

A Phonaesthetic Analysis of Joe Ushie's Yawns and Belches

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Abstract

In exposing the abysmal economic mismanagement, despoliation and widespread pillage in the public domain by the powerful elites, committed artists have no choice than to bring creative ingenuity to bear on the process of redeeming the society, especially the vulnerable population and the mass of the underprivileged among whom the artist co-exists. To carry out such patriotic task, the writer relies on language, not just as aesthetic utility, but also as tool of artistic mediation in the pursuit of creative involvements. Against this backdrop, this research examines the phonaesthetic devices in Joe Ushie's Yawns and Belches and the stylistic effects to both form (aesthetics) and content (meaning) in the rendition of the poems in the collection. To achieve the purpose of the paper, linguistic stylistics has been adopted for its conceptual thrust to explore the linguistic features and their effects towards a proper understanding of the text. The research is library based; therefore, books, journal articles, audio-dictionary facilities and internet sources are used as sources of its data collection. The dominant phonological features evident in the selected poems designate the criteria for our selection; hence, both qualitative and quantitative analyses have been adopted. The researchers purposively selected three (3) out of the fifty-seven (57) poems in this collection to examine the phonological properties of alliteration, assonance, consonance, meter, onomatopoeia, repetition, rhyme, intonation and their contributions to meaning. Findings of the work reveal that Ushie's phonostylistic idiolect as evident in the selected poems is more of segmental features than the prosodicones. In conclusion, the work demonstrates the binary relationship between sound and sense, as well as its formation to the literariness of literary compositions. The sensitivity of the readers and critics to the sound properties in poetry appreciation has been recommended.

Introduction

Literature provides writers with the medium for purgation of emotions and feelings as explicated in the Aristotelian critical ethos. No other genre of literature can help the

writer achieve this more effectively and more convincingly than the poetic form. It is different from other forms of literature because of its exceptional use of the resources of language and even music. Chase and Collier (1985, p.393) state that “the main characteristics of poetry are verse, sound and compression of statements by taking into consideration the effects of the combination of and systematic variation in the flow of sound patterns”. However, the decorated use of language at the lexical, syntactic or phonological level is the most distinctive factor in the poetic form; it is dense and concentrated, supercharged with meanings. As a genre preoccupied with the unique use of words in both composition and interpretation, poetry, for Vincent (1979, pp. 217 – 233) “is a sophisticated art form” and its ‘mechanical processes are too exacting, drawing from the vast resources of language...”. It is the linguistic and sound properties crystallized in poetry which affirm the stipulation of Wellek and Warren (1977, p.52) that “language is the material of literature as stone or bronze is of sculpture, paints of picture, or sounds of music”. This, however, becomes compelling and ineluctable that language and sound elements constitute the basic material of which poetry is made.

Sound-meaning relationship is a significant method that attracts linguists from the early time. One of its applications is poetry where the poet tries to create a theme through which all his words are chosen to have certain effect on the part of the listener, to evoke wide range of emotions (Wales, 2011). With the uniqueness in the use of words, poetry and sound are inseparable. It is at this point of careful selection of words that sound and sound-related elements are built. Sound, therefore, “is an idea or impression conveyed by words and it is considered an invaluable mark to the formation of the literariness of literary composition(s)” (Burton, 2015, p.22). Thus, poetry must be read aloud in order to achieve the apt interpretation of its form (structure) and content (message). The correct choice of sounds and their combinations is one way of creativity in poetic compositions. Approaching such creativity is the job of phonaesthetic analysis.

Phonaesthetics, therefore, is the study of the aesthetic properties of sounds, especially in language with regards to the overall meaning and emotional impact of a piece of writing or speech. The organisations and patterning of human speech sounds, stress, rhythm, intonation, metre, pitch, accent, alliteration, assonance, onomatopoeia, syllable structure, among others, respectively formulate the essence of phonaestheticism which aid the categorisation and full understanding of poetry, in particular. As a result, the study of unearthing the sound or musical qualities of poetry, as well as its implied meaning, is well appreciated through a phonaesthetic purview.

Yawns and Belches, generally, addresses the contemporary issues of socio-political and economic extortion, as well as the exploitation of natural resources by a few at the helm of affairs to the detriment of the yawning masses. The symbiotic relationship between sound and semantic aestheticism, in poetic discourse, is the reason that the present paper sets out to, comprehensively, explore the phonological features of alliteration, consonance, intonation and assonance in Ushie's Yawns and Belches.

Situating the Study

Stylistics, being a relatively new and independent linguistic discipline, has recorded an innumerable influx of researches and literary assessments by scholars. The linguistic levels of analysis have often been the hallmark of any stylistic analysis of a text. These levels include: lexis, syntax, morphology, graphology, phonology, and so on. Van-Peer (2008), for instance, relatively reveals the fact that researchers have attempted to explore, at a stretch, all these levels of analysis in a text, thereby heralding some deficiencies in the individual linguistic levels. Phonostylistics, therefore, is an offshoot of phonaestheticism which basically designates our study. Stallworthy (1997) goes as far as relating phonostylistics to poetry with its concentrated language in which words are chosen for their sound and suggestive power, as well as for their sense in the exploration of poetic composition. To clarify this relationship, the critic remarks that:

The most satisfying reading of a poem involves a simultaneous engagement of eye, and ear: the eye attentive not only to the meaning of words, but to their grouping and spacing as lines on a page; the ear attuned to the grouping and spacing of sounds. The more one understands of musical notation and the principles of music composition, the more one will understand and appreciate a composer's score. Similarly, the more one understands of versification, the more one is likely to understand and appreciate poetry and, in particular, the intimate relationship between its form and its content (p.1103).

Phonostylistics, as the study of the various individual or combined devices of sound, is predominantly concerned with the relationship between sound and sense in a literary discourse. Similarly, Eyoh (1998) examines Clark-Bekederemo's poetry from a phonostylistic perspective. However, the work adopted stylistic criticism as a tool to highlight the inseparable link between form and content. The phonological features such as metre, alliteration, rhythm, assonance and repetition, are discussed in the poem: "Return of the Fishermen". According to the critic, these elements of sound are employed by the poet to "enact the fishermen's satisfaction, joy and excitement" (p.41). In order to elaborate further, the author remarks that "the alveolar plosives and fricatives alliterating in the poem further gives the poem an active, energetic tone which suggests happiness – an emotion usually borne out of success" (p.41). Though the essence of sound to poetry is highlighted in the work, there is a limitation in scope of the study as it examines only the above named poem out of the many poems of Clark Bekederemo. The above limitation and similar theoretical framework used by the author is our concern through a linguistic-stylistic perspective.

In an online treatise, 'Musicality and Sense in Tunde Olusunle's Rhythm of the Mortar', Bassey (2013) argues persuasively on the need to pay close attention on the impression conveyed by speech sounds to the formation of arresting content. Evaluating extensively on intonation, rhythm, alliteration, and onomatopoeia, the said treatise holds that "an apt sifting of sound patterns becomes the bricks and stones to the base of meaning in an engaging appreciation of literary renditions" (p.32). The

author also submits that “the literariness of arts is immersed characteristically in the properties of speech sounds...”, which according to the critic, “forms the spicy flavour of poetry” (p.33). As a conclusion, the critic maintains that, “the premium attached to, and the primacy of phoneme to sense is stylishly stylistic-oriented to accentuate poetic hallmark of arts and society” (p.34). Taking into consideration the effects of the combination and systematic variation in the flow of sound, according to the source, inundate the relevance of phonostylistics to the appreciation of poetry. As hinted above, the critic only evaluates on four properties of sound such as intonation, rhythm, alliteration and onomatopoeia. There is a relationship with the present study as phonological devices are foregrounded to aid meaning and for aesthetic purposes in our chosen anthology.

Josiah and John (2018) examine the use of sound devices for aesthetic purposes by the poets. Phonaesthetics, according to the authors, generally deals with the symbolic properties of sounds. Adopting phonostylistics and phonaesthetics for their theoretical thrusts, the authors discuss the prosodic features that are prominent in select literary works of two Nigerian poets, Niyi Osundare and Imo Okon, both representing older and newer generations of Nigerian poets, respectively. The authors, however, use purposive sampling methodology to select three poems each from Osundare's *Village Voices* and Okon's *Detections* for their analysis of sound elements such as assonance, alliteration, rhythm, rhyme, meter, accentuation and intonation. From the foregoing, the study concludes that, in analysing Nigerian poetry, musical composition forms a major consideration for proper interpretation. Although such an illuminating study sets a template for our study, ours takes an eclectic approach, giving the work a wider perspective.

The sum and substance of phonostylistics, therefore, is based on the notion that separate sounds, due to their articulatory and acoustic properties, awake certain ideas, perceptions, feelings and images. Poetry, in specific, is not entirely divorced from music. Hence, how a word, phrase or sentence sounds when uttered, either separately or in combination with other linguistic items, accords poetry a definite aesthetic function and a desired phonetic effect for meaning interpretation. Significantly, it may be added that phonostylistics provides a descriptive frame or model within which readers/critics explore the synergetic effects of sounds to meaning through a systematic and principled attention to language and intonation patterns.

The present study draws an inference from reviews that the theme of man's inhumanity to man, as well as that of human to the environment, has been the core of Ushie's poetic discourse. His writings adequately mirror his unshakable determination to liberate society from plundering socio-political arrangements in his country and Africa as a whole. Since his literary expedition in the early 1990s, Ushie's poetry has continued to lament the systematic corruption and abuse of power which causes theyawning gap between the rich and the poor to widen even further. On the whole, the need to critically examine Ushie's *Yawns and Belches* from the lens of linguistic stylistics validates the present study and establishes its contribution to

scholarship.

Theoretical Underpinning

This study adopts linguistic stylistics approach for its conceptual thrust. Style is the basic thing that gives uniqueness to every writer. The study of style is so broad and cannot be wholly discussed in this modest treatise. Linguistic stylistics, however, focuses on linguistic theory. In linguistics, stylistic analysis is concerned with recurring patterns used in speech and writing; and in literature, it focuses on interpretation of a literary work. In other words, stylistic analysis tends to look for meaning in a text. Linguistic stylistics explores the linguistic features of a text; it is primarily concerned with the use of language and its effects in a text. It has to do with a stylistic study that relies heavily on the scientific rules of language in its analysis. “It is about doing stylistic analysis in order to test or refine a linguistic model in effect, to contribute to linguistic theory” (Jeffries & McIntyre, 2010, p.57). Linguistic stylistics explores the linguistic features of a text. It is primarily concerned with the use of language and its effect in a text.

Linguistic stylistics, nevertheless, looks for style in terms of linguistic features of a text at different levels of linguistic description like phonology (onomatopoeia, alliteration, rhyme, among others), syntax (grammatical rules), graphology (punctuations) and semantics (metaphor, irony, simile, among others). It points out the choices made by the writer and their effects on the reader. Linguistic stylistics was introduced as a complementary approach to literary criticism where the linguistic study of texts was absent. It is different from literary criticism in that while literary criticism rests solely on the subjective interpretation of texts, linguistic stylistics concentrates on the linguistic frameworks operative in the text. This gives the critic a pattern to follow, what to look out for, in a text. Those parts of the text which are heavily foregrounded have to be taken into account when interpreting a poem.

It is also concerned with the quantification of these features and their recurrence in a literary text. Thus, linguistic stylistics uses scientific methods and seems more objective than literary stylistics. It does not neglect meaning of the text but it gives more importance to linguistic description rather than interpretation. In this regard, Ayeomoni (2003) believes that the linguistic study of literary text is “precise and definite” as it employs objective scientific methods and interpretation of texts” (177).

Therefore, it is stylistics which brings the two subjects (language and literature); the two disciplines (linguistics and literary criticism) and, the two approaches (linguistic stylistics and literary stylistics) under one umbrella. As a whole, literary and linguistic stylistics work together for the ultimate goal of stylistics. It is from the foregoing that our study examines the phonological features evident in Ushie's Yawns and Belches to unearth the relationship between sound and sense (that is, form and content) in a literary interpretation.

Methodology

In order to explore the phonaesthetic devices such as alliteration, consonance, intonation and assonance crystallised in the selected poems, study uses musical and audio aids (the dictionary audio facilities) respectively to determine both the rhythm as well as symphony as its methodology. The study also adopts the selection method to avert redundancy on the recurrent phonostylistic features in the collections. Coherently, a total of three (3) out of fifty-seven (57) poems are selected from Yawns and Belches to explicate Ushie's phonostylistic idiolect. The table below captures, in summary, the research design in which the present study designates.

Title of the Anthology	Total Number of Poems	Poems Studied	Phonological Elements Studied
Yawns and Belches	57	“Letters on the Streets”	Alliteration and Consonance
		“The Big Man”	Intonation
		“Yawns and Belches”	Assonance

However, both quantitative and qualitative analyses are utilised. The dominant phonological features embedded in the selected poems designate the criteria for our study. To ensure clarity, the subject matter and thematic preoccupation of the selected poems are first analysed to incorporate form and content as the two are interwoven before each noticeable phonostylistic device is given consideration.

Data Presentation and Analysis

In “Letters on the Streets”, alliteration and consonance are the predominant phonaesthetic properties as could be seen in our analysis. As the title of the poem suggests, “Letters on the Streets” is a call for the rejuvenation of artistic compositions such as poetry and prose, but with particular emphasis on poetry. The poet persona admonishes that poets serve as chastisers, visionaries, inspirers and prophets of change; hence, the need to revive the genre for its urgent service of societal wellbeing and transformation.

Structurally, the poem has a total of 186 lines arranged in 31 unequal stanzas of blank verse and divided into five (5) sections. Inherent in the poem is a total of sixteen (16) alliterative sounds. These are: the voiceless alveolar fricative /s/, bilabial semi-vowel /w/, voiced bilabial plosive /b/, voiceless labio-dental fricative /f/, glottal fricative /h/, voiceless alveolar plosive /t/, bilabial nasal /m/, alveolar nasal /n/, voiced dental fricative /ð/, alveolar liquid /l/, voiceless velar plosive /p/, voiced velar plosive /g/, voiced labio-dental fricative /v/, alveolar liquid /r/, voiced alveolar plosive /d/ and voiceless velar plosive /k/.

Consonantal devices, on the other hand, manifest in nine (9) sound segments. These include: /d, n, k, l, ŋ, t, z, p and s/. On this basis, the poet employs alliteration and consonance to convey his message as we shall see in our analysis. These are

represented in tables.

Table 1: Alliterative Voiceless Alveolar Fricative /s/ in “Letters on the streets”

S/N	Pg(s)	Lines	Instances of Alliteration	Alliterative Sound
1	9	15	<u>S</u> inging...the refrains of Walt Whitman’s <u>s</u> ong”	/s/
2		16	“of Neruda’s <u>s</u> ong, of Tagore’s <u>s</u> ong, of Derek Walcott’s <u>s</u> ong”	
3		17	“of Okigbo’s <u>s</u> ong, of Niyi Osundare’s <u>s</u> ong, of Soyinka’s <u>s</u> ong”	
4		18	“of Ojaide’s <u>s</u> ong, of Gabriel Okara’s <u>s</u> ong, of Kalu Uka’s <u>s</u> ong”	
5		27	“As a <u>s</u> ubaltern...dance <u>s</u> teps on every <u>s</u> treet “	
6	10	28	“The <u>s</u> treets are now a <u>s</u> ingle cage...”	
7	12	110	“...and shouting from the <u>s</u> treets, <u>s</u> peaks of”	
8		113	“On <u>s</u> tage of the <u>s</u> treets...”	

The sibilant /s/ is also repeated at word initial position in lines 21, 78, 145 and 156 to produce a harmonious/euphonious effect to the form and structure of the poem. Through this alliterative device in the above lines, the underneath message of the poem is vividly highlighted. This is indicated by the persona's reference to renown poets such as Walt Whitman, Neruda, Tagore, Derek Walcott, Christopher Okigbo, Niyi Osundare, Wole Soyinka, Tanure Ojaide, Gabriel Okara and Kalu Uka, who have given literary compositions, particularly poetry, an indelible footprint to the social engineering of humanity. Hence, the persona subtly defends and insists on chastising the ills and foibles of the society through poetry.

Table 2: Alliterative Bilabial Semi-vowel /w/ in “Letters on the Streets”

S/N	Pg(s)	Lines	Instances of Alliteration	Alliterative Sound
1	9	4	“... <u>w</u> eird and <u>w</u> ayward in every <u>w</u> ay”	/w/
2		5	“... <u>w</u> as <u>w</u> hen the quill lost its crown...on <u>w</u> hich”	
3	11	25	“...to the street <u>w</u> here I <u>w</u> atch its bizarre dance”	
4		64	“...dark clouds <u>w</u> atch the streets and <u>w</u> EEP <u>w</u> ells of tears”	
5		126	“ <u>W</u> e <u>w</u> atch the <u>w</u> ilting of the yawning...”	
6	14	158	“...from his <u>w</u> ard of <u>w</u> orries”	
7		166	“...the <u>w</u> orlds of <u>w</u> onders and <u>w</u> eapons”	

Here, the bilabial semi-vowel /w/ gives pleasure to the ear, and as well renders the persona's emotion towards the gradual fading away of poetry to the service(s) of mankind. This consonant /w/ is also alliterative in lines 7, 23, 70, 96 and 116 dominantly to aid the meaning of the poem.

Table 3: Alliterative Voiced Bilabial Plosive /b/in “Letters on the Streets”

S/N	Pg(s)	Lines	Instances of Alliteration	Alliterative Sound
1	10	30	“...near a <u>b</u> elching <u>b</u> arbed wire”	/b/
2	13	127	“...clapping for the <u>b</u> ullying <u>b</u> elching”	
3		132	“... <u>b</u> een <u>b</u> eheaded and <u>b</u> uried”	
4	14	180	“...the <u>b</u> ombs of <u>b</u> rutes”	
5		184	“ <u>B</u> atches of the <u>b</u> ashed...”	

The harshness in the use of voiced bilabial plosive /b/, in this context, is to confront people of high advantage at the helm of governance (represented as, the belches). This harsh tone is also manifested in line 135 where the persona expresses: “your lambs and butterflies of beauty writhe in dustbins of the streets”, to scorn the oppression of the haves (bourgeoisie). Through this alliterative plosive, the diction is militancy in nature; hence, contributes to the subject matter of the poem.

Table 4: Alliterative Voiceless Labio-dental Fricative /f/ in “Letters on the Streets”

S/N	Pg(s)	Lines	Instances of Alliteration	Alliterative Sound
1	9	9	“... <u>f</u> allow <u>f</u> ountain”	/f/
2	10	32	“...highways of a <u>f</u> orest where hyenas <u>f</u> east”	
3		37	“... <u>f</u> aith <u>f</u> rom the <u>f</u> ear of the <u>f</u> aithful”	
4		48	“Poetry <u>f</u> ondles the bodies of <u>f</u> allen... <u>f</u> lies on the streets”	

As could be seen above, the poet persona attempts a recollection of the relevance of poetry which he holds in high esteem. The mellifluosity/pleasantness of the voiceless labio-dental fricative /f/ reiterates the persona's eagerness that: “poetry shouts from the fet of the youth flying...through the wild” (line 54). This implies that, poetry is a correctional tool to humanity. From the speaker's tone, one can easily depict that the sound /f/ alliterates to portray the vacuum of societal misfits that poetry fills.

Table 5: Alliterative Glottal Fricative /h/ in “Letters on the Streets”

S/N	Pg(s)	Lines	Instances of Alliteration	Alliterative Sound
1	9	3	“It’s been long we <u>h</u> aven’t <u>h</u> ead from you!”	/h/
2	11	66	“...dogs <u>h</u> ave developed <u>h</u> orns and snakes walk...and lift with <u>h</u> ands”	
3		84	“ <u>H</u> aven’t you <u>h</u> ead?”	
4	12	96	“...we <u>h</u> ear...wails of the mother <u>w</u> hose seven-year wait...”	
5	13	132	“Your <u>h</u> ills <u>h</u> ave been...”	
6	14	180	“... <u>h</u> opes of the sick in <u>h</u> ealing centres”	

The poet's use of the voiceless glottal fricative /h/ above, and in lines 93 and 97, shows the persona's dissatisfaction and restlessness on the reformation of the genres of literary compositions, specifically poetry.

Table 6: Alliterative Voiceless Alveolar Plosive /t/ in “Letters on the Streets”

S/N	Pg(s)	Lines	Instances of Alliteration	Alliterative Sound
1	9	10 and 19	“...I now <u>t</u> ell the <u>t</u> ale”	/t/
2	10	29	“...where the <u>t</u> eeth of <u>t</u> ar”	
3		30	“...the <u>t</u> yre <u>t</u> ear yawning <u>t</u> ireless soles”	

The above voiceless alveolar plosive /t/ is employed to set the harsh and militant tone of the poem. This is indicated by the poet's conscious selection of the sound /t/ to pinpoint the preservation, as well as the revival of poetic genre.

Table 7: Alliterative Voiceless Bilabial Plosive /p/ in “Letters on the Streets”

S/N	Pg(s)	Lines	Instances of Alliteration	Alliterative Sound
1	10	33	“ <u>P</u> urses and <u>p</u> ockets of accident victims...”	/p/
2	12	95	“... <u>p</u> ounding into <u>p</u> ulp...for victory at the <u>p</u> olls?”	
3	14	182	“... <u>p</u> oetry <u>p</u> rowls on the cauldroned streets”	

The above voiceless bilabial plosive /p/ is also replete in lines 38, 70 and 115 as alliterative device to add to the persona's harsh attitude towards the depreciation of poetic compositions.

Similarly, the voiceless velar plosive /k/ is used in the poem to convey unpleasantness. This alliterative device is evident in line 5: “when the quill lost its crown...” to reinforce the already established message of the poem. Also, the voiced alveolar plosive /d/ alliterates in line 110: “...drama also dancing and shouting...” to remind us of the feeling of bitterness evoked by the persona.

Table 8: Alliterative Alveolar Liquid /l/ in “Letters on the Streets”

S/N	Pg(s)	Lines	Instances of Alliteration	Alliterative Sound
1	9	13	“And poetry, <u>l</u> ike a <u>l</u> ong- <u>l</u> ocked prisoner <u>l</u> eapt out”	/l/
2	11	66	“...snakes walk on <u>l</u> egs and <u>l</u> ift with hands”	
3	12	117	“Floating <u>l</u> ike <u>l</u> ogs...”	
4	14	184	“...ancestral <u>l</u> ands <u>l</u> ike bees”	

Here, the alveolar liquid /l/ is pleasant to the ear and it is used to unearth the unusual eventualities, but in a mild tone. This is marked by the use of the word “like” to compare the world of bards (poets) to what is presently obtainable.

Table 9: Alliterative Alveolar Liquid /r/ in “Letters on the Streets”

S/N	Pg(s)	Lines	Instances of Alliteration	Alliterative Sound
1	10	40	“... <u>r</u> ebellious <u>r</u> oaring <u>r</u> odents <u>r</u> ide <u>r</u> oughshod on immortal <u>r</u> oyalty”	/r/
2		45	“...magical <u>r</u> ealism <u>r</u> eigns... <u>r</u> ealities”	
3	12	113	“...prowling like <u>r</u> aiders in midst of the <u>r</u> aided”	
4	13	133	“Your <u>r</u> ivers have been <u>r</u> oasted by the furnace”	

The above alveolar liquid /r/ adds to the lively and energetic tone of the poem. This is marked by the repetition of the sound at word initial position in order to render a pleasant flow of the thematic concerns embedded in the poem. Other alliterative /r/ are: “poetry rides on the bumpy roads whose failed repair is repairing the pocket of the minister” (line 50) and “...by the rock rested clown...” in line 112 employed to enliven the tone of the poem.

Table 10: Alliterative Voiced Velar Plosive /g/ in “Letters on the Streets”

S/N	Pg(s)	Lines	Instances of Alliteration	Alliterative Sound
1	10	35	“...the gold of the gullible greedy”	/g/
2	12	124	“Sip lush glass after glass of foreign wine”	

The recurrence of the voiced velar plosive /g/, as shown above, is employed to create forceful effect and, to undermine the gullibility of the belching mouths (i.e., the exploiters).

Table 11: Alliterative Alveolar Nasal /n/ in “Letters on the streets”

S/N	Pg(s)	Lines	Instances of Alliteration	Alliterative Sound
1	9	7	“... <u>n</u> ow <u>n</u> ot...”	/n/
2	11	83	“Which <u>n</u> ow <u>n</u> arrate their own tales”	

The persona utilises the above alveolar nasal /n/ to create a sharp melodic effect, and to indicate his innocence on the murder of poetry's dignity in our present world.

Table 12: Alliterative Voiced Dental Fricative /ð/in “Letters on the streets”

S/N	Pg.	Lines	Instances of Alliteration	Alliterative Sound
1	9	8	“...out of <u>the</u> quill... <u>the</u> streets with <u>their</u> pounding feet”	/ð/
2		11	“... <u>the</u> long monopoly of <u>the</u> Muse”	
3		14	“...of <u>the</u> closet... <u>the</u> open arms of <u>the</u> street”	
4		22	“Celebrating <u>there</u> its freedom from <u>the</u> Muse”	

The dearth of inspiration with regards to literary compositions in today's world is the persona's outcry. The expressions above use the voiced dental fricative /ð/ repeatedly as a display of distress especially for the loss of thorough and deep vision in absorbed thoughts (the Muse for poets).

Table 13: Alliterative Labio-dental Fricative /v/in “Letters on the Streets”

S/N	Pg(s)	Lines	Instances of Alliteration	Alliterative Sound
1	10	35	“...the <u>v</u> aults of <u>v</u> anity...”	/v/
2		43	“... <u>v</u> ans and <u>v</u> aults”	
3	14	169	street- <u>v</u> or ^t ing <u>v</u> exatious <u>v</u> erses	

The voiced labio-dental fricative /v/ in the word “vor^ting” is an internal or hidden alliteration having the soothing effect to the ears with the words “vexatious verses” in the same line. Thus, the above /v/ sound evokes the feeling of absurdity alluding to the imperious (high-and-mighty) belching mouths. The persona, here, delineates the nothingness of life no matter the wealth one amasses. In addition, the bilabial nasal /m/ is evidently alliterative in the following lines.

Table 14: Alliterative Bilabial Nasal /m/ in “Letters on the Streets”

S/N	Pg(s)	Lines	Instances of Alliteration	Alliterative Sound
1	9	1	“ <u>M</u> any idle <u>m</u> oons have <u>m</u> arched...”	/m/
2		11	“...the long <u>m</u> onopoly of the <u>M</u> use”	
3		20	“...of being <u>m</u> easured out in the <u>M</u> use’s <u>m</u> iserly doses”	
4		23	“...the <u>M</u> use once sprinkled it <u>m</u> ere doses”	
5	10	45	“... <u>M</u> arquez’s <u>m</u> agical realism...”	

The above bilabial nasal /m/ is deployed by the poet, in this context, to express sadness in the loss of poetry's dignity in our modern world.

As hinted from the above analysis, /m, h, w, f, r, n, ð, l, v/ and /s/ resonate the rhythmic

flow of the stanzas, and lull melodic effect to the ears contrary to /t, p, b, k, d/ and /g/ which add unpleasantly to the harsh mood and tone of the poem. Moreover, alliteration is consciously employed in the anthology in order to sustain lively and auditory effects to the understanding of the persona's emotional disposition towards the essence conveyed.

Consonance, a counterpart of alliteration, is also evident in “Letters on the streets”. Instances of repetition of same consonant sound at the final position of a word are as shown below:

Table 15: Consonantal Voiced Alveolar Plosive /d/ in “Letters on the Streets”

S/N	Pg(s)	Lines	Instances of Consonance	Consonantal Sound
1	9	4	“...weird <u>d</u> and wayward <u>d</u> ...”	/d/
2		12	“...invad <u>e</u> d the abod <u>e</u> of the Muse”	

Other examples of the voiced alveolar plosive /d/ are consonantal in line 20: “...tiredd of being measured...”, “...ride roughshod...” (line 40), “...invaded and raided and disrobed” (line 76), “crowned rock-rested army armed” (line 112), “...beheaded and buried...” (line 132), “And I stand, quill in hand” (line 138) and lastly in line 169: “To be consoled, mourned or healed...” The repetition of the above consonant /d/ calls attention to the grieving state of the persona towards the breakdown of conventions guiding poetic compositions.

Table 16: Consonantal Velar Nasal /ŋ/ in “Letters on the Streets”

S/N	Pg(s)	Lines	Instances of Consonance	Consonantal Sound
1	9	11	“...envy <u>ing</u> the long monopoly...”	/ŋ/
2		28	“...a single cage hous <u>ing</u> ”	
3	12	110	“...danc <u>ing</u> and shout <u>ing</u> ”	
4	13	126	“...the wilting of the yaw <u>ning</u> ”	
5		127	“clapp <u>ing</u> for the bully <u>ing</u> belch <u>ing</u> ”	

Observably from the above, the inflection of the “-ing” morpheme to the base accords the velar nasal /ŋ/ a melodious effect and also portrays the action of the verb in progression.

Table 17: Consonantal Voiceless Alveolar Plosive /t/ in “Letters on the Streets”

S/N	Pg(s)	Lines	Instances of Consonance	Consonantal Sound
1	9	13	“...lock <u>e</u> d prisoner leapt <u>ou</u> t”	/t/
2	11	70	“I have not stop <u>p</u> ed writ <u>ing</u> poetry”	
3	13	134	“...soak <u>e</u> d in industri <u>es</u> ’ belch <u>e</u> s...”	

The effect of the voiceless alveolar plosive /t/, here, is pleasurable to the ear but, on the contrast, pinpoints the forceful imagery of giving voice to the voiceless.

Also, the voiceless alveolar fricative /s/ is manifested as consonantal in “...also laments the loss of its voice” (line 82), “...the nameless corpses” (line 116) and in line 156: “In this seson of escape...to the stresets”. The mild impression conveyed by the sibilant /s/ reinforces the persona's wish for the reformation of poetic renditions.

However, the voiced alveolar fricative /z/ co-exists with /s/ sound and it is the dominant consonantal element in the poem. The table below exemplifies the symmetry of such sound:

Table 18: Consonantal Voiced Alveolar Fricative /z/ in “Letters on the Streets”

S/N	Pg(s)	Lines	Instances of Consonance	Consonantal Sound
1	10	28	“...cage hous <u>ing</u> goats <u>and</u> lions <u>and</u> ”	/z/
2		33	“Purses <u>and</u> of accident victim <u>s</u> ”	
3		56	“...the hills <u>and</u> rivers <u>and</u> across mound <u>s</u> ...”	
4	11	64	“...the skies...dark cloud <u>s</u> weep well <u>s</u> of tear <u>s</u> ”	
5		82	“Poetry’ <u>s</u> cousin, Prose...”	
6	12	120	“... <u>s</u> and ear <u>s</u> and nose <u>s</u> of the street”	
7	13	134	“...industries’ belche <u>s</u> ”	
8		135	“Your lamb <u>s</u> and butterfly <u>s</u> ...in dustbin <u>s</u> ”	
9		155	“In palace <u>s</u> and high place <u>s</u> ...”	

The above sound /z/ gives harmonious effect thereby calling attention to the callous insensitivity of the belches (haves) perpetrated against the socially-deprived yawning mouths (haves not).

Evident also are alveolar nasal /n/ in line 5: “...when the quill lost its crown”, alveolar liquid /l/ in line 10: “I now tell the tale”, voiceless bilabial plosive /p/ in line 78: “...stripping like a temple suddenly torn open...”, and the voiceless velar plosive /k/ in line 130: “...with pickaxes of beaks...” The recurrence of the above consonants at word final position reinforces the harsh disposition of the persona.

We can infer, from the above explication, that the repetition of those consonant sounds elicits symphony and coherence to the meaning and beauty of the poem. The interweaving of these sounds also gives pleasurable experience to the ear. Also, the sensitivity of the poet is made manifest through the repetition of alliterative and consonantal devices to underscore the senselessness of human suffering brought about by exploitation and oppression, which the poem structurally encodes.

Intonation in “The big man”

It has been observed generally that natural languages are never spoken at one level of voice pitch for a considerable length of time. When people speak or read aloud, the voice pitch is either falling or rising; rising or falling, and as the case may be for a special effect. As a phonological feature, intonation may be viewed as the variation that occurs in the rise and fall of speech patterns during utterances. To achieve an apt interpretation that encompasses both form and content in poetry, intonation is performatively crucial. It is stylistically significant to make prominent some parts of an utterance, mark sentence type and also to convey the tone and mood of an utterance. Thus, this device of sound shall be utilised in our analysis of “The big man”, and the symbols [] shall be used to indicate accentuated syllables and unaccented syllables respectively.

“The big man” is a poem of thirty-four (34) unequal lines in nine (9) unequal stanzas. It ridicules the ephemerality of existence, as well as voidness on proud and mighty rulership. However, the preamble drawn from Ime Ikiddeh's *The Vulture's Funeral & Reincarnation* reinforces the embedded message of which the poet persona cleverly addresses. The below exemplifies the meaninglessness of life despite ones' status in the society:

As the powerful pound the earth
 So do the gods count their years...
 Ime Ikiddeh: *The Vulture's Funeral & Reincarnation* (51).

Semantically, “The big man” is a derogatory phrase intended to scorn the belching oppressors, and a reminder that ill-gotten wealth fades away gradually.

It is on this basis that the poet deploys intonational patterns consciously to pinpoint the underlying thematic concerns, as well as the mood and tone of the poem demonstrated below in stanzas 1, 2 and 9.

Stanza One



Born with the hare’s trickster brain and



Ebullience of a bull, greatest son of a great father



I am here to conquer

Stanza Two



Fortified with fresh blood of mortar-pounded



Day-old babies and a sojourn in the belly of



The medicine man's python



I have made things happen

Stanza Nine



Ah, Big Man, faceless Time is a winnowing tray



Separating the chaff from the grains



In that morning after your bow,



Your name will leave a sour taste in



The memory of the yelling yawning and



On the distilled pages of the grave chronicler

Judging from the above instances, it could be averred that the poem is dominated by the falling tune pattern at the end of each line of the nine (9) stanzas. The infusion of the above intonational pattern is a deliberate attempt by the persona to confront societal issues of exploitation and oppression. This level of confrontation is marked by the use of assertive and declarative sentences thereby giving the poem its phonaesthetic and expressive power.

Significantly, *Yawns and Belches* as a collection is modeled with the rising and falling tune patterns of utterances with the two occurring simultaneously. From our study, the repletion of falling tunes has been discovered to be more than its rising counterpart. The poet's use of interrogative sentences which aid rising tune is evident only in six (6) out of fifty-five (55) poems in the compendium. These are: "Letters on the streets" occurring in four (4) interrogative sentences; "Weird harvest" having two (2); "Ballot season" having one (1); "Message to my congressman" having eleven (11); "The tethered" having two (2), and "In memoriam: Mike Akomaye Yanou (Jolly)" has eleven (11) interrogative sentences. All of these make up a total of thirty-one (31) rising tune utterances. Thus, the collection is crystallised predominantly with falling tune pattern than its counterpart to instigate the mood and tone, as well as the content. One can, therefore, say that the poet is assertive and sensitive to the plights of the masses; thus, the use of falling tunes in the composition.

Assonance in "Yawns and Belches"

In a nation where few people have access to the natural resources and the majorities are on deprivation, inequality must certainly set in. The poem, "Yawns and Belches" is distinctive of its own and also the title of the collection. Whereas, "yawns" symbolise the poor masses, "belches" refer to the privileged. The thematic concerns of political ineptitude of leaders, corruption, misappropriation of public funds, maladministration, class struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, among others, are crystallised in the poem.

An insight into the preoccupations of the poem renders it a revolutionary composition infused with satire and condemnatory tone in an attempt to correct visible leadership anomalies, and to encourage the led to be voiced and proactive in a system raped by shackles and shambles of disillusionment. In condemning the abysmal despoliation engendered by the leadership, especially, and by the people, the poem serves as a recorder, censure of wrongdoings and reformation, thereby making its essence an art-for-human-sake but; not art-for-art-sake.

It is structured in a blank verse of forty-eight (48) lines arranged in eleven (11) unequal stanzas. Stanzas one, ten and eleven have three (3) lines each, Stanzas two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight and nine have four (4) lines each. Remarkable is that, each stanza begins with capital letter which shows that each stanza has its idea to convey. The opening stanza serves as preamble and prologue by unveiling the subject matter of the poem which is that of class struggle between the rich and the poor in the society. The diction is conversational and transparent. Assonantal devices and rhyme are richly replete to aid the free-flow of the message conveyed in the poem as shall be discussed in our study. A total of eight (8) monophthongs which are /i:/, /ɪ/, /e/, /æ/, /ɒ/, /ɔ:/, /ʌ / and

/ɜ:/are evident in the poem. Also, there are four (4) diphthongs which include /ai/, /æ/, /ei/ and /əʊ/ used by the persona to reinforce meaningful rendition.

Table 19: Showing Assonantal /i:/in “Yawns and Belches”

S/N	Pg(s)	Lines	Instances of Assonance	Assonantal Sound
1	15	12	“ <u>B</u> eneath these imperial hills are yawning vales”	/i:/
2		24	“...ce <u>a</u> seless terminal bond beneath our imperial <u>f</u> ee <u>t</u> ”	
3		27	“...burnt <u>s</u> tr <u>e</u> ams or the tear-faced <u>s</u> easons”	

As indicated above, the long unrounded high front vowel /i:/ is utilised by the persona to delineate the complex nature of dual existence. This implies, amidst the oppressors (i.e., the belching imperialists), exists the oppressed (i.e., the yawning masses). The sound /i:/ above is employed to foster a stylistic blend between aestheticism and the message conveyed.

Table 20: Showing Assonantal /ɪ/ in “Yawns and Belches”

S/N	Pg(s)	Lines	Instances of Assonance	Assonantal Sound
1	15	2	“...the belch <u>i</u> ng few <u>i</u> n shelter...or s <u>i</u> lk”	/ɪ/
2		3	“...yaw <u>n</u> ing writh <u>i</u> ng <u>i</u> n the open furnace of sun”	
3		4	“ <u>D</u> ivine <u>W</u> isdom created the <u>f</u> ingers unequal but...”	

Here, the persona is immersed in grieving thoughts on why Nature (Divine Wisdom) chooses to favour few persons, and the majority ill-fated. The recurrence of the short unrounded frontal vowel /ɪ/ in the above illustrations is stylistically significant as suggestive of the persona's emotional disposition towards the ordeals of human existence. This brisk sound /ɪ/ is also replete in lines 6, 9, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 23, 24 and 28. All of these in their respective order aid the tone, as well as the preoccupied message of inequality. Also assonantal in the poem is the frontal unrounded short /e/ illustrated in the table below:

Table 21: Showing Assonantal /e/ in “Yawns and Belches”

S/N	Pg(s)	Lines	Instances of Assonance	Assonantal Sound
1	15	2	“...belch <u>e</u> ng...in sh <u>e</u> lter...”	/e/
2		7	“... <u>h</u> ealth to a few and <u>d</u> eath to the majority”	
3		29	“Life among them <u>s</u> elves...and <u>d</u> eath down the vales	

A remention of “death” in the above lines gives a contrast to the words “health” and “life”. The poet, here, makes an abstract allusion to portray a picture of doom on the poverty-stricken masses, as well as the rosy part of life to the belching mouths. From the foregoing, one can easily depict that untimely death awaits the yawning masses with no medical attention, while the few rich are sustained healthily through the amassed resources. Therefore, it could be deduced that the persona's use of the sound /e/ is to create poetic effect of sadness and sorrowful tone.

However, the frontal unrounded short /æ/ only manifests in line 23: “Moulting...famine-fired famishing”. The above is suggestive of the ceaseless struggle for survival as the yawning masses are starved amidst the well-fed imperial leaders. Though the /æ/ vowel gives euphonic effect, it also creates a sense of dissatisfaction in the consistent exploitation of natural endowments. Similarly, the back lip rounding short /ɒ/, occurs only in line 6: “...democracy for the equality” to show the persona's distress in political ineptitude (incompetence) of the imperialists.

Adding to the sorrowful tone of the poem, the open back rounded long /ɔ:/ in line 20: “...locked horns of the belching and yawning” expresses the clash of interest and hatred between the poor and the rich. The phrase “locked horns” is indicative of disagreement between opposing forces.

Furthermore, the persona reemphasizes on the theme of equality indicated in line 1: “Subjects of the furious tropical noon sun are we all”. The blend of idea in the expression is marked by the central unrounded short /ʌ/ to enliven the tone of the poem. The vowel /ʌ/ is also repeated in lines 21 and 44 respectively: “...sometimes in the volcanoes, sometimes in the earthquakes.../...just where the muscles of the just stream...” The deployment of /ʌ/ sound helps in the lively flow of the subject matter which the poem designates.

The last in the monophthongs evident in the poem is the central unrounded long /ɜ:/ deployed only in line 8: “From birth I berthed here...” Here, the persona laments of his misfortune through the use of the first-person pronoun “I” to indicate him as a commoner co-existing with the oppressing forces from birth.

Diphthongs, on the other hand, are also repeated in the poem to foster content and form. First is /aɪ/ in line 22: “...sometimes in the landslide...”, expressing a pyramid structure in the society where the rich are at the top ranks preying on the poor at the base. Its stylistic effect, in this context, enriches and reinforces the persona's attitude in the poem. Second is /eɪ/ in line 21: “...our fate...in the volcanoes...” and “...pain at the vales” (line 30). The use of /eɪ/ in “fate”, “volcanoes”, “pain” and “vales” respectively foretells unhappy situation (i.e., the adversity of life) which is one of the thematic concerns of the poem.

We may draw an inference, from our analysis, that all the vowel sounds employed in the poem have pleasurable and poetic effect to the auditory organ but, on the contrary, infused to reflect the complexities of life. However, the three diphthongs evident in the

poem evoke the feeling of sad and unhappy ending. Also, there is excessive deployment of alliterative devices, assonantal elements and consonance to bring about emphasis on the subject matter of discussion.

The repletion of falling tunes has been discovered to be more than its rising counterpart. It has also been revealed that the segmental sounds /s, w, b, f, h, t, m, n, ð, l, p, g, v, r, d, k/ are consciously and unconsciously deployed by the poet to bring about their respective aesthetic and emotional effects, contributing to sound-content relationship. The repetition of those consonant sounds elicits symphony and coherence to the meaning and beauty of the poem.

Conclusion

From this research, the generalisation of poetry as suspect generic phenomenon has been faulted through our investigation on phonological features which are found capable of contributing to the understanding and deeper appreciation of poetry as artistic form. The study buttresses the fact that sound properties are to poetic renditions what stone or bronze is to sculpture. As a result, the indispensability of sound to meaning interpretation has been examined in Ushie's Yawns and Belches. The work demonstrates a phonaesthetic analysis that relies heavily on the relationship between sound and sense, as well as its formation to the literariness of literary compositions. Significantly, the transparency in the use of language and the repletion of linguistic features in the collections shows the abiding commitment of the poet to the concerns of the common man. The conclusion derived from the result of this analysis submits that sound and poetry have synergetic effects in the urgent service of mediating societal well-being and transformation thereby making its essence an art-for-human sake, but not an art-for-art sake.

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