

The Dramatic Functions of Songs : A Pragmatic Approach to Wole Soyinka's Plays

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Abstract

This study aims at determining the category and the function of songs in the plays of Wole Soyinka. It purports, in turn to show to what extent songs as narrative techniques are integrated into the dramatic text and help readers of Soyinka in defining the function of songs in other plays, as well as stimulate a search for functions perhaps not included in this examination. Whatever merit it may have lies in the fact that it treats songs as a functional unit and element of composition, rather than as mere lyrical parentheses or decorative embellishments.

Keywords

Category, Dramatic functions, Songs, Plays, Narrative techniques, Characters' feelings, Functional unit, Didactic, Prophetic.

Résumé

Cette étude vise à déterminer les catégories et les fonctions de la chanson dans le théâtre de Wole Soyinka. Elle montre dans quelle mesure la chanson comme technique narrative intègre le texte du théâtre, aide des lecteurs de Soyinka à définir la fonction de la chanson dans d'autres pièces de théâtre, et stimule la recherche des fonctions non incluses dans cette analyse. Elle traite la chanson comme une unité fonctionnelle et un élément de composition, plutôt que des parenthèses lyriques ou des embellissements décoratifs.

Mots clés

Catégorie, Fonction dramatique, Chansons, Pièces de théâtre, techniques narratives, Pensées des personnages, Unité fonctionnelle, Didactique, Prophétique.

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Introduction

Musicals combine the full spectrum of all the arts: words, singing, dancing, stage spectacle, providing audiences with something for just about every taste. Numerous critics have lent credence to this with a special focus on songs. The conclusive assessment the Kenyan writer Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o accordingly makes is that they are unquestionably the background most of sub-Saharan African writers refer to very often, a cultural context which helps appreciate a Negro African work of art as he better puts it:

Song and dance as we have seen, are central to nearly all the rituals celebrating rain, birth, the second birth, circumcision, marriage, funerals or to all ordinary ceremonies. Even daily speech among peasants is interspersed with song. It can be a line or two, a verse, or a whole song. What's important is that song and dance are not just decorations; they are an integral part of that conversation, that drinking session, that ritual, that ceremony (Ngũgĩ, 1986, p. 45).

In the best, songs are reverent and devotional, and are regarded as a major activity during which people show their joy or their sorrow or in case of a religious festival. As such, they do not exist only for their entertainment value, but develop story, mood, theme, communicating drama through music. Indeed, songs may function dramatically in several ways, a primary one being to define character. The best type of character song fits the dramatic situation and cannot be fully appreciated if taken out of context.

Wole Soyinka's literary production is replete with songs to the point that some critics posit them to be characteristic of his committed style. In most of his plays, songs are graphologically set apart from the main narration by indentation and italics. When James Gibbs in *Conversations with Wole Soyinka* asks him if a young playwright should try to incorporate music and dance in his play. Soyinka answers that "there is no question at all that any play succeeds in integrating music, dance, masks, and so on is at least one dimension richer than purely literary form of theatre." (B. Jeyifo, ed., 2001, p. 90-108). Soyinka defends one of the most important characteristics of his own theory of drama: the use of dance, music, masks, and mime, songs,

chants which accompany them. Songs as narrative techniques include different types or categories as we may identify them in Soyinka's four plays namely *A Dance of the Forest*, *The Road*, *The Lion and the Jewel*, and *Kongi's Harvest*.

This research paper draws from pragmatism according to W. Koyama's pronouncement :

If we define pragmatics as what we do with words, that is, performing acts of referential and nonreferential (social-indexical) signification, involving both (signifying) signs and objects (i.e., what is signified), then songs, sounds, are part of pragmatics, since verbal articulations constitute a kind of action. On the other hand, if we narrowly define pragmatics as the referential or nonreferential speech acts that result from the use of sounds, mediated by a denotational code called linguistic structure, pragmatics appears located at the signified pole of signification and thus diametrically opposed to phonetics at the signifying pole (W. Koyama, quoted in Jacob L. Mey (2009, p. 702).

Thus, this study, in two points, focuses on songs as a functional unit and element of composition, rather than as mere lyrical parentheses or decorative embellishments of Soyinka's plays under consideration.

1. Songs of Celebration

'Celebration' comes from 'to celebrate' which, according to *The New International Webster's Comprehensive Dictionary of the English Language* (2004), carries connotations of 1. performing (a ritual, ceremony, etc.) publicly and formally, 2. commemorating (an anniversary, holiday, etc.) with ceremony or festivity, 3. praising publicly, 4. marking (a happy occasion) by engaging in some pleasurable activity - to have a convivial good time. This means that, welcomes, weddings, praise, religious festivals, the outcome of contests or elections, etc., are the most common types of celebrations in which songs are used to express the collective cheer and good feelings of friends and relatives or of an entire community, in an open and direct fashion. The content of these songs is usually general and conventional,

though particular reference to characters and situations is made in some cases, discussed below. They all have great similarity in phrasing and content between plays.

The song of welcome is not sung but recited by Dirge-Man in *A Dance of the Forests*, especially at the end of Part one. The context of this song in the play makes it a song which exposes the unglorious past of Africa so that it is examined as a way to avoid cycle of stupidity, and envision a better future. The text of this song is the following :

Dirge-Man: Move on eyah! Move apart
I felt the wind breathe – no more
Keep away now. Leave the dead
Some room to dance
If you see the banana leaf
Freshly fibrous like a woman's breasts
If you see the banana leaf
Shred itself, thread on thread
Hang wet as the crepe of grief
Don't say it's the wind. Leave the dead
Some room to dance. (Soyinka, 1973, p. 36)

The essential fact in this song is Dirge-Man's call for a space for the dead to dance metaphorically that is to express themselves freely on the crimes the living characters committed upon them eight centuries ago. The song of Dirge-Man is about the misery the dead couple underwent. In this regards, this song sounds and presents aspects of Black American folklore characterized by the Negro spiritual which is a kind of liturgical song that was sung by black slaves in the plantation in America. Without any doubt, Wole Soyinka in the above 'song of welcome' refers to the negro spiritual to show the parallelism between Black American and African aesthetics since the latter stems from the former. For instance, peasants in their field, sing to rhythm and spur themselves in their works. Soyinka chooses to adopt this tropical experience in his works to better convey themes dealing with Postcolonial Nigeria.

As for the wedding song, it is sung by small groups of actors representing friends and relatives, or by musicians who appear singing and playing on stage. They are generally brief and reflect stereotypes expression of joy and good will. The below 'song for celebrating

marriage' follows the stage direction, " Festive air, fully pervasive. Oil lamps from the market multiply as traders desert their stalls to join them [...] The crowd repeats the song after Sidi ":

To lani tolani	She belongs to me, wrap
T'emi Nit' emi N;	yourself around me
Sun momi, we momi;	Come close to me, wrap
Sun momi, ta momi	yourself around me
Yarabi io m'eyi to	Only God knows which
'led' omo (Soyinka,	moment makes the child.'
1974, p. 58)	(Soyinka, 1974, p. 58)

This is actually fa song celebrating marriage. Along with Sidi, the crowd also sings. Thus, songs are an essential part of the village. The above two songs have things in common. The essential is that, they are all about marriage and childbirth for which Sidi herself sings the praise. The two songs are particularly Yoruba, and only Yoruba sings the union of the lion and the jewel.

The next category is about 'praise songs'. They are one of the most widely used poetic forms in Africa; a series of laudatory epithets applied to gods, men, animals, plants, and towns that capture the essence of the object being praised. The praise song is not part of Western cultures, though the 'eulogy' is a similar form. They are almost always positive. Interestingly, African praise songs can include negative things as well as positive; indeed, they are intended to be descriptive rather than simply laudatory.

Among some Bantu-speaking peoples, the praise song is an important form of oral literature.¹ In the plays like *The Road*, *The Lion and the Jewel* and *Kongi's Harvest* the use of praise-songs is relevant. To begin with *The Road*, the praise-song is in Part two of the play. The action of the play which is the context of this song involves characters such as Samson, Particulars Joe, Kotonu, Say Tokyo Kid and Professor. They are talking about death by road accident as a way for them obtaining all that they need to live. Samson addresses Particulars Joe. He says, "If you see accident make you tell me I go run go there before useless men steal all the spare part finish" (Soyinka, 1973, p. 218).

¹ <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/473871/praise-song> (March 2018).

In addition, road accident looks like war in view of the number of victims and how the destruction of their bodies. That is why Professor compares it to “[...] a battlefield they always say. Like a battlefield.” (Soyinka, 1973, p. 219) In relation to this, Kotonu, the driver says, “Much more peaceful to trade in death than to witness it” (Soyinka, 1973, p. 219) Particular Joe calls Samson “bloody dealer in death” (Soyinka, 1973, p. 219), and he asks him where he was on the day of the Drivers’ Festival. Very surprisingly, Samson answers, “...Professor, he handles everything for us” (Soyinka, 1973, p. 219). This leads Professor asks all of them to “Call out the hymn. Any song will do but to restore my self-confidence make it a song of praise. But mind you don’t disturb me. I feel like working” (Soyinka, 1973, p. 220). In a stage direction, we read: “[Falls straight on his papers as the group sings his favourite praise-song.]”

Professor anjonnu t’awa	Professor, our being like demon
Professor anjonnu t’awa	Professor, our being like demon
Baba wa l’oke baba	The elder above us
Baba wa l’oke baba	The elder below
Eni ba magbe mi san’le,	The hand that thinks to smash me, let it)
ko da’wo duro	
Mo leni lehin, ejo	
ragbada l’ori awo	
Ay’ awo pada, ejo	Pause a while
ragbada l’ori awo	
Ota o lef’ori oma baba	I have one behind me,
gun’yan jc	coiled snake on
A b’oro soro	Mysteries
ab’elerigbo b’okele	He moults in season,
Baba wa l’oke baba	coiled snake on
Baba wa l’odo baba.....	Mysteries
(Soyinka, 1973, p. 220)	The foe cannot pound the head of a Father’s Son like yam Who holds discourse with spirits, who dines with The Ruler of Forests He is elder above us

He is our elder
below... (Soyinka,
1973, p. 231-232)

The Professor is their elder. They request the hand that plans to destroy them to stop a while since there is a “coiled snake on mysteries” (Soyinka, 1973, p. 232). The enemy cannot destroy anyone who holds discourse with spirits and who dines with the ruler of the forest. The above song is sung in order to boost up Professor’s confidence. So he allows the group to sing favorite praise song about communication with the spirit of the world. Here he is depicted as their protective patron and the link between the world of men and gods. Through this song Soyinka has effectively brought out the anguish and despair, giving a clear picture of man’s insecurity, aggressiveness and evasiveness. They contrast the greed, the violence in the world of politics and the quest for spiritual peace. Above all, this song deals with death, the main theme in *The Road*.

In *The Lion and the Jewel*, Baroka breaks out in a great song of self-praise when he hears from Sadiku that Sidi thinks he is too old to marry as he better puts it in this song :

Did I not, at the festival of Rain,
Defeat the men in the long-tossing match?
Do I not still with the most fearless ones,
Hunt the leopard and the boa at night
And save the farmers’ goats from further harm?
And does she say I’m old?
Did I not, to announce the Harmattan,
Climb to the top of the silk-cotton tree,
Break the first pod, and scatter tasseled seeds
To the four winds-and this but yesterday?
Do any of my wives report
A failing in my manliness?
The strongest of them all
Still wearies long before the lion does!
And so would she, had I briefest chance
To teach this unfledged bridling
That lacks the wisdom to embrace
The rich mustiness of age (Soyinka, 1974, p. 27).

In the self-praise song above by Baroka, the essential ideas are: he alone has such power among the lions; age does not decline his virility; he is capable for seducing and winning any beautiful woman or girl whatever the means he uses; the strongest of his wives get exhausted before he starts, so will be the situation of the young beautiful; he will give her chance to learn more. The other aspect we find better to mention is the repetition of 'Did not I' which also becomes 'Do not I' to actually express the idea of self-praise, capacity, possibility, he did and is still doing what others could not. Moreover, in *The Lion and the Jewel* are parts of the text that indicate the issue of praise. But, they are not actually songs like those we have mentioned above. For instance, Sidi praises Lakunle for his performance and the opportunity he takes to her more. Then, in a stage direction, one reads:

Sadiku dips her hand briskly in Lakunle's pocket, this time with success [...] she has darted to the drummers and pressed a coin a piece on their foreheads, waving them to possession of the floor. Tilting their heads backwards, they drum her praise... (Soyinka, 1974, p. 51).

Through this action of the play about praise, we read more about a traditional practice of the Yoruba. This part of the play evokes the reality of the lifehood of professional drummers. Accordingly, Ajani (2005, p. 15) writes: "The person whose praise is sung is expected to dance towards them and begin to press money on the forefinger". The text even furthers that if one is not ready to give money to them, it is considered as an act of belittling one's image in the society. As Lakunle is not ready to spend money for the singers, Sadiku wants to save his face, so she plunges her hand into his pocket and takes some money for them.

Furthermore, in *Kongi's Harvest* 'praise songs' are in the 'Hemlock' section and in part one and part two as well. The 'Hemlock' section of the play sounds like, and is structured in the manner of a song, here a praise-song which is about royal quality. As for the second, the text is the following:

Oba ni i fepo inu
ebo ra'ri
Orisa l'oba

None but the king
Takes the oil from the
cross roads

Oba ni fepo inu ebo
r'awuje
Orisa l'oba (Soyinka,
1974, p. 109)

And rubs it his awuje
The king is god). (V.
N. Manjula, 2012, p.
95)

The above praise-song is sung by Oba Sarumi. He pays tribute to the might and majesty of the king.

As for the second praise-song, it is associated with the coming of Secretary to Segi's club to announce a message. He is stuck by the beauty of Segi. He tells her as he enters: "Like a word with you. In private." And Segi replies: "You can see I'm occupied Mr. Secretary." Secretary insists by telling Daodu that Segi is "Elegant. Very elegant". But, he also asks Daodu, "is she really as dangerous as they say" (Soyinka, 1974, p. 72; 74). We note that Segi's beauty sticks all men, and she always finishes destroying them physically. The praise-song under consideration is sung by Daodu, another Segi's lover, Segi, Kongi's former mistress, of course in praise of her beauty. This song is as follows:

A coiled snake
Is beautiful asleep
A velvet bolster
Laid on flours
If the snake would
Welcome me, I do not wish
A softer pillow than
This lady's breasts
But do not fool with one
Whose bosom ripples
As a python coiled
In wait for rabbits (Soyinka, 1974, p. 88).

This song includes only negative things to know the character and the personality of Segi. She is very dangerous. In addition, in the above song, Daodu compares Segi's skin to a black glistening snake which passes in the sun into cool shadows. He also compares Segi to a coiled snake which is beautifully sleeping in a velvet bolster laid on flowers. If this python of a woman welcomes him, he prefers her breast to a softer pillow. By the end of the song, Daodu states that with a python

coiled, whose bosom ripples for its prey, one should not be fooled with. In addition, Daodu's negative praise-song for Segi's beauty is followed by Secretary's turn-taking which is also a praise-song, remembering him Segi, the same one whom they warn:

Do not stay by the sea
At night
Mammy Watta frolics by the sea
Do not play
With Daughter of the sea....
It's picking at my mind but it just will not surface. (Soyinka, 1974, p. 88)

Then, Daodu agrees with Secretary in another negative praise-song that :

She is still, but only as
The still heart of a storm.
Segi, turn on me eyes
That were bathed in tender seas
And tender springs. (Soyinka, 1974, p. 88)

The stage direction coming after this song, indicates that Secretary's face becomes suddenly clear, he opens his eyes, stares hard at Segi. To this regards, Daodu sings another praise-song, now for Secretary:

Your eyes are
Cowrie shells, their cups
Have held much brine
It rained
Beads of grace
That hour of your birth
But it fell
From baleful skies. (Soyinka, 1974, p. 88-89)

In this praise-song of Secretary, we read the words 'sea' twice, and in Daodu's songs, the words 'still' and 'tender' are repeated also twice. In addition to the use of striking repetition, the heavy use of similes in

those songs makes them lively. All these literary features are parts of Wole Soyinka's aesthetics.

2. Songs of Confrontation

In *The New International Webster's Comprehensive Dictionary of the English Language* (2004) a confrontation is the action or fact of facing in hostility or defiance

In Soyinka's plays under scrutiny, songs of confrontation express regret, anger, the action of protest, and conflict, which, according to *The Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English* (2005) carry connotations of the feeling of sadness at the loss of something, or of annoyance or disappointment because of something; the strong feeling that comes when one has been wronged or insulted, or when one sees cruelty or injustice, the feeling that make people want to quarrel or fight; statement of disapproval or objection, and fight, struggle, quarrel, opposition, difference.

Songs of regret and anger also called 'sorrow songs' are literally songs from the souls of black folk. These songs served as a device for self-expression within the slaved population. There was no education for those enslaved and this was one way they were able to express themselves. Some of the songs are even welled up from black souls in the dark past. These songs start with despair, but by the end there is an array of hope. This is symbolic of the life of the slaves. The songs were used to describe the suffering that they went through and the hope they eventually felt². The illustration is in *The Lion and the Jewel* with regard to the following song:

'N' ijo itoro
'Amuda el'ebe
I' aiya;
'G be je on' ipa' (Soyinka, 1974, p. 23)

Establishing the locale is one of the functions of dialect song found in Soyinka's plays. Only one, the song in Yoruba is entirely in a language other than English as it this song is not translated into English

² http://wiki.answers.com/Q/What_are_sorrow_songs?#slide=9? (March 2018).

as the others. Its context and part of the stage direction which comes before bear indications that are helpful in understanding its meaning. In fact, this song is sung in the scene of the white surveyor. In addition, the play writes,

Enters the prisoners, guarded by two warders', [...] A white surveyor [...] directs the sweat team to where to work. They begin felling, machet swinging, log dragging, all to the rhythm of the work gang's metal percussion (rod on gong or rude triangle, etc.). The two performers are also the song leaders and the others fill the chorus. 'N' ijo', Amuda el' ebe l'aiya', 'Gbe je on' ipa' etc. (Soyinka, 1974, p. 23)

The song under consideration is sung by prisoners working on the railway track. According to Ogunba (1976, p. 45-45) "It was very popular in 1940s and later became a favourite percussion song among prisoners". It expresses the spirit of regret and anger which provokes Lakunle to accuse Baroka of extreme conservatism. The use of songs makes the play lively and interesting since many on the stage are involved in the scene.

The next category is about 'song of protest'. The instance of illustration is in *The Lion and the Jewel*. It is Sidi's reaction to the words of Baroka's protests. The idea remains Baroka's lie on his impotency. Baroka seems to hide his virility behind impotency. But Sidi is hesitating, and she is very far from believing him. He says, "By the years on my beard, I swear they slander me!" and Sidi replies: "You won!" (Soyinka, 1974, p. 40), "I think he will win" (Soyinka, 1974, p. 38), because she adds "If the tortoise cannot tumble it does not mean that he can not stand" (Soyinka, 1974, p. 38-39). This is Sidi's wish for, and knowledge about Baroka because, "They say he uses well his dogs and horses" (Soyinka, 1974, p. 41) This song is :

"Yokolu Yokolu.
Ko ha tan bi
Iyawo gb' oko san'le
Oko yo 'ke..."
(Soyinka, 1974, p. 40)

"Yokolu, Yokolu, what
say you now?
The wife knocked down
the husband
And he now sprouts a
hunchback..."
(Soyinka, 1974, p. 40)

Sidi repeats this song throughout Baroka's protest. In addition, this song also sounds as a mockery song because only at this level of the action Baroka is qualified as the defeated man, nursing his hip, goes to the corner of the room and lifts out a low 'ako' bench. He sits on the floor [...], then 'using only their arms now, they place their elbows on the bench and grip hands. Soyinka effectively uses the word "Yokolu" repetitively.

Furthermore, before dealing with 'bridal song' we find it better to examine two excerpts from *The Lion and the Jewel*, for which there is no clear indication for them being songs, as it is the case for the previous songs, but are essential as transitive situations that culminate to bridal song. However, it is important to note the special reference to distant music, light, drums, flutes, box-guitars and sekere as they accompany Lakunle's text through which he expresses his disappointment. He says:

And now I know I am the biggest fool
That never walked this earth.
There are women to be found
In every town or village in these parts,
And every one a virgin.
But I obey my books. (Soyinka, 1974, p. 55)

We also note that before Lakunle's moment of realization he remarks under the sounds of the distant music, light drums and other instruments:

Man takes the fallen woman by the hand'
And ever after they live happily.
Moreover, I will admit,
It solves the problem of her bride-price too.
A man must live or fall by his true
Principles. That, I had sworn,
Never to pay. (Soyinka, 1974, p. 55).

The group commences singing again when Lakunle shares with Sadiku his views on marriage. Lakunle is mistaken when he tells the musicians that no one is getting married and they should return. It is at this strategic point that Sidi enters. There is singing and song; Sidi gets blessing from Sadiku who invokes the fertile gods so that they stay with her, and may the time come soon when she will be as round-bellied as

a full moon in a low sky. Sidi exclaims: "Come, sing to me for sedes/ Of children, sired of the lion stock" (Soyinka, 1974, p. 57) The musicians resume their tune. She sings the following bridal song:

Mo te'ni. Mo	My net is spread, my
te'ni.	net is spread
Mo te'ni. Mo te'ni.	Come close to me,
Sun mo mi, we mo mi	wrap yourself around
Sun mo mi, fa mo mi	me.
Yarabi lo m'yei t'o le	Only God knows
d'omo..... (Soyinka,	which moment makes
1974, p. 57).	the child... (Soyinka,
	1974, p. 57).

Through this song Sidi reveals her romantic sensibility and her dream for a matrimonial life. In addition, this song highlights her emotions especially, the happiness. She does not feel sorry for her seduction, but she prepares herself for her marriage. To her, it is a better proposition to marry Baroka.

Songs of political conflict make a new sub-category. We read them in *Kongi's Harvest*. It is interesting to remind that the all play is about the issue of conflict between a traditional ruler and a modern system of government. To this respect, the praise-song from *Kongi's Harvest*, especially in the Hemlock section that we have elaborated on above is also a song for political conflict in the sense that it stresses the spiritual authority of the Oba when he anoints the head's pulse centre with the oil sacrifice, as well as his power as God. Unfortunately, Oba Danlola has only the trappings of royalty, since he is in detention after being stripped of his political power by Kongi. Besides, Danlola exhibits his resignation to his loss of power through a song of political conflict, because his oral text is accompanied by drums which sounds now a hollow ring. He says:

My friend, you merely stopped
My drums, but they were silenced
On the day when Kongi cast aside
My props of wisdom, the day he
Drove the old Aweri from their seats (Soyinka, 1974, p. 63).

The above song about political conflict is also read in the Hemlock section of *Kongi's Harvest*. The conflict being tradition against modernity in the domain of governing the people, the above song is sung in the camp that defends tradition. To this effect, it is about traditional conflict. As the action of the play goes on, Oba Sarumi points out at the start of a dirge which is sung traditionally when a King dies. He sings:

They complained because
The first of the new yams
Melted first in an Oba's mouth
But the dead will witness
We drew the poison from the root (Soyinka, 1974, p. 66).

This song is also about traditional conflict. It seems very prophetic to the extent that it describes successfully Kongi's personality as he would be political leader. Key to this description which will prove true in the course the action of the play is that Kongi is seen as a leader who is not prepared to risk danger and encounter suffering on the behalf of his people. As a consequence, the song reveals that he personifies the poison in the body of politics. There is a contrast between the qualities Kongi gives to his own political person, we may cite life-giving, harmony, and the reign of terror, sudden and dangerous change in the governance of the land of Isma, disharmony that characterize him. This negativity in the Kongi's leadership leads to the last song of political conflict we have selected. This song is Oba Danlola's final chant of the dirge of ege. It is written as follow:

This is the last
Our feet shall touch together
We thought the tune
Obeyed us to the soul
But the drums are newly shaped
And stiff arms strain
On stubborn crooks, so
Delve with the left foot
For ill luck; with the left
Again for ill-luck; once more
With the left alone, for disaster
Is the only certainty we know. (Soyinka, 1974, p. 69).

The essential idea in the above song is that, Oba Danlola, at this stage of the whole action of the play, seemingly accepts the ends of his traditional rule. But he predicts a disastrous end for Kongi's rule.

Let us now deal with 'songs of the passage of life to death'. They are in *The Road* only. This is evident because this play is about the ritual of 'Agemo' which the play itself defines simply as a religious cult of flesh dissolution (Soyinka, 1973, p. 149). In *The Road*, we select two songs that deal with the issue of the passage of life to death. The very first song is the preface poem Alagemo which is presented as follows:

I heard! I felt their reach
And heard my naming named.
The pit it there, the digger fell right through
My roots have come out in the other world.
Make away. Agemo's loops
Are pathways of the sun?
Rain-reeds, unbend to me, quench
The burn of cartwheels at my waist!
Pennant in the stream of time – Now,
Gone, and Here the Future
Make way. Let the river woo
The thinning, thinning Here and
Vanished Leap that was the Night
And the split that snatched the heavy-lidded
She - twin into the Dawn.
No sweat – beads droop beneath
The plough – wings of the hawk.
No beetle finds a hole between Agemo's toes.
When the whirl wind claps his feet
It is the sundering of the.... Name of no ills....
Of....the Not-to-be
Of the moistening moment of a breadth...
Approach. Approach and feel
Did I not speak? Is there not flesh
Between the dead man's thumbs? (Soyinka, 1973, p. 150).

Hearing and reading through this song reveals another aspect which is linked to the passage of human life to death; it is the dissolution of the flesh the Professor is negatively determined to know the reality through his search of the Word. Metaphysical concepts as well as a series of vivid images are used in this song. The most important thing

in this song is that, it brings out the quest of man for the essence of death which alone will explain the meaning of life. In addition, it denounces the fact that savage gods are masters of human life. The play is about the road and the accidents that take place in the total unawareness of the travelers whose lives are transformed to death. We may evoke a kind of uncertainty as to the possibility to reach the destination. The first persons concerned by this situation are the characters in play. They are users of the road because they are touts, drivers, thugs, proprietors of Lorries, etc.

The second song of the passage of life to death is sung in Yoruba language by one of the layabouts who strums his guitar while Samson is moaning. The song is as follows:

Ona orun jin o	It's a long long road to
eeeeee	heaven
Ona orun jin dereba	It's a long road to
roar	heaven, Driver
E e dereba rora	Go easy a-ah go easy
E e dereba rora	driver
Ona orun jin o eeeee	It's a long long road to
Eleda mi ma buru	heaven
Esin baba Bandele je	My creator, be not
I' odan	harsh on me
Won o gbefun o	Bandele's horse
Eleda mi ma ma buru	galloped home a
Esin baba Bandele je	winner
I' odan	But the race eluded
Won o gbefun o	him.) (Soyinka, 1973,
(Soyinka, 1973, p.	p. 230).
165).	

That song is actually about the passage of life to death. It also adds another dimension: the heaven. The driver on the road seems himself doomed; he is aware of the unavailability for his life to be transformed to death. In front of such situation, and how long is the road that leads to Heaven, and which he can only take easy, the driver asks to the Creator that He should not be harsh on him because the road to heaven is indeed long. This song reveals the secret of the transitional experience from life to death, and the feelings of existence. Their life is

disrupted. The question of their existence is highlighted through this song.

Last but not least, there is the 'war-chant' which is sung by the Thugs. The main concern is 'What he shall experience' in front of the violence of the God Oruesu and the ancestral spirits who always play on their lives. The song is presented as follows:

Eni r' oro ke juba	Who meets Oro and
Ohun oju ri	makes no obeisance
K'o ba de'le a mo'ra	What he shall
Ohun oju ri	experience!
Eri r'oro ke juba	When he's home he'll
Ohu oju ri	need a hot message
Ko ba de'le a ru'bo	What he shall
Ohun oju ri	experience!
B'e de dele d'ojumo	When he's home he'll
Ohun oju ri	make thanksgivings
Oruwo re a pitan	What he shall
Ohun oju ri	experience!
Eni r'esu ke yago	And if he fails to make
Ohun oju ri	home before dawn.
Eni s'agberef'elegun	What he shall
Ohun oju ri (Soyinka,	experience!
1973, p. 171).	His skull shall tell the
	tales thereof-oh
	What he shall
	experience!
	Who meets Esu and
	fails to give way
	What he shall
	experience!
	Who struts arrogant
	before ancestral spirits
	What he shall
	experience!)
	(Soyinka, 1973, p.
	231).

This chant is about war not because it is sung in war-time by the Thugs, but because what they experience when they meet god Oro

during a road accident is in no way different from actual war-time experience. The situation is that no one survive after he has met god Oro and the ancestral spirits who fed themselves with human blood alone. We find it better to deal with the last song which is closed to the one we have just elaborated on. This is not actually about war, but what we find useful is the way and circumstance people meet violent gods and ancestral spirits who always play on their lives. Here is how it sings:

Iri se l'oganjo
orun ni ki lo ti je
Iri se l'oganjo orun ni
ki lo S'orun
Iri erun ta si mi j'ese
iku gb'omitan
Iri erun ta si mi l'aiya
otutu eru mu mi
Iku se ni o' okoni
l'aiye lo
Eba mi kedum,
kokolori o...
(Soyinka, 1973, p.
191).

It fogged suddenly at
noonday
The sun asked, what is
this wonder?
The sun asked, what is
this wonder?
The dew of drought
settled on my feet
Death deprives us of
rain
The dew of drought
settled on my breast
And the chill of fear
took me
Death has sinned
against us
A man among men is
gone (Kokol'ori)
(Soyinka, 1973, p.
231).

As in the previous song, here we read more about the circumstance in which the characters are surprised by death on the road. This is shown through the image of the sun which surprises the fog suddenly in the noon-day. In addition, the characters are not affected when the dew of drought is settled on their feet, but the chill of fear overtakes when the dew of drought settles on their breast. Death seems to have deprived them of all their blessing.

Conclusion

In the end it appears clear that songs used in Wole Soyinka's plays help one understand their meanings as they are all linked to the main themes of the plays. The different categories of these songs are: songs of celebration and songs of confrontation. Reading them in context through pragmatic approach, these songs fulfil didactic, prophetic, and decorative functions. They address almost all aspects of human life. They expose the unglorious past of African, they express the spirit of regret and anger which provokes to accuse other characters of extreme conservatism, and they make the play lively and interesting since many on the stage are involved in the scene. Songs reveal traditional conflict, characters' romantic sensibility and dream for a matrimonial life, and highlight emotions especially, the happiness for being seduced. A song is sung in order to boost up characters' confidence, they show man's power and age cannot decline virility, capacity to seduce and win any beautiful woman or girl whatever the means the man uses. Songs also evoke the reality of the lifehood of professional drummers that, the person whose praise is sung is expected to dance before them and begin to press money on the forefinger. Through songs tribute is paid to the might and majesty of the king. Songs bring out the quest of man for the essence of death, which alone will explain the meaning of life, and denounce the fact that savage gods are masters of human life, the road and the accidents that take place in the total unawareness of the travelers whose lives are transformed to death.

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