder they must "put a sting" (2.1.14-16) and "kill him in the shell" (2.1.36). But as we discover, the assassination of Caesar, like Pompey's defeat, leads to further assassinations of Brutus and his fellow conspirators. Indeed Caesar's death haunts the conspirators just as Pompey's haunted Caesar. A like process is under way in Plaatje's context. Both Shakespeare's and Plaatje's rulers progressively become tyrants. Caesar and Tauana's assassinations of Pompey and the Ndebele emissaries respectively, and Mzilikazi's refusal to move the kingdom, plunge their nations into bloodshed. Due to the connection between the ruler and kingdom, the tragic mistakes of the former affect the latter. It is thus clear how Plaatje's rendition of the title reflects a leader's/ruler's several deaths. Rosencrantz's remarks on majesty in *Hamlet* are here an appropriate conceptualisation of what I have been explaining.

> The cess of majesty
> Dies not alone, but like a gulf doth draw
> What's near it with
> It is a massy wheel
> Fixed on the summit of the highest mount
> To whose huge spokes ten thousand lesser things
> Are mortised and adjoined, which when it falls

> Each small annexment, petty consequence
> Attends the boisterous ruin
> Never alone
> Did the king sigh, but with a general groan (III.3.15-23).

If both Shakespeare and Plaatje's rulers are tyrants, or at least potential tyrants, it is necessary to trace the roots of tyranny. To run the affairs of the nation, Tswana, (and indeed African chiefs generally) are assisted by councillors chosen on account of kinship or success as warriors or statesmen (see Schapera 1937:176*ff*). These men constitute the ruling assembly, parallel to the Senate in *Caesar*. When decisions have been made or not made at this small assembly, they are referred to the larger assembly known as the *kgotla*. Here everybody in attendance is "free" to contribute to the discussion. The democracy of the traditional assembly is reflected by proverbial sayings such as "*mafoko a kgotla a mantle otlhe*/words at the *kgotla* are all nice" and "*mmualebe o bua la gagwe gore mongwe a tswe ka le lentle*/each person is entitled to their opinion and it is from various opinions that the best will be selected". However, this should not fool us into believing that the *kgotla* system is always democratic. Like all political systems, it is subject to manipulation and has its own politics of inclusion and exclusion. Molomo, for example, notes that

> While the kgotla was widely regarded as democratic, it cannot be said to encourage popular participation, as women and children were excluded. Anyway, this was to be expected as it is intrinsic to the patriarchal structure of the Tswana society (2001:4).

Chief Moroka's council is an example of Tswana democracy at work: councillors are allowed to settle down; the subject of discussion is introduced, and the decision is "left" to the assembly. Phelps comments on this democracy thus:

> Before the chiefs arrive a full range of alternatives is confidently aired. The women are not forgotten, and one speaker proposes that they should help in the battle against the Matabele...The arrival of the council of chiefs appears to be deliberately delayed in order to allow for the atmosphere of open discussion to be well established. Individuals clearly do not fear to speak their minds. The diversity of political constituencies, marked by the various clan chiefs, is detailed (1993:54).

This assembly—with its exclusion of women--recalls the Senate meeting over which Caesar presides. In a consultative atmosphere, Caesar asks the Senate for issues to be discussed, unlike Moroka who provides the agenda. Tragically, Caesar's conduct opens a can of worms by giving the conspirators an opportunity to raise the Publius matter which Caesar flatly refuses to reconsider. This rigidity and political arrogance—couched in the metaphor of the "constant northern star"—offers the conspirators a "justifiable" basis

for their attack on Caesar. Tauana, allegedly intoxicated by the *jwala* of his wives (Plaatje 1978:53), does not consult his council on what to do with Mzilikazi's emissaries. Instead, he "commanded some young men to take the two to the ravine and 'lose them', which is equivalent to a death sentence" (Plaatje 1978:29). Similarly, neither Mzilikazi nor his sycophantic councillors bother to investigate reasons for Bhoya and Bangela's execution. Further, Mzilikazi ignores and rejects the warnings of his soothsayers to move the kingdom northwards. 'Intoxicated' by anger due to Umnandi's disappearance and his presumed bravery, Mzilikazi unilaterally orders the massacre of sorcerers and defeated soldiers in a language reminiscent of Tauana's: "take them far down to the ravine and leave them there" (Plaatje 1978:102). If Tauana was not in control of his actions because of the effects of his wives' brew, Mzilikazi is not in control of his either because of the effects of Umnandi's disappearance. As Gubuza tells us, "Mzilikazi knows not what he does. I am told that he has lost his pet; his favourite wife, Umnandi...and he is not responsible for his actions" (Plaatje 1978:103). Of interest is the possible and probably unintentional allusion to women as the archetypal tempters or charmers, who lead men into tragedy. By refusing to be influenced by their women, Caesar and Brutus resist female temptation or guidance, which is not sufficient in avoiding the tragic consequences of going to the Capitol.

Mzilikazi's rejection of his soothsayers' warnings is echoed in Caesar who too dismisses the soothsayer's caution about the Ides of March. Intoxicated by power, Caesar considers the soothsayer as a "dreamer" who should be ignored. Plaatje who was conscious of equivalents must have seen parallels between ancient Roman history and that of South Africa.

In contrast to Caesar's, Tauana's and Mzilikazi's dictatorial impulses is Chief Moroka's flexibility when he delivers a Solomonic verdict in a case in which two couples, the Noko and Poe, had stolen each other's partner in an adulterous affair. Moroka rules that

> from today, Noko shall take Mrs Poe to wife; and Poe shall have Noko's wife, the woman he says he loves (1978:124).

This contrasts with Cilliers' inflexible and unoriginal proposition:

> In that case, we would ask the woman to cling to the husband she is married to, and forget all about her childhood's love. The parties should remain with the spouses they were wedded to before these disputes arose (1978:123).

Moroka's decision is original and flexible because it considers current affections of the couples rather than the traditional respect for the law of marriage. As Willan writes,

> His decision is that the new arrangement should continue since it was now obvious that this was the judgement that would give satisfaction to all parties concerned. A kind of consensus justice, in other words, was preferable in certain circumstances to adherence to a rigid legal or moral code (1984:353).

For Moroka, the law must be flexible enough to suit changing times. A review of Cimber's matter was therefore in order. Caesar, Mzilikazi, Tauana, and Bhoya, seem intoxicated by power, confirming the Setswana proverb "*bogosi boa taga*/kingship is often intoxicating". Through Gubuza and Sitonga's remarks on intoxication, Plaatje invokes this proverb in his indictment on royalty and its excesses.

While the roots of tyranny are varied and complex, one thing is clear. A ruler becomes a tyrant when he becomes dangerously ambitious in thinking that he is more important than his subjects. Intoxicated by power, he ceases to be accountable to his subjects and strays from the path of consensus-politics onto the dangerous one of totalitarianism. Caesar, Tauana and Mzilikazi symbolize what could happen to consensus rule when the ruler becomes a tyrant. In comparing and contrasting these rulers, Plaatje shows how African, and specifically Tswana systems of government, could be superior to their Roman and European counterparts. His re-telling of history warns both the segregationist government and African societies about the dangers of ignoring history, and specifically, the democratic dispensation that could obtain in "traditionally established structures and procedures of leadership and representation" (Phelps 1993:47). We can see how Plaatje, like his mentor, uses history as a moral fable. Shakespeare's production of *Julius Caesar*, Daniell tells us, was a reaction to Queen Elizabeth's tyranny.

> The tyrant in view was not hard to find. Even elementary knowledge of Queen Elizabeth's policies in the years up to her death allows parallels between herself and a tyrannical Caesar. Queen Elizabeth, as age advanced, put herself out as immortal...(1998:25, see also Shakespeare 1998:142).

If *Mhudi* and *Julius Caesar* are indictments on political power and ambition, it is possible to appreciate Plaatje's self-imagination as Tsikinya-Chaka. Conscious of Plaatje's search for equivalents, it is not hard to see how he might have seen parallels between Shakespeare's play and some aspects of his own society. For Plaatje, Caesar's behaviour reminded him of such rulers as Tauana and Mzilikazi.

Caesar's symbolism—the political, historical and social dimensions for which he stood—enables us to explore these personal translations. Shakespeare's histories—*Julius Caesar, King Lear, Richard II* and others—resemble Plaatje's biographies of pre-colonial Tswana chiefs and distinguished citizens in which he recorded their achievements and failures, just as Shakespeare reveals Caesar's virtues and vices. In fact *Julius Caesar* presents us with the difficult moral question of whether Caesar deserved to die. In terms of subject matter, Plaatje's biographies and Shakespeare's histories have some similarities. What distinguishes them is the genre, namely narrative and drama. The resemblance in subject matter could illuminate Plaatje's transformation of Shakespeare's dramas from performance material into narratives or sayings to be read and told. These biographies, like Shakespeare's plays, are replete with historical allusions, thus presenting us with insights into these nations' past, present and future. Like Plutarch, and to some extent Shakespeare, Plaatje might have considered the actions of prominent citizens as influential in determining the course of their national histories.

While Plaatje's 'narrativization' of *Julius Caesar* could be viewed as a transgression or misappropriation of the "original", it is also a reminder that Shakespeare's dramas are narratives, or at the least, they have strong foundations in stories. This becomes clearer when we consider Shakespeare's sources. "Shakespeare's prime source for *Julius Caesar*", writes Daniell, "was Plutarch's *Lives* in North's English translation" (1998:79). In *Lives*, Shakespeare "found, principally in the lives of Caesar, Brutus and Antony, much material about their characters and events of their lives" (1998:79). But who was Plutarch? Daniell tells us:

> Plutarch was a Greek citizen of the Roman Empire born around AD 45...He was...a writer on the theory of poetry, a biographer and historian, and principally a moralist...He wrote his *Bioi paralleloi—The Parallel Lives of Most Noble Greeks and Romans* (1998:80ff).

It could be assumed that Plutarch chronicles Roman and Greek oral stories, making him a translator of some sort. These stories reached Shakespeare via translation and this is of significance to this argument. Adapting Roman and Greek narratives for English audience places Shakespeare in the role of a translator between genres, namely narrative and drama. In Paz's words, the dramas are therefore "translations of translations of translations" (in Alvarez and Vidal 1996:12). Thus, we can appreciate the difficulty of applying the term "original" to these dramas, more so that they have undergone extensive scholarly/editorial intervention. Plaatje's transformation of Shakespeare's

dramas into sayings continues the unavoidable process of translations of translations. Consequently, Plaatje restores Shakespearean drama to its narrative foundation, a process that brings him into conflict with white academics. If Shakespeare's dramas have strong foundations in stories/narratives, it is possible to imagine with Plaatje's Tswana people and Achebe (1987:124) that the story is "chief among his fellow" literary genres. In vernacularizing Shakespeare, Plaatje re-enacts a process that goes back to Plutarch's compilation of oral narratives through to North and Shakespeare. In fact, all these translations constitute, in Dawson's logic, the models for future translations. Translations of Shakespeare continue to date. The past continues to haunt the present and future.

Other than criticising political power and ambition, both biographies and history plays illustrate their authors' association with royal courts and are therefore a basis for personal equivalences. Recording and preserving the achievements of Tswana kings is material to the Plaatje project. As Starfield tells us, most of these chiefs ruled before colonialism and the dislocation it initiated (1991:8). She continues, Plaatje

> held that the cultural practices of chiefly rule should be the basis of the new nation and a new nationalism that gave equal respect to all South Africa's ethnic groups (1991:7).

Focusing on pre-colonial rule allows Plaatje to make at least two important points. First, that the traditional form of government could be as (un)democratic as the systems of government presented in Shakespeare's plays. To this extent, if Shakespeare's play world is the mark of civilization, then its equivalence to traditional Tswana forms challenges hierarchies that have been erected between European and African cultures. Colonization with its ostensible introduction of civilization to backward natives could amount to the proverbial folly of "*go isa phudubudu bosarweng*/sending the steenbok to the Bushman/adding a drop of water into the ocean". Secondly, Plaatje makes the point that prior to colonization, natives already had a robust political history, which to a large extent is equivalent to European history. In *Mhudi*, Plaatje's juxtaposition of Rolong/Tswana, Ndebele, Qoranna, Boer histories, shows the "*Kiwas* from the sea" as the third force, and not the initiators of African history. Hence, as Starfield suggests, Plaatje wants to show that an African polity is as significant as European ones. The significance of each polity entitles it to a respectable role to play in the attainment of Plaatje's envisaged democracy.

Associated with this political history is the system of courtly patronage that parallels the one in Shakespeare's English society (see Frye 1982, Johnson 1996 for a discussion of Shakespeare's association with the court and the benefits of such an association). That Plaatje needed chiefly patronage for the success of his projects is not in doubt as seen in the previous chapters. Besides being a basis for self-translation into a Shakespeare, Plaatje's association with royalty also highlights his familiarity with politics. For Plaatje, this familiarity goes back to his ancestry. Let us recall that through the stories told to him by his mother and grandmother, Plaatje traced his ancestry to a line of famous Rolong kings, and therefore to the cradle of Rolong nationalism and politics. Hence Tim Couzens's remarks in his Introduction to *Mhudi*.

> Plaatje was a Barolong who belonged to the Badiboa clan...who traced their descent from Modiboa, the eighth in a line of kings descended from Morolong, who...was the 'original founder of the Barolong nation or tribe, which according to tradition migrated from the Lacustrine region in Central Africa southward... about the year 1400 (1975:1 *cf.* Willan 1984).

Willan goes further than Couzens to tell us that Plaatje's immediate royal ancestor was Tau, who in Plaatje's words, was "the progenitor of the four royal branches of the Barolong: (1) Ratlou (2) Tshidi (3) Seleka (4) Rapulana" (1984:4). Tracing his ancestry Plaatje wrote:

> My ancestry lost the kingship of the Barolong during or about the years 1580-1600...My mother is a direct descendant of a grandson of the last named (Rapulana) from Tau's youngest and dearest wife, Mhudi. Mother, therefore, is a near relative of Chiefs Matlaba of Bechuanaland and Western Transvaal, also of Chief Fenyang, O.F.S. My mother and father are both descended from King Morolong. Father from the senior house of the tribe (deposed about 1600) and mother from the junior house which still survives the changing scenes and vicissitudes of time (Willan 1984:4).

The division of the Rolong kingdom into four is a direct outcome of Tau's leadership, which is useful in negotiating the politics in *Julius Caesar*. Tau, we are told,

> was an ambitious leader whose territorial designs brought him into conflict with the Batlaping, another Tswana-speaking tribe to the south, and the Korana, a mixed race of nomadic hunters. Together they proved to be more than a match for Tau's Barolong, many of whom were apparently opposed to his ambitions for conquest and expansion. It was a recipe for disaster: Tau was killed in about 1780, and in the ensuing confusion and dispute over the succession the Barolong broke into four sections—the Tshidi, Ratlou, Seleka, and Rapulana (Willan 1984:7).

These remarks find parallels in *Julius Caesar*. In fact, Plaatje who had a sharp eye/ear for equivalences between nations and people must have seen *Julius Caesar* as a dramatization

of some aspects of Rolong history and politics. The themes of dictatorship, political ambition, conspiracy, assassination, deposition, and confusion following the death of the current ruler are common issues in *Julius Caesar* and Plaatje's Barolong society. Tau is killed because of his ambition, and so are Caesar and Brutus; the Romans are confused when Caesar is killed and so are the Barolong after Tau. Following the assassination, new rulers emerge and so the circle continues. Plaatje was therefore on familiar terrain, and must have seen the shape of Barolong history and politics in *Julius Caesar.*

Tau's expansionist ambition finds a direct equivalence in Mzilikazi's, and later his son from Umnandi, who we are told "extended the awe-inspiring sway of his government to distant territories of the hinterland" (1978:181). The narrator relates Mzilikazi's nostalgic expansionism thus:

> He had for years been cherishing a beautiful dream. He had dreamt of establishing a kingdom stretching east, west, north and south. He had made enormous preparations for overpowering and annexing the adjacent nations one by one and for augmenting the Matabele contingents from fighting men of conquered peoples and, having inured them with Matabele pluck, he had hoped to rule over the most terror-inspiring nation of death-defiers that ever faced an enemy. Then with his power thus magnified he had looked forward to a march upon Zululand, the crown of his ambition, recapturing the ancient dynasty with superior fighting forces and establishing an empire from the northern extremity of Bechuanaland to the sea coast of Monomotapa, embracing the Tonga, Swazi and Zululand kingdoms and extending with the sea shore as its boundary right away to the Pondoland coast (1978:170).

Such a grandiose scheme finds impetus and motivation in the very society over which Mzilikazi rules. Among the many factors that fuel and sustain these ambitious thoughts are the councillors and the general social psychology of warfare. At the historic celebration of Langa's raid on Kunana and its concomitant looting of Rolong wealth, the psychology of imperialism is fuelled by the praise names with which the councillors address Mzilikazi and the eloquent (un)patriotic speeches by which the crowds are harangued. Sitonga for example, calls him "King Mzilikazi the Great, the terrible ruler of land and clouds" (1978:52). In opposition to Gubuza's Kent-like unflattering reflection on Langa's raid, Dambuza quips, "Gubuza, I am ashamed of you" (1978:55), and continues to characterize Gubuza as unpatriotic in the proverbial language of "the one fly in the milk" (1978:57). If most of his councillors are sycophantic in their praises and therefore sustain the psychology of war and conquest, Gubuza's caution not only reminds us of the duality of issues Mzilikazi eloquently and expediently states, but also

serves as a prologue to the disaster which is about to befall the Ndebele nation. Gubuza's caution recalls Calphurnia's to Caesar not to leave his house, or the soothsayer's to Caesar to beware of the Ides of March.

Mzilikazi's sycophantic councillors remind us of Cassius's insinuations and temptations to Brutus to turn against Caesar. In a sustained series of machinations, innuendoes and even blackmails, including the invocation of oral history or past narratives (Lucius Junius Brutus and his founding of the Roman Republic and the story of Aeneas), Cassius, like Lady Macbeth, ignites the fire of political conspiracy and ambition against Caesar. In his words,

> I am glad that my weak words
> Have struck but thus show of fire from Brutus (1.2.176-77).

The symbolism of fire, like the fire Langa uses to destroy Kunana, not only shows the political destruction that will befall Rome, but connotes the purification in which the nation will, hopefully be rid of conspiracies. The ending of *Julius Caesar* is however not definite. Like *Mhudi*'s, *Julius Caesar*'s ending is open-ended, raising the possibility of more civil strife. The victory of the triumvirs is probably a lull before a storm.

To further illustrate Plaatje's familiarity with politics, we need to remember how political his entire career was. It would seem that Plaatje's political ancestry anticipated or even prepared him for modern politics. His vocations as post office messenger, court interpreter, newspaper editor, recruitment agent, translator of Shakespeare, linguist, and his campaigns against the Land Act, are informed by a political ideology of asserting the native's capacity to determine his/her own destiny, and therefore proving himself worthy of the liberal privileges of the Cape Colony. His participation in the South African Native National Congress gave Plaatje first-hand experience of political conspiracy and ambition. The then president of the organisation John Dube was forced to resign the presidency (Willan 1984:213-214) following a conspiracy against him, a conspiracy which approximates Brutus's against Caesar or Mark Antony's against Brutus.

From his political career, one can pick up an important aspect which has a bearing on his rendition of *Julius Caesar*, namely Plaatje's eloquence and mastery of the art of speaking. In the numerous meetings Plaatje addressed both in and outside South Africa, also

evident in his writings, Plaatje emerges as an orator whose figurative language, humour, rhetoric, eloquence and wit left his audience either spell-bound or shaken to their marrow because of his capacity to incite. Willan tells us that

> Today, the dominant memory of Plaatje in his home town of Kimberley is of his unrivalled ability as a public speaker, a man whose wit and humour could hold the attention of any audience. He used to appear on a variety of local platforms, and at election time, particularly, his services were much in demand (1984:381).

Mr. J. van Reit who attended some of the meetings at which Plaatje spoke, is recorded by Willan as remembering:

> In those days we had the SAP, South African Party, Sol Plaatje was always the speaker. They always left Sol Plaatje to speak last. And whenever the meeting got a little boring, you knew, they would say, 'Sol Plaatje, Sol Plaatje', and in no time at all there would be roars of laughter...he was an eminent politician and speaker (1984:381).

Edward Barrett, Secretary of Native Affairs described Plaatje as a man "likely to become a troublesome professional agitator" (Willan 1984:250), recalling Cassius's fears of what Mark Antony's speech might do to the people (3.1.233-34).

On this note of political and professional agitation, I establish an equivalence between Plaatje and Mark Antony as eloquent speakers and potential "professional agitators". Public oratory and eloquence of speech in *Julius Caesar* are but some of the play's aspects which rendered it familiar territory to Plaatje, himself a good speaker and a product of society which places high importance on the art of speech as a means of resolving situations and general social intercourse. Plaatje's linguistic aptitude endeared him to Shakespeare whom he and his people admired as "the white man who spoke so well". Educated natives not only found Shakespeare politically useful, but aesthetically appealing as well. Hence they quoted him to embellish their speeches. Mark Antony's eloquence must have reminded Plaatje both of his own and also the oratory of some of the Native chiefs to whom he compares Chief Moroka in *Mhudi* (1978:111). The equivalence of Plaatje to Mark Antony is further evidence of personal translations into Shakespeare the actor and also the playwright. In *Mhudi*, Plaatje implicitly imagines himself as the Shakespeare or Tsikinya-Chaka of South Africa who blends history and fiction to warn against totalitarian rule.

Within the broader historical and political issues, there are other aspects which could have attracted Plaatje to *Julius Caesar*. Of particular interest are the gender roles and the belief in prophecies, predictions, premonitions, superstition and fate. Amongst the Romans, Batswana and Matabele, we are shown patriarchy in operation, with observable perceptions of females as naturally weak, cowards and lacking in valour. Males who show signs of cowardice are therefore dismissed as effeminate and womanish. In *Caesar*, Cassius remarks:

> Let it be who it is, for Romans now
> Have thews and limbs like their ancestors'.
> But, woe the while, our fathers' minds are dead
> And we are governed with our mothers' spirits;
> Our yoke and sufferance show us womanish (1.3.80-84).

In Portia's complaint to her husband, we get the same sense of womanhood as being synonymous with weakness and therefore worthy of contempt. To be worthy of respect, a woman must be legitimated by male patronage. She states in part,

> I grant I am a woman, but withal
> A woman that Lord Brutus took to wife.
> I grant I am a woman, but withal
> A woman well reputed, Cato's daughter.
> Think you I am no stronger than my sex,
> Being so fathered and so husbanded? (2.1.292-297).

In *Mhudi*, similar gender stereotyping is evident in several incidents. Ra-Thaga, for example, "believed that women were timid creatures" (1978:35). When he calls Mhudi to spear the lion he held by the tail, her bravery runs counter to the common perception of the sex's weakness: "most Bechuana women in such circumstances would have uttered loud screams for help" (1978:64). Among the warlike Matabele, a similar perception can be detected. Following Langa's raid on Kunana, not many people were interested in understanding the cause of the raid, especially the women: "no one, much less a woman, cared to know the cause of the raid, for the end had amply justified the means" (1978:51).

Implied is the notion that such war-related matters are not the concern of women who are interested only in the food, but of the males who have to prove their masculinity. Among the Batswana, this female stereotype is proverbialized: "never be led by a female lest thou fall over the precipice" (1978:73). Hence, whenever Mhudi warns her husband against Ton Qon, Ra-Thaga dismisses her fears as the female's attempts to lead the male,

or at the least, the female's attempt to usurp masculine power. Hence, as shown earlier, women are excluded from the ruling council. When that happens, disaster is inevitable. Similarly, when Calphurnia implores Caesar to stay at home, he dismisses her in a typical brave-male way:

> The gods do this in shame of cowardice
> Caesar should be a beast without a heart
> If he should stay at home today for fear.
> No, Caesar shall not. Danger knows full well
> That Caesar is more dangerous than he:
> We are two lions littered in one day,
> And I the elder and more terrible.
> And Caesar shall go forth (2.2.41-48).

Despite resemblances, Plaatje's women are empowered with more political agency than their Shakespearean counterparts. If Shakespeare's women are weak and ineffectual in not prevailing on their husbands to stay at home and therefore avert the impending tragedy inaugurated by Caesar's assassination, Plaatje's women are involved in making history and therefore negating the stereotypical perception of female cowardice. Mhudi surprises her husband when she follows and directs him to where she saw a lion; she then stabs and kills one; she follows her husband to the hunting field because she never trusted Ton Qon; she then braves a terrible storm and follows her husband to the battlefield and along the way she meets Umnandi whom she befriends and encourages to play a role in ending wars. This friendship, Chrisman suggests, is the vehicle of a pan-African political vision (2000:182). She implores Umnandi to

> Seek him and when thou hast recovered the lost favour of thy lord, urge him to give up wars and adopt a more happy form of manly sport. In that he could surely do much more than my husband who is no king (165).

Her encouragement to Umnandi identifies the role of women in the pan-Africanist vision Plaatje espoused throughout his career. In contrast to Plaatje, Shakespeare does not even allow his women--Portia and Calphurnia--a moment together let alone include them in the Senate, thus they are fragmented in their struggles. Neither do their husbands pay much attention to them. No wonder Portia is driven to suicide—ironically like her husband—due to marital loneliness and neglect.

Reading *Julius Caesar*, Plaatje would probably have been reminded of the marginalization of women in African society, and the Tswana one in particular. Like Shakespeare, he seems equally concerned by this treatment. We noted earlier how Batswana maintain, as

they indeed do in *Mhudi*, that women should not be allowed to lead the male (1978:73) as that would be disastrous. As a democrat, Plaatje imagined a world in which all citizens, including women, are equal. In responding to the marginal position of women in Shakespeare, Plaatje imagines a society in which they play a central role in its affairs. In *Mhudi* women are thus sympathetically allowed some prominence, with Mhudi as the central character. Even Umnandi, against whom other wives conspire, does not contemplate suicide. Rather, she seeks her husband, presumably because she is incapable of independence, but also because she reckons she has a role to play in Ndebele history. In fact, she participates in and furthers Ndebele imperialism by giving Mzilikazi an imperialistic heir.

However, let us not forget that in *Mhudi* Plaatje is also dealing with personal matters. By giving his female characters agency, Plaatje is paying tribute to the many women who had a lasting influence on his life. Among these women are his wife who did more than her share of parenting during Plaatje's extended periods of absence from home, his mother and grandmother, from whom he received his first instruction in Setswana language and family traditions, and his daughter Olive, to whom the book is dedicated. Couzens argues:

> As we have noted, Plaatje and his wife were separated on three occasions for long periods at a time, and the long separation of Mhudi and Ra-Thaga in the novel has echoes which are more than merely fictional. Although he projects her back into the past, it is clear that Mhudi is, in one sense, Elizabeth Plaatje. The novel is, then, a great love story, a very moving tribute to his wife...(1996:188).

Similarly, Plaatje's biographer states:

> At the same time it is evident that Mhudi is invested, in Plaatje's book, with qualities and characteristics which flow very directly from his own experiences and perceptions of women during his own life. Perhaps first and foremost Mhudi stands as a tribute to his own wife Elizabeth, 'without whose loyal cooperation' his *Native Life in South Africa*, so he acknowledged, would not have been written. But it would be surprising if Plaatje did not also conceive of Mhudi as a kind of literary testimony to those women who gave him so much support and encouragement when the book was being written in London in 1920— Georgiana Solomon, the Colensos, Betty Molteno, Jane Cobden Unwin, Alice Werner. *From these women in particular Plaatje had derived a keen insight into the parallels between the racial and sexual discrimination, and through their actions and beliefs they had done much to strengthen his conviction that women, more than men, possessed the qualities from which a more just and humane society could emerge* (Willan 1984:360)[emphasis added].

It is not surprising therefore that the ending of this novel attributes authority and power to Mhudi, the symbol of feminine sensibility in contrast to masculine destructiveness.

But humane/sympathetic feelings, feminine sensibility, temperance and brotherhood/sisterhood are inadequate challenges to political structures, nor do they translate into tangible political changes. It is not in doubt that with his oratorical skills, charm and commitment to the cause of the natives in South Africa, Plaatje aroused sympathetic feelings from his audience, including the women listed above. But sympathy rarely translated into financial support, let alone significant changes in policy. Willan pessimistically notes:

> The people he [Plaatje] convinced were far removed from the corridors of power. However sympathetic they were, there was nothing they could do for him in political terms, and for the most part they were not in a position to offer much assistance financially...Promises of financial support for his work were always more forthcoming than hard cash, and they were easily forgotten once Plaatje himself was no longer around (1984:281).

Mrs Solomon's direct appeal to General Louis Botha on behalf of Plaatje's *Native Life* solicited a sympathetic response (see Willan, 198-199) which had very little impact, if any, on the political situation. Her friendship with Botha, symbolic of English-Afrikaner relations, raises questions about the success of the African elite's appeals to the imperial government. The imperial government's stance of non-interference is not necessarily due to South Africa's suzerainty, but perhaps more importantly, because the native sufferers are after all non Europeans. It was therefore misguided and naïve for Plaatje and the rest of the African activists to expect the British government or any white-led government for that matter, to make any meaningful changes to the Land Act, let alone repeal it. Chanaiwa claims:

> Retrospectively, we can see that the elites were often so carried away by their humanistic impulse towards the universal person, towards nonracialism, and towards brotherhood based on Christianity, reason, and goodwill that they consequently missed the real, specific, and immediate problem of predatory settler colonialism...they treated racism as a monstrous and immoral aberration of the sick, ignorant, and sinning Boers, instead of a symbol and function of colonial conquest, economic exploitation, and privileges. Elites attempted to distinguish between the liberal Anglo-Saxons and racist Boers...They misjudged the parliamentary struggle between English and Afrikaner colonists, which was nothing more than family differences between groups of privileged white settlers over economic and social dividends and over some of the psychological qualms of colonial domination and exploitation, for a clash about humanistic fundamentals. Consequently, they overlooked the underlying ideological consensus and preoccupation with political power, economic self-interests, and raciocultural self-preservation, and, thus, erroneously presumed that while the Boer was *enfant terrible*, King George was their liberator (1980:21).

The inadequacy of feminine sensibility or sympathetic feelings in interrogating patriarchal political structures is dealt with in *Mhudi*. Mhudi's peace project, and therefore Plaatje's empowerment and tribute to [his] women, are haunted by failure. Mzilikazi predicts a "war" Ra-Thaga will not wish away. Neither will Mhudi be the final authority. In this prophecy, Mzilikazi foretells the betrayal of the Batswana by their current friends--the Boers. Read in conjunction with Umnandi's fatalistic view that "so long as there are two men left on earth there will be war" (165); and considering that at least two men are left--Ra-Thaga, de Villiers and Mzilikazi--and finally that Umnandi returns to her husband and gives him a son who "wielded a yet greater power than that of his renowned father" (181), Mzilikazi's prophecy undermines the peace and success of Mhudi's pan-Africanism. Like Shakespeare's women, Plaatje's too can remain women only within specific patriarchal structures, with very little influence on history and the operations of the male domain. If indeed this novel is a tribute to women, it could be suggested, harsh as it may seem, that women remain symbols to be exploited by men in dealing with their bruised masculine ego/failures. To borrow Brink's words, "women [are] merely stages of journey, spaces (topoi) traversed, points of arrival and/or departure" (1996:2) in what are predominantly male quests.

In spite of the perceived weakness of women, both Plaatje and Shakespeare's women are seers and prophetesses, and these references to prophecy take us to the last issue to be discussed. The translatability of *Julius Caesar* was further enabled by the beliefs in the occult which find equivalents in *Mhudi*. Plaatje wrote in *Native Life* that "Africa is a land of prophets and prophetess" (in Couzens 1996:185) and that "the Natives of South Africa, generally speaking, are intensely superstitious" (1916:117). And so were the whites: "But the Natives received not only the white man's civilization and his religion, but have even gullibly imbibed *his superstition*" (118) [emphasis added].

The belief in omens and superstition manifests itself in, among other things, the naming system and in the notion that human destiny is closely linked to the natural world. From planetary movements, prophecies and omens ensued. For example, stars and comets were believed to be the harbingers of catastrophe in human lives. In reading *Julius Caesar*, Plaatje was struck by the way in which Tswana oral tradition and the written traditions of English literature shared common literary and cultural symbols (Willan 1984:352).

When Halley's Comet appeared in 1910, not only did Plaatje name his new born son Halley, but he also elaborated on his people's belief in stars.

> In common with other Bantu tribes, the Bechuana attach many ominous traditions to stellar movements and cometary visitations in particular. Space will not permit of one going as far back as the 30's and 50's to record momentous events, in Sechuana history, which occurred synchronically with the movements of heavenly bodies (in Willan 1984:352).

Hence, as he tells us, the comet's appearance in 1910 coincided with the deaths of Kings Edward VII, Sebele and Bathoeng. Commencing each obituary with a quotation from *Julius Caesar* was therefore natural and a confirmation that African and European cultures do indeed share common beliefs and symbols. Even more importantly, collocating English and Tswana kings grants them equal status (Distiller 2003:117). In light of Plaatje's career, an important political statement is being made, namely that a shared humanity accords each equal treatment and recognition. *Mhudi* allows Plaatje to explore further these beliefs, hence the recurrence of prophecies, seers, and omens. Among these seers is Mhudi.

Against this background, Plaatje's rendition of *Julius Caesar* was relatively an easy task, and an opportunity to reflect on some of his people's social beliefs. Let us then compare and contrast *Julius Caesar* and *Mhudi* for illustration. In *Julius Caesar*, Calphurnia's dream is an omen for Caesar's assassination and its attendant civil chaos.

> A lioness hath whelped in the streets,
> And graves have yawned and yielded up their dead;
> Fierce fiery warriors fight upon the clouds
> In ranks and squadrons and right form of war,
> Which drizzled blood upon the Capitol;
> The noise of battle hurtled in the air,
> Horses did neigh and dying men did groan,
> And ghosts did shriek and squeal about the streets.
> O Caesar, these things are beyond all use,
> And I do fear them (2.2.17-26).

Caesar's death and the resultant chaos are further foretold in the elemental disturbances of thunder and the appearance of comets. Calpurnia tells her husband in a quotation Plaatje used in the obituaries that

> When beggars die there are no comets seen,
> The heavens themselves blaze forth the death of princes (2.2.30-31).

Mhudi has its omens and prophecies which impinge on human destiny. The storm Mhudi traverses recalls Casca's. The narrator tells us, "it was as though the legions of nature were in conflict" (153), and this compares to Casca's

> Either there is a civil strife in heaven
> Or else the world, too saucy with the gods,
> Incenses them to send destruction (1.3.11-13).

The close connection between the human and natural worlds helps us to appreciate how human problems are mirrored in cosmic unrests. In fact, the war in *Mhudi* and about to be initiated in *Caesar*, can only be dramatized by the elemental disturbances of thunderstorms. In *Mhudi*, this storm has regenerative capacity as well.

> The unprecedented severity of the storm, far from depressing her spirit, only served to inspire her with hope. According to the belief of her people, Jupiter Pluvius is the god of Good Fortune, hence she regarded the downpour as his special benediction on her journey (153).

It is hoped that the civil strife in *Caesar* will restore republican rule.

In *Mhudi*, the significance of comets is more elaborate than merely announcing the demise of princes as seen in Calphurnia's statement. As Mzilikazi's soothsayer relates:

> Wise men have always said that such a star is the harbinger of diseases of men and beasts, wars and the overthrow of governments as well as the death of princes. Within the rays of the tail of this star, I can clearly see streams of tears and rivers of blood. I can see the mighty throne of Mzilikazi floating across the crimson stream and reaching a safe landing on the opposite bank. I also perceive clear indications of death and destruction among rulers and commoners but no death seems marked out for Mzilikazi, ruler of the ground and the clouds (137).

To appreciate the power of this prophecy, let us read it in conjunction with Mzilikazi's.

> The Bechuana know not the story of Zungu of old. Remember him my people; he caught a lion's whelp and thought that, if he fed it with the milk of his cows, he would in due course possess a useful mastiff to help him in hunting valuable specimens of wild beasts. The cub grew up, apparently tame and meek, just like an ordinary domestic puppy; but one day Zungu came home and found what? It had eaten his children, chewed up two of his wives, and in destroying it, he himself narrowly escaped being mauled. So, if Tauana and his gang of brigands imagine that they shall have rain and plenty under the protection of these marauding wizards from the sea, they will gather some sense before long.
>
> "Chaka served us just as treacherously. Where is Chaka's dynasty now? Extinguished, by the very Boers who poisoned my wives and are pursuing us today. The Bechuana are fools to think that these unnatural Kiwas (white men) will return their so-called friendship with honest friendship. Together they are laughing at my misery. Let them rejoice; they need all the laughter they can have today for when their deliverers begin to dose them with the same bitter medicine they prepared for me; when the Kiwas rob them of their cattle, their children and

their lands, they will weep their eyes out of their sockets and get left with only their empty throats to squeal in vain for mercy.

"They will despoil them of the very lands they have rendered unsafe for us; they will entice the Bechuana youths to war and chase, only to use them as pack-oxen, yea, they will refuse to share with them the spoils of victory."

"They will turn Bechuana women into beast of burden to drag their loaded wagons to their granaries, while their own bullocks are fattening on the hillside and pining for exercise. They will use the whiplash on the bare skins of women to accelerate their paces, and quicken their activities: they shall take Bechuana women to wife and, with them, breed a race of half man and half goblin, and they will deny them their legitimate lobolo. With their cries unheeded these Bechuana will waste away in helpless fury till the gnome offspring of such miscegenation rise up against their cruel sires; by that time their mucus will blend with their tears past their chins down their heels, then shall come our turn to laugh" (1978:174-75).

This is the final prophecy in a novel that is full of prophecies. Exploiting the accoutrements of oratory (use of narrative proverb, rhetorical questions and the general speaker-audience consciousness), Mzilikazi offers a predictive warning to the Barolong of Boer treachery, already evident in Potgieter's proposal of "a just division of the spoil by keeping all the land for the Boers and handing over the captured cattle to the Barolong" (1978:141). The justice of this proposal is dizzying in its irony. Mzilikazi's oratory which leads to Ndebele migration resembles Mark Antony's, which successfully turns the Plebeians against Caesar's killers. Thus, Mzilikazi and Mark Antony are "men who can talk" (Plaatje 1978:57).

The unification of 1910 and the Natives Land Act of 1913 together with its subsequent inauguration of an apartheid state fulfilled Mzilikazi's prophecy. This ushered in decades of native suffering. Despite its pessimism and destructive severity, this prophecy points to a revolution that probably set the precedent for the historic elections of 1994.

In this section, my aim was to isolate issues that might have attracted Plaatje to *Julius Caesar*, leading him to share it with his Tswana audience. I showed that the play was translatable because it dealt with history, politics, superstition and gender stereotyping, themes which Plaatje grappled with in his own society. To this extent, the translatability of *Caesar* must of necessity be linked to Plaatje's *Mhudi*, a novel in which history, politics, superstition, prophecy and human destiny are explored with amazing skill. Plaatje's presence is felt in his appropriation of these issues to reveal our shared humanity which is necessary in building an ideal civil society. In the next section, I explore how this

translation furthers or does not further Plaatje's concerns with not only the spelling of his language but the transforming of oral material into written forms as well.

Julius Caesar, Orthography and Plaatje's Displacement.

The previous chapter revealed how one of the reasons for translating *The Comedy of Errors*, and indeed all other Shakespearean dramas, was to disseminate and entrench Plaatje's preferred version of the five or so variant orthographies of Setswana. Reasons for Plaatje's choice of this particular variant are to be found in his fascination with phonetics. His interest in the orthography debate explains why his Introduction to *Diphoshophosho* begins with a disquisition on the spelling problem facing Setswana. It is safe to suggest that Plaatje succeeded in deploying *The Comedy of Errors* in disseminating his preferred version of spelling.

On the contrary, the same cannot be said about *Dintshontsho.* In fact, the current rendition represents one extreme end of Plaatje's translation continuum in various ways. Hence, the issue of whether this is indeed the authentic product of Plaatje's translation, is a matter that should not be taken for granted. I will illustrate how the current translation departs from the previous one later in the chapter. One of those ways concerns the orthography which I proceed to address together with its impact on the Plaatje project.

What is the basis for doubting whether this translation is indeed the outcome of Plaatje's hand, where is Plaatje, and what happened to him? To begin with, the play was first printed in 1937, some five years after Plaatje's unfortunate early death in 1932. He did not see it to the publisher, and so it should be expected that Plaatje's commanding voice evident in the earlier translation would be absent, just as Shakespeare's was in the First Folio. This would not be much of an issue had it not been displaced and replaced by the voices of two figures—Doke and Lestrade—whose presence is worth discussing. These professors stand in between Plaatje and the translation, something which we did not experience previously. Who these figures are, what debates they invoke and the significance of such debates to this argument, are the subject of the ensuing section.

Professors Doke and Lestrade were university academics who belonged to the Universities of Witwatersrand and Cape Town respectively, and as outlined in the

previous chapters, they remind us of the orthography debate in which Plaatje was involved. Both were members of the orthography committee, with Lestrade as its chair. Together with their universities, these figures invoke associations which go beyond the mere linguistic issue they are closely associated with: with colonialism, the subjectification of natives and their responses to foreign culture.

These professors, their universities, and the manner in which they proceeded with the spelling issue, have been sufficiently dealt with in the previous chapter and so should not detain us. What should concern us is to illustrate how the current translation fails as Plaatje's weapon in the spelling debate, thereby illustrating his "presence/displacement". Instead of *Dintshontsho* being a means of entrenching the orthography Plaatje inaugurated in the earlier translation, it is a means by which white professors write back at what they felt to be Plaatje's weird and "non-expert" spelling. The spelling used in this translation is, as Doke informs us, the outcome of the committee meeting of April 1937, a variant which obviously runs counter to Plaatje's. In short, the current rendition entrenches what Plaatje contemptuously referred to as SeRuti. Let me consider some of the features of this orthography to justify Plaatje's opposition to it.

At the February 1929 Sotho-Pedi language group meeting in Pretoria, Plaatje had in Willan's words,

> proposed the use of phonetic characters to express sounds which could not be expressed directly by the Roman alphabet, but on neither occasion could he find a seconder. Instead, the meeting as a whole voted by a majority of seven to one to adopt the use of diacritics--accents and stress marks, to be placed over letters of the Roman alphabet. These, Plaatje believed, both disfigured and misrepresented the language, and were in no way an adequate or accurate means of representing the subtleties and variations in the tone and pronunciation of his language (1984:345).

As a result of this proposal, the letter ***c*** was replaced by ***tš*** leading to changes in the spelling of many words. The orthography used in this translation reflects the use of diacritics, circumflexes, accents and stress marks, so that Plaatje's original ***Dinchoncho*** becomes ***Dintšhontšho***. His reaction to the use of diacritics is evident in the following passages.

> Some one at Pretoria appears to have come across orthographic hieroglyphics and fallen head over heels in love with them. We admit that any man is entitled to his fads; but what right has he to embody his notions in our language?

> Anyone with a taste for diacritical hieroglyphs should incorporate them in his own language, not in ours (in Willan 1984:346).

Plaatje considers the use of diacritics, accents and stress marks as obscure, cryptic, complicated, tedious and unnecessary as the use of hieroglyphs.

In 1931 he wrote in the *South African Outlook* of May with disapproval of the proposed orthography.

> Why should the spelling of my language depend on unsightly diacritics, whilst other people spell theirs very neatly with only letters of the alphabet? One has not the space to give samples of the confusing letter-juggling which we are asked to contrive in substitution of our own superior spelling. But one may be permitted to mention only one by way of illustration. For instance, we Bechuana are asked to dispense with the letter ***c*** in order that the Xhosa group may use it as a click. The far-reaching effect of this one omission is that words like *nca* (dog), *mocaca* (bitter), *cacanka* (be angry), etc., will be spelt so: *ntša, motšatša, tšatšanka.* Should one forget to put a small ***v*** on top of every ***s***, then words retain their old values, and they mean not dog etc (as the writer intended) but, *a rift, flimsy* and *strut about* respectively (Plaatje 1996:400).

Plaatje had compelling reasons for frowning upon the new spelling. First, as a poet and a man of good taste, he found the new spelling aesthetically appalling and "unsightly"; it therefore "disfigured" and "misrepresented" his beautiful language. Secondly, the use of diacritics has semantic consequences. An omission of these marks results in changes in meaning as the above passage suggests. Plaatje's concern with meanings is not a new thing. In the previous chapter we noted his concern with missionary spelling's failure to distinguish between the "j" and "y" sounds. Practically, the new spelling was not only tedious and unstable (it is "confusing letter juggling"), but also more time-consuming than Plaatje's preferred version.

> I once exercised on the typewriter the Sechuana Lord's Prayer in the new spelling. Having repeated it several times, I got myself timed, and it took me over six minutes to type it off. In addition, I required another three minutes to go over the copy, with pen and ink, and insert the necessary diacritics. In the present spelling it took me just under three minutes complete with punctuation marks.
>
> In these days of rapid progress, of time and labour saving devices like linotypes, telephones and new Fords, how could anyone force upon our children (by threats to withdraw their government grants, the proceeds of poll taxes paid by their own parents) a cumbersome and retrogressive spelling that requires from 25 to 30 minutes to compose a letter which their grandmothers wrote very neatly, and with a better spelling, in eight or ten minutes? The proposition is hardly worth discussing (Plaatje 1996:401).

Adopting this spelling, Plaatje felt, is like regressing into the "dark ages" of human civilisation, thus undermining the "rapid progress" symbolised by telephones, linotypes and new fords. To use his metaphor, adopting this spelling will be to "drop a 100 years down the progressive ladder" (1996:101).

Plaatje's feud with Doke and Lestrade over how to spell the Setswana language is symbolic of the ambivalence, complexity and internal heterogeneity of modernity, and orthography in particular. Academics, universities and orthography, are aspects and signs of the modernity Plaatje grappled with. In choosing a particular version of spelling, Plaatje embraces modernity. In fact, he acknowledges the extent to which the modern science of spelling could benefit his language by turning it into a written one, thereby ensuring its survival. For him, this science is useful and constructive only if it involves the native speaker. He believes that his version—a blend of modern science and native "expertise"—is "superior" (1996:400) to the "cumbersome and retrogressive" variant the professors and their institutions want to promote. According to Plaatje, the new orthography destroys what he believes to be authentic Setswana by creating SeRuti. This struggle is ultimately a clash of different perceptions of modernity.

Plaatje's implacable opposition to the SeRuti or missionary Setswana academic institutions promoted--an opposition he sustained through to his deathbed--is therefore a logical reaction aimed at restoring not only the beauty of his language but also the dignity and humanity of its speakers. So implacable was his opposition to the SeRuti orthography that, in Schalkwyk and Lapula's words,

> it seemed preferable to him that his collection of Tswana folk-tales, praise poems, and further proverbs should remain unpublished rather than to be disseminated in an orthography that was, for political as well as linguistic reasons, anathema to him (2000:23 *cf.* Willan 1984:342).

The presence of these figures here, their remarks and therefore Plaatje's "proxies", is a symbolic act of triumph over what Plaatje stood for: his version of the orthography; struggles to empower and inspire his people; his assertion of their humanity, his penetrating interaction with Shakespeare, and his version of modernity. The publication of his translation in what he disparagingly referred to as "discordant SeRuti" and by the so-called experts was certainly not welcomed to Plaatje, and for Shepherd to suggest in the epigraph to this chapter that this publication is a collaborative effort, can only be

described as patronizing doublespeak. Admittedly, both Lestrade and Doke deserve credit for rescuing this translation. Without their efforts, *Dintshontsho* would be another casualty on Plaatje's long list of works that have not survived.

The intervention of the two professors deserves extended discussion to highlight the deeper political tensions beyond the scientific and somewhat dry spelling issue, and the impact of such on Plaatje's projects. A close reading, a re-translation even, of the Preface and the Introduction to the translation is necessary to illustrate Plaatje's "displacement" and to create a basis on which I will anchor the discussion on the possible ideological implications of their intervention.

Doke and Lestrade's remarks reflect a unity of purpose whose ideology is to silence, displace and place Plaatje's voice under erasure. Doke's General Editor's Introduction begins with a tribute to Plaatje whom he admires as having had "exceptional strength, drive, originality and motivation to work and whose efforts will leave an indelible mark on Black literature in South Africa" (p.iii).

He continues to illustrate Plaatje's originality and talent in his seminal translations of some of Shakespeare's plays, culminating in the publication in 1930 of *Diphoshophosho*, in which Plaatje unveils not only his great talent, but also his language's poetic wealth and beauty. What is, however, omitted from Doke's tribute is Plaatje's political activism. In Schalkwyk and Lapula's words, Doke's "appreciative account of Plaatje's achievements...passes over his political struggle for the rights of African people in silence" (2000:22). One cannot help but suspect this to be deliberate, for his political activism, which cuts across his entire career, runs counter to the philosophy that informs Doke's intervention in this translation. That is, Plaatje's political ideology is a direct response to Doke and Lestrade's orthographic interests.

Doke's tribute is, however, compromised when he introduces what could be seen as the crux of his introductory remarks, namely the many errors that supposedly marred Plaatje's translations of Shakespeare:

> Plaatje's translation is marred by a bad end-product, and his failure to take into account the general agreement of everything in the original and the translation, and his inconsistent orthography (p.iii)

Doke then laments the lack of a knowledgeable person who could have advised Plaatje in his great efforts. Had there been such a person, the numerous errors in the translation would, Doke wants us to believe, have been greatly reduced. It is not hard to detect Doke's justification of his intervention.

Doke proceeds to tell us how after Plaatje's death, the department of Bantu Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand inherited his manuscript. On the basis of the title page of his earlier translation, the department, with the aid of Plaatje's great friend and collaborator David Ramoshoana, tried to trace his unpublished manuscripts, but with little success. As he tells us,

> The manuscript of his Setswana dictionary, together with his expanded collection of proverbs and other translations of Shakespeare were not found, except *Dintšhontšho* (p.iv).

The delayed publication of this translation, we are further informed, was due to the raging debate over how to write the language. The 1937 Johannesburg gathering resolved to publish the translation "as a fitting commemoration or tribute to this man who has contributed tremendously to Setswana literature" (p.iv). This publication was also to be used to disseminate the new orthography adopted by the Johannesburg committee meeting. Enter Professor Lestrade, the chair of the committee, who was commissioned to "correct Plaatje's spelling in line with the accepted orthography" (p.iv). However, upon a careful reading of the manuscript, Lestrade noticed a litany of errors. To quote Doke,

> Lestrade found many instances of mis-translations which did not agree with what appeared in Shakespeare's original, and other errors similar to what can be found in *Diphôšôphôšo* (p.iv).

Lestrade's mandate was thus extended to include "editing and arranging" the translation so that, in Doke's words, "what gets published becomes a fitting commemoration" (p.iv). Doke then acknowledges Lestrade's successful collaborative work with Mangoaela, an assistant tutor with the department of Bantu Studies at the University of Cape Town. (I will comment on this alliance later). Doke suggests that due to Lestrade and Mangoaela's work, the publication of this translation is a contribution to Setswana literature, and that he is "confident Plaatje would have welcomed this publication and its revisions as a continuation of his good work, more so that he had asked Ramoshoana to revise, and correct this translation" (p.iv). What is disturbing about Doke's closing remarks is the

suggestion that this translation could only be a contribution to Setswana literature after Lestrade and Mangoaela's revision.

Lestrade's Preface continues along the lines of Doke's patronizing remarks, except that the former is more detailed and thus more patronizing than his colleague. He begins in a restorative fashion by reminding us of the true authorship of the text at hand; that it was translated into Setswana by Solomon Tshekiso Plaatje and that he (Lestrade) edited and arranged it as requested to prepare it for publication (p.ix).

Lestrade proceeds to outline his initial mandate, namely to change Plaatje's spelling in line with the new orthography as adopted by the Johannesburg meeting of 1937. He was further to correct the use of punctuation marks, capitalization and make other necessary revisions, but not to change Plaatje's wording. But, Lestrade tells us, upon closely examining the manuscript, he found major errors whose corrections were forced on him. The litany of errors and other inaccuracies Lestrade points out are worth reproducing.

> Plaatje's translation was not a true translation of Shakespeare's words, but a translation of the intention of his [not clear whether Plaatje's or Shakespeare's] words. This I was aware of and it did not worry me much. What worried me the most are the many errors I found in the manuscript, errors which had to be corrected. First, Plaatje did not follow a single way of writing Setswana; of writing in Setswana Roman names of people and places; and also of translating into Setswana words borrowed from English. Secondly, Plaatje committed errors of translation. At times he reduced what Shakespeare wrote by not translating certain words, lines, dialogues and other verses; more often than not these reductions changed the sense of the omitted words. In some cases, he made additions to what Shakespeare wrote by introducing what is otherwise not in the original; in most instances these additions were not necessary/did not make sense. Sometimes he translated wrongly probably due to his not understanding English very well, while at times he was merely careless by not being careful with what he was writing. All these errors affected the sense and even diminished the beauty of Shakespeare's words. Thirdly, there was a mix-up/confusion in the stage directions, dialogues and actions of characters. In some cases, Shakespeare's were left out, in some cases Plaatje introduced his own, the dialogue of two or three people in Shakespeare was assigned to one person in Plaatje, while at times a single person's dialogue was assigned to a different person in Plaatje's rendition (v-vi).

It was upon the discovery of these gross errors that Lestrade's mandate was extended to purge the translation of such inaccuracies. Admittedly, he does not know which English edition Plaatje used, nor does he tell us which English edition he himself held. On the basis of not knowing which edition Plaatje had, he hopes to tone down his criticism of

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Plaatje's errors, an exercise which amounts to mere rhetoric in his condescension, for as we see, he does not relinquish the idea of Plaatje being a bad translator and a betrayer of the pure original by apportioning most of the blame for the errors to him (vi).

Like his colleague, Lestrade continues to remark that had Plaatje lived to see his translation to the printers, he would have made the necessary corrections to it, as indeed he had asked his fellow Tswana speakers to read and make the necessary revisions. True, Plaatje would have liked corrections made to his translation, but would have loathed the interference of the representatives of the SeRuti and their orthography in his work. Lestrade then confesses the true reasons for his revisions, namely and principally "the honour due to Shakespeare" (vi), and grudgingly, the "honour due to Plaatje" (vi):

> First, I wanted the translation to state in Setswana *the intention of what Shakespeare wrote* without adding or reducing it, the difference only being the language. Secondly, I wanted the translation to pay tribute to its author, Plaatje, and make his name immortal once he has passed on. It is for this reason that I did not only regularize spelling, the use of punctuation marks, capitalization and the division or formation of words, but went further to correct wording where I felt the need so as to pay respect to Shakespeare, Plaatje and the Setswana language (vi)[emphasis added].

Lestrade's remarks are problematic, but given the context in which they were made, the search for perfect homology between the original and the translation is understandable. In contrast to Lestrade's search for perfect translations, Plaatje's irregularities, lack of formula, and carelessness characteristic of his mentor (see Hinman 1996:ix, Cloud 1991) demonstrate that translation can never match the original perfectly. He was therefore ahead of his time as far as translation theory is concerned. Given the politics of this translation, Lestrade's attempts to restore Shakespeare, Plaatje and Setswana's honour could be interpreted as reinforcing current power structures. Shakespeare will be restored as the quintessential English poet and icon of western civilization; Plaatje as the ambitious and "non-expert" native who deserves expert patronage to enable him to handle Shakespeare. He is therefore restored as the native whose translation of Shakespeare can only succeed in violating the beauty of his words, "intentions" and his cultural power. Consequently, this restoration smacks of putting the native in his place. Setswana is restored as a native language to be studied by white academics through state sponsored schemes before it can disseminate Shakespeare. Given that Lestrade was adamant not to involve 'non-expert' natives in the orthography issue, the claim to honour Plaatje and his language is therefore suspect and highly patronizing. The greatest

honour Plaatje would have welcomed for himself and his language, is the involvement of informed native opinion by the self-appointed menders of Setswana in the orthography debate. Anything less amounted to gross violation of the dignity and beauty of the language and its speakers. It is not surprising that the adopted spelling is considered "unsightly" and therefore "disfigured" his language.

To justify his revisions, Lestrade makes the following remarks. First, that to evaluate his success, the reader should juxtapose what is here printed with what appears as Shakespeare's English edition, fully cognisant of what has been said about the errors in Plaatje's manuscript (vi). This methodological evaluation is only possible if we had Plaatje's manuscript against which to vet Lestrade's revisions. So far, all efforts to trace the manuscripts have been unsuccessful. The manuscript did not survive, probably because minority professors did not consider it important or interesting enough to preserve in the archives.

Lestrade requests that those who are unable to juxtapose these texts, should accept that he did not change any wording as written by Plaatje, save for instances where he was compelled to make changes in accordance with his noble intention of eliminating what he perceived to be "reductions, additions, mis-translations and confusions" (vi). In the absence of Plaatje's manuscript, Lestrade's proposition remains problematic.

Lestrade acknowledges the great assistance he received from

> Mr. G. L. Mangoaela, an assistant tutor in Sesotho and Setswana Studies at the University of Cape Town. Mangoaela, who is a Mosotho of Moshweshwe, is well acquainted and familiar with the Batswana by living with them for years, and therefore knows their language very well (vii).

The choice of Mangoaela--in contrast to Ramoshoana— is problematic. To use Plaatje's criteria, Mangoaela neither

> wrote a Sechuana book or pamphlet nor ever lived in Bechuanaland or in districts where the unadulterated Sechuana is spoken (Plaatje 1996:398)

Nothing short of political intentions could best explain this anomaly. Ramoshoana was the right candidate.

Having justified the choice of his assistant, Lestrade itemizes his assistance.

> Mangoaela helped me in correcting spelling, regularizing the use of punctuation marks, capitalization and word parts. He also helped me in my extended mandate when I corrected Plaatje's errors and in the overall project. Most of the corrections were first suggested by me, as I understood the intentions of Shakespeare's word and how I understood Setswana. But while Mangoaela endorsed the corrections, I remain answerable to their presence. Mangoaela also translated Doke's General Editor's Introduction into Setswana and also edited my Preface when I wanted assistance in writing it in Setswana (vii).

It would have been helpful if examples had been provided. This would have enabled the evaluation of the translation by appreciating the factors influencing some of the suggested corrections. For example, it would be clear how Mangoaela's Sesotho background comes to bear on his suggestions on Setswana. Their absence hampers an in-depth analysis of this translation. The other assistant was Mr. Z.K. Mathews of Fort Hare who read and made corrections to a few errors in the book after Lestrade's revisions. The choice of Mathews, an academic with the University of Fort Hare, together with that of Mangoaela, could be evidence of the restoration of Shakespeare to the academy, or at the least, the academic policing of Shakespeare's dissemination to ordinary people. This restoration, it is important to emphasize, forms a major part of the philosophy of Doke and Lestrade's intervention.

Lestrade then craves the reader's indulgence by wanting to mention briefly three aspects which he thinks are noteworthy. I follow these up here because of their importance to the overall appreciation of Plaatje's translation. The first point he mentions is that of the Setswana orthography. This is crucial in a variety of ways. First, it reminds us of the Introduction to *Diphoshophosho* in which Plaatje discusses the spelling problem and the possible solutions to it. Lestrade's return to this issue emphasizes its centrality not only to the Plaatje project, but also to that of Doke and Lestrade. This matter has both spatial/temporal and political dimensions. From the time of *Sechuana Proverbs* in 1916 through to *Diphoshophosho* in 1930 up to *Dintshontsho* in 1937, the orthography debate had evolved significantly. With the publication of Plaatje's second translation, the orthography matter seems settled. Thus the current variant has become the official orthography through which *Dintshontsho* is published. In terms of function, the current Introduction is therefore a kind of "writing-back" to the earlier one in which battle-lines are revisited, but this time victory is also announced and celebrated.

However, an interesting development is mentioned, a development which recalls what we saw in *Diphoshophosho*. Lestrade informs us that while the spelling is an outcome of the Johannesburg consensus, in "the use of punctuation marks, capitalization, word formation and other matters related to the publication of this book" he has "followed his own path" and asks readers to forgive him (vii). In a way, like Plaatje, Lestrade uses the translation as a means to an end, namely to disseminate his own ideas on linguistics. He however acknowledges that he followed Plaatje's representation of Setswana sounds, and admits that three books came to his aid in this regard: Plaatje's book, in which he shows how he thought Setswana sounds should be represented; Professor Daniel Jones's, in which he presents Plaatje's sounds differently; and Lestrade's own unpublished works written in London in 1922/3 when he worked with Plaatje (viii). Without any bibliography, it is difficult to establish which of Jones's books Lestrade refers to, and more curiously he makes no direct reference to Jones and Plaatje's joint publication of *A Sechuana Reader*. Also not mentioned is the International Phonetic Alphabet from which Plaatje borrowed certain letters to supplement the twenty-six-letter Roman alphabet.

However, Lestrade admits that all these books fail to provide an acceptable rule of presenting sounds of the following letters: "*e*" and "*ê*" and "*o*" and "*ô*". This explains why he uses circumflexes and diacritics on some letters. This problem should remind us of the letters Plaatje borrowed from the International Phonetic Alphabet in order to establish significant semantic distinctions. For Lestrade to bring this up at this time when the reader expects the problem to have long been solved, and Lestrade's refusal to acknowledge Plaatje's solution to it, are all reflective of the struggle over turf between native speakers and the representatives of SeRuti in which the latter attempts to silence the other.

The second issue Lestrade focuses on is Plaatje's inconsistency in translating Roman names into Setswana. Here an example is used to explain Plaatje's lack of a proper formula.

> The *–us* Roman suffix is translated into Setswana by sometimes omitting it (*Antonius, Antoni*), sometimes rendered as *ose* (sic) (*Cassius, Kasiose*), or as *–ase* (*Lucius, Losease*), as *–o* (*Trebonius, Trebonio*), and what else; these reflect a lack of formula in Plaatje's translation…In some cases he retained names in their Roman forms, sometimes retained them as they are written in English (viii).

To solve this inconsistency, Lestrade tells us that he followed the Roman versions of the names and translated them into Setswana, following Setswana rules by using sounds which Batswana use in translating names drawn from other languages (viii). Here Lestrade does not provide any examples and so one is left guessing. Lestrade's concern for rules and formulas is an issue I will return to later and use it to show how over-emphasis on grammatical rules produces unexciting translations. I can mention in passing though that the emphasis on regularity robs the translation of its creativity, particularly in the rendition of characters' names.

More profoundly, Lestrade's insistence on regularity, formula, and therefore predictability raises a fundamental issue which challenges his expert knowledge of Shakespeare, in particular, Lestrade's implied notion of a "stable Shakespeare" with a consistent and predictable naming system. Names, or what Random Cloud calls "speech tags" are seldom consistent in Shakespeare's Quartos and Folios. In Cloud's words:

> Each time he summoned a character, Shakespeare was free to rename her, and he was just the author to exploit that freedom. He is thus, thank God, unpredictable. Pope's nomenclature for Shakespeare's characters is highly predictable; Shakespeare's is not (1991:92).

Like Pope, Lestrade seeks to impose formula where it rarely existed before. Thus his views represent a particular strand of editorial intervention in the construction of a "stable Shakespeare" whose sanctity must be protected against desecration by non-expert natives. Such scores of editors are, in Cloud's opinion, not only responsible for "regularizing" Shakespeare's nomenclature, but also for imposing lists of dramatis personae. In his words,

> A corollary of editorial reform of speech tags is the creation of editorial dramatis-personae lists. No Shakespeare text published before his death has such a list, and only a handful exist in the folio tradition after his death. Why editors should inflict dramatis-personae lists on plays, and not novellae-personae lists on novels or sonnetae-personae lists on sonnet sequences, is not clear to me (1991:95).

Plaatje's lack of formula is therefore consistent with his mentor's practices, free from the tyranny of editorial intervention. Whether Plaatje's inconsistencies were deliberate or accidental is yet to be established. With Lestrade's professed knowledge of Shakespeare, one would expect him to be aware of Shakespeare's inconsistent nomenclature, if not aware that "Shakespeare's text was drifting" (Cloud 1991:94). Lestrade's knowledge of Shakespeare's intentions, like Plaatje's, could be suspect.

Thirdly, Lestrade charges that Plaatje's manuscript was full of English words.

> For example, Plaatje at times used authentic Setswana words as (*mmuso, kgotla*); sometimes he used English equivalents such as (*goromente, parlamente*); at times he used English words where authentic Setswana words were appropriate as (*fešene* instead of *mokgwa*); sometimes he committed errors in translating as in (*bootless* for *lefela*/nothing" instead of *without shoes/shoeless*) (viii).

As an alternative to these anomalies Lestrade harps once more on his noble aim of correcting errors, and minimising the use of English words by replacing them with Setswana ones (viii). This he claims was motivated by his sole concern of writing and showing respect to Setswana. He asks for forgiveness if he is perceived to have overdone this.

While Lestrade's corrections may seem legitimate and sensible, he seems however to be at odds with some of the philosophical justifications underpinning Plaatje's translation. In a country that was destined to embrace multi-lingualism and multi-culturalism, the search for equivalents and differences was one important factor towards establishing a commonwealth of human experience. While eliminating English words from a Setswana translation is a legitimate enterprise, the presence of such words is a reminder of the linguistic and cultural mosaic on the ground. A translation of this nature should thus not be divorced from reality, nor should it claim to be presenting a Setswana language whose vocabulary is so well developed as not to borrow from other languages. While the retention of borrowed words could be potentially problematic, it is nevertheless essential because it illustrates Benjamin's idea of the kinship between languages, and how no single language can achieve its purpose without the assistance of others. Therefore, a borrowed word may emphatically or clearly state the idea better than a Setswana word. Thus the phonologically adapted *goromente* (from government) might have been found to be more appropriate in expressing the form of government found in Caesar as opposed to the authentic Setswana word *mmuso* or even *kgotla.*

The use of *goromente* and *parlamente* takes on added significance. In the post-union South Africa, Plaatje inflects these words with bitterness and sarcasm for it was in the modern parliament (and its associated governance) where the infamous land act was decided. The essence of *parlamente* will therefore contrast sharply to the traditional *kgotla* system which in spite of its inherent politics of inclusion and exclusion, allows a larger section of the population not only to attend, but also to contribute to the discussion. If the land act

had been subjected to the *kgotla* process, it is safe to argue that it would not have passed. Parliament is appropriately used to conjure the limitations in terms of access to it, and the possible undemocratic decisions that may arise from it. The Land Act and Caesar's refusal to re-consider Publius' case are telling examples of the potential absolutism of parliament.

More practical is the fact that some of these English words have now become part of the Setswana lexicon, and the example of *parlamente* is a good one. While it may be replaced by *kgotla*, the former retains the social contexts from which it was derived, and those contexts have been domesticated and adapted in an environment which had its own equivalent aspects. That is, while the modern parliament is the equivalent of the traditional *kgotla*, there are nuanced differences between the two. For example, eligibility to parliament may differ from one's eligibility to the traditional ruling council. Plaatje's aim was therefore to show how the two systems of rule were, despite historical and social contexts, both commensurate and different. In fact, Plaatje's phonological adaptation of parliament as the equivalent of the Roman Senate House demonstrates the multiple translations he was undertaking. Three societies--Tswana, English and Roman--are being compared and contrasted simultaneously. Juxtaposing these societies reveals equivalences and differences which will form the basis for cultural exchange. Examples from *Caesar* and *Mhudi* have shown how in some cases Tswana institutions could be more (un)democratic than their European counterparts. Ultimately, the use of foreign words is in accordance with Plaatje's own political convictions--to draw from diversity and create a world of coexistence. This is also an acknowledgement of the fact that the language has not remained immune to the historical circumstances in which it finds itself. It cannot therefore claim to be pure or pristine. By using *parlamente* Plaatje was not in any way diminishing Setswana, but wanted to invoke the social and political contexts of *Julius Caesar*. It is curious that Lestrade should be the person claiming to be more respectful to Setswana than Plaatje on the basis of the number of English/Setswana words. Lestrade seems to have been more concerned with translating literally. Hence he will judge himself an effective translator by the number of Setswana words with which he has replaced English ones. Shakespeare himself borrowed from other languages and cultures.

Where Plaatje's words were replaced by Lestrade's, Mangoaela was on cue to offer the necessary linguistic assistance. Mangoaela assisted in writing the language spoken by Plaatje. With his assistance, Lestrade claims to have followed closely Plaatje's translation of the intention of Shakespeare's words (viii-ix). Lestrade returns once more to Mangoaela's credentials to justify the revision of this rendition, except that here Mangoaela's curriculum vitae is expanded: "Mangoaela knows very well many dialects of Setswana including Serolong which was spoken by Plaatje" (ix).

The justification of Mangoaela's knowledge of Setswana contradicts Plaatje's insistence that "only one man...is capable of determining the spelling of this language. That man is the Native" (Plaatje 1996:402), and Peter Sebina's trenchant distinction between "Bechuana and Basuto" (Willan 1984:326).

Not to be outshone, Lestrade continues that

> I also learnt Serolong from Plaatje in London. Together we worked in trying to write Serolong in the translation of Plaatje's words (ix).

In the last paragraph of his Preface, Lestrade states that he did not make any distinctions between Plaatje's words and his own for two reasons:

> First, I would be happy if this book is read as if it is a product of one person, namely Plaatje. Secondly, by not showing where I assisted him, my major aim was to pay tribute to this remarkable Motswana. In this Preface, I was supposed to point out Plaatje's errors, and this I did without being harsh and severe (ix).

Lestrade hopes the success of the translation will depend on the readers' inability to distinguish Plaatje's words from his and Mangoaela's. It is a difficult task to accomplish without Plaatje's manuscript which Lestrade corrected. In any case, I doubt if readers can pretend that the present translation is a product of one person (Plaatje).

Lestrade ends his Preface on a panegyric note.

> Plaatje's *Dintshontsho tsa bo-Juliuse Kesara* is a monumental legacy he bequeaths to Batswana. Plaatje accomplished a difficult task by translating Shakespeare into Setswana, and here he showed his great abilities. His language is full of exciting words, remarkable and penetrating dialogues: all these surprised and thrilled me. I can only end by saying that this man has accomplished a lot: he promoted Setswana, and so Batswana should promote/immortalize his name (ix).

Having almost reproduced Doke's and Lestrade's Introductions/Prefaces, it is fitting to make some general remarks on the possible ideological reasons underpinning their

intervention in Plaatje's work. Plaatje's relationship to the two professors should be placed in colonial contexts reminiscent of the Prospero-Caliban situation I explored in the first chapter. Such contexts, we may recall, are riddled with hierarchical binaries of master/slave, us/them, expert/non-expert. One of the most important outcomes of such hierarchies is the perception of the native as inferior, backward, childlike, ignorant and therefore in need of guidance from the superior master. In Plaatje's situation, we observed in the previous chapter how professors were charged with the responsibility of designing schemes for natives. Plaatje's remark regarding the orthography issue I have referred to makes the point.

> It is to be regretted that at this end of the continent the scheme was attacked along real South African lines; i.e. the Natives know not what they need. So, let university professors lay down a scheme, in the light of science; and Native schools will have to adopt it or do without government grants (Plaatje 1996:398).

The native has to chose between two evils. Whichever choice they make results in their dis-empowerment. Consequently, Plaatje's struggles to inspire his people will come to nought.

It is thus appropriate to suggest that while the relationship between Plaatje and the two professors may be seen as a linguistic matter, it is equally a poignant reflection of the deep-seated politics of colonialism. The professors represent the dominant ideology in which they can construct the native in ways that are intended to render him dependent and therefore manageably controlled. Plaatje is the non-expert native for whom the professors with their vast expertise, design schemes. As suggested, the struggle over orthography is a clash of perceptions of modernity and its impact. While the professors and their institutions perceive the native as a *tabula rasa* for whom modernity must be "interpreted", Plaatje surprises them by offering a "reconstituted" perception which acknowledges the native's "expertise" and agency. In fact, Plaatje reveals the "retrogressiveness and cumbersomeness" of the modernity (reflected in orthography) the professors stand for. His implacable resistance to this orthography presents him as Fanon's revolutionary native or Gramsci's organic intellectual who defies colonialist constructions of natives as ignorant and therefore in need of salvation from this state. His ability to appreciate and even appropriate/transform Shakespeare marks him as a Caliban who defies racist notions of the uneducability of the natives and also the native's ability to learn the master discourse and use it for his emancipatory efforts. Like Caliban, he learns and uses the master's language effectively against his teachers, thus warranting

constant surveillance. The professors' ostensible claims of doing service to native languages by formulating orthographies based on science, are therefore distastefully patronizing, and a euphemization of colonial domination.

The battlefield is indigenous vernaculars, and this is not surprising, for the languages of the "natives" have, from the inception of imperialism, remained the subjects of interest to the colonial powers as a means of controlling the peoples of the new worlds. The battlefield is, however, extended to another crucial aspect, namely, Shakespeare who both as person and body of texts has not been an innocent by-stander in the colonial enterprise. The use of Shakespeare here by both professors and Plaatje for different purposes deserves further discussion.

Judging by Lestrade's remarks, Shakespeare belongs to the select few in the academy, or rather, his dissemination to ordinary people should be controlled by academics, while for Plaatje Shakespeare is locatable in the lives of common people in their indigenous communities. Hence among his Tswana people the bard became William Tsikinya-Chaka who, as Plaatje wrote, "became noted among some of my readers as a reliable white oracle" (Plaatje 1996:211). Consequently for Plaatje, Shakespeare belongs to all and is thus one of the many means of establishing our common humanity. Put more precisely, Plaatje uses Shakespeare to challenge hierarchies between nations. By intervening in Plaatje's "trivialisation" of Shakespeare, Lestrade wants to re-inscribe hierarchies by restoring Shakespeare to the academy and make him the preserve of the few. In the mean time, Plaatje is restored as the "non-expert" who with his less-than-basic education can only succeed in trivializing and diminishing Shakespeare's cultural power and poetic beauty. In view of the preceding, it seems morally obligatory for Lestrade to *de-trivialize* Shakespeare by restoring his political power as a hierarchising force.

Lestrade's restoration is not only evident in the orthography (the current spelling decided by academics) he uses in this translation, but also on the title page of the translation. The general heading of ***MABOLELO A GA TSIKINYA-CHAKA/ THE SAYINGS OF TSIKINYA-CHAKA***, and the series under which Shakespeare's plays were to appear in Setswana, together with Plaatje's signature (an indication of his other publications including the translations of Shakespeare), are conspicuously eliminated from the title

page. Effectively, the "***Mabolelo***" series is no more. What we have is the translated title of the play; the original William Shakespeare replaces the accessible Tsikinya-Chaka; the statement that Plaatje is the translator (and note the formal Solomon Tshekiso Plaatje in contrast to the familiar and informal Sol. T. Plaatje of the earlier translation); what Plaatje would have loathed the most, is Lestrade's statement that he "corrected and arranged" Plaatje's otherwise "careless and error-infested translation" and the appearance of the official emblem of the University of the Witwatersrand. Evident in all the wording of the title page and the rest of the translation, are the "unsightly diacritics" and circumflexes, which reflect a change in the orthography from the one Plaatje had used earlier. In all these changes, Schalkwyk and Lapula argue,

> the Shakespeare of the Western canon, of Englishness and universal human value, has been reappropriated and restored by a white, English academic. Gone is the Tsikinya-Chaka of Plaatje's original; the proper English name is returned to the title page and retained in its pristine glory throughout the text (2000:23).

These remarks identify Lestrade as "the white, English academic" who restores Shakespeare's power. Mangoaela was an appendage in a larger political enterprise.

Lestrade's desire to restore Shakespeare to the academy is further evident in the conscious replacement of Ramoshoana with Mangoaela, and to some extent Z.K. Mathews of the University of Fort Hare, whom Lestrade acknowledged as one of his editors. Ramoshoana, we might recall was a mere teacher at Hopetown, but his knowledge of Setswana was profound and penetrating. The choice of Mangoaela in opposition to Ramoshoana confirms Plaatje's views on the composition of the Setswana Orthography Committee and the general attempt to eliminate informed native opinion and so-called non-expert natives on the matter so as, in his words, to generate subjects for a series of academic conferences (Plaatje 1996:420). Ramoshoana and Plaatje shared similar views on Setswana. For example, they collaborated in several researches including the compilation of a Setswana dictionary (Plaatje 1996:380). With the death of Plaatje, the logical expectation would be to utilize his friend's great knowledge, considering that he was a native speaker of the language as well. Logistical reasons notwithstanding, Lestrade deliberately ignored Ramoshoana because involving him would mean endorsing Plaatje's views and therefore consulting people who were not "experts" in these matters. Instead, Doke mentions Ramoshoana only in the tracing of Plaatje's manuscripts, after which we hear of him no more in the preparation of the

salvaged translation of *Julius Caesar* for publication. Mangoaela and Mathews, are in Lestrade's notion, "experts".

This restoration also returns Shakespeare to the theatre, thus taking him away from the lives of ordinary people. Returning him to the Kimberley Theatre and the De Jong Havilland Company, reminds us that he is complicated and not readily accessible. Hence, his introduction to South Africa is, as we may recall, a novel and daring experimentation.

Plaatje and Lestrade are symbolic, corresponding not only to the Caliban-Prospero relationship, but also reflective of scholarly trajectories in the humanities, and more specifically in Shakespeare scholarship. Plaatje's views on Shakespeare may be thought of as corresponding to post-colonial criticism and Lestrade's to conservative, colonialist views in which Shakespeare approaches the sacrosanct. But as is evident in the first chapter, the distinction or categorization into colonial and post-colonial does not imply discrete or dichotomous positions, but interlocking viewpoints. This therefore illustrates the complexity of Shakespeare, and the multiple appropriation of his texts. I suggest that Lestrade fails to appreciate this complexity by upholding the notion of a 'stable Shakespeare' who could be restored to a pristine condition. It is thus appropriate to suggest that the feud between the two reflects the raging debates between post-colonial and for want of better terminology, colonialist criticisms, or at least, the development of Shakespeare criticism from the conservatism of Lestrade to the "flexible" post-colonialist readings that Plaatje sets in motion in these translations. It is fitting therefore to credit Plaatje, whose education never went beyond primary three, with having initiated in Southern Africa, decades ago, what today is commonly referred to as Post-Colonial criticism of Shakespeare. Regrettably, not many post-colonial readings of Shakespeare acknowledge him. It is time such criticism should do so, as indeed Johnson and Distiller do in *Shakespeare and South Africa* (1996) and *Shakespeare in South Africa: Literary Theory and Practice* (2003) respectively.

From Plaatje's feud with Lestrade over where Shakespeare should belong, it becomes clear how, despite his claim to know "Shakespeare's intentions", Lestrade exhibits a superficial knowledge of him (Shakespeare). If he had read Shakespeare thoroughly as he wants us to believe, he would have noticed the extent to which Shakespeare defies

pigeonholing. The Prospero-Caliban relationship could be invoked here as a fitting metaphor for Shakespeare's complexity and a window into how he should be read. A careful examination of the Prospero-Caliban duo illuminates how Shakespeare affords both the master and servant a platform from which to articulate their concerns. Caliban's curses, ineffective as they might be, are a forceful metaphor in which marginalized peoples of the world respond to the colonizing influence of western metropoles. Translation, the process by which Plaatje invites Lestrade's intervention, is synonymous with Caliban's curses or use of language and his adventurous attempts to populate the isle with culturally hybrid citizens or *mestizas*. Put more directly, Lestrade failed to see himself in Prospero, a powerful metaphor of the "expertise" he stood for.

The title of 'expert' euphemises strategies of colonial domination. Like Prospero, the expert knowledge of the professors is first dependent upon native expertise, which ironically it seeks to suppress for its (white academic expertise) survival. Caliban's knowledge of the island is necessary for Prospero's survival and ultimate domination of his servant.

> And then I loved thee
> And show'd thee all the qualities o' th' Isle,
> The fresh springs, brine-pits, barren place and fertile. (I.2.339-341)

Lestrade claims to have worked with Plaatje in England, but like Prospero, he uses Plaatje's knowledge in ways that fail to acknowledge him (Plaatje) as an 'expert'. This is compounded by Lestrade's explicit exclusion of Plaatje in the spelling debate.

The overall effect of the intervention of these professors is that it runs counter to Plaatje's major cultural and political project of generating pride and confidence in his people so as to enable them to participate fully in the struggles of their time. That is, by holding the supremacist view that "natives" do not know what they need or are not experts even in matters closer to them, the professors push the native South Africans further into the abyss of powerlessness and dependence on the powers that be for their survival. This enslaves them further. Plaatje's ideal civil society could only remain a dream. Furthermore, by being Plaatje's proxies, the professors and their assistants kill the modern leadership to which Plaatje and colleagues committed themselves to further the interests of "their people". According to Plaatje, Lestrade and Doke cannot satisfactorily articulate the needs of the Batswana.

Let me conclude this section by returning briefly to the litany of errors Lestrade has cited. He wants us to believe that the emendations he made are not substantial enough to effect major semantic shifts. Until Plaatje's manuscript surfaces, we cannot establish the truth of these claims. Treating this translation as Plaatje's, as indeed Lestrade hopes, could only be a leap of faith made in the dark. My contention is that having accused Plaatje of "mistranslating, carelessness and not paying attention to the agreement of the original to the translation", Lestrade's emendations were probably substantial, and an outcome of his interpretation of the English text. To this extent, what is here examined must be rightly seen as a product of at least two people and this examination would have benefited from the availability of Plaatje's manuscript to be contrasted with what is here present.

The preceding discussion has shown the extent to which the intervention of the professors is more than a linguistic exercise of regularising the orthography; it is a deeply political enterprise of re-inscribing Shakespeare's cultural power. Thus rescuing him from the carnivalization, "brutalization", menace and domestication to which the natives have put him, is regarded as a responsible task for white academics to undertake. I contend that with regard to orthography, the current translation stands in sharp contrast to the earlier one and the philosophy behind it. Thus it fails as Plaatje's tool in entrenching his preferred spelling, as he is displaced by white academics.

However, the deployment of this translation by white academics as a writing back at Plaatje acknowledges the "menace" and disruptive power colonial subjects pose to colonial discourses. In Ashcroft's terms, the colonial subjects are capable of "interpolating" dominant discourses, proving that they are "not passive ciphers of discursive practices" (2001:47-48) and "never simply a *tabula rasa* on which colonial discourse can inscribe its representations" (2001:44). Although this translation does not use Plaatje's spelling, it is nevertheless successful in pointing to the "non-expert" native's capacity to "scare" representatives of dominant colonial discourses. In fact, Plaatje's opposition to the proposed orthography bore fruit in a unanimous conference resolution at Kimberley in October 1930:

> This Union, after considering the innovations proposed by the Orthography Committee of Pretoria, which intends to create a uniform spelling for all the languages of Africa, is of the opinion that from the point of view of the Sechuana-speaking sections of the Bantu race the proposals are unduly

> cumbersome; that the complicated and unnecessarily numerous diacritical signs will occasion useless waste of time and space and, compared with the missionary orthography, at present in vogue (which is phonetically simple and easy to learn), this Union feels that the Phonetic proposals will constitute a hindrance rather than an encouragement to the study of the vernacular (in Willan 1984:347).

This section reflects an ambivalence, in which Plaatje is simultaneously present and absent. While he is physically displaced by white academics, he is nevertheless symbolically present and a 'menace' to what they stand for. Let me examine in the following section the proverbial uses and therefore determine to what extent the translation dis/continues Plaatje's preservation of this cultural aspect of his people.

Julius Caesar and the Preservation of Proverbs.

Lestrade's remarks and their strong resonance beg the questions: what then is the product of "Plaatje's" translation; how does it come across, especially when compared to the previous one; what impact do these remarks have on the remainder of this chapter?

After *Diphoshophosho*, the current text comes across as a well-policied and regulated text that seeks, to a large extent, to reproduce the original's word order, structure, and metaphor. For instance, the elaborate structure of *Diphoshophosho* is non-existent here. As we may recall, this structure used at least three proverbs as headings. The absence of this structure might suggest a decline in the exuberant use of proverbs and other creative examples characteristic of the earlier rendition. Previously, Plaatje would offer at times two or three proverbs in contrast to the original's single or no proverbial use at all. The decline in the ostentatious display of Setswana proverbs could be due to Lestrade's revisions which, as we saw in the previous section, sought to reflect what Shakespeare "intended" without adding or reducing it. Ultimately, Plaatje's major project of rescuing Setswana proverbs is compromised. Lestrade's revisions begin with the notion of an "authoritative" original to which the translation must pay homage, resulting in some instances, unexciting renditions. Attempts to translate the original's word order also reproduces its metaphors without considering the effect on the target audience. For example, Cassius's conceptualisation of Caesar as a "colossus" (1.2.135) is reproduced as "*kolusese*" (p.7), and "sleeve" (1.2.178) becomes "*kobo*/blanket" (p.8), all of which are unimaginative and seem to be concerned with merely producing a Setswana version of the play. Setswana words such as "*mokaloba* or *dimo*/giant" could suitably portray the idea of a colossus. In fact, even "Goliath" could serve the purpose, considering the

Biblical influence on Plaatje's people. Caesar's desire to know the time "what is't o'clock" (2.2.113) is awkwardly translated as "*nako ke eng*? (p.30)/the time what is it" instead of the usual "*ke nako mang*?/what is the time". Similarly, Caesar's "who's within" (2.2.3) is translated directly as "*ke mang mo teng*"(p.27). "*O mang* or *Ke mang*/who are you/who is there" are better renditions. Unlike *Diphoshophosho*, *Dintshontsho* retains the obscure monetary currency of "drachmas/*terakema*" instead of using the familiar unit of pounds. Effectively, this translation lacks some of the exciting examples of the first one.

However, a scrutiny of the translation reveals that Plaatje's preservation of Setswana proverbs inaugurated by the publication of *Sechuana Proverbs* in 1916, and continued into *Diphoshophosho*, is sustained in *Dintshontsho*. A cursory count of the proverbial and idiomatic expressions yielded at least sixty-one, slightly more than in the previous rendition. But given its length and political tensions, one might expect an elaborate increase in proverbial and idiomatic use. These figures, although approximations, illustrate the extent to which the concern to preserve and contextualize Setswana proverbs and idioms constituted one of the major reasons for translating Shakespeare. Reading Shakespeare's poetic dramas reminded Plaatje of the rich proverbial wealth and beauty of his language, and this *re-proverbialization* so to speak, is recorded not in a collection of proverbs similar to his earlier compilation, but appropriately in the translations of Shakespeare's dramas. Thus they are not only a means of *re-proverbialization*, but also an equally suitable vehicle for recording, preserving, reclaiming, disseminating and contextualizing the outcomes of that *re-proverbialization*. After all the dramas also contextualize English proverbs and idioms. In this way, Plaatje is enabled to put the proverbs in living context, thus reversing the de-contextualization of proverbs of which Starfield accuses *Sechuana Proverbs* (1991:3).

The disparity in proverbial and idiomatic use between the translations probably lies in their subject matter: one comic and the other tragic. The second translation deals with grave matters of politics and history, whose gravity manifests itself in the elemental, superstitious and cometary visitations. It seems therefore that such tensions of cosmic proportions deserve a correspondingly elevated register to convey them. We thus are reminded of Finnegan and Starfield's remarks that while proverbs are not necessarily reserved for particular occasions as praise poetry and riddles, for example, they are nevertheless effective in situations of conflict where they are deployed in resolving such

conflict (1970:411-412, 1991:5). The political tensions of *Julius Caesar*, like the political tension at the *kgotla* meeting in *Mhudi*, are appropriate contexts in which these rhetorical devices are useful not only in emphasizing issues, but also in resolving moral and political impasses.

While there is a general increase in the use of idiomatic and proverbial expressions in the current rendition, their distribution, particularly in the play's greatest moments of intensity and tension, is somewhat disappointing. For example, Mark Antony's funeral oration manages only five proverbs. A speech of this nature and delivered at a crucial political moment should have exhibited a flamboyant increase in proverbial use as a means of resolving situations or at least to show their gravity. Either Plaatje under-performed or the proverbs were expunged during Lestrade's revisions. But all this is difficult to establish. It seems what is significant for this text, is merely to have Shakespeare rendered in Setswana, paying little attention to the language's poetic devices. As we may recall, even this Setswana is anathema to Plaatje because it is SeRuti.

Let us examine instances of proverbial and idiomatic use. Like the previous translation, the current one enables Plaatje to record and put in context more proverbs and idioms, and thereby rendering *Sechuana Proverbs* an inadequate reference book. Examples include:

Go nstha mosi ka sekhurumelo (p.6)/to divulge
Go latlhegelwa ke lotsalo lwa madi a kgoro (p.7)/to lose noble blood
Batho ba ba thetheletsang molelo ka lepotlapotla, ba o gotetsa ka ditlhokwa (p.15)/those who hastly encourage a burning fire do so with twigs.
Go ribama ka mpa ya sebete (p.21)/ to be totally defeated
Go kwatlalatsa dintshi (p.63)/to wake up
Dikobo di khutshwane (p.52)/being poor.

Some of the proverbs and idioms in the translation translate directly into their English counterparts. The consequence of this is to create an impression of direct translations, and therefore a decline in proverbial use. This is particularly true because unlike the previous translation, the current one seems "conservative" in its proverbial use. Examples include:

Tlhoseditse molelo (p.8)/struck a fire
Khumula diphafa (p.3)/pluck feathers
Tlhanolele seatla (p.5)/strange hand
Teme…di bofilwe (p.3)/tongue-tied
Nkadimeng distebe (p.45)/lend me your ears

The direct equivalents are evidence of the Setswana language's capacity not only to translate freely what Shakespeare conveys in English, but also its capacity to reproduce it. In terms of expression, Setswana is equal to English. This equality implies therefore that each language is worthy of recognition, respect and preservation if a non-racial society is to be achieved.

Establishing the meanings of idioms by isolating the constituent words may turn out to be nonsensical. But the above examples are an exception to that rule. The example of "*nkadimeng ditsebe*/lend me your ears" illustrates the contexts and rhetorical effectiveness of proverbs/idioms. Its effectiveness depends not only on its metaphorical sense, but its literal sense as well. Mark Antony uses this idiom as a poetic and imaginative request for attention, and the ears, the hearing aids, are a metaphor for patient and sympathetic attentiveness.

Ordinarily, the use of the word "*nkadimeng*/lend" has temporal effect, in which the speaker merely asks the audience's attention for a specific period, after which it is a free agent once more. At a deeper level, the use of "*nkadimeng*/lend", appeals to the audience's collective moral value system in which lending and borrowing are acceptable transactions in cementing social cohesion. The word therefore appeals to the collective moral conscience of society, and this softens the audience into allowing the speaker the indulgence he is asking for. Denying the speaker's request runs counter to entrenched social values.

Adding to the poetic nature of the translation are the images and metaphors, predominantly those drawn from the natural world. These include stars, thunder, lightning, lions, hyaena, sheep, and clouds. The associations of these images create significant equivalents between the world of Plaatje's Batswana readers and that of the play world. The image of the lion, for example, is a recurring one in Plaatje's novel, as a symbol of power, strength, masculinity, majesty, oppression, destruction, bravery and rashness as well. When Kesara conceives himself in metaphorical terms,

> *Re tau di le pedi tse di tlhagileng ka letsatsi:nna ke tla bolola, gonne ke tau e e kgolwane, e e boitshegang go e gaisa* (p.28)

Literally translated as:

> We are two lions born on the same day. Me, I will go out because I am a bigger lion which is fiercer than the other one.

The English version is as follows:

> We are two lions littered in one day,
> And I the elder and more terrible.
> And Caesar shall go forth (2.2.46-48)

The pun on "*tau*/lion" not only evokes the associations of majesty, bravery and strength, but also an allusion to Tau, the Barolong chief who in Plaatje's words was "the progenitor of the four royal branches of the Barolong"(Willan 1984:4). The masculine strength of a lion in both Caesar and Tau (the powerful or aristocracy) is therefore potentially destructive, divisive and autocratic. If we recall the incident in which Mhudi spears a lion to death, we can suggest that lions--with all their majesty, power and bravery—are also a menace to be gotten rid of. Caesar's boasting as the "elder and more terrible lion" merely hurries his equally "terrible" destruction.

The destructive nature of the lion's strength is deployed by Cassius in responding to his rhetorical question of how Caesar came to be a tyrant.

> *Ke eng Kesara e le motlhorisi? Ke itse gore motho wa batho ga a ka ke a intsha phiri, fa MaRoma a ne a sa iphetola dinku; a koo e se tau fa MaRoma a ne a sa itira dinone (p.15).*

Literally translated as:

> Why is Caesar a dictator? I know this man of the people cannot turn himself into a hyena if Romans had not turned themselves into sheep, he would not be a lion if Romans did not turn themselves into fat animals.

The English version is:

> And why should Caesar be a tyrant then?
> Poor man, I know he would not be wolf
> But that he sees the Romans are but sheep;
> He were no lion, were not Romans hinds (1.3.103-106).

The metaphorical language is useful for at least two reasons. Cassius attempts to resolve an epistemological impasse in which the cause of Caesar's tyranny seems unclear, but is worth clarifying. Secondly, and following from the first one, the discovery that it is the Romans who are responsible for his tyranny, throws back at the Romans the power and responsibility to bring it to an end. That is, they created him and so must destroy him. This therefore justifies and legitimates the conspiracy against him. The rise of dictatorship must also be blamed on the subjects.

In rare instances, the translation introduces idioms where none exists in the original, thereby enriching the translation poetically. Brutus's description of Mark Antony as one "given to sports, to wildness, and much company" (2.1.188-89) is rendered as follows "*O tshameka bobe, o matseba, e bile o rata batho fela jaka tlala*" (p.23). Plaatje uses a Setswana proverb "*o rata batho fela jaaka tlala*/he is fond of the people as hunger is fond of them"(Plaatje 1916:80) to concretely illustrate Mark Antony's love for company. Hunger or starvation is among Plaatje's people considered to be humanity's inseparable companion. The metaphor of "*tlala*/hunger" is recalled in Octavius's closing dialogue which I will discuss shortly. The next example comes from Caesar's message to Senate. In the original he only states that "I will not come" (2.2.63). The translation offers the following idiomatic reason "*ke robile sogo*(p.29)/I am relaxing" for his absence. It is also clear that Plaatje uses this opportunity to record idioms and proverbs of his language. Brutus's request to Lucius to "hold up thy heavy eyes awhile" (4.3.254) is rendered in equally poetic Setswana as "*kwatlalatse dintshi* (p.63)/spread eyebrows". These examples illustrate how proverbs are incorporated in ordinary speech to illuminate issues as well as to embellish it (ordinary speech).

As noted previously, proverbs are a rhetorical strategy employed in situations where strategic thinking is required. After the murder of Caesar, Metellus encourages other conspirators to "Stand fast together lest some friend of Caesar's should chance" (3.1.87-88). Plaatje provides the following as an equivalent: "*Kitlanang...Fifing go tshwaranwa ka dikobo*" (p.36). "*Kitlanang*" means "uniting or bunching together so that nothing splits you". The second part of Metellus's dialogue is a proverb which literally means "in the dark people hold to one another's cloaks". The notion of "darkness and need for holding each other by the cloak" gains rhetorical effectiveness by alluding to folk-tales. One such story is "*Lefifi la ntshwarela ngwana*/darkness hold the child for me"(Mogapi 1980:48). In this story, under cover of darkness, a woman gave her baby to Hyena whom she mistook for her husband. Hence, the emphasis that in the dark people should stay close to one another by holding to each other's robes. Here proverbial wisdom is invoked to exhort people to be united. Ironically, this unity is tainted by evil. Similarly, we are offered a window into the belief system of society where unity is one of its ideals. By conjuring the contexts of the story, the proverb is a commentary on the uncertain and precarious situation of the conspirators; will they remain united, what does the future hold for them? Caesar's death has resulted in a literal and symbolic darkness for the

conspirators. The context of darkness would have triggered in some of Plaatje's audience similar political situations such as the uncertainty and turmoil after Tau's assassination.

The second example is from Mark Antony's speech as he allies himself with the conspirators following Caesar's death--specifically, when he shakes the last person's hand. The original's "thou last, not least in love" (3.1.189) is rendered in similarly poetic language as "*Moja-morago ke kgosi*(p.39)/the last is king". Plaatje transforms and enriches the original text by drawing on familiar cultural symbols. Trebonius, the last person to be greeted, is placated by this proverb not to feel less important. In fact, he is made to feel superior than those greeted before him by being equated to the *kgosi*, the most important person in Tswana society. This supplements the handshake in cementing the bond between the speaker and the person spoken to. Furthermore, both the handshake and the proverb confer conspiratorial status on Mark Antony. He is after all one of the conspirators.

In another rare example, the strict policing losses its stranglehold on the translation and the experimentation of the previous text surfaces. Octavius's final statement illustrates the point:

> *A re mo direleng tlotlo e e lebanyeng maatlametlo a gagwe. Re ye go mmoloka ka ditshwanelo tsotlhe le tirelo tsa phitlho. Marapo a gagwe gompieno a tla lala mo tenteng ya me jaka marapo a motlhabani yo o tlotlegang. Atlholang mephato e itapolose, gonne e le rure la gompieno e tlhotse e se* ***tsatsi ja tlala tlhaola-malata*** *e ne e le ja* ***marumo-ma-ja-magosana****. A ba ikhutse, re tsoge, re ye go abalana makgabane a tsatsi jeno ja tlhapedi (*p.76*)*.[emphasis added]

Translated directly as

> Let us do for him all the honours worthy his great deeds. Let us bury him with all the ceremonies and the funeral rites. His bones will today sleep in my tent as the bones of a respectable fighter. Let the armies rest, for certainly today was not *a day of hunger isolating serfs, it was a day of spears eating princes.* Let them rest, so that we wake up and share the festivities of this day's excitement.

Compare it with the English version

> According to his virtue let us use him,
> With all respect and rites of burial.
> Within my tent his bones tonight shall lie,
> Most like a soldier, ordered honourably.
> So call the field to rest, and let's away
> To part the glories of this happy day (5.5.76-81).

First, the translation is wordy and elaborate (the translation is about twice the length of the original). Thus it illustrates Lestrade's complaint that Plaatje's translation "added more words than there were in the original", and consequently misrepresented "Shakespeare's intentions". But what does "adding more words" mean: in how many words does the target language retain the original's sense and meaning? Here we are reminded of Plaatje's rendition of a five-word legal statement "you are committed for trial" into forty-six words in Setswana. Would this, according to Lestrade, constitute "adding words where they do not exist in the original?" The point to make is that differences in languages, and therefore cultures, suggest that translations may not necessarily match the original in terms of number of words and sentence length. Further, the length of the translation is a result of attempting to "recreate" the context which is displaced in the text. In a specific legal context, a litigant is expected to understand the phrase.

If we assume that this concluding passage is a fine example of Plaatje's expansiveness and "addition of more words than there are in the original", we face yet another series of difficult questions: why did Lestrade not rectify this problem; is it a problem anywhere; and what effect does it have on "Shakespeare's intentions?" Lestrade realizes that translation transforms instead of reproducing exact copies of originals.

These difficulties notwithstanding, the passage is a fine example of how the original could be transformed. It reflects the poetic beauty of Setswana, Plaatje's love for words and general linguistic aptitude through the use of idiomatic language. As a good orator, Plaatje was not content with merely stating that this was a happy day, for this would be rhetorically banal and therefore aesthetically unappealing. Instead, he prefaces the happiness of this day by the 'colourful' language of idioms. "*Tsatsi ja tlala tlhaola malata*/the day of hunger the chooser of servants" is an ostentatious description of ordinary and uneventful days characterised by the passage of quotidian flow of community life such as the usual hunger of serfs. The uniqueness of this day departs from such common occurrences. "*E ne e le ja marumo-ma-ja-magosana*/it was a day of spears slaying princes" forcefully creates the exceptionality of this day. This is the day on which spears conquered princes. These two idiomatic statements echo Calphurnia's statement: "When beggars die there are no comets seen;/The heavens themselves blaze forth the death of princes" (2.2.30-31). The images of "*malata*/serfs" and

"*magosana*/princes" conjure the politics of the play, manifested in the elemental/cometary visitations and the colourful language of proverbs. Further, these images conjure the significance of class distinction to the political in/stability of Roman society.

Plaaatje's use of these idioms not only 'colours' or 'embellishes' every day language, but subtly indicts royal power as well. In view of his struggles for democracy, his uneasiness with the abuses of power and the treatment of serfs, we can detect a veiled indictment on royal power and its transience. Despite their power princes ultimately fall just as serfs fall victims to starvation. Invoking his Christian faith, Plaatje is an advocate for divine power and justice as the absolute authority to which all forms of power must ultimately succumb. In a sense, he condemns all forms of tyranny, and given what transpires in both *Mhudi* and *Julius Caesar*, the message is that "tyranny...is an ever-present danger and it can and must be avoided" (Couzens 1996:189).

Plaatje also introduces local symbols. The "crown" Mark Antony offers to Caesar three times is rendered as "*kgare*" (10). *Setswana English Afrikaans Dictionary* defines "*kgare*" as "a cloth or grass-ring (used as a cushion for something that is to be stabilised on the head or elsewhere" (62). The cushion could be discarded after use, particularly if it is made of grass. Plaatje employs the symbol to emphasise the fact that the crown being offered to Caesar is useless and not real presumably because of his unconstitutional rise to power. It also emphasizes the fact that Rome is still a republic and not yet ready for a monarchy.

Titinius's "Alas, thou hast misconstrued everything" (5.3.84), is rendered in equally poetic language as "*u ba utlwile ka tsa ga Morakile*" (71)/you head them with Morakile's ears". It is not clear who Morakile is, but is probably a legendary figure who was renowned for poor comprehension. The proverb could be a summary of a folk-tale which has to be invoked in order to appreciate this part of the text. In another example, Caesar's "constancy"(3.1.73) attracts specific Tswana cultural metaphor as "*ga ke ojwaojwe ke se lore* (p.30)/I cannot be bent like a twig". This is an inflection of a Setswana proverb "*Lore lo ojwa lo sa le metse*/bend the twig while it is green" (Plaatje 1916:53). Since he cannot "bend" and is therefore inflexible, Caesar is destined for destruction. The metaphor of the twig therefore illuminates Caesar's impending destruction.

In other examples of transformation, the original's "They fall their crests, and like deceitful jades" (4.2.26) becomes "*ba ngosela jaka kgarebe e le matlho mantsi* (p.54)/they become shy like an unfaithful lady". The contemptuous metaphor of "jades" is replaced by that of an unfaithful lady or strumpet. The stage direction "*mosito wa batho*/low march within" does not "interrupt" Brutus' dialogue as is the case in the original. Lastly, the concept of "unintelligible Greek" (1.2.283) is variously rendered as "*tshoma*, *ditshomi* and *o nkabile ditsebe*/he blocked my ears" (p.11). As verb, noun and proverb respectively, these terms describe eloquence that dazzles the audience, leaving it with "blocked ears".

Finally, Mark Antony's "If you have tears, prepare to shed them now" (3.2.167) is rendered as "*Fa lo na le dikeledi, digang matlho, gone a tla dutla merwaleld*". This translates directly as "if you have tears drop your eyes because they are going to ooze/bleed floods". Two words--"*merwalela*/floods" and "*dutla*/uncontrollable flow of liquids or air through an opening or puncture"—are rhetorically effective in Mark Antony's plan to agitate and inflame the Plebeians against Brutus and fellow conspirators. "*Dutld*", also meaning "bleeding", appropriately alludes to the general bloodshed in the story. Specifically, the term anticipates the unveiling of Caesar's bleeding body to the Plebeians and the audience. Such a gory sight will lead to uncontrollable flow of "floods" of tears. "*Merwaleld*" alludes to the Biblical floods which had both destructive and regenerative connotations. These words hyperbolically describe the Plebeians' grief on whose basis they will seek vengeance against Brutus and his colleagues. Their vengeance, it is hoped, will blot out conspiracy, bloodshed and autocracy, leading to the restoration of republican order. After this oratory, Mark Antony relishes in his success by referring to himself as the proverbial "*Masenya di ageld*", the stirrer and agitator who upsets the applecart. In this case, he brings down Brutus' house of cards.

On the basis of these examples, it is safe to suggest that this translation furthers Plaatje's project of reclaiming his language's proverbial wisdom. Like *Diphoshophosho*, *Dintshontsho* also uses proverbial and idiomatic expressions to make it as poetic as the original. In fact, examples show that at times the translation can be more poetic and imaginative than the original, and thus confirming Setswana's capacity as a medium of literary expression. However, this translation does not have the elaborate examples we saw in the previous text.

Julius Caesar: Translation of Translation of Translation.

The evaluation of the successes and failures of *Dintshontsho* simultaneously presents us with opportunities and problems. Compared to the previous translation, the current rendition demonstrates clearly some of the theoretical issues of translation raised in chapters one and three. First, the tension between Plaatje and white academics over the quality or status of translation forcefully illustrates the complex and conflicting relationships that translation engenders. This tension refers us to Benjamin's central question: "Does translation have to be faithful, or does it have to be free?" (de Man 1986:91). With the benefit of such notions as mimicry and contact zones, Benjamin's question could be phrased differently: can texts remain the same during transmission? The current translation, and the same could be said about the previous one, reflects a middle-ground position in which it is both free and faithful to the original, although it tends to lean more to being faithful towards the source. This, as I point out later, tends to rob the translation of creativity that we saw in the previous text. The important point to make is that the answer to Benjamin's question must not be subjected to binary thinking, but rather that one should see fidelity and freedom of translation as interconnected notions, which can enrich Plaatje-Shakespeare scholarship. Secondly, in view of Lestrade's corrections—substantial, judging by his remarks--the current translation reminds us of Octavia Paz's famous assertion about: "translations of translations of translations" (Alvarez and Vidal 1996:12). Lestrade's revisions are therefore re-translations of translations, informed by specific ideologies and histories. Unfortunately, the multiplicity of translations that *Dintshontsho* reflects are problematized by the unavailability of Plaatje's manuscripts. Hopefully, if these manuscripts surface, scholars will investigate the multiple translations that *Dintshontsho* encapsulates.

By alluding to these theoretical issues, the translations point to the complexity of Plaatje's translation career and the ideology that informed it. Thus they are a fertile field of scholarly inquiry, particularly for post-colonial and Shakespeare studies. It is lamentable that this rich area has been ignored for decades.

The litany of errors Lestrade points out in Plaatje's manuscript creates the impression that prior to his intervention, Plaatje "mis-represented" Shakespeare's intentions, (problematic as this notion of intention is). Among the list of errors are: inconsistent spelling; reducing what Shakespeare wrote by not translating some words, lines, dialogues

and verses; additions to what Shakespeare wrote by introducing what is not in the original and other errors of mis-translation presumably due to his poor comprehension of English. These and many more errors, Lestrade informs us, he set out to rectify. Herein lies the problem of evaluating this translation: to whom should we attribute its successes and failures; who is responsible for it, how does this affect the consumption of this translation; how effective is Lestrade in polishing this translation?

A close examination of the rendition reveals the presence of some of the very errors Lestrade set out to eliminate. First, the placing of Plaatje's "unsightly diacritics" seems to be inconsistent. For instance in "*maikgomošo*/ambition" you have the circumflex on ***s*** and none in the verb "*ikgogomosa*/to be ambitious" and in the noun "*moikgogomosi*/an ambitious person". This probably confirms Plaatje's view of how tedious and confusing the new spelling is. Secondly, condensing the Plebeians' dialogues into a monologue (p.48) deserves consideration because, as we may recall, Lestrade claimed to have set out to correct such inconsistencies in which, as he said "sometimes two or three people's dialogue in Shakespeare's book were written as though spoken by one person in Plaatje's manuscript" (v). It is surprising to find this inconsistency in the revised edition. It may be argued that the Plebeians are bunched together as "*Batho*/people" and this is appropriate, but if rules were followed to the letter, Plebeians needed to be translated as "*Bo-Matlhogole*" (p.1). This done, we will have *Matlhogole* 1, 2, 3, 4. as the equivalents of Plebeian 1, 2, 3, 4. This would reproduce according to Lestrade, "Shakespeare's intentions". Leaving this substantial inconsistency unrectified could mean: Lestrade's revision was not successful; translation is a difficult process which defies at times the strict application of rules; and thirdly, Lestrade concurs with Plaatje's translation as the logical one under the circumstances and therefore accepts Plaatje's general principles of translation. The overall effect of this discussion is to confirm that no translation can be an exact replica of its original. Literary translation is creative, with each translation introducing something new, albeit small or insignificant.

While Lestrade's concern for rules and regularity makes the translation faithful to the original and therefore commendable, it nevertheless robs it of the highly imaginative creativity which characterized the earlier translation. This is nowhere better illustrated than in the rendition of the characters' names. Lestrade informed us that in regularizing the rendition of names, he followed their Roman endings and showed examples of how

Plaatje's rendition of these names was inconsistent and therefore unformulaic. It must be admitted however, that while efforts towards regularity are legitimate, we should bear in mind, as Cloud has shown above, that Shakespeare's nomenclature is seldom regular. It should equally be borne in mind that the search for regularity and rigid application of rules could at times be nonsensical. No wonder the search for formulas produces unpronounceables such as "*Aretemidoruse*/Artemidorus", "*Kalephurunia*/Calpurnia", "*Porotia*/Portia" which, as Shole rightly observes, "fall too heavily on the tongue and harshly on the ear" (1990/91:60).

Proving that this is how Plaatje originally rendered these names is difficult without his manuscript. But it is possible to detect that his rendition was not tied down to the Roman version of the names as Lestrade shows. In fact, Lestrade showed how Plaatje's rendition shuttled between several endings which he thought needed to be regularized. Further, if the experience with *Diphoshophosho* is worth anything, I am convinced that some of these words, Lestrade's intervention aside, would have been rendered in more tongue and ear-friendly renditions, possibly as follows: "*Porotia/Poshiya*", "*Marekuse Antoniuse/Mareko Antoni*", "*Borutuse/Burutasi*". In short, the accusation of inconsistency notwithstanding, Plaatje would have in some instances created new labels (just as Shakespeare did) as he did in the earlier translation by rendering Courtesan as *Ma-Noko* or Abbess as *Ma-Thapelo*. In fact, Plaatje uses two speech tags—*Ma-Thapelo and Ma-Baruti*—in reference to the Abbess.

In conclusion, this chapter set out to discuss Plaatje's last surviving translation to determine the extent to which it (dis)continues Plaatje's cultural and political agenda initiated in the previous translation and other aspects of his career. The current rendition reveals both a continuation and discontinuation of this agenda. As in *Diphoshophosho*, he deploys *Dintshontsho* in preserving his language's vocabulary, proverbial and idiomatic expressions. He also uses it to continue sharing with his people his experience of Shakespeare. Thus, he adapts Shakespeare for his specific purposes. In terms of orthography, this translation is used by white academics to disseminate their own version of spelling, which is at variance with Plaatje's. Thus on this score, the translation could be read as a discontinuing of the Plaatje agenda. However, the intervention of white academics is an acknowledgement of Plaatje's challenge, "insertion, interruption, and interjection" (Ashcroft 2001:48) in the orthography issue. In subtle ways, this translation

succeeds. With the publication of the two translations at different times of his life, the renditions generate, in spatial/temporal and ideological terms, scholarly debates worth pursuing. In the next and final chapter of this study, I wish to assess what has happened since Plaatje made available these translations: Have they been taught or read; if not, why not; what are the implications on the Plaatje project; and where do we go from here?

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Chapter Six: Conclusion: Translation and Beyond.

> *It is to be hoped that with the maturity of African literature, now still in its infancy, writers and translators will consider the matter of giving to Africans the benefit of some at least of Shakespeare's works. That this could be done is suggested by the probability that some of the stories on which his dramas are based find equivalents in African folk-lore---Sol T. Plaatje, 1916.*

> *Now that some of the required books are ready, they need to be printed over the Yuletide vacation so as to have them available when schools reopen at the end of January. I have asked for quotations in South Africa and abroad and the cheapest proved to be the following:*
>
> *(1) Translations of Shakespeare's The Comedy of Errors, Julius Caesar and Much Ado About Nothing £125*
> *(2) Traditional Native Folk-tales and other Useful Knowledge £205.0.0 (sic)*
> *(3) Sechuana Proverbs (with English equivalents) £57 18/---Sol Plaatje 1929.*

> *His sheer persistence, not to mention the bravery of his prose, made him hard to stifle. Nor has he ever been really forgotten. His books...have ensured that. But recognition of the full majesty of his writings—and of his significance as an historical figure—has long been confined, for the most part to academic circles. There are signs that this is changing. Sol Plaatje's house and grave have been declared national monuments, and his writings are being inserted into educational curricula at all levels---John Comaroff 1999.*

This thesis set out to illustrate how Plaatje's fascination with and subsequent translation of Shakespeare into Setswana reflects, in Schalkwyk's words, "a key political and cultural juncture in Southern Africa" (31/05/04), or what Comaroff calls "a critical phase of its [Southern Africa] construction" (1999:156). This juncture, with its allusion to previous and future phases, is in this study the phenomenon of modernity. As Wagner (2001) told us, modernity retains a "double connotation": conceptual and material; optimistic and pessimistic; negative and positive; enchanting and dis-enchanting; promising and yet raising anxieties. It is a philosophical and material condition of rationality, general progress, conjunction with Shakespeare, autonomy, adoption of print culture, modern education and its associated skills of literacy. It is therefore a contrast to an earlier juncture of backwardness, tradition, superstition and less rational (Connolly 1988:1) and from which Plaatje's society is moving. However, this phase is equally ambivalent, and has its own attractions: "well grounded morality, a spiritual sensibility, an appreciation of hierarchy, an attunement to nature" (Connolly 1988:1). It is an era of "simple wants...bounties...ample sustenance" where "abject poverty was practically unknown...no orphanages because there were no nameless babies" (Plaatje1978:25-27). We can therefore appreciate Plaatje's ambivalent attitude to both modernity and traditional forms of life. While he welcomed

modernity's ideal of progress, he was equally weary of the possible extinction of traditional modes of social organisation. This ambivalence is a leitmotif in his life and career. The transition to modernity is therefore ambiguous and requires constant contextualization.

(Literary) Translation, the process to which Shakespeare—a symbol of modernity—is subjected, also retains a double connotation and is an important vehicle through which Plaatje reacts to modernity. Hence my subtitle "*Translation and Transition to Modernity*". Traditionally defined as an exchange between languages, translation is also a transfer of cultures (Alvarez & Vidal 1996:5, Bassnett & Trivedi 1999:6). By bringing into contact Setswana and English languages and cultures, translation is decidedly a political process from which complex relationships and reactions result. These relationships engender the dynamics of Pratt's contact zone, Bakhtin's carnival, Caliban's "isle of calibans" and Plaatje's equivalence, all of which have political and cultural significance. Equivalence—the interplay of sameness and difference or the simultaneity of "a universal humanism" and "a deep sense of ethnicity" (Schalkwyk & Lapula 2000:14-15)--is significant in Plaatje's political ambition of creating a tolerant and culturally diverse world. By translating Shakespeare, Plaatje sought to highlight linguistic and cultural equivalences as a foundation for an ideal civil society. His theory and practice of translation derive from the notion of equivalence. Modern South Africa, with its linguistic and cultural diversity (the rainbow nation) is a realisation of Plaatje's early twentieth century ambitions and struggles.

As a politically and culturally informed process, translation is a re-writing of original texts (Bassnett & Lefevere 1990). Chapters four and five illustrated how Plaatje transformed, manipulated, refashioned and adapted Shakespeare's dramas to preserve Setswana language and culture, paradoxically against certain aspects of modernity. Shakespeare is therefore "*South Africanised*" and "*Tswanalised*", hence the title *Sol Plaatje's Shakespeare.* Specifically, he uses the translations to record and contextualize Setswana proverbs, idioms, and vocabulary through what he considered as its authentic orthography. Further, via translation Plaatje also seeks to portray Setswana's efficacy as a medium of literary expression. That is, he wants to show that Setswana is equivalent to English, thus revealing, in Benjamin's words, the "reciprocal relationship between languages" (in Johnston 1992:44). We saw for example that

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Tswana and European cultures do share common beliefs and symbols. Thus translation allows us to see our similarities and differences. Translating and or re-writing Shakespeare has several implications: as a means of preserving threatened oral forms, translation is a form of resistance to modernity's negative effects. Recall that through the preservation of oral forms Plaatje hoped to reverse his society's declining moral standards (Willan 1984:326-27). Similarly, the translatability of Shakespeare demonstrates the native's intellectual capacity to appropriate foreign symbols for his own struggles. Consequently, as a symbol of cultural superiority, Shakespeare is carnivalised and indigenised. Further, the use of print culture to preserve traditional forms creates a hybrid world in which traditional and modern forms of life co-exist. In this sense, translation acts as a link between the past, present and future. Kader Asmal felt Plaatje's name to be an appropriate label for the Education Department building because it

> Will remind us of where we have come from, and...inspire us on the road to our destination...proclaim that we South Africans are proud of our extraordinary diverse heritage...show the world that our diversity is the source of our unity (2000:4).

Plaatje's fascination with and translation of Shakespeare could also be an embrace of modernity and its symbols. For example, he praises modern educational institutions of Morija and Lovedale, while lambasting boy initiation. By using Shakespeare to embellish their speeches, educated natives assimilate modern culture. In translating Shakespeare Plaatje paraphrases dialogues, changes word order and introduces local symbols and metaphors. Such transformations could imply Plaatje's failure to mimic Shakespeare and thus confirm certain perceptions that Shakespeare is not only beyond the intellectual scope of Africans, but is also untranslatable (see Willan 1984:331*ff*). Consequently, transporting texts into different lingo-cultural spaces could either enrich or degrade them. Doke and Lestrade's charges that Plaatje mistranslated Shakespeare (see chapter five) are a testimony to the potential 'violation', 'degradation' and 'corruption' of "originals". Hence their need to restore Shakespeare's power. Plaatje's perception of translation differs from Doke's and Lestrade's who seem to insist on perfect, stable and authoritative originals which have to be reproduced and honoured.

Granted that Plaatje's translation of Shakespeare was a conscious political and cultural act, and that the translations reflect a critical phase in the construction of Southern Africa, it is

imperative to conclude this thesis with an assessment of "life beyond Plaatje and the translations": what is his status and that of his works; are they relevant to the modern Southern Africa he contributed in its construction; has Plaatje been forgotten; does he succeed in his cultural and political schemes that are partly informed by Shakespeare; are his ideas relevant to the African Renaissance? After all Comaroff refers to him as a "renaissance man" (1999:155). These questions form the basis for further inquiry.

This chapter therefore concludes in an open-ended way. The sub-title—Translation and Beyond--encodes a process whose conclusion(s) lies beyond the frontiers of this chapter and study. This process, with its spatiality and temporality, anticipates, *inter alia*, the following related questions: when were the translations made; what has happened since they were made available; what is their current status and reasons for it; what is the way forward and why; should we even worry that Plaatje translated Shakespeare; is Plaatje's notion of equivalence relevant to modern society? These are legitimate questions to raise considering that Plaatje perceived Shakespeare not as an end, but a means to crucial political, cultural and educational ends. Put more directly, the study of Plaatje's translations automatically anticipates and invites the crude question of so what?

Answers to some of these questions are hinted at in the previous chapters. To begin with, seven decades have passed since Plaatje published translations of Shakespeare's plays. Sadly, only two of the five-and half- or six he translated, survive. But what happened to these texts, were they read or taught in schools as Plaatje envisaged; where are they? A glance at the Plaatje criticism reveals a satisfactory scholarly attention to Plaatje and his role in the formation of the South African political and literary culture. Credit goes to pioneering Plaatje scholars of the seventies—Tim Couzens, Stephen Gray, and Brian Willan—and lately David Schalkwyk, Laura Chrisman, Phaswane Mpe, Maureen Rall, Peter Limb to mention only these. As Schalkwyk and Lapula noted:

> Not only has Plaatje's importance received renewed recognition in the form of academic papers, a new edition of his novel...and a comprehensive and welcome selection of his writings edited by Brian Willan, but he has also been honoured as a political and cultural icon by having two schools named after him and his house in Kimberley a national monument (2000:9).

To the list we can add the Sol Plaatje Dam in Bethlehem, Free State, Sol Plaatje Municipality in Kimberley and Sol Plaatje House, 123 Schoeman Street, Pretoria. The latter is the building that houses the Department of Education. And as Kader Asmal remarked on this naming ceremony,

> when the Department of Education building is constructed on the Government Boulevard...the name Sol Plaatje will travel with us from 123 Schoeman Street (2000:6).

Collocating Plaatje with education should not surprise us. He was in his own right an educator who commented critically and passionately on educational issues (Willan 1984:385-86; Plaatje 1996:270, 325, 327, 369*ff*, 375*ff*, 393*ff*). In fact, this conjunction is foundational not only in the assessment of the status of the translations, but also in charting the way forward. That Plaatje was aware of the shortage of teaching materials in Native schools and therefore intended his works to be school textbooks is now obvious. Hence we need to consider the extent to which these works addressed the lack of teaching-learning materials Plaatje felt to be a serious problem in these schools (Plaatje 1996:375), and to ask if these texts have a place in modern South(ern) Africa. I return to this point shortly.

Despite the well-deserved attention and recognition Plaatje has received, other aspects of his literary career continue to suffer scholarly neglect. Specifically, his translations and collection of proverbs and folk-tales continue to gather dust in special libraries as Starfield (1991) has already told us. This is the fate—*mutatis mutandi*—of the translations. At the Universities of Cape Town and Botswana they are kept in the African Studies Library and Botswana Collection respectively where they cannot be checked out. All material in these libraries is to be read or used in the library. When I requested to photocopy them in 2001, the staff in the African Studies Library (UCT) asked me to let them do it for me because the books are fragile. Up until 2004, none of these translations were available on the open shelves. Luckily, fascimile reprints of both texts are now available on the general shelf and so could be checked out. According to Gillian Morgan--a librarian at Hiddingh Hall branch--these texts were bought "in order to build up on our African language collections (the drama department is also focussing on plays etc written in African languages), as part of our Africanisation goal" (12/10/2004). I was the first to sign out these copies from the library in March 2004. It is difficult to establish if other users have looked at them since they

became available. Similarly, the University of Botswana library does not have a system in place to monitor the frequency with which these texts are used, save for the librarian's observation.

Neither have they attracted significant scholarly attention in the form of critical essays, theses or scholarly editions. Besides Shole's (1990/91) comparative examination of *Diphosophoso* and Raditladi's translation of *Macbeth*, references in Schalkwyk (1999), Schalkwyk and Lapula (2000), Willan (1984) and Rall (2003), these translations are largely an obscurity. Johnson's *Shakespeare and South Africa* (1996), does not even mention that Plaatje published Setswana translations of some of Shakespeare's plays, to Lars Engle's astonishment:

> What astonishes me is that Plaatje's main attempt to meet the challenge he sets up is never mentioned: Plaatje published translations into Setswana of *The Comedy of Errors* and *Julius Caesar*, three other manuscript translations of *Othello*, *Merchant*, and *Much Ado*, have been lost. It's odd for Johnson not to know this. But it would be odder still to know it and not say anything about it, since the translations cast Plaatje's interest in Shakespeare's relation to African culture in quite different light, and would cause all of the formidable intellectuals being ventriloquized about him to have to say different things about his activities (1997:441, Schalkwyk & Lapula 2000:12).

Reasons for this state of affairs may be due to the quality of the translations; attention to Plaatje's political activism, thus divorcing his literary career from politics (see Kunene, 1980, for example); Plaatje's weird spelling and vocabulary (see criticism on Dumbrell's decision to include *Diphoshophosho* in the curriculum); the perceived status of translation as unoriginal work and the politics of curriculum choices. Shole laments the poor attention given to translations thus:

> Not much attention has been given to literary translations in Setswana, either as translations or works of art on their own, despite the role they have played. Even among our reading sector, which consists mainly of students, these translations suffer neglect. This may be due to the quality of the translations themselves, or, as Prochazka puts it, due to the negative conception of the translation as "a fundamentally unoriginal work". This is rather unfortunate, because the mere fact that translations have played a vital role in the beginnings of many a literature, qualifies them for a respectable place in discussions about specific literatures. Comparative criticism in particular cannot do without them (1990/91:51).

A decade later, Starfield still laments:

> His many writings, including *Mhudi*, South Africa's first novel by a black person, *Sechuana Proverbs*, Shakespearean translations and incisive journalism have, unfairly, not yet won as much national recognition as his political role within the South African Native National Congress (from 1923, the African National Congress) (2001:857).

But hopes that

> The re-publication of his *Diary*, chronologically one of his first works, but one of the last to be published, will encourage readers to explore his other writings, and his role in South African literature (2001:857).

1930: Tracing the Trajectory.

Granted that Plaatje intended his works as school readers to address the shortage of Setswana texts, let us determine the extent to which this objective was achieved and the possible reasons for its success or failure. 1930—the year in which *Diphoshophosho* was first printed--provides a base-line for this assessment. Willan (1984) demonstrates that the publication of *Diphoshophosho* and *Dintshontsho*, seven years later, was successful and generated diverse interest, ranging from appreciative comments and reactions to requests that they be included in the school curricula. For example, the *Diamond Fields Advertiser* and the Johannesburg *Star* featured Plaatje's achievement, with the former devoting "an entire editorial...expressing the wider importance of Plaatje's 'invaluable services in saving from extinction some of the rich profusion of the Sechuana language'" (in Willan 1984:329). Similarly, Professors Doke and Lestrade "were also impressed" (Willan 1984:330). The Resident Commissioner, C. F. Rey wrote to the Government Secretary that:

> I should like the I. of E. [Inspector of Education] to consider the desirability of obtaining some of Sol Plaatje's Shakespeare translations for use in the higher standards of some of our schools. Please let me have a report on this (*Botswana National Archives* S.150/5).

Rey's injunction was in concert with efforts by Education Departments in South Africa, Basutoland and Bechuanaland to encourage and promote mother tongue instruction in all Native schools (Plaatje 1996:375). H.J. Dumbrell, the Director of Education in Bechuanaland, "agreed to include *Diphoshophosho* in the new school syllabus for the higher secondary grades" (Willan, 341). The *Primary School Syllabus for Native Schools in the Bechuanaland Protectorate* of 1931 cites *Diphoshophosho* as a prescribed reading text for Standard five (*Botswana National Archives*, BNB 148). It is therefore necessary to determine if these

texts appeared consistently on the school syllabi from 1931 to the present. To this extent I sought to look through old school syllabi and past examination papers in the Ministry of Education, Botswana. The exercise was unsuccessful not because such records do not exist, but because they have not been properly kept and managed/archived to allow for ease of access. They are therefore lying somewhere in various government departments/schools without the concerned officers knowing their exact location. Consequently, I found myself being sent from one department to the next without much success. The Curriculum Development and Evaluation Unit in particular, faces the greatest challenge to scout for these records and to archive them in their library if not send them to the national archives. Only then can we establish the gaps in the records. I therefore had to rely on the memories of former teachers, students and education officers to establish the extent to which they have been active in schools, when they were dropped and the reasons for that.

However, in spite of the 'absence' of records, these texts were indeed taught in Botswana primary and secondary schools from 1931, although it is difficult to ascertain if they appeared on the syllabi consistently. Mr. Mothei, an education officer at Curriculum Development and Evaluation Unit recalls that *Diphosophoso* was active during his school days in the 1960's (he specifically mentioned 1967). A prolific writer of more than five books, he still finds Plaatje's skill and talent unrivalled and regrets that changes in the curriculum, necessary and welcome as they are, have denied learners the opportunity to savour Plaatje's extraordinary skill at language use. He admits that he cannot match Plaatje's abilities (30/06/04). Similarly, Mr. Makanye, a Primary school teacher with more than thirty years experience told me that *Diphosophoso* was taught in primary schools during the seventies. He further recalled how a retired colleague and former education officer had strong preference for *Diphosophoso* (28/06/04). I recall seeing a copy of *Diphosophoso* in the mid 70s during my primary school days.

Similarly, Messers Mafokate, Sekwababe and Ditebo (current Setswana teachers at Shashe River and Francistown Senior Secondary Schools respectively) confirmed that both Plaatje's translations have been actively used in secondary schools. Mr. Ditebo, for example, remembers two incidents in which he interacted with *Diphosophoso*: first, when he sat for his form five (previously known as COSC—Cambridge Overseas School Certificate)

examinations in 1986 at Maru-a-Pula Secondary, and later as a teacher at Franscistown Senior Secondary School, where he taught the book in 1998 (4/8/04). Mr. Malipiti, a receptionist at Examinations and Testing Unit, also claims to have studied both the English and Setswana versions of *Julius Caesar* at Mater Spei College from 1987 to 1988. While he enjoyed both the original and translation, he preferred the English version, citing the impressive use of language as the reason for this preference (30/06/04). Another officer at Examinations and Testing Unit, Mr. Lekoape, claims to have studied Plaatje's books up to university before teaching them (18/8/04). Clearly, these books have been active in primary and secondary schools for some time, and so it could be concluded that Plaatje's objective of providing school readers was significantly achieved.

Although the exact date on which these texts ceased to be taught at secondary schools is not certain, my informants recall late 1990, citing 1997/98 for *Diphosophoso* and mid 90s for *Dintshontsho*. It is not known when they were removed from primary school syllabus. Of great interest are the possible reasons for dropping these texts. According to Mr. Mafokate, the primary reason was not because Plaatje's works, or any texts by South Africans, are sub-standard, but rather because there emerged a substantial corpus of work by local authors which needed exposure. Therefore, the curriculum had to be "nationalised", thus gradually dropping all texts by South Africans. Mr. Mafokate further argues that local authors deal with contemporary issues in Botswana such as corruption, leadership and HIV/AIDS which Batswana learners must grapple with. Plaatje would probably not worry that his texts have been removed from the curriculum. Rather, he would welcome the increase in the number of Setswana texts as evidence that his language will not fall into dis-use as was the case with the Koranna language (Willan 1984:326). Had Plaatje not died prematurely, he certainly would have published more readers. Plaatje's compilations, it could be suggested, inspired an increase in the number of Setswana authors and books. He could therefore be credited for setting in motion efforts at recognising African languages, and Setswana in particular, as means for national development.

Changes to the Setswana syllabus are part of Botswana's larger post-independence educational reforms to come up with an education system that is deemed relevant and

appropriate to its citizens in the face of major economic, social and political changes. Such efforts saw the appointment of two national commissions on education in 1976 and 1993 respectively. Two of the 1993 commission's terms of reference illuminate the education system Botswana sought to put in place:

> 1.to review the current education system and its relevance; and identify problems and strategies for its further development in the context of Botswana's changing and complex economy.
> 3. to advise on an education system that is sensitive and responsive to the aspirations of the people and the manpower requirements of the country (1993:1).

These educational reforms culminated, among others, in the localisation of the senior secondary school examinations because it was realised that:

> The senior secondary curriculum lacks diversity, particularly in relation to the needs of the economy. In fact, there has been little local curriculum development at this level so that many topics are inappropriate to Botswana (*National Commission on Education* 1993:13).

In view of these major educational reforms, it could be argued that Plaatje's translations are a legacy from colonial education. Changes are therefore not only in order, but also necessary to give the curriculum local content/flavour and ultimately, relevance. Mafokate pointed out that there is a feeling among some teachers that certain texts by South Africans should be retained in the Setswana syllabus for comparative purposes (4/8/04). This feeling is legitimate, considering that the education system is designed to produce, among others, "good citizens of Botswana and the world" (*Senior Secondary School Syllabus*, online). This feeling is further supported by both Botswana's and South Africa's membership of SADC (Southern African Development Community) which promotes regional economic, political, cultural, and social cooperation amongst member states. Speaking at the Third National Symposium on Language Policy and Language Policy Implementation, the Malawi Deputy Minister of Education Hon. Samuel Kaphuka, reiterated his country's support for "inter-state collaborative efforts whose ultimate goal is to advance the socio-economic standards of our peoples" (2001:10).

For Mr. Lekoape, Plaatje's works were dropped on account of the "language factor". That is, Plaatje's Setswana (and other texts by South Africans) did not conform to the Standard Setswana orthography adopted in 1981. He claims that Plaatje's Setswana has a great deal of

Tlhaping and Sotho influence. Thus preference had to be given to local authors who wrote according to the adopted Setswana orthography (18/8/04). The choice of orthography therefore remained a critical factor from Plaatje's day to the present. Recall that Dumbrell's decision to include *Diphoshophosho* in the curricula received criticism "on the grounds that it [the text] used a 'weird' orthography" (Willan, 341). Consequently, he sought to convince Plaatje to "sacrifice his orthography" for the sake of the interests of the Bechuanaland Protectorate. Given Plaatje's strong feelings on orthography, such a request was bound to fail, leading (as Lekoape confirms) to the removal of the text from the curriculum. Save for this language factor, Plaatje remains foundational in the development of Setswana literature.

The presence of these texts in schools must have led to continuous revisions and 'modernising' the orthography. A look at the publication history of the copies at the University of Botswana library reveals that these texts attracted significant editorial attention. Following the initial publication in 1937, *Dintshontsho* was reprinted in 1942, 1945, 1954, 1962, 1963, 1967. A revised edition came out in 1973, and was reprinted in 1975. First published privately in 1930, *Diphosophoso* was revised and enlarged by the Bechuanaland Book Centre (now Botswana Book Centre) in 1958. A second impression in 1962 was followed by a revised "Quatercentenary" edition in 1964, second, third and fourth impressions in 1967, 1974 and 1981 respectively. This particular edition has noteworthy features just as Plaatje's original translation had experimental features such as narrative units: an expanded version of the plot summary, which is a translation of the version in Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare* (1957) by one Mrs Segomotso Kgaudi; a brief biography of Plaatje penned by former president Quett Masire; pictures of characters and a glossary. Masire's biography follows the format Plaatje used in writing Shakespeare's. Plaatje's biography of Shakespeare is reproduced with the following minor, but noticeable changes (in addition to the modern orthography). First, Plaatje's eleven sub-headings are reduced to nine, with the first and last omitted. Secondly, where Plaatje used English words like January and December, Kgaudi uses Setswana versions. Third, the monetary currency of "*diponto*/pounds" is replaced by "*diranta*/rands" to reflect the adoption of the South African currency. Lastly, 'theatre' (for which Plaatje seemed not to find a Setswana equivalent, Schalkwyk & Lapula 2000:20) is translated by Kgaudi as "*dipontsho*" (from the Setswana verb "*bontsha*/to show", emphasizing the idea of public spectacle). These changes help to

underscore the point that perfect homology between 'original' and 'translation' is impossible. Indeed, translation results in a new product, irrespective of how minor the changes or differences are.

These remarks reveal that Plaatje's translations have been active in the schools. When the archiving system in Botswana is improved, it may be possible to estimate the actual number of years over which they were taught as well as assessing whether Plaatje's ideas and ambitions informed the type of examination questions set. This could be an area for further research.

Way Forward.

Clearly, Plaatje's translations were taught in diminishing intensity from 1931. Having been dropped from the school curricula, could these texts be returned/retained; how soon could that be; and what is the way forward? Answers to these questions must recall Plaatje's 1920 political and cultural ambitions about language against current democratisation in South(ern) Africa. This begs the questions of whether Plaatje's views on language have any relevance in modern South(ern) Africa and whether the translations have a place in such contexts. To assess the relevance of Plaatje's ideas in modern South(ern) Africa, we need to rehearse briefly what those ideas were.

In general, Plaatje was conscious of the great potential of human language becoming, in Nyathi-Ramahobo's (1999) formulation, a "resource or problem". For example, while English was considered among the African intelligentsia as a means of self-advancement (see Willan 1984:36), it was not lost on them that English (and western ideas) posed a threat to indigenous oral forms. Plaatje was particularly conscious of how the spread of western civilisation threatened his Tswana cultural ideas (1916, 1930). Consequently, his linguistic and literary projects sought to arrest this threat by turning his language into a print language through which he could preserve threatened forms. His compilation of Setswana proverbs, recording of folk-tales, his involvement in the orthography debate, translations of Shakespeare and journalism are to be understood against the legitimate concern that his language could vanish like the Koranna language and its people. For Plaatje, language was

not only a means of communication, but also an identity—political, social, cultural and economic. Hence he invested the Setswana language with political agency with which his people could respond to an increasingly changing society. To ensure the success of his projects, Plaatje welcomed the idea of mother tongue instruction alongside other languages. Thus, he produced school readers through which he disseminated not only the richness, beauty and efficacy of his language, but also its "correct spelling". His bi-/tri-lingual journalism, polyglot versatility and the "Chuana-M'Bo family" symbolise the cultural diversity, tolerance, equity, "spirit of accommodation", equivalence, brotherhood/sisterhood and the "live and let live spirit" for which Plaatje struggled. But that was in the 1920's.

Decades on South(ern) Africa has experienced significant political, economic and social changes. Apartheid has collapsed, and in April 2004 South Africa celebrated ten years of democracy. The question of languages and their roles in public domains remains as significant as was in Plaatje's context, and continue to generate academic and public attention. The results include a wealth of scholarship, a series of conferences (National Symposium on Language Policy and Language Implementation, 2001, see also Webb 1995:36 and Heugh 2001:116 for a list of language conferences), commissions of inquiry, sub-committees, language bodies/organisations (LANGTED-Language in Education, PRAESA-Project for the Study of Alternative Education in South Africa, PANSLAB-Pan South African Languages Board, LiCCA-Languages in Contact and Conflict in Africa), government decrees, protocols, charters and declarations (OAU charter of 1986, UNESCO's of 1953). According to Kathleen Heugh:

> They all say the same thing, namely, that the children of this continent will only experience the full benefits of formal education if the languages of the continent are used as languages of initial literacy and as the languages through which they engage with the curriculum (2001:116).

Emphasis is on harnessing mother/first/home languages in the socio-economic and political development of sub-Saharan Africa, and Southern Africa in particular (Kaphuka 2001:10, Heugh 2001:119, Tsiane 2000:ix). For example, members of the Organisation of African Unity adopted a Language Charter in 1986 which recognises that "the cultural advancement of the African peoples and the acceleration of their economic and social advancement will not be possible without harnessing in a practical manner indigenous languages" (in

LANGTAG 1996:225, Rubadiri 2001:17*ff*). Several countries have, since independence, taken steps towards developing indigenous languages and making them media of instruction in the education system and other public spheres. Recognising Botswana's multilingualism and multiculturalism, the 1993 National Commission on Education recommended the use of a third language in the school curriculum (1993:78*ff*, 110*ff*, Tsiane 2000:ix). According to Tsiane, this "is a first step towards the use of minority languages in some of the public spheres" (2000:ix).

Similarly, in 1996, South Africa's Government of National Unity set up a Language Task Group (LANGTAG) "to advise on the issue of a National Language Plan for South Africa" (1996:7). More than many countries in the SADC region, South Africa adopted a progressive language policy which resulted in the increase of official languages from a mere two to eleven. The additional nine—Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, isiNdebele, isiXhosa and isiZulu—are African languages. Further, this policy entrusts the Pan South African Language Board with the promotion and development of "the Khoi, Nama and San and Sign languages" and further, to "ensure respect" for others including "German, Greek, Gujarati, Hindi, Portuguese, Tamil, Telugu, Urdu...Arabic, Hebrew, Sanskrit and others for religious purposes" (*Constitution of the Republic of South Africa*. in *LANGTAG* 1996:223). Such a policy can appropriately take place in a democratic context. As the Task Group observed, its formation is "a direct result of the struggle for democracy" (1996:10). Plaatje's notion of equivalence resonates through this policy.

For these previously marginalized languages to become useful media of instruction in schools, they must be developed into print languages through which appropriate reading matter could be produced. These were Plaatje's ambitions as well. His otherwise lone struggles are currently the concern of modern governments, non-governmental organisations, educators and academic institutions. PRAESA, for example is involved in the production of reading matter. As Kathleen Heugh of PRAESA writes:

> A key aspect of rehabilitating and developing the uses of the African languages in education, is to find ways of extending their uses as print languages. This includes the general societal print environment as well as developing literature in African languages. As long as the situation, where virtually no literature in African languages (or other reading materials) exists for young children, is allowed to continue it is

> difficult to argue for mother tongue literacy. A crucial incentive for stimulating children's desire to read, is to have appropriate reading materials available. PRAESA has initiated a process of developing materials which use Xhosa as a print language of equal status to English or Afrikaans in the Western Cape...Research in progress...demonstrate that one of the essential elements in reducing drop-out, repeater and failure rates in the schooling of the children of Africa is to reintroduce mother tongue education, i.e., educational systems based on the use of the child's or learner's home language or, if this is impossible initially, on the language of the immediate community, as the language of teaching and to sustain this as far as possible up the educational ladder (2001:118-119).

Recently, PRAESA received about R4-million from the Ford Foundation towards its "Stories Across Africa" project. The project aims at producing "a collection of stories" in different African languages. Besides its aesthetic and educational value, this project also has political and cultural functions. Neville Alexander, PRAESA's director, states:

> Beginning with the very youngest children and those adults who interact with and educate them, we hope to establish and promote a culture of reading and writing in African languages as well as in English. We also hope that the project will give a sense of a continent that is awakening and uniting, and thus contributing to the concept of an African Renaissance. Stories Across Africa brings together people doing the same thing in other countries and as such creates a network of a creative vision for our continent (*Monday Paper* 2004:3).

Alexander's remarks remind us of Plaatje's attempts to forge political organisation through linguistic/cultural projects, ignoring, in his case, the importance of economics. Plaatje's career lacked financial support hence his collections of folk-tales and other compilations have not survived. However, his conviction that ethnic pride is the basis for supra-ethnic politics seems essential in forging African unity. As Plaatje wished, ordinary citizens are being offered political agency in the African Renaissance.

If emphasis is on indigenous/mother or home language instruction/education, the production of reading material, and contributing to the African Renaissance, could Plaatje's translations and other works be considered or made part of this reading material; does Plaatje leave an indelible mark on Black literature as Doke and Lestrade suggest in *Dintshontsho*; how is he a "renaissance man"; what curriculum/pedagogical decisions could we carve out of these texts; is there a place for them in the context of mother tongue education or will they remain relics from the past; does the production of appropriate reading matter include translating more Shakespearean plays; will PRAESA's story project

confirm Plaatje's hypothesis that some of the stories on which Shakespeare's dramas are based have equivalents in African folk-lore (Plaatje 1996:212)? Answers to these questions could be the subject of other theses.

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