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Language in Literature: A Stylistic Analysis of Dennis Brutus' "After Exile"

Peter Oyewole Makinde*

Department of Linguistics, Faculty of Arts, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria

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Abstract: Considering the diversity of opinions, ideas and/or points of view on stylistic analysis of literary texts, one sees the need to bring to the fore proper examination of grammar, lexis, semantic as well as phonological properties and discursive devices employ by stylisticians in any textual analysis. This paper which focused on *Language in Literature: A Stylistic Analysis of Dennis Brutus' "After Exile"* aimed at bringing to the forecourt the use of linguistic patterns and their communicative functions embedded in African literary discourse as well as their linguistic involvements. The study, which is anchored on the theory of literary stylistics, drew on the models and terminologies provided by relevant aspects of linguistics which delight in the violation/breaching of linguistic norms – a deliberate deviation from the use of language code. In this paper, the researcher examined various tenets of stylistics such as foregrounding, category rule violation, selectional restriction rule, reduplication/pattern repetition, paradigmatic and syntagmatic association, parallelism, word choice/diction and sentence patterns.

Keywords: Language, Style, Stylistics, Deviation, Foregrounding, Paradigmatic and Syntagmatic Relations, Literary Discourse.

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INTRODUCTION

Languages are more to us than systems of thought-transference. They are invisible garments that drape themselves about our spirit and give a predetermined form to all its symbolic expression. When the expression is of unusual significance, we call it literature (Sapir, 1921). Sapir (1921) further points out that language is the medium of literature as marble or bronze or clay are the materials of the sculptor. Since every language has its distinctive peculiarities, the innate formal limitations - and possibilities - of one literature are never quite the same as those of another. The literature fashioned out of the form and substance of a language has the colour and the texture of its matrix. The literary artist may never be conscious of just how he is hindered or helped or otherwise guided by the matrix, but when it is a question of translating his work into another language, the nature of the original matrix manifests itself at once.

As such, every language is itself a collective art of expression. There is concealed in it a particular set of aesthetic factors - phonetic, rhythmic, symbolic, morphological - which it does not completely share with any other language. These factors may either merge their potencies with those of that unknown, absolute language or they may weave a private, technical art fabric of their own, the innate art of the language intensified or sublimated. This fact is not farfetched in the literary works of African literature which this paper aims at. Thus, language in literature here refers to stylistic approach employed by literary artists which focuses on the examination of grammar,

lexis, semantics, as well as phonological properties and discursive devices of literary works (Sapir, 1921).

In stylistic analysis there abound a wide range of opinions, ideas and/or points of view on textual analysis – stylistic analysis of any kind. These differences in opinions and ideas on the issue of style among stylisticians result in the development and stages of style and stylistic analysis – Traditional Stylistic Analysis and Modern Stylistics Analysis. (Ajah & Igiligi, 1997)

In this paper, our emphasis is on the opinions and ideas of various authors on the subject matter of style and stylistics. It also looks into the historical background as well as branches of stylistics and stylistic analysis of Dennis Brutus' "After Exile" upon which this work revolves. As Fowler (1971) noted, "there are a number of recent developments in and around linguistics which deserve to be better known to literary critics for they point to the original ways of reading and analysis, and literary criticism, as a discipline has always welcomed innovation". In view of this, this paper seeks to employ the notion of stylistics and how language is used to convey the poet's displeasure with oppression as witnessed within his society. By way of methodology, the study used practical stylistics (Widdowson, 1992) which involves close reading of the verbal texture of texts. Data for the study which was drawn from the poem "After Exile" was analysed using textual analysis.

Stylistics: Historical Background

Stylistics which is sometimes confusingly called literary stylistics (because it tends to focus on literary texts) or linguistic stylistics (because its models are drawn from linguistics) gained its popularity since the 1950s. Prior to this period, literary critics used to evaluate works of art in a subjective manner. Here, a work of art might be pronounced as 'good' or 'bad' by a critic depending on the impression that such work has on him. But later, there was a shift from the subjective nature of analysis, and stylistics becomes a more objective account of literary style.

Stylistics in the twentieth century therefore, replaces and expands on the earlier study of 'Elocutio' in Rhetorics. Following the publication of a two-volume treatise on French stylistics (*stylistique*) by Bally (1909), a pupil of the structuralist, Saussure, interest in stylistics gradually spreads across Europe via the work of Spitzer (1928, 1948) and others. It was in the 1960s that it really began to flourish in Britain and the United States, given impetus from post-war developments in descriptive linguistics, Grammar in particular.

Like other branches of language and/or language study, many people have contributed to the study of style. Among such people are Martin Joos, Geoffrey Leech, David Crystal and Derek Davy whose works contributed immensely to the study of style – stylistics. So far, the study of style or rather stylistic analysis has grown from the level of an evaluative index, an impressionistic and objective analysis where a particular literary text is being measured against certain standards, to a linguistic-oriented base which tries to analyze, describe and explain certain characteristic features of language use that distinguish a particular work or author from another. (Ajah & Igiligi, 1997; & Wales, 1989)

The Notion of Stylistics

The notion of stylistics has been examined by many stylisticians in various ways. Some of such views among others include *inter alia* that "stylistics is concerned with the examination of grammar, lexis, semantics, as well as phonological properties and discursive devices" (Bronk 2003). Leech (1980) makes it more explicit when he states that stylistics is "simply the study of literary style, or to make matters more explicit, the study of the use of language in literature". Leech & Short (1985) further note that "stylistics is a distinctive term that may be used to determine the connections between the form and effects within a particular variety of language". To them, stylistics looks at what is 'going on' within the language, what the linguistic associating (are) that the style of language reveals.

One can infer from the above views that there exists a reference to linguistic elements from which the study of choices in the use of literary language made by

different individuals is exposed. With the aid of these linguistic elements and the knowledge of connections between the form and effects within a particular variety of language lies the possibility of a measure of stylistic analysis of any given literary texts. Another definition worthy of note is the tлумaczenia–angielski's (web) definition where "stylistics examines oral and written texts in order to determine crucial characteristics of linguistic properties, structures and patterns influencing perception of the texts".

The definition above identifies the existence of oral and written literary texts with the aim of determining the linguistic features and patterns of such texts for proper analysis. Evident in all the definitions are the various branches and aspects of stylistics as influenced by individual perception of stylisticians.

CONCEPTUAL DISCOURSE

At this point, it is needful to discuss some conceptual discourses essential in the field of stylistics. These include linguistic foregrounding, category rule violation, selectional restriction rule, reduplication/pattern repetition, paradigmatic and syntagmatic association, parallelism, word choice/diction and sentence patterns.

Linguistic Foregrounding

Foregrounding is a popular term in stylistics most especially in the analysis of poetical works. The term *foregrounding* was introduced by Garvin in 1964 to translate the PRAGUE SCHOOL term of the 1930s *aktualisace*, literary ACTUALIZATION (Wales, 1989). A text is therefore said to be foregrounded when there are violations of linguistic norms at grammatical, phonological or semantic level. A term Ezenwa-Ohaeto & Makinde (2011) refer to as "linguistic deviances in literary texts". According to Yankson (1987), "the normal language code is the background. Any deviation from the norm – the code – is the foregrounding because it brings the message to the forecourt of the reader's attention". Furthermore, Ajah & Igiligi (1997) quoted in *A Glossary of Literary Terms* say "to foreground is to bring into the highest prominence to make it dominant in one's perception".

In textual literary analysis, linguistic features can themselves be foregrounded, or 'highlighted' and 'made prominent' for specific effects against the background of the rest of the text. It is around this – 'internal' foregrounding that critical attention is largely focused. Foregrounding – linguistic foregrounding – is achieved by a variety of means. Among such means include:

Category Rule Violation

A principled description of the grammar of any language..., according to Radford (1997), requires us to recognize that all words in their language belong to a restricted set of grammatical categories. Redford (1997)

went further to stress that a grammatical category is "... a class of expression which share a common set of grammatical properties".

As pointed out above, grammatical properties refer to the parts of speech or categories to which words belong. When we say that words like boy, cow, hand, idea, place, team etc. belong to the same grammatical category 'noun', they are said to share the same grammatical properties in common. These properties include:

- The morphological property of having a plural form (ending in the suffix "+s").
- The syntactic property of being able to be pre modified by definite article 'the'.

The above shows evidence in support of the postulation that words belonging to the same categories are MORPHOSYNTACTIC (morphological and/or syntactic) in nature.

To Yankson (1987), the deliberate misplacement of an item is technically known as 'a category rule violation'. A good example of category rule violation is found in the following lines from Dennis Brutus' "A Troubadour I Traverse ..."

A troubadour, I traverse all my land exploring
all her wide-flung parts with zest.

From the above extract, the word 'traverse' in the first line is used both as a verb meaning 'to travel across' as well as a noun - 'the travail' (Senanu & Vincent, 1976) and the use of 'traverse' as a noun against the kernel rule is a violation of category rule. The literary effect that the poet tries to achieve is the creative use of the same word in two different categories - 'verb' and 'noun'.

I	Traverse	All my land
↓	↓	↓
S	V	O

Selectional Restriction Rule

A word is said to be in collocation with another word. Like human beings, words also select and keep habitual company. When animate and human features are conferred on a normally inanimate object, there is a breach of selectional restriction rule. This violation of collocational rules is referred to as breach of selectional restriction rule. Yankson (1987) citing Ayi Kwei Armah's 'Fragments' where the writer talks about Juana's feelings "... to leave the whole aborted town just to get out and keep going in the attempt, however doomed ... to forget all the reminders of futility".

In the extract above, a noun 'town' with the feature /-animate/ has been given the features

- /+ animate /
- /+ human /

Where normally it should reflect thus

Aborted	Town
+ animate	+ inanimate
+ human	- human
- inanimate	- animate

Thus the collocation of the word 'town' - a noun with the verb 'aborted', whereby animate and human features are conferred on a normally inanimate object, a deviation from the norms, is a breach of selectional restriction rule.

Reduplication/Pattern Repetition

A number of definitions exist by various authors on reduplicative formation, otherwise also known as over-frequency. According to Leech (1980):

... repetition is a fundamental if primitive device of intensification.... By underlining rather than elaborating the message, it presents a simple emotion with force, it may further suggest a suppressed intensity of feeling - an imprisoned feeling - as it were, for which there is no outlet, but a repeated hammering at the confining walls of language.

To Wales (1989), repetitive patterns (of sound or syntax, for example) are superimposed on the background of the expectations of normal usage, and so strike the reader's attention as unusual. There is therefore no doubting the fact that repetition is a well-known universal rhetorical device, and its use is for emphasis sake. That is why Yankson (1987) opined that "the stylistic effect of pattern repetition is to emphasize those items and structure that have been repeated so as to place the message they carry at the forecourt of the reader's mind."

An instance of the use of repetition is exemplified in the lines of the poem 'Salute to the Elephant'.

O elephant, possessor of a savings - basket full of money
O elephant, huge as a hill, even in a crouching pasture
O elephant, enfolded by honour; demon flapping fans of war.
Demon who snaps tree branches into many pieces and moves on to the forest farm.
(Translated by Babalola, 1976)

The successive repetition of 'O elephant' at the initial stage of each clause is used for stylistic effect. It is used to depict the huge and crouching nature of the object of description. Another instance of repetition is the use of demon and repetition of sound(s) effects in:

- /h/ - in huge as a hill
- /f/ - in flapping fans of war
- forest farm

All reflect the destructive nature of elephant as shown predominantly throughout the lines of the poem.

Paradigmatic and Syntagmatic Association

Paradigmatic relation refers to the nature of semantic relations or associations that can exist among lexical items that occur in the same grammatical slot and the literary significance of the relationship. According to Udofot (1998), “paradigmatic relation is a process whereby all members of the sets of semantically related terms can occur in the same context”.

To show the nature of semantic import that could occur in a context in the above definition, Udofot (1998) elucidated further that the words ‘husband’ and ‘wife’, for example, are not synonymous but are semantically related in a way that ‘husband’ and ‘wine’ are not. The same semantic relation is applicable to ‘good’ and ‘bad’ and not ‘good’ and ‘black.’ Paradigmatic association therefore could be in the form of synonymous and/or antonymous relations. To this view, Yankson (1987) pointed out that “two or more lexical items in a literary text are said to be synonymously related when they share a general semantic feature”.

In the following lines from Birago’s (1976) “Vanity”

If we weep, gently, gently
 If we cry roughly of our torments
 What heart will listen to our clamoring
 What ear to our sobbing hearts?

The VPs

If we + { Weep
cry } + { gently
roughly }

‘weep’ and ‘cry’ belong to the same paradigm by virtue of the fact that they are in syntagmatic relation with the phrase “If we”. They are also synonymously related to produce ‘tears’ – weep, cry – while adverbs ‘gently’ and ‘roughly’ are antonymously related – ‘gently’ for positive and ‘roughly’ for negative.

It is worthy of note here that the effect that the poet tries to create is to produce the sound effect with ‘ly’ as in ‘gently’ and ‘roughly’. On the other hand, syntagmatic relation as shown in the above extract is a pointer to the semantic import made by the poet. To this effect, Udofot (1998) is of the view that “syntagmatic relations are those that lexical items enter into with other units of the same level with which they occur and which constitute their context”. In stylistics, attention is particularly focused on the syntax of LITERARY texts, and the way in which POETIC syntax might be seen to deviate from the norms of non-literary language.

Parallelism

As pointed out early in this work that the use of pattern repetition in a literary work or text for a particular stylistic effect is part of the African writers

linguistic repertoire. This pattern repetition is what is referred to as parallelism which operates at all three levels of linguistic organization – phonological, semantic and lexical levels.

According to Leech (1980), “parallelism sets up a relationship of equivalence between linguistic items and strongly urges a connection between them”. In the above definition, the stylistic effect created through parallelism in literary text is portrayed. Clark (2000) looks at the term ‘parallelism’ from another point of view when he says that:

Parallelism is more than a figure of speech, it is a principle of composition: that similar ideas should be expressed in similar form. Similarity of construction is a formal indication of similar ideas. As such, any linking of words in a corresponding syntax forms a parallel.

Here, figurative expressions that aid stylistic effects are considered with the parallelism principle extending to antithesis, which is the parallel construction of contrasting ideas. Supporting Leech’s view about parallelism is Fabb’s (1997) definition which goes thus:

Parallelism is a ‘sameness’ between two sections of a text, and can be structural or semantic. Structural parallelism holds between two sections of text when they are the same at some level of structure (for example, when they have the same phrase structure). Semantic parallelism holds between two sections of text when they can be interpreted to be the same in some component of their meaning.

The functional effect that parallelism has either at structural level or semantic level in a literary text is that the poet’s intense feeling is expressed through pattern repetition to achieve stylistic effect.

Word Choice/Diction

It has been pointed out that no two individuals or authors can write or express their thoughts in exactly the same style. This view is evident in the fact that the choice of words/diction employed by authors differs. To this end, Wales (1989) posits that diction is “a literary term referring to LEXIS or vocabulary, mainly used in discussions of STYLE, to mean: all the LEXICAL ITEMS in a text or as used by an author...” As such, one can determine whether an author’s usage is vague or concrete, denotative or connotative, conversational or formal.

Other forms of choice of words used by an author could be deliberate uses of archaism, Romance words, Anglo-Saxon words or combination of two or more forms. Proper identification of the choice of words used by an author in a text constitutes one of the factors that aid stylistic analysis.

Sentence Patterns

In stylistic analysis, sentence pattern is another important factor that contributes to the achievement of creative effect by an author – a poet. A sentence has been variously defined by various linguists and one of such is Ajah & Igiligi's (1997) definition of sentence "as a group of words having subject and predicate and which expresses a complete thought". Different types of sentence patterns or structures therefore are taken into account in stylistics analysis of a text. A poet can use a sentence against the normal norms of the rule of grammar. The question here then focuses on identifying whether an author – poet – uses sentence according to function or whether he uses sentence according to structure which in itself consists of structure within structures – Seven Kernel Sentences – SV, SVO, SVC, SVA, SVOO, AVOA, SVOC – as well as compound complex and multiple sentences.

Apart from classifying sentence according to function or according to structure, Ajah & Igiligi (1997) identify the fact that sentence can also be broadly classified into two types namely:

- The Periodic Sentence
- The Loose Sentence

The periodic sentence is that type of sentence "in which the main idea or sense remains suspended or delayed until the end of the sentence" (Ajah & Igiligi, 1997). For instance, in the sentence "if I become rich, I shall help the poor." The main idea is suspended or delayed until the end of the sentence. It is worthy of note here that most periodic sentences are introduced by subordinate clauses. This therefore serves as a major tool in the hands of poets.

The Loose sentence on the other hand is the type of sentence "in which the main idea is followed by loosely joined component parts" (Ajah & Igiligi, 1997). As William & White (1979) point out "an occasional loose sentence prevents the style from becoming too formal and gives the reader a certain relief. Consequently, loose sentences are common in easy; unstished writing" (Ajah & Igiligi, 1997). Here, the poet begins with a simple sentence - with the main idea – followed by loosely joined components parts – such as strings of subordinating structures. A good example is found in the example below:

"I shall help the poor, if I become rich"

STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF DENNIS BRUTUS' "AFTER EXILE"

Biography of Dennis Brutus

Dennis Brutus was born in Salisbury, Rhodesia, in 1924 of mixed parents who while Brutus was a child migrated to South Africa and lived in Port Elizabeth. Brutus' early education was irregular but his

mother introduced him to English poetry, reading to him from Tennyson and Wordsworth. Brutus eventually entered Fort Hare University as an adult and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree. Subsequently he taught English and Afrikaans for fourteen years in South African High Schools. But his active participation in protest against racism and the apartheid laws of South Africa led to his dismissal in 1962 and his arrest in 1963 in Johannesburg.

Brutus writes simply and subtly. His style belongs to the main tradition of English poetry. As such, he is well known with his popular poem "A Troubadour, I Traverse".

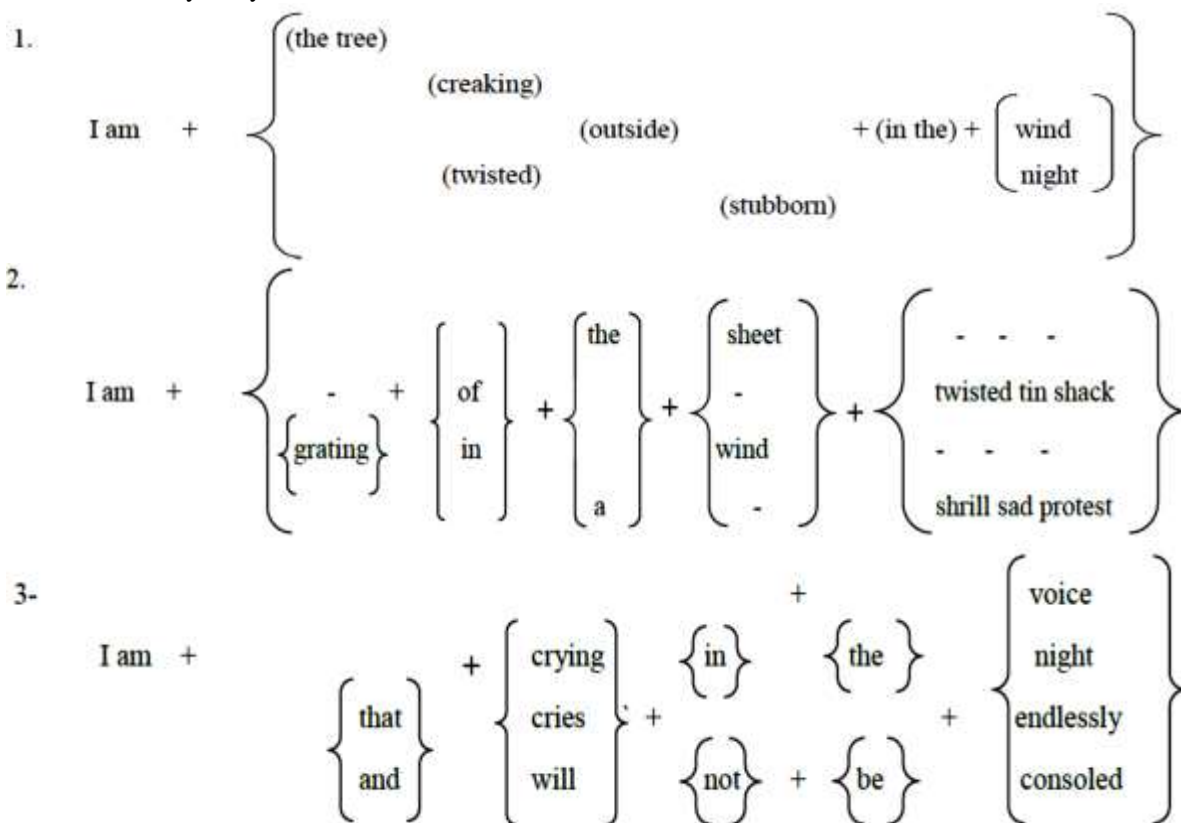
After Exile

I am the tree
Creaking in the wind
Outside in the night
Twisted and stubborn:
I am the sheet
Of the twisted tin shack grating in the wind
In a shrill sad protest:
I am the voice
Crying in the night that cries endlessly
And will not be consoled. (Dennis Brutus
From: "A Selection of African. Poetry" By
Senanu & Vincent, 1976)

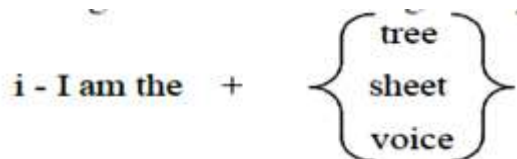
The poem 'After Exile' by Brutus (1976) belongs to one of the four poems written for South African Freedom Day in June 27th, 1967. The poem presents a composite picture of life as an oppressed black or coloured person in South Africa. Three different images of existence as a struggle unavoidably accomplished by protest are presented by the poet. These images are "the three", "the sheet" and "the voice". They produce visual images which convey the transformation of the materiality of representation that the poet projects. The direct comparison – metaphorical expressions – employed by the poet through the use of these images are specific and historic as well as natural and universal.

In "I am the voice", the voice as an image depicts protest against injustice and oppression that the poet aims at picturing. While "the tree" that is creaking in the wind depicts the exposure to the menace, "the sheet" evokes a picture of the slum huts of the shanty-town to which the coloureds are confined. The walls and roofs of these huts rattling in the wind seem to cry in protest against the human laws they symbolize. Worthy of note in the structures of this poem are the use of sound effects in *creaking*, *grating* and *crying*; the use of colon (:) and a period (.) at the end of the first and second stanzas and stanza one respectively coupled with the pattern repetition reveal the stylistic effects that the poet tries to create.

Each stanza of the poem is represented in the patterns below for easy analysis.

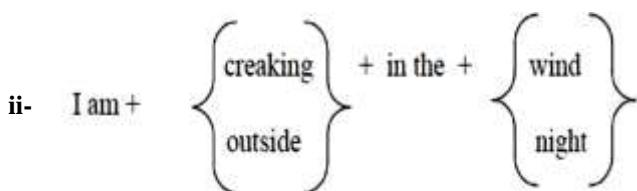


The following are some of the linguistic patterns in the above text:



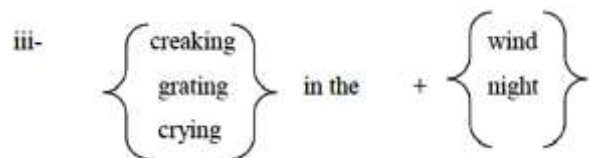
In the above pattern, the three nouns *tree*, *sheet* and *voice* which are the images employed by the poet, are in paradigmatic relation because they occur in the same paradigm. They are in the same syntagmatic

relationship with “I am the”. Also, “tree” and “sheet” share the same vowel sound /i:/ with the exception of /ɔi/ - a diphthong – in voice.



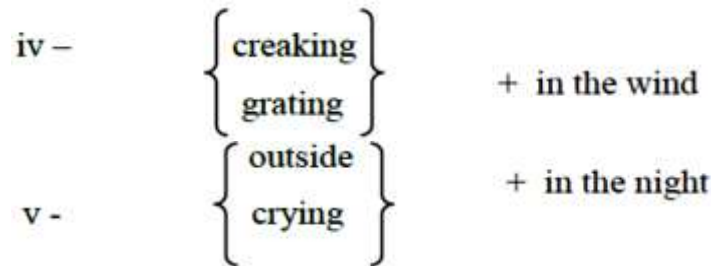
The set of lexical items “creaking, outside” and “wind, night” above occur in the same grammatical slot. Where “creaking” and “outside” occur in the same

paradigm with the verb “am”; “wind” and “night” occur in the same slot with the preposition “in”.



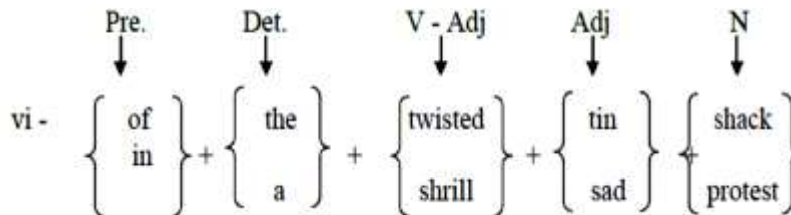
Apart from the sound effect in ‘-ing’ that the poet tries to achieve in the first slot of the above pattern, the slot is, in addition, in paradigmatic association because the items “creaking”, “grating” and “crying” are synonymously related under the general semantic

feature /+sound/, although “grating” and “crying” depict a sound of someone’s voice; “cracking” depicts the sound of a tree. Furthermore, the two slots in this pattern are in the same paradigm with the preposition “in”.



Patterns (iv) and (v) above are in the same paradigm with the prepositional phrases that they

preceded with the slot in pattern (iv) having similar phonological feature – rhyming scheme “ing”.



The creative effect formed by the poet here relies on the use of complex prepositional phrases so as to device patterns of language which will convey his individual personal vision.

I am the voice...

The pattern above drawn from lines 1, 5 and 9 consists of loose sentences. This syntactic repetition also serves as a refrain, with the “tree”, “sheet” and “voice” sharing the same stress pattern – phonological parallelism.

vii- in the wind
in the night
of the twisted tin shack
in a shrill sad protest

x- I am the tree twisted and stubborn:
I am the sheet of twisted tin shack
I am the voice and will not be consoled.

In the pattern above, the repetitive use of prepositional phrase in lines 2, 3, 6, 8 and 10 of the poem as a refrain represents the poet’s search for the proper pattern of language upon which the linguistic items could be conveyed. Further evidence is seen in the repetition of the sound effect created by the poet in /t/ - twisted tin shack and the dangling use of shrill sad protest /s/ in the same pattern above.

The pattern above is an expansion of pattern (ix) but contains the phonological features as in:
/t/ - tree twisted and stubborn
twisted tin
/ʃ/ - sheet of twisted tin shack
/v/ - voice and will not be consoled.

viii – twisted and stubborn:
in a shrill sad protest:
and will not be consoled.

It should be noted here that the sound /ɔi/ in voice, though is a diphthong, shares similar sound with /v/ in belonging to the same vowel category in contrast with consonant sound.

The use of colon (:) and a period (.) at the end of stanzas 1 and 2 respectively and stanza 3 is an element of foregrounding.

xi- I am the voice that cries endlessly.
The pattern above is a complex sentence structure comprises of
I am the voice – Main Clause
that cries endlessly – Subordinate Clause

Other Sentence Structures

ix- I am the tree...
am the sheet...

xii

$$I \text{ am the sheet} + \left\{ \begin{matrix} \text{of} \\ \text{in} \end{matrix} \right\} + \left\{ \begin{matrix} \text{the} \\ \text{a} \end{matrix} \right\} + \left\{ \begin{matrix} \text{twisted} \\ \text{shrill} \end{matrix} \right\} + \left\{ \begin{matrix} \text{tin} \\ \text{sad} \end{matrix} \right\} + \left\{ \begin{matrix} \text{shack} \\ \text{protest} \end{matrix} \right\}$$

Like other patterns, this pattern belongs to the same paradigm. Intra-textually, the overall pattern in

this poem can be further represented in the form of a substitution table thus:

	Tree			creaking			wind			
				outside		in	night			
							twisted			
							the		and	
									stubborn	
	sheet					of	twisted	tin	shack	
I am the +				grating			wind			
							a	shrill	sad	protest:
	voice			crying		the	night			
		that		cries					endlessly	
			and					will not	be	
								consoled		

CONCLUSION

From the foregoing, it has been revealed that it is the function of literary writers to surprise the reader with a fresh and dynamic awareness of its linguistic medium through the use of poetic license which gives room for aesthetic exploitation of language usage. As a result of this, various stylistic devices are employed by literary writers so as to create the desired effects intended by the writer(s). It is around this deliberate deviation from the use of linguistic code that stylistics analysis focuses.

Without casting any aspersion whatsoever, this study concludes on this note, that literary writers - African literary writers - use words against the normal linguistic norms to achieve creativity. This comes in the form of reduplicative formations, parallel structures, intra-textuality among others. Such pattern formations appear at the phonological level, syntactic level, lexical level and semantic level as shown in the analysis of this study.

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