



Eros Love as Depicted in B. Mavuso's Poem 'Woza Mvula Yothando' in Izimbali ZeMfolozi

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Abstract

This article is an examination of the depiction of Eros love in B. Mavuso's poem 'Woza mvula Yothando' that is found in the volume Izimbali Zemfolozi. It will define the concepts of love and Eros love, also mentioning other types of love, as part of the introductory section. The choice of the words used by the poet to emphasise the concept of Eros love will be touched on in the discussion. The promising of marriage, as a way of showing the poet's commitment to the love relationship he is proposing, will be commented on. The subtitles of the paper are introduction, analysis, and conclusion.

Keywords: *Eros Love; Marriage; B. Mavuso; Woza Mvula Yothando; Izimbali Zemfolozi*

Introduction

While B. Mavuso presents the theme of Eros love in his poetry, so far very little attempt has been made in analysing the poetry, addressing this aspect. Zwane (2021), on whose master's study this article is based, is the only scholar who has done so. This discourse then explores Mavuso's depiction of Eros love in his poem. To understand Eros love, it is imperative to define love first, as it is attempted below.

Multiple attempts have been made to define the concept of love. One of the scholars who played a role in doing so is Sternberg (1986) who came up with a theory called Triangular Theory of Love. According to this theory, love has three components, namely, intimacy, passion, and decision/commitment. In the words of Sternberg (1986: 119):

The intimacy component refers to feelings of closeness, connectedness and bondness in loving relationships ... the passion component refers to the drives that lead to romance, physical attraction, sexual consummation and related phenomena in loving relationships. Then, the decision or commitment component refers to, in short term, the decision that one loves someone else, and in a long term, the commitment to maintain that love.

Again, Ali (2013: 05) states that love is a virtue presenting all human kindness, compassion, and affection. He further expresses that this phenomenon may describe compassionate and affectionate actions towards other humans, oneself, or animals. In English, love refers to a variety of feelings, states, and attitudes, ranging from pleasure to interpersonal attractions. Treger *et al.* (2013: 01) state that love is a universal human experience. It is viewed as a basic human emotion that may manifest itself in a variety of forms and lead to a variety of cognitive-affective responses and behaviours. Treger *et al.* (*Op cit.*) outline that looking at the taxonomy supported by Sternberg of the three components of love, “specific combinations of these building blocks, - which are passion, intimacy, and commitment - can form distinct love types. For instance, love that lacks passion and intimacy but has commitment is labelled as empty love”. The above statement suggests that love should have all the three components that are explained by Sternberg (1986), for it to be considered complete. As much as love is important in human nature, artists also portray that importance in their works. It is portrayed in different literary genres that may be poetry, novels, drama, or even short stories. In literary works, it is often portrayed as theme.

Cartwright (2019: 01) states that Eros was the Greek god of love full of passion and physical desire. He further explains that without warning, Eros selects his targets and forcefully strikes at their hearts, bringing confusion and irrepressible feelings. Erotic love was named after this god of love because of the similarities it has with him, which are passion and physical attraction.

There are scholars such as Flecher and Kerr (2012); Kanamasa *et al.* (2004); Lee (1973); and Levine *et al.* (2006) in whose explanations there are similarities of Eros love. These similarities are that this kind of love is that of physical attraction, sexual desire, and passionate love. According to Mills (2012: 04), Eros love is sexual love, physical love, married love, and mutual desire between a man and a woman. People whose predominant love style is Eros, are self-confident in love. Physical beauty is important to them. They are generally content with their work and love. They are conscious and aware of their preferred ‘type’ in a love relationship. In other words, people who are driven by Eros love can easily describe their preferred type in terms of physical appearance. For instance, they can easily tell that they want a short girl with light complexion. Some would say that that is immature love style which is caught up in passion and lusty aspects of their relationship. Other types of love are agape, phileo and storge, which are not attended to in this discourse.

Avinash *et al.* (2015: 84) state that Eros love can be described as passionate love. This style involves powerful attractions to the partner, both physically and emotionally. These scholars further state as follows:

And erotic lover is described as one who is open and honest and seeks a deep, pervasive rapport with the partner. Individuals with an Eros attitude report love as intense passion towards another and believe that love is physically centred, but, accompanied with a sense of understanding the other and an almost immediate attraction towards the other.

(*Ibid.*)

The above explanation suggests that physical appearance is the most important characteristic if a person is an erotic lover. So, erotic lovers easily fall in love, they can do so from just seeing the person for the first time, without deeply understanding him or her. Avinash *et al.* (*Op cit.*) say that erotic love is often quick to ignite and quick to flicker out and infrequently turns into a deep lasting relationship. One could argue that people who fall in love at first sight and run into getting married are the ones driven by Eros love. Hence, most of them also get divorced fast. Tung (2007: 08) states that Eros is a style of love that begins with a strong physical attraction, and it can be known as love at first sight. He further explains that erotic lovers enjoy intense emotions and desire exclusivity with their partners.

Raffagnino and Puddu (2018: 309) argue that Eros love involves a typical person with passionate and romantic attitudes towards love. This love is based on feelings of passion as well as physical and

emotional attraction towards a partner. One could argue that this love style is the one driving people into getting married. It is not the love that can be shared between a brother and a sister or close relatives, but a woman and man. It is the love that can make unrelated people to relate. In research that was conducted by Raffagnino and Puddu (*Op cit.*), it is outlined that the Eros love style has proven its direct associations with specific dimensions. These dimensions include attachment, security, the desire for intimate closeness to the partner, positive strategies, conflict resolution and many more. Hamesath (2016: 34) says that Eros love involves a strong physical attraction, emotional intensity, and a preferred physical appearance.

Olivier (2011) conducted research in which he wanted to look at the relationship between Eros and life. From his findings, Olivier (2011: 45) highlights that the researcher Freud once indicated that Eros is genital love. He goes on to say that one cannot afford to be indifferent to the close blending of Eros, in a more inclusive sense, with all life forms. He further states that if such indifference had to occur in practice, the condition of enduring 'genital love' between human (and other) individuals would be fundamentally cast in jeopardy. Given one priority attributed by Freud to 'genital love', one must agree that human life could not go on existing without this form of love. In other words, when looking at Eros love through the lenses of Freud, one could argue that this form of love promotes reproduction by humans. Reproduction is one of the important processes in human life that ensures the production of offspring and thus increases the number of people. Without human reproduction, no people would be born. Therefore, if Eros love is as explained by Freud, then this love is important.

Analysis

When poets write about this form of love, they talk about love between love partners. It can be married people or those who are involved in a passionate love relationship. In the volume titled *Izimbali Zemfolozi*, Mavuso has a poem that can be classified as expressing erotic love. The poem is titled 'Woza Mvula Yothando' (Mavuso 2015: 25), which is about love. The poet chooses to use personification by talking to love directly as a means of proposing a love relationship. He also carefully chooses to refer to love as the rain of love instead of just love, while he is talking to it. In this poem, rain is used as a symbol to highlight the strong love that the poet is inviting. The choice may have been motivated by the fact that rain is often heavy and strong. When it happens that, while rain is pouring, one is walking outside, they become wet. Therefore, the poet is asking for satisfying love. He does not only ask for love but also communicates his intentions, which are to get love and be married. This is evident in the line: *Ngikushela ungiqome sishade* (I shall propose to you, you will agree, and we get married). In these three words, the poet is saying that he will propose love to the prospective suiter, who will accept, and they will get married. This proves that clear intentions are communicated.

Although the poem does not refer to people who are already in love, the poet's choice of words is evidence that it is promoting erotic love. For instance, the last stanza of the poem is as follows:

Woza, woza, woza mvula yothando,

Ngikwange ngiqabule, kusuke lokho!

Akekho namunye ozosibona siwotawotana.

(Come, come, come rain of love,

So that I hug and kiss you, and that begins!

No one shall see us cuddling.)

(Mavuso, 2015: 25)

Reading the above stanza makes it clear that the poet aims for love that fulfils sexual desires. He is talking about hugging and kissing that may lead to sexual intercourse. Among the love types, this is erotic love. Although he does not clearly specify that after kissing, they will engage in sexual intercourse, by saying “*Kusuke lokho!*” (And that begins), the poet implies that the kiss will be leading to sexual engagement and satisfaction. The use of the word ‘*lokho*’, whose English equivalent is ‘that’, is referring to sexual engagement in this context. The poet carefully chooses to use the demonstrative pronoun ‘*lokho*’ (that) to represent a noun instead of using the actual noun. The pronoun ‘*lokho*’ can be used to represent nouns of class 15 or 17, which can also be used as (infinitive) verbs in some instances. In this case, the pronoun is used to represent sexual engagement.

The next line talks about ‘*ukuwotawotana*’, which is cuddling, an act that also leads to sexual engagement. The poet employs euphemism in these lines. This is his poetic and linguistic way of communicating ideas that are hush in a subtle manner. The fifth and last stanza conveys a similar idea. In this stanza, the poet says:

Woza mvula yothando,
Kunyamalale isomiso elawini lami,
Ngibanjwe ngezandla ezithambile nami.

(Come rain of love,
Let drought disappear from my room,
I too be held with soft hands.)

(Mavuso, 2015: 25)

In this stanza, the poet uses drought as a symbol representing lack of sexual engagement. He chooses to use the word ‘drought’ because, in simple terms, drought is generally the shortage or lack of water for a prolonged period. In other words, the poet is implying that it has been long since he was with a lover. Therefore, it is as if his room is filled with drought. The usage of drought when referring to lack of sexual intercourse is popular amongst the youth nowadays. Therefore, it can also be said that the poet is trying to appeal or arouse the attention of the youth and to make this poem more interesting and appealing to them as well. In this stanza, the poet uses symbols as a polite way of addressing situation that are less polite. The use of symbols is common in isiZulu poems; it is a way to show respect.

As stated earlier, Eros love may lead people to marriage. With that being said, the poet communicates his intention as wanting to get married. This is stated in the fourth stanza as follows:

Woza mvula yothando,
Ngikushela ungiqome sishade.
Woza mvula yothando.

(Come rain of love,
I shall propose to you, you will accept, and we get married,
Come rain of love.)

(Mavuso, 2015: 25)

In the above stanza, the poet does not only propose love but is also communicating his intention, which is to get married. People cannot shy away from the fact that sometimes, when men propose love, they attract ladies by making promises of the wedlock, even when there is no commitment to fulfil the promise. This links up with the general isiZulu saying that *Intombi ishelwa ngamanga* (a girl is proposed with lies). The poet goes on about this in a romantic manner. He, instead of promising this lady all the glamorous things, chooses to promise her marriage. This is because marriage is valued by most ladies, and, again, because girls grow up being told that the end goal of their lives is to get married and connect two unrelated families. As much as society is trying to preach women empowerment as a way of trying to teach or motivate girls to be independent, there are still those ladies who value marriage.

To ensure that the audience is aware that the theme of this poem is love, the poet uses a refrain. A refrain is explained by Abrams (1999: 263) as a line, or a part of a line, or a group of lines, which is repeated during a poem. He further states that, sometimes, the repetition slightly changes. In the above poem, the poet uses the title; 'Woza Mvula Yothando' as its refrain, at the beginning of each stanza. The reason for doing so could be trying to be clear and specific about the theme of the poem, as the repeated use of the word 'Yothando' (Of love) gives an indication that the poem is about love. By choosing to employ refrain in his poem, the poet is ensuring that the theme is emphasized. He could have chosen to make any line a refrain, but he chooses to use the title, which clearly shows what the theme of the poem is. In other words, this refrain is emphasizing the theme of love that is being communicated in this poem. Reading this poem becomes musical and, to the hopelessly romantic people, it is romantic.

Conclusion

This article discussed Eros love as portrayed in B. Mavuso's poem 'Woza Mvula Yothando' in *Izimbali Zemfoloji*. Before discussing Eros love, the concept of 'love' was defined and discussed. Eros love was then explored and explained as it is portrayed in Mavuso's poem. It was determined in the article that Eros love is one of the most important love types as it contributes and leads to human reproduction. It was explained that this love type is associated with companionship and intimacy, it is a love type where people become sexually attracted to each other. The article also highlighted that poets discuss this love type by explaining feelings of people who are romantically engaged or people who want to be in a sexual relationship.

Mavuso's employment of personification, refrain, and symbolism in the poem, emphasises the theme of love and vivifies the meaning of the poem to the reader.

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