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Sound Repetition as Characterisation Mechanism in *The Moor's Last Sigh* by Salman Rushdie*

Ina Biermann

Summary

This article is a stylistic analysis of the description of the act of sighing in *The Moor's Last Sigh* (1995) by Salman Rushdie. The analysis brings together two disciplines: that of phonetics and that of narratology. It offers a description of sound repetition in a passage from the novel in which the act of sighing is elaborately described and metaphorised. The functions of sound repetition in this text include that of onomatopoeic transfer and of mediating the construction of metaphorical relations with regard to the central metaphor of sighing.The analysis further reveals that sighing has implications for narration and characterisation which are discussed in some detail within the context of recent narratological research. The article makes the point that the sound of language communicates in this narrative text in a way expected of poetic texts. This implies on the one hand that the language used in this narrative text has poetic qualities and on the other hand that the notion and occurrence of poetic language use are not genre-bound.

Opsomming

Hierdie artikel is 'n stilistiese analise van die beskrywing van die sughandeling ("sighing") in *The Moor's Last Sigh* (1995) deur Salman Rushdie. Die analise bring twee dissiplines byeen: dié van fonetiek en dié van narratologie. In die analise word 'n beskrywing gegee van klankherhaling in 'n uittreksel uit die roman waarin die sughandeling uitgebreid beskryf en gemetaforiseer word. Die funksies van klankherhaling in hierdie teks sluit in onomatopeïese oordrag en die bemiddeling van metaforiese relasies ten opsigte van die sentrale sugmetafoor. Dit blyk verder uit die analise dat sug implikasies het vir vertelling en karakterisering, wat in besonderhede bespreek word in die konteks van die resente narratologiese navorsing. Die punt wat die artikel maak, is dat klank in hierdie narratiewe teks op 'n manier kommunikeer wat gewoonlik van poëtiese tekste verwag word. Dit impliseer aan die een kant dat die taal wat in hierdie narratiewe teks gebruik word, poëtiese kwaliteite het en aan die ander kant dat die begrip en voorkoms van poëtiese taalgebruik nie genre gebonde is nie.

Keywords: foregrounding; sound repetition; onomatopoeia; onomatopoeic transfer; the narrator; characterisation; metaphor, textual specification in narrative; Rushdie, Salman.

1 Introduction

The expectation that language used in literary texts is highly organised to achieve various specifically literary purposes has been generally accepted in stylistic and literary-theoretical research especially since the publication of Jakobson's influential contributions (1960,1968). In poetic texts, the sound of the language is usually expected to be communicatively and functionally organised through sound repetition. Furthermore, sound in poetic texts is often more expressive than sound in everyday language use.[1] These two features, functional sound organisation and sound expressiveness, do not usually apply to the sound of the language in narrative texts.[2] In this article, I maintain that reading Salman Rushdie's *The Moor's Last Sigh*, however, requires attention to the sound of the language, because in this text, sound is used in an organised and functional way. To demonstrate this, I analyse the use and function of sound repetition in a passage from the novel in which the narrator elaborately explains the implications of his breathing problems and relates it to the act of sighing. The interpretation of the effect of sound repetition in these passages is based on my metaphorical analysis of the title of the novel in the context of characterisation in the story. The analysis also takes into account that the word "sigh" is an onomatopoeic term. Its expressive potential is exploited in the chosen passage by means of the principle of onomatopoeic transfer (as postulated by Biermann 1991: 113). The Moor in the title is the one who performs the action of sighing. Throughout the novel, he is implicitly and explicitly characterised by this act. The analysis of sound repetition in the passage, against the background of the qualification of the act of sighing in the rest of the novel, then, leads to the conclusion that phonic foregrounding is employed as a characterisation mechanism in this text. Rushdie therefore crosses the boundary of genre conventions by his practice of sound repetition. He also extends the scope of the traditional concept of characterisation by not only employing sound repetition in isolated instances or on a small scale for temporary effect, but by integrating it consistently with an element of narrative structure, namely the composition of character.

2 The Sigher and the Sigh: The Moor (Narrator and Character) and the Story

The Moor is the main character and the narrator of the story. He is identified in the following passage at the beginning of the novel:

(1) Long ago when I was green my beloved said to me in fondness, 'Oh, you Moor, you strange black man, always so full of theses, never a church door to nail them to.' (She, a self-professedly godly un-Christian Indian, joked about Luther's protest at Wittenberg to tease her determinedly ungodly Indian Christian lover: how stories travel, what mouths they end up in!) Unfortunately, my mother overheard; and darted, quick as snakebite: 'So full, you mean, of faeces.' yes, mother, you had the last word on that subject, too: as about everything.

(Rushdie 1995: 3)

The story that the Moor tells is his own story and that of his family. At the time of telling, most of the events are in the past. He tells the story of his family starting at a point long before his birth continuing until the end of his life, when he is on the verge of dying. The story starts at "the dawn of the century" (p. 15) and covers the life and times of four generations, as can be seen in the family tree at the beginning of the novel (reproduced in Appendix A). The environment in which the actors experience the events includes India and Europe. The story takes place in "four sequestered, serpented, Edenic-infernal private universes" (p. 15). The first of these is Cabral Island, where his great-grandparents spent their life, "my mother's Malabar Hill salon, was the second; my father's sky-garden, the third; and Vasco Miranda's bizarre redoubt, his 'Little Alhambra' in Benengeli, Spain, was, is and will in this telling become, my last" (p. 15). It is clear that this is a story of considerable temporal and spatial magnitude, with a rich variety of participants. The fact that the "universes" or environments are so clearly described as private, or apart from the real world, points to the imaginary or fictional nature of the story and supports a reading of the characters and their actions as metaphorical.

The Moor's position with regard to the story is complex. There is a mixture of the Moor as an experiencing "I" and a narrating "I" with frequent switches between the two throughout. Together with the narrator's continual acknowledgement of his own limited insight and his disillusionment at having been betrayed by at least three of the characters in the story (Uma, Vasco and his father), the switching between narrative and experiencing "I" creates an illusion of authenticity, giving validity to the opinions of the narrator. As a character, he participates in the story; nevertheless, as the narrating agent, he is in a position superior to the story he narrates and tells the story from the perspective of hindsight. He is therefore extradiegetic.[3]

With regard to the part of the story in which he is not a character, specifically the part that is about the time before his birth, he is heterodiegetic. As an extra-heterodiegetic (character-to-be) narrator, he is absent from the story and acquires that special quality sometimes called omniscience, or more appropriately, in the

case of this novel, of being able to know what is in the minds of the characters he tells about, of being in possession of knowledge about the past, present and future and of being able to be present in private situations where characters are supposedly unseen or unaccompanied, such as the night of his own conception. However, the extent and truth of his knowledge about events such as these later prove to have been limited and in doubt. The narrator frequently and increasingly points to the lack of certainty and reliability of his narration to the extent that "I was no longer sure of anything" (p. 414). Judging from the meticulous detail of the family tree at the beginning of the novel (Appendix A) and from the details throughout of the family history, the story superficially appears to be a rock-solid family saga, but eventually all the truths are undermined, reversed, or placed in a different, ironic light. By creating such a monumental semblance of reliability and authenticity, the stark contrast of the narrator's explicit unreliability has the effect that it conveys a bewildering sense of doubt and uncertainty, in keeping with the postmodern condition as Rushdie sees it in a lecture: "the acceptance that all that is solid *has* melted into air, that reality and morality are not givens but imperfect human constructs, is the point from which fiction begins .... The challenge of literature is to start from this point, and still find a way of fulfilling our unaltered spiritual requirements" (1990: 9).

The "I" narrator, who is the kind of narrator that is maximally overt, identifies himself as a character in a large part of the family history or story that he tells. With regard to the part of the story in which he is a character, he is a homodiegetic narrator. Even where he is a character, however, there are again shifts between chunks of story in which he has the role of the principal character, telling a story about himself, and chunks of story in which he plays a secondary role as observer, telling about the other characters. His mother Aurora often seems to assume the role of main character in these instances. In the part of the story before the Moor's birth, much of the information about characters and events that the heterodiegetic narrator tells is filtered through the lens of her focalisation. The information is often derived from the family legends as she interprets them and passes them on to her son.[4] A result of this uncertainty about the narrator-focaliser's credibility is that it raises the question whether the matter of his accelerated aging process is not also a kind of betrayal in which he takes part himself.

There is, for instance, the question of the validity of his mother's brief pregnancy in the light of the missing night Aurora spent in the company of Nehru nine months before his birth (1995: 175-179). All in all, however, his mother has "the last word" (Extract (1)). The narrator deliberately chooses to allow his external focalisation, in terms of which, as narrator, he might have been more objective, to coincide with Aurora's internal character-focalisation, which is by

definition more limited and biased. He states the agreement between the two instances of focalisation clearly as an emotive need on his part: "Well, I believed her. I needed consolations and was happy to take whatever was on offer. I believed her, and it helped. (When I learned about the missing post-Lotus night in Delhi four and a half months before my conception, I wondered if Aurora were covering up a different problem; but I don't think she was. I think she was trying to will my half-life into wholeness, by the power of mother-love.)" (p. 220). As a result of this uncertainty throughout about the narrator-focaliser's credibility and his inability to determine which version of the story is true or false, who is to blame or not to blame, what is right or wrong, instability and unreliability are prominent features in this story. The fact that we have only the narrator's word for all of the story is emphasised by the Moor himself when he says: "what was she [i.e. Carmen da Gama, his great-aunt] but a creature of my mind? - As are all these; as they must be, having no means of being other than through my words" (p. 425). The storyness of the story is closely associated with its being a product of the narrator's imagination, a fiction, but yet one that is in essence true and valuable, because what the narrator tells is fundamentally the one universally true thing, a love story (cf. Extract (8)), despite the ironic revisions and everything which makes it so incredibly hard to tell. In Aoi's words, the moral of the story he is telling is that "defeated love is still a treasure, and those who choose lovelessness have won no victory at all" (p. 425).

The relationship between this instance of internal character-focalisation and external narrator-focalisation is further evident in the fact that the Moor is the model for his mother's paintings:

(2) As I set down my memories of my part in those paintings, I am naturally conscious that those who submit themselves as the models upon whom a work of art is made can offer, at best, a subjective, often wounded, sometimes spiteful, wrong-side-of-the-canvas version of the finished work. What then can the humble clay usefully say about the hands that moulded it? Perhaps simply this: that I was there. And that during the years of sittings I made a kind of portrait of her, too. She was looking at me, and I was looking right back.

(p. 219)

The narrator's focalised object is the character, his mother, Aurora, the creator of paintings of which he is frequently the subject, but the character Aurora's focalised object is the other character, her son, the Moor, the subject that she is making sense of in her painting, or through which she tells a story on canvas, but who is also the narrator of her story and his. These two creators of stories are looking at each other then, in the mutual, but different, process of storytelling. Aurora's story, through the medium of epic paintings, often in series, is about

the mother-child relationship, including her own experience of losing her mother and of losing her son, against the background of her family and the larger context of India. The Moor's story through the medium of verbal narration is also essentially about the mother/parent-child relationship, including his loss of his place in the parental home, including the loss of his mother and of the woman he loves, against the background of the extended family and his position in India and in the world.

The narrative situation is not at all a peaceful one with an armchair narrator sitting by the fireside telling his experiences of the past. On the contrary, the narrator is persecuted when telling the story, compelled to scribble it down on paper while being held captive. Only when he is on the verge of dying, he finally tells the very last part of the story of how he has escaped and how he is now presenting the story to the outside world (nailing it to the landscape) or making it known like a declaration. The character-narrator has experienced a tremendous decline in fortune, from the position of the dearly beloved only son and youngest child of his parents to that of the family outcast and a prisoner. The reader realises that the last word of the text must also be his dying word, spoken with his last breath. The phrase "last sigh" in the title therefore indicates that the entire novel is the dying utterance of the Moor. To make this connection it is already necessary at an early stage to read the phrase "last sigh" metaphorically, because the novel is far too long, simply on a physical scale, to fit the description of a final exhalation of breath. The metaphorical connection between this story and the notion "last sigh" is made explicit by the narrator in the following Extracts (3) and (4):

(3) When you're running out of steam, when the puff that blows you onward is almost gone, it's time to make confession. Call it testament or (what you) will; life's Last Gasp Saloon.

(p. 4)

From a point in time at the end of the story, the narrator then looks back at a lost world:

(4) Now, therefore, it is meet to sing of endings; of what was, and may be no longer; of what was right in it, and wrong. A last sigh for a lost world, a tear for its passing. Also, however, a last hurrah, a final, scandalous skein of shaggy-dog yarns (words must suffice, video facility being unavailable) and a set of rowdy tunes for the wake. A Moor's tale, complete with sound and fury. You want? Well, even if you don't. And to begin with, pass the pepper.

(p. 4)

In Extract (3), the act of narrating is related to the condition of running out of

steam, or being out of breath and with the concept of ending. The narrator is nearing the end of his life and the story is his testament or confession, or that in which he finds his last relief: "life's Last Gasp Saloon". In (4), the narrator mentions the passing of a "world", the ending of a story and the end of a life as types of endings that are relevant in this story. What is also relevant is that with the ending itself, there is the reference to it, or the telling about it: the act of confession or "to sing of endings", or in Extract (1) the nailing of a protest or thesis against a church door, like Luther. This adds a sense of a final and profound declaration to the notion of story. This is, then, not only a love-story, but also a story about ending(s).

The reference to pepper in Extract (4) points to the central importance of pepper and spices in the family fortune, as can also be seen from the following passage:

(5) Mine is the story of the fall from grace of a high-born cross-breed: me, Moraes Zogoiby, called 'Moor', for most of my life the only male heir to the spice-trade-'n'-big-business crores of the da Gama-Zogoiby dynasty of Cochin, and of my banishment from what I had every right to think of as my natural life by my mother Aurora, *née* da Gama ....

(p. 5)

The story covers the life and times of three generations (as in the family tree in Appendix A), starting with the Moor's maternal great-grandparents, Francisco da Gama and Epifania née Menezes. Francisco was a successful spice trader, continuing "the age-old da Gama art of turning spice and nuts into gold" (p. 17). They had two sons, Camoens da Gama and Aires da Gama. Aires married Carmen Lobo. They had no children. Camoens married Isabella Souza, also called Belle. Their only daughter Aurora fell in love with Abraham Zogoiby, a Jew, but they remained unmarried because the Catholic Bishop refused to accept Abraham's conversion. She became the mother to four children, the youngest of which was the Moor. His three sisters all died before him.

It is the story of the decline of a family and of the main character's own decline. Emotionally, he starts from being cherished by his mother, the rest of the family and the household. He grows up in a materially and emotionally wealthy home with an artist mother and a businessman father, a colourful variety of extended family members and a constant stream of visitors. In spite of his handicaps of having a deformed right hand, of aging at twice the normal speed and of suffering from breathing problems, his childhood is happy. This is largely due to the close bond between him and his mother. However, as he becomes an adult, things begin to change for the worse. When he falls in love with Uma, the relationship between him and his mother and later between him and the rest of

his family deteriorates as a result of Uma's ill intentions towards them all. The narrating Moor describes his mother Aurora and Uma, the woman he loved and who betrayed him, as the two opposing "super-powers" (p. 3) in his life (also cf. Extract (1)). Eventually, he is banished from his family and becomes part of a criminal gang led by Mainduck. After his mother's death, he is reconciled with his father, but this is followed by a further betrayal when Abraham adopts an adult son who brings about the total destruction of his father's crooked business empire and his father's death.

Finally, he is the last surviving member of the family. At the time of telling the story, he has reached the end of his life. He has escaped from the prison in a tower room in the folly built by Vasco Miranda, but his breathing problems, from which he suffers his entire life, and the double-quick ageing of his body have caught up with him and he is about to die.

In the course of the Moor's life, from infancy, his mother often uses him as a model for her paintings. He is the subject of a sequence of works dealing with the relationship of mother, son and lover/rival of which the painting "The Moor's Last Sigh" is the final one. These three roles are also mentioned in the parlour game played by the family on the night of Uma's visit (pp. 252-256). The same narrative, or fabula, i.e. the "series of logically and chronologically related events that are caused or experienced by actors" (Bal 1988: 5) which constitutes this story, is therefore present in more than one artistic manifestation of which the text, this novel, is only one possibility. There is another painting with the title "The Moor's Last Sigh", a self-portrait by Vasco Miranda, covering his portrait of Aurora with her invisible baby daughter in her arms. In the self-portrait, Vasco is dressed like an Arab, sitting on a white horse (pp. 157-161). The reference to other representations of the central vehicle within the text suggests that the story is more than the medium in which it is told. It also suggests that even though the narrator might breathe his last, or the story might come to an end, the essence of the story will remain potentially intact to be retold in another form. It is also significant that the paintings are eventually destroyed but that the written story survives and that the narrator escapes with it. For the narrator this implies that, in *The Moor's Last Sigh*, the telling of a story in language is more enduring than any other form of artistic endeavour.

Just as the narrator coincides with a character in the story, the narratee is also identifiable. Whereas, at the beginning of the novel, the remarks addressed to the reader (cf. Extract (4)) seem to be to the virtual reader, it becomes clear that there is also a character in the text, Vasco Miranda, who fulfils the role of narratee. The relationship between the narrator and the narratee provides another reason why the narrator is out of breath: it is a relationship of deathly fear and of hatred. Initially, though, it was a relationship of pure, innocent, child-like and

fraternal love, containing an element of hero-worshipping on the part of the narrator towards the narratee, with the narrator a handicapped child and the narratee an eccentric, but lovable adult (pp.154-155). At the time of telling the story, however, the narratee has changed: "his openness slammed shut, the wine of love spoiled in him long ago, and turned into the vinegar of hate" (p. 155). In the course of the Moor's childhood, the painter Vasco Miranda arrives and eventually comes to live with the family. His is a lesser, more commercial talent compared to Aurora's, but he admires her deeply. He decorates the Moor's nursery walls with cartoon characters and teaches him many truths and insights into the world and his family relations that remain with him throughout his life. Vasco's feelings for Aurora are a mixture of admiration of her talent and love for her as a woman. She tolerates his presence and extends her hospitality, but constantly humiliates and eventually rejects him. He leaves and goes to live in Spain. His admiration and love for her later turn into fanatical hatred of the entire family, which eventually culminates in insane revenge years after her death when he is instrumental in the destruction of her work and the stealing of the remaining paintings. He finally imprisons the Moor. Vasco forces him to write down the story of his family, which is at the same time the story of the novel. He reads each portion as it emerges from the narrator's pencil. The novel itself, then, is that "thick furl" (p. 433) of paper that the Moor has written under duress as a captive in the tower room. The story is told under the threat of death: "He had made a Scheherazade of me. As long as my tale held his interest he would let me live" (p. 421). When he flees, he nails the "bunches of scribbled sheets" (p. 3) to the landscape. At the time of telling the story, both Aurora and Uma are dead "and I in a far-off country with death at my heels and their story in my hand, a story I've been crucifying upon a gate, a fence, an olive tree, spreading it across this landscape of my last journey, the story which points to me. On the run, I have turned the world into my pirate map, complete with clues, leading X-marks-the-spottily to the treasure of myself. When my pursuers have followed the trail they'll find me waiting, uncomplaining, out of breath, ready" (p. 3). Again, the fact that the telling of the story and the condition of being out of breath are one and the same, is evident.

A recurrent motif in the story is that things are not what they seem. There are frequent references to the technique of palimpsest painting in Aurora's art, of paintings deliberately painted over other paintings to hide or obliterate the original, of secret identities, of schizophrenic personalities and of more than one interpretation of events and persons. One of the crucial events in the story, for instance, is Aurora's death. She falls to her death at the age of sixty-three while dancing near the cliff edge during an annual feast day, as she does every year. The first layer of interpretation of this fact, accepted by the authorities, is one of

accidental death. However, Abraham later reveals to the Moor that it had been the work of Mainduck, who had been angered by having been rejected by Aurora. A third interpretation, which seems to be irrefutable, is that which motivates Vasco's revenge. He tells the Moor that he knows who Aurora's murderer is. He is able to prove his accusation by X-raying her painting "The Moor's Last Sigh" under which she had concealed another painting, that of her killer, Abraham. Vasco tells the Moor that his mother had written to him before her death, informing him that she was afraid for her life and that the painting contained proof of who was threatening her.

In addition to the multilayered paintings, the characters themselves are not what they seem. Through the generations, the characters have secrets and secret identities, which include the family secrets such as his great-uncle Aires's homosexuality, Vasco's many versions of himself, his father's double life as a big businessman and a "Big Daddy" (Mogambo) of the criminal underworld, and Uma's schizophrenic personality in terms of which she invents different versions of herself, which brings about that the Moor is rejected by his mother and father, later imprisoned and eventually becomes a member of the so-called cricket team of crooks under the leadership of his father's opponent, the criminal mastermind called by the names Raman Fielding, Scar or Mainduck. At this point, one of his own secret identities or "layers of disguise" (p. 153) emerges. His misshapen right hand which he has been hiding from sight most of the time now becomes the instrument with which he delivers torture to assist Mainduck's manipulations of society. When he is eventually reconciled with his father, he gives up the alliance with Mainduck, and after his father reveals that Mainduck has been responsible for his mother's death, he kills him in revenge. Ironically, it emerges from Vasco's X-ray of the painting of "The Moor's Last Sigh" by his mother that his father has only used him to kill his opponent. The main villain in the entire story, then, seems to be his father Abraham. His father is willing to sacrifice him, as the biblical Abraham, but for far less godly reasons. This is a repetition of Abraham's initial promise to hand over his first-born son to his mother Flory (pp. 110-112). The sacrifice in this case is to get the upper hand over his enemy, the gang-leader Mainduck, and to remove proof of the fact that he is his wife's murderer.

His fellow captive is Aoi Uë, a Japanese restorer of paintings, who must peel off the painting by Vasco, called "The Moor's Last Sigh", covering the portrait he made of Aurora when she was young. While she peels off the painting and reveals the other beneath it, the Moor must write the story of his family. She advises him "to spin it out" to gain time and to enlarge the chances of being rescued. The joint activities of the Moor and Aoi Uë imply that the act of telling the story and that of revelation of hidden truths go hand in hand. It is significant

that what Aoi uncovers is a portrait of the Moor's artist mother at her loveliest and most vital, at the beginning of her childbearing years. She is the one who gave life to him, nurtured him, watched over him and whose eyes are eventually looking back at him again when the portrait is uncovered, before he escapes to nail his story to the landscape.

Bearing in mind Bal's (1988: 5) observation that the text aspect of narrative literary texts accounts for the fact that they are composed of language signs, Aoi Uë's presence in the story points to the importance of the sound of language in this novel:

(6) Her name was a miracle of vowels. Aoi Uë: the five enabling sounds of language, thus grouped ('ow-ee oo-ay'), constructed her. She was tiny, slender, pale. Her face was a smooth, unlined oval, on which two smudge-like eyebrows, positioned unusually high, gave her a permanent expression of faint surprise. It was an ageless face.

(p. 423)

Aoi Uë is here clearly revealed as an embodiment of language. She is a restorer of paintings by profession, but, like the Moor under threat of death, she now destroys one painting to uncover what is hidden beneath it. Her characterisation clearly has a bearing on the communicative role of language which can be to preserve, to destroy, but also to reveal what is unclear or essential. Furthermore, she is a metaphor for the beauty of the sound of language and the mellifluousness of vowels. In contrast, the other characters in the story told by the narrator are compared to consonants:

(7) There was our story in a nutshell, our tragedy enacted by clowns. Write it on our tombstones, whisper it to the wind: those da Gamas! Those Zogoibys! They just *didn't know how to be calm.*

We were consonants without vowels: jagged, lacking shape. Perhaps if we'd had her to orchestrate us, our lady of the vowels. Maybe then. Maybe, in another life, down a fork in the road, she would come to us, and we would all be saved.

(p. 428)

Aoi Uë's strength and "self-possession" (p. 423) sustains the Moor during his captivity. He draws strength from her for his survival. Not only does she encourage him to continue telling the story, advising him to increase the length of time of telling, but she also comments critically on each instalment before Vasco sees it. She, therefore, is a mediator who intercedes between the narrator and the narratee. This is a comment on the relationship between story and language: the story depends on language, but there is an unease in the relationship. Aoi shrinks away from the violence of the narrative and eventually

withdraws from the narrator himself (p. 427). Comparing the two sets of characters as metaphors for the vowels and consonants (as in Extracts (6) and (7)), if the vowels are removed and only consonants remain, language becomes meaningless and uncommunicative. Aoi's death implies that storytelling is destructive of all that is smooth, "unlined" or mellifluous in language and can render language useless, but also that the story is not confined by language. The Moor is a member of the family of the Da Gama-Zogoibys, who are compared to the consonant sounds of language, lacking the mellifluousness and serenity of the vowel sounds of language. Therefore, extending the metaphor of the sounds of language as vehicles for the characters of the novel, as made explicit by the narrator in Extracts (6) and (7), an expectation about the Moor who breathes the last breath or sigh, the sigher, begins to emerge. This is that he may be expected to be described in terms of the sound of that "last sigh". I investigate the realisation of that expectation and the extent of that description in the next section.

The foregrounding of sound in this narrative text indicated by the metaphorisation of the characters Aoi Uë and the Da Gama-Zogoiby family in Extracts (6) and (7) can also be demonstrated from the following extract:

(8) Christians, Portuguese and Jews; Chinese tiles promoting godless views; pushy ladies, skirts-not-saris, Spanish shenanigans, Moorish crowns ... can this really be India? *Bharat-mata, Hindustan-hamara*, is this the place? War has just been declared. Nehru and the All-India Congress are demanding that the British must accept their demand for independence as a precondition for Indian support in the war effort; Jinnah and the Muslim League are refusing to support the demand; Mr Jinnah is busily articulating the history-changing notion that there are two nations in the sub-continent, one Hindu, the other Mussulman. Soon the split will be irreversible; soon Nehru will be back in Dehra Dun jail, and the British, having imprisoned the Congress leadership, will turn to the Leaguers for support. At such a time of upheaval, of the ruinous climax of divide-and-rule, is this not the most eccentric of slices to extract from all that life - a freak blond hair plucked from a jet-black (and horribly unravelling) plait?

No, sahibzadas. Madams-O: no way. Majority, that mighty elephant, and her sidekick, Major-Minority, will not crush my tale beneath her feet. Are not my personages Indian, every one? Well, then: this too is an Indian yarn. That's one answer; but here's another: *everything in its place*. Elephants are promised for later. Majority and Major-Minority will have their day, and much that has been beautiful will be tusked & trampled by their flap-eared, trumpeting herds. Until then, I continue to guzzle this last supper; to exhale, albeit wheezily, this aforementioned *dernier soupir*. To hell with high affairs of state! I have a love story to tell.

(p. 87)

The first sentence reveals its poetic quality when it is rewritten in verse form, as below:

(8)(i) 1. Christians, Portuguese and Jews;
2. Chinese tiles promoting godless views;
3. pushy ladies, skirts-not-saris,
4. Spanish shenanigans, Moorish crowns

In these lines (or the first sentence of Extract (8)) the narrator summarises the main points of the story: the personages are of mixed origin and religious background and there is a constant rebellion against tradition, such as the reversal of male domination ("... [the women], not the men, were the true protagonists in the struggle" (p. 33)), in the family history. These lines can be scanned iambically and there are sound patterns including approximate rhyme of /i:z/ and /u:z/, end-rhyme of /u:z/, assonance of /ai/, alliteration of /s/, consonance of /z/ and diffuse repetition of /ʃ/. The sound repetition can be viewed as a foregrounding mechanism: the relationship between the rhyming pair "Jews" and "godless views", for instance, summarises one of the important themes of the novel, namely, the contrasting characteristics of the two characters Abraham and Aurora (he is a Jew and she is basically areligious). In the family history, too, the contrast between religious piety and nonbelief as well as the joining together of various religious persu-asions and a variety of cultures are recurrent themes. On the whole, these four lines adhere to poetic conventions. This confirms that there is a poetic exploitation of sound in this novel.

There is a reference in (8) to the narrator's breathing difficulties when he describes his act of telling as: "I continue to guzzle this last supper; to exhale, albeit wheezily, this aforementioned *dernier soupir*." The Moor's breathing difficulties are part of his family inheritance. Apart from his mother, Aurora, several other family members died as a result of drowning or suffocation. His great-grandfather committed suicide by drowning, his grandmother Belle died of lung cancer, her grieving husband Camoens, his grandfather, committed suicide by drowning and his sister Mynah suffocated as a result of having been poisoned. In terms of methods of characterisation (Rimmon-Kenan 1983: 59-70), the Moor's legacy of breathing difficulties characterises him indirectly.[5] He is the story-teller (the one who sighs) but he is hampered by finding it so hard to exhale. (Other characteristics are his action of moving through time at double speed; his external appearance: he is a beautiful dark-skinned man ("black" as in Extract (1)), but has a birth defect, a deformed hand, which becomes his weapon as he beats up people during the time of his membership of the criminal gang in his secret other identity; his environment including Bombay and his ancestry or family tree. The characteristics of his entire extended family have a

bearing on his character. The close relationship with his mother, in particular, characterises him as special, cherished and different. He was, for instance, the only one of her children that she breastfed. Their closeness is seen as incestuous by Uma. For present analytical purposes, I confine the consideration of the Moor characteristics mainly to his breathing problems. What is notable about the way in which he is characterised in general is that much of it points in the direction that he is depicted as special in various ways. He is *the one* to whom every clue points (p. 3), the special one who is also the teller of the story.)

At this stage of the analysis, several points have emerged about the phrase "the Moor's last sigh". On the grounds of Extracts (1), (3), (4) and (8) then, the following metaphorical construction may be proposed:[6]

(8)(ii) THIS STORY = THE MOOR'S LAST SIGH
TENOR **VEHICLE**

The associations of the vehicle activated by the textual specification considered above can be summarised as follows:

[the] last sigh
breathing out of the last breath
the last utterance
the dying word(s)
the expression of a last and /or ultimate longing or desire

[of]	**the Moor (character)** death, i.e. the end of the character's life	**&**	**the Moor (narrator)** the end of the narrator's story and the end of his function as story-teller

Applicable to the vehicle "the Moor's last sigh", with regard to both the Moor-character and the Moor-narrator are the associations: the last exhalation of a person when dying, the last exhalation including the last spoken words of the person and the last testament or confession spoken with the last breath. If the narrator is "running out of steam" (Extract 3) the implication is that his story is running out of content, but it also implies that the character is nearing the end of his life and that his means of staying alive are exhausted. As the representative of the abstract narrative agent, the fact that the Moor sighs, or breathes his last at the end of the story has serious implications, because the very function of story-telling is brought to an end by it. In this sense, the "Moor" acquires the stature of vehicle for the universal story-teller. Nailing up of secrets can be associated ambiguously with making a declaration or with hiding the truth. The asso-

ciation between the Moor and Scheherazade implies a further association which qualifies the notion of the last breath as the attempt by the narrator to prolong his life: the Moor's last sigh, telling the story and continuing the suspense of not having finished the story, is what ensures that his imaginative, fictional world and the people in it, including the Moor himself, remain alive in the mind of the real reader. In this way, the telling of the story is the Moor-character and the Moor-narrator's last sigh by which he lets go of his vital air and breath. By telling it, he releases that last vital breath, but he is compelled to let go of that breath to stay alive. There is a tremendous urgency, an overwhelming need and desire to tell the story. The last sigh is a final, last embrace of life and yet a dying action.

3 The Sound of the Last Sigh as Communicated by Sound Repetition

My overall aims in this section are to demonstrate, from a detailed analysis of sound repetition in one passage from the novel, that the exploitation of sound which is associated with poetic language use is not genre-bound, that linguistic sound is functional in this particular narrative text for characterisation purposes and that, by extension, its functional use in narrative texts should be included in the theoretical accounts of the linguistic mechanisms of narrative structure. What applies to characterisation in this text may well be valid for other narratological concepts.

In the analysis that follows, the term "sound repetition" is used in the sense that it is used by Leech (1969: 89) to imply that repetition of sound in poetry can be viewed as a form of parallelism. For the present purposes, the rarer form of foregrounding at this level, deviation, is not included in the analysis.[7]

In the passage from the novel below, the narrator directly addresses the reader, reflecting about the story he is telling and about himself as narrator and, almost exclusively, about his breathing difficulties, specifically his difficulty to breathe out. The use of language, particularly the organised use of sound, in this passage makes it memorable. In the analysis, I try to describe the sound patterning more accurately and indicate a number of potential communicative functions of sound repetition.

(9)(i) In my family we've always found the world's air hard to breathe; we arrive hoping for somewhere better.

Speaking for myself, at this late hour? Just about managing, thanks for asking; though old, old, old before my time. You could say I lived too fast, and like a marathon runner collapsing because he failed to pace himself, like a

suffocating astronaut who danced too merrily on the Moon, in my overheated years I used up a full lifespan's air-supply. O wastrel Moor! To spend, in just thirty-six years, your allotment of threescore-and-twelve. (But let me say, in mitigation, I didn't have much choice.)

So: there is difficulty, but I surmount it. Most nights there are noises, the croaks and honks of fantastic beasts, issuing from the jungles of my lungs. I awake gasping and, sleep-heavy, grab fistfuls of air and stuff them uselessly into my mouth. Still, it is easier to breathe in than out. As it is easier to absorb what life offers than to give out the results of such absorption. As it is easier to take a blow than to hit back. Nevertheless, wheezing and ratchety, I eventually exhale, I overcome. There is pride to be taken in this; I do not deny myself a pat on my aching back.

At such times I become my breathing. Such force of self as I retain focuses upon the faulty operations of my chest: the coughing, the fishy gulps. I am what breathes. I am what began long ago with an exhaled cry, what will conclude when a glass held to my lips remains clear. It is not thinking makes us so, but air. *Suspiro ergo sum.* I sigh, therefore I am. The Latin as usual tells the truth: *suspirare* = *sub*, below, + *spirare*, verb, to breathe.
Suspiro: I under-breathe.

In the beginning and unto the end was and is the lung: divine afflatus, baby's first yowl, shaped air of speech, staccato gusts of laughter, exalted airs of song, happy lover's groan, unhappy lover's lament, miser's whine, crone's croak, illness's stench, dying whisper, and beyond and beyond the airless, silent void.

A sigh isn't just a sigh. We inhale the world and breathe out meaning. While we can. While we can.

- *We breathe light* - the trees pipe up. Here at journey's end in this place of olive-trees and tombstones the vegetation has decided to strike up a conversation. *We breathe light*, indeed; most informative. They are 'El Greco' cultivars, these chatty oliviers; well-named, one might remark, after that light-breathing God-ridden Greek.

Henceforth I'll turn a deaf ear to prattling foliage with its arboreal metaphysics, its chlorophyllosophy. My family tree says all I need to hear.

(pp. 53-54)

The patterns of sound repetition in this passage are indicated in (9)(i) in Appendix B. These include a sustained assonance of /ai/, alliteration of /s/ and diffuse repetition of /s/ throughout, on the basis of which I argue that the phonemes of the word "sigh" are communicatively continued in the passage.

The word "sigh" in the title of the novel, used as a noun, occurs more than once in Extract (9). The Oxford Dictionary defines its meaning as: "A sudden, prolonged, more or less audible respiration, following on a deep-drawn breath and esp. indicating or expressing dejection, weariness, longing, pain or relief." This sense can be transferred to the sound made by the wind, or in the case of the

verb "sigh" ("to emit, give or heave a sigh"), it can be "of the wind, trees, etc.: to make or give out a sound suggestive of a sigh". The aspects of "sigh" used as noun and as verb in the title and in the passage above that are relevant, then, are that sighing is closely associated with the (human) act of exhaling, producing sound in doing so and that this act can be associated with the expression of emotion. The association with sound in the meaning of the word and the phoneme sequence of a voiceless alveolar fricative initial consonant /s/ and a diphthong /ai/ can, in the context of the meaning of the word, be considered to be an approximation or imitation in the sound of the language of the sound of sighing, thus onomatopoeia[8]. In the continuation of the sounds of this onomatopoeic word throughout the passage, an effect of onomatopoeic transfer (Biermann 1991: 113) occurs. In the analysis that follows, I argue that various facets of the above dictionary meaning of "sigh" are activated by sound repetitions and that new, metaphorical associations are created through equivalence in sound. The entire passage acts as a metaphorical construction, as in the case of a poetic text, qualifying the word "sigh".

When the narrator says: "A sigh isn't just a sigh. We inhale the world and breathe out meaning. While we can. While we can", it becomes possible to review the metaphorical analysis of the notion "the Moor's last sigh" to include the aspect of making meaning of experience, the creative act such as artistic activity and story-telling. The narrator constantly has such severe breathing problems that they impede his ability to exhale, or to sigh, or to tell the story. He nevertheless overcomes them and succeeds in telling the story. The act of story-telling is therefore described as an exceedingly difficult one, to be performed against great odds and at the cost of overcoming great obstacles. The description has a bearing on the reading of the vehicle "the Moor's last sigh" in that this difficulty in breathing further qualifies the act of sighing. An investigation of the organisation of sound in these four sentences reveals that the metaphorical structure and the syntactic repetitions are emphasised in a very specific way by sound repetition, as follows:

(9)(ii) A sigh isn't just a sigh.
ə sai **'iznt djʌst ə sai**
NP (subject X) V NP (subject X), with subject X = global vehicle

We inhale the world and breathe out meaning.
wi: in'heil ðə wɜ:ld ənd bri:ð aut 'mi:niŋ

While we can. While we can.
wail wi: kan wail wi: kan

The sentence "a sigh isn't just a sigh" is a mirror-like construction in which the two noun phrases contain an identical subject, a sigh, which is also phonetically identical and which corresponds with and elaborates the vehicle, the sigh of the title, as revealed in the metaphorical construction analysed above. The implication is that the notion a sigh cannot be taken at face value, that it is considerably more than it appears to be, which corresponds with the reading of the term as a global vehicle in Gräbe's (1984, 1985) sense. In "we inhale the world and breathe out meaning", the semantically opposite verbs "inhale" and "breathe out" are both used nonliterally, as focal expressions, "inhale" qualifying "the world" metaphorically and "breathe out" qualifying "meaning" metaphorically. The assonance of /i:/ in this sentence establishes a relationship of parallelism in sound which relates the subject, "we", performing the action, the verb "breathe out" and the object of the breathing out, "meaning" to one another. This results not only in emphasis of this sentence, but also in creating a semantic association of similarity between these three components of the metaphorical construction, which mediates the transfer of semantic features between the focal expression "breathe out" and the term qualified by it, "meaning". The phonic equivalence unifies the sentence across the syntactic symmetry of the two juxtaposed verbal focuses. This allows for a reading of the two verbal phrases which describe the two parts of the breathing process as a two-part verbal vehicle for the process of understanding and creating, of literally making sense, of absorbing all that life offers by way of experience and of expressing again what has been understood. In the context of this text, this process of making sense is extended to include the creative process of story-telling. The repetition of the phrase "while we can" obviously results in exact phonetic repetition of the whole sequence. The syntactic and phonic repetition emphasises the temporary nature of breathing / making sense or meaning. Breathing and making sense are both activities that maintain human life, but for any individual person they are both limited to the lifespan of that person. The identical repetition of the phrases "a sigh" and "while we can" brings about assonance of /ai/ in the context of the above four sentences, but viewed against the passage as a whole, it contributes to the increased density and continuation of the phonemes constituting the onomatopoeic word "sigh". The linguistically given sound imitativeness of this word is exploited and expanded by the sound repetitions in this passage, which transfer the onomatopoeic associations of the central metaphor to the network of sound repetitions that continue its phonemes in the passage as a whole.

This is particularly evident in the phrase "I sigh, therefore I am" in the fourth paragraph of the passage and its surrounding elaboration. The narrative subject "I" is phonically parallel to his act of sighing. The semantic equivalence established by the assonance of /ai/ is enhanced by a pattern of alliteration of /b/ in

"At such times I become my breathing .... I am what breathes. I am what began long ago with an exhaled cry ...." The identity between the "I" and his breathing and especially the exhaled "sigh" or its variation in the infant, an exhaled "cry", is made firm, sure and memorable through sound repetition.

The initial phoneme /s/ in "sigh" occurs in various sound patterns throughout this passage. There are specifically in the second paragraph patterns of alliteration of /s/ and /sp/ and of diffuse repetition, phonically relating a number of verbs qualifying the Moor. This is an instance of sound repetition for the sake of similarity, in the sense that the verbs form a grammatical paradigm and a semantic set, establishing and extending the metaphorical implications of the term "sigh". These include "speaking" in "speaking for myself, at this late hour?"; "collapsing", "suffocating", "spend" and "say" in "like a marathon runner collapsing because he failed to pace himself, like a suffocating astronaut who danced too merrily on the Moon, in my overheated years I used up a full lifespan's air-supply. O wastrel Moor! To spend, in just thirty-six years, your allotment of threescore-and-twelve. (But let me say, in mitigation, that I didn't have much choice.)" Apart from the verbs, there are other words and phrases that are related by this instance of sound repetition, which contribute to the general emphasising effect and establish other equivalences. The present discussion remains confined to the grammatical and semantic correspondence established by the equivalence in sound within the above paradigm of verbs. There is a causal relationship between them in that the act of speaking exhausts the speaker (the narrator) to the point of collapsing: he spends his breath by speaking. Speaking, to the narrator, is essentially telling this story. The strong phonic similarity between the words "sigh" and "say" is communicative of the metaphorical relationship of likeness between them. Another verb that forms part of this phonic paradigm is "surmount" in the third paragraph. It refers to the Moor overcoming his breathing difficulty and finally exhaling, or sighing. To sigh / say is to overcome tremendous obstacles, but the effort ends victoriously, even if it causes considerable discomfort and even pain. The assonance of /ei/ which establishes phonic parallelism between the verbs "say" and "exhale" draws the latter verb into the pattern of verbs qualifying the central vehicle "sigh". In "Nevertheless, wheezing and ratchety, I eventually exhale, I overcome" and in "I am what began long ago with an exhaled cry" the act of exhaling is once again linked with the act of speaking, which reinforces the reading in (9)(ii) of sighing as breathing out meaning.

There is reverse rhyme of /sai/ in "**sigh**"and "silent" in "and beyond and beyond the airless, silent void". In this case, the phonic equivalence emphasises semantic dissimilarity. The phrase "silent void" comes after a number of onomatopoeic terms, indicating a point "beyond" all sighing, speaking and ex-

pression. Silence is the final end to sighing and all that it represents.

Other patterns such as the alliteration and diffuse repetition of /f/ are also communicative in the passage. The noun "family" at the beginning and end of the passage is continued through the repetition of /f/ in phrases like "I lived too fast"; "he failed to pace himself, like a suffocating astronaut .... I used up a full life-span's air-supply"; "there is difficulty, but I surmount it". The Moor's family and the inheritance of breathing difficulties, as well as his accelerated ageing, are brought together in the sound repetition. This is continued in the description of the recorded noises that Vasco plays in his tower during the Moor's captivity. These noises are also metaphorically equivalent to the sounds inside his own lungs. Apart from the alliteration of /f/, the alliteration of /n/, assonance of /ʌ/ and consonance of /ks/ communicatively relate various parts of the description in the third paragraph. The alliteration and diffuse repetition of /f/ further continue the association with breathing and breathing problems in the fourth and fifth paragraphs in especially "faulty operations of my chest", coughing" and "fishy gulps"; "divine afflatus" and "baby's first yowl". The word "coughing" is another onomatopoeic term. Taking into account the two patterns of alliteration of /s/ and alliteration of /f/ in the passage, and the participation of the onomatopoeic terms "sigh" and "coughing" in them, the phonetically acoustic similarity between the voiceless fricatives /s/ and /f/ which contribute to the onomatopoeic effect in each case cannot be accidental. They are identical in all phonetic features except that of the place of production. Together with the piling up of a number of onomatopoeic words in the syntactic parallelisms in "baby's first **yowl**, shaped air of speech, staccato gusts of laughter, exalted airs of song, happy lover's **groan**, unhappy lover's **lament**, miser's **whine**, crone's **croak**, illness's stench, dying **whisper**, and beyond and beyond the airless, silent void" the sustained sound patterns with /s/ and /f/ therefore further emphasise and support the onomatopoeic effect of the word "sigh". It is in this context that the following instance of alliteration is viewed: there is alliteration of /f/ in "henceforth I'll turn a deaf ear to prattling foliage with its arboreal metaphysics, its chlorophyllosophy. My family tree says all I need to hear". On the grounds especially of the alliteration of /f/ in "foliage" and in "family" the nonliteral term "tree" is related to the literal trees. In this case, the adjective "deaf", which participates in the sound pattern in terms of diffuse repetition of /f/, refers to the narrator's attempt to shut out sound and the information communicated by it ("*We breathe light,* indeed: most informative"). This is an instance of sound repetition used for the sake of dissimilarity. The word "deaf" contrasts with the general communicative effect of the alliteration of /f/ which relates descriptions of sound in the preceding part of the passage.

The metaphor of the real trees that are the vehicle for the family tree is

qualified and co-communicated by the sound repetition in "*We breathe light* - the trees pipe up" where the assonance of /i:/ relates the vehicle "trees" with the verbal focus "breathe". The trees, like the Moor, breathe. This enacts the figurative dictionary meaning of the verb "sigh" referred to above, that the sound can refer to that made by the wind in trees. Furthermore, the assonance of /ai/ relates "light" to the consistent pattern of assonance of /ai/ which, together with the alliteration of /s/, has been shown to have transferred the onomatopoeic qualities of "sigh" to the pattern of sound repetition. There are, therefore, several patterns of sound repetition that co-communicate the following metaphorical construction:

(9)(iii)

TENOR:	**family tree**	VERBAL FOCUS:	says all **I** need to hear
			↕
			I (THE MOOR) **sigh**, therefore **I** am
VEHICLE:	(olive) trees	VERBAL FOCUS:	breathe light pipe up strike up a conversation
	foliage		prattling

El Greco cultivars, after that light-breathing, God-ridden Greek
ADVERBIAL FOCUS: with its arboreal meta**phy**sics, its chloro**phyl**-losoph**y**

From the above reconstruction of metaphorical components it emerges that the alliteration and diffuse repetition of /f/ establish semantic relationships between the tenor and vehicle and between the vehicle and the adverbial focus qualifying it. The adverbial focus is also related phonically to the tenor "family tree" specified by the vehicle, which provides another explanation for the negative attitude of the Moor of turning a "deaf ear". What he is rejecting is not the trees / foliage in themselves, but what their "prattling foliage" communicates: their interpretation or the meaning that they make "arboreal metaphysics ... chlorophyllosophy" does not answer his deep need and his longing. This is supported by the assonance of /ai/ as presented in the above reconstruction, where it is evident that the subject "I" and "sigh" are related on metaphorical grounds already discussed: the "I" is defined by his act of sighing ("I sigh, therefore I am"). By contrast, the assonance of /ai/ in "pipe up" and "strike up a conversation" relate two verbal focuses that qualify the trees metaphorically as speaking or communicating, but the two verbs describe speech of a less important and less significant kind. The trees are engaged in small talk, their leaves are "prattling". What they have to say points in a useless, outdated direction, that of mythology

and metaphysics, in which the Moor cannot find any salvation or meaning.

The verb "breathe" which qualifies the trees also qualifies the human subject the Moor, or the human subject "we", representing all humans in "We inhale the world and breathe out meaning" analysed above. From the analysis of the metaphorical constructions mediated and established by the sound repetitions, it emerged that the act of breathing out could be associated with the act of sighing, which is also making meaning in the case of the Moor and in the case of humankind in general. The trees, however, breathe "light". "Light" generally has positive associations. Breathing "light" as a qualification of "trees" can be associated with the biochemical process of photosynthesis, during which light energy is absorbed by the chlorophyll in the foliage of trees and green plants and this energy is transformed into organic matter including fruit like olives. In the process life-giving oxygen is released by the tree as a by-product during the daytime. If the phrase "light-breathing" is used with reference to humans, however, it is generally associated with ease of breathing, in this case the complete act of breathing in and out. A sleeping child, or a person who is at rest and carefree, for instance, breathes light. To breathe light is the opposite of sighing in humans. Both these sets of associations are potentially relevant in the case of "trees". Their act of breathing light and their cultivar name, "El Greco", give rise to a metaphorical comparison between the trees and "that light-breathing God-ridden Greek". In this case, breathing light, apart from the human association, has mythological and also metaphysical associations, relating to more than physical light. Nevertheless, whatever may be gained from that act of breathing light, the narrator prefers the act of sighing, of breathing out meaning over the breathing of light of the trees or of meaning produced by mythical or spiritual explanations, even if this inevitably means that he will run out of breath. This explains why the Moor will "turn a deaf ear to prattling foliage with its arboreal metaphysics, its chlorophyllosophy". What he listens for is the "sigh", or what is communicated by his "family tree". This is co-communicated by the assonance of /i:/ in "tree" and "need" in "My family tree says all I need to hear" where the vehicle human family tree is related to the verb "need" qualifying the Moor and describing his deep attachment to his mother, the entire family and his position in it that are described so elaborately in all the pages of the novel. In this final line, the verb "says" relates to the verbs "speaking" and "say" and finally to "sigh" on the basis of the alliteration of /s/ and the phonic near-identity between "sigh" (/sai/) and "say" (/sei/). In view of the metaphorical constructions in the novel and in this passage, as represented in 8(ii) and 9(iii), the global metaphorical metaphor "the Moor's last sigh" has been further substantively qualified in the sound of the language used in the text to specify the profoundly difficult, longed for, urgently needed and finally self-destructive, yet inexplicably

painfully meaningful act of creative discourse itself.

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Notes

1. My view of the communicative role of sound in poetic texts, which has a bearing on the approach taken in this article, is explained and demonstrated more fully in Biermann (1991). In brief, the view I take is as follows: If everyday language use is considered to be the norm, poetic language is foregrounded with regard to the use and function of sound. In my (1991) study, I base this view on the notion of heightening as formulated and practised by Gerard Manley Hopkins. Jakobson (1960) relates his formulation of the equivalence principle to Hopkins's notions of parallelism (House & Storey 1959: 107) and the recurrent figure of sound (p. 267). Leech (1969) extends this notion of foregrounding, derived from Mukařovský (1964) in his definition of parallelism and deviation as foregrounding techniques. I take into account Herman's view of foregrounding as "both a linguistic and a psychological device" (1983: 105). The psychological aspect started receiving attention with Van Peer (1983) and is still the subject of current empirical studies of literature, for instance Steen (1994).

2. This is supported by recent publications in the field of stylistics. For instance, Short makes explicit his strategy of discussing "particular kinds of analysis in relation to the literary genre that they give us most analytical purchase on" (1996: 10) and consequently, in his book, sound patterning is earmarked for discussion with regard to the genre of poetic texts.

3. The terms extradiegetic, heterodiegetic and homodiegetic are taken from Rimmon-Kenan's typology of narrators (1983: 94-96), based on Genette (1972, English transl. 1980). The point of these distinctions is to clarify the narrator's position with regard to the story and the extent of the narrator's participation in the story.

4. This novel explicitly makes the distinction between narrator and focaliser, as is evident in the relationship between the narrator and the character Aurora. She has the dual role of seeing mother to the Moor and seeing artist who is in turn narrating the Moor's story on canvas. The term focaliser is used here in the sense in which it is used by Rimmon-Kenan (1983: 71-85) and Bal (1988: 100-118; 120-121).

5. In the discussion of aspects of characterisation in *The Moor's Last Sigh*, I rely on the three-dimensional or layered view of narrative outlined by Rimmon-Kenan (1983) and Bal (1988), both of whom are indebted to Genette (1969, 1972); Bal (1988) also refers to Genette (1980). In terms of this view, characterisation is the process by which the *actors* who participate in the *events* on the abstract *story level* are transformed into more specific, individualised *characters* at the level of the *narrative text*.

6. The metaphorical analysis is in terms of the interactive view of metaphor as represented by Reinhart (1976) and extended by Gräbe (1984, 1985).

7. The term "sound repetition" is used with reference to the syllable (C V C) to cover the six types defined by Leech (1969: 89) and a seventh type termed "diffuse repetition", when the phoneme that is repeated occurs in varying positions of the syllable. A model for the description and reading of sound repetition as parallelism has been formulated by Biermann (1991: 95-97).

8. One instance of a motivated (or iconic) relationship between sound and meaning in language is the occurrence of onomatopoeia. This term refers to words which refer to a sound and resemble in their sound shape the sound referred to, for instance, "crash", "moan", "plop" and "yell". Biermann (1991: 41ff) accounts more fully for the types of sound expressiveness and the relative position of onomatopoeia in language.

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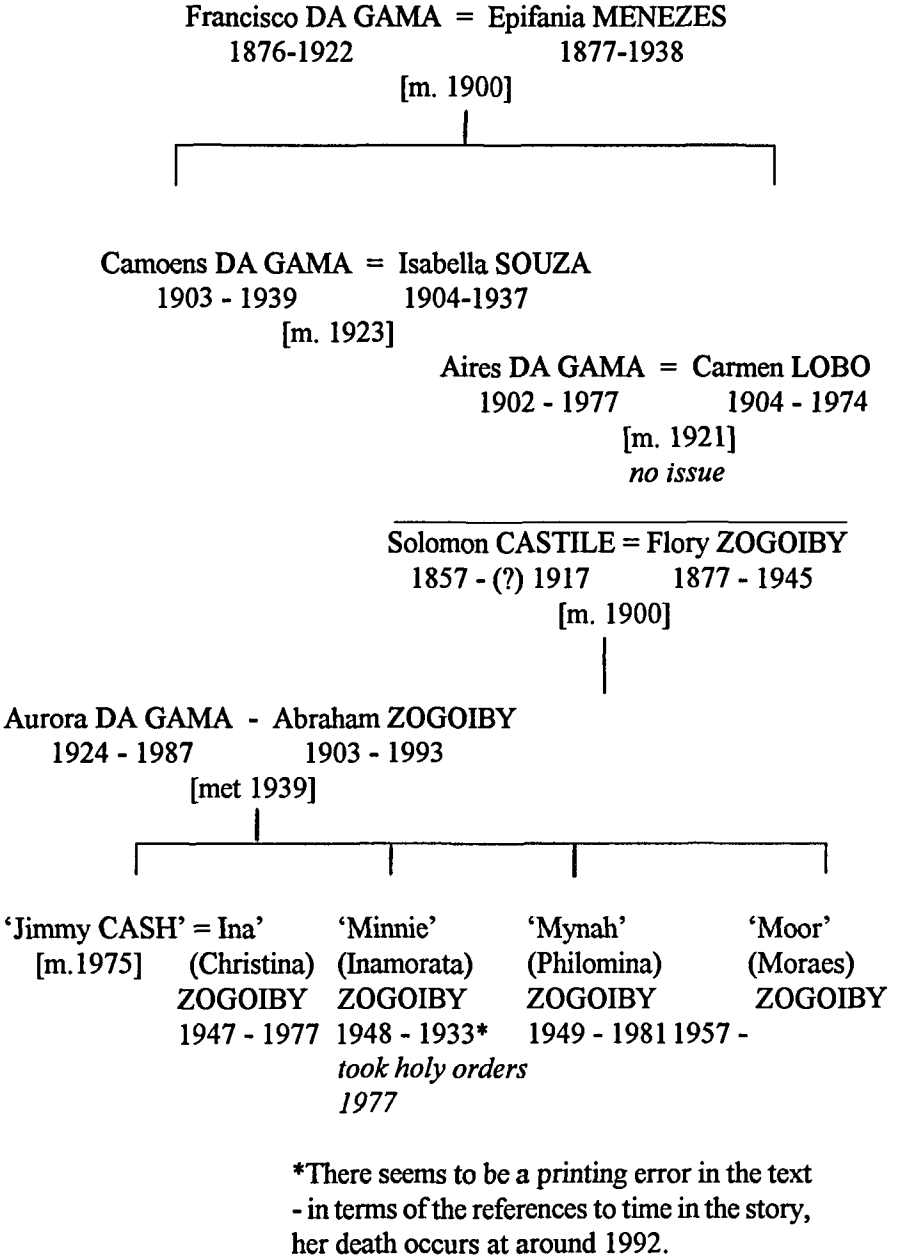
Appendix A

The Da Gama-Zogoiby Family Tree



*There seems to be a printing error in the text - in terms of the references to time in the story, her death occurs at around 1992.

Appendix B

Note: In the description below, phonetic symbols are indicated only here and there in cases of sound repetition for ease of identification; some of the salient sound repetitions are summarised at intervals interspersed with the lines of the passage.

(9)(i) In my family we've always found the world's air hard to breathe; we arrive hoping
mai 'famili w__ f wɜ:ldz eə bri:ð wi:

for somewhere better.
'b___

Alliteration of /f/ relating "family" and "found"; alliteration of /b/ relating "breathe" and "better"; alliteration of /w/ in "we've", "world's" and "we"; assonance of /i:/ in "we've", "we" and "breathe".

Speaking for myself, at this late hour? Just about managing, thanks for asking; though
'spi:k__ f_ mai's__lf θ__ks f_'_sk__ ð__

Alliteration of /f/ continued in the preposition "for" x2 , diffuse repetition of /f/ in "myself".

old, old, old before my time. You could say I lived too fast, and like a marathon runner
mai taim sei ai l__ f_st laik 'm_____n 'rʌnə

Assonance of /ai/ in "my time", "I" and "like"; alliteration of /l/ in "lived" and "like"; diffuse repetition of /m/ in "my time" and "marathon"; assonance of /ei/ in "say", failed and "pace".

collapsing because he failed to pace himself, like a suffocating astronaut who danced too
k_'l_ps__ feild peis _'s_lf lai_ 's_f_ke i__ '_str_n_t __ns_

merrily on the Moon, in my overheated years I used up a full lifespan's air-supply. O
m___ m_n mai ai f_l 'laifspanz eə s_'plai

wastrel Moor! To spend, in just thirty-six years, your allotment of threescore-and-twelve.
'weistrəl m__ spend _'l_tm_nt

(But let me say, in mitigation, I didn't have much choice.)
let mi: sei m_____ ai m__

Assonance of /ei/ in "failed", "pace", "suffocating", "wastrel" and "say"; diffuse repetition of /f/ in "full" and "lifespan's"; assonance of /ai/ in "like", "lifespan's

air-supply"; diffuse repetition of /n/ in "astronaut", "danced" and "Moon"; alliteration of /m/ in "merrily", "Moon", "my", "Moor", "me", "mitigation" and "much". Alliteration of /sp/ in "lifespan's" and "spend" with the same phonemes in diffuse repetition in "pace" and "air-supply"; alliteration of /l/ in "collapsing", "like", "lifespan's", "supply", "allotment" and "let".

So: there is difficulty, but I surmount it. Most nights there are noises, the croaks and
səu __f__ ai s_'m___ m__ n___z n___z krəuks

Alliteration of /s/ in "so" and "surmount". Alliteration of /m/ in "surmount" and "most"; alliteration of /n/ in "nights" and "noises"; assonance of /əu/ in "so", "most" and "croaks".

honks of fantastic beasts, issuing from the jungles of my lungs. I awake gasping
___ks f_'t_st_k b__st 'ʤʌŋglz maɪ lʌŋz ai _'weik 'ga:spiŋ

and, sleep- heavy, grab fistfuls of air and stuff them uselessly into my mouth.
sl_ gr_b 'f_stfulz eə stʌf '_sl__sl_ mai m__

Still, it is easier
st_l 'i:ziə

Consonance of /ks/ in "croaks" and "honks", with the same phonemes in diffuse repetition in "fantastic"; assonance of /ai/ in "I", "nights", "my"; assonance of /ʌ/ in "jungles", "lungs" and "stuff"; alliteration and diffuse repetition of /f/ in "fantastic", "fistfuls" and "stuff"; assonance of /i:/ in "beasts", "sleep-heavy", "breathe", "easier" x3 and "wheezing".

breathe in than out. As it is easier to absorb what life offers than to give out the results
bri:ð 'i:ziə ab'zo:b laɪf

of such absorption. As it is easier to take a blow than to hit back. Nevertheless, wheezing
ab'zo:b__ 'i:ziə teik bl__ b__ 'w i:z_

and ratchety, I eventually exhale, I overcome. There is pride to be taken in this; I do not
ai eks'heil ai _aid 'teikn ai

deny myself a pat on my aching back.
de'nai mai'self ai 'eikiŋ b__

Alliteration and diffuse repetition of /b/ in "grab", "breathe", "absorb", "absorption", "blow", "(hit) back", "be" (taken) and "(aching) back"; assonance of /ai/ in "life", "I", "pride", "deny", "myself" and "my"; assonance of /ei/ in "take", "exhale", "taken" and "aching".

At such times I become my breathing. Such force of self as I retain focuses upon the
ʌ_ taimz ai b_kʌm mai 'bri:ðiŋ f___ s_lf ai _ei_ f___

faulty operations of my chest: the coughing, the fishy gulps. I am what breathes. I am what
'f__l_ 'k__f__ 'f___ ʌlps ai bri:ð z ai

began long ago with an exhaled cry, what will conclude when a glass held to my lips
l__ eks'heild krai k__'kl_d gl_s __ld l_ps

remains clear. It is
'mei kl__

Assonance of /ʌ/ in "such", "become" and "gulps"; assonance of /ai/ in "times", "I" (become), "I" (retain), "I (am)" x2, "cry"; alliteration of /b/ in "become" and "breathing", "breathes", "began", "sub", "below", "verb", "breathe" and "under-breathe"; alliteration and diffuse repetition of /f/ in "force", "self", "focuses", "faulty", "coughing" and "fishy"; diffuse repetition of /l/, also in consonant clusters in "self", "faulty", "gulps", "long", "exhaled", "will", "conclude", "glass", "held", "lips" and "clear".

not thinking makes us so, but air. *Suspiro ergo sum*. I sigh, therefore I am. The Latin as
meiks _s s_ eə s_s'p_r_'_r_ s_m ai sai ai _m 'l_t_

usual tells the truth: *suspirare* = *sub*, below, + *spirare*, verb, to breathe.
t_l_ t__ s_sp_'r_r_ s_ b b_'l _ sp_'r_r_ __b bri:ð

Suspiro: I under-breathe.
s_s'p_r_ ai 'ʌ___bri:ð

Assonance of /ei/ in "retain", "exhaled", "remains" and "makes"; assonance of /ai/ in "I sigh... I (am)"; alliteration and diffuse repetition of /l/ and /t/ interwoven in "Latin", "tells" and "truth"; alliteration and diffuse repetition of /s/ in "makes us so", "suspire" ... "sum", "sigh", "suspirare", "sub", "spirare" and "suspiro"; assonance of /ʌ/ in "under-breathe" and "unto".

In the beginning and unto the end was and is the lung: divine afflatus, baby's first yowl,
b_____ lʌŋ __ai_'_fl_t_s 'b_b_ f_st __l

Continued alliteration of /b/ in "beginning" and "baby".

shaped air of speech, staccato gusts of laughter, exalted airs of song, happy lover's groan,
_ei_ eə sp__ st_'k_t_ _ʌsts 'l__ft__ ek'z_lt_eə_ s__ 'lʌ__

unhappy lover's lament, miser's whine, crone's croak, illness's stench, dying whisper,
'lʌ__z l_m_t 'maiz_z _ai krəu_z krəuk'_l_z st__ '_ai_ 'wispə

and beyond and beyond the airless, silent void.
ʌ_ 'b__ 'b____ 'eəl_s 'sailənt void

Assonance of /ei/ continued in "shaped"; assonance of /ʌ/ in "lung", "gusts", "lover's", and "unhappy lover's"; alliteration of /l/ in "lung", "laughter", "lover's" x2, "lament", "airless" and "silent"; also diffuse repetition of the same consonant in "afflatus", "yowl", "exalted", "illness's"; assonance of /ai/ in "divine", "miser's whine", "dying" and "silent".

A sigh isn't just a sigh. We inhale the world and breathe out meaning. While we can.
sai sai w_ _'heil wə:ld bri:ð 'mi__: wail wi:

Assonance of /ai/ in "sigh" x 2 and "while" x2; allliteration of /w/ in "we", "world", and "while we" x2; continued assonance of /ei/ in "inhale"; "assonance" of /i:/ in "we breathe" and "meaning".

- *We breathe light* - the trees pipe up. Here at journey's end in this place of olive-trees
wi: bri:ð lait tri:z paip ʌp end _lei_ '_l_ tri:z

and tombstones the vegetation has decided to strike up a conversation. *We breathe light*,
t___st___z e__'teiʃn __ai__ straik ʌp k____seiʃn wi: bri:ð lait

indeed; most informative. They are 'El Greco' cultivars, these chatty oliviers; well-named,
in'di:d f_____ ðei el 'greku 'kʌltiva:z ði:z ___t_ _l_v_z 'welneimd

one might remark, after that light-breathing God-ridden Greek.
mai lait 'bri:ðiŋ 'godridn gri:k

Continued assonance of /i:/ in "we breathe" and "trees" x2, "indeed", "these", "breathing", and "Greek"; assonance of /ai/ in "light" x3, "pipe", "decided", "strike" and "might"; alliteration of /p/ in "pipe" and "place"; alliteration of /t/ in "trees", "olive-trees", "tombstones" and "vegetation", approximate rhyme of "vegetation" and "conversation"; alliteration of /gr/ and diffuse repetition of the same two consonants in "El Greco", "God-ridden Greek"; assonance of /ei/ in "place", "vegetation", "conversation", "they" and "well-named"; diffuse repetition of /l/ in "light" x3, "place", "olive-trees", "El Greco cultivars", "oliviers", and "well-named"; continued diffuse repetition of /m/ in "tombstones", "most", "well-named", "might remark", "metaphysics" and "my family".

Henceforth I'll turn a deaf ear to prattling foliage with its arboreal metaphysics, its
'_e__f__ ail def iə 'pratliŋ 'f____ _'b___l m___'f____

chlorophyllosophy. My family tree says all I need to hear.
kl_____f_'l__s_f_ mai 'famili tri: sez o:l ai ni:d hiə

Diffuse repetition of /l/ continued in "I'll", "prattling", "foliage", "arboreal", "cholorphyllosophy", "family" and "all"; diffuse repetition and alliteration of /f/ in "henceforth", "deaf", "foliage", "metaphysics", "chlorophyllosophy", and "family"; assonance of /ai/ in "I'll" and "my", assonance of /i:/ in "tree" and "need"; assonance of /e/ in "henceforth", "deaf" and "says"; rhyme of "ear" and "hear"; alliteration of /b/ in "breathe" x2, "light-breathing" and "arboreal".