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Shona Traditional Poetry

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Shona poetry, in its nascent written form, received a welcome new expression in 1969 in the shape of an anthology entitled *Mabvumira Enhetembo* (The Harmony of Poetry). Before its appearance, there had existed only two very slight collections, *Madetembedzo Akare Namatsva* (Poems Old and New) and *Mutinhimira Wedetembbo* (The Rhythm of Poetry).¹ These little books contained some examples of traditional oral poetry in written form but the bulk of their contents was original in the sense that it had been composed in the medium of writing, a medium relatively new and strange to an institution which is very ancient in its oral form.

When it first appeared, in the work of Chivaura and Mutswairo, written poetry in Shona was a new departure showing no continuity with the oral tradition. But gradually more and more account has been taken of the forms and devices of spoken art so that, in the work of Hamutyinei and Kumbirai in the latest anthology, it is clear that the earlier oral poetic tradition is finding a new and developed literate expression. This very interesting development, which is a part of the brief history of written poetry in Shona, is something that calls for critical appreciation. But before this can be attempted, and it should be as part of a general assessment of written Shona poetry since its inception,² it is necessary to say something about the nature of traditional Shona poetry. Informed criticism and appreciation of

the work of modern poets, particularly when they continue the past, is only possible in the light of an understanding of the oral, pre-literate tradition out of which it has grown. This article attempts to describe that part of traditional poetry which was recited rather than sung; and the treatment of sung poetry and the relation of written poetry to traditional verbal art will be dealt with in a further article.

SOCIAL ROLE

The study of traditional poetry in Shona is part of the wider subject of Shona verbal art in all its varieties which include all the registers of speech and song, as related to their appropriate social context. Against this background, the poetry, both spoken and sung, stands out and is recognisable in virtue of its formal characteristics which it will be the business of this article to attempt to define. But it is helpful to state that the poetic styles and registers are part of a larger variety of verbal styles of speech since they formed part of the common repertoire of ordinary people and were in daily, functional use.³ The recitation of oral poetry was widely diffused in Shona society. There were certain social occasions which demanded and encouraged it and certain social relationships which received appropriate expression by means of it. These situations and relationships were those of the ordinary clansman and clanswoman and hence were part of their social rôle, to be learned as

this was learned. Poetry and its recitation were not limited to exclusively literary occasions or to a relatively restricted social group. In keeping with the relative lack of specialisation in Shona society, ordinary men and women had to be their own poets if they were to be fully members of their society and cooperate adequately in the social occasions which demanded poetic expression rather than some other register. There will be much to say later concerning other characteristics of this poetry and the extent to which it was traditional and original. The point to emphasise here is that poetry formed a normal ingredient in certain common social situations and relationships. This fact will be found to have influenced the poetry in its poetic qualities of imagery and form, and criticism, by which is meant informed and appreciative understanding of this poetry, should never lose sight of the social occasions in which and for which it was recited.

CLASSIFICATION

There is no single parameter which will yield an adequate typology of Shona traditional poetry. In fact there are several involved and the application of any one of them results in overlapping and anomalous results. We may categorise poetry according to its delivery into sung, intoned and spoken varieties; but this will yield a division which is irrelevant from the aspect of structural form, imagery, language or social context. In any case the study of Shona traditional poetry has barely commenced and at this stage only a tentative typology can be offered. In compiling and distinguishing the following types, the following considerations have been kept in mind: mode of delivery, imagery, form and structure of the typical single utterance or line, existence of larger structural units such as verses, poetic devices common to Shona poetry in general or specific to particular genres, and social context. Each genre is given a Shona term to bring this typology into agreement, as much as possible, with that of the Shona themselves. Before the various types can be listed, exemplified and described, however, the nature of Shona poetic devices must be clarified.

POETIC DEVICES

Since Shona poetry is part of Shona verbal art in general it will be found to be limited by the resources of Shona phonology and morphology. It is also limited by the further constraints of the poetic tradition which Shona poets have elaborated. Gleason's definition of poetic form is a use-

ful one to recall at this point: 'Poetic form is any conventional patterning superimposed on the normal phonologic structure required by the language . . . Only after a text has qualified as a sample of some specific language can the question be raised as to whether it is poetry or not, for a poem is always a text which uses the resources of its language in a characteristic poetic way.'⁴ Shona poetry shares a common phonology and morphology with the other registers of Shona verbal art. It is distinguished from them by the further conventional patterning which is imposed on it. But these poetic devices must lie within the phonologic and morphologic resources of the language and not be foreign to them. This must be remembered in the attempts to develop Shona poetry. It cannot be expected to imitate foreign models which are constructed on completely different phonologic principles. Shona does not employ word stress as English does. Hence it cannot be expected to develop a prosody based on the principle of recurring patterns of stressed and unstressed syllables. Metrical rhythm as it occurs in English poetry can be expected to be foreign to it since it finds no place in the sound system of Shona. Similarly Shona does not employ the opposition between long and short vowels on which Latin metric patterns are based. The typical Shona syllable consists of a consonant and vowel (CV) or of a vowel (V) alone. With the exception of certain ideophones which end with syllabic nasal consonants, e.g. *ho-m* (barking of a baboon), *ba-m* (sounding of a gun), words in Shona never end in a consonant. Hence Shona could never develop a system of rhyming akin to the so-called "strong" rhymes of English poetry. Rhyming schemes, if any, would have to be weak; but, in fact, Shona traditional poetry has never used rhyme as a poetic device to achieve repetition.

The poetic devices of traditional Shona poetry are: linking, which may be initial, cross or final; parallelism; alliteration and assonance, and others such as antithesis and repetition of a refrain. These are the forms taken by the principle of *repetition* in Shona. Poetry consists essentially of imagery but, as Cope reminds us, its effectiveness is greatly increased by the judicious use of repetition.⁵ This contributes the aesthetic necessity of form which gives unity and satisfactory completeness to a poem and to its constituent parts. Imagery with repetition, Cope reminds us, combine to make poetry more evocative, more emotive and more memorable than other forms of speech and

issue in a greater richness and concentration of language. He also reminds us that mere repetition in itself is monotonous and so it appears in combination with variety and in various guises.

Linking

Linking is a pervasive feature which is found as a poetic device in all types of Shona poetry, spoken as well as sung, of children as well as of adults. When applied to single lines or utterances, it consists in the repetition of an identical item in two or more successive cases. There are three kinds of linking, initial, cross or final, depending on the relative positions of the two repeated items. We have initial linking when the repeated items occur at the beginning of the successive lines:

a b c d
a e f g

We have cross linking when the repeated items occur, one at the end and another at the beginning of the successive lines:

a b c d
d e f g

We have final linking when the repeated items occur at the end of the successive lines:

a b c d
e f g d

The lines which are linked combine automatically to form a larger structure, normally a couplet, but sometimes a triplet.

The principle of linking is also applied to larger entities than lines or utterances. Thus a series of lines may be initially linked to another follow-

ing series by both series beginning with the same item. Similarly a series of lines may be medially or finally linked to another following series by the medial or final repetition of an identical item, such as by a recurring refrain at the end of successive groups of lines. The recurrence of these linking elements or items serves to indicate the existence of the unities which are linked, whether these be lines which are linked into couplets or groups of lines into a sequence of verses.

The occurrence of lines and sequences of lines has been mentioned. The unit out of which Shona poetry appears to be built is the line. The line in oral poetry is recited within, and usually well within, the compass of a single breath. But as Schapera has pointed out,⁶ there appears to be an optimum length of line which is not due solely to the physical necessity of drawing breath since the favoured number of words to a line is three or four. The position in Shona is similar to that in Tswana; and the line most commonly found consists of three or four words. Each word is marked by an accent of relative length and, it seems, slightly more prominent stress or breath force, on its penultimate syllable, the final word of each line receiving a more marked accent than those preceding. Thus the words and lines of Shona poetry are marked by penultimate accents. This may be one of its basic features: the recurrence, within very flexible limits, of a favoured pattern of three or four accents per line or phrase, the phrase itself being marked by a pause.

A good example of cross linking is found in Kumbira's version of the children's jingle, *Mwedzi wagara*:

1. *Mwedzi wagara**

Gwe-e kwe-e, mwedzi wagara
Wagara kuna Dondore
Dondore ane mavara
Mavara anenge edzetse.
5 *Gunyana nhasi wachena*
Wachena kuti ngwengwengwe
Ngwengwengwe chando chatiza
Chatiza kutya madziya.
Madziya mafadza vana
10 **Vana nesu tofara**
Tofara chando chapera
Chapera, mbare dzaenda.
Dzaenda, dzasiya vanga
Mavanga pane chembere

The moon is new

Gather round, there's a *new moon* tonight
New moon where Mr. *Fruit-toffee* is
Fruit-toffee covered with *stripes*
Stripes like those of the bullfrog.
September today is *bright*
Bright with *shining light*
Shining the cold has *fled*
Fled out of fear of the *summer*.
Summer that pleases the *children*
The *children* and we are *glad*
Glad that the winter is *over*
Over and scorch marks are *gone*.
Gone but leaving their *scars*
Scars on all the *old women*

* In examples 1-4 the linking elements are printed in bold in the Shona versions and in italics in the English versions.

- 15 **Chembere dzobuda panze**
Nokuti ave madziya.
Madziya tinokwazisa
Gunyana mwedzi wavana
Wavana neshiri dzose
 20 **Dzorira rungwanangwana.**

There exist many varieties of this jingle which the writer has adapted in order to convey some development of the thought and a recurrence of cross linking. This device effectively threads lines together into a unity of form though, as I have implied, the oral forms are not so developed either in thought or form as this example is. Lines 19 and 20 show that elements smaller than words can be used to link lines. In this instance it is the concordial affix of cl. 10 which is repeated. Similarly items longer than words, such as sub-

Old women who creep out now
Because the summer has come.
The summer we welcome gladly
September the month of the children
Of children and all the birds
Which sing in the early morning.

stantive phrases, may be repeated and thus link lines.

The following example, also an adaption by Kumbirai, combines cross linking with initial linking in the creation of three line stanzas. This is a very skilful example of the use of a traditional device as a structural principle. The poem is a piece of advice which might be given by an uncle to his sister's son or indeed by any elder to a junior. It savours of the traditional instruction given by elders at the *dare* (the village meeting place):

2. Chawanzwa

- Chawanzwa usaudze mukadzi**
Mukadzi idare rinoti ngwengengwe
Chawanzwa achiridza kwese.
- 5 **Chawanzwa usavanze murume**
Murume idare risingamborira
Chawanzwa charamba kurira.
- Chawanzwa pfimbika mudumundu**
Dumundu ipfumbi usine kaburi
Chawanzwa pfigira mumwoyo.
- 10 **Chawanzwa usachipambidzire**
Kupambidzirako kudira tunduru
Chawanzwa reva nepawanzwa.
- Chawanzwa ziva kuti wanzwa**
Ndechenzeve, handi chokuona
 15 **Chawanzwa ziva kuti watonzwa.**

What you have heard

What you hear never tell a woman
A woman is sounding metal
What she hears ringing out everywhere.

What you hear never hide from a man
A man is metal that never rings
What he hears does not resound.

What you hear store away in your breast
The breast is closed, a store to mature
What you hear shut away in your heart.

What you hear do not add to
Adding means pouring in gall
What you hear say as you heard it.

What you hear remember you heard
Of the ears, not of the eyes
What you hear remember was only heard.

The linking is initial between the first and third lines of each stanza. It is in fact this linking which constitutes the stanzas. There is no linking between 11, 3-4, 6-7, 9-10. Each stanza is similarly linked initially into a series since the first element of each is the same.

At the same time there is cross linking between the first and second lines of each stanza save the last. Note that stanzas 1-4 are characterized by a similar pattern of linking, both initial and cross. The last stanza departs from the pattern in having

cross linking between the first and third lines and in having final linking as well, a somewhat rare feature in the case of lines.

The poem also makes very effective use of parallelism in order to convey contrast. Parallelism is a device which will be discussed in the next section but which may be savoured in anticipation in this example. Stanzas 1 and 2 are almost wholly parallel in construction but sharply contrasting in content. Stanzas 3 and 4 show hardly any constructional parallelism but they also contrast. Thus, in keeping with the aphoristic and pro-

verbal style of traditional moral instruction which delights in pointed antithesis, this piece of advice is conveyed by way of two pairs of balancing yet contrasting images, the first pair that of the imprudent, talkative woman and the sage, circumspect man, the second that of the ripening store of fruit in the ground and the injection of bitter gall. In the fifth stanza, which stands apart as a conclusion from the preceding two pairs, there is the antithesis between hearing and only hearing, which is conveyed by repetition, and that between hearing and seeing of the second line. The whole poem is in fact a little gem of imagery and repetition of the forms of linking and parallelism.

The repetition of initial, and sometimes final, forms as a framework for successive verses is a feature of children's "item songs" or memory games. The games involve a song or a recitation in which items of a particular category appear successively within a constant framework. The song is sung by a soloist and a chorus. The soloist is a competitor taking his or her turn in the game in which the winner is the one who can list the greatest number of items of the sort considered relevant. The chorus is made up of the other children competing in the game, having had, or waiting to have, their turn and quick to notice if the competitor has defaulted in any way. It is usual for songs to accompany communal activities in Shona life. The activity which these 'item songs' accompany is a game:

3. *Ndianiko?* (Who is it?)

Chorus (repeated after each line)

Mushava anendarira, mushava

(A brown one with a bracelet, a brown one)

Solo

Ndianiko? (Who is it?)

Ndianiko?

Muchafa (Boy's names)

Tsikwa

Mhondiwa

Dzumbunu

Chinhoi

Ndianiko? (Who is it?)

Ndianiko?

Sekai

(Girl's names)

Taona

Zviripi

Maria

Dhokasi

Ndianiko? (Who is it?)

Ndianiko?

Tsiru

(Names of various kinds of

Mhanje

cattle: heifer, barren cow,

Handira

bull, cow, calf)

Mhou

Mhuru

Ndianiko? (Who is it?)

Ndianiko?

Sadza

(Names of various kinds of

Mhunga

foods: stiff porridge,

Mapfunde

bulrush millet, sorghum,

Mupunga

rice, finger millet)

Zviro

Ndianiko? (Who is it?)

Ndianiko?

Derere

(Names of various kinds of

Chijonga

glutinous wild vegetables)

Hambakachere

Nyamwenda

Nyenje

Ndianiko? (Who is it?)

Ndianiko?

Pfura

(Names of hills)

Harare

Tsikwi

Chishawasha

Hambadya

Here the competition consists in listing items of all kinds of categories. In changing from one category to another the competitor-soloist should introduce the new class of items by singing *Ndianiko?* (Who is it?) a set number of times. Further, the number of items in each category should be kept constant. In the above example *Ndianiko?* is sung twice at the beginning of each new category and there are five items each sung by each competitor. The one who reaches the greatest number of categories wins.

4. *Poti, poti*
Chorus (repeated after each line)

Going around
Zinyanga rinyanga

Solo
First Boy:

Poti, poti!
Ndinotsvaga wangu
Musuki wendiro
Anodzichenesa
Simuka, hende!

Going around, going around!
I look for my one
A washer of plates
Who will clean them
Get up, let's go!

Second Boy:

Poti, poti!
Ndinotsvaga wangu
Mureri wemwana
Asingamuchemedze
Simuka, hende!

Going around, going around!
I look for my one
A nurse for my child
Who will not make it cry
Get up, let's go!

Third Boy:

Poti, poti!
Ndinotsvaga wangu
Mubiki wesadza
Anorimononga
Simuka, hende!

Going around, going around!
I look for my one
A cook for my porridge
Who will stir it well
Get up, let's go!

Fourth Boy:

Poti, poti!
Ndinotsvaga wangu
Mukuyi wezvio
Anozvitsetsetsa
Simuka, hende!

Going around, going around!
I look for my one
One to grind my grain
Who will grind it fine
Get up, let's go!

The setting for this song is a game played between boys on one side and girls on the other. Each boy in turn dances over to the girls singing his part of the song, accompanied by the chorus. While singing the last line he touches the girl of his choice and brings her back to his side. Each boy in turn must choose new lines for the variable part of his verse within the constant framework. If a girl remains unchosen or a boy remains over with no one to choose, she or he is mocked.

Item songs of this general type, of which there are many, were of great use in the education of

children as memory training exercises and for teaching them the culturally recognised categories and typology. They also gave the children a grasp of different kinds of verse form.

Songs consisting of verses which consisted of a constant frame and partly of a varying element of a particular, relevant sort were also sung by adults, and minstrels' songs were frequently of this type. The following song about the baboon, sung in alternating and interlocking parts, is a good example:

5. *Te-he-te**

Tehete

1-3	{	Solo	<i>Tehete</i>	<i>tehete</i>	<i>Nhai, Gudo he</i>
		Chorus		<i>tehete</i>	<i>tehete</i>
4	{	Solo	Zimuswe	chiyi?	<i>Nhai, Gudo he</i>
		Chorus		<i>tehete</i>	<i>tehete</i>
5	{	Solo	<i>Hayaya</i>		<i>Imi zvenyu</i>
		Chorus		<i>tehete</i>	<i>tehete</i>

1-3	{	Solo	<i>Tehete</i>	<i>tehete</i>	Tell me, baboon
		Chorus		<i>tehete</i>	<i>tehete</i>
4	{	Solo	<i>What is the big tail?</i>	Tell me, baboon	
		Chorus		<i>tehete</i>	<i>tehete</i>
5	{	Solo	<i>Hayaya</i>		You people
		Chorus		<i>tehete</i>	<i>tehete</i>

* In 5 it is the variable parts of the verse, not the linking elements, which are printed in bold in Shona and in italics in English.

6	{ Solo Hayaya Sere yenyu	6	{ Solo Hayaya Your jokes
	{ Chorus tehete tehete		{ Chorus tehete tehete
7	{ Solo Hayata Zviri zvamboko	7	{ Solo Hayaya It's the sjambok
	{ Chorus tehete tehete		{ Chorus tehete tehete
8	{ Solo Zvataibata Tiri Harare	8	{ Solo Which we held While in Salisbury
	{ Chorus tehete tehete		{ Chorus tehete tehete
9	{ Solo Kuvarungu vedu	9	{ Solo At our employers
	{ Chorus tehete		{ Chorus tehete

In this song 11. 1-4 are sung to the baboon and 11. 5-9 are its reply. The solo and chorus parts overlap in the first part of 11. 1-4 but elsewhere they alternate in a pleasing rocking rhythm. The song consists of an indefinite number of verses of this sort, each verse consisting of a constant frame and a variable nucleus. The variable part mentions one peculiarity of the baboon after another for which it is twitted. Its reply is to explain its oddity with reference to its employment at Salisbury among the Europeans. Thus further verses would contain the following in the variable slots:

Verse 2:

<i>Mamvere chiyiko?</i>	What is the
	coarse hair?
<i>Ari majazi</i>	The coats
<i>Ataipfeka</i>	We used to wear

Verse 3:

<i>Muharwe chiyiko?</i>	What is the hollow
	in your stomach?
<i>Ari mabhande</i>	Belts
<i>Ataisunga</i>	We used to tie
	around us

Verse 4:

<i>Zheve chiyiko?</i>	What is the ear?
<i>Iri migwaku</i>	Ladies
<i>Yataiveza</i>	We used to carve

Verse 5:

<i>Muromo chiyiko?</i>	What is the mouth?
<i>Ari majegi</i>	Jugs
<i>Atainwisa</i>	We used to drink
	from

The song makes fun at the expense of the baboon but was also a satire on employment in the towns.

Parallelism

Enough has been said about the form of repetition called linking as applied to two kinds of unit, lines and stanzas, and the way in which it is used to signal the presence of these units and create poetic structures. We must now turn to the second pervasive poetic device, namely parallelism. Parallelism obtains between two units when there is similarity of grammatical construction. Cope defines parallelism as "repeated statements of identical construction with different words expressing the same idea" and he exemplifies it by verses from the poetry of the Bible. A somewhat wider definition is more useful in describing the Shona material for two reasons. Firstly, parallelism in grammatical structure admits of a great number of degrees ranging from complete identity at one end to something very partial at the other. Just as linking can involve the repetition of phrases, words, stems or affixes so parallelism can involve the repetition of larger or smaller grammatical patterns. Secondly similarity of construction between two units may exist not only to reinforce a common idea in different words but to develop an antithesis or contrast.

The following lines taken from a love poem or set of courting praises show close parallelism:

6. *Mune meso anenge etsinza, anoendaenda.*
Mune meno anenge mukaka, akachena
semwedzi wechirimo.
Mune mhuno yakati twi, kunge mutswi
weduri.

(You have eyes like the oribi's, bright with life.

You have teeth like milk, white as a winter moon.

You have a nose that is straight, like the stamper in a mortar.)

Each line consists of a verb phrase inflected in the same way by the second person plural subject prefix. Each verb phrase contains the same radical /-na/ (be with) and similar object complements made up of similar substantive phrases. In these substantive phrases we have a noun, one of the features of the beloved, which is qualified by relative inflected verb phrases. Three of these relatives convey a simile for they include the verb radical /-nge/ (be like, seem). Structurally and in content these three lines are closely parallel though not identical.

Another example is given by the ending of a traditional love poem:

7. *Amai vangu vamakura-narwo, mukonde wangu yuyu.*

Chiuyai ndikudetembe, iye muri munyasi.

Dai zvainzi munopindurwa kuva tsime remvura,

Tsimero ndairisosa nemubaya-mhondoro.

Dai maiva nwiwa, ndaikudyai nemhodzi dzose.

Uye dai pasina chakauya ichi, ndingadai ndakusisitirai.

(My mother versed in the ways of love, close as a bead girdle to me,

Come and let me praise you, as you sit beside me.

Could you be turned into a spring of water,

I would seal that spring with a branch of thorny mimosa.

If you were a melon, I would eat you, seeds and all.

And if these new ways had not come, I would have carried you off already.)

The last four lines consist of three hypothetical conditional sentences of the same general structure each expressing the desire of the suitor to make his beloved his own.

There are many cases where an idea is repeated without any similarity of structure between the two phrases. Here for example are two pairs of lines, each of which is describing, metaphorically, a stingy woman:

8. *VaChipa imbwa rejena,*
Renupunga rinopa imbwa gwembe;
Vavakidzani nezvipungu
Zvisodonhedza munhenga pasi.

(She who gives dogs only maize porridge, That made from rice would give them mange;

Neighbour to the bateleur eagles Who never drop a feather to the ground.)

With regard to parallelism in structure serving to underline antithesis it is certainly true that examples are not numerous in poetry. Parallelism in poetry mainly expresses analogies. But in proverbs it is often used to express paradox or contrast and examples can be found in didactic poetry as for example in the first poem quoted in this article.

9. *Mukadzi idare rinoti ngwengwengwe,*
Murume idare risingamborira.

(A woman is sounding metal, A man is metal that never rings.)

10. *Munhu akarurama anodya chebanga misi yose,*

Asi munhu akaipa anotodya chedemo.

(A just man eats what he can cut with a knife everyday (viz. has special favours), But an unjust man eats only what is cut by an axe (viz., can expect only the common lot).)

Parallelism is a very common feature of proverbs as is its opposite, cross-parallelism. This is possible because proverbs normally have a balanced structure and fall naturally into two halves, e.g.

11. *Kandiro enda, kandiro dzoka*
(Little dish go, little dish come back; viz. One good turn evokes another)

12. *Chiri pamuchena chiri pamutenhure*
(What is on a poor man is on a sloping place; viz. A poor man's possessions are not durable)

13. *Zvawakanzi dzipakate, wakanzi dziridze here?*

(When you were told to carry them, were you told to play them [mbira (the hand-piano)]? viz. A lessee is not an owner)

14. *Aive madziva ave mazambuko. Aive mazambuko ave madziva*

(What were pools have become fords. What were fords have become pools; viz. Times change)

Parallelism involves similarity of structure. In proverbs it is often very close, the structures in each part being as similar to each other as it is possible to be. Thus in example 11 we have the structure of imperative clause in both parts. In example 12 we have a clause consisting of subject and predicate. What creates the parallelism is that both subject and predicate are inflected forms of verb phrases having in common the same verb radical /-ri/ and similar complements *pamuchena*, *pamutenhure*, both adverbial locative complements of cl. 16. The subject is a relative inflection and the predicate a principal inflection. The fact that these two inflections differ only tonally is made great use of to create proverbs with relative subject and principal predicate parallelism:

15. *Wakweva sanzu wakweva namashizha aro*
(He who pulls a branch after him pulls its leaves as well; viz. If you inherit a wife, you inherit her children as well)
16. *Chafamba chasvaya*
(The thing which travelled wilted)

In examples 14, 15 and 16 this is the basis of the parallelism. In example 13 the inflection of the first part is participial, that of the second principal. The parallelism is equally there, the common structures being repeated so that what is not common, the contrasting forms, can convey their maximum effect:

11. -end- (go) : -dzok- (come back)
12. -muchena (poor man) : -mutenhure (slope)
13. -pakat- (carry) : -ridz- (play)
14. *madziva* (pools) : *mazambuko* (fords)
15. *sanzu* (branch) : *mashizha aro*
(its leaves)
16. -famb- (travel) : -svav- (wilt)

Parallelism is also created by the collocation of substantives or substantive phrases in clauses. Just as a clause can consist of a substantival or relative inflected verb phrase as subject and a principal inflected verb phrase as predicate so also it can consist of a substantive phrase as subject and a predicative or copulative inflected substantive phrase as predicate:

17. *Mbavha imhatwa*
(A thief is someone you catch in the act; viz. Suspicion is not enough)
Mbavha (a thief) and *mhatwa* (someone who is caught) are both nominals of cl. 9.

In many instances the subject is an infinitive phrase and the predicate a copulative inflected infinitive phrase:

18. *Kusema chivi huona chiuya*
(To hate the bad is to see the good)
19. *Mbudzi kudya mufenje hufane nyina*
(For a goat to eat the *mufenje* bush is to resemble its mother; viz. Like father, like son)

In many cases of parallelism the likeness is rather distant:

20. *Mwana washe muranda kumwe*
(The son of a chief is a servant elsewhere)

Here the parallelism is between a substantive phrase of cl. 1 consisting of noun and possessive and another substantive phrase consisting of a noun of cl. 1 and a locative.

21. *Mugoni wepwere ndiye asinayo*
(The expert with children is he who has none)

Here the first member of the parallel relationship is a substantive phrase of cl. 1 consisting of a noun and possessive, a noun of cl. 9 (*pwere*) being the possessive stem. The second member is a substantive phrase of cl. 1 but consisting of the pronouns which refer to these nouns, /-ye/ (he) and /-yo/ (it), in a sequence of headword and relative *asinayo* (he who does not have it).

These examples and analyses are given in order to make the point that the creators and users of these literary forms, both poems and proverbs which are poems in miniature, have an awareness and appreciation of relationships of structure of a very abstract kind. Secondly similarity of structure is a variable. It is greater or less depending on how many structural elements are held in common. The correspondence of structures even though of the most abstract and general kind is enough to create frames in which contrasts may be appreciated.

In cross parallelism the correspondence and the similar frames are reversed. Similar forms and structures are not in corresponding positions in each half of the proverb but in transposed positions. And their relationship is like that which obtains between objects and their mirror image:

22. *Chakanganwa idemo. Chigutsa hachika-nganwe*
(What has forgotten is the axe. The stump does not forget; viz. One who injures another may forget but the injured party will not)

23. *Kugocha kunoda kwaamai. Kwomwana kunodzima moto*
(Roasting requires the mother's [action]. That of the child puts out the fire)
24. *Gore harizi pakaza rimwe*
(A year never comes where another has come; viz. No year is exactly alike another)
25. *Makunguwo zvaakatya, akafa mangani?*
(When the crows took flight, those who died were how many? viz. Those who run away live to fight another day)

In all these examples the variable correspondence must be looked for crosswise. The contrast is perhaps sharpened by the contrasting words, axe and stump in example 22, mother and child in example 23, being held in tight juxtaposition.

Parallelism corresponds to initial linking while cross-parallelism corresponds to cross linking.

Alliteration and assonance

Alliteration and assonance are a final feature which is used as a poetic device to give unity of form to lines and stanzas. The distinction which Cope has made between natural and contrived alliteration in Zulu obtains also of course in Shona as it rests on a similar structural linguistic feature, namely grammatical agreement.⁸ The nouns of Shona are divided on the basis of their prefixes into a number of classes. For example the nouns *chinhu* (thing) and *chigutsa* (stump) both belong to the same class as they have the prefix *[chi-]* in common. The nouns *murume* (man) and *mukadzi* (woman) both belong to the same class because they share the same prefix *[mu-]*. Now grammatical agreement between headwords and qualifiers in substantive phrases and between subjects and predicates in clauses is brought out by the repetition of the class prefix in varying forms:

chigutsa hachikanganwi

(the stump, (it) does not forget)

chigutsa chidiki (a little stump)

Since the class prefixes which are repeated in qualifiers and predicates to express agreement commonly consist of both consonants and vowels, their repetition is accompanied by alliteration and assonance. The proverbs quoted above provide a number of examples. Alliteration and assonance based on repetition of the class affixes is natural and inherent in the grammatical structure of Shona. Since class affixes are usually in prefixal position it means that natural alliteration and assonance is common. Contrived alliteration and assonance is not common but does exist:

26. *VaChirera-nherera*
(One who brings up orphans)
27. *Mukadzi asina mhindu kana mhakanyiko; VaChurehwa-tenda; Mudzimu usina shura kana shungu; Panezuro ndipo penhasi.*
(A woman not unpredictable nor railing; Biddable; A spirit without brooding or anger; What she was yesterday she is today)

LI. 1 and 3 of 27 are parallel even in their pattern of alliteration. The alliteration of LI. 4 is inherent.

TYPOLOGY

The oral and sung poetry of Shona is tentatively divided into the following types:

1. Praise poetry addressed to people in virtue of their clan affiliation (*Nhetembo*).
2. Praise poetry addressed to people in virtue of their social role and personal qualities (*Made-tembedzo*).
3. Didactic poetry recited in order to implant and transmit traditional sentiments and values (*Nhango dzepadare*).
4. Critical poetry aimed at expressing or rectifying social ills and personal grievances (*Nheketerwa*).
5. Poetry recited at wakes to console and hearten the bereaved (*Nhembo*).
6. Entertaining verse (*Ndyaringo*).

The above types are mainly spoken or intoned, but sung varieties are found as well, such as minstrels' songs and the critical songs sung during threshing. What follows are sung:

7. Songs sung to accompany communal activity such as work in the fields, dancing, storytelling. Of these children's songs sung to accompany their games form a separate category.
8. War and funeral songs.
9. Songs sung to and by the spirit of a founding father.
10. Nursery songs and lullabies.

This list will certainly not prove to be complete or satisfactory when more is known about Shona traditional poetry; but in the absence of anything more systematic it may serve for the purpose of this paper.

Nhetembo

The Shona are segmented into exogamous patrilineal clans, the members of which all claim descent from a common ancestor. They also own a totem in common and a number of praise names and praises. The clan praises enjoyed considerable

prestige as poetry. Nowadays they are difficult to collect in their entirety to such an extent has their use fallen into desuetude. They were used to thank a clansman for a service and the praises used were, first of all, praises of the clansman in terms of his totem with which he was identified, and of the clan's particular virtues. Secondly they were thanks addressed to all his ancestors. These were addressed by name, in the case of famous men, or by the names of their burial places in the case of those forgotten. It was held that the whole clan should be thanked for service done by any single member since he would have been inspired to do it by his forefathers. Indeed the primary object of thanks is the clan.

In style the clan praises are apostrophic and consist largely of praise names addressed to the clan, the imagery of the totem being used. This is often striking and bold. In other lines the ancestors in their several burial places are addressed, these being the names of places where the clan once lived and left their dead. No one should be left out from thanks for who knows which ancestor was responsible for the kind thought? They are to be thought of as collectively responsible for any good deed done by a member of their clan.

In delivery the praises are recited in short lines with a special accent of final length and falling tone, high-falling if the final syllable is high-toned and low-falling if it is low. This cadence marks

the end of each utterance, usually a complete praise, though a praise, if long, can be distributed over several lines. Praises are grouped into stanzas by introductory words of thanks like *Maita* (You have done a service), *Zvaitwa* (A service has been done) and *Hekani* (Thank you). Thus stanzas can be looked on as initially linked in this way. The intent of the *nhetembo dzorudzi* (clan praises, cp. *-tetemb-* utter praises, greet ceremoniously, praise, thank in traditional wise) is to express the thanks, appreciation and indebtedness of the beneficiary. The stanzas are of varying length and there is the greatest freedom in the order in which they are recited. They are not cumulative or developed to reach a climax. They are essentially a string of praises, seemingly unconnected save in their subject matter, which cluster round the object of thanks which is the clan. The lack of development and the free order in which they may be recited accords well with the apostrophic style. The praises usually have a standardised beginning and end. The beginning consists of the totem and principal praise name of the clan and the conclusion commences with the phrase *Aiwa*, *zvaitwa* and concludes with a praise name.

The following is the version of the clan praises of the Hera people under Chief Nyashanu, quoted by Musiwa. Their totem is *Shava* (Eland) and their principal praise name *Museyamwa* (Support).

28. *Nhetembo yevaHera*

Maita, Museyamwa!

Maita, Nhuka,

Shava yangu yiyi.

Hekani, Mutekedza;

Vari UHera mukonde.

Maita, Vetsambo chena;

Mhofu yomukono;

Zienda-netyaka,

Mutumhu una mago.

Hekani, Mhuka huru;

Vemiswe inochenga muviri;

Kuyambuka rwizi mvura yakwira

makomo;

Vanovhimwa navanonyanga;

Vanovangira vashura'vhu kutsivira
mutumbi;

The Clan Praises of the Hera

Thank you, my support!

Thank you, Eland.

My dear tawny one.

Thank you, Mutekedza;

The honoured dead who lie in Buhera.

You have done a service. Those of the
bracelet of white beads;

Bull Eland;

Going with power and graceful ease as
the noise when your knees bend
reveals.

Like a region full of wasps.

Thank you, Great beast;

Those of the tails that cover the body
in their sweep;

When you cross a river, the water
climbs the hills in its excitement;

Those who are hunted by the silent
stalkers;

When they turn a ridge, hoeing, while

- 15 *Vanochemera wavatanga;
Vane misodzi isingadonhi pasi.
Kuti yadonha, yoda nhevedzo yero-
munhu ropa.*

*Tinotenda, varidzi vamatenhare;
Vane nzanga chena kunge mwedzi.
Zvaonekwa, Vahombarume.
Aiwa, zvaitwa, Sarirambi.*

The Hera clansmen are praised in imagery taken from the eland, the animal they revere, and for certain moral qualities they are deemed to possess such as patience and self control. Mention of ancestors and ancestral sites, as in 11. 4, 5, 8 and 21, is meagre in this version compared with others. There are usually also in such praises references such as those of 1.6 which cannot be fully understood.

29. *Kutenda masango
Hezvoka, Vamatenhere namasango!
Vana vati, "Tobatanidza maoko,
Titende vene vepasi namatenhere
Neusavi nemichero zumatipa."*

- 5 *Vana vati, "Tatenda, matateguru
Nezvamaita, vatenzi namakombwe."
Matidziura mhanza, varidzi vavanhu.
Munotonga musina tsinu kana godo;
Mune kupa kusingasarudze;*

- 10 *Mumoti wasvika mati, "Mwana!"
Mune mukurumbira wakapambira
nyika;
Mutisvitsirewo kune vari mberi;
Ndimi motizivirawo vatisingazive
kwavari.*

Aiwa, zvaitwa, varidzi vepasi.

- 15 *Maita, vashe.*

running, the very soil is amazed;
Who cry for him who provoked them;
Whose tears never fall openly to the
ground.

But if they do, they will be requited in
human blood.

We are grateful, owners of the young
bushes;

Who bear white horns, white as the
moon.

Your kindness has been seen, hunters of
good things.

Indeed a kindness has been done, Sarirambi,
the one who stands firm.

Other types of clan praises are:

1. those used to thank the daughters of clansmen, used before their marriage;
2. those used by a wife to her husband as an expression of wedded love and, possibly,
3. examples such as the following prayer of thanks offered by hunters to the guardian spirits of the area in which they have found game or fruit. As is made clear in the poem, the spirits addressed are not of the clan to which the hunters themselves belong.

Thanks to the Guardian Spirits
Gracious, Guardians of the bushveld and
the wild country!

The children say, "We clap our hands,
And thank the lords of the land and
the bushes
For the relish and fruit you have given
us."

The children say, "We thank you, our
fathers,

For what you have done, masters
and lion spirits."

You have opened a way to good for-
tune, masters of men.

You rule without favour or spite;

You exercise giving without partiality;

You call whoever comes to you,

"Child!"

You have a renown which covers the
world;

You will please take our thanks to
those who are beyond you;

It is you who must acknowledge
them in our stead who do not know
where they are.

Indeed, a kindness has been done, masters
of the land.

You have done kindly, lords.

This poem is remarkable both for the religious feeling and its matching form, far more organised than the loose sequence of apostrophic lines in 28. In 29 we have a formal opening, characteristic of ritual thanks, in the term *Hezvoka* and the praise name of cl. 2a which follows. There is parallelism and initial linking between 11. 2-4 and 5-6, initial linking and repetition of the same sentiment in 11. 7-10 and partial parallelism in 11. 12-13; 14-15 are a formal conclusion. This definite yet flexible form is a fit vehicle for the praises and thanks which are in perfect taste. In comparison 28 is marked only by its division into praise stanzas of variable length and initial linking by means of the reiterated cl. 2 affix /*va-*/. Ll. 16-17 are interesting for a couple of negative-affirmative cross-linking which results in a couplet with cumulative effect.

30. *Mhezi yomunwe wangu*

*Houno musikana wandinoda,
Tsyarakadenga, muti usina bunha,
Muuyauya asina nekanongo kese.
Mhezi yomunwe wangu,
5 Muswa-ndakaringa.
Ane meno anenge mamanda.
Nhongora-mutsipa yomusikana,
Ane mutsipa unorare-nda panzira.
Ane mhuno inenge mutswi.
10 Ane meso anocndaenda.
Ane kufamba kunenge kukavira nyimo,
Kutizira kuchinge kudya ya nzungu.
Vachirera-nherera vangu vava:
Vakanditi, "Ponda amai,
15 Ndigosara ndokureneni."
Vanzungu-nhokotera, mateko ndirini.
Ndatoti kutakura ndotodii?
Dai pasina varoyi,
Ndingadai ndakusisitira.*

The imagery of this love poem is clearly different from those of the clan praises. Here the interest is in the personal attractions of the beloved and images are applied through metaphor and simile to describe them. All of these praises are recurrent and hence, no doubt, traditional but there is room for adaptation to the person praised and for new and original lines. Otherwise the

Maderembedzo

The praise style is also found in poems composed for, and addressed to, persons in virtue of their social rôle and personal qualities. Thus we find praises addressed to young women by their suitors during courtship and by husbands to their wives; praises in honour of chiefs and heroes, in honour of smiths, hunters and outstanding tillers of the soil to be recited by their women, in honour of children by their parents and vice versa. There are also praises recited in honour of oneself, as by diviners, or by any man in a situation where he is threatened by rivals, as in a fight or in courtship. These poems, unlike the clan praises which seem to be purely traditional, are a blend of traditional and original lines. As an example here are some lines of courtship praises collected by Musiwa with one or two further added.

Pimple on my finger

Here she is, the girl I love,
Straight as a tree without a knot as it
stretches up to brush the sky,
My beautiful one without a single blemish.
Pimple on my finger,
Which I turn to all day long.
She has teeth as white as fat.
Girl of the long and graceful neck,
Which a louse may not traverse in one day.
She has a nose straight as a stamper.
Eyes that shine and glisten with life.
Hers is a gait like the planting of ground-peas.
And running like the planting of ground-nuts.
My dear guardian of orphans;
Who say to me, "Slay your mother.
And I will then look after you."
Kernel of the nut, the shells being I.
What do I do to carry you away?
But for the witches,
I would have bourne you off.

devices used are similar to those used in the clan praises, parallelism in 11. 6, 8, 9, 10, 11 (1. 12 being parallel to part of 1. 11); the use of praise names which compress a great deal of imagery in nominal constructions of various classes and types (cf. 11. 2, 5, 7, 13; 1. 16 is one long praise name of cl. 2a), initial linking and alliteration (cf. 11. 11-12, 13, 17 and 19).

Nhango dzepadare

The genre of didactic poetry in which the traditional mores and knowledge of social institutions was passed down has been called here *nhango dzepadare*. As the title indicates, their appropriate context is the *dare*, the village meeting place, where the men gather and which is the focus of

village life. In the *nhango* the proverbs are appropriately expounded and given a context of commentary. The following example is called *Rugare harumbungirwe* (Peace is not seized by force) and it develops in a manner reminiscent of the Book of Proverbs the paradoxes of humility and pride.

31. *Rugare harumbungirwe*

*Ichokwadi kuti vakuru vanoti,
"Kugarika tange-nhamo, rugare rugotevera."
Munhu akangwara anofamba akazvirereka
panyika;
Nounhu hwake hunozviratidza hwoga
pavanhu;
5 Navanhu vanomupa chiremero nokuti haa-
zvukudze.
Asi mhengera-mumba inofamba yakatakura
ungwaru mumaoko
Nokuti anoti baridzira ndihwo unhu.*

*Chimiro chomunhu akarurama ane rukudzo
Chinokosha kupinda ndarama zvakaipetwa
runa.*

- 10 *Mbiri haikungirwe hata, aiwa!
Mbiri inouya yoga.
Noungwaruwo humoziviwa navamwe, kwete
muridzi.
Usafambe wakashonga uzivi hwako
pavanhu.
Rega kufamba uchiparidzira ungwaru
nouchenjere hwako.*

- 15 *Zvirerekewo, ugozviisa pasi pavakuru vako.
Zvikomborero zvinowananzowira kune vaka-
shoreka
Kunyange zvazvo dzimwe nguva vakuru
vachiti,
"Chiri pamuchena, chiri pamutenhure."
Asi vanaChinyamapezi ndovaiwana sha-
ngura dzavakadzi.*

- 20 *Chikara harisi benzi, Chikara imhepo ino-
ziva kwainoenda.
Varanda vakarurama vakazova machinda
ashe,
Vakazopedzisira vapiwa rimwe divi kuti
vatonge
Sechipo chounhu nedikita ravo.*

Peace is not to be seized by force

Is it true what our elders say,
"To find peace start with trouble so that
peace may follow after."
A wise man walks humbly through the
land;
And his worth speaks for itself to men;
People respect him because he does not
praise himself.
But the fool goes about holding his
wisdom in his hands
Since he thinks that worth consists in
display.

The character of a just man with respect
for others
Is more precious than gold four fold.

Honour does not have to have a head-pad
to be carried away.
Honour comes of itself.
And the presence of wisdom is recognised
by others, never by him who is blessed
by it.
Do not go about before men wearing your
knowledge like a garment.
Do not go about advertising your wisdom
and your prudence.

Humble yourself, be submissive to your
elders.
Blessings come most often to those who are
despised
Although the elders do say at times,
"All the poor man has will waste away."
But the scabrous ones in the stories married
the most beautiful girls.

God is no fool, he is a wind that knows its
direction.
The upright servants became the chief's
councillors,
And were given, in the end, a part of the
kingdom to rule
As a gift for their worth and devotion.

- 25 *Saka vakuru vaine tsumo dzinoti,*
"Kudya chomuzvere hubata mwana."
"Mupfuvira womukadzi wenhaka
Kumuzivira vana vake bedzi."
"Chirango ndochinaamai, mugoti unopiwa
anyerere."
"Kukumbira hutsenerera, kukwangwamara
hunge une chako."
- 30 *Ushe hahufambwe nahwo kwawashanyira.*
Chimiro chakanaka inhaka yaunovigwa
nayo.
Chimiro chakarurama hachigarwe nhaka
sehwakwati.
Munhu akarurama anodya chebanga misi
yose,
Asi munhu akaipa anotodya chedemo.
- 35 *Chimiro chakarurama chinokosha kupinda*
ndarama.

This piece is clearly proverbial in its inspiration, not only because it is a development of the proverb quoted in 1.2 but also because its language and tempo are philosophical and its imagery the somewhat abstract metaphors of the moralist. The proverb in 1.2 skilfully uses cross parallelism to convey its contrasts, beginning : sequel, trouble: plenty. The poem in its first two stanzas contrasts the eloquent power of humility with pride and the false pursuit of honour. Humility is shown to be the prelude to the true blessings that come from solid worth (stanza 3). Though one proverb might seem to argue against it, the whole of the folklore and many other telling proverbs show what the received teaching of the elders is (stanzas 4,5).

The language is sententious and epigrammatic. It does not, even in its didactic aim, descend to the use of simple language since it is held that the young are best taught by saws, adages and proverbs in all their compressed and undiluted power. Because enigmatic, they are also challenging and make the young think for themselves and gradually assimilate the wisdom of their elders. Proverbs are best elucidated by reference to other proverbs. The Shona find it distasteful and banal to translate the powerful metaphors and epigrams into plain speech. However, the poem provides a context of elevated commentary so that the meaning of the proverbs, themselves expressed in homely images, may be fully appreciated.

The element of external form does not appear until 11. 31-34 where there is parallelism observed

- So the elders have their proverbs which run.
 "If you want food from a nursing mother,
 you must hold her baby for her."
 "The way to the heart of an inherited wife
 is to think of her children more than of
 her."
 "When the mother rewards, the quiet child
 gets the stirring stick to lick."
 "When you beg, humble yourself; arrog-
 ance will belie your need."
 A chief cannot expect to be treated as a
 chief outside his country.
 A good character is a legacy that dies with
 you.
 An upright character cannot be passed on
 by will.
 A just man is singled out for special treat-
 ment everyday,
 But an evil man just gets the common lot.
 An upright character is more precious than
 gold.

in two pairs of lines. The ideas of 11. 31-32 and 33-34 are expressed first in affirmative and then in negative form.

Nheketerwa

Nheketerwa or critical and satirical poetry is to be found in a variety of contexts and forms, most of them highly institutionalized and in sung form. In them the singers air their grievances, complaints and frustrations, for the Shona very sensibly believe that if mental and emotional upsets do not come out into the open they will only cause personal and social harm. There are a number of correlative registers recognised as belonging to these institutions and which differ from each other along a scale of explicitness. At one end of this parameter are *nheketerwa* which are veiled, cryptic and allusive and at the other are the grinding songs of young wives airing their complaints against their mothers-in-law, the *bembera* or public complaint of a man who believes he is being bewitched and the songs sung at threshing time when all inhibitions on speech are lifted and what does not come out *kane mudzimu wako* (must have a special spirit to stop it).

The language of criticism and complaint is called *madimikira*. It is metaphorical and indirect. Different situations will call for different depths of metaphor and allusion and the Shona are very skilful at gauging the depth required so that the language used may be intelligible but avoid being actionable, hurtful or embarrassing by being too direct. Art is at the service of delicacy

and produces pieces which are admirable for their imagery and the adjustment of their imagery to the situation in which they are spoken. It may be because of their aesthetic requirements in verbal art quite as much as for social and moral reasons that the Shona avoid plain speech in the language of social comment. These qualities fuse in the verbal art of the responsible person, as much at one end of the scale as that of the other. The interest in this type of poetry lies in the imagery which is never absent even in the *mavingu*, the

complaints which a wife may address to her husband.

The following example, entitled *Madimikira*, might be spoken by a village head at the *dare* in the evening. He is seizing the occasion to comment on a number of things for which he has been biding his time. *Mwoyo womukuru ndimaorera*. (The heart of an elder is a fertile heap of comment.) It brings forth the fruits of reflection but with no very clear thread of meaning to link them together as far as the outsider is concerned.

32. *Madimikira*

Allusive Sayings

*Zuva igore.
Rinodoka rava namavi namauya.
Mhosva haina mweni.
Upfumi hahutenherwe,*

One day is like a year.
It sets with its fill of bad and good.
Where faults are concerned, no one can
plead ignorance.

Wealth cannot be forced like cattle into
their pen,

It only goes where there is some already.

Luck is luck and

A gift from your ancestors will be yours
by name.

Let the birds hatch out.

Eggs make no broth.

To catch a rogue in the act you have to
follow him.

A sleeping dog

Is not roused from its food lest it bite.

When a guinea fowl dies

Its eggs are scattered.

A man objects to have his property taken
like the Rozvi.

When you set a trap in burnt grass,
You do not worry about soiling your rear-
skin.

If insolent women have on their rear-skins,
They treat men with contempt.

A red gourd is bitter inside.

Tailless rat, stay in your hole.

If you want to enjoy a natural death.

Those who are in the forests are lucky.

For those at home nothing is free from
trouble.

Knowledge is strength.

The locust of a poor man

Is roasted by the leg.

If you care for a traveller's dog,

You show love to its owner.

5 *Asi hunotoenda pane humwe.
Chemhanza ndechemhanza.
Chomudzimu ndechawadanirwa.
Rega dzive shiri.
Mazai haana muto.*

10 *Kugona nhavataya kuitevedzera.
Imbwa ivete
Haimutsirwe kudya. Inokuruma.
Kufa hwchanga,
Mazai anoparara.*

15 *Haabatirwe chake semuRozvi.
Kureya riva murutsva,
Usatye mhapa kusviba.
Makadzi akasimira mhapa,
Kupengera varume.*

20 *Dende dzvuku, mukati munendye.
Gonzo mhini, gara mumhango,
Chomudzimu chikuwaniremo.
Vari kumatondo ndivo vauya.
Vari kumusha zvizengeya.*

25 *Kuva nezivo kuva nesimba.
Imhashu yomurwere
Inogochwa yakabatwa gumbo.
Kuchengeta imbwa yomufambi
Kuda tenzi wayo.*

30 *Zvauri mutsvuku, chizocherwa.*
Ruzivo rwendangariro
Kumachindarume nemachindakadzi,
Makara asionane.
Anoera mvura nechigunwe anyonyima.

35 *Uyezve imbudzi yanyakupinda.*
Kuzeza busa reharahwa
Kuramba maraiwa.
Makadya jenjedza, vambuya,
Mukuwasha akadzura duwu.

40 *Ngaube mutova-kamwe, mwana wenho-*
ngora.

The introduction (11. 1-2) warns that the old man has plenty to say and that he speaks to those who know, or should know, what is right (1.3). Ll. 4-7 urge work, 11. 8-15 avoidance of intemperate action particularly if so advised by bad companions. Though fair on the outside, they infect one by their conversation. Ll. 21-5 advise against being provocative or taking offence too quickly; 11.26-9 state that everything is to be gained by tact and a soft answer. An overwhelming sense of one's own importance will land one into trouble (1.30); wisdom and folly do not mix (11. 31-3). Stinginess. (11. 34-5), arrogance in the young (11. 36-7) and another unattractive trait, such as meanness (11. 38-39), all adding up to lack of magnanimity, are condemned with the plea that this behaviour be not repeated.

Parallelism, with many different degrees of similarity, both within and between lines, is very evident (cf. 11. 1-2, 6-7, 10, 23-4, 25, 28-9, 36-7); 11. 4-5 show cross linking with negative-affirmative contrast. The piece is uttered in phrases as set out. The proverbs in themselves have a variety of meanings and applications but their combination and particular sequence in any recital are deliberate and converge to convey a consistent meaning to those in the know. The language and constructions used are terse and severely econ-

Since you are ruddy and ripe, be ready to
 be plucked soon.
 Wisdom and folly
 Are like young men and women,
 Wild beasts that avoid each other.
 She who measures water with her thumb
 is stingy
 And it is as with a goat belonging to a
 passing traveller.
 Avoiding a fool of an old man
 Means denying yourself instruction.
 You revealed your true character, mother-
 in-law, by eating all the fish
 And your son-in-law has thrown away the
 fish trap.
 Let it be only once, a first-born calf.

omical, each morpheme used carrying its maximum reference particularly the person and class affixes (11. 6-7, 22, 23-4). This genre, and that of the *nhango dzepadare*, which expound and form the setting for the *tsumo*, the proverbs, are obviously influenced greatly by structures which the proverbs use and which second and serve the communication of their meaning with such deft felicity.

Nhembo dzeparufu

Funerals are the occasions for recitals, or the expression of sentiments of varying length, which convey sympathy to the bereaved and are aimed at heartening them in their affliction. The context may be the *dare* where the men of the village and those who have come to mourn and console are gathered and the time either in the evening or morning before the burial or after it. Mourners do not come to share the funeral meal without expressing appropriate sentiments. The recital may pass from one man to another and as each one speaks others will chime in to show their agreement. This will explain the way in which these *nhembo dzorufu* have been set out as if recited by a leader and chorus, respectively A and B, though the part of leader passes from one to another.

33. *Kuipa kusina magumo*

A: *Iwe rufu, zita rako rinotyisa.*
 B: *A, kutyisa kutetetete?*
 A: *Hapana anoda ushamwari newe.*
 B: *Ungaite ushamwari nerovambira?*

Limitless evil

A: Death, your name is a fearful one.
 B: And is the fright a small one?
 A: No one wants friendship with you.
 B: Would you be friends with a
 deadly snake?

- 5 A: *Hanzi shamwari yakanaka.*
 B: *Ingave shamwari yakanaka nokupi?*
 A: *Une mukundo mukuru pavanhu.*
 B: *Mukundo unengei?*
 A: *Munhu wese haakude, anokuzeza.*
- 10 B: *Kuzezwa kudikidiki?*
 A: *Hauna mhangami kana magamba.*
 B: *Mhangami yakazvarwa naani?*
 A: *Kuuya kwako kunozungaidza.*
 B: *Kuzungaidzwa kungataurwe nomuromo?*
- 15 A: *Hauna munhu ari parufaro rwakadii!*
 B: *Zvinoonekwa naani izvozvo?*
 A: *Hauna tsitsi noruregerero kana wasvika.*
 B: *Chinoregerera munhu ndicho chii?*
 A: *Mwoyo wako hauna kana nekatsitsi zvako.*
- 20 B: *Katsitsi kanobva kupi?*
 A: *Zvechokwadi rufu uri Chazezesa.*
 B: *Ko, ndiye mukuruka nhai?*
 A: *Kuipa kwako hakuna kwakungae-nzaniiswe nako.*
 B: *Chiri chii chingaenzaniiswe nako?*
- 25 A: *Nehwako utsinye humenge munhu ane manyemwe.*
 B: *Ari manyemwe akanaka?*

- A: You are not a good friend.
 B: How could he be good friend?
 A: You have tremendous sway over men.
 B: A sway like what else?
 A: Everyone dislikes you, shuns you.
 B: And is that a slight shunning?
 A: No one is too clever, too much of a hero for you.
 B: A clever son of whom?
 A: Your coming throws all into confusion.
 B: Can the mouth utter such confusion?
- A: No one is so happy as to be safe from you.
 B: By whom would that be seen?
 A: You have no pity or mercy in your approach.
 B: What sort of thing is it that shows mercy?
 A: Your heart has not a scrap of pity.
 B: A scrap of pity from where?
 A: Truly, Death, you inspire fear.
 B: So his is the final word, is it?
 A: Your evil cannot be compared with anything else.
 B: What can be compared to it?
- A: And your cruelty is like a person who can't resist display.
 B: Display that bodes good?

These are but two stanzas arbitrarily chosen from a long series. The threnody is expressed in the form of a number of complaints addressed to death in the most direct manner and which express well the mortal predicament of man. There are no *madimikira* here. The responses are based on the principle of linking, usually a word in the second half of the line being chosen, and all interrogative. At times a different response is chosen, which does not involve repetition, as a variation. These *nhembo dzeparufu* and their responses would repay study as they express in a clear way the Shona philosophy of life and death.

Ndyaringo

The term *ndyaringo* is another large category of recitals. They are told mainly for entertainment and the examples which have been examined seem to deal with two sorts of material, social institu-

tions and events or happenings which are notable or extraordinary in some way or other. They are notable for their vivid language, their extravagant humour and exaggerated descriptions in which ideophones play an important part. *Ndyaringo* are often fitted into the various culturally determined divisions of life and its activities. One may deal with marriage negotiations in their sequence, another with an adventure explicitly segmented and described according to the times of the day. Some *ndyaringo* are satirical and most, like folk tales, convey a moral, distilled from the recital, which may be expressed in a proverb at the end. *Ndyaringo* make use of the usual poetic devices being distinguished from the other genres by subject matter, language and style.

As an example here are a few lines from a description of a visit of a marriage intermediary to arrange the bride-wealth.

34. *Kuchiri kuroora here?*

*Mune imwe nyikayo isingadomwe,
Nyikayo ina vambuya navatezvara vasinga-
durwe.*

*Mumwe muchinda ndokuti mwanasikana
wavo tsvaru.*

*Hapo pakundotunira mari yerusambo
zvino,*

5 *Samutume akashama mari yaperevedza
zviverengeto.*

*Musikana ndokubva angomira pagumi rine
tsere.*

*Vatezvara gumi repondo piku, zarura-
muromo.*

Pondo piku, chigaro chavatezvara:

Pondo piku, sunungura-homwe.

10 *Pondo shanu uripi, makandizwa ani?
Vambuya pondo shanu, mwana waroorwa,
Pamunun'una wavatezvara pondo mbiri,
mwana waroorwa.*

In *ndyaringo* a good deal of fun and entertainment is given both by the subject matter (description or social comment) and the racy style. This genre shares a common approach to events and institutions with the item songs of which examples were given earlier in this paper. *Ndyaringo* also exists in sung form as minstrels' songs.

The other types of poetry which have been distinguished need not detain us here. They are remarkable chiefly for their developed verse form which involves the co-operation of a leader and an interweaving chorus which can take all sorts

Does bride-wealth still exist?

In a certain country which shall be
nameless,

A country with a father and mother-in-law
whose names are not revealed.

A certain young man courted a sweetheart.
The time came to send the first instalment

And the suitor's agent was amazed to see
the money disappear in perquisites.

The girl herself forebore to take more than
eighteen pounds.

Her father took ten as a fee for opening his
mouth.

One for the chair on which he sat;
Another for opening his purse.

Five disappeared on the title, "Who told
you I had a daughter to wed?"

Then her mother helped herself to five —
the title, "My daughter is pledged."

And her father's brother a further two
since she was his daughter too.

of shapes and forms. Save for the *mhondoro* songs, which may contain statements of varying length in the allusive styles, these songs are not notable for content. There are, of course, many occasions in which *nheketerwa* are sung. The threshing songs of the *jakwara* have been mentioned. Beer drinks are also the occasion for songs of reproach or complaint. The children's verses which accompany memory games as well as others said or sung at other times have provided Kumbirai with a number of models which will be studied another time.

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Grateful thanks are expressed to the Rhodesia Literature Bureau and Longman Rhodesia for permission to quote from their publications *Madetembedzo Akare Namatsva* and *Mutinhimira Wedetembo*, as well as to the authors and collectors of the poems quoted, in examples 1, 2, 3, 4, 28, 30, M. Shamyarira, J. C. Kumbirai and C. R. Musiwa. Thanks are also expressed to H. Tracey for permission to quote his recording in example 5. The poems and fragments quoted as examples 6, 7, 8, 19, 27, 29, 31, 32, 33 and 34 were collected and arranged by Mr. A. Hodza, Shona Language Assistant, Department of African Languages, University of Rhodesia; they are quoted here by kind permission.

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1. *Madetembedzo Akare Namatsva*. Cape Town, Longmans, 1959; the traditional poems were collected by M. Shamyarira, the modern poems written by W. B. Chivaura and S. Mutswairo.
Mutinhimira Wedetembo, ed. C. R. Musiwa. Salisbury, Longmans in association with the Rhodesia Literature Bureau, n.d.; the traditional praise poems were collected by the editor, the modern poems written by W. B. Chivaura, P. Christie, P. T. Kazembe, J. C. Kumbirai, G. D. Mandishona, M. Manyika and E. M. Muzenze. *Mabvumira Enhetembo*. Gwelo, Mambo Press in association with the Rhodesia Literature Bureau, 1969; this is a much more substantial work than its two forerunners. Edited by the Shona Section of the Literature Bureau, it contains work

- by some twenty-two writers. More than half of the book, however, is by two outstanding poets, M. A. Hamutyinei and J. C. Kumbirai. It received an enthusiastic review in *Teacher in New Africa*, 1970, 7, (v), 27-8 under the heading 'Some Great Shona Poetry'. A further small publication to be mentioned is a collection of children's songs collected by S. M. Mutswairo, arranged, translated and annotated by G. Fortune and A. Hodza: *Ambuyamuderere* (The Praying Mantis), Cape Town, Oxford University Press, 1967.
2. The materials for this study are somewhat slender since it is only recently that the Shona have taken to giving poetry a written form:
 - (a) Occasional verse was published in *The Home Teacher*, a supplement of *The African Weekly*, from 1957 until about 1960 under the names of L. U. Chaparadza, L. C. Chidavaenzi, I. S. Chiketa, W. B. Chivaura, L. Mukonora, F. I. Munjoma, S. M. Mutswairo, M. Shamuyarira, E. J. Zvobgo.
 - (b) The writer has copies of unpublished verse by J. C. Kumbirai, E. Mudadirwa Muzere, S. M. Mutswairo and E. J. Zvobgo.
 - (c) Poetry journals published in Salisbury carry work in Shona, but it is often marred by misprints and faulty translations: *Two Tone*, a Quarterly of Rhodesian Poetry, published from P.O. Box 3598, Salisbury; *Rhodesian Poetry*, an occasional publication of the Salisbury Poetry Society, 22 Bradfield Road, Hillside, Salisbury; *Chirimo*, a thrice yearly review of Rhodesian and International Poetry, edited by C. J. E. and K. O. Style, Avondale, Salisbury; *Poetry in Rhodesia*, edited and annotated by D. E. Finn, College Press, Salisbury, 1968. In these publications the following, among others, have contributed: J. M. Chamunorwa, W. B. Chivaura, C. M. Gano, M. A. Hamutyinei, C. Kapfunde, N. Kashaya, J. C. Kumbirai, G. Mandishona, L. G. Masimbe, H. Memba, E. Musarira, C. Nhau, C. Nyamupanda, A. H. Pangana, H. H. Pote, E. Zvobgo.
 - (d) The three anthologies already mentioned and other journals which have printed poems in Shona very occasionally, such as *Moto* and *NADA*.
 - (e) CHITEPO, H. 1958. *Soko Risina Musoro*, translated and annotated by J. H. Carter. London, Oxford University Press. The present writer intends to review this modern poetry in a subsequent article.
 3. The past tense is used to describe the social rôle of Shona poetry because the description applies to an ever decreasing number of people. Social change, evident in urbanisation, education and religion, has divorced most people aged forty and under from their traditional literature in its fullness.
 4. GLEASON, H. A. 1965 *Linguistics and English Grammar*. New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, pp. 421-2.
 5. COPE, A. T. 1968 *Izibongo, Zulu Praise Poems*. Oxford, Clarendon Press, pp. 38-9.
 6. SCHAPER, I. 1965 *Praise Poems of Tswana Chiefs*. Oxford, Clarendon Press, p. 17.
 7. COPE, p. 38.
 8. *IBID.*, p. 45.