Original Research Article

A Stylistic Analysis of Elesin's "*Not – I – Bird*" Song in Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman*

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Abstract: This paper explicates the stylistic features in Elesin's *"Not – I bird"* *chant* in Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman*. The text of this song was examined by analysing its graphological, lexical, grammatical and phonological features through the theoretical underpinning of Halliday and Hassan's (1976) *Cohesion* and Halliday's (1978) *Systemic Grammar.* The field, mode and tenor of discourse of the chant were examined, Besides, the cohesive patterns, foregrounding, and syntactic structure of this song were also studied. It was discovered that hyphenated words; cohesive devices of reference, ellipsis and substitution abound in this song as foregrounding that reveal Soyinka as a poet, folklorist and a dramatist. It was equally shown through this study that understanding the thematic foci of this verse drama revolves round the proper understanding of the meaning construction and interpretation of the symbols and icons used by Elesin in his '*Not –I Bird' song* in the dramaturgy.
Keywords: Elesin's *'Not-I Bird song*, style, *DKH,* meaning, scapegoatism.

INTRODUCTION

Every man speaks a language according to his experiences and situations. Stylistics therefore is a linguistic tool which scientifically examines aspects of language variations (Crystal & Davy, 1997, p. 9). In explaining the concept of stylistics, Crystal and Davy (1997) define style as the language habits of one person or the occasional linguistic idiosyncracies which characterize an individual's uniqueess. In their words, Crystal and Davy (1997) state that:

"The stylistician ideally knows … and aware of the kind of structure language has, and thus the kind of feature which might be expected to be the 'technique of putting these features down on paper in a systematic way in order to display their internal patterning to maximal effect".

Many scholarly papers have been published on Soyinka's drama and poetry such as Adejare (1992), Odebode (2005), Olaosun (2005), Ogunba (1975), and Daslyva (2004). Most of these works centre on meaning and significances of Soyinka's drama. For instance, Aremu (2015) studies the pragmatics in Nigerianisms in Soyinka's *DKH*, while Olaosun (2005) explains the style and meaning in Soyinka's *Kongi's Harvest*, while Odebode (2005) studies the pragma- sociolinguistic use of names and nicknames in Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman (i.e DKH)*, Aremu (2008) studies the pragmatic presupposition in proverbs used in Soyinka's *DKH, while* Aremu (2018*)* examines the conceptual mappings in participants' conversation exchanges in the play. Apart from Dasylva (2004) which examines the meaning and significance of "*Not – I – Bird*" song text in Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman (henceforth DKH)*, no real work has been done on the stylistic analysis of this folkloric chant of Elesin-Oba in the play. As a result, this paper was used to fill the existing research gap in

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the stylistics of Soyinka's *DKH*. Besides, the work is also useful in demystifying Soyinka's dramaturgy by explaining the relations between Soyinka's employment of language and the significances in the drama.

Style and Stylistics: Meaning and Difference

This section gives the theoretical background to the analysis of the linguistic style in Soyinka's *DKH.* There are legions of approaches to style while scholars have explicated style in different ways, according to their different situations, disciplines and idiosyncrasies or mannerisms (Gray, 1969). While commenting on style, Enkrist (1964,p.3) says: "Literary scholars and professional linguists often find themselves on different sides of a mountain – like banner with philologists struggling for a precarious foothold on one slope or another". In the view of Azuike (1992, p.110), "these is no consensus (or agreement) among linguists on what the aims of styles are, nor a uniform approach or methodology for its analysis''. The following are germane to the study of style and stylistics. According to Adejare (1992, p.1), "style and stylistics are virtually synonymous." The difference between them is in use and usage. Style is favoured by critics while stylistics is preferred by the linguist (Brown, 2005). To my mind, stylistics refers to the linguistic and scientific study of style of a piece of writing or speech. In the words of Turner (1978, p. 8), "stylistics has to do with the study of styles, particularly in literary texts, and more particularly with a view to explicating the relationship between the form of the text and its potential for interpretation.

Besides, different yardsticks or parameters could be employed by linguists to measure style (or carry out the stylistic analysis) of a given discourse. Style could be defined (or examined) as a deviation from the norms. Every literary writer, according to Osundare (1990), will distinguish himself by flouting the linguistic "thou – shall – not". This means that a poet, playwright or novelist often employs a foreground language in his use of expression in order to distinguish himself from others. Every language has the code or norm which guides its usage. A good writer therefore will unconsciously (or spontaneously) deviate from the norm through inversion, (syntactical rearrangement in order to create shock) and structural embellishment. In the same vein, Halliday, according to Leech and Short (1981) regards every linguistic choice as significant and stylistic. This, however, does not mean that a speaker or writer makes a conscious choice from the repertoire of his lexical and grammatical system. Rather, the language user will unconsciously (or tacitly) make a choice together his selected words in order to make a meaningful expression, at the syntagmatic or chain axis (Tomori, 1977, p. 28) A stylistician often examines the graphological, lexical, syntactical, phonological, and cohesive patterns of the expression used in a discourse.

This study attempts to analyse the lexical, syntactic, graphological, phonological and cohesive pattern of the "*Not – I – Bird*" song text in Soyinka's *DKH*. Halliday and Hasan's (1976) *Cohesion* and Halliday's (1978) *Systemic Grammar* were employed as theoretical framework for this study.

Theoretical Perspectives

The theoret*ical* foci of the study hinge on Halliday's (1978) *systemic grammar* and Halliday and Hassan's (1976) *cohesion*. Cohesion refers to the nexus or link that binds a specific text together to make it an organic whole, It is also a linguistic 'tool' used to connect different constituents of a given discourse to give it a 'meaningful shape'. There are series of cohesion in language, We have (i) lexical cohesion. (ii) ellipsis and substitution, (iii) reference, (iv) repetition and (v) conjunction. These are often utilised to connect different words, phrases and clauses to give meaningful sentence ; and to bind together different paragraphs to provide a meaningful thought within a text. Lexical cohesion icimplies the relations among words along the sygntagmatic and paradigmatic axes in a discourse. Synonymy, polysemy, antonymy, homonyms, etc, are lexical relations or cohesion in a text .Collocation of words in a discourse is also a type of lexical cohesion .Words co-llocate in a given text when they can move together to give a meaningful expression.

Reference, according to Brown and Yule (1983), is the use of deitics such as 'here', 'there', 'then' , 'now', et cetera, which are often used to point at something. Adegbija (1999) states that 'reference implies meaning that is external to language',while 'sence' signifies meaning that is internal to language. There are four types of reference: cataphore, anaphore, endophore and exophore. Endophoric reference is a reference within a specific discourse, while exophoric reference implies a reference assigned outside a text. Anaphoric reference signifies a reference that is used to refer backward to a word within a given discourse, while cataphoric reference means a 'forward reference' in a text.

The systemic grammar concept was started by Halliday (1978). Systemic grammarians often view language as a form of behavior and something that humans perform for specific purposes. Systemic grammar has been used to identify three levels of language: form, substance and situation.

Substance implies the raw material used in human language. We have the phonic and the

graphic substances. The bits of grahic substances that are grouped into recognizable patterns is called form. There are two types of these: grmmar and lexis .Grammar, according to the systemic grammarians signifies the type of patternings that operates between types of linguistic items in a discourse. Situattion implies the social, cognitive, linguistic or cultural environment in which a language is used.

There are immediate and wider situation as proposed by systemic grammarians like Michael Berry, Melrose, M.AK Halliday, etc. Systemic grammar (i.e SFG) also recognizes the syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations in a meaningful text. SFG equally identifies the unit or scale in grammar. Hence, it is called 'scale category grammar' .SFG states that there are grammatical and phonological rank in any language. Tone group is the highest phonological rank while phoneme is the lowest. Morpheme is the smallest grammatical rank, while sentence is the highest. According to systemic grammarians, the structure of simple sentence often has subject and the predicator as the obligatory constituents, while it has the compliment of the predicator and adjunct as the optional aspects. The compound sentence, in the view systemic grammarians often has the *SPconj SP* structure; while a complex sentence has alpha and bita structure. SFG also explains mood to explain the functional classification of sentence. Five types of mood were identified in SFG: indicative, interrogative, imperative, conditional and subjunctive moods. Apart fom Halliday and Hassan's (1976) cohesion, Halliday's (1978) SFG is also useful in analyzing styles in Elesin's '*Not-I bird' song* in Soyinka's *DKH.* Hence, *the* two concepts serve as the theoretical foci of the study.

METHODOLOGY

The text of Elesin's "*Not – I – Bird*" song in Soyinka's *DKH which* has both complete and incomplete expressions serves as the data for this study. The stylistic analysis of the song was done through the theoreical perspectives of Halliday and Hassan's (1976) *cohesion* and Halliday's (1978) *systemic grammar.* Six complete sentences were randomly selected from 32 statements that characterize the chant. These were used as sample expressions for the analysis of the grammar of this text of Elesin's *Not-I-Bird song* in *DKH.* Random sampling technique was utilised for the selection of sampled data. Also, the dfferent types of cohesion (Halliday and Hasan, 1976) in this song were also analysed. The phonological pattern and lexical choice in the discourse were analysed to show its structural unity.

Stylistic Analysis of Elesin's "*Not – I – Bird Song* in Soyinka's *DKH*

The field of discourse of Soyinka's *DKH* is based on Elesin-Oba in Old Oyo empire who refused to commit a ritual suicide as tradition demands. This play has been employed to condemn the aspect of Yoruba cosmology which enforces scape-goatic motif of Elesin who must die along with Alaafin. Elesin's refusal to die shows that he is both egocentric and stubborn. Instead of performing the rite Elesin dances round the market square singing the "*Not – I* "song in order to show that he is not ready to leave the company of women and journey with Alafin (paramount ruler in old Oyo Empire) to the great beyond.

In the text of "*Not – I – Bird*" song, we have six personae who are: a farmer, the fearless hunter, malam, courtesean, Ifawomi and the evening courier. A farmer, according to Elesin, ran away from the danger of being killed by the falling "araba "tree saying: "*Not – I*". The fearless hunter shouted "*Not – I* "when his night-lamp got quenched in the bush; stood rigid like "Oranyan" plinth. The third character in this text is the courtesan who shouts "*Not – I* "and runs away from being impregnated by the Chief Tax collector. Another character in this chant is the malam (or muslim cleric) who perceives an omen and tells his students to go home. Ifawomi is also a character in the song. Ifawomi runs away leaving his Opele because of the fear of death. The last of all these personae is the evening courier, the tapper, who enters the sacred-groove to .He runs away, being too fearful, shouting: *"Not – I"*. Elesin sings this chant to explicate his loathsomeness to commit the ritual suicide.

The mode of discourse in this text is dialogic. It is a dialogue (between Elesin and the praise –singer). The praise-singer is reminding Elesin of his role as the "Life sustaining tank of the Oyo people". The mode of discourse also involves' turn taking', between Elesin and the praise-singer. As an oral mode (thought it has been written), it is germane to explain the illocutionary act or force of this discourse in order to show the implicature of the text and the stylistic significance of the utterances.

According to Grice (1983), implicature means meaning conveyed by virtue of communication. In speech act, we have illocutionary force. The illocutionary act/force is the force which has motivated a person to utter a statement. The illocutionary force which propels the praise-singer to utter:

"There is only one home to the life of a river mussel …" is to warn Elesin to refrain from his " foot –dragging attitude " and perform his role as the " life sustaining tank " of the people of Oyo. Any speech act has the illocutionary statement which can be used for commanding, advising, stating, conscientising, etc. The praise –singer (through his statements) is advising Elesin not to forget his role. It is note worthy to explain the tenor of discourse in this text. Tenor of discourse refers to the relationship between the interlocutors (Onadeko, 2000). There is a master-servant relationship between Elesin/ praise-singer, Elesin / Iyaloja and Elesin / Oyo women. Elesin Alaafin has right to snatch the betrothed daughter –in-law of Iyaloja.

Having explained the mode, field and tenor of discourse in this text, we need to examine and explicate its graphological pattern. In the text, "*Not – I – Bird*" has been started with the capital letter so as to personify it. "Not-I-Bird" is just an imaginary bird in this play; and it is Elesin-Oba personified. Another distinctive graphological pattern in the text is the excessive employment of question mark to ask rhetorical questions in the text.

Example: *"Death came calling, Who doesn't understanding his rasp of reeds?* Other graphic substance which has been used for stylistic purpose in the text of "Not-I-Bird" song is hyphen. Hyphenated words such as *"night-lamp", "courier-bird", "half – taunting –dance", "time-smoothed", "Not – I – Bird"*, etc. abound in the text of this song so as to give it a sonorous rhythm. Soyinka employs hyphenated words like Gerald Manley Hopkins which has made Chinwensu to describe him as someone suffering from "Hopkinsean disease". All the same, neologisms also abound in the text of this song. Examples are: "*half-tauting dance", Not-I-bird*". Neologisms were used in the play to foreground the socio-cultural context of Yoruba cosmology.

Use of Lexical Borrowing
Soyinka's mixture of the English language with the socio-pragmatic Nigerian context makes him to loan lexical patterns from his mother tongue(Yoruba) and his socio-cultural background into his use of English in the text of the "*Not – I – Bird*" song. Examples of lexical borrowings in this song are: *Ifawomi, Opele, Osanyin, "half –penny robo", "*plinth of *Oranyan", sigidi", "Elegbara",* and *"Ifa"*. The lexical borrowing in this poem has been used as foregrounding. It shows the poet –playwright's social and cultural backgrounds.

Use of Cohesion
Cohesion, according to Halliday and Hasan (1976) and Halliday (1985) is the connective tie which serves as nexus (or links) in a given text in order to give the text the structural and thematic unity. We have the (i) referential cohesion, (ii) ellipsis, (iii) conjunction and (iv) lexical cohesion. In the text of "*Not – I*" song, reference has been significantly employed. We have both endophoric and exophoric references. Endophoric reference refers to the reference within a given discourse, while exophoric reference is the reference outside a given text. The endophoric reference is also sub-divided into: (i) anaphoric (backward) and (ii) cataphoric (forward) references.

In the text of "Not-I" song, both "endo-" and exphoric references are employed. That is, collocation refers to the co-occurrence of two or more lexical items in a given text. For example, the words: (i) beautiful / ladies, (ii) Promulgate / decree, (iii) in extricably / bound, and (iv) unalloyed / support are collocates because they often appear together.

Examples of lexical collocates in the text are: (1) dance / performs (ii) river-mussel / tortoise (iii) great wars / little wars , as well as (iv) forward or backward. The analysis of the linguistic style in the text of "*Not – I – Bird*" song in Soyinka's. **DKH** will be in complete without the examination of the clausal and structural types in this chant. The System Grammar Model was adopted for this analysis. According to systemic Grammar, a complex sentence has alpha (∂) and bita (β) structure such as:

	∂	β
(i)	Ade came	when you had left
(ii)	I will go	after it had stopped raining.
(iii)	That is the boy	who came here yesterday

Also, Systemic Grammar explains that simple sentence has SPCA structure, SPCA represents, subject, predicator, complement and Adjunct (Halliday, M. A. K, 1961, Tomori, 1977). The sentences in Not-I bird bird song were used by Elesin to perform imperative mood of ordering Iyaloja not to disturb him or force him to commit suicide. The following are examples of simple, compound, multiple and complex sentences in Elesin's 'Not-I bird' song in DKH. In Elesin's Not-I bird song there are 17 simple sentences, out of which the following were selected for analysis.E1: Death came calling, E2:'Not-I, swears the farmer and E3: 'The great araba falls'.

Syntactic Analysis of Elesin's "Not-I Bird Song" in Soyinka's *DKH*
There are thirty two (32) sentences and 1 phrase in Elesin's '*Not – I bird*' song in DKH. Two of these sentences are complex sentences, while seventeen (17) are simple sentences. There are also five (5) multiple sentences in the song, while there are eight (8) compound sentences in it. There s no

compound – complex sentence in it. The frequency of sentence patterns in the song is in Fig 1 below.

S/N	Sentence Type	Frequency	Percentage
1	Simple	17	53.13%
2	Compound	08	25%
3	Complex	02	6.25%
4	Multiple	05	15.63%
5	Compound Complex	0	0%
	Total	**32**	**100%**

All expressions in *Not-I bird song* were used by Elesin to perform imperative mood of ordering the praise singer and Iyaloja not to force him to commit ritual suicide as tradition demands. The following are sampled examples of Elesin's statements in the song.
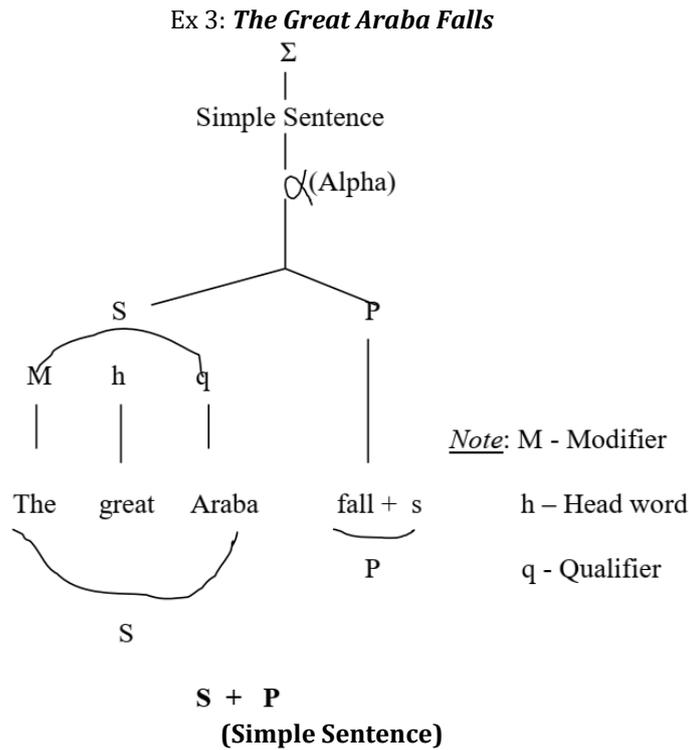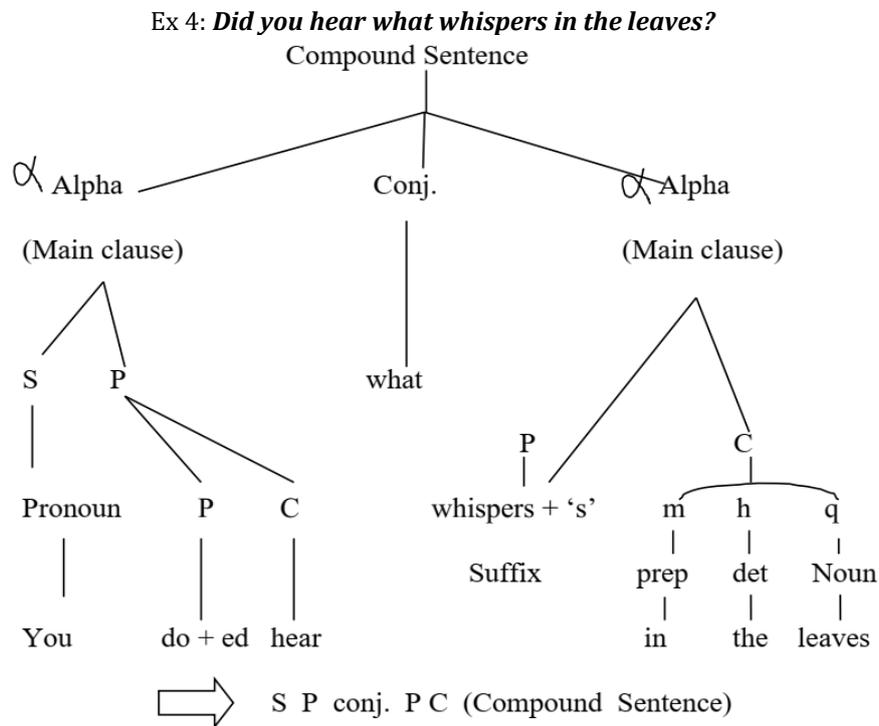
Example 1: ***"Death came calling***"
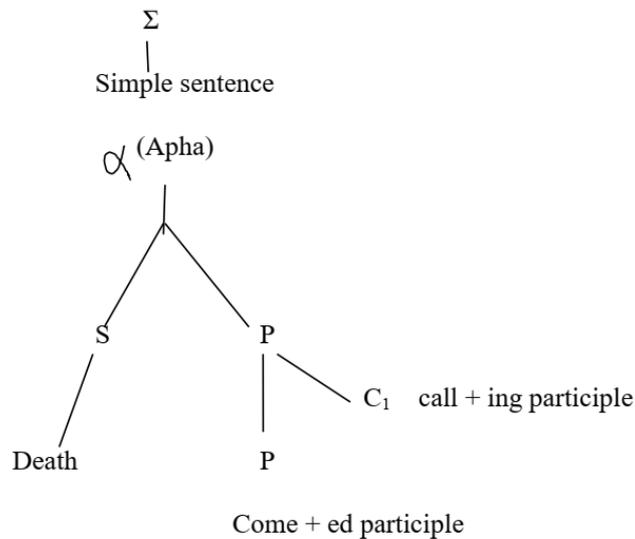
Ex: '***Not-I' swears the farmer.*** (Simple Sentence)

Ex 3: *The Great Araba Falls*
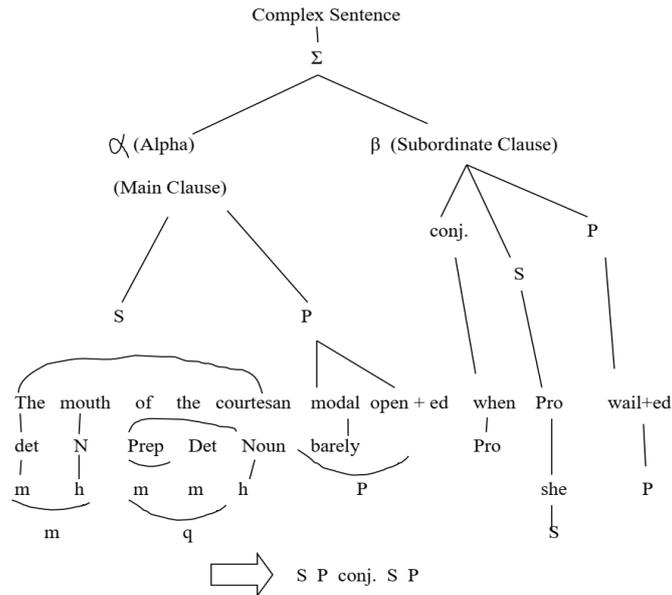

S + P
(Simple Sentence)
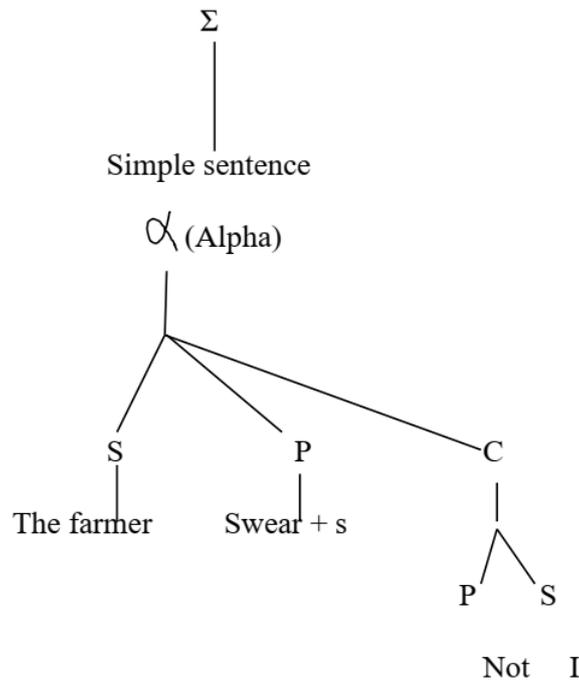
Compound Sentence

There are eight (8) compound sentences in Elesin's '*Not – I*' bird song in DKH. Out of these, the following 2 were randomly selected for analysis.

Ex 4: *Did you hear what whispers in the leaves?*

Complex Sentence

There are two (2) complex sentences in Elesin's 'Not-I bird' song in DKH. Out of these, has been randomly selected for analysis.

Ex 5: *The month of the courtesan barely opened wide when she wailed…*

**Multiple Sentence in '*Not – I bird*' song**

There are five multiple sentences in Elesin's 'Not-I bird' song in DKH. Out of these, the following was selected for analysis.

This compound sentence has the following:
1. He snaps his finger rounds his head.
2. Abandons his hard-worn harvest.
3. And begins rapid dialogue with his legs.

These can be analysed thus:

Ex. 6: *'He snaps his fingers round the head, abandons a hard-worn harvest and begins a rapid dialogue with his legs.'*
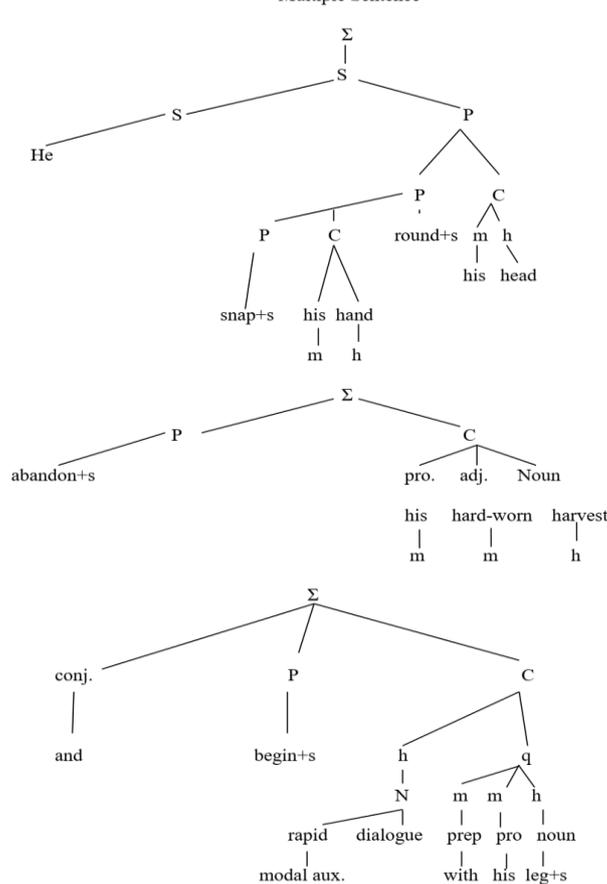
It is noteworthy to state here that Soyinka employs a mixture of the simple and complex sentences in the "*Not – I* " bird" song.

Sound Effects of the Chant

Phonologically, this text is artistically whole. There are the use of alliteration, simile, assonance and repetition which have made the text of the chant musical and sonorous. Repetition of consonant sounds (alliteration) abound in this chant

Examples are: (i) "came calling", (ii) "calling down a curse"

Assonance (that is, repetition of vowel sounds abound in the text of this song

Examples are:
  i. "Those we call immortal…"
  ii. "Its getting dark, and this night lamp …"

The employment of alliteration, repetition and assonance has made the song rhythmic and sonorous. The text of "*Not – I – Bird*" chant is also an extended metaphor of Elesin's unwillingness to jettison his promiscuity and egocentricity. The "*Not – I*" is an imaginary bird, and Elesin himself is the bird in the lore of this chant.

CONCLUSION

The text of Elesin's Not-I Bird song in Soyinka's *DKH is* as an oral piece and a verse drama within a drama. It can be understood with the use of paralinguistic cues (Abercrombie, 1973) that enrich the drama. Nonetheless, the employment of lexical cohesion, foregrounding, repetition, assonance, alliteration, and metaphor makes the chant not only sonorous and but it also makes it socio-culturally significant. By and large, the song is not only an evocative and invocative text, but it is also functional since it is of cosmic essence and is enriched with Yoruba cultural symbols. Understanding the participants' meaning construction and interpretations in the text of song by the audience of *DKH* revolves round the decoding of the iconic usage of language in the discourse as well as in the entire dramaturgy.

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