

Shakespeare and Botswana Politics in 2014: A Case of Life Imitating Art

Daniel Koketso
University of Botswana

"How many ages hence / Shall this our lofty scene be acted over,
/ In states unborn and accents yet unknown!"

(*Julius Caesar*, Act III, scene i. Lines 112-114).

Abstract

Shakespeare's influence cannot be confined by subject, theme, spatial and/or temporal setting. His works transcend disciplines and geographical identity. He is a linguist, a psychiatrist, ecologist and a political, social and economic commentator. Three thousand new words and phrases all first appeared in print in Shakespeare's plays. Through Shylock's resolve on three thousand ducats repayment, readers of *The Merchant of Venice* learn about the dangers of a cash nexus on human relations. The major tragedies and tragicomedies impart knowledge about politics at both national and family levels. *Julius Caesar*, *Macbeth*, *King Lear*, *Othello*, and *Romeo and Juliet* each touches on the important aspect of power dynamics in the private and public spheres. This paper considers some of the major political events in the build-up to the 2014 Botswana general elections and compares them to Shakespeare's political intrigue in *Julius Caesar*. The paper concludes that there is credibility in Oscar Wilde's argument in his 1889 essay 'The Decay of Lying,' that "Life imitates Art far more than Art imitates Life" (Wilde, 1889, p. 11).

Introduction

In his 1954 work 'The Relationship of Literature and Society', Milton C. Albrecht writes:

At one time or another literature has been thought to reflect economics, family relationships, climate and landscapes, attitudes, morals, races, social classes,

political events, wars, religion, and many other more detailed aspects of environment and social life.

Albrecht's assertion above supports the view that Shakespeare's canon reflects:

- Attitudes towards politics/politicians. For example, in *Julius Caesar*
- Family relationships. For example, in *Romeo and Juliet* and *King Lear*
- Attitudes towards race. For example, in *Othello*
- Attitudes towards a foreigner or foreign religion. For example, anti-Semitic sentiments in *The Merchant of Venice*
- Economics. For example, in *The Merchant of Venice*

Albrecht also goes on to identify three hypotheses that have been coined about literature, namely:

- that literature "reflects" society
- that literature influences or "shapes" society
- that literature functions socially to maintain and stabilize, if not to justify and sanctify, the social order "social-control" theory.

It is my submission that there is a symbiotic relationship between literature and the society. In other words, literature feeds from the society as much as it (literature) "is the precious lifeblood of a master spirit, embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life" as John Milton puts in it *Areopagitica* (Stephen, 1991, p. 240). Literature functions socially to maintain and stabilize, if not to justify and sanctify, the social order and writers derive part of their material from society to enrich the figments of their imagination. I believe that one of the benefits of literature is the acquisition of temperance or its converse, intemperance.

In his essay 'The Novelist as Teacher', Achebe alludes to the mutual relationship of literature and the society when he writes that "African writers [...] need to reach out to their readers – to help African people regain pride in themselves, the past and their future."

Background

Shakespeare's characters in the poems and plays continue to inspire many people around the world. It was fitting, therefore, that in 2016 Shakespeare was celebrated around the world to mark the four hundredth anniversary of his death. The celebrations were officially opened by the then British Prime Minister David Cameron on January 05th, which is the eve of the Twelfth Night in English tradition. Twelfth Night is also the title of one of Shakespeare's comedies. In Botswana the dramatist was celebrated under the theme "*Shakespeare o a tshela*" (Shakespeare lives). The celebration began in Gaborone with a week-long film festival at New Capitol Cinema in River Walk. One thousand three hundred government and private secondary school students attended free screenings of the documentary 'Muse of Fire', which follows two young British actors as they travel the world interviewing actors and directors about their love of Shakespeare, and Shakespeare's Globe's film of 'Twelfth Night', starring multi-award winning actor Mark Rylance. The film festival was facilitated by project partner New Capitol Cinemas and was part of a 6-month long programme of events in Botswana celebrating Shakespeare's work through film screenings, teacher/student workshops, a digital content production project and a showcase of students' work at the 2016 Maitisong Festival. Several performances of excerpts from Shakespeare's works, such as *Twelfth Night*, *Macbeth* and *Othello* were re-enacted by high school students from St Joseph's College, Maru-a-Pula School, Kagiso Senior Secondary and Ledumang Senior Secondary. The learners also recited some of the bard's sonnets. The Ministry of Youth, Sport and Culture's actors performed *Measure for Measure*, providing an easy understanding of the play as well as interpretation of Shakespeare.

(<http://www.maitisong.org/news/page/2/>)

Discussion

Josiah Nyanda (2015), in his work 'Macbething Lear and the Politics of Succession in Zimbabwe' establishes parallels between Zimbabwean political history predicated on President Robert Mugabe's succession battles within ZANU-PF and Shakespeare's tragedies, *Macbeth* and *King Lear*. The critic argues that scenes from the two tragic plays were inadvertently re-enacted by then Vice President Joyce Mujuru's faction and that of Emmerson Mnangagwa. He likens the Mujuru and

Mnangagwa factions to Goneril and Regan respectively with each faction having to profess their love and loyalty to their father Mugabe who is seen as Lear at least until Grace Mugabe enters the fray in October 2014. When Mujuru is expelled from the party following her declaration of interest to succeed Mugabe, which some members of ZANU-PF viewed as a conspiracy to overthrow their aged leader, Mugabe transmogrifies into Macbeth and Grace inadvertently morphs into Lady Macbeth who masterminded the Zanu-PF succession plot thus “putting/The night’s greatest business into my dispatch,” (*Macbeth*, Act I, scene i lines 66).

As a graduate of Shakespeare, I have watched several performances of his plays but I had never seen anything closer to a re-enactment of some of the scenes in *Julius Caesar* in a real-life situation until 2014. In the build-up to the 2014 Botswana general elections, the leader of the opposition Botswana Movement for Democracy (BMD) who doubled as the Secretary General of the Umbrella for Democratic Change (UDC) was killed in what government investigators concluded was a car accident. Opposition members, however, would have none of it and still believe to this day that one of their own was assassinated. UDC then was a tripartite coalition comprising the Botswana National Front (BNF), the Botswana Movement for Democracy (BMD) and the Botswana People’s Party (BPP). It is this so-called conspiracy theory surrounding Mr Gomolemo Motswaledi’s death that changed Botswana’s political landscape.

On the 6th of August 2014 a casket bearing the body of the opposition leader was carried by his friends and comrades along Independence Avenue to Trinity Church where it was to lie in state for members of the public to bid him farewell. It was the manner in which the politician’s body was carried to the church that conjured up in my mind *Julius Caesar’s* Act III, scene ii. In the play, Caesar’s body is carried through the streets of Rome by Brutus, Cassius and the other conspirators. In the case of Motswaledi, multitudes of people from Gaborone and other far-flung areas queued to catch a last glimpse of the leader. Sadness mixed with rage towards suspected Motswaledi conspirators was palpable. The general outrage of members of the public across the political divide was not very different from that of the Plebeians whose anger was aroused by Caesar’s body which bore deep wounds inflicted by his murderers.

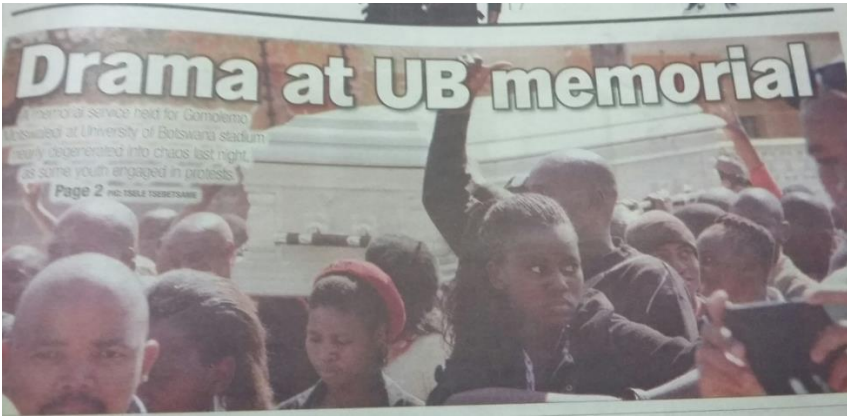


Figure 1. Motswaledi's body (white casket) carried along the Civic Centre Road in Gaborone to Trinity Church to lie in state. Picture courtesy of Mmegi Newspaper, August 07, 2014 Vol 31, No 116.

The caption on the picture in Figure 1 makes reference to the protest by some youths at the University of Botswana stadium during a memorial service held in honour of Mr Motswaledi. The protest is captured in Figure 3.



Figure 2. Multitudes of people from Gaborone and other areas queuing outside Trinity Church to see Mr Motswaledi's body that lay in state in the church. Picture courtesy of anonymous.

The Plebeians on the rampage

Another incident that bore a resemblance to events from *Julius Caesar* unfolded during Motswaledi's memorial service which was held at the University of Botswana stadium. The service almost degenerated into chaos when some youths protested against Botswana Democratic Party's representative Mr Gaotlhaetse Matlhabaphiri taking to the podium to give a message of condolence. When the Master of Ceremonies allowed members of other political parties, the Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) and the Botswana Congress Party (BCP) to speak on Motswaledi's life, the youth who were sitting in the stands surged onto the pitch shouting, "Bring back our Sir G!" prompting the party elders off their seats to calm them down. The crowd booed the BDP members as they were coming into the stadium but they welcomed the two former Botswana presidents Sir Ketumile Masire and Festus Mogae who are members of the BDP Council of Elders. The youth demanded an assurance that both the BDP and the BCP representatives would not be allowed to speak. Motswaledi's friend and UDC policy director Mr Ndaba Gaolathe pleaded with the angry members to remember that Motswaledi was a man of peace. (*Mmegi Newspaper* 07 August 2014)



Figure 3. Some youths forced their way to the football pitch shouting, "Bring back our Sir G!" (Picture courtesy of anonymous)

The youth's reaction is similar to the Plebeians' in *Julius Caesar*. In the play, the Plebeians are easily swayed and they conclude that Caesar, contrary to what Brutus has said, was not ambitious, therefore, was wrongly murdered. After Antony reads Caesar's will after descending into the masses and standing next to Caesar's body, he shows them the stab wounds and reveals the conspirators who inflicted the wounds on Caesar. The crowd surges away in anarchy, shouting, "Revenge! About! Seek! Burn! Fire! Kill! Slay!" (Act III, scene ii, line 196).

The screams "Bring back our Sir G!" of the youth at Motswaledi's memorial service at the University of Botswana stadium is a response similar to "Revenge! About! Seek! Burn! Fire! Kill! Slay!" shouted by the agitated Plebeians. The plebeians and the youth disregarded the need for temperance as they were "stirred up to such a sudden flood of mutiny" (*Julius Caesar*, Act III, scene ii, lines 202) by strong suspicion that one of their own had been assassinated.

It is unclear, however, why some Batswana especially the UDC supporters viewed the BCP with so much suspicion regarding the death of Mr Motswaledi that they would even make it difficult for the BCP leader to stay on at the funeral and pay his last respects to his fallen compeer. Mr Dumelang Saleshando walked out of Mr Motswaledi's funeral citing political intolerance on the part of his bereaved political opponents. I surmise here that, in the eyes of the UDC and its sympathisers the BCP was a better devil than the BDP (the latter was alleged to have orchestrated and/or choreographed Mr. Motswaledi's accident in a cover-up attempt while the former had refused to join the UDC). However, the two parties were treated with equal measure of disdain because they were political adversaries to the UDC. For the BCP, it was unfortunate that they shared a tag "opponent" with the BDP, a party which sympathisers of the UDC resent. In *Julius Caesar* Cinna the Poet is attacked in place of his namesake Cinna the Conspirator who was involved in the assassination of Caesar. When Cinna meets the Plebeians the following exchange ensues:

THIRD PLEBEIAN

Tell us your name, sir, truthfully.

CINNA THE POET

Truly, my name is Cinna.

FIRST PLEBEIAN

Tear him to pieces. He's a conspirator.

CINNA THE POET

I am Cinna the poet. I am Cinna the poet.

FOURTH PLEBEIAN

Tear him for his bad verses! Tear him for his bad verses!

CINNA THE POET

I am not Cinna the conspirator.

FOURTH PLEBEIAN

It is no matter. His name's Cinna. Pluck but his name out of his heart and turn him going. (*Julius Caesar*, Act III, scene iii)

In the scene above we have, until after Cinna the poet tries to explain himself, a case of mistaken identity as a result of the Plebeians' ignorance. However, when Cinna the poet tries to make it clear to the Plebeians that he comes to them not as an enemy but a friend and that he is Cinna the poet and not Cinna the conspirator, the plebeians still find an excuse to attack him because his name is Cinna. The point I am suggesting here is that Mr Saleshando was "attacked", as it were, at his late friend's funeral not because sympathisers of the UDC thought he was involved in the alleged assassination of the UDC Secretary General, but because of the tag "opponent" which his party shared with the alleged conspirators. Surely, if the Plebeians wanted to tear apart Cinna the poet for his bad verses they would have done so long before Caesar's assassination. Likewise, UDC's presumed anger at the BCP's failure to join the coalition was well documented before Motswaledi's death, but the anger never manifested into violent outburst as it did at the funeral. The funeral provided a platform, albeit an inappropriate one, for venting the anger.

When the convener of the opposition talks (that is the negotiations by BCP, BNF, BMD and BPP to form a coalition party) Lebang Mpotokwane had mentioned

that during the talk one of the parties had pulled out and the response from the UDC was: “*Ee, e ne yo!* (Yes, that one),” they said pointing accusing fingers at Saleshando. Mpotokwane nearly earned the wrath of the charged UDC youth when he mistakenly called UDC president, Duma Boko the BCP leader. They shouted angrily at him: “*A eye BCP. (To hell with the BCP).*” (*The Monitor*, 11 August, 2014)

‘Peace! Let us hear what Antony can say’

Another interesting development in Motswaledi’s death that brings Shakespeare to life on a Botswana ‘stage’ manifests through the eulogies made by the President of the Umbrella for Democratic Change Mr Duma Gideon Boko at Mr Motswaledi’s memorial service and that of the late former President of Botswana Sir Quett Ketumile Joni Masire on the day of the funeral. The two men’s tributes read like excerpts from the powerful rhetoric delivered by Antony after the assassination of Caesar. Mr Boko’s eulogy of Mr Motswaledi, which was delivered in English, is not very different from Sir Ketumile Masire’s Setswana homage. Just like Shakespeare’s works which, whether in Setswana, Swahili, Sanskrit, German et cetera, read just as great as they do in English, both eulogies are appealing to the ear. Alice Werner observes in her work ‘Shakespeare in Africa’ that Shakespeare’s works dropped “like seed into the virgin soil of the Bantu race”, enriching “the floating mass of tradition in those wonderful melodious languages whose future possibilities some of us just dimly apprehend” (1916, p. 144). The two speeches express the two men’s hope for a better Botswana, a republic characterised by justice and other democratic ideals that Mr Motswaledi idealised and propagated amongst his followers. Mr Boko says:

His (Motswaledi’s) plea was for God to tear down the consolidated walls of denial that still imprison many of our leaders; leaders who cursed and persecuted him for daring to speak the truth to them and their power. (*Mmegi Newspaper* 11 August 2014)

The words by Mr Boko derive from Mr Motswaledi’s persecution at the hands of the BDP leadership, a party he left to form the Botswana

Movement for Democracy together with like-minded comrades such as Hon. Samson Moyo Guma, Hon. Botsalo Ntuane, Hon. Wynter Mmolotsi, and Hon. Odirile Motlhale. It was their belief that the BDP was intolerant of plurality of ideas and/or divergent views, therefore, bereft of inner party democracy. When they left to form the BMD, the leadership of the BDP labelled them power-hungry individuals. In other words, they were too ambitious in a destructive way. This is somehow similar to how, according to Antony, Brutus and the rest of the conspirators perceived Caesar. The sheer relevance of the play reveals itself when these comrades later on abandon Mr Motswaledi and the BMD which was still in its formative days. Messrs Moyo Samson Guma, Botsalo Ntuane, Odirile Motlhale, and Kabo Morwaeng, and two flash-acts in Phillip Makgalemele and Patrick Masimolole retraced their steps to the BDP.

“Et tu, Brute?": Caesar is betrayed by his friends?

I listened to a conversation on Gabz FM radio during the morning show “Breakfast with Reg” in July 2014 a few days after the death of Mr Gomolemo Motswaledi. The host of the show Reginald Richardson had asked people to call the radio station to say how they remembered Mr Motswaledi. One of the people who called was Hon. Samson Moyo Guma. He told Reginald that some days before Mr Motswaledi died he spent time with him reminiscing about Hon. Guma’s days of reading Shakespeare. According to Hon. Guma, Mr Motswaledi asked him whether he was still as sharp on Shakespeare as he used to be during the bygone days of schooling and the former responded in the affirmative. To buttress his point Hon. Guma quoted the following words from *Julius Caesar*:

Cowards die many times before their deaths;
The valiant never taste of death but once.
Of all the wonders that I yet have heard,
It seems to me most strange that men should fear;
Seeing that death, a necessary end,
Will come when it will come.

Mr Motswaledi was, according to Hon. Guma, impressed and he urged him (Hon. Guma) to go on and he continued quoting:

Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears;
I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him;
The evil that men do lives after them,
The good is oft interred with their bones,
So let it be with Caesar...

Quoting Shakespeare verbatim is an impressive feat and to many people, a mark of intelligence. In retrospect, the quotations above are a fitting tribute to Mr Motswaledi who, as a former student of Shakespeare himself, got to hear the playwright speak to him through Hon. Samson Moyo Guma. It was this radio call-in show that made me understand why the playwright tells us in his play *As You Like It* that “All the world’s a stage/ And all the men and women merely players. / They have their exits and their entrances, / And one man in his time plays many parts,” (Act II, scene vii) while Ben Jonson says of the playwright that ‘He was not of an age but all time.’ There we were as Batswana in 2014, just two years shy of 400 years since the death of Shakespeare, ‘performing’ his play. Hon. Guma’s Shakespearean theatrics reminded me of his political relationship with Mr Motswaledi. These were two of the several men who left the BDP to found the BMD; however, Hon. Guma and others later retraced their steps to the BDP. Many people viewed Hon. Guma and other’s move as an act of betrayal of Mr Motswaledi. The first quotation of the two above is particularly sobering in that it was recited to Mr Motswaledi days before he died and it captures effectively his bravery. Mr Boko’s eulogy to Mr Motswaledi to which I make reference later on attests to this fearlessness. Mr Motswaledi was ‘kicked out’ of the BDP, as it were, for speaking against the all-too-powerful president of the party H.E. Ian Khama Seretse Khama whom he accused of stifling inner-party democracy. Despite counsel from friends and comrades to toe the line, Mr Motswaledi stood his ground, vowing to defend democracy and the constitution of the BDP. This was after the acrimonious BDP elective congress in Kanye where Motswaledi and his *Barata-Phathi* team trounced the president’s preferred faction, the A-team. Motswaledi was elected the Secretary General at the congress and his relationship with the President of the party was rough to the point where he was recalled as BDP candidate for the Gaborone Central constituency. Mr Motswaledi challenged his 5 years suspension from the BDP in a court of law in what became Botswana’s first case against a sitting president. However, he lost the case with costs. This led to the formation of a BDP splinter party, the BMD.

Clearly, Mr Motswaledi was not a coward, therefore, one can appropriate Caesar’s words, the same words Mr Guma recited to Mr Motswaledi, and say he (Mr Motswaledi) tasted of death but once because of his valour.

Although he was recalled by the BDP from Gaborone Central constituency, he later stood a chance to win the constituency under the BMD banner had death not overtaken him. One can surmise here that perhaps winning the constituency was one of the many accolades that Sir Quett Masire foresaw Motswaledi achieving had he lived much longer when he told the crowd that "... *Ke belaela gore ha a ne a santse a tla tshela, o ne a tla nna le ditlotla tse ditona*"(Had he lived longer, he would have in future received bigger and better accolades).

Mr Boko says in his eulogy about Mr Motswaledi: "I have witnessed that enduring fortitude, that patriotic self-abnegation, and that invincible determination which have carved his statue in the hearts of his people." He was making reference to the deceased's fearlessness in the face of a repressive leadership of the BDP and Botswana as a whole. While Antony in *Julius Caesar* repeatedly calls Brutus an honourable man, a clear use of irony, thereby creating doubt in the public's mind that he (Brutus) is honourable, Mr Boko on the other hand repeatedly uses the refrain "what a man! What a man! What a mighty good man!" to underscore his fallen comrade's irrepressible qualities, such as patriotism, determination and fortitude. These are the same qualities to which Sir Ketumile alludes when he says:

Mathata a lehatshe la Botswana a tlhoka badiredi – se iphatlalatseng, yatla yare re re re a lo bua ra hitlhela motho a le mongwe hela hela, ele party ya motho le bana ba gagwe.Re tlhoka batho... Re tlhoka batho ba ba nang le tebelopele ya bokamoso ja lehatshe...Re tlhoka batho ba ba sa batleng go itirela leina ka bo bone, ba lebile leina ja lehatshe la Botswana.

(Botswana needs visionary professionals not individuals who want personal glorification. Therefore, persist in unity so that your party stays a people's project, not a family entity that no one can sell.) (*Sunday Standard* 14 August 2014)

Here, Sir Ketumile cautions the UDC and by extension Botswana at large to remain steadfast in unity. In other words "his principal message was

about rediscovering the national ideals of democracy, unity and nation building” (*Sunday Standard* 14 August 2014). Mr Motswaledi left the BDP, a party that uses the tagline “*ya rona le bana ba rona*” ([the BDP is] *for us and our children*). Although the tagline means that the BDP belongs to its members and their posterity, its detractors often interpret the tagline to mean the party belongs to a select few members especially those in positions of power. Sir Ketumile warns Batswana against elitism, a trait often associated with his party, the BDP. Perhaps this is the message that was in the minds of those who founded the BMD whose slogan is “*Botswana wa rona!*” (*Our Botswana!*). The slogan puts altruistic and patriotic sentiments ahead of personal attainments predicated on such factors as ancestry, the intellect, wealth and other personal qualities. The slogan seems to be inspired by the national anthem *Fatshe leno la rona* which calls for unity and patriotism, a call that Sir Ketumile delivers through his eulogy. The eulogy, just like Mr Boko’s, is premised on two factors, Mr Motswaledi’s political vision and solid friendship qualities. Sir Ketumile laments: “*Batho betsho, re rakanye hano go gomotsana, le go gomotsa boora Motswaledi ...*” (We are gathered here to console one another and the Motswaledi family).

And later on he says:

...*Motswaledi ene ele tsala yame, le rre Gaolathe ha – Ndaba – mo ebileng batho ba gaetsho ba party ya gaetsho ba neng ba belaela gore, “e se gore gongwe Quett le ene o setse a tsene kwa? A eseng gore Quett le ene o tsene mo bathong ba bangwe ba? (Motswaledi was my friend, and so was Mr Gaolathe –Ndaba here- so much so that my comrades were even suspicious that I, Quett, had defected to the opposition party.)*

In *Julius Caesar* Antony also mentions Caesar’s good qualities and their friendship: “I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him .../ He was my friend, faithful and just to me.” (*Julius Caesar*, Act III, scene ii. Lines 112-114). Sir Ketumile and Mr Motswaledi were at this point affiliated to two different political parties; however, politics did not affect their friendship negatively. In a classical Mark Antony way, Sir Ketumile seeks to endear his late friend to Batswana and to “[paint] his legacy on the canvas of immortality”

as Boko puts it. As one of the great statesmen in Africa and the world, Masire was lauded for his great leadership, therefore, to those who were still warming up to Mr Motswaledi's leadership within and beyond his political establishment, Sir Ketumile was reassuring them that through hard work, commitment and by association, Mr Motswaledi was a great leader. That is why he amassed accolades even before he was given a position of responsibility in the BDP. Sir Ketumile told mourners that had he not died this young Mr Motswaledi would possibly, at some point, have become the President of Botswana.

Ha kere Motswaledi o ne a nonohile ebile a hilwe, kana e sale e rile bogologolong jole a sale lekawana, ka jaanong o tlhokahala a le lekau, ra mo neela dietsele re le goromente (a ise a bo a tsene mo phatheng epe), ... Ke belaela gore ha a ne a santse a tla tshela, o ne a tla nna le ditlotla tse ditona, tse ditonatona go heta tlotla tseo. (Motswaledi had great leadership qualities and he was gifted at that young age. My government recognised his talents through awards and this was before he assumed any leadership role. Had he lived longer, he would have in future received bigger and better accolades than he had already received.)

As a leader of a political organisation, there was no bigger and better recognition that Motswaledi would have received than becoming the President of Botswana. Following Sir Ketumile's speech there was grave concern from the BDP followers that he was unhappy with the leadership of the ruling party, therefore, he was in a way drifting towards the UDC especially the BMD. However, Otlogetswe (2014) refutes this claim. He argues that:

Masire had not shifted, even a bit. His views have always remained core BDP values of democracy and a tolerance of divergent views. Instead, the BDP seems to have been the one that heeled away from where Masire and Seretse left it; a matter that has made Masire and many in the BDP frustrated and

alienated from their party (*Sunday Standard*,
14 August 2014)

The quotation above argues that Sir Ketumile's speech does not mean he had changed his mind about the BDP. He was only expressing his condolences to Motswaledi's family and the UDC and "not [making] a political point" (*Sunday Standard* 14 August 2014). However, the eulogy has a couple of political punch lines that either directly or indirectly benefitted the UDC. We should understand that Mr Motswaledi was to multitudes of Batswana a political figure, therefore, crediting him with leadership attainments would immediately border on a political statement. For example, Sir Ketumile mentions in the eulogy that our democracy is amenable to plurality of ideas and he concludes this point by stressing:

Mme ha re re we are democratic, re itse gore ha lo le goromente, lo itse gore lo goromente e e tla reng kamoso e bo e le opposition... ebile ha lo le opposition, lo itse gore you are a government-in-waiting! (We should be cognisant of the fact that as a democratic government of the day, we may one day be an opposition party. The opposition party too should know that it is a government-in-waiting.) (Sunday Standard 14 August 2014)

Sir Ketumile warns the ruling and the opposition parties that they should be as democratic as they would want Botswana to be when they find themselves either as an opposition or a ruling party. This is one of the most powerful utterances in his eulogy. The line sounds more like an indictment of the democratic credentials of the government of the day. It is one of the statements that I believe rattled the BDP to its core. Firstly, the statement must have caused discomfiture in the BDP and its sympathisers especially that it was uttered by a member of the BDP Council of Elders. Secondly, the statement was made at a funeral of a political icon who quit the BDP citing lack of inner-party democracy. However scathing Sir Ketumile's speech appears to be, the statesman somehow maintained a conservative stance towards the political poles just as Antony maintained a calm demeanour regarding those who conspired against Caesar. Masire left everyone to draw his or her own

conclusion regarding his speech. However, his final statement makes his intentions clear:

Leso le re sodile senatla! Le re sodile motho yo ne re na le tsholohelo ya botshelo ja rona mo go ene. Mme mma ke ipoeletse ke re gatwe go swa motho, go sale yo mongwe. Jaaka Rre Boko a rile "Motho ke yo!" (Death has bereft us of great talent! It has deprived us of someone on whom we placed our national hope, but let me say once more that when one dies another rises. As Mr Boko said, "*ecce homo!*") (*Sunday Standard* 14 August 2014)

In the statement above Sir Ketumile tells the mourners that death has robbed the nation of great talent, someone who carried the nation's hope on his shoulders. He ends his eulogy by taking his cue from Mr Boko's eulogy premised on the Latin dictum *ecce homo*. He tells the nation "*le nna kare mme gona le motho mo, mo bathong ba ba ha ba*" literally saying behold the man referring to Mr Boko. It is clear that Sir Ketumile loved Mr Motswaledi as a friend and a son he raised in the BDP, but he loved Botswana more, that is why he cautions both the opposition and the ruling party to do what is best for the country.

Conclusion

As a reader of Shakespeare, I cannot say with certainty that the carrying of Motswaledi's body along the Independence Avenue, the reaction to BDP's functionaries at the memorial service and the verbal attack on Mr Dumelang Saleshando at the funeral were a "lofty scene" from Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* "acted over" by someone or a group of people who read the text. There is no ocular proof that the acts are manifestations of the influence of literature on society. Neither can I conclude that those members of the UDC who did not protest against the participation of the alleged Motswaledi conspirators at the memorial service had read and acknowledged from literary or theological texts the importance of restraint. The youth who protested against the BDP operatives may have done so out of their youthful exuberance and not because they had read radical literature. Nonetheless, I can say with conviction that Shakespeare understood human psychology, mob psychology even, so much that the parallels arising from Mr. Motswaledi's death and the events in *Julius Caesar* cannot be ignored by readers of

this play. The events become a classic example of how life imitates art, an anti-mimesis philosophical position that puts the Aristotelian idea of mimesis on its head. Oscar Wilde's assertion that anti-mimesis 'results not merely from life's imitative instinct, but from the fact that the self-conscious aim of life is to find expression, and that art offers it certain beautiful forms through which it may realise that energy' (Wilde, 1889, p. 17), finds amplitude in the parallels that I have established between the events that closely followed Mr Motswaledi's death in the build up to the 2014 Botswana general elections and events in *Julius Caesar*.

It is the exhibitionistic undertaking, coupled with political rhetoric that incites the Plebeians in Shakespeare's play to effect political change. A public display of Motswaledi's body produces similar results in Batswana, some of whom have never heard the name Shakespeare let alone read English. It is events such as Motswaledi's political life and death that would make even the most cynical reader believe that Shakespeare 'Doth bestride the narrow world like a Colossus.' It is the words of Cassius, however, that ring true in the context of the recent events mentioned above when he says "How many ages hence / Shall this our lofty scene be acted over, / In states unborn and accents yet unknown!". Stephen Black's pessimistic criticism of Sol Plaatje, "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" (Willan 2016, p. 17) is after all untrue because the researcher and indeed several other people who read Shakespeare appreciate his contribution to the understanding of human nature. Shakespeare belonged to no one and everyone at the same time, to no particular age but all ages (Ndana 2005, p. 58). As either a sociological personage or a corpus of texts, he is a universal language through which societies around the world express their aspirations and fear. I believe Shakespeare o a *tshela* and he lives in every one of us even those who have not read a phrase from any of his works.

References

- Achebe, C. (1965). The novelist as teacher. *Address to the Conference on Commonwealth literature* (pp. 161-162). University of Leeds: New Statesman,
- Albrecht, M.C. (1954). The Relationship of Literature and Society. *American Journal of Sociology*, 59(5), pp. 425-436.

- Brian, W. (2016). A South African's homage' at one hundred: revisiting Sol Plaatje's contribution to the Book of Homage to Shakespeare (1916). *Shakespeare in Southern Africa*, 28, 1-24.
- Drama at UB Memorial. (07 August 2014). *Mmegi Newspaper*. Retrieved November 15, 2017, from <http://www.mmegi.bw/index.php?aid=45028>
- Maitisong, (2015). Shakespeare o a Tshela schools film festival. Retrieved November 22, 2017, from <http://www.maitisong.org/news/page/2/>
- 'Motswaledi funeral turned into freedom square', (11 August 2014). *The Monitor*. Retrieved November 17, 2017, from <http://www.mmegi.bw/index.php?aid=45084>
- Ndana, N. (2005). Sol Plaatje's Shakespeare: Translation and transition to modernity' PhD thesis. University of Cape Town, South Africa.
- Nyanda, J. (2015). Macbething lear and the politics of succession in Zimbabwe' *Shakespeare in southern Africa* (vol. 27), pp. 39-46.
- Shakespeare, W. (1994), *Julius Caesar*. London: Penguin Group.
- Stephen, O, & Jonathan, G. (eds.) (1991). *John Milton: The major works including paradise lost*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- The linguist chair: Quett Masire's speech was about his dream of a perfect republic. (14 August 2014). *Sunday Standard*. Retrieved November 17, 2017, from <http://www.sundaystandard.info>
- Walker, A. (1916). Shakespeare in Africa. *Crisis*, 12(3), 144.
- 'What A Man! What A Man! What A Mighty Good Man!' An eulogy of the departed BMD President and UDC Secretary General Gomolemo Motswaledi by UDC President Duma Boko. (11 August 2014). *Mmegi Newspaper*. Retrieved November 15, 2017, from <http://www.mmegi.bw/index.php?aid=45081>
- Wilde, O. (1889). *The decay of lying*. Retrieved September 20, 2017, from <http://virgil.org/dswo/courses/novel/wilde-lying.pdf>