

STYLOMETRIC ANALYSIS OF MAIK ORTSEGA'S 'SEASON OF RAIN'

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Abstract

Stylistics of counting which is widely known as stylometry or stylostatics has been effective in identifying authors of disputed texts or authors' idiosyncrasies. This study examines recurrent linguistic stylistic features in 'Season of Rain' under graphology, phonology, lexis, syntax and semantics. The authors adopted Enkvist's (1973) Statistical Universals' approach for analysing 'Season of Rain.' This approach entails that a stylolinguist or stylostatician should select dominant features that texts have in common. These universal features establish that such works belong to a particular author. The primary datum is Ortserga's 'Season of Rain' which was posted on his Facebook wall on the 27th May, 2022. The instrument for data elicitation involved critical reading of the select poem; classifying these style markers into graphology, phonology, lexis, syntax and semantics then counting and discussing their stylistic relevance. It has been discovered that grapho-phonological style markers produce sound-meaning nexus. The repetition of phonic devices and sentential structures brings about phonological and syntactic foregrounding. Semantic features enhance the understanding of the poem under study and have allegorical and metaphorical interpretations.

Keywords: Season of Rain, Style, Stylistics, Stylometric Analysis, Stylometry

Introduction

In-depth studies of stylistic features of literary and non-literary texts reveal a lot about authors. Such studies compare works written by one author and other authors to bring about their idiolects or idiosyncrasies. Critical evaluation of texts by counting dominant linguistic features is widely known as stylometry or stylostatics which has been effective in identifying authors of disputed texts. However,

this study approaches stylometry in a different perspective. It examines recurrent stylistic features in 'Season of Rain' under graphology, phonology, lexis, syntax and semantics. It does not intend to investigate the authors of disputed texts and to compare their works. Maik Ortserga, an erudite poet who reflects contemporary issues in his compositions, is currently the Secretary-General of the Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA). His poems dwell on incessant killings, hunger and starvation, bad governance, power tussle, unemployment, kidnapping and other social vices. As rich as Ortserga's poems are, they have not received scholarly attention. This paucity of critical studies on his works is what this study attempts to fill.

Review of related Literature

Crystal and Derek (1969) define style in terms of idiolect, that is, language habits of one person. The import of this definition is that style defines an individual's personality. Style is a man and expresses man's thought. McMnamin (2002, p. 132) states that writers' styles are characterized by their special 'aggregate set of grammatical patterns' that they often use in their discourses. McMnamin therefore maintains that the study of individual style markers as seen in the writer's idiolect and dialect of a group is what is known as linguistic stylistics. Missikova (2003) and Jeffries and McIntyre (2010) aver that the study of style in any given language is what is called stylistics. This style can be archaic style, style of a given period, idiolect, dialects in literary texts, variations in language use and deviation from the norms. Nørgaard, Busse and Montoro (2010) opine that stylistics describes how meaning is utilized in literary and non-literary texts. This shows how texts project meaning, how readers construct meaning and why readers respond to texts in the way that they do. According to Ray (2015), stylistics analyses and interprets literary and non-literary texts by using methods and models that are understood by writers and readers. Gibbons and Whiteley (2018) simply describe stylistics as the scientific study of language and literature. Aor (2019, p. 26) defines stylistics as 'a branch of applied linguistics that makes use of texts as its 'raw material' - thus subsuming

it under textlinguistics.' Aor's definition has been adopted in this study because Ortserga's 'Season of Rain' is a literary text which has been analysed using graphology, phonology, syntax, lexis and semantics.

The above authors hinged on style, language, linguistics and literature. Authors have different dictions, registers, sentential arrangements and formation of words. Language is a medium through which authors' styles are identified and evaluated and linguistics provides levels of language descriptions such as graphology, study of layout, punctuations, spelling and graphics; phonology/phonetics studies the description, transmission, perception and sound patterns of individual languages; morphology studies internal arrangement or structure of words; syntax studies rules of sentence formation or construction and semantics/pragmatics studies linguistic meaning/contextual meaning. The use of the above levels of descriptive linguistics varies from one author and the other. Distinctive use of stylistic devices results in different styles.

Stylistics as a sub-discipline of applied linguistics is vitally important. Bradford (1997) submits that stylistics aids stylisticians to identify striking features of literary texts and classify them into genres. Thornborrow and Wareing (1998) affirm that stylistics uses linguistics to discuss literary texts; it is objective in its operations and it foregrounds the aesthetic features of language. Simpson (2004 and 2014) emphasizes the rigorousness, retrievability and replicability of stylistic analysis. Rigorous means that the analysis should be thorough and should use 'explicit framework of analysis.' Retrievable indicates that such analysis should use clear terms and criteria. Replicable presupposes that the methods used should call for verification by other stylisticians.

Enkvist (1973) stresses the prominent role of statistics in the stylolinguistic description of texts and states that style has been said to be a statistical and probabilistic branch of linguistics. Kenny (1982) asserts that the statistical study of style in modern times began in 1851 when Augustus de Morgan advised that some of St Paul's writings be authenticated by measuring the length of sentences and words in his

Epistles. Kenny further maintains that Mendenhall was the first person that measured the frequency distributions of word-length. Malkjær (1995) substantiates that stylometry supports evidence in law courts, aids in authorship authentication and interpretive stylistics. Abrams and Harpham (2005, p. 352) opine that stylometry is the 'quantitative measurement of the features of an individual writer's style.' Crystal (2008, p. 460) asserts that stylometry or stylostatistics deals with the 'quantification of stylistic patterns.' Crystal maintains that the study of the statistical structure of literary texts is within the purview of stylometry. Zhukovska (2010, p.14) asserts that statistical stylistics or stylometrics deals with the 'peculiarities of language units functioning in texts of different functional styles obtaining the objective data by applying certain methods of statistics.'

According to Wales (2011), stylometry is a branch of linguistic stylistics that uses statistical analyses to investigate linguistic patterns so as to identify authors of such literary works. Wales (2011) avers that stylometry investigates multivariate features of texts like collocations, connectives, parallel structures, length of words and length of sentences in different texts to identify the authors of disputed texts. A stylometrician carefully selects stylistically significant features that distinguish one writer from the other. Hollingsworth (2012) employed syntactic devices for stylometric analysis to determine authorship attribution.

Similarly, López-Escobedo, Méndez-Cruz, Sierra and Solórzano-Soto (2013) used corpus-based stylometric analysis for authorship attribution. Their study made use of dialect, register, text and genre as corpus-based features. Furthermore, Colin (2013) examined authorship attribution case of Facebook. Bolt, Flynt, Chaudhuri and Dexter (2019) identified lexical, syntactic, semantic and rhetorical aspects of the texts for analysing Latin literary style stylometrically.

The above review touched on the identification of authors of disputed texts. It dwelled on studies carried out in other countries, not Nigeria. This study uses stylometric analysis to count and discuss frequencies of graphological, phonological, lexical, syntactic and

semantic devices in Ortserga's 'Season of Rains.' This study proves that all genres of literature can be analysed using stylometry as seen in Ortserga's poem. The study does not involve any attempt to investigate authorship identification hence the author of the poem is well-known.

Theoretical Framework and Research Methodology

The author adopted Enkvist's (1973) Statistical Universals' approach for analysing 'Season of Rain.' He maintains that stylisticians may identify those statistical patterns that are common to large samples of texts. These common statistical patterns are known as statistical universals. The statistical universals in the select poem have been discussed under graphology, phonology, lexis, syntax and semantics. The authors set up an inventory of those statistical features that are potential style markers of the select poem. This approach aids in counting style markers such as length of words, syllable structures, various forms of repetitions, syntactic parallelisms and various kinds of meaning.

The authors used primary and secondary sources of data analysis. The primary datum is Ortserga's 'Season of Rain' which was posted on his Facebook wall on the 27th May, 2022. The instrument for data elicitation involved critical reading of the select poem; classifying these style markers into graphology, phonology, lexis, syntax and semantics then counting and discussing their stylistic relevance.

Analysis of 'Season of Rains'

The study is discussed under the following headings: graphological devices (stanzas, lines, words and punctuations); phonological devices (figures of repetitions and syllable structure); lexical devices (word classes); syntactic devices (types of sentences and syntactic parallelisms) and semantic features such as metaphor, personification, hyperbole and synecdoche.

Graphological Analysis of the 'Season of Rain'

Graphological devices look at the layouts (stanzas, lineation, end-stopped lines, run-on-lines), typographical features (font types, font sizes), orthographic features (spelling, punctuations, hyphenation, italicisation, boldening, capitalisation) of the entire poem. These graphological devices add visual appeals, prominence, legibility, clarity, loudness and smooth pronunciation. These graphological devices have been discussed below:

Stanza

A stanza is a graphological device of a layout that ties the verses of a given poem together. It is graphically shown by the use of white spaces. These white spaces may be double-spaced for emphasis. This poem is divided into three stanzas of unequal length. Stanza one has six verses that describe the time for electioneering campaign 'the wet season' where jumbo-sized politicians 'bloated toads' come with their sweet-coated tongues to give demagogic speeches 'acres of lies' to gullible masses 'fertile ears.' These politicians easily cross-carpet if they do not win and buy nomination tickets at exorbitant amount of money 'billion dollar.' Stanza two which has three verses expresses the effects of maladministration, corruption and non-challant attitudes of politicians to the masses. The schools are in dilapidated state, youths have indulged in vices as a result of unemployment, insecurity and abject poverty in the country. There is a proliferation of sophistication weapons that people use to main, destroy and kill. The last stanza which has four verses suggests ways of curbing the excesses of politicians by voting politicians that can bring positive changes so as to rescue Nigeria from the jaws of death. The choice of three stanzas by the poet is vitally important because there is a free-flow of thoughts which enhances graphological foregrounding. Admixtures of irregular stanzas and lines in the select poems foreground the themes, add variety and enhance rhythm.

Verse

Poems are written in lines and stanzas and a line in a poem is known as a verse. The poem has irregular number of words per line. In stanza one, verses 1-3 have six words each; Verse 4 has seven words; verse 5 has seven words and verse 6 has nine words. Stanza one indicates that the first three verses have equal words but there is a quantum leap from six words to nine words in verse six of stanza one. Furthermore, stanza two has three verses with four words each. These verses have syntactic parallelism. Lastly, in stanza three, verses 10-11 are made up of eight words each; verse 12 comprises four words and verse 13 consists of three words. The stylistic relevance of word length helps in identifying author's diction, especially, in disputed texts. Generally, the deployment of monosyllables, bisyllables and polysyllables provides different degrees of enunciations and cadences in the 'Season of Rain.'

Economy of Punctuation Marks

There is economy of punctuation marks in the poem. All the lines are not marked off with any punctuation marks. The poem has *enjambments* or *run-on-lines*; that is, no end-stopped lines. This enhances fast reading hence there are no caesuras and end-stopped punctuations like full stop, question marks and exclamation marks. The title of the poem is foregrounded by the use of uppercase 'SEASON OF RAIN.' There is a graphological deviation on line five where the first letter begins with a lowercase *t* - 'they defect from one dirty pond to another.' The quantum leap from capital letters to a lower-case *t* in 'they' is what Leech (1969) calls unexpected regularity. There is only one hyphenated word - 'mouth-wide' - used in the poem to form an adjectival compound. Graphological devices foreground the beauty of this poem, enhance fast-paced reading and metrical architecture.

Phonological Analysis of the 'Season of Rain'

The poem under discussion resonates with phono-stylistic devices which add euphony, rhythm and music. According to Thornborrow and Wareing (1998), the reasons for using sound and

metrical patterns in a poetic work include: aesthetic pleasure, poetic and stylistic arrangements, experimenting or innovating with a form, demonstrating technical skill, and for intellectual pleasure, emphasis or contrast, and onomatopoeic reasons. The sound patterning comprises use of rhyme, symplce, assonance, alliteration, onomatopoeia, alliterations, anaphora, epistrophe, enjambments/run-on-lines and syllables.

Rhyme

Rhyme occurs when words have similar sounds in the middle or end of the lines. This poem under study has instances of end-rhymes. Rhymes must not have the same spellings before they are qualified to be called rhymed words. Words that have different spellings may perfectly rhyme, as in lines 5 and 6 of 'Season of Rain': 'another' and 'dollar' /ə`nʌðə/ and /`dɒlə/. The rhyming scheme of the select poem is presented and transcribed for easy comprehension below:

Rhymed words	Transcriptions	Rhyming Scheme
again	/ə`geɪn/	a
rain	/reɪn/	a
ear	/ɪə/	b
ear	/ɪə/	b
another	/ə`nʌðə	/ c
dollar	/`dɒlə/	c
broken	/`brəʊkən/	d
broken	/`brəʊkən/	d
overtaken	/əʊvə`teɪkən/	d
ours	/aʊəz/	e
ours	/aʊəz/	e
trapped	/træpt/	f
clapped	/klæpt/	f

The rhymed words add rhythmical appeals to the poem under study. Rhyming is also used for metrical orchestration and aid in knowing words that have similar sounds or syllables. Rhyme serves as a

cohesive device that links two syllables at line end which have identical medial vowels and final consonants as indicated in the poem under study. Rhymes as schemes create an architecture which links lines into larger complexes of pattern and meaning in Ortserga's 'Season of Rain.' Rhyme defines the metrical shape of the whole poem and establishes linkages with other sound patterning within the poetic lines. Furthermore, the reiteration of similar sounding syllables and words brings about aesthetic appeal to the select poem. Finally, the effect of rhyme on auditors and readers both inside and outside poetry is well known: it is a powerful mnemonic device.

Symploce

Symploce /sɪmpləʊsɪ:/ is the repetition of similar words at the beginning and/or end of lines. The repetition of similar words at the beginning of lines or sentences is called *anaphora* while the reiteration of similar lexical items at the end of lines or sentences is known as *epistrophe*. It is symploce that is bifurcated into anaphora and epistrophe. Symploce enhances phonological foregrounding. It is a special figure of sound which has correspondences of words and phrases at the beginning and end of successive sentences or lines.

Our schools are broken

Our youths are broken

'Our' is reiterated at the beginning of the two lines and the verb phrase 'are broken' is echoed at the end of successive lines.

The choice to make a change is ours

The decision to save Nigeria's soul is ours

The determiner 'The' is echoed at the initial lines of the poem and a phrase 'is ours' is repeated at the end of successive lines. The repetition of 'Our' and 'The' at the beginning of the above excerpts is an instance of anaphora while the reiteration of 'are broken' and 'is ours' constitutes epistrophe. The repetition of same word or phrase helps to make words memorable and pleasurable as it leads to rhythm

and cadence to the poem thereby all aiding the audience to understand the select poem better. The occurrence of same words or phrases at the beginning and end of lines or sentences brings about heavy rhythm in the poem under study. This repetition unites similar lexical items together. That means that symproce results in syntactic parallelisms as indicated in the above sentences. The matching of similar sounding words brings about visual beauty and phonological cadence in the ‘Season of Rain.’

Assonance

Assonance /`æʃənəns/ repeats similar vowel sounds in the lines of poetry. Similarly, Trask (1996) defines assonance as the recurrence of similar vowel letters or vowel sounds in two or more words in a phrase or in a poem. Assonance adds cohesion in the poem or prose-fiction, since identical vowel sounds tie words together. Assonance contributes to sonority, half-rhymes and vowel harmony. The following are examples of assonance italicised below:

- i. ‘Bloated toads croak in the rain’ line 2 - reiteration of diphthong /əʊ/.
- ii. ‘Smiling mouth-wide from ear to ear’ line 3 - repetitions of /aɪ/ and /ɪə/ diphthongs.
- iii. ‘... lies on fertile...’ line 4 - diphthong /aɪ/ is repeated.
- iv. ‘... doom bought...’ line 6 - long back vowel /u:/ is emphasized.
- v. ‘Crazy...overtaken’ line 9 - diphthong /eɪ/ diphthong recurs.
- vi. ‘... make a change...’ line 10 - /eɪ/ diphthong echoes.
- vii. ‘We either...’ line 12 - long front vowel /ɪ:/ is reiterated.

The poet uses long vowels such as /u:/ and /ɪ:/ and diphthongs like /əʊ/, /aɪ/, /ɪə/ and /eɪ/ in the poem to emphasize the seriousness of his message. These heavy vowels further foreground the solemnity of the poem. For instance, ‘Bloated toads croak...’ expresses jumbo-size

nature of the toads and deep, hoarse and loud sound that such ugly creatures emit. The onomatopoeicity of line 2 is horrific and frightening. Finally, the choice of long vowels and diphthongs is stylistically marked hence it shows how much Nigerian politicians maltreat those they are representing.

Alliterations

Alliteration is phono-stylistic device that repeats consonant sounds in the lines of poetry or paragraphs. The repetition of consonants in the lines of poetry results in phonological foregrounding. The stylistic effect of alliteration is creation of some musical effects, imitate sounds and give more thrust to certain words. It also creates memorability. The following lines alliterate:

- i. '...defect ...dirty...' line 5 – voiced alveolar stop /d/ alliterate.
- ii. '...they ...another' line 5 – voiced palate-alveolar /ð/ is repeated.
- iii. 'And...doom...dollar' line 6 – voiced alveolar fricative is foregrounded.
- iv. '...tickets...bought ...' line 6 – voiceless alveolar stop is reiterated.
- v. '...save Nigeria's soul...' line 11 – voiceless alveolar fricative alliterate.
- vi. '...stay trapped' line 12 – voiceless alveolar stop is reiterated.
- vii. '...get trapped' line 13 – voiceless alveolar stop is reiterated.

Alliteration, assonance, anaphora, epistrophe symploce and other sound patterning describe various sounds that poets utilise in their works. Alliteration and other phonic devices constitute phonological parallelism, repetition, aesthetics, memorability and musicality in the select poem. Alliteration reinforces the meaning of the select poem. It also links related words and enhances the palpability of enunciating the words.

Onomatopoeias

Onomatopoeia is one of the phono-stylistic devices that has morphological, syntactic and semantic relevance in the literary texts. Etymologically, onomatopoeia is a Greek word meaning: ‘name-making’. Onomatopoeias facilitate the degree of musicality because they mimic man-made and natural sounds. The only onomatopoeia in the poem is found on line 2: ‘Bloated toads *croak* in the rain.’ The word *croak* is an onomatopoeic verb that suggests or describes the sound made by toads. The adjective ‘bloated’ suggests that the sound made by these fat toads is hoarse, fearful and horrific. The hoarse and coarse sound that the ‘bloated toads’ emit portends force, danger, domination, subjugation, power and authority.

Syllables

A syllable implies a unit of pronunciation. A syllable has a nucleus/peak/vowel as an obligatory element whereas onset and coda are optional components of a syllable. The structure of a syllable comprises an onset, a vowel and a coda. Monosyllabic words such as *a* /eɪ/, *or* /ɔ:/, *are* /ə/, *ah* /ɑ:/, *owe* /oʊ/, *oh* /əʊ/, *ear* /ɪə/, *air* /eə/, *err* /ɜ:/ can act as peaks of English language syllables. The select poem has a total of 77 words which are divided into 56 monosyllables: *the, wet, is, here, toads, croak, in, the, rain, from, ear, to, ear*; 17 disyllabic words: *season, again, bloated, smiling, mouth-wide, planting, acres, fertile*; 3 trisyllables: *another, decision, Nigeria’s* and 1 quadrasyllabic word – *overtaken*. The overkill of monosyllables enhances fast-paced reading and also shows that politicians can wreak havoc to the masses without much ado. The admixture of monosyllables, bisyllables and polysyllables spices the structure and the recitation of this poem.

In addition, the select poem has open, closed, light and heavy syllables. An open syllable ends with a vowel/nucleus/peak. In other words, an open vowel does not have a coda. A closed syllable ends with a coda, that is, final consonant. Open and closed syllables are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Monosyllables, bisyllables, trisyllables and quadrasyllable, open and closed syllables in the ‘Season of Rain’

Syllable	Monosyllable	Bisyllable	Trisyllable	Quadrasyllable	Total
s	s	s	s	s	1
Open	22	3	1	0	26
Closed	34	14	2	1	51
Total	56	17	3	1	77

The open monosyllabic examples show that *ear*, *they*, *our*, *stay* and *or* are open syllables. This is because letters *r* and *y* are vowels when they precede vowels. Thus, *ear*, *or*, *our*, *stay* and *they* are transcribed as /ɪə/, /ɔ:/, /aʊə/, /steɪ/ and /ðeɪ/, respectively. Furthermore, *change*, *choice*, *have*, *make*, *one* and *save* are examples of closed syllables because the final letter *e* is deleted as seen in their transcriptions: /tʃeɪndʒ/, /tʃɔɪs/, /hæv/, /meɪk/, /wʌn/ and /seɪv/. Toads /təʊdz/, schools /sku:lz/, youths /ju:ðz/, trapped /træpt/ and clapped /klæpt/ are the only words that have double coda, that is, two consonant clusters at the word-final position. The overall impact of syllable architecture in the select poem is to enhance rhythmical appeals, prosodic analysis, poetic metre and rhyming scheme. The utilisation of monosyllables, bisyllables and polysyllables spices the entire poem.

Lexical Analysis of the ‘Season of Rain’

The poet stylistically deploys lexical items that convey the meaning of his poem. Etymologically, McArthur (1992) states that the word ‘lexis’ was coined in the 1960 from Greek *lexis* meaning ‘speech.’ Lexis refers to ‘the vocabulary of a language’ and Aarts, Chalker and Weiner (2014) define lexis as the stock of words in a language and the level of language comprising vocabulary of a given language. These lexical items used in the poem belong to adjectives, verbs, nouns, pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions, adverbs and determiners. The poem contains six adjectives (wet, bloated, mouth-wide, fertile, dirty, crazy) that modify nouns such as: ‘wet season,’ ‘bloated toads,’ ‘mouth-wide,’ ‘fertile ear,’ ‘dirty pond’ and ‘crazy guns.’ Apart from ‘mouth-wide,’

the remaining adjectives are pre-modified or used attributively. There are twenty action or doing words used in the poem. These verbs indicate past present and future actions. The verbs used in the poem are: *is, croak, smiling, planting, defect, bought, are, broken, are, broken, have, overtaken, make, is, save, is, stay, trapped, get* and *clapped*. Some of the verbs are combined to form verb phrases such as: *are broken, are overtaken, stay trapped* and *get clapped*. This means *are, stay* and *get* are auxiliaries and *broken, overtaken, trapped* and *clapped* are lexical verbs.

The poem also resonates with concrete and abstract, singular and plural, countable and uncountable, and genitive and qualifying nouns. There are twenty-one nouns in the select poems. The singular countable nouns are *season, rain, ear, ear, ear, pond, choice, change, decision, soul, toads*; plural countable nouns are *acres, lies, tickets, schools, youths, guns*; possessive noun as in *Nigeria's*; qualifier as in *billion dollar* and abstract noun *doom*. *Pronouns* are also used to replace nouns in the poem under discussion. There are two plural personal pronouns (*they* and *we*) and possessive pronouns (*ours* and *ours*) used in the poem under study.

In order to show various locations or directions in the poem, the poet subscribes to eleven singular *prepositions* to enhance fast-paced recitation. The poet uses *to* four times, *of* two times, *from* two times, *in* and *on* once. Furthermore, one alternative coordinating conjunction *or* and a correlative conjunction *either ... or* are used in the poem. Additionally, adverbial of place *here* and adverbial of frequency *again* have been equally used. Last but not the least, the poet deploys determiners before nouns and/or in the place of some nouns. These include four definite articles *the*, two indefinite articles *a*, two possessives *our*, one cardinal number *one* and pronominal determiner *another*. These determiners, which co-occur with nouns, express a wide range of semantic contrasts, such as quantities, numbers, distributions and determiner phrases (DP) in the select poem. These lexical items are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2: Lexical Items and their Frequency in ‘Season of Rain’

S/No.	Lexical Items	Frequencies
1	Adjectives	6
2	Verbs	20
3	Nouns	21
4	Pronouns	4
5	Prepositions	9
6	Conjunctions	3
7	Adverbs	2
8	Determiners	10
	Total	77

Syntactic Analysis of the ‘Season of Rain’

Ortserga’s poem is replete with figurative expressions but its syntactic architecture is very simple. There are two fragments, nine kernel or simple sentences and one compound sentence in the poem. Fragmentary sentences have no finite verbs in them. Enkvist (1973) defines fragments as sentences that lack finite verbs in the main clause. These fragments are found in lines three and four – ‘Smiling mouth-wide from ear to ear’ and ‘Planting acres of lies on fertile ear.’ The subjects of the above lines are implied or truncated, that is, ‘bloated toads’ is left out. They all start with non-finite verbs – ‘Smiling’ and ‘Planting’. These non-finite verbs do not show subject-verb concord. These fragments are graphically presented in Tables 3 and 4 below:

Table 3: Analysis of the Fragment ‘Smiling mouth-wide from ear to ear’

		VP			
V	Adj P	PP			
	Adj	P	N	P	N
Smiling	mouth-wide	from	ear	To	ear

In Table 3, the above fragment functions as a verb phrase (VP) which is headed by the non-finite verb ‘smiling.’ It is divided into

adjectival phrase (Adj P) ‘mouth-wide,’ prepositional phrase (PP) ‘from’ and noun phrase (NP) which is further branched into noun ‘ear,’ proposition ‘to’ and noun ‘ear.’

Table 4: Analysis of the Fragment ‘Planting acres of lies on fertile ear’

V	VP					
	NP		PP			
	N	P	N	P	Adj	N
Planting	acres	of	lies	on	fertile	ear

Table 4 also illustrates a verbal fragment which has non-finite verb ‘planting’ as the head of the phrase which is branched into a plural noun ‘lies,’ a preposition ‘of,’ a plural noun ‘lie’ and PP which further divides into a preposition ‘on,’ adjective ‘fertile’ and a noun ‘ear.’

The relevance of sentence fragments is to avoid stating the obvious. Sentences are made up of subjects and predicates but ‘Smiling mouth-wide from ear to ear’ and ‘Planting acres of lies on fertile ear’ do not have subjects. Therefore, the carriers or performers of the actions in the select poem are not stated. The absence of the subjects in the above statements is a syntactic deviation. This is a deviation from the norm of sentence formation.

Apart from the two fragments discussed above, there are nine kernel and/or simple sentences in the poem under study. Crystal (2008: 260) defines kernel clauses or sentences as ‘simple, active, affirmative and declarative (SAAD) sentences of language.’ This definition presupposes that kernel sentences do not contain any optional elements and they have indicative mood, active voice and positive polarity. By and large, kernel clauses do not have exclamations, interrogations, passives, parentheses, appositives, negations and imperatives. These kernel sentences are shown in Tables 5, 6 and 7 below.

Table 5: Analysis of a kernel clause: ‘Dirty guns have overtaken’

S					
NP			VP		
Adj	N		Aux	V	
Dirty	guns		have	overtaken	

Table 5 shows a simple declarative sentence whose NP comprises an adjective ‘Dirty’ and a plural noun ‘guns’ whereas its VP is branched into auxiliary verb ‘have’ and finite verb ‘overtaken.’ This sentence does not have optional elements such as passive, negation, exclamation and appositives.

Table 6: Analysis of a kernel clause: ‘The wet season is here again’

S					
NP			VP	Adv P	
Det	Adj	N	V	Adv	Adv
The	wet	season	is	here	again

Table 6 shows that the NP is modified by a determiner ‘The’ an adjective ‘wet;’ ‘is’ becomes its finite verb and it has adverbial phrases of place ‘here’ and frequency ‘again.’ There are no optional elements in the above sentence.

Table 7: Analysis of a kernel clause: ‘Bloated toads croak in the rain’

S					
NP		VP	PP		
Adj	N	V	P	Det	N
Bloated	toad	croak	in	the	rain

Table 7 has a NP which is branched into an adjective ‘Bloated’ and a noun ‘toad;’ VP has ‘croak’ as its finite verb and a PP which comprises a preposition ‘in,’ a determiner ‘the’ and a noun ‘rain’. The above three kernel sentences can only be analysed into phrases (NPs, VPs, Adj Ps, Adv Ps).

Furthermore, there is an instance of a compound sentence that amalgamates two simple sentences in lines 12 and 13. These two sentences - 'We either stay trapped' and 'Or get trapped' - when joined together produce 'We either stay trapped or get trapped.' This is analysed in Table 8 thus:

Table 8: Compounding of 'We either stay trapped' and 'Or get clapped'

		Simple Sentence 1			CON	Simple Sentence 2			
NP	CON	VP			(NP)	VP			
Pron.	Corel.	Con	Aux	V	Corel.	Con	(Pron.)	Aux	
We	either		stay	trapped	or		(we)	get	clapped

Table 8 clearly shows how lines 12 and 13 are synthesized to produce a compound sentence. Simple sentence 1 has a pronoun 'We' as its NP while simple sentence 2 has an implied NP (we). Simple sentence 1 has 'either' as a conjunction whereas simple sentence 2 has 'or' and the combination of 'either' ...'or' results in correlative conjunction. The two simple sentences have VPs. Variegated sentence patterning add variety to the select poem. The tedium of using simple sentences has been broken by employing fragments, passive and compound sentences.

Syntactic parallelism

Wales (2011) sees parallelism as the reiteration of similar structural patterns which depend on the principle of equivalence. Parallelism is also known as 'parison' (Wale 2011, p. 302). Oladayo (2011:47) affirms that parallelism 'ensures communicative efficacy'. Aor (2019) maintains that using parallelisms results in clarity, economy, equality, delight, rhythm, emphasis and balance. Generally, the use of parallel structures strengthens writing style, enhances readability, facilitates sentence formations and creates memorability.

Table 9: Syntactic parallelisms in: ‘Our schools are broken’ and ‘Our youths are broken’

		S		
	NP		VP	
Det	N	Aux	V	
Our	schools	are	broken	
Our	youths	are	broken	

The parallelisms in Table 9 reinforces syntactic equivalence; thus, resulting in rhythmical and euphonic appeals. The two simple sentences are bifurcated into NPs and VPs, respectively. They all have the same determiners ‘Our,’ plural nouns ‘schools’ and ‘youths’ and similar VPs ‘are broken.’ These sentences are very easy to process and comprehend. The overall effects of parallelisms in the select poems is to enhance cohesion.

Semantic Analysis of the ‘Season of Rain’

The poet carefully selects simple lexical items but uses them in figurative ways. Words acquire new meanings to express the Nigerian political scene that is full of abnormalities. The poet uses antilanguage to express the political instability, cross-carpeting, rigging of elections, vote buying, intimidations and killings call for sophisticated use of language. An arm-chair analyst may think that Ortserga’s diction is prosaic. It is not completely so hence most lexical items have been relexicalised to avoid shock and to enhance continued reading so as to get the intended meaning of the poem. The semantic aspects of this poem are effective deployment of metaphors, personifications, hyperboles and synecdoches.

Metaphoric Meaning

The word ‘metaphor’ is a derivation from a Greek word *metaphorá* which means *transference* of meaning. According to Bussmann (1998), metaphors are linguistic images which have similar

semantic features. There is a denotational transfer of meanings in metaphorical meanings. There is transference of meanings in the following phrases: 'wet season,' 'bloated toads,' 'the rain,' 'acres of lies' and 'pond.' These phrases do not mean 'rainy season,' 'fat toad,' 'the downpour,' 'fields of lies' and 'pond.' Metaphorically, 'wet season' is the time for electioneering campaign when politicians present their befitting manifestos. These manifestos are demagogically inclined hence they are not executed. A phrase 'bloated toads' is another metaphor that describes the physiques of Nigerian politicians. They look rotund, amorphous and obese. The noun 'toads' is a relexicalised or metaphorical word for politicians. Furthermore, the phrase 'the rain' connotatively refers to the time that politicians canvass or get more supporters for their political ambitions. Fake manifestos and unfulfilled promises are described as 'acres of lies.' These politicians have sweet-coated tongues that can say anything to appease the masses to vote for them. Finally, 'pond' is a metaphor that refers to political party. The poet says 'they defect from one dirty pond to another.' This means politicians easily cross-carpet from one political party to another. These metaphorical expressions conceal the harshness and bitter truth that the poet expresses. The relexicalisation of lexical items in the select poem is stylistically marked.

Personification

Personification is a figure of meaning in which human qualities are given to non-humans. The poet succeeds in giving human attributes of smiling, planting, soul, being crazy to bloated toads, guns and Nigeria, respectively. These characteristics have been transferred to non-humans to achieve stylistic effect. Instances of personification abound in the poem. These are 'smiling mouth-wide,' 'planting acres of lies,' 'crazy guns have overtaken,' and 'Nigeria's soul.' Bloated toads have been given the human attribute of smiling and planting which is an exclusive preserve of humans. Guns and Nigeria are presented as if they are human beings who have souls and can be crazy. Crazy guns can kill both innocent and guilty people.

Hyperbole

A hyperbole magnifies, amplifies, overstates and exaggerates facts for the sake of emphasis. The poet exaggerates that the politicians buy 'tickets of doom' with 'a billion dollar!' A billion dollar is an overstatement that the poet uses for emphasis. In the just concluded primaries in Nigeria in June 2022, presidential aspirants under the platform of All Progressive Congress (APC) bought nomination/expression of interest forms at the rate of one hundred million naira (100, 000000) while governorship aspirants under the same party bought theirs at the rate of fifty million naira (50, 000000). What the poet expresses is not far from truth. This semantic device amplifies or exaggerates the intended meanings for stylistic effects. Hyperbolic use of language further exposes the filthiness of Nigerian politics.

Synecdoche

Synecdoche is a figure of speech in which a part, container, bottle, cup and so on stand for a whole, the contained, alcohol, oil and water. This poem has instances of part-whole relationships. For example, 'season' in the Nigerian political realm represents four years. Also, the phrase 'ear to ear' means every person or electorate. 'Fertile ears' represents the masses that listen to politicians' manifestos. 'Nigeria's soul' is a personified synecdochic statement that stands for the whole of Nigeria. Synecdochic statements have euphemistic purpose in the select poem: name-calling is avoided and truth is concealed.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The analysis of 'Season of Rain' reveals the potentialities of style markers. Analysis showed that 'Season of Rain' has 3 stanzas, 13 lines and 77 words. Sonic devices such as alliteration, assonance, onomatopoeia and rhyme and symploce bring about emphasis, musicality, rhythm and memorability. The poem has 58 monosyllables, 17 disyllables, 3 trisyllables and 1 quadrasyllable. 'Season of Harvest' has

77 lexical items that comprise 6 adjectives, 20 verbs, 21 nouns, 4 pronouns, 9 prepositions, 3 conjunctions, 2 adverbs and 10 determiners. The select poem consists of 2 fragments, 8 kernel sentences, 1 compound sentence and 1 passive sentence. Grapho-phonological style markers produce sound-meaning nexus. The repetition of phonic devices and sentential structures brings about phonological and syntactic foregrounding. Semantic features enhance the understanding of the poem under study. This study will be of immense use to linguists, stylisticians, stylostatisticians, corpus linguists, computational linguists and literary critics.

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