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Parallelism in G. V. Mona's *UVulindlela*

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This article examines the use of parallelism in the poetry of G. V. Mona as contained in the anthology *UVulindlela* ("The Pathfinder", 1995). The discussion in this article commences by defining the concept of parallelism. Parallelism is discussed as it takes different forms, which include complete parallelism, incomplete parallelism and parallelism by linking. These forms are selected as they are clearly used in the poetry under study. The article also demonstrates what purpose is fulfilled by the parallelism used in Mona's poetry. Lastly, a concluding remark is included, where some findings and observations about the use of parallelism in Mona's poetry are highlighted. Key words: Parallelism, G. V. Mona, *UVulindlela*, isiXhosa poetry.

Introduction

Although Mona makes extensive use of parallelism in his poetry in the anthology entitled *UVulindlela* ("The Pathfinder", 1995), so far no attention has been paid to this aspect of his works. It is this lack of attention paid to this topic and the richness of the parallelism used in Mona's poetry that has motivated the undertaking of this study.

Parallelism is an important device in isiXhosa poetry, as poets often use it as a formal feature that also emphasises some ideas in their poetry. The employment of this device also promotes consistency and rhythm between lines. It also creates beautiful structural patterns and some musical effect in the poetry.

The concept of parallelism

Parallelism is a stylistic device of repetition. It is a technique where words in successive lines are arranged in a balanced manner. Abrams (1999: 11) views parallelism as "a similar word-order and structure". Cuddon (1991: 680) views parallelism as consisting of "phrases or sentences of similar construction and meaning placed side by side, balancing each other". Myers and Simms (1985: 223) define parallelism as:

a rhetorical device of grammar in which words, phrases, or ideas of equivalent value share a similar grammatical structure, thus creating an inherent comparison among them. The term applies to the larger aspects of development in literary works: the manner in which abstractions and images are used, the various manip-

ulations that juxtaposition presents in the form and content of narration; and the balancing of description and dialogue.

According to Rycroft and Ngcobo (1988: 78), parallelism is “a device whereby the poet brings together, in a balanced relationship, ideas and images that may seem independent of one another.”

In the words of Kgobe (1994: 234), parallelism “can be defined as linguistic similarities observed between certain successive lines”. Kgobe further cites Guma, who defines parallelism as “a certain similarity between two parts or members of a sentence whose words correspond to one another”.

Mtumane (2006: xxii), who terms parallelism *unxusano-magama* (word correspondence) defines it as:

This is a technique where lines in two or more successive lines have an equal number of words, and each word in the previous line corresponds with another word in the next line. Someone listening to the recitation or reading of these lines hears a beautiful rhythm that is interesting.¹

From the above definitions one may deduce that parallelism is observed in successive lines of poetry. Each word in the previous line(s) has a corresponding partner in the next line(s), and thus the lines have a similar structure. This correspondence creates a balanced relationship between the lines. The similar structure of lines creates beautiful rhythm in the lines.

Parallelism may be complete or incomplete. It may also be by linking. These forms of parallelism will be discussed in the ensuing sections of the article.

Complete parallelism

Complete parallelism is what Ntuli (1984: 190) refers to as “perfect parallelism”, and explains it as when “correspondence is found between all the units” of successive lines. Tabu (2007: 88–9) views complete parallelism as a case “when all the words in the first member have corresponding partners in the second member”. Complete parallelism therefore may be regarded as a situation where two or more lines have the same number of words, and all the words correspond in a complete partnership between the lines. In this situation, there is no word that does not have a corresponding partner in the other line(s).

Complete parallelism is apparent in the poem “Andimbongi” (“I’m no poet”), where Mona addresses isiXhosa as follows:

Awumncinane kunezinye izizwe,
Awungaphantsi kunezinye iilwimi.

(You are not smaller than other nations,
You are not smaller than other languages.)(1) ²

In the poem Mona addresses different issues about his being a budding poet. In the stanza where the above lines are found, he addresses amaXhosa and isiXhosa as a nation and a language. It should be remembered that isiXhosa, as a language, got its name from the fact that it is spoken by the nation of amaXhosa.

The above parallelism is regarded to be complete as all the words in the first line have corresponding partners in the second one. Also, note that the correspondence of the words causes the lines to follow the same structure. It is this sameness in structure that makes the reading of the lines create a beautiful audible rhythm. This parallelism may be illustrated graphically as follows:

a	b	c
†	†	†
a	b	c

In the above parallelism, Mona compares amaXhosa to other nations in the first line, and other languages in the second one. By using this parallelism, Mona emphasises that amaXhosa is a nation among other nations. To say that it is not smaller than other nations in the first line, implies that amaXhosa have the same status as all the other nations of the world. For this reason, the nation of amaXhosa should not undermine itself, but claim its rightful place among the nations. It should compete on an equal basis with all other nations, in all aspects of life. It was pitiful that the nation of amaXhosa and other black people were oppressed during the apartheid regime in South Africa. This oppression made it difficult for them to claim their rightful place and compete equally and freely with other nations.

Also, Mona emphasises that isiXhosa is a language among other languages, in the second line. To say that it is not smaller than other languages, implies that isiXhosa has the same status as all the other languages of the world. For this reason this language should not be undermined. Instead, it should be placed in its rightful position among other languages. It should also compete on an equal basis with all other languages in the world. It was unfortunate that isiXhosa and other indigenous languages were regarded to be of a lower status during the apartheid regime in South Africa and, for that reason, could not compete equally with other languages.

Another example of complete parallelism is found in the poem “Abasebenzi” (“Workers”) as follows:

Amadela kufa,
Amadela ngozi.

(Those who fear not death,
Those who fear not danger.)(43)

In the poem, Mona writes about mineworkers. He views mineworkers as fearing neither death nor danger as they work under the ground. By so doing, the mineworkers take serious risks as they are aware of the rock falls and the collapsing of mines. These actions may lead to suffocation and death as they may interrupt the flow of oxygen in the mines. Because these workers want to make a living, they disregard all these dangers involved in their work. The risk involved in working in mines is emphasised by Tshomela (2006: 70) as follows: "For instance, rock falls are often reported to have taken place in the mines while there are workers underground. Workers would stay for days before being rescued, and some even suffocate to death."

The use of complete parallelism in the above lines is evident in the fact that each word in the first line has a corresponding partner in the second one. The reading of the two lines also reveals the beautiful rhythm that is created by the parallelism. This parallelism may be illustrated graphically as follows:

a	b
↓	↓
a	b

In the poem "Ijelo losasazo kwelamaXhosa" ("The broadcasting station in Xhosaland"), Mona has the lines:

Ukuz' umthengi azuz' amaxabiso angawo,
Ukuz' umthengi azuz' imveliso eyiyo.

(For the customer to get proper prices,
For the customer to get proper products.)(19)

In the poem, Mona writes about the then Radio Xhosa, which was the radio station found within Xhosaland, and later had its name changed to UMhlobo Wenene FM. In its broadcasting programmes, this station includes adverts for businesses. It is in these adverts that the listeners get to know the products sold in these businesses and their prices. This is how useful the station is to the public who want to buy goods from these businesses, as Mona states in the above lines.

The above lines form complete parallelism, as each word has a corresponding partner in either line. This correspondence balances the words into parallel units between the lines. This parallelism may be illustrated graphically as follows:

a	b	c	d	e
†	†	†	†	†
a	b	c	d	e

As the foregoing examples of complete parallelism involve two lines only, Mona uses parallelism that involves more than two lines as well. This is apparent in the poem “Oko bendingumntwana” (“When I was a child”), as follows:

Andazanga lutho ngeengozi nobunzima,
 Andazanga lutho ngobuhlwempu neenkxwaleko,
 Andazanga lutho ngeenzima neembandezelo.

(I knew nothing about dangers and difficulties,
 I knew nothing about poverty and calamities,
 I knew nothing about hardships and suffering.)(28)

In the poem, Mona presents the situation of a child who feels protected in the company of his parents, siblings and other relatives. Due to this protection, the child has no concern of the problems that people worry about, as the relatives always take care of issues. That is the reason why this child is presented as having known nothing about dangers, difficulties, poverty, calamities, hardships and suffering.

The employment of complete parallelism in the foregoing excerpt is evident in the fact that all the words in the first line have corresponding partners in the second and third ones. The reading of the three lines also reveals that each word has a balanced relationship with words in the other two lines. This relationship then creates an appealing rhythm in the three lines. The use of parallelism in three lines is proof that this device can be used in more than two lines. The above parallelism may be illustrated graphically as follows:

a	b	c	d
†	†	†	†
a	b	c	d

Incomplete parallelism

Incomplete parallelism is one where all the words in one line have corresponding partners in the next line, while one or more words in either line have no corresponding partners in the previous or next line. This is further explained by Mtumane (2000: 176) as “when there are some words in the first member, which do not have corresponding partners in the second one or vice versa, that is a case of incomplete parallelism”. Tabu (2007: 93) views incomplete parallelism as “where some units of a mem-

ber have corresponding counterparts in the other member, while others have no corresponding counterparts”.

The use of incomplete parallelism in Mona’s poetry is evident in the poem “Idlul’ indlovu” (“The elephant has passed away”), where the following lines are found:

Yiza uze kulamla!

Yiza uze kukhusela intsapho yomntakwenu.

(Come and mediate!

Come and protect your brother’s family.)(21)

The poem from which these lines are drawn is an elegy about the death of Nkwenk-wana, who left his family with a lot of inheritance in the form of livestock. His brother, Dumele is called to come and assist this family with conducting certain rituals, to appease the ancestors. That is why he has to come and mediate and protect the family, hence he is presented conducting sacrificial rites later in the poem.

The above lines are regarded as forming incomplete parallelism as all the words in the first line have corresponding partners in the second one, while the latter has words which have no partners in the first one. The words *Yiza uze kulamla!* (“Come and mediate!”), in the first line, correspond appropriately with the words *Yiza uze kukhusela* (“Come and protect”) in the second line. The words *intsapho yomntakwenu* (“your brother’s children”), in the second line, have no partners in the first line, thus making the parallelism incomplete. This parallelism may be illustrated graphically as follows:

a	b	c		
↑	↑	↑		
a	b	c	d	e

Another instance of incomplete parallelism is found in the poem “Intyatyambo zezwe lethu” (“The flowers of our country”) as follows:

Obu bubuso bezwe lethu,

Esi sisibuko sethu,

(This is the face of our country,

This is our mirror.)(9)

In the poem, the poet describes the beauty of flowers with different shapes. In the above lines he implies that these flowers are the beauty of the country, hence he refers to them as the face of the country and our mirror. The face is the part of the body that is normally considered to determine one’s beauty. This idea is supported by Shasha (1998: 32) when he states: *Ubuhle nobubi bubuso bomntu* (“Beauty and ugliness are one’s

face”). This statement implies that the beauty or ugliness of a person is determined by the nature of their face. On the other hand, the mirror is the instrument that one uses to see one’s beauty. These flowers therefore are presented as showing the beauty of the country.

The above lines are noted as forming incomplete parallelism, as all the words in the second line have corresponding partners in the first one, while the latter has a word which has no partner in the second one. The words *Obu bubuso* (“This is the face”), in the first line, correspond well with the words *Esi sisibuko* (“This is the mirror”) in the second line. It seems that the word *bezwe* (“of the country”), in the first line, is the one that has no counterpart in the second line. This is said as the word *lethu* (“our”) forms a striking rhyme with *sethu* (“our”) in the second line. This is over and above the fact that these two words are the same part of speech; that is, possessives.

This parallelism may be illustrated graphically as follows:

a	b	c	d
↑	↑		↑
a	b		d

Parallelism by linking

Linking is what Mabuza (2000: 22) refers to as the “repetition of the same word in different sentences”. It is a technique where a word, its root or stem that appears in one line, is repeated in the next line in a poem. In the words of Kgobe (1994: 240), linking is “a process whereby a part of the first line or a word or idea is repeated or echoed in the second or third line” (see also Tabu 2007: 77).

Parallelism by linking therefore, is one in which two consecutive lines have the same words in a corresponding relationship. Each word in one line has a word similar to it as its corresponding partner in the other line. Tabu (2007: 91) views parallelism by linking as “a process where parallelism is fulfilled by repeating the same words in two lines”. The use of parallelism by linking is apparent in the poem “Phambi kwamasango aseFort Hare” (“In front of the gates of Fort Hare”), where the following lines are found:

Wena ulukhanyiso lwe-Afrika,
Wena ulukhanyiselo e-Afrika.

(You are the light of Africa,
You are the light in Africa.)(53)

Each word in the above lines corresponds with its repeated counterpart. Although the words *ulukhanyiso* and *ulukhanyiselo* (“you are the light”), on the one hand, and *lwe-Afrika* (“of Africa”) and *e-Afrika* (“in Africa”), on the other, have different forms

due to the morphemes affixed to them, the stems are the same; hence the same idea. It is because of the use of similar words in corresponding positions that the above parallelism is by linking.

The parallelism created by the above lines may be illustrated graphically as follows:

a	b	c
†	†	†
a	b	c

In the poem from which the above lines have been drawn, the poet eulogises the University of Fort Hare. Fort Hare is an institution of higher learning situated in Alice, in the Eastern Cape. In fact, most well-known African leaders, such as Nelson Mandela, obtained their initial university education from this institution. As uneducated people are generally regarded to be in darkness, as they do not have academic and scientific knowledge, education is regarded to be bringing light to society. The poet views Fort Hare as a source of light and he presents it as the light of and in Africa; he also bestows the praise name Sokhanyiso (“Father of light”) on it.

Note the following lines from the poem “UGqirha S. Satyo” (“Dr S. Satyo”):

Omnye ndimnikela komnye,
Nomnye ndimnikela komnye.

(I give one to the other,
I also give the other to one.)(35)

In the poem of which these lines form part, Mona is praising Sizwe Satyo, Professor of African Languages at the University of Cape Town. The above are the closing lines of the poem, where he presents Sizwe to the nation (*isizwe*) and the nation to Sizwe.

All the words in corresponding positions in the above lines are the same. Each word in one line balances with its repeated counterpart in the other line. The only minor difference is in the initial words *omnye* (“one”) and *nomnye* (“the other”), as the latter word begins with the formative n(a). However, despite this situation, these words still give the same idea as they are used to separate the two subjects referred to in the poem. This parallelism emphasises the fact that two subjects, that are related, are presented to one another. These subjects are Sizwe Satyo and the nation. Satyo is related to the nation as he is part of it and that he is serving it by teaching isiXhosa and writing books that develop the language. He has served as a lecturer of isiXhosa at various universities, including the University of South Africa and the University of Cape Town. Books that Satyo has written include *Elugayini* (“At the performance venue”, 1980), *Amazinga eembongi* (“Levels of poets”, 1985), *Etshatile engatshatanga* (“Married or not married”, 1990), and *Abantwana bezikhwebu zombona* (“The children of maize cobs”, 1991), among others.

The above parallelism may be illustrated graphically as follows:

a	b	c
↑	↑	↑
a	b	c

Another example of parallelism by linking is found in the same poem, where the poet says:

Namhla usapho lulala lunambitha isiXhosa,
 Namhla usapho lulala lusetyisa isiXhosa.

(Today the family sleeps enjoying isiXhosa,
 Today the family sleeps digesting isiXhosa.)(35)

It has already been said that Satyo is a teacher of isiXhosa and a writer of books in the language. It is because of these contributions by him (and other scholars) that people have interest in reading and speaking the language; hence the poet presents them as enjoying and digesting isiXhosa.

The above parallelism is effected by linking, as similar words are repeated in corresponding positions in the two lines. Although the words *lunambitha* (enjoying) and *lusetyisa* (digesting) are different, they give the same idea. *Ukunambitha* (to enjoy) is the feeling one has as one eats something that is delicious. The enjoyment of the taste may also happen even after the swallowing of that something delicious. This is manifested by one's licking one's lips and the inside of the mouth, and swallowing the taste. In the context of the above lines, this word is used to illustrate how people enjoy isiXhosa.

Ukwetyisa (digesting), on the other hand, is the action of the stomach when it mixes the food that has been swallowed with enzymes. This word is generally used symbolically to refer to cogitating about something that has been said. In the above lines, it is then used to illustrate how people converse in and think about isiXhosa in their homes.

Besides emphasising the significance of isiXhosa, this parallelism creates an attractive rhythm in the poem. It arrests the attention of the reader and makes him gain more interest in reading the poem. A graphic presentation of this parallelism is as follows:

a	b	c	d	e
↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
a	b	c	d	e

A poet who uses parallelism with linking in a perfect manner is Shasha (1994: 19), where the following lines are found:

Zihlabana nje ziyalamba,
Zihlabana nje ziyalamba!

(They poke each other for they are hungry,
They poke each other for they are hungry!)

Note that each word in the above lines corresponds with its repeated counterpart, which is exactly the same. The repetition of the exact same words in the parallelism emphasises the fact that the bulls presented in the poem poke each other or fight because of hunger. There is no other reason for them to fight except poverty.

Conclusion

The above discussion illustrates the employment of parallelism in G. V. Mona's *UVulindlela* ("The Pathfinder", 1995). Mona uses complete, incomplete parallelism and parallelism by linking in his poetry. The parallelism used in Mona's poetry helps create consistency in the arrangement of parallel lines. It also assists in linking up ideas between successive lines and clarifies the ideas of the poet, thereby making the message clearer and more emphatic to the reader. It is a means by which the poet brings unity and harmony within the lines in which it is used. This parallelism also creates an appealing rhythm, enhances the structure and adds the musical effect on the poetry. It is this rhythm that arrests the attention of the reader, and makes them more interested in reading the poetry, as it is appealing and interesting to them. The employment of this device then gives Mona's poetry a lasting appeal.

Notes

1. All translations from the original are mine. "Esi sisixhobo apho imigca emibini nangaphezulu, elandelelanayo, ithi ibe nenani elilinganayo lamagama, lize igama ngalinye kumgca ongasentla lingqamane okanye limelane nelinye elikumgca olandelayo. Ubani omameleyo xa kucengcelezwwa okanye kufundwa le migca uthi eve isingqisho esifanelekileyo nesinika umdla" (Mtumane 2006: xxii).
2. The poetry citations refer to Mona's *UVulindlela* (1995).

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