

Syntactic Parallelism and Meaning Relation in Tanure Ojaide's Poetry

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Abstract. This paper is an analysis of the use of syntactic parallelism as a meaning relation device in the poetry of Tanure Ojaide. Essentially, the major thrust of Ojaide's poetry is oil exploration and exploitation and its attendant environmental problems in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. Eight poems have been selected across four different collections of Ojaide's poetry for this study. The parallel structures inherent in the poems are identified and analysed following Allen's (1996) classification of syntactic parallelism to show how syntactic parallelism enables the poet to foreground and organize his eco-critical messages. The study also applies Halliday's (1961) "Scale and Category" description of elements of clause structure to handle the structure of the clauses. The findings revealed that the use of syntactic parallelism is functional in written poetry as it enables the poet to foreground the parallel similarity and dissimilarity in the meaning of words and structures which occupy variable positions in the poems. The study further revealed that syntactic parallelism acts as an organising principle in enhancing form and messages in the selected poems of Tanure Ojaide.

Keywords: Syntactic Parallelism, meaning relation, oil, exploitation, exploration, poetry, Niger Delta.

1. Introduction: Syntactic Parallelism

Parallelism can be defined simply as a linguistic device characterized by repetitive structures. According to Beaugrande and Dressler

(1981:49) "repeating a structure but filling it with new elements constitutes parallelism". Its study as a linguistic/literary trope has a long history of critical examination in different texts. The Bible and texts of different cultures and literatures have benefited from the concept of parallelism (Okunowo, 2012). According to Nwankwo (2012:29), researches have shown that parallelism relates to the poetic canon of different folk patterns. Thus, Ojaide (1996:4) observes that its use is common in oral literature in the expressive way of depicting additive thought and in conveying semantic re-iteration which in an oral performance, registers mnemonic impression. As Leech (1969:66) observes, the exact repetition of a sentence is not counted as parallelism. For an element to be parallelistic, there must be an element of identity and an element of contrast. It requires some variable features of the pattern – some contrasting elements which are parallel with respect to their positions in the text (Leech, 1969:66). And linguists study parallelism to show the relationship of equivalence between two or more linguistic elements that are singled out by the pattern as being parallel (Nwankwo, 2012:29).

Fabb (1997:137) defines it as "sameness' between two sections of a text". He goes further to identify two main types of parallelism: structural and semantic. Structural parallelism applies when two sections of a text are the same at the level of structure while semantic parallelism applies when two sections of a text can be interpreted to be the same at the components of their meanings. Structural parallelism can be at the syntactic,

morphological or phonological linguistic levels. Thus, Crystal (2004:466) defines it as “The use of paired sounds, words or construction”. Parallelism is an important functional device in literature in general and poetry in particular. It has perceptual prominence, and according to Short (1996:14), it invites the reader to “search for meaning connections between the parallel structures, in particular in terms of the parts which are varied”. Short (1996:15) further identifies it as a foregrounding device thus:

Parallelism has the power not just to foreground parts of a text for us, but also to make us look for parallel or contrastive meaning links between those parallel parts. This may well involve us in construing new aspects of meaning for the words concerned, or in searching among the possible connotations that a word might have for the one that is most appropriate in the particular structure.

Furthermore, parallelism has an organizing principle, a means by which the text takes form (Fabb, 1997:144). In the words of Ojaide (1996:25), “it helps to impose a formal order on the poems which could be seen at first sight as “free verse”. Leech (1969:67) also observes that patterned repetition is “connected with rhetorical emphasis and memorability.” It is an expressive way of depicting additive thoughts rather than subordinate ones. It conveys semantic re-iteration which registers mnemonic impression (Ojaide, 1996:43). Ojaide further summarises the functions of parallelism in poetry thus: “Grammatical parallelism is highly functional in written poetry. It evokes a monotonous rhythmic quality which is aesthetically pleasing when poems are read aloud”.

2. A Brief Review of Previous Literature

Tanure Ojaide, one of the leading Nigerian third generation poets, is a significant voice in the discussions of modern Nigerian poetry and African poetry at large. What can be regarded as a modern poetic engagement in Nigeria started with poets like Wole Soyinka, Christopher Okigbo, J.P Clark, Kalu Uka, Titus Chukuemeka Nwosu, among others. The next phase, to which Ojaide belongs, started in the late 1970s up to early 1980s when the fortunes of Nigeria as a

nation began to decline with serious socio-political and economic crises. At this stage, the poets see it as their responsibility to document, expose, criticise and satirise the maladministration and injustices plaguing every facet of Nigeria as a nation. As Osundare (1996) puts it, “The thematic preoccupation remains the desperate situation of Africa, the stylistic hallmarks are clarity and directness of expression, formal experimentation and a deliberate incorporation of African oral literary modes” (as cited in Ushie, 2005:20).

Poets of this generation make “a recourse to the use of plain prosaic language as a natural discourse of poetic composition” (Ogede, 1996:63) and in the words of Ojaide, “there is a new discursive unpretentiously clear voice with almost the syntax of prose” (Ojaide, 1996:84). One of the leading figures of this generation of poets is Niyi Osundare whose poems have received a lot of critical attention from the perspectives of literary and linguistic/stylistic studies. Also prominent, is Tanure Ojaide. Though he has equally received quite a lot of critical attentions, most of them are in the directions of literary criticism. However, most of his critics make a passing comment on the language of Tanure Ojaide only very few have been able to pay the deserved critical attention to the language of his poetry.

Among the critical and acerbic responses to Ojaide’s poetry, is Ogede’s (1996) “Poetry as Repression in Contemporary Nigeria”. In a most sweeping statement, the paper avers that poets of Ojaide’s generation are:

...compelled by the need to sound factual and down-to-earth in re-creating the real mood of the down-trodden peoples born of their deprived status, the majority of the poets have been unable to resist the temptation of making a recourse to the use of plain prosaic language as a natural discourse of poetic composition (Ogede,1996:63)

To him, “the interplay of adequate language in the exploration of the writer’s dream” is a major factor in the determination of organically vibrant poetry. In particular, he states that Ojaide’s poetry lacks the sense of the paced cadence, musical rhythm, and profound structural and

technical terseness of Osundare or Osofisan (1996:65); and that Ojaide could make a good poet but he has to banish entirely his hubris – the tendency for self-glorification (1996:67). Continuing in this direction, Ogede states that the fact that Ojaide’s verses occasionally manage to rise above the level of prosaic banality, merely goes to state the fact that he has not fully mature as a poet. He believes that good poetry uses language with concision and poetic succinctness which has to do with the effective employment of syntax so that each poetic line is not stilted but free enough for music, rhythm, verbal echo and heightened imagery. Quoting Nwoga (1967), he calls Ojaide poems “Versified intelligibilities” (1996:30) which cannot “make exciting poetry” and, quoting Soyinka, he calls poets of Ojaide’s generation “the poetics of limited sensibilities” (1996:71).

No criticisms of a writer and his works can be more acidic than the above. However, such vituperations are made without a single analysis of a line or a verse of Ojaide’s poetry. Though Ogede’s discourse is linguistically oriented, it appears to be based on intuition and over-generalization as readers are not presented with any linguistic analysis to see how Ojaide’s poetry “lacks the sense of paced cadence” and rhythm or how banal they are. On the question of being prosaic, this appears to be a hallmark of the alter-native tradition of Nigerian poets of this generation as they eschew the linguistic style of the euromodernist poets like Soyinka, Okigbo, Clark and so on.

Furthermore, Eka (2002) studies Ojaide’s *Fate of Vultures and Other Poems* as a collection that employs lexical repetition for reinforcement of the matter being communicated while Adagbonyin (2002) examines the rhetorical effects of pronominal forms in Ojaide’s *Fate of Vultures*. Also, Ibhawagbele (2012) discusses the use of pronouns as signals of authority, opposition and solidarity in Tanure Ojaide’s *Fate of Vultures*. Ativie (2007) studies Ojaide’s *Delta Blues* from the perspective of pronominal forms as cohesive device in Ojaide’s *Delta Blues* while Ativie (2010) examines *When It No Longer Matters Where You Live* from a sociolinguistic perspective. However, from the review above, it seems that not much has been done from the perspective of syntactic

parallelism in Ojaide’s poetry. Therefore, this study will reveal how Ojaide communicates his messages through the use of parallelism.

3. Procedure for Data Analysis

Our analysis is based on Allen’s (1996) classification of variants of syntactic parallelisms. Allen (1996:409) classifies structural parallelism into the following types:

- **Synonymous Parallelism:** This is the most frequent type on which there is a slight variation in the structures concerned. It may involve just the substitution of a single word in the second structure.
- **Antithetic Parallelism:** In this type, the second line contrasts or denies the first
- **Constructive Parallelism:** In this case the second line or several other lines complete the first.
- **Climactic Parallelism:** This is a sort of repetition where the first line is itself incomplete and the second line takes a word from it and completes it.

Prominent types from the above classification are identified and analysed to show how they express the poet’s messages and organise his thoughts and the structure of the selected poems. Furthermore Halliday’s 1961 description of the elements of English clause structure provides insights for the clause structural analysis. According to Halliday (1961:256-257), four elements are needed in the statement of English clause structure and these are subject, predicator, complement and adjunct and they yield for distinct symbols of S, P, C, A. All English clauses can be stated as a combination of the four in different places. The analysis is presented below.

4. Data Analysis

Syntactic parallelism is a major meaning relation device in “Without the tree” (*Tales of the Harmattan*, 2007:38). In this poem, Ojaide uses constructive parallelism to communicate his thoughts, visions and concerns for humanity, and also as an organising principle. Through this, he achieves structural identity between sections of the text. Stanzas three to six illustrate this:

A
|| without the creeks |

S A P C
| the rains | no longer | sate | my voracious appetite ||

A
|| without the currents |

S A P C A
|| the flying fish | no longer | makes | sorties | into my soup pot |

A
|| without the sun (now fumigated) |

S A P A A
| the sunbird | no longer | plays | patiently | with me ||

A
|| without the shrubs (already devoured by fire) |

S A P A C
| the dew | no longer | delivers | to me | the message of dawn ||

As indicated above, each stanza constitutes one clause and the second line completes the first as a norm in constructive parallelism. The parallel structure of this poem can be better appreciated when presented in a single line thus:

A₁ S A₂ P A₃ A₄
|| without the trees | the wind | no longer | gestures | playfully | to me ||

A₁ S A₂ P C A₃
|| without the currents | the flying fish | no longer | makes | sorties | into my soup pot ||

A₁ S A₂ P A₃ A₄
|| without the sun (now fumigated) || the sunbird | no longer | plays | patiently | with me ||

A₁ S A₂ P A₃
|| without the shrubs (already devoured by fire) | the dew | no longer | delivers | to me |

C
the message of dawn ||

The above four stanzas of the poem are made up of two lines each, and they are parallel (with minor exception). Stanzas three and five have the clause pattern A₁ S A P A₂ A₃, while stanzas four and six have the same clause pattern of A₁ S A₂ P C A₃. They have the same group and word classes in the same order. The introductory adjuncts in the four clauses are realised by a prepositional group made up of the preposition *without* and its qualifier, a nominal group, made up of the definite article, *the*, and a noun. The subjects of the four clauses are realised by nominal groups while the predicator elements are realised by the present tense form of the verb. However, the negative adverbial element, *no longer*, intervenes between the subject and the predicator in the four clauses. The most noticeable syntactic differences are in stanza four and six. While stanza four has a complement followed by a final adjunct, stanza six has an adjunct followed by a final complement.

To enhance the effectiveness of this parallel structure in portraying the message of the poem, the poet repeats the same synonymous thought pattern throughout the poem. The repetition of the linguistic

structures *without, the* and *no longer* creates a framework that gives cohesion to the poem and provides a strong structure surrounding it. Such parallel structure foregrounds the relations of meaning of words and groups which occupy variable positions of the qualifier to the prepositional group functioning as introductory Adjunct. Thus, it foregrounds the relation of meaning among the words *trees, evergreens, creeks, currents, sun, shrubs, forests, farms, and stars*. The relation of meanings foregrounded here is that of similarity in the fate of these ecological features in the wanton destruction of the ecosystem of the Niger Delta environment. In a similar manner, the prepositional group which functions as introductory adjunct, and which occupies the first line of each stanza is set on a parallel structure of similarity to foreground the theme of destruction of the ecosystem while the adverbial, *no longer*, underscores the theme of pain and disapproval which the poet thinks all normal human beings should understand. The main structural pattern of A₁ S A₂ P with a slight variation in the two syntactic positions that follow the P is sustained throughout the poem to achieve unity of form and message.

“Ughelli” (*Labyrinths*, 1986:74) as the name implies, is the name of one the major towns in that used to host Shell, one of the major oil companies that operates in the Niger Delta region. In this poem, the title stands for all oil producing towns that have been deprived and denied of the benefits of the produce from its soil. The entire poem exhibits constructive parallelism. Stanza one has the dominant parallel structure of a predicator followed by two complements and an adjunct:

|| To see | her | dry-skinned || when her oil rejuvenates hags || P C C A
 || to leave | her | in darkness | when her fuel lights the universe || P C A A
 || to starve | her | despite all her produce || P C A
 || to let | her | dehydrate | before the wells bored into her heart || P C C A
 || to have | her | naked | despite her innate industry || P C C A
 || to keep | her | without roads | when her sweat tars the outside world || P C A A
 || to make | her | homeless | when her idle neighbours inhabit skyscrapers || P C C A
 || to see | her | lonely | when sterile ones use her offspring as servants || P C C A
 || to regard | the artisan | as a non-person | when drones celebrate with her sweat, || P C A A

Out of the nine lines, five has the clause structural pattern of P C C A; two has PCAA, one PCA and one PCAA. The dominant structural pattern which is common to all of them is the repetition of the *to*-infinitive and the complement *her* to realise the clause structural of P C at beginning of each line. This parallel structural pattern underscores not only the meaning relation and structural unity of the poem, but also its semantic unity of deprivation and exploitation of the Niger Delta people. The exponents of the structural elements which vary can be linked synonymically in this poem. The lexical verbs *see, leave, starve, let, keep, make, and regard* are all preceded by *to*. They have the pronoun *her* as reference to Niger Delta as complement. The lexical items *dry-skinned, darkness, naked, homeless, and lonely*, which occupy the complement positions, are all semantically linked in the context of the Niger Delta environment. They are linked by the themes of environmental deprivation, exploitation, denial, and subjugation. Equally, the rank-shifted clauses which are very

prominent in this poem are a means of foregrounding the inherent parallel structure of the poem. Above all, the repetition of the structural words *to* and *her* in the same syntactic slot in stanza one, and *for* and *the* in stanza two helps the poet to achieve uniformity of the poem’s parallel structures.

Furthermore, the meaning relation of contrast expressed in each line of the first stanza as seen above is enhanced by the parallel structure. Thus, *dry-skinned* and *rejuvenates*, *darkness* and *lights*, *starve* and *produce*, *dehydrate* and *wells*, *naked* and *innate industry*, *without roads* and *tars the outside world*, *homeless* and *skyscrapers*, *lonely* and *offspring*, *artisan* and *drones* and in the second stanza two, *palms’s oil* and *fig tree’s*, and *earn so much* and *denied all* are instances of “creative oppositions” (Jefferies, 2010) used to communicate the contrast between the Niger Delta region and the outside who enjoy the oil produce of the region. They also help to foreground the themes of deprivation, denial and injustice.

contextual meaning relation of synonym between elements that occupy similar slots in the clauses. *Smooth body* and *anthills* are contextual synonyms in terms of the destroyed features of the Niger Delta environment. The predicators, *lacerated* and *sank*, have negative semantic implications. Thus, they can be said to be contextual synonyms. The A₁ in each clause also shows the extent to which the Niger Delta environment and its people have been decimated. Thus, *beyond recognition* and *into oblivion* are contextual synonyms. Also, A₂ in each stanza provides agents that are responsible for these destructions: *intruders* and *gas flares and blow outs*. It should be noted that in the environmental context of this poem, *the intruders* (the multinational oil companies and government agents) are responsible for the *gas flares and blow outs*.

The second clause in each stanza also presents what has happened to the human body in the Niger Delta region thus:

S P A
 || The skin | peels | away ||
 S C
 || The body | damned crust ||

With a slight variation of A and C in the two clauses and the omission of the predicator in the second clause, both clauses are parallel in structure and they project the effects of the oil blow outs on the people of the Niger Delta region. This use of parallelism helps to foreground the effect of environment destruction on the Niger Delta people and the environment.

Also, parallelism is used to present what has happened to the fish population of the streams and rivers of the Niger Delta region in stanza ten:

S P C
 || The catfish | wears | no whiskers ||

 S P C
 || the mudfish | misses | its phallic heads ||

Both clauses have a parallel structure of SPC which helps to highlight the effect of gas flares and blow outs on the aquatic population of the region. This environmental degradation has also led to hunger and famine in the land and the people now suffer from kwashiorkor and abnormal body growth as the poet presents through parallelism in stanza fourteen:

S C
 || The nose | a mere facial protrusion ||
 S C
 || the tongue | a labial outgrowth ||

In the two clauses above, one can infer the omission of the predicator in each case as a mark of economy of words as it is the norm in the poetic genre. *The nose* has become a mere *protrusion* as it cannot breathe natural air as a result of poisoning from oil flares and blow out, while *the tongue* has lost its tastes buds from the perennial hunger from lack of food. Thus, the parallel structure is an effective communicative strategy in expressing the meaning relation in this poem.

The poet also uses constructive parallelisms to rhetorically question the environmental destruction and degradation “So many questions” (*Song of Myself*, 2015 134-135). In doing this, the poet holds a similar syntactic pattern constant. Through this, the poet questions rhetorically what becomes the fate of the Niger Delta region after the birds, animals, fishes and the insect population have been decimated by constant flares and blow out. In this sense, stanzas two, three, four and five can be seen as parallel structures, while stanzas six and seven are also parallel. Apart of this, each stanza is organised to achieve its internal parallel structure. This can be seen in stanzas three and five below:

Stanza three A S P A
 || After | the woodpecker | slips | underground,

S P A
 || the hyrax | fallen still | from flares ||

α S P
 and || all the voices of the land | muffled, ||

A P- S -P C A
 || how | can | there | be | Rex Lawson | again

Stanza five

A S P
 || After | the earthworm | has been poisoned |
 A
 with seepage and percolation of wastes, ||

A S P
 || after | the insect population || has been decimated, ||
 S P C A
 || who | can be | a maestro | without natural mentors ||

Stanza three analysed above is a complex sentence with the first three lines constituting three dependent clauses. These dependent clauses are parallel in structure with the clause pattern of SPA constant for the first two clauses and SP for the third clause. The initial adjunct, *After*, in the first clause can be said to be ellipted in the other two clauses. From the analysis, one can infer a synonymous sense relation of destroyed aspect of the environment with respect to the nominal groups that occupy the S position in the three clauses. The items that occupy the P position in the three clauses also have negative connotation with respect to the subject and context of the poem. The last line of this stanza is the interrogative alpha clause. As the norm is in constructive parallelism, it completes the previous lines.

Stanza five is also a complex sentence with two beta clauses and one alpha clause. These two clauses are introduced by the subordinate conjunction, *after*, followed by the subject. The first clause has ASPA structure while the second has ASP pattern. The /S/ in both is synonyms in terms of aspects of the environment that has been destroyed. In the predicator position for both clauses, the auxiliary verb *has been* is repeated in both, this is followed by the lexical verbs. Thus, we can infer a meaning relation of synonymy between *poisoned* and *decimated* as used in the two clauses respectively.

Apart from the above and the constant listing of nouns in this poem as aspect of parallelism to achieve rhythmic effect, Ojaide also uses synonymous parallelism to bemoan environmental degradation in the first three lines of stanza eight:

S P A
 || Who | can sing | without models of the forests? ||
 S P C
 | Who | can lisp | God's wild children's voices |
 A
 amidst flares, wheezes, and hisses? ||

The above is an analysis of two alpha clauses in interrogative mood. The first has a structural pattern of SPA while the second has SPCA. In the S position both, the pronoun *Who* is repeated. In the predicator position, the modal auxiliary *can* is also repeated followed by the lexical verbs *sing* and *lisp* respectively. Apart from being similar in meaning, these two verbs are synonyms. One can also infer a meaning relation between the A in the first clause and the C in the second clause. This can be seen in the meaning relation between *forests* and *wild* in both cases. Thus, there is a meaning relation between *models of the*

forests and *God's wild children's voices* to mean natural sources of music/songs of the Niger Delta region.

“In the Omoja River” (*Song of Myself*, 2015:117) Ojaide presents the theme of environmental pollution of the waters of the Niger Delta and the wanton destruction of its forest through the use of syntactic parallelism. In the first three stanzas, the poet nostalgically recalls the days of yore when they used to *wash body and tools* in the river and *listened to murmuring water before / taking tracks into the forest to pick fruits*. Those were the days before the conglomeration of oil companies in connivance with the powers of the state invaded and destroyed the oil rich region. In stanzas four five and six, Ojaide presents and foregrounds this environmental pollution through synonymous parallelism thus:

α S P C A

|| But | they | brought | affliction | to the cheerful river; ||

S P C A

|| They | brought | flames of fear | to the marvelous forest: ||

S P C A

|| they | pissed and pissed | barrels of arsenic | into the current ||

β S P A C

until || it | is | no longer | the ageless river sung but a cesspool; ||

S P C A

|| they | stripped and stripped | the forest | naked of its ever-

β S P A C

green suit || until || it | is | no more | a forest but a sand-field. ||

In the above analysis, the first two clauses have the same structure of SPCA to realise synonymous parallelism. The S and P is a repetition of the same element in each clause. The C and A elements in each clause have contextual meaning relation of synonymy. *Affliction* and *flames of fear* are related contextually, while elements at A are also related as features of the environment that are polluted and destroyed. The next two stanzas are also parallel in structure. Each is made up of two clauses with SPCA β SPAC respectively. A pairing of the two clauses reveals the meaning relation between the constituents of the clause elements. *Pissed and pissed* and *stripped and stripped* underscores the incessant pollution of the waters and deforestation respectively. Of interest too are the elements at C in the second clause of the two stanzas. Apart from the meaning relation between the two, each presents two nominal groups in contrast to further foreground the theme of the poem. Thus, *the ageless river* contrasts with *a cesspool* as a result of pollution while *the forest* has become *a sand-field* due to the effect of deforestation in the process of oil exploration. In the last stanza of the poem, Ojaide wishes those responsible for this acts the worst evil on earth through the use of parallelism thus:

S P C

||You || can imagine || [[what we wish despoilers of the land –]] ||

C

||[[what we wish the world's criminals and transgressors!]] ||

In the above, the C elements in the two clauses are rank-shifted noun clauses with the S and P; and in the second clause, the S and P are ellipted. *Despoilers of the land* and *the world's criminals and transgressors* are contextual synonyms and they are in the context of this poem. They are the destroyers of the Niger Delta and the poet wishes them the worst punishment on earth.

In “Idjereh” (*In the Kingdom of Songs*, 2002:77-78) Ojaide uses the categories of synonymous and constructive parallelisms to project his messages. He uses synonymous parallelism to project the

insensitively and callousness of the government on the plight of the Niger Delta people. This is seen from line eleven to thirteen:

*The mass graved and palpitating patients needed balm
but none from Abuja to treat wailing families,
none from the state coven to soothe the smarting ones.*

The above extract is a compound sentence made up of three alpha clauses. The second and third clauses which project the insensitively of the government are parallel in structure to foreground the irresponsiveness of the government:

S	A ₁	A ₂	C
None from Abuja to treat / wailing families			
S	A ₁	A ₂	C
None from the state coven to soothe the smarting ones			

The above analysis is an instance of syntactic synonymous parallelism. The two clauses have a similar clause structure of SAAC as we can infer the deletion of *is* as the predicator coming after the subject. The A₁ in both clauses have contextual synonyms meaning relation while A₂ in both clauses have a similar meaning relation of “to calm”. *Wailing families* and *smarting ones* which are complements in both clauses refer to the same entity: the maligned Niger Delta indigenes. This parallel structure helps to emphasise and foreground the carelessness insensitivity of the Nigerian government to the plight of the Niger Delta indigenes whose land produces the wealth of the nation.

From lines 30 to 33, Ojaide also uses constructive parallelism to protest, identify and describe the real saboteurs against the accusation of the government that the Niger Delta indigenes are saboteurs:

S	P	C
They are saboteurs [[who in the cabinet grow fat in the neck rather than maintain multiple refineries to fuel cars]]		
S	P	C
They are saboteurs [all far inland in the cabal of looters] not [[wretches disabled by government and multinational guns]]		

The clauses analysed above have SPC structure. The S, P and C are filled with the same linguistic elements, but the C is post modified to really identify and describe the real saboteurs. This repetition creates rhythm and enhances memorability of who the real saboteurs are. Thus, the structure projects the meaning that the cabinet members in Abuja who loot the national treasury instead of building industries are the real saboteurs, not the disabled Niger Delta indigenes.

Ojaide also uses the category of constructive parallelism in which the second line completes the first to convey his messages in each stanza of “When Warrior Currents Assault the Boat” (*In the Kingdom of Songs*, 2002:3). This makes the poem to have a parallel stanzaic pattern. It is a poem of nine stanzas which is divided into two sections in terms of the parallel pattern it exhibits. To enhance this parallelism, stanzas one to four have similar clause structural pattern, while the adverb *when* is repeated in initial position except in stanza three. This parallel structure is analysed below:

A			
When warrior currents assault the boat in deep waters			
S	P	A	A
mere paddles give way to oars to stay on course			

A

|| when ethnic friction fractures the community, |
 S P C A
 the nationalist | builds | bridges | against bloodletting |

A

|| where arson taunts homes with fatalities, |
 S P A A
 the fire brigade | scrambles | in | to douse flames ||

A

|| when patients are stricken with nerve-racking pain, |
 S P C A
 the doctor | fortifies | the drugs | with soothing hands ||

As seen above, each stanza has the following clause structure:

ASPAA stanza 1
 ASPCA stanza 2
 ASPAA stanza 3
 ASPCA stanza 4

The initial adverbial clause in each stanza states the restiveness in the Niger Delta region, while the rest of the clause states the need for conflict resolution. For instance, in stanza two, the poet tells us that when there is ethnic friction, there is the need to make peace: *build bridges against bloodletting*.

As with the first four stanzas of the poem, the poet also uses constructive parallelism, in which, case the second line of each stanza completes the first in stanzas five to nine. However, the parallel structural pattern varies from that of the first four stanzas as the analysis below shows:

 S P C
 || It | 's | the errant turns of youths |
 C
 that call for the elder's admonishing finger |
 S P C
 || it | 's | the flourishing of bees |

 C
 that brings the honey-gatherer to work ||
 S P C
 || it | 's | dark's vast cache of fear |
 C
 that calls for a lamp-lit presence ||
 S P C
 || it | 's | unprovoked harassment of the helpless |
 C
 that strengthens the resolves of the weak ||
 S P A
 || it | 's | to stop the oppression of silence |
 C
 that the singer's voice breaks out with songs ||

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