

From 'Nehanda Nyakasikana' to The National Anthem: Poetic aesthetics and the articulation of local and national sensibilities in Solomon Mutswairo's poetry.

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This chapter employs text analysis to explore the stylistics of the poems of Solomon Mutswairo ranging from his earliest poems in *Madetembedzo Akare Namatsva* (1958, 1988), to the lyrics of the national anthem, "Ngaikomborerwe Nyika yeZimbabwe", his last offering. Through the use of text analysis it is feasible to analyse linguistic features pertinent in the poet's works. In this chapter, we note that the accomplished Zimbabwean author mainly employs simple and straight forward language to navigate sophisticated local and national issues ranging from philosophical, religious, economic to topical political concerns. Though our primary focus is on stylistic analysis, inevitably we also address some key thematic concerns that permeate Mutswairo's poetry. This is so because form and content are intricately related, the former facilitated the revelation of the latter. Throughout his career as a poet, novelist, literary critic and academic, Solomon Mutswairo passionately addresses a repertoire of thematic concerns namely, the Chiweshe chieftancy, land politics, exploitation, African religion, the liberation struggle, sovereignty, governance, love, respect, death and nature. All these thematic concerns are closely linked to the poet's life experiences characterized by his childhood socialization in Chiweshe communal lands, missionary education, colonial exploitation and subjugation, overseas university education, high school and university teaching. Mutswairo's poems analysed in this chapter are found in the anthologies, *Nduri DzeZimbabwe* (1983) and *Madetembedzo Akare Namatsva* (1988), the poem "Nehanda Nyakasikana" in the epic novel *Feso*, and the lyrics of the national anthem, "Ngaikomborerwe Nyika YeZimbabwe". It is the preoccupation of the chapter that repetition, personal address forms, the apostrophe technique, the Mhiramudzimu incantation register, metaphoric and imagistic language and rhetorical questions are the key poetic devices that characterize the poet's stylistics.

The communal socialization of the poet can be exemplified by his sentimental selection of themes in 'Madetembedzo edzinza rekwaChiweshe' (The praises of the Chiweshe dynasty), in which he eulogises the military prowess of chief Chiweshe and at the same time, laments his loss of power and political control to the whites. In this poem, and as echoed in 'Ridzai mhere' (Mourn loudly), 'Ridzai mupururu' (Ululate), Mhondoro huru dzeZimbabwe (Major territorial spirit mediums of Zimbabwe), Mutswairo assumes the role of griot (court poet), who relentlessly chants emotional and evocative praises in honour of his chief – cum –symbol of black resistance against colonial subjugation. In this regard, the poet takes the micro to be the metonym of the macro. The poem 'Madetembedzo edzinza rekwaChiweshe', in particular, represents the praise poetry genre abundant in pre – colonial Africa which arguably has now been supplanted by the propaganda machinery of modern day governments. Parallels from the same generic tradition are the Yoruba's Oriki, Zulu's Izibongo and Tswana's Maboko. These are similar in both tone and style. Central to this genre is the propensity to praise the character and achievements of chiefs and kings and even the land they prevail over. For

example, chief Chiweshe is praised for being powerful and caring, just like the Sultan of Bornu, Ndaba, Seepapisto and Shaka (Mapanje: 1984) The only difference is that Shaka ,unlike Chiweshe, is eulogized in expressive and horrifying terms for his military genius and unbounded energy.

The repetitive style of this genre makes it ideal for face to face interactive communication among the chief/ king, the poet and the people where the poet chants while the chief/ king responds either verbally or non verbally or both amidst rounds of applause and ululation from the audience. In the poem, Mutsairo addresses his chief using a number of clan names, apt names and other address forms such as *Nyamhangambiri* (One who fights using two spears), *Chihweshure* (One who strikes the enemy with devastating blows), *Mwana waNyashanu* (Son of Nyashanu), *Chirombowe* (My vicious one), *Mhukahuru* (Gigantic animal), *Mhondoro huru* (Supreme spirit medium), *Chizvarwo chevhu* (Son of the soil) and *Shava Mutenhesanwa*. The semantic variation couched in alliteration achieved by the repetitive use of the nasal consonant /m/, in *Chizvarwo chevhu* (son of the soil), typifies Mutsairo's repetitive style that stems from Shona oral literature mastered from his early socialization. Alliteration and assonance give the poem a rhythmic pattern which when performed in public, goes well with the material accompaniments of *hosho* (rattles), *magavhu* (leg rattles) and drums. On this aspect of repetition, Chiwome (1996: 13) rightly observes that it enhances communication. In written poetry the rhythmic pattern created by repetition motivates the readers to read on as they enjoy the musical pattern. In doing so the reader/ listener does not labour to absorb the message, for example, that Chiweshe is a brave chief of Harare and its surroundings (Vatongi venyika yeHarare), whose kingdom is given birth by a series of victories against his foes namely, chiefs Seke, Nyamweda, Rusunga of Shawasha, the rebellious Mafema, Zharare, former chief of Harare and Zumba, chief of Gomba. Sadly though, the poet laments the demise of Chiweshe's rulership due to whites (Pfumojena) determination to colonise the Zimbabwean plateau through the use of superior weaponry and military tactics. To the poet such defeat was temporary setback which albeit ushered in a colonial administration that introduced a gamut of discriminatory laws and policies that culminated in untold suffering among the black people. The poems 'Ridzai mhere' (Mourn loudly), and 'Nehanda Nyakasikana' reflect such suffering and the subsequent political protest. The historic first and second Chimurenga and the feeling of hope for independence are chronicled and captured by Mutsairo in 'Ridzai mipururu', 'Mhondoro huru dzeZimbabwe', 'Mukurumbira wekufira nyika' and 'Mauto ehondo' (The people's army). Mutsairo amply relays his message by drawing from rich stylistic conventions mainly drawn from his training, Shona oral tradition, religious values and a deep rooted Afrocentric worldview.

We note that the national anthem becomes the icing ingredient of the poet's stylistics and thematic concerns. In the national anthem, Mutsairo maintains a pleasant rhythmic pattern through repetition of morphemes and consonants and the name Zimbabwe, which is repeated for six times. The first line goes thus: Simudzai mureza wedu weZimbabwe (O lift, high, high, our flag of Zimbabwe). In this example, repetition of the vowel /i/ and the affixes /mu/ and /we/ creates alliteration and assonance that gives the text a rhythmic pattern. On this aspect of rhythm Chiwome (1987: V) rightly observes that, Shona

achieves rhythm through repetitive devices like linkage, parallelism, antithesis, word reduplication, call – and response and dialogue.” Thus the whole poem has a rhythmic pattern achieved through repetition, penultimate stress, call – and – response and so on that soothes the heart and makes one passionate for the country, Zimbabwe.

We also note that Mutswairo unreservedly taps the technique of personal address forms from Shona oral literature to address his chief, ancestral spirits, spirit medium, lover and even God. Through the use of this device, the poet collapses the distance between him and the addressee. In ‘Madetembedzo edzinza rokwaChiweshe’, found in the anthology *Nduri dzeZimbabwe*, he writes thus:

Tarisaka Chiweshe, wakati wotuma hondo...
Honakazve! Ndiwe muparadzi waZumba. ... (P. 20).

Mutswairo also uses personal address forms or the apostrophe technique in the national anthem. The verbs *simudzai*, *tarisai* and *ropafadzai*, all in the imperative mood, are a passionate call upon the subject of address, in this case all Zimbabweans, foreigners and God to act. In particular, the first stanza is a call for the performance of the patriotic act of hoisting the flag, a unifying symbol of the nation, national aspirations, philosophy and cherished value systems. Because the poet uses the imperative in this directive, it becomes an uncompromising and mandatory act which all Zimbabweans must perform. *Tarisai* is a passionate plea to Zimbabweans and foreigners alike to marvel at the beauty of the Zimbabwean landscape including its rich material culture. Lastly, in ‘Mwari ropafadzai...’, the poet makes a direct call for divine blessings upon the nation of Zimbabwe. The use of the apostrophe, which is aimed at collapsing the physical and spiritual distance between the poet and his addressee, is a direct influence of Shona oral culture in which personal address forms are in common use in face to face interactive communication.

The *mhiramudzimu* ‘incantation’ register is yet another stylistic device common in Mutswairo’s poetry, particularly that with a religious orientation. The *mhiramidzimu* register is commonly used by heads of families, clans, villages and chiefdoms when invoking spirits of departed elders. In such poems personal pronouns like *iwe*, *imi* and *isu* are commonly used for they depict a sense of closeness and oneness between living people and their ancestors. Such address forms reflect that in the Shona traditional religion the physical and the spiritual worlds are intricately related. Ancestors are perceived as living and actively involved in constantly providing guidance and solution to problems afflicting people in society. Hence, they partake of beer drinking, feel thirst and so on just like people in society. That ancestral spirits are eternal and transcendental is a common aspect of Mutswairo’s religious poetry. For example in the poem, ‘Mhondoro huru dzeZimbabwe, found in *Nduri dzeZimbabwe*, he repetitively use the copulative inflecting affix /*ndi-*/ and its allomorphs in the present continuous tense to communicate the idea that ancestors are perceived in the here and now. The examples are :

Majukwa edi emuZimbabwe;
Ndiye Chingoo naDzivaguru:...
Ndiye Murenga.....

Ndiwo majukwa....
NdohwaChaminuka...
Ndiro bandadzi, ndiye chibvuwo (p. 25).
(True national spirit mediums of Zimbabwe;
Chingoo and Dzivaguru...
Its Murenga...
Its Chaminuka's...
She is the intercessor.)

It is important to note that the use of the adjective 'true' with respect to the said spirit mediums connotes that in Zimbabwe, the realm of spirit mediums is a heavily contested terrain for it remains a source of socio – political power and control. This is so because chiefdoms in Zimbabwe are autonomous in the sense that each chief has his / her own territorial spirit mediums and rainmakers. Therefore, the elevation of spirit mediums around the present day Harare is a fallacy of relevance.

Mutswairo also makes extensive use of metaphoric and imagistic language as rhetorical strategies to create vivid and pictorial images in the mind of the reader or listener thereby making them understand both the surface and subterranean meaning of his poetic discourse. In this chapter we note that from the two dominant theories of the metaphor namely, the abstraction theory which states that there exists one neutral and abstract concept that underlies both the literal and metaphoric use of word and, the homonymy metaphor theory, which states that the same word or expression may be used for different concepts (Halliday, 1985), Mutswairo's metaphoric expressions lean towards the latter. Metaphors helped him to communicate allegorically but effectively to his Shona readers on sensitive issues which could not be perceived by the colonial authorities. We draw an example from 'Nehanda Nyakasikana', wherein the poet uses *pfumojena* as a complex metaphor which is multi – layered in the sense that, apart from its direct reference to the whiteman, it also refers to the whiteman's oppressive and exploitative rule and to his superior weaponry and military strategies. *Pfumojena* is also the archetypal imperial figure whose seemingly invincible stature propels the poet to call upon the spirit of Nehanda to redeem or liberate the suffering people. There is a palpable tone of desperation and near hopelessness which imbue the whole lamentation. In the poem Mutswairo also displays syncretic tendencies typical of one subjected to a desperate situation as he chants incantations to both Nehanda and God for a solution. For example, Mutswairo uses the simple metaphor, *mweya unoera*, in reference to Nehanda within the context of Shona traditional religion, which in the Christian religion is a reference to the holy spirit. This reflects syncretism, which is a result of his historical experiences both as an adherent of the Shona religious system and as a leading figure in the Salvation Army Christian church and later the Baptist church. Other metaphors used to refer to the acute suffering of people in colonial Rhodesia are the following absolute and hyperbolic metaphors: *Kunwa misodzi* (endless mourning) which specifically refers to perpetual suffering; *kudzipwa huro nemajoto* (suffocation due to the colonial yoke), used in reference to claustrophobic experiences of subjugation and *Isu tichidya nhoko dzezvirona* (We, languishing in grim poverty). When looked at collectively, these evocative metaphors of suffering reveal the emiseration of the subjugated. Besides succinctly capturing the acute suffering of the exploited, these metaphors also appeal to

the pathos of the audience or readers which has the ultimate effect of stirring their emotions and catapulting them into liberating action. It is a historical fact that the poem “Nehanda Nyakasikana,” was chanted in many rallies during the liberation struggle. The vividness of the metaphors and their emotional appeal galvanized many youths into taking the onerous decision of joining the struggle to wrestle the nation from the claws of the enemy.

In other poems such as ‘Madetembedzo edzinza rekwaChiweshe’ (Praise poetry for the Chiweshe clan), ‘Ridzai mipururu’ (Ululate), ‘Mauto ehondo’ (the people’s army) in *Nduri dzeZimbabwe* and ‘Ruva rangu Shora’ (My beloved Shora), ‘Guva raasozivikanwi’ (Tomb of the unknown soldier) in *Matetembedzo akare namatsva* and, the national anthem, ‘Ngaikomborerwe nyika yeZimbabwe’ (Blessed be the country of Zimbabwe), Mutswairo makes use of a variety of metaphors. For example, in ‘Madetembedzo edzinza rekwaChiweshe’, Mutswairo employs a wide range of war metaphors like Nyamhangambiri (one who fights with two spears), *chiradza* (the drunkard) meaning one who fights as if possessed and *pfumo guru* (mighty army), which all refer to the poet’s adoration of chief Chiweshe’s dexterity and military prowess at the battlefield.

Another example where Mutswairo uses metaphors is in ‘Ridzai mipururu’ (Ululate) wherein he makes use of the contrastive absolute metaphors *mwenje* (light) and *rima* (darkness) to refer to independence and colonialism respectively. *Mwenje* symbolizes a new dispensation ushered in by the liberation struggle in which all citizens apply their collective knowledge for the betterment of society. Contrary to this *rima* symbolizes hardships experienced by the exploited black people under colonialism. From a Christian perspective *rima* is symbolic of the pagan lifestyles of the heathen, the unconverted, while *mwenje* stands for the Gospel and all those who would have accepted Christian ways. Similar skillful use of absolute metaphors is evident in ‘Mauto ehondo’. In this poem, Mutswairo uses the cyclic nature of seasons as metaphor – cum – symbol of the inevitable demise of the repressive colonial regime and the dawn of independence.

Mutswairo writes:

*Misi hairambe iri yechirimo;
Asi shure kwacho kotevera ndimo;... (p. 29).*

Literally translated as:

(Spring season does not last forever;
After it comes planting and harvesting time).

In this citation *chirimo* is an absolute metaphor symbolizing a state of deprivation and exploitation of blacks by whites during the colonial era, whereas *ndimo* is symbolic of life of abundance envisaged in post independence Zimbabwe.

In *Madetembedzo akare namatsva*, Mutswairo uses the absolute metaphors *jenaguru* (fullmoon) and *ruva... richangovhurura*(budding flower) in reference to the radiant, charming beauty, purity and tenderness of his immaculate lover named Shora. In the Shona culture *jenaguru* has some cultural significance in the sense that it coincides with *chirimo* (spring season) within which the young would be socialized during the evening through story telling, song and dance. During this time of the year intense socialization processes take place as people are not busy in the fields. Among the Varembe tribe,

chirimo is the time of the year when boys undergo male circumcision, a crucial rite of passage that marks their transition from boyhood to manhood. It is during this time of the year that flowers start to bloom whilst trees grow new shoots and leaves which result in a pleasant scenery that gives hope to the whole community. The use of these imageries therefore makes a natural appeal to Shona readers as they not only associate them with their worldview but with their concept of beauty and love. The same metaphor is used in the death poem entitled 'Guva raasozivikanwi' (The grave of an unknown person), found in the anthology, *Madetembedzo Akare Namatsva*. Here Mutswairo laments the deaths of people before they enjoy the fullness of life. Through the use of these metaphors Mutswairo effectively communicates with his audience who are familiar with the language and images he use.

In 'Ngaikomborerwe nyika yeZimbabwe', the poet makes use of the complex or multi-layered metaphor, *moto* (fire) in *Yakazvarwa nomoto wechimurenga*. (Born out of the fire of the liberation struggle). The metaphor is a reference to the revolutionary war that gave birth to the nation of Zimbabwe and the devastating and consuming rage of that war. On another level fire refers to gunfire and the raging infernos that characterized the liberation war. Indigenous people in Zimbabwe celebrated the gun as a tool for liberation hence the song, "Tora gidi uzvitonge" (Take up arms and emancipate yourself), commonly sung during the war of liberation. It also refers to the cataclysmic effect of the war; after its destructive wake a new dispensation emerged.

Despite being heavily influenced by Shona oral tradition Mutswairo also exhibits western literary influences in his poetic style. This is manifest in the use of coinages and invasion. The two stylistic devices lend themselves well to the formalist literary tradition that is associated with scholars like Victor Shyklovsky and Jakobson of the Prague linguistic circle in Russia. The thrust of the formalist approach was on the writer's technical prowess and craftsmanship in the selection and deployment of a variety of stylistic devices. This was done to create a literary product that was 'excitingly' novel and hence appeal to the reader's sense perception. In this way, the aesthetic value of literature was realized in the sum total of literary devices used. Selden (1985:32) associates such passion for literary devices with formalism when he observes thus, "Formalists technical focus led them to treat literature as a special use of language which achieves its distinctness by deviating from, and distorting 'practical' language." From Selden's statement and as confirmed by Kunne-Ibsch, D.F.E. (1977) it is clear that formalists aimed at achieving the aesthetic value of literature through a wide range of well packaged, crafted and defamiliarised literary devices. However, for Mutswairo the formalist literary tradition does not have a defamiliarisation effect but a more revealing one.

In 'Madetembedzo edzinza rekwaChiweshe' (Praise poetry of the Chiweshe clan), Mutswairo uses the coinage *mudyinhaka* (one who inherited) in reference to chief Chiweshe's defeat of Zumba, who was chief of Gomba and, Chiweshe's subsequent takeover of all the resources of the late Zumba including his wives and children. The use of *mudyinhaka* vividly communicates Chief Chiweshe's appropriation of the loot. Another example of coinage can be drawn from 'Ridzai mhere', wherein he coins the

word *Mazowemudhara* (old mazowe). Apart from this term's mere reference to a geographical location (Mazoe), it is also used to satirise settler rule and its policy of land expropriation. Mutswairo laments the loss of his ancestral land to the colonizers. Thus, there is an element of nostalgia captured in this word which is also palpable in the whole poem.

Another poem where Mutswairo uses coinage is 'Ridzai mipururu' (Ululate). The coined word is *vaparadziropa* (those who spill blood). The significance of this word lies in the fact that it emotionally and evocatively captures the brutal and exploitative nature of white rule in Rhodesia. It also refers to colonial rule's failure to uphold the sanctity of human life.

In "Mhondoro huru dheZimbabwe," (Territorial spirits of Zimbabwe), Mutswairo employs the coinages *mhondorodzimu* (territorial spirits), *asodziziva* (who does not know) and *vanaisimvura* (rain makers) to good effect. Firstly, the three coinages are a contraction of words and expressions meant to achieve word economy which facilitates effective communication. This also give a musical tone to the poem as a result of repetition of select syllables and vowels. For example:

Dzinodzvova, dzinorira mhondorodzimu,

Hapana asodziziva nehasha dzadzo, ... (p.25).

In the above example, the repetition of the syllable /dzi-/ and the morphemes /o/ and /a/ lends a musical and rhythmic tone to the poem. A similar use of coinages can be cited from 'Guva Raasozivikanwi,' wherein Mutswairo uses the coinages *usozivikanwi* and *kwaasopindura*. The repetition of the syllable /-vi/ and the vowel /-i/ is equally meant to enhance the musical tone of the poem.

In spite of the above positive effects derived from the use of coinages we note that there is an element of forced rhythm and rhyme. Such rhythm and rhyme are not achieved through the use of naturally occurring speech and syntactical patterns. For example in the philosophical poem entitled 'Ndinotyia,' (I am afraid), Mutswairo coins the compound noun *vanyeperikutenda* (*false - believers*). The term is coined from *vanonyepera* (pretenders) and *kutenda* (to believe). In the natural use of language the two terms are used as separate lexical items. Therefore, the compound *vanyeperikutenda* used in the context of *Pamberi pevanyeperikutenda* (*Infront of false- believers*) creates an unnatural rhythmic pattern realized in the repetitive use of the vowels /a/ and /e/ and the syllable /ri/. In the Shona language rhythm is created through the stressing done to the last but one syllable called the penultimate stress. An example can be cited from the children's lullaby 'Chemutengure' which goes as follows:

Chemutengure, chemutengu:re,

Chave chamutengure vhiri rengo:ro.

As exemplified above, in the Shona language, rhythm is achieved through penultimate stress.

Another literary device that Mutswairo uses extensively is word invasion. Through the use of this device he aims at forging a rhyming scheme that gives the poem a musical tone. Examples can be drawn from the anthology entitled, *Madetembedzo akare namatsva*, in the poems: 'Ruva rangu Shora' (My beloved Shora), 'Guva raasozivikanwi' (The grave of the unknown person) and 'Dandanda kujenaguru' (Hail fullmoon). Some examples of word invasion in 'Ruva rangu Shora,' found in the anthology *Madetembedzo Akare Namatsva* are: *Unorinzwa bani nomweya razara* (You smell her charming perfume that fills the veld and wangu moyo (my heart). This creates rhythm that captivates the mind of the reader. The following is another example from the same anthology:

Kuyewedza kwaro kuri yangu pfungwa,

Nokurida kwangu zvoise zvichapera,...(p.14).

(Its attractiveness pleases my mind,

But one day all this will be no more,...)

The placement of the possessive *yangu* before the noun *pfungwa* is meant to create final linkage through the repetition of the morpheme /-a/ in the two lines thereby giving the poem a rhythmic pattern which captivates the mind of the reader. Another example in which the poet uses word invasion in order to give the poem a musical and rhythmic pattern can be cited from the poem entitled 'Guva raasosivikanwi' (The grave of an unknown person). The example is as follows:

Zvino wasara mugomo wava woga woga,

Nyika iyi yawaifamba yose paimire,

Kusati kwava nanhare idzo dzoga dzoga,

Nhasi yava yomutorwa ndiye changamire (p.18).

(Now you have remained alone in the mountain,

You used to walk freely on this land,

Before the dawn of the new era,

Today aliens rule over this land).

Mutswairo achieved a rhyming scheme whereby the morphemes /-a/, in the first line and /-e/, in the second line, rhyme with corresponding morphemes in the third and fourth lines respectively. In the cited stanza Mutswairo attempts an abab rhyming scheme which can be associated with that of the sonnet. According to Evert (geverett@utm.edu), a sonnet is a "... fourteen line poem in iambic pentameter with a carefully patterned rhyme scheme." Evert proceeds to argue that its fourteen lines are divided into two parts, the first line

being the octave (or octet) – the first line with a rhyming scheme of abbaabbaa or abbacdda and or rarely abababab. It is important to note that the sonnet tradition has a thrust on a rhyming scheme whose creation is arguably the preoccupation of the poet.

Another example where Mutswairo uses a rhyming scheme aligned to that of the sonnet is in the poem entitled, ‘Mvura yedenga’ found in the anthology, *Nduri dzeZimbabwe*. He writes thus:

Ndinobva munzizi namadandadziva,

Namakungwa ose, imi musoziva.

Ndinoatonhodza maruve ebundo.

Nokupfunha – pfunha ndiri muruundo.

Ndinokwikwinhisa vafudzi vemombe,

Navarimi ndovaita samarombe.

Neshiri dzedenga ndodzipa usanza,

Ndichibva mumvura zhinji yomunyanza (p.35).

(I come from rivers and swampy places,

And oceans, while you are unaware.

I bring relief to all flowers,

I sprinkle all places.

I make head - boys shiver with cold,

I make farmers labour like vagrants,

To birds of the air I bring joy,

As I emerge from mighty waters of the ocean.)

This poem’s theme is on the importance of rain. In the poem, Mutswairo attempts a rhyming scheme of aabbccdd. Thus, the lines rhyme as follows: first and second; third and fourth; fifth and sixth and seventh and eighth respectively. According to Birkerts (1996), “Rhythm is a direct consequence of the fact that words are made up of syllables that are both stressed and unstressed.” In the given example, Mutswairo achieves rhythm through skillful diction and coinage. For example, the word *musoziva* is a coinage aimed at creating a rhyming scheme due to final linkage. Chiwome (1996) argue that linkage was an integral part of traditional rhetoric. It gives the poem a rhyming scheme and a musical tone. In addition, Mutswairo also achieves a rhyming scheme through word

invasion as follows: *matete maruva* (thin flowers), *makomo ndozadza* (mountains, I fill) and *ini ndodiridza* (I water). Here Mutswairo is experimenting with a new technique inherent in sonnets. This renders the poem a bit unnatural. However, we argue that the techniques of word invasion and coinage enrich the Shona style of poeticizing.

Another common source of rhythm that Mutswairo uses is the simile. As put by Chiwome (1996: 15), “When similes are used cumulatively as is the case in love praises and clan praise poetry, the resultant parallel construction creates rhythm.” In addition, the simile enhances understanding the theme by association. For example, in *Madetembedzo edzinza rekwaChiweshe*, Mutswairo writes thus:

Harahwa nechembere nenherera,
Vanodya mudura rako risingapere,
Vanopona nokurungura kwauri,
Semazinyana eshiri ane nzara (p. 20).

(The old and orphans,
Feed from your ever full granary,
They cry for food on your doorstep,
Like hungry little birds.)

In the example, the simile *Semazinyana eshiri ane nzara*, vividly communicates the plight of hungry old people and orphans who habitually flock to chief Chiweshe’s palace for food handouts. It also creates assonance realized in the repetition of the morphemes /s/ and /z/ and the vowel /e/. The same use of the metaphor to make an emotional appeal as well as to give the poem a rhythmic pattern can be exemplified by ‘Mkurumbira wekufira nyika’ (the pride of dying for one’s country), wherein Mutswairo laments the suffering experienced by some nationalist leaders in detention camps. He puts it thus: *Kunyange mave somuviri wabvutwa m’soro* (Even though you now resemble people who have lost memory). The morphemes /s/ and /m/ and the vowel /o/ are repeated thereby creating rhythm which captivates the mind of the reader. Another example of a simile comes from ‘Ruva rangu Shora’ (My beloved Shora). The example is as follows: *Ruva rangu Shora, rinenge nyenyedzi* (My beloved Shora resembles a star). The repetition of the morphemes /r/ and /e/ creates a rhythmic sound pleasant to the ear. It also makes the reader to marvel at the beauty of the loved girl thereby understanding the theme of the poem.

Other rhetorical strategies used by the poet are rhetorical questions. Blair (1783), Dixon (1971) and Richards (1936) define rhetoric as the power of discourse and skill in the use of language aimed at pleasing or persuading. The art of rhetoric dates back to the 5th century B C and is associated with Greek scholars such as Plato and Aristotle. We draw

examples from 'Nehanda nyakasikana' (The pure spirit of Nehanda) and 'Mauto ehondo' (The people's army). In 'Nehanda nyakasikana', Mutswairo makes use of a record twelve (12) rhetorical questions. Firstly, these are used to effectively express the despicable deprivation and exploitation of black people under colonial rule in Rhodesia. This is clearly evident in the following:

Ko, isu rugare ruchatisvikira riiniko? ...

Makumbo avo ava namatuzu nekupfuviswa neriri Pfumojena. Ko! Vosvikepiko? (p. 35).

(When shall our suffering come to an end?...

Their legs have developed blisters as a result of being exploited by whites. So, for how long should they shoulder this burden?)

Secondly, the use of rhetorical questions is to emotionally and evocatively register a complaint with the ancestral spirits and Nehanda for seemingly being insensitive to the people's plight. Mutswairo writes thus:

Tine chitadzo chakakura sei

Chokubva matiramwa zvakadai? (p. 35).

(What sin have we committed

for you to treat us so badly?)

Thirdly, such an incantation is aimed at invoking the ancestral spirits in general and 'Nehanda Nyakasikana' in particular, to rescue people from colonial bondage. The following serve as examples:

Hamungatinzwewo kuchema kwedu here?...

Nehanda Nyakasikana! Kunozove riniko

Isu vaNyai tichitambudzika? (p.35).

(Can you not come to our rescue?...

(Nehanda Nyakasikana! When shall our suffering,

We, the true owners of this land, come to an end?)

Rhetorical questions are an effective persuasive strategy for they make the reader to suggest answers to questions asked by the author. This makes the reader to understand the theme. For example in 'Ridzai Mhere', Mutswairo uses a rhetorical question to bemoan the deprivation and exploitation that blacks suffered as a result of colonialism.

He puts it thus: *Chemai ridzai mhere marudzi ekwedu*

Nhasi kwamava ndokupi nokwamaiwe? (p.23).

(Mourn, cry loudly fellow countrymen

Can you imagine the magnitude of your exploitation?)

So, the reader understands the poet's message by answering such questions. This is an effective rhetorical strategy.

In this chapter we have demonstrated that Mutswairo is mainly a traditionalist poet whose literary style stems from Shona conventions of poeticizing. The conventions emphasize that poetry has to be utilitarian. This makes it imperative for poets to churn out poetry that reflects history and reality. In terms of style, the utilitarian view of poetry and life dictates that poets employ stylistic devices that are born of a people's experiences and thus the language of poetry should be easily understood by people who use that language. It is our observation that Mutswairo tries as much as possible to use language and style

that is accessible to the reader. In few cases where he does not, as when he resorts to the use of coinages and word invasion, it is a reflection of influences from western conventions of poeticizing. On this aspect we note that as a leading academic Mutswairo was aware of the formalist literary tradition and the sonnet as reflected in some of his few poems. The chapter viewed this hybridization positively for it arguably enriched rather than impoverished his literary style.

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