The Syntax of Nominal Group (NG) as Trope of Meaning in Niyi Osundare's Poetry

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Abstract

In this paper we analyse the creative deployment of the nominal group (NG) of English as a stylistic device of meaning in Niyi Osundare's poetry. The device, as we found, is an under-examined stylistic feature of Osundare literary idiolect. We claim here that NG deployment as a creative tool shows identifiable patterns that are significant for meaning construal in Osundare's poetry. The stylistically organised linguistic form and patterns of nominal group syntax are interpretive of and constitute the writer's purpose. Using insights from linguistics, Stylistics decodes how resources of language are used in texts, in particular, literary texts to provide linguistic evidence of meaning making that defines the writer's purpose. Thus, in our stylistic analysis of NG in Osundare's poetry, we take the theoretical understanding that the structural connectedness of words in English, which is described as syntax shows how sentences and its constituents express meanings. Consequently, based on selected poems of Osundare, which are generally representative of how the poet uses NG of English creatively, this paper engages a stylistic analysis of the linguistic form of NG as a style of poetic composition in which the poet means.

Keywords   linguistic organization, meaning, nominal group, stylistic analysis

Introduction

Niyi Osundare is a world-renown Nigerian poet with many awards in his poetic bag, and because of his globally accessible poetic idiolect, in spite of being rooted in his Yoruba background milieu, he is famously described as "people's poet" (see for example: Ogunsiji et al, 2018; Na'Allah, 2003). Osundare's poetic oeuvre is implicated by the poet's being both a linguist and a stylistician in the sense of the high level of stylo-linguistic creativity that incites and defines, in most cases, the interpretation his thematic purpose. And as often observe, "The messages of Osundare's poetry significantly synchronise with his language" (Ogunsiji and Okunowo, 2018). One of such creative interplay of language use and messages is Osundare's manipulation of the nominal group of English, which is aesthetically patterned to message delivery. Thus, stylistically, nominal group (NG) patterns are foregrounded in Osundare's poetry as aesthetic maker.

While nominal group as a constituent of sentence structure, to say the least, is not unusual in clause construction, it foregrounds itself preponderantly as a deliberately arranged linguistic structure for rhetorical purpose in Osundare. A further understanding of NG is provided by Tufte (2006) who positions that

"because there are more nouns than any other part of speech in the English vocabulary, noun phrases offer a tremendous stock of meaning. Important for their content and variety, they also perform a great array of functions […] Not only does the noun phrase occupy the important subject position; additional noun phrases usually appear as part of the verb phrase that fills the predicate position. Noun phrases take their places in half a dozen slots in enlarged sentence patterns (37). This linguistic resource is remoulded to poignantly project pragmatic meaning, meaning emphasis, musicality, thematic memorability and aesthetic in Osundare's poetry. For example, in *Midlife* (106) the design of the NG in the poem "I behold" serves a rhythmic purpose by its similarity of structures, directing readers' focus on the one-member clausal referent NG "I" and its experiential predicator "behold". The NGs in the object slot of the clause for this reason gain prominence for meaning. This arrangement suggests, therefore, that what is made prominent is what *is* "behold" and not the 'beholding' experience. Three observations could be made here: The parallel repetitive syntactic structure is parallel to repetitive persona/poet-chorus mode in Yoruba poetry. According to Ajolore (1972), this mode is heavy in Ìjálá, *Rárà* and *Ifá* poetry/chants, and the phrases are refrains, either in parallel frame or sameness in lexical, structural, and semantic compositions. Osundare uses this as a function of performance and evocation of mood being created for thematic purpose and aesthetic effect. Secondly, in the poem, the parallel structures are motivated by comparison of contrast and relational connectedness. "Stubborn root" vs. "sickle insistence" (relational conflict) and "heaviness of the needle" vs. "weightless truth of fracture visions" (comparison of contrast) are examples in this regard. These comparisons are adjectival in orientation, motivating the construction. The third observation is metaphorical as we have in "delicious laughter" (*laughter as food* metaphor) and "fracture visions" (*visions as breakable object* metaphor–abstract to concrete). These three motivating factors in Osundare construction of NG syntax are expatiated upon in the subsequent analysis.

Theoretical Basis

This article is a stylistic analysis of nominal group as a device of meaning in Osundare's poetry. It engages the meaning process facilitated by linguistic resource of nominal group of English. Stylistics, to follow Daramola (2010), is "the study of language as an art and as science", however, we contend that it is more of an art in literary texts than science because literature is not a 'science' but emotive in projection. The central concern of stylistics as a branch of applied linguistics is to explain how language is used to mean, often in literature. In the accepted opinion of Short (1996) "stylistics is an approach to the analysis of

(literary) texts using linguistic description". Short submits further that "Stylistics is [...] concerned with relating linguistic facts (linguistic description to meaning (interpretation) [...]". This being the case, we take the position that stylistics provides the platform to explicate the creativity into which Osundare has put the nominal group of English.

The syntax of the nominal group as a unit of grammatical system is a constituent of sentence structure that occupies the positions of subject, object and, sometimes, complement and adverbial in the structure of the sentence. The composite structure for nominal group is (*M*) – modifier; realizing all elements before the head noun, *H*- head (noun-element) (*Q*) – qualifier; realizing all elements after the head noun, with *M* and *Q* as optional units and *H* as obligatory element. The possible realizable options are *h*, *mh*, *hq* and *mhq* constructions (Tomori: 1977). The typological term nominal group (NG) subsumes the term noun phrase (NP). The NG is characterized by a mixed bag of grammatical units; nouns, nominalizations, including clauses that may function as nouns. On the other hand, the NP is a reference, in basic term, to noun-headed NG (Quirk et al 1985). We will use the two terms with reference to these designations. For clarity we hereby illustrate the syntactic structure of the nominal group at primary and secondary degrees delicacy of grammatical analysis as we have in the following illustrations: "The castle of days stands / On the graveyard of moribund moments" (Osundare's *Days*: 47).

This a simple sentence with the structure S/V/A, that is, (subject/verb/ adverbial). There are six NPs in the sentence analytically, both at the primary and secondary degrees of grammatical delicacies thus: The/ castle/ of days→ *mhq* (subject position). The/ castle→ *mh*. (*Of*) days→ *h* (rankshifted within PP). (*On*) the/ graveyard/ of moribund moments→ *mhq* (rankshifted within AP). [*On*] the graveyard→ *mh* (rankshifted within AP). (*Of*) moribund/ moments→ *mh* (rankshifted within PP). The system of nominal group in English is complex. The items that can function in each of the slots of the composite structure (m) h (q) are multivariate. For example, the modifier slot may be composed of choices made among four groups of grammatical items: deictic, ordinator, epithet and nominal. For example, "the butterfly's busy dalliance" (*Days*: 106) makes a choice of *deictic*, *nominal* and *epithet* at the 'm' slot of *mh* in the structure of the NP. However, for our purpose, we will treat all elements occurring in each slot of *mhq* as one group, belonging to m, h or q, as the case may be.

Literature Review
Osundare's poetry is a widely studied one in the literary tradition of criticism in Africa. It has commanded numerous doctoral theses and countless articles

in journals and books (see for examples: Na's Allah (ed), 2003; Okunowo, 2010; Oloko, 2017; Ogunsiji et all, 2018; Dick, 2016). In most cases, Osundare's criticism is wide and diverse, generally overwhelmed by insights into the poet's thematic and ideological position, leaving open a poetic tradition whose creative linguistic structuring for meaning making is still under-investigated. Moreover, Osundare's rhetorically 'simple' language, insisting that "poetry is man meaning to man" (2003) as a poetic manifesto proposes a juxtaposition of language and meaning in the poet's communication credo of 'simplicity', saying that "[...] it should be possible for me to reach my people with poetry in the kind of English idiom they found accessible, and about the kind of issues which touch their lives" (2000). This position of the poet complicates the syntactic-meaning interplay as substance of language, requiring a close investigation, such as being undertaken here as an addition to Osundare study.

Gaining from and agreeing with Weber (1996; 200), we claim that "particular language structures assume the forms they do in response to communicative uses [literary use is one] to which they are put". It may not have a chatted systemic path, manipulating forms of language for rhetorical purpose is not uncommon in modern African literaturary criticism. For examples, Olaogun (1991) studied graphology in Okigbo's poetry; Osakwe (1998) critically examined noun phrases in Soyinka's Idanre studies, Oyeleye's (1991) engaged a semantic study of character metaphors in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* while Balogun's (1991) linguistic characterization of the African short story contributed to the tradition of the hermeneutics. A comparison could be drawn, while Osundare's use of the material substance of language in reference (NG) is motivated, in part, by metaphor construction and abstractions from Yoruba oral poetic genre, that of Soyinka is motivated by the fluidity of a monolingual English user, in spite of the density and bizarre collocation in Soyinka's metaphoric configuration (see Soyinka's "green reception" and Osundare's "green memory" (82) in *Horses of Memory*. In consequence, Osundare's literary idiolect (see Ogunsiji and Okunowo, 2018), with reference to his creative linguistic structuring, in which this article is a modest contribution, is still very much required as a major writer that has contributed so much to the canon of Modern African Literature.

Osundare's Motivations for NG as Rhetorical Device
Foregrounded NG in Osundare's poetry is achieved by repetition and similarity of structure, and more importantly, by quantity. There are three major motivations that incite Osundare's stylistics of nominal group of English the way the poet does. The first one is Osundare's style of fashioning linguistic metaphors in poetry.

(Okunowo, 2010). Our analysis here is partly informed by Brook-Rose (1958: 24-25) thus:

> [...] for the noun metaphor is linked sometimes to its proper term, and sometimes to a third term which gives the provenance of the metaphoric term: B *is part of, or derives from, or belongs to or is attributed to or is found in* C, from which relationship we can guess A, the proper term (e.g. the *hostel* of my heart = body). The link may be achieved by preposition, adverb, adjective clauses, possessive's' and other grammatical linkers as in stanza one (*Midlife;* 106) above and shown as in the brackets below:

m	h	q	m	h	q
Stubborn/	roots/	`[in] league	Against the sickle ['s] insistence The/	fireflames/	[of] mountains.

For example too, in Brooke-Rose's example above; the genitive "of" constructs the formula: "A" is "body", "B" is "hostel" and "C" is "heart", where "B" is part of "A"; therefore the syntactic structure of the NP is *mhq* and the conceptualization is *body as hostel* metaphoricity. In most cases, the structural patterns found commonly in Osundare, which invites interpretation are *mhq* and *mh*. However, each of these structures further involves multiple sequencing in the constituents as I will show later in my analysis. For *mhq*, it takes the scheme: B of A is C, where B is part of A used to conceptualize C. If however B has no relation outside it, then, B becomes the appositive of C rather than part of A. I recall here two examples for explication: "Suppose I turn into a river? / You will flow easily through / The *channels* of my mouth" (*Laughters*: 63).

The NP structure is *mhq*- "the/ *channels*/ of my mouth." "*Channels*" is the noun metaphor meaning 'esophagus', in which case B is "channels," "A" is "esophagus" and "C" is "mouth" with the metaphor *esophagus as channels*, whereby "esophagus" is part of "mouth". The second example is as in the following lines: The messiahs peep at / The tattered hordes from the *paradise* / Of a Mercedesed distance (*Laughters*: 56).

The NP is rankshifted within an adverbial phrase with the structure *mhq*- "[*from*] the/ *paradise*/ of a mercedesed distance". In this case, the B "*paradise*" is a reference to "luxury," fashioning the metaphor *mercedesed (distance) as luxury* where both the source and the target are appositives, that is, B is C, where B is derived from C rather than any existing A.

The second motivation is the fascination and propensity for the construction and employment of adjectives and adjectival phrases, sometimes multiples in the same breath of nominal construction. Osundare has this to say in this regard

(Ogoanah: 2003)[1]: "I break up my words, not only morphologically but also syntactically. *I use adjectives a lot.* I'm a partisan writer" (italics mine). Hardly any noun escapes without an adjective, sometimes multiple, which, again, in most cases, metaphorise the referent noun phrase or subject head noun phrase. In this instance *mh* structure is common and found most commonly in the objective function and as rankshifted units. The italicized portions in the following are illustrations:

> With these *green guests* around
> Who says that drought was here?
> Aflame with *herbal joy*
> Trees slap *heaven's face*
> With *the compound pride*
> Of *youthful leaves*
> Drapering twigs into groves
> Once skeletal spires in
> The *unwinking face* of *the baking sun*   (*Eye*: 34).

The italicized units have *mh* structure with potential metaphorical meaning engendered by the modifying/adjective elements in the structure. Another example will suffice thus:

> Earth will not tremble under our feet
> Onward, then, spirit of *wailing waters*,
> Through *fragrant halo*
> And a crown of *pagan thorns*;
> Through the *figuring shadows*
> Of the first light
> And *the blaring noon*
> On the mountain of the sun   (*Memory*: 65).

The close proximity, syntactic connectedness and preponderance of metaphorizing adjectives provide a loom of meaning with cohesive rhythmic value. These are usually better experienced in the performance of Osundare's poetry. One cogent observation in Osundare employment and construction of adjectives is that there is no restriction as to item that may be used as adjective or collocate of the referent noun as in the following examples:

> My memory

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1   Interview conducted by Ogoanah, N.F; *West Africa Review*. Vol. 14. 1, 2003.

> Is the brown laughter
> Of your earth   (Memory: 79).
> Your memory is the tyranny of the blank page
> Mocking my sweating pen   (Memory: 80).

The strangeness in these lines is the unusual collocation of "brown" with "laughter" and "sweating" with "pen". However, a close look at the relationship between "earth" and "brown" suggests the colour relates to "earth" and that "laughter" (human conceptual source domain) is a metaphoric reference to the dust cloud that is generated from "earth", the basis of the persona's remembrance/ memory. Similarly, "sweating" (human source domain) in relation to "pen" and "the tyranny of blank page" is a metaphoric reference to the "absence of the muse of creation" or presence of 'artistic block' when the persona-writer is bereft of ideas, inspiration in the process of poetic composition. These two motivations are attributive of the intensive meaning and message communicated in Osundare's deployment of nominal group as a stylistic device.

The third, and perhaps the most important motivation is archetypal patterns of *Oríkì* and incantatory poetic genres of Yoruba, which according to Osundare (2006), is mediated, in his poetry, by "English syntactic parallelism, balance, and antithesis" (6), which Osundare says "enriches that interface between the two languages" (6) Yoruba and English, offering that:

> The ideation, sentiment, rhetorical complexion, and sensibility originate in one language-culture [Yoruba] the verbal and other surface structural elements are in the other [English] (6).

This structural orientation of NG is also partly an abstraction from Yoruba command language generally referred to as *ofò* (Olajubu: 2001).[2] This is a poetic genre which institutes and generates its force of command from parallel linguistic structure of repeated phrases and according to Olajubu "the enchanter [of *ofò*] employs repetition, with the belief that it has magical powers to elicit an answer to his request from the incantatory agent. Repetition is usually thrice or seven times" (175). Having observed these influencing factors, we now precede with the analysis of the representative nominal group patterns with their attending meaning.

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2   Olajubu, O. "The Influence of Yoruba Command Language on Prayer, Music and Worship in African Christianity" *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, Volume 14, Number 2, December 2001, pp. 173-180.

Nominal Group Patterns in Osundare

The first notable scheme is that in which the NG forms the body of the poetic composition, with a 'head subject or referent'. This comes in a variety of patterns. Two examples will suffice: This pattern is engendered by repetition, emphasis on meaning, semantic contrast or similarity, alliteration for rhythmic value and collocation creativity. For instance:

> Let me conjugate the world
> And decline oppression
> Make my verb
> An acting word
> My noun
> A happening icon
> *My deictic a pointer*
> *To a universe*
> *Of adverbs without adversity*
> *Of prepositions without preimpositions*
> *Of commas without comas* (*Nib*: 8-9).

Our focus is on the italicized portions of the poem. It is a clause with elliptic verbal item "is", carrying the structure S/V (deleted)/C→ *mhq*- (a pointer [...] comas)→ *mhq*- (a universe [...] comas)- (rankshifted). There are actually three rankshifted NPs with the same preposition "of" and modifier *m* in the *mhq*. The rhythm and foregrounding of the NPs is achieved by the repetitive structure, construction of alliteration and the contrast that is drawn between the metaphoric lexical opposites: "adverbs" and "adversity", "prepositions" and "preimpositions", and "commas" and "comas". The idea of 'grammatical correctness' is used as a metaphor to conceptualize a just and an egalitarian society in the NP construction. Again, here we are confronted with an ideological perspective through linguistic structures which embed the purpose and communicate it at the same time. Again, this harps upon ideological philosophy of an egalitarian society. The second example can be analyzed in the following lines thus:

> Memory, too, is
> The footsteps of ants
> In the corridors of the forest,
> The winged termite's fleeting frolic
> In the wake of the first rains
> The squirrel's fly-whisk tail

In the province of nutty seasons
Memory is
The penetrating touch
Of the January dew
The dusken fluff of the homing eagle... (*Memory*: 82).

In this instance, just as in the previous example, the body of the NPs is heaped on a single referent subject "Memory" of the clause in which the NPs have co-referential anaphoric relation by the virtue of the *BE* verb. There are three pairs of NPs with the structure *mhq*: "the footsteps[…]forest", "the winged[…]rains" and "the squirrel's[…]season", with overlapping rankshifted NPs within each pair of NPs, again with the structure *mhq* as in "*in* the/ corridors /of the forest", "*in* the/ wake/ of the first rains" and "*in* the/ province/ of nutty seasons". The relationship that is drawn between the immediate constituent NPs and the rankshifted ones is a semantic collocation one: "footsteps (metaphorical) of ants" relates to ants/ foot path in "corridors (metaphorical) of the forest". Termites are mostly found in large number when rains fall after a long spell of dry season, thus "winged termite's fleeting frolic (metaphorical)" is engendered by "wake (metaphorical) of the first rains". Finally, squirrel's favourite food is palm nuts, at least as known in the socio-semio-linguistic life ecosystem, making the immediate constituent NP "the squirrel's fly-wisk (simile) tail" to relate to its rankshifted pair "the province (metaphorical) of nutty (a portmanteau word evoking double semantic meaning of 'nut' and 'hard' or 'stubborn') seasons". The second stanza of the poem has two NPs with the structure *mhq* and the relationship between the two units of each of the NPs is a descriptive one while that of the first stanza is structural, metaphoric and semantic, making metaphoric meaning as the central motivation for the above NPs structures.

The patterns in the following extracts present another perspective of NG meaning:

Art for Ass Sake
But how can we shut the closet
On plebeian skulls cracking
Under patrician heels
On kings and queens, gorged on
our earth's wealth,
belching bullets on tattered masses
on Europe's African factories multiplying

    profit princes and profit partiahs

    on the wails of earth, *atererekaye*,

    trampled to pulp by empire hunters

    on sunset reapers burying wheat and meat

    just how bolt the door against

    the swansong of sprawling slums

    the last whimper of kwashiorkor children

    the desperate pall in the vagrant's eyes

    the lingering anguish in the beggar's song

    the building anger of buka banters   (*Nib*: 6).

The first part of this extract is headed by an inverted interrogative clause "how can we shut the closet [...]" to which all the NPs as object-referents of the verb "shut [...] on" are attached. It should be noted, however, that the adverb "on" is more part of "shut" as phrasal verb "shut on", but more of heading the NPs if the heading unit is converted to simple imperative sentence by deleting the *wh-* element "how" as in 'shut the closet *on* plebeian skulls [..]'. The immediate constituent pair of NPs has the structure *mhq.* The ideational relationship in the transitivity of the verbal element between the head noun objects of the NPs, orchestrated and made more intense by the structural repetition, is a paradigm of the victimizer and the victimized, in a manner that suggests the inequities in the socio-economic and political milieu of the 'socio-semio-linguistic life' of the context of situation/cultural referent thus:

- "Patrician heels" crack "plebian skulls" → repression between social classes of have and have not.
- "kings and queens" feed greedily on "our earth's wealth" → greed and self-centeredness
- "kings and queens" brutalize "tattered masses" → despotism and brutal power.
- "Europe" exploits/corners the wealth of "Africa" → colonialism and exploitation.
- "speculating moguls" and "empire hunters" drill/destroy "The Earth" → oil barons, developed nations exploiting other nations and
- "sunset reapers" (economic saboteurs/speculators) engage in hoarding "wheat and meat" (goods and services) → scandalous profit at the expense of the disadvantaged.

The second part of the poem has *mhq* as the structure of the NPs (E.g. the/ swansong/ of sprawling slums). The NPs show the structural sameness and a *cause-effect* relationship between the pair of head nouns in the NPs. Consequently thus:

the "sprawling slums" (poverty/disease) is the cause of "the swansong" (sadness and sorrow), "kwashiorkor" is the cause of "last whimper (death) of children", "lingering anguish" (poverty) is the cause of "beggar's song" (cry for help) and, finally, "building anger" (lack of basic social needs) is the cause of "buka banters" (growing public discontent and agitation).

The second NG taxonomy in Osundare's poetry is categorized by the fact of the structural composition in which the poem concerned is wholly made of NPs without overt subject element in the body of the composition. However, the subject matter-thesis is usually the title of the poem, and it is the title that the NPs directly interpret. Let us illustrate this, using the following example:

Earth

1. Temporary basement
2. and lasting roof
3. First clayey coyness
4. And last alluvial joy
5. Breadbasket
6. And compost bed
7. Rocks and rivers
8. Muds and mountains
9. Silence of the twilight sea
10. Echoes of the noonsome tidè
11. Milk of mallowing moon
12. Fore of tropical hearth
13. Spouse of the roving sky
14. Virgin of a thousand offsprings
15. *Ògéré amókó yerí* (*Eye*: 1).

This poem is composed of the NG structures: *mh* (lines 1-8), for example, temporary-*m*/basement-*h,* and *hq* (lines 9-14), for example, silence-h/of the twilight sea-*q*. The thesis on which the NPs are heaped is "Earth", the title-thesis. In Yoruba worldview, '*Ilè',* the earth on which we trek is powerful and has both supernatural and economic implications. These implications are embodied in Yoruba semiotics of *Ilè*, particularly as found in its *oríkì* (praise song) as in "[*Ilè*] Ògéré, amókó yerí" (line 15). What Osundare does here is reinvent the reverence of '*ilè*" in the semiotics, as the earth we trek on into *ilè* as Mother Earth, as the source of human existence and as element of our planetary make up. Consequently, for the purpose of perceiving the relevance of "Earth", the ideational functions of the NPs are constructed to express the thematic content of both the modifiers

and qualifiers, including the metaphoric relations instituted in the NPs, in relation to the title-thesis of the poem. The NPs with *mh* structures carry both descriptive and metaphoric relation between the *m* and *h* elements, adjectives and metaphors being the poet's motivation as pointed out in the introduction. For example, "temporary basement" will mean an abode or accommodation, with the pragmatic implication of transitory existence on earth, while "lasting roof" implicates burial accommodation, defining "earth" as accommodating all- both human existence on earth (basement) and when dead and buried in the earth ("lasting roof").

On the other hand, the NGs with *hq* metaphorically relate "Earth" as the appositive of the immediate one-member NGs in the structure. For example, "milk/ of mellowing moon" (*hq*) is *earth as food*, metaphorically feeding the "moon," resulting in its beauty- "mellowing." Similarly, "spouse of the roving sky" (*hq*) metaphorically instructs the ecological synergy of the elements of "Earth," the metaphorical synergy, which, in each case, informs the conceptual interpretation of the meaning embodied in the nominal group map of the poem. Again, the nouns and the modifying units exhibit phonic relation, as in "*clay*ey *coy*ness" (line 3), "*r*ocks and *r*ivers" (line 7), "*m*uds and *mo*untain" (line 8), "*m*ilk of *me*llowing *mo*on" (line 11). It is an alliterative interplay not dispassionate of thematic focus, but intensifies and promotes prominence and the semantic connectedness in the structures.

The next example in this category shows that the stylistics of the NG syntax connects the persona/poet's purpose of artistic drudgery as being a motivation of the poet's passionate social commitment to the course of the larger society, usually described as 'the masses' of the society, found in the lower and middle class of the society. The following poem illustrates our claim:

Peopled imagination (2)
1. Of the thread of dawn
2. So active in the loom
3. Of shutting sun
4. Of leaf-draped roosts
5. Where noon gathers the wisest winds
6. And ancient riddles explode
7. At the root of listening trees
8. I want to go down the alley
9. Of lengthening shadows
10. With ears warmed by human voices

11.   And a memory which yarns the echoes
12.   Of forgotten tongues. (*Memory*: 119).

This poem is an abstraction from the story telling tradition and context of Yoruba 'socio-semio-linguistic life'. The persona/poet is fascinated by it, its setting; lines (1-7) and its people-based motivation; lines (8-10), including, more importantly, the stories that are narrated; lines (11-12). In this poem, Osundare uses the syntax of NG and embodies it in stylistically exciting metaphors, reinventing and renewing a simple 'ordinary' scenario of traditional storytelling, under a shady tree; lines (4-5) where people traditionally gather and unwind by listening to a griot-story teller narrates fables, myths and historical events (lines 6-7) of bygone ages, into a most pungent template of poetic cantata, which incites Osundare's poetic imagination and purpose; lines (8-10). For its thematic purpose, stanzas (1-2) provide the motivation while stanzas (3-4) are the desire incited by stanzas (1-2). This is a major pragmatic composite relationship that can be drawn in the poem.

The desire in stanzas (3-4) is expressed by the clause in stanza (3); "I want [...] tongues", whereby the two stanzas are conjoined by the additive conjunction "and" in stanza (4). The structure of the title NP *mh→* peopled/imagination is a metaphorical construction which institutes "imagination" (creative sensibility) *as space*, where people stay as occupants. Following this, the modifier "peopled" has double semantic orientation of both 'people' and 'occupants'. This suggests that the product of that "imagination", art of poetry and its function will and should necessarily be people-oriented, an ideology that rates itself over and above "art for art's sake." If we take the title phrase "peopled imagination" as part of the body of the poem (stanzas 1–2), that is what it is anyway, then we will have the title-thesis as *mh* while the body of the NPs in stanzas (1–2) becomes the *q,* as immediate constituent NP, becoming *mhq* syntactic structure as the following analysis shows:

m	h	q
NP→ Peopled/	imagination/	Of the thread of dawn So active in the loom Of shutting sun (stanza 1).

m	h	q
NP→ Peopled/	imagination/	Of leaf-draped roosts Where noon gathers the wisest winds/ And ancient riddles explode /At the root of listening trees (stanza 2).

The genitive "*of*", heading the immediate constituent NPs, relates the head NP "peopled imagination" as the appositive of all the rankshifted NPs, both in their syntax and metaphorical interpretation. For illustration: "thread of dawn" (*hq*) as "peopled imagination" (*mh*) is the artistic composition informed by people-driven sensibilities. All the other NPs at the secondary degree of grammatical delicacy; "loom of a shuttling sun" (*hq*) stanza (1), "the wisest winds" (*mh*), "ancient riddles" (*mh*) and "the root of listening trees" (*mhq*) stanza (2) define and characterize, metaphorically, the immediate rankshifted NP of which the *h* of the immediate constituent NP is an appositive. The idea of "peopled imagination" and "I am a poet, my memory is a house" appeal to the sense of the poet's commitment as a writer who puts his imagination (writing), at the risk of his life, to the service of his community. Thus the central pontificating here is a counter discourse, I believe, against "art for art sake", but art for a purposeful egalitarian politico-economic structures and social reordering in which justice and equal opportunities are respected. Further example of this category is analyzed thus and it expresses some of the social ills the poet abhors:

Questions
1. What are
2. dogs that cannot bark
3. Lion days that cannot roar
4. Ram days that cannot swim
5. Gold days that cannot glow
6. Towncrier-days without a voice
7. Temple days without a god...
8. Some days are a magnet that
9. Cannot win the love of common metal   (*Days*: 107).

In this poem, there are two forms of qualifying elements relating to the head NPs: a restrictive relative clause, headed by the adverb "what" and a noun phrase headed by the negative conjunction "without" as in the following syntactic analysis:

— "Lion days"- head NG (*mh*)/ "*that* cannot roar"- qualifying restrictive relative clause (*q*) line (3). "Towncrier-days"- head NG (*mh*)/"*without* a voice"- qualifying noun phrase (*mh*) line (6).

Interestingly lines (8-9) are a clause with the structure SVC, with the C (*mhq* NP) composed of two noun phrases and a dependent clause thus:

- "a magnet that cannot win the love of common metal" (C) → a magnet (head NG) *mh*/ "that cannot [...] metal" (*q*) → clause (that cannot win) and noun phrase: "the

love of common metal" (*mhq*). This means that the relationship between the clause and the noun phrases in the (C) slot is to be understood in terms of the attributes lacking in the object-referent head NP in the (S) slot, which the qualifying clause and noun phrase define and institute in terms of the co-referential relationship between the units. The interesting thing is that the structure of the clause in the (C) slot (8-9) will still perform the same ideational function of the question NPs lines (2-7) if reversed as interrogative and the clause unit deleted. In addition, the clause composition, it seems, appears like an 'after thought' to serve as 'additive' information and a reiterative impulse of meaning. The question is how does this stylistic construction of syntactic/semantic connectedness make pragmatic poetic meaning and serve aesthetic purpose, in this instance?

The pragmatics of the poem is a riddle by interrogation: "What are [...]" The interrogative context serves as the metaphorical conceptualization within which the riddles are to be decoded. The conceptualization lies in the surprising negative equation between the referent NGs and the semantic content of the verbal element introduced by the negation element "cannot" as in the following examples "*dog* days [...] cannot *bark*", "*lion* days [...] cannot *roar*", "*fish* days [...] cannot *swim*" and "magnet [...] cannot *win* (attract) the love of common *metal* (metaphorical). The pragmatic sensibilities and the interrogative structure, reformulated though, are analogous to a Yoruba oral narrative tradition of which "*Àló àpamò*" is one. *Àló àpamò* is a brain-cudgeling riddle which incites surprise in view of the result which contradicts expectation. For example, "What passes by the king without paying obeisance/respect to the king?" The answer: "erosion water" (water passing by after a rain down pour). Similarly, "What dines with the king and does not clear the table?" The answer: "house flies". The figurative evocation is that all things bear their characters, and that is the expectation, anything contrary is an aberration. Human beings should bear their humanity and people holding public positions should bear the responsibilities of their various offices. Thus, the understanding in the relational structures of the NPs would suggest an indictment of the social situation described. In effect, the juxtaposition of the units in each of the NPs in which the second unit contradicts the other by the mediation of the negative "cannot"- for instance, "dog days [...] cannot bark" is, by interpretation, a discourse about public service ineptitude, which Osundare finds disgusting and abhors.

Finally, we have also identified a structure that we can describe as layering sequencing of the NG patterns. This is a pattern that involves variety of grammatical linkers, including ellipsis to produce aesthetic and semantic intensity as we have in the following analysis:

In Praise of Little Thing

> Of the glittering shards of imperial gold
> The sceptre's septic sway
> Purple pimples on the royal phallus
> The queen's pretty goiter
> Doddering dialect of the diadem
> Bile-tipped spears of accumulated rage
> Crowns in the dust crowns the dust the dust crowns in   (*Words*: 36).

Thematically, the poem makes nonsense of and ridicules that which is venerated in the context of self and corrupt aggrandizement. This extract is made up of seven NGs, and there are three different grammatical linkers present in the units of the NGs: genitive *of*, possessive "*s*", adverb '*on*'. For examples, "the glittering shards *of* imperial gold" and "the queen's pretty goiter". I also note that the intense relationship and the tension built up in each of the NPs, except one, are brought about by the oxymoronic sense created in the poem. For example, "glittering shards" NP unit contradicts "imperial gold" NP unit in the group. Similarly, "doddering dialect" contradicts "diadem". The same cognition is conceptualized in NGs (*mh*) "royal phallus", pretty goiter" and "sceptre's septic sway" because the semantic content of the modifier contradicts or does not collocate with the semantic content of modified head noun. The layering is structurally and semantically achieved. Structurally, each of the NGs has basically the same structure *mhq*. For examples, "purple/ pimples/ on the royal phallus"→ *mhq,* "Doddering/ dialect/ of the diadem"→ *mhq.* On the semantic side, the NG schema projects a rage of metaphorical abuse to deride royalty and religion, and the scorn finds violence in the metaphor of "Bile-tipped spears of accumulated rage" *mhq,* that is *angry human are weapons-* long oppressed, denied people are ready to fight back and liberate themselves from brutal, tyrannical governments. Thus the NGs achieved a contrast of conflict, where in most cases the semantic content of one NP unit derides and exposes the ephemeral nature of the referent of the other NP unit. The thematic scheme that is instituted relates to royalty of corruption, religion of deceit and deception, including the larger societal fury against them. Furthermore, this example can be found in "*Alupayida*" (Words: 55). In it is the conflation of the syntactic pattern, where one unit necessarily relates to the other, to the surrealistic image of 'alupayida'; again, a reformulation from oral narrative tradition in Yoruba semiotics, which projects "cause- and- effect" relation of the transformation of the poetic persona from one element to the other achieved by layering of NG through coordination and attributive syntactic construction.

Conclusion

The identified patterns of Osundare's NG stylistics so far analyzed are representatives of what we can find across the body of the poet's oeuvre. Even though each can commonly be found in Osundare's poetry as distinct stylistic patterns, forming the totality of a composition, they are most pervasive in the collection *Waiting Laughters* (1990). In general stylistic term, the deployment constructs a refrain of endless "waiting", by the repetitive construct of "Waiting" in which the reference-meaning of the "waiting" is encoded in the NGs, essentially embedding metaphors and images in which meanings are palpable for themes and message. In Osundare's other collections, the NG patterns are found as amalgam of semantic and figurative communication of meaning, and their structural patterns and rhythmic value are, in the main, as previously explained, mostly reformulated abstraction from the Yoruba panegyric and incantatory poetic tradition. Further in this regard, our discovery is that the NG patterns serve, as already demonstrated the framework in which Osundare's metaphoricity is, in the main, created to conceptualize meaning. In other cases, the NG patterns are wide spread and the patterns are interplayed or blended and made mutually expressive of the thematic and aesthetic purposes of Osundare's poetry.

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