PHONOLOGICAL STRUCTURES OF ICONICITY IN NIYI OSUNDARE'S *RANDOM BLUES* AND *WAITING LAUGHTERS*

By

Ray N. Chikogu
Department of English and Literature
University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria
Email: nwabenu.chikogu@uniben.edu

And

Liberty Osarodion Osemwenkhae

Abstract
This paper examines the deployment of phonological structures of iconicity in Niyi Osundare's *Random Blues* and *Waiting Laughters*. Relying on M. A. K. Halliday's conceptualization of style as motivated prominence, it studies the structures in a complementary relationship with other meaning-making linguistic features of syntax and lexico-semantics in both texts. The study finds that Niyi Osundare has made the complementary roles of language resources and literary devices in the negotiation of meaning a prominent element in which linguistic features are mimetic and laced with representational values. It then argues that foregrounded regularity of phonological form in the shape of phonological schemes, as well as lexical and formal repetitions, is iconically exploited for symbolic, echoic and evocative functions as they reinforce the strands of meaning expressed in the poet's communication of the major themes of ineptitude of politicians and its adverse effects in the Nigerian socio-political space and apartheid in South Africa.

Keywords: Iconicity, Foregrounding, Phonological Schemes, Prominence, Apartheid, Political Ineptitude

Introduction
This research work explores stylistic description of the iconic representation of textual meaning in Niyi Osundare's *Random Blues* (*RB*) and *Waiting Laughters (WL)*. It seeks to

demonstrate the poet's deployment of the phonological resources of language in representational patterns to reinforce textual meaning conveyed by the combination of the lexical, syntactic, and contextual elements in the texts. It focuses on the exploitation of foregrounded regularity of phonological patterns for their symbolic and evocative value in both texts. The choice of *Random Blues* and *Waiting Laughters* is premised on their very rich content of iconic sound patterns bearing directly on the subject matter of inept political leadership in Nigeria and the apartheid regime in South Africa which they address.

Osundare's *WL* contains pieces of sombre reflective 'songs' in which the poet releases his epiphanic strains in many voices and dense redolent tonalities. With *RB*, they have attracted numerous critical interests from literary scholars and linguists including Asomwan Adagbonyin, Felix Ogoanah and Ray Chikogu, Ayo Ogunsiji, Christopher Anyaokwu, Mathew Abua and A. M. Olajide, and G. A. Olaleye. Adagbonyin examines the role of grammatical categories and lexical repetition as tools for a satirical attack against the Nigerian polity in *Waiting Laughters*; Ogoanah and Chikogu's study of *WL* and other collections by Osundare focuses on the artistic motivation and effects of the poet's "verbal calisthenics manifested in unusual morphological formations, lexico-semantic puns, functional conversions, reconceptualization, and phonological puns of English lexical items" (69); Abua and Olajide study Osundare's deployment of linguistic features to achieve satirical effects (36-37); while Ogunsiji analyses Osundare's use of inciting and illustrative adjectives, imagery and satire (123). Anyaoku also examines the use of indigenous Yoruba concepts in Osundare's poetry, while Olaleye explicates Osundare's condemnation of the malfeasance of manipulation, intimidation and hooliganism characterizing the Nigerian electoral process using the Speech Act theory.

The principle of iconicity suggests that language, for all its arbitrariness, is an iconic mirror of reality. Geoffrey Leech and Mick Short affirm that a fundamental characteristic of the rhetoric of literary texts is that it follows the 'principle of imitation' (188). They state that diagrammatic iconicity falls under the 'principle of imitation', and further emphasize that iconicity is inherent in language. A literary work in its textual form is thus what E. L. Epstein calls a "'self-reflexive artefact': its very physical substance imitates or enacts the meaning that it represents" (qtd in Fischer 62).

In view of the reasonable attention to Osundare's poetry and the dearth of studies therein focussing on the iconic use of language, it is hoped that this paper will be a valuable addition to the body of knowledge in the literature of Osundare's poetry as it examines the aesthetic role of phonological structures of iconicity in *Random Blues* and *Waiting Laughters*.

Theoretical Background

The paper relies on M. A. K. Halliday's conceptualization of style as motivated prominence for its theoretical base. This approach to style is Halliday's reaction to Jan Mukarovsky and Geoffery Leech's definition of foregrounding as the violation of a scheme by which standard language, which avoids foregrounding as a general principle, is styleless. Jan Mukarovsky relates style to foregrounding and says that the violation of the norm of the standard is what makes possible the poetic utilization of language (Traugott and Pratt), while Geoffrey Leech says foregrounding is "deviation from linguistic or other socially accepted norms which invokes the analogy of a figure seen against a background" (57). According to Leech, what makes a piece of art interesting and stylistic is how it deviates from mass-produced regularities of pattern (56). Their notion of foregrounding has its origins in the work of Russian formalist, Viktor Shklovsky who observes that:

> …The purpose of art is to impact the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known. The technique of art is to make objects "unfamiliar", to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the purpose of perception is an aesthetic in itself and must be prolonged. (12)

Halliday considers foregrounding in this sense a misleading term because of its emphasis on deviation and uses the term prominence to account for both deviant and non-deviant linguistic elements with communicative value in a text. Halliday conceptualizes foregrounding this way:

> Foregrounding as I understand it is prominence that is motivated. It is not difficult to find patterns of prominence in a poem or prose text, regularities in the sounds or words or structures that stand out in some way or are brought out by careful reading; and one may often be led this way towards new insights, through finding that such prominence contributes to the writer's total meaning… a feature that is brought into prominence will be foregrounded only if it relates to the meaning of the text as a whole (339).

He says stylistic relevance is the basis of the communicative value of the item (*Linguistic Function* 339). It is on this ground that Halliday 'redefines' foregrounding as motivated 'prominence'. He explains that any element, regular or irregular, which is linguistically highlighted, as long as it contributes to the communicative value of the text, is stylistically relevant.

Explaining how prominence may be achieved in a text, Halliday states that "anything from a highly detailed measurement of the reactions of subjects to sets of linguistic variables to the parenthetical insertion of figures of occurrences" designed to create textual meaning is stylistic. Leech and Short express this clearer when they say that "regularities in the sounds or word structures that stand out in some way or may be

brought out by careful reading" (112) make for prominence in a text. These features may be referred to as STYLE MARKERS. In other words, prominence or foregrounding can be achieved by the functional and systematic use of style markers.

Our interaction with the poetry of Niyi Osundare in *Random Blues* and *Waiting Laughters* reveals a characteristic poetic vision and language use whereby he deploys iconicity of phonological structures for remarkable communicative effect. And this underlines our conviction regarding the suitability of Halliday's theory of motivated prominence for the explication of Osundare's artistry in both texts.

Definition of Terms

Iconicity: Iconicity is conceived in this study to denote the miming of meaning with form. It is derived from the term 'icon', "an image that more or less reflects a situation, object or concept in the real world" (Roman Jakobson qtd in Fischer 63). Leech and Short state that a literary expression has a presentational as well as a representational function where, in the latter case, it mimes the meaning that it expresses; and add that "a code is iconic to the extent that it imitates, in its signals or textual forms, the meanings that they represent." Such codes, according to them, include sequential ordering, markedness, positioning of content words in terms of centrality vs peripherality, creation of distance/proximity, repetition, parallel structures, analogy, grammatical and cognitive metaphor (187-189).

Prominence: Prominence is the term adopted by M. A. K. Halliday in place of foregrounding (which assumes that only negative regularities or deviations from the linguistic norm are stylistic) to suggest that any element, regular or irregular, which is linguistically highlighted, as long as it contributes to the communicative value of the text, is stylistically relevant. (*Linguistic Function* 339)

Phonological Schemes: The expression 'phonological scheme' is derived from Katie Wales's broad traditional classification of figures of speech into tropes (foregrounded irregularities of content) and schemes (foregrounded regularities of expression or form) (162). Such repetitions of phonological patterns resulting in alliteration, consonance, and the like are thus understood in this study as phonological schemes.

Phonological Schemes: The phenomenon of sound imitating and producing sense is perceptible in Osundare's deployment of phonological schemes such as alliteration, consonance, and assonance in his poems.

Data Presentation and Analysis

In *Random Blues* and *Waiting Laughters*, various patterns of sound are exploited for their expressive, evocative and symbolic effects.

Text A

i. Crocodile tears

From the Kraal to the Cape
I say, crocodile tears
From the Kraal to the Cape
Scaly sins, rosaries of ruse
He held freedom down for the racial rape

(*RB*17)

ii. They fester in filth

And swell in sin
Lord, they fester in filth
And swim in sin
Bloated maggots in the nation's corpse
They strut and swagger as if unseen

iii. Raunchy reprobate

Mad between the moons
Say, Raunchy reprobate
Mad between the moons
They carry long tails beneath their robes
Opulent orangutans, blubbering baboons   (*RB* 39)

(iv)   I pluck these words from the lips of the wind
Ripe like a pendulous pledge;
Laughter's parable explodes in the groin
Of waking storms
Clamorous with a covenant
Of wizened seeds   (*WL*)

(v) I pluck these murmurs
From the laughter of the wind
The shrub's tangled tale
Plaited tree tops
And palms which drop their nuts

Text A(i) is extracted from "Random Blues 4" in *RB*. In this poem, Osundare sardonically berates the late Pieter Willem Botha, President of South Africa from 1978 – 1989. He was a firm believer in apartheid ideology and is believed to have committed

heinous crimes against black South Africans. The poet derides the late leader, describing him as counting for little even after his demise. In Text A (i), the alliterative sound pairing of "Kraal" and "Cape" foregrounds the hard, piercing sound of the velar plosive /k/. Also in "scaly sins, rosaries of ruse", the alliterative 'syntagm' between the pairs ("scaly sins" and "rosaries of ruse") projects the enormity of PWB's atrocities against black South Africa which he accentuates by the subtle reference to his self-professed Christian faith. Osundare suggests by this alliterative bonding that PWB only uses religion as a strategic subterfuge. Here, the phrase "scaly sins" sounds ominous as the sibilant /s/ is sharp and bitter. Sibilance has been used to achieve a sinister feel in the sense that sins are scaly. Underlined here through suggestive sound texture is the immensity of the oppressive actions of P. W. Botha against the black South Africans during the apartheid regime. In the alliterative pairing, "rosaries of ruse", a conceptual similarity is established between the words, besides the sound similarity. In other words, as much as his insensitivity to the feelings of black South Africans is perceived to be monstrous, the presentation of rosaries as religious objects of worship used by some religious servitors in a fake and hypocritical fashion to deceive and fool others serves to emphasize Botha's dissimulation.

The suggestion of meaning through sound patterning is also achieved in the use of the diphthong /ei/ in "racial rape" in **Text A(i)**, an instance of internal rhyme or assonance. In this context and with such a convergence of phonological and semantic levels of linguistic organization, Osundare suggests through the gliding of the diphthong /ei/ that the recognition of the racial difference between white and black South Africans is coetaneous in its identification of 'Black' as being seamlessly associated with deprivation and disenfranchisement. At the peak of the apartheid regime under Pieter Willem Botha, black South Africans were politically disenfranchised. Once identified as a black South African, disenfranchisement was naturally consequent; the blacks glide into being racially abused and relegated to the back end of South African politics without question. The use of the glide /ei/ in "racial rape" thus iconically captures this ugly practice by the PWB apartheid regime. Also inherent here is the articulatory attribute of the closing diphthong/ei/ exploited for meaning encoding. The schematic use of this closing diphthong is suggestive of the finality of the closure of political opportunities against black South Africans as PWB had vowed never to yield any ground on the policy that denied suffrage to black South Africans in the apartheid enclave. It is in cognizance of the oppressive and segregationist temper of his government, that a majority of the people from the 'Kraal' (a traditional South African village of small huts) to the 'Cape' (typifying Cape Town, the second most populous urban area in South Africa) despise PWB and only shed crocodile tears upon his demise. They are in a jubilant mood at the

death of a man whose sins were scaly enough to leave a conspicuous scar on the psyche of black South Africans as he racially raped them during the infamous apartheid regime.

(ii) They fester in filth
     And swell in sin
     Lord, they fester in filth
     And swim in sin
     Bloated maggots in the nation's corpse
     They strut and swagger as if unseen   (*RB*39)

In **Text A(ii)**, Osundare describes the unenviable state of greedy politicians who parade themselves as leaders and nationalists. The poet reinforces the sharp and piercing tone of his message through the deployment of alliterative structures and consonances. In the alliterative pairings "fester in filth", "swell in sin" "swim in sin", the forceful and hissing sounds realized in the associative vocalization of the voiceless labio-dental fricative in *fester in filth* /f/ and alveolar /s/ fricative in *swell in sin* and *swim in sin* re-echoes the depth and endemic proportions – *festering*, *swelling*, and *swimming* – of the filthiness and reprehensibility that the politicians are associated with; a fact already imposed on the text by its lexico-semantic content. The alliterative schemes re-echo the deplorable and dirty state of politicians who fester in filth just as does a badly oozing suppurate sore. In the repetition of the sibilant /s/ in "swell in sin" and "swim in sin", an assonantal order of similarity and contrast exists between the words. The open, mid vowel /e/ in "swell" is contrasted with the open, high /i/ in sin as though to suggest that the people being described move from a middle level to a high point in the way they engage and revel in evil deeds. In "swim in sin", a case of internal rhyme is achieved in suggesting the similarity between swimming in a pool or river and being completely enmeshed in sin. The enormity of sins is conceptualized in terms of a large body of water that overwhelms anyone swimming in it. This metaphor is sustained in the description of the politicians who swell like "bloated maggots in the nation's corpse /[who] strut and swagger as if unseen" (*RB*39).

(iii) Raunchy reprobate
     Mad between the moons
     Say, Raunchy reprobate
     Mad between the moons
     They carry long tails beneath their robes
     Opulent orangutans, blubbering baboons

                            (*RB* 39)

Alliterative structures also echo the horrible deeds of mindless politicians in **Text A(iii)**. The alliterative pair, "Raunchy reprobate", sounds out the sensual, erotic and wanton nature of these politicians being described. As well, although the alliterating

words, "mad" and "moon" are split by the preposition and determiner ("between" and "the", respectively), the heavy voicing of the bilabial nasal /m/ in the words seems to signal ponderousness. These politicians, lacking the will or power to exercise self-restraint, it appears, rage mad across days and months (moon). The last line of the stanza debases these politicians to the status of animals. In addition, the poet achieves a variety of expressive effects through the use of assonance, alliteration and consonance in the single line of "Opulent orangutans blubbering baboons" (*RB* 39). The line is quasi-onomatopoeic, as the sounding of the words "orangutan", "blubbering", and "baboons" seem to naturally evoke the meanings being encoded through the lexical items. With these phonological devices, Osundare mobilizes sound to amplify his deprecation of the reprobate politicians and their inordinate quest for affluence and opulence.

(iv) I pluck these words from the lips of the wind
>   Ripe like a pendulous pledge;
>   Laughter's parable explodes in the groin
>   Of waking storms
>   Clamorous with a covenant
>   Of wizened seeds   (*WL*)

Text A(iv) is the introductory stanza in *WL*, a collection of poems in which Osundare deploys the words 'waiting' and 'laughter' as instruments of resistance – patience, natural progression, historical inevitability, humour, laughter therapy - in the face of the deplorable socio-economic and political conditions of contemporary African States (Niyi Akingbe 237). A reading of the text reveals a striking use of alliteration and consonance to suggest some veiled meaning. The plosive sound /p/ is deployed copiously in the first three lines for iconic effect. In vocalizing the words "pluck", "lips", "ripe", "pendulous pledge", "parable", and "explodes"; the characteristic 'plosion' property of the voiceless bilabial plosive /p/ is activated. Of this property, Leech says the repetition of plosive sounds in poetry produces a particular texture of sound: "a pervasive abruptness, a flinty and unyielding hardness" (96). This is invoked as the pervasive abruptness and hardness of the sound in each of the lexical items and all of them as a collective is palpable in the way the poet introduces the poem in which it seems he simply plucks the words that were already dangling in the wind, waiting to be expressed. The poet even says that "parables 'explode' in the groin" to re-enact the synchrony between the phonological property of the sound and the semantic import of the 'abruptness' of an 'explosion' as he relates what happens inside of him to birth the *Waiting Laughters* that follow.

(v) I pluck these murmurs.
>   From the laughter of the wind
>   The shrub's tangled tale

Plaited tree tops
And palms which drop their nuts

(*WL* 2)

Text A(v) is a continuation of the Osundare's musings concerning how he suddenly 'plucks' the words or murmurs that will express his "tangled tale" that he compares to "plaited tree tops" (2) in the stanza. Here, the poet further employs the alliterative suggestiveness of the alliterating voiceless alveolar plosives /t/ in the pair of lines to both underline his bewilderment by the dumb actions of the political actors and to heighten the sense of perceived suddenness of the physical as well as the psychological reactions – symbolized by 'waiting' and 'laughter' – of patience and resistance to the pillaging of the society. In the stanza of the poem immediately preceding **Text A(v)**, – the poet is in a state of reverie with memories of the past when his people enjoyed laughter and nature was in harmony with mankind: the winds were laughing, while the people's "wandering fancies [were] yeasting into mirth, / yeasting into glee in the crinkled lanes" [emphasis ours], (2). So the 'plucking' of words and murmurs introduces a sudden shift accompanied by a sudden change of mood. The transition from being verbose to plucking murmurs prepares the unexpected metamorphosis from joyful excitement to misery. The iconic schematization of the voiceless bilabial plosive in **Text A(iv)** with its associated phonologically rigid texture and the poet's labyrinthine reflections expressed by the deployment of the alliterating voiceless alveolar fricative in **Text A(v)** contrasts sharply with the reverie in "yeasting to mirth", producing a phonological shift that simultaneously synchronizes with and projects the contrast.

There are other instances where sound schemes such as alliteration, consonance and assonance are used to create iconic phonological texture in both texts. "*Soaring syllables* and the feathered word" (*RB*11), "*stay steady* behind my wing" (*RB*11), "*Quenchless quest **for** the **farthest fountain**" (*RB*11), "*silence is* a *serpent*/with a *fatal fang*" (*RB*13), "*Hooded horsemen*/ and a *hateful Herod*" (*RB*15) are some of the instances of sound patterning in *RB* that reinforce meaning in the text by reason of their symbolic value. In *WL*, lines such as "through a *street which stretches*", "which temper the *whitened waiting*" (6), "the *deed was dawn*/ and *we watched* a tutored childhood" (8), "in the visa house is a *chronicle of cold complaint*/the *calibrated aircon coughs* a chill (11), "From the ruptured *slumber of the stars* / from the *begging banter* of the dew" (43), "the *squares are sour with the absence* / of *friendly feet*" (43) etc., also typify the pervasive distribution of alliteration, consonances, assonances, and other allied sound devices in the text.

The sound patterns highlighted above recreate beauty as they add a musical quality to the denunciation of PWB and the apartheid South African government, and the mockery and resistance of the greed of African politicians. They also illustrate

Osundare's craving for oral and auditory effects in his poetry. This echoes Osundare's integration of features of traditional African oral poetry in the texts. At both the phrasal and sentential levels, the poet relies heavily on the aesthetic, thematic and iconic uses of alliteration. Remarkably, Adagbonyin observes that "of all the phonological devices exploited in his poetry, alliteration is the most dominant" (163). Osundare does, however, often intersperse his deployment of alliteration with occasional placements of assonance and consonance in various contexts to deepen the musicality and communicativeness of the poems.

Lexical Repetition

Ofuani and Okungbowa have earlier noted that "the lines of the refrain appearing regularly in Osundare's poems make the central ideas reverberate continually" (300).

In *RB* and *WL*, Osundare uses lexical repetition for musical, thematic and iconic effects. In *RB*, his use of lexical repetition is unique in his engagement with the structural features of the 'blues' songs tradition from the African-American oral tradition among the slaves who sang in melancholic tunes and in a specific form and rhythm. The songs were about alienation and displacement from home, their sufferings in the plantation, heartbreak, despair and injustice. According to J. V. Gabbins, the blues songs they created were "defined by communal values, the primacy of musicality and improvisation, and inventive style" (2). As a result, blues-inspired poetry thematically engages racism, oppression, despair, struggle, and perseverance. It is also characterised by phonaesthetic and antiphonal features such as repetition, refrain, alliteration, assonance, rhyme and, the use of regional dialects.

Osundare's blues, however, "are no faithful resurrections of either the original *orinaro* (Yoruba song expressing sadness due to bereavement) or its ingenious reincarnations in the hands of African-Americans" (*RB* 9). In the collection, each poem consists of seven stanzas whose message is developed by refrain or lexical repetition. He explains that each stanza in *RB* is anchored on linear-lexical replication. On this structural template lies the various patterns of refrain in the poems. Below, a representative poem is presented to show the construction of the patterns of refrain through linear-lexical replication.

> **Text B**

i.   Here once again
        The *Penkelemesi* years
        I say, here once again
        The *Penkelemesi* years

ii.   Yet another era
          Of thugs and cut-throats
          I say, yet another era
          Of thugs and cut-throat
iii.   An ill-literate Chieftain
          Calls the shots
          Yes, an ill-literate Chieftain
          Calls the shots
iv.   Medieval his method
          Parlous his ploy
          Oh, medieval his method
          Parlous his ploy
v.   Commander-in-Chief
          Of numberless thugs
          Yes, Commander-in-Chief
          Of countless thugs
vi.   Machetes and mallets
          Clubs and cudgels
          Alas, machetes and mallets
          Clubs and cudgels
vii.   Arrest us if you can
          Boast the Rampaging Gang
          Yes, arrest, if you can
          Boast the Rampaging Gang
          Our orders come from the ruling clique
          Who never hit without a ban   (*RB*19-20)

The representative poem above titled "Random Blues 6" and subtitled "Return of the Penkelemesi Era, Part 1" thematizes a grossly incompetent and violent administration. In the poem, the ruler's reign is compared to the *Penkelemesi* era, a time characterized by roguish ruler-ship and bloodshed perpetrated by "thugs and cut-throats". As in other poems in the collection, the rhyme-pattern in this poem contributes to the musicality and message of the piece. The stanza form of six lines each has the third and fourth lines as refrains re-echoing the musings in lines one and two respectively. Semantically, these two rhyming lines which form the refrains emphasize the message in the blues, while the fifth and sixth lines develop the theme of the poems.

Pointedly, the refrains do not sound formulaic or uniform as they do usually in folk songs or blues. On the contrary, they sound dramatically conversational and are introduced by emphasizers and interjectional elements. In addition, there is no regularity

in metrical feet, nor do they possess a uniform rhythmic flow. However, the lines of the refrain, in their conversational nature, enthuse the expressiveness of a live voice developing, stanza by stanza, the horrible activities of a "ruling clique / who never hit without a bang" in their unreasonable quest to subjugate the masses through violence and mayhem.

In *WL*, the lexical repetition is used in the first section of the volume. In this first section which serves as a dramatic opening that sets the scene for his poetic excursions in the volume, the poet provides background information on the past and what he intends to do in the present. The actions that inform his present state are captured by the refrain thus:

viii.   Like talents of golden vows
        I listen solemnly to the banter.

        Tonalities. Redolent tonalities
<p style="text-align:center">(WL, 2)</p>

 ix.   I pluck these words
        From the lips of running winds

        Tonalities. Redolent tonalities
<p style="text-align:center">(WL,5)</p>

In the excerpts above, Osundare breaks off the refrains from the stanzas to introduce new ideas. The refrain "Tonalities. Redolent tonalities" is repeated nine times in the first section. The repetition of the refrain stresses the poet's intention to introduce his audience to a new state, following his recollection of a fanciful past where man and nature enjoyed laughter. By "Tonalities", the poet equates the recollections of various events with musical keys playing in high cadence. With "Redolent", he implies the evocative and highly suggestive character of the various keys. Taken together as a refrain, the poet presents a sounding code that suggests multiple layers of meaning using iconic representations throughout the collection.

1.8   Formal Repetitions

Leech says formal repetition or "free repetition of form means the exact copying of some previous part of a text" (77). In other words, formal repetition is a method of producing foregrounding in which everything is repeated and nothing is varied. Leech explains further that it contains verbal iterations and repetition of similar sound patterns (76). Repetition is a textual resource of the grammar of English that projects the central idea in a text and acts as a signpost of this idea for the reader. This is why Geoff Thompson sees repetition as one of the three ways in which textual meanings are constructed; the other two being conjunction and thematization (14).

Formal repetition serves a fundamental purpose in Osundare's poetry. In *RB* and *WL*, the poet explores the phonological and semantic resources of the scheme to create musicality and to echo numerous socio-political and economic issues. These are discussed with relevant extracts from the texts.

Text C

i. Teach us the patience of the sand
Which rocks the cradle of the river…
Teach us the patience of the branch
Which counts the seasons in dappled cropping.

Teach us the patience of the rain
Which eats the rock in toothless silence.
Teach us the patience of the baobab
Which tames the rage of orphaning storms…

Teach us the patience of the cat
Which grooms the thunder of leaping moment

Teach us, teach us, teach us . . .
                                              (*WL*, 7)

ii. The rain the rain
The rain is *onibanbantiba*
The rain is *onibanbantiba*
                    .   .   .   (*WL*, 4)

iii.   And interrogative windows
And reluctant seats
And officers cold and clever

Like inquisitive godlings
And the metallic "No!"
And rapid ciphers
And repatriated dreams
And wingless fancies
And darkened noons . . .
                                     (*WL*, 12)

iv.   The masses danced for the tyrant
The masses danced for the master

> Alas, the masses danced for the tyrant
> The masses danced for the master
> *   *   *   *   *   *
> At last, the usurper fled
> His foul dream in disarray
> Yes, the usurper fled
> *   *   *   *   *
> The usurper fled
> His wake a heap of sordid deeds
> Oh how the usurper fled
>
> (*RB*, 25-26)

v.   He lied
>   In God's name
>
> In God's name
>   He stole
> He plotted
>   In God's name
> In God's name
>   He killed
> He rigged the ballot
>   In God's name
> In God's name
>   He lamed the law
>
> (*RB*, 28)

In **Text C (i)**, "Teach us", repeated five times at the beginning of each couplet, is echoed at regular intervals and constitutes a sort of phonological amplification. Read aloud, the verb phrase comes to us like the tolling of a church bell, an audible signal of the poet's continuing supplication and evocation. In its repetition, the poet prays for himself and his people to be taught the virtue of patience, wherein lies the power of resistance. The poet equally draws inspiration from the natural elements that seem weak yet overwhelm the stronger ones: the sand rocks the river, the rain dissolves the rock, and the short baobab tree tames and controls the raging power of destructive storms. The verbal repetition of "teach us" in the poem is thus used both to orchestrate the general symphony of phonological schemes in Osundare's poetry and also to foreground the significance of imbibing the virtue of patience as a vital ingredient of resistance. In **Text C(iii)**, Osundare invokes the might of rain, one of the natural elements he extols, through a description of its physical capacity which he reinforces by formal repetition. The phrase

"the rain" is repeated five (5) times. He says 'the rain' taunts and wipes the roof's dusty laughter; the wind is its wings; and that its sounds echo as in a "fluent concert". He proceeds to show the enigmatic qualities of rain by referring to it as "*onibanbantiba*" in **Text C (ii)**, a coinage with a Yoruba base, having no specific meaning yet significant for the sense of 'greatness' that its vocalization conjures. The repetition of "the rain" compels the reader's focus on it and enhances the traditional rhythmic orality of Osundare's rendition. This is why the characterization of the sound of the rain in relation to a 'fluent concert' is motivated, in terms of how it signals the musical undertone of the repetition of "the rain".

The lexical repetition of the coordinating conjunction, "And", in **Text C(iii)** is particularly communicative in its contextual occurrence. In a poem where Osundare ridicules and satirizes the cold and imperial disposition of the "visaman", he summarizes the outcomes of such conduct in the stanza above. In a series of syndetic constructions, the poet reveals how the dreams of Nigerians are shattered in a matter of moments after the long wait in "the anxious fumes of the visa awe-ffice" (11). The dehumanizing attitude of the neo-colonial powers in the way they deal with prospective migrants is reinforced and re-enacted by the repetition of the conjunction "And" in the stanza. The visa-house is truly an *awe-ffice*!

In the three stanzas presented in **Text C(iv),** the pattern of formal repetitions also involves the use of lexical repetitions. The poet drives home the most salient ideas in the poem through the integration of clausal and lexical repetitions as in "The masses danced…" (in stanza one) and "The Usurper fled…" (in stanzas two and three). Here, the poet seemingly suggests a cause-and-effect situation in the repetitions: that the continual and progressive dance of the people contributed to ousting the tyrant ruler who fled at last, putting "an end to the vicious play" (26).

The example in **Text C (v)** is a wholesale phrasal repetition of the prepositional phrase "in God's name"; although at different positions in the five couplets where they occur. The musicality occasioned by the repetitive structures is only moderated by the varied positioning of the phrase. The poet reveals the evil deeds done by the "Ganster Govnor" in God's name in each of the five stanzas. The repetitions in the poem thus aggregate to create a repetitive poetic rhythm, and, thereby, an aesthetic and rhetorical appeal. In addition, they represent one of the most noticeable meanings suggesting indexical markers of iconicity in Osundare's texts.

Conclusion

In all, the analysis has demonstrated that Niyi Osundare exploits phonological schemes such as alliteration, consonance, assonance, lexical repetition and formal repetition for their musicality and aesthetic function of painting and pointing out the major themes of

delayed hope, racism, socio-economic, socio-political deprivations, bureaucratic bottlenecks, political manoeuvring, and resistance. To the poet, sound and sense are interwoven and interdependent in such a way that the one is signalled by the other. Pertinently, the paper shows that sound devices such as alliterative, assonantal and consonantal structures, lexical repetition, and repetitive patterns are recurring iconic devices of orality that foreground Osundare's thematic vision, aesthetic appeal and stylistic versatility in the texts. The analyses reveal the poet's use of these phonological devices as iconic cum linguistic codes for the presentation, representation and transmission of textual meanings which has been brought to the fore in this study.

It should be noted that this study has limited the analysis of the imitation principle in the poetry of Niyi Osundare in *Random Blues* and *Waiting Laughters* to the sub-field of phonology while being aware that there is the possibility of a significantly rewarding study of the concept as it relates to other sub-fields of linguistics in literary texts. It is recommended, in particular, that a study of the lexico-semantic and syntactic patterns of iconicity in both texts will reasonably enrich the literature on Osundare's poetry.

References

Abua, Matthew E. "A Critical Discourse Analysis of Niyi Osundare's Blues for the New Senate King". *A Journal of Contemporary Research*.Vol.18, no.1, 2021, Pp.36-37.

Adagbonyin, Asonmwan. *A Stylistic Analysis of Niyi Osundare's Poetry*. Dissertation. University of Benin, 1999.

Akingbe, Niyi. "Mapping Cavities of Despondency: Waiting as Resistance in Niyi Osundare's *Waiting Laughters*. *Journal of Poetry Therapy*. Vol. 29, no 4, 2016, Pp. 237-246.

Fischer, Olga. "Iconicity in Language and Literature: Language Innovation and Language Change". *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* Vol. 98, 1997, 63-87.

Gabbins, J.V. "A Furious Flower: African-American Poetry: An Overview". In C. Nelson (ed) *Modern American Poetry: An Online Journal and Multimedia Companion to Anthology of Modern American Poetry*. Oxford University Press, 1999.

Halliday, M.A.K. *Explorations in the Functions of Language*. Edward Arnold, 1973.

Leech, Geoffrey. *A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry*. Longman, 1969.

Leech, Geoffrey and Mick Short. *Style in Fiction*: *A Linguistic Introduction to English Fictional Prose*. 2nd ed. Pearson Education, 2007.

Ofuani, Ogo A., and Mikel O. Okungbowa. "Patterns of Performance and Orality in Niyi Osundare's Seize the Day and The Word Is an Egg". *Niyi Osundare's Research Conference*. TASUED.2016, P300.

Ogoanah, Felix N., and Ray N. Chikogu. "Niyi Osundare and the Search for a Unique Language of Literary Expression." *Journal of the Literary Society of Nigeria* Vol. 3. no 1, 2011, Pp. 67-81.

Ogunsiji, Ayo. "Language, Style and meaning in Some Selected Writings of Niyi Osundare." *Niyi Osundare's Research Conference*. TASUED. 2016.Pp.123.

Osundare, Niyi. *Random Blues*. Kraftgriots, 2011.

Osundare, Niyi. *Waiting Laughters*. Malthouse, 1990.

Shklovsky, Victor. "Art as Technique". *Russian Formalist Criticism*. U Press, 1965, Pp 3-24.

Thompson, Geoff. *Introductory Functional Grammar*. 2nd ed. Hodder Education,2007.

Traugott, E. and M. Pratt. *Linguistics for Students of Literature*. New York. Harcourt. 1980.

van Peer, Willie and Jemelyan Hakemulder and S. Zyngier. "Lines on Feeling: Foregrounding, Aesthetics and Meaning". *Language and Literature*. Vol. 16 no. 2, 2007, pp197-213.

Wales, Katie. *A Dictionary of Stylistics*. 3rd ed. Routledge, 2011.