Transitivity in Atukwei Okai's "The Oath of Fontomfrom"

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1.Background

The language used in any form of social discourse is representational (Fairclough, 2001) of the speaker or writer's conscious experiences of the outer world and his inner

experiences. These experiences constitute an individual's perceptions. According to Halliday (1973; 2004), an author's linguistic and functional choices result from social influences and their influences on the author's perception. Linguistic choices: vocabulary and syntax: are linked to the experiential perspectives of the user and should therefore be highlighted at the discourse level. Thus, examining the language of a literary text is a very reliable means of gaining sufficient comprehension and appreciation of the artistic realization of the author. This paper explores the relationship between linguistic choices and socially construed meaning in a literary text.

1.2. Systematic Functional Linguistics

Several linguistic theories have been developed to help ascertain the form-function relationship in discourse. One such theory, which has for some time gained scholarly attention, is the systemic functional linguistics (SFL) initially proposed by Halliday in his work titled An introduction to functional grammar (Halliday, 1985; 1994) and has since been revised by himself and Matthiessen in An introduction to functional grammar (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004) and Halliday's introduction to functional grammar (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). For Halliday (1985), a language is interpreted as a system of meanings, accompanied by forms through which the meanings can be realised and answer such a question as, how are these meanings expressed? SFL is a framework for modelling language as a resource for making meaning and choices. This framework combines the formal structures of language and the socio-cultural context of language use. Its primary goal is to show how and why a text means what it means (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004).

Halliday proposes some systems of meaning, one of which is the transitivity system. The system of transitivity is arguably a common means by which isolated clauses and clauses in context are analysed for the semantics of the clauses.

1.3. Transitivity System

Transitivity forms part of the ideational and representational metafunction; it concerns with transmission or representation of ideas by the speaker or writer. Transitivity represents the experiences, including events, actions, inner consciousness, and relations in processes expressed by the verbal group, the classification of the participants involved in the processes, and the circumstances within which the participants carried out the processes. Transitivity structure is thus characterized by: participant–Process–circumstance.

According to Halliday (1985), the processes expressed in language represent the experiential conception of our outer and inner worlds. Transitivity outlines the different categories of processes: material, mental, relational, behavioural, verbal, and existential. Each processing category provides a model for construing a particular domain of experience (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014).

The transitivity system facilitates the interpretation of language in action and context. It portrays how the clause and its parts are potential sources of information that can go a long way to aid in understanding and interpreting a speaker's language content or even fiction stories (Opara, 2012) and poems. Viewing language as a means of expressing and transferring ideas and experiences among people, analysts can know that one is doing something, something is happening, or how someone does something in the text by concentrating on the clause. The clause should therefore be seen as a unit that can form the basis for textual analysis.

1.4. Transitivity in Literary Analysis

The transitivity study of African literary texts has become a fertile ground for researchers in Applied Linguistics and Literary Studies (Mwinlaaru, 2012). Halliday's systematic functional linguistics and its transitivity model, where linguistic wording and the socio-culturally constructed meaning meet in texts, attempt to demonstrate that underlying ideology in the texts by probing beyond the linguistic surface. Halliday's transitivity model provides a useful linguistic framework for uncovering the main linguistic features of literary discourse.

According to Nguyen (2012), transitivity analysis has been extensively used to understand the language of speakers and writers. It studies the structure of sentences represented by processes, the participants involved in these processes, and the circumstances in which processes and participants are involved. The main aim of transitivity is to connect the semantic and grammatical marks to extract meaning through language stylistically (Mehmood et al., 2014).

Using transitivity analysis, studies such as (Halliday, 1971; Mwinlaaru, 2012, 2014; Darani, 2014; Ogungbemi, 2016) have tried to make known that language structures can produce certain meanings and ideologies which are not always overt for readers. In other words, the task of functional analysis, particularly transitivity analysis, is to discover the relation between meanings and wordings that accounts for the organization of linguistic features in a text (Nguyen, 2012). Therefore, transitivity has been used to shed more light on the use of language in a literary text. It can be seen that the understanding of stories rests on the context of situation/background. This study aims to show how the transitivity system works in Atu Kwei Okai's "The Oath of the Fontomfrom" to discover the representation of the author's experiences.

Doing a transitivity analysis of discourse can, also, reveal the linguistic style of a speaker/writer; it is generally accepted that each individual has a unique linguistic identity informed by their linguistic style. That implies that one expresses themselves in their way through the lexical, syntactic, and semantic elements chosen to focus on determining aspects of reality.

1.5. Theoretical Framework

The study was informed by the theoretical underpinning of Systemic Functional Linguistics by Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), which construes language as a resource for making meaning through choices. The study specifically adopted the Transitivity model.

The Transitivity System of the SFL

Halliday (1973) has explained transitivity as a set of options where the speaker (or writer) encodes their experiences of the external world and the internal world of their consciousness in conjunction with the participants of the processes and the circumstances within which the processes take place. In other words, transitivity explains how we use language to represent our inner and outer experiences and ideas concerning our social contexts. The semantic and syntactic choices one makes to communicate serve to manifest their external and internal positioning and are based on the assumption that one organizes their discourse in line with how one perceives the situation and the meanings one wishes to convey (Halliday & Matthiessen,

2014). The concept of choices stipulates that each speaker has a plethora sets of options from which selection is made based on the kind of semantic representation they wish to make. Transitivity grammar maintains that a clause consists of three main components, namely a process (a verbal group), a participant (a nominal group), and a circumstance (an adverbial group or a prepositional phrase). The process and participant elements are considered inherent, while the circumstance element is considered optional.

1.6. Objectives of the Study

The study is hinged on the general purpose of revealing the socially constructed meaning carried in the poem. The specific objectives are to:

1. Examine the poet's process choices and their typical distribution in "The Oath of the Fontomfrom".
2. Ascertain the participant characteristics of each process category.
3. Establish the role of the speaker/persona in the poem.

2. METHODOLOGY

A descriptive qualitative research design was deployed in this study. Data were obtained from a poem titled "The Oath of the Fontomfro", selected from an anthology of poetry, *The Oath of the Fontomfrom and Other Poems*, authored by Prof. Atukwei Okai and published in 1971.

2.1. Corpus

The corpus of this study was composed of the clauses construed from the poem "The Oath of the Fontomfrom". The clauses are listed, and a clause (usually refrains) repeated was given a single entry. The repetition must be homogeneous. A verb phrase (i.e. Process) repeated in a different clause structure is indexed differently. These clauses were then categorized based on the categories to which the processes were assigned.

2.2. Data Analysis

An analysis of the different processes that the poet (or persona) and other people perform in the selected poetry was done using the transitivity model of the ideational metafunction. Thematic analysis (conceptual analysis), a type of content analysis, was used in analysing the text. Typically, the objective of thematic analysis is to assess the frequency of selected terms from sampled data (Owusu, et al., 2019).

2.3. Process and Participant Configurations in the Transitivity System

Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) identified six process categories, including material, mental, relational, verbal, behavioural, and existential, with the first three as major categories and the last three as minor categories. Each process type occupies some semantic roles in the representation of reality as demonstrated in Table 1:

Table 1: Process types, their meanings, and participants

PROCESS TYPES	Meaning Category	Inherent Participants	Peripheral Participants

material:	'doing'	Actor, Goal	Recipient, Client,
action	'doing'		Scope, Initiator,
event	'happening'		Attribute
Behavioural	'behaving'	Behaver	Behaviour
mental:	'sensing'	Senser, Phenomenon	Inducer
	'seeing'		
perception	'thinking'		
	'wanting'		
cognition	'feeling'		
desideration			
emotion			
Verbal	'saying'	Sayer, Target	Receiver, Verbiage
relational:	'being'		
	'attributing'	Carrier, Attribute	Attibutor, Beneficiary,
attribution	'identifying'	Identified, Identifier, Token,	Assigner
		Value	
identificatio n			
Existential	'existing'		

Source: Halliday & Matthiessen (2014)

3. TRANSITIVITY IN "THE OATH OF THE FONTOMFROM"

3.1. The Material Clauses

The 'material' clauses are clauses of doing- &-happening: a 'material' clause construes a quantum of change in the flow of events as taking place through some input of energy" (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014 p.224). The Process (i.e. verbal group) of the clause informs the nature of change as transformative or creative. The transformative change construes that a pre-existing participant element – Actor or Goal – is transformed as the Process unfolds. In contrast, for creative change, the element functioning as the Actor or Goal is construed as being brought into existence as the Process unfolds. For example, the outcomes or change caused by the material processes in the following clauses in Atukwei Okai's "The Oath of the Fontomfrom" are transformative. (The processes in all the clauses herewith are marked in bold.)

In the middle of a moonless night, the village rises to her feet from sleep, aroused not by owl, not by cock.
And the living is awakened!
The males are leaping and reaching out for spears and arrows and bows
My voice-guided and led them here.
When in the past, the women and girls Had gone down to the stream's water, and the men and boys had gone far behind the hills for the forest's venison and fruits, and flames of fire had visited the roofs of the children's huts,

Because I have torn down the masks from the faces of our ill-wishers.

Our farms shall be set ablaze and the blood of our children shed!

They shall seek to break my neck, bury me alive, massacre my children and squeeze me into a bottle.

There are, however, very few creative material process outcomes. Consider the   example below:

Let no hand carve our tombstone now the one to dare will know … the cloud that rains thorns; the marble that grows a   beard

In (9) and (10), 'our tombstone' and 'thorn' exist as the outcomes of carving and rain. In these material clauses (and material clauses in general), the energy source bringing about the change is typically construed as a participant – the Actor. The Actor is the one that brings about the change. The doing of an Actor may be confined to the Actor as in the village rises to her feet, the males are leaping, the women and girls have gone down to the stream's water, and the men and boys have gone far behind the hills, or it may be directed at, or extended to, another participant, Goal, as in they shall seek to break my neck, burry me alive, massacre my children and squeeze me. According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), the term' goal' implies 'directed at' – i.e. the goal of impact. The participant is construed as impacted by the Actor's performance of the Process. The Actor and the Goal participants are inherent in material clauses.

However, just as it is possible to have Actor-self-directed action, there can also be Actor-less action, as is the case in most passive clauses where the Actor is treated as the Doer Adjunct and so construes a non-essential element of the clause. The village rises to her feet from sleep, aroused not by owl, not by cock, and the living is awakened. The Actor of the change carried in the processes 'aroused' and 'are awakened' are relegated to peripheral necessity.

The other peripheral participant roles that may be involved in a 'material' clause are Recipient, Client, Scope, and Attribute (which is more marginal). "The Recipient is one that goods are given to; the Client is one that services are done for. Either may appear with or without a preposition, depending on its position in the clause (gave John the parcel, gave the parcel to John); the preposition is to with Recipient, for with Client" (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014 p.237) as in the males are … reaching out for spears and arrows and bows [Client].

The Scope either construes the domain over which the Process takes place or construes the Process itself in general or specific terms. The Scope of a 'material' clause is not in any way affected by the performance of the Process as down in the women and girls had gone down and far in the men and boys had gone far behind the hills. The Scope is restricted to 'intransitive' clauses – i.e. the 'material' clause without a Goal.

The Attribute enters into 'material' clauses in a restricted way; it may be used to construe the resultant qualitative state of the Actor or Goal after the Process has been completed as dead in the drummer of the village is sprawling dead on his floor. Refer to Appendix B for a detailed analysis of the process types and their participants.

3.2. The Mental Clauses

Halliday and Matthiessen (2014 p.245) explain 'mental' clauses as clauses of sense: a 'mental' clause construes a quantum of change in the flow of events taking place in our

consciousness. The clauses are concerned with our experience of the world of our consciousness. The mental process category, thus, relates to our internal experiences, including how we understand, perceive, feel about, or desire something or someone. Our inner consciousness (or sensing) has been subcategorised into four meanings: cognitive Process (cognition), emotive process (emotion), perceptive Process (perception), and desiderative process (desire). In 'The Oath of the Fontomfrom", there are perceptions:

11. Their eyes pierce the foliage of darkness, seeing before them and afar beyond: Cognition
12. Our enemies refuse to remember.
13. When they lay in ambush for us on the market day in the White Woods, I discovered and warned my brothers.
14. That they aim at me – seeing that those aimed at are those who are the keepers of their brothers!

The clauses above have some characteristic features outlined by Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) of the mental clause category. First, in the present time, the tense of the verbal group serving as the Process is the simple present rather than the present-in-present (i.e. 'present progressive' in traditional grammar) that is characteristic of 'material' clauses, for example, Their eyes pierce the foliage of darkness or they aim at me, not Their eyes are piercing the foliage of darkness or they are aiming at me respectively. However, it is evident from our text that present-in-present can express the present time in the mental clause as found in both the perceptive 'seeing' and the cognitive 'seeing' in Their eyes …, seeing before them and afar beyond and That they … – seeing that those aimed at are those who are the keepers of their brothers respectively.

Second, the Senser doubles as the Subject of the clause and is a nominal group denoting a conscious being, for example, they (i.e. 'our enemies') in That they aim at me, or personified entity like parts of the body as Their eyes in Their eyes pierce the foliage of darkness. The Senser in a clause of the 'mental' Process is one participant who is human or human-like; this is the one that 'senses' – feels, thinks, wants, or perceives. Such a being is 'endowed with consciousness and is usually referred to pronominally as he or she, not as it (Halliday & Matthiessen 2014). The other inherent participant is the Phenomenon, which is felt, thought, wanted, or perceived. The set of things taking on this role in the mental clauses in "The Oath of the Fontomfrom" include: (1) a thing like the foliage of darkness and before them and afar beyond as the Phenomenon of the processes 'pierce' and 'seeing' respectively in Their eyes pierce the foliage of darkness, seeing before them and afar beyond; (2) a fact such as that those aimed at are those who are the keepers of their brothers in That they … – seeing that those aimed at are those who are the keepers of their brothers, or (that) they lay in ambush for us on the market day in the White Woods as in When they lay in ambush for us on the market day in the White Woods, I discovered and warned my brothers.

3.3. The Relational Clauses

"Relational' clauses serve to characterize and to identify" (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014 p.259). Looking at relational clauses from 'below the clause' (i.e. how are they realized?) and 'around the clause' (i.e. what other systemic variants are possible?), it is

observed that such clauses have a distinct grammar of their own. Looking at these clauses below, we can see that the Process is realized by the simple present or past verb form of be or have. Consider the relation in the following clauses from "The Oath of the Fontomfrom":

15.   where the murdered drummer is dead

16.   Under their sore soles, I am the fire!

17.   Proud I am and even strengthened

18.   Those aimed at are those who are the keepers of their brothers!

19.   But her feathers shall stay unburnt, like water on the back of a duck –

20.   I am the Fontomfrom –

21.   I shall be the Fontomfrom –

22.   I am Africa!

The view 'from below' also reveals that the second participant may be a 'non-specific' ('indefinite') nominal group such as dead, and proud and strengthened, in the murdered drummer is dead, and Proud I am and even strengthened respectively; or a 'specific' ('definite') one such as the fire, and the Fontomfrom, in I am the fire, and I am the Fontomfrom respectively.

When we probe these clauses 'from around' for a voice-like contrast, we find that the clause with a 'specific' second participant does have an agnate reversed variant – the fire is I Under their sore soles, the Fontomfrom is I, those who are the keepers of their brothers are those aimed at seems like a very normal systemic variant of the clauses (16), (20) and (18) respectively that occurs in the text, the clauses with a 'non-specific' second participant have no agnate reversed variant such as dead is the murdered drummer is marginal.

From above the clause, we view these relational clauses in the text by attempting to explain the kind of experience they construe. The relational clauses can construe both the speaker's outer experience and inner consciousness. These experiences are modeled as 'being' (i.e., change unfolds 'inertly' without the input of energy). Thus, static location in space or state, for example, But her feathers shall stay unburnt, like water on the back of a duck is construed relationally. The process 'shall stay' construe a static state of being of the participant 'her feathers'.

In 'relational' clauses, there are two parts to the 'being': something (Carrier or Identified) is said to 'be' something else (Attribute or Identifier). The Carrier/Identified and Attribute/Identifier are always the two inherent participants, and a relationship of being is set up between Carrier and Attribute as one set, and Identified and Identifier as another. The sets are two separate entities and are mutually exclusive of the Process, be. The attribute is the class ascribed or attributed to an entity, Carrier, while the Identifier is the element that serves as the identity of an entity, Identified. The attributive clauses construe class membership while the identity clauses construe identifying. From the relational clauses in "The Oath of the Fontomfrom", we can have both attributive and identifying clauses:

Attributive

•   where the murdered drummer **is dead**

•   Proud I **am** and even strengthened

•   But her feathers **shall stay** unburnt, like water on the back of **a duck**

Dead, proud and even strengthened, and unburnt like water … ascribe attribute each to the

murdered drummer, I, her feathers respectively. So, the murdered drummer, for example, is a member of the class of dead Things.

Identifying

• Under their sore soles, I **am** the fire!

• Those aimed at **are** those who **are** the keepers of their brothers!

• I **am** the Fontomfrom –

• I **shall be** the Fontomfrom –

• I **am** Africa!

The fire, those who are the keepers of their brothers, the Fontomfrom, and Africa construe the identity created of I and those aimed at.

From the foregone analysis, we can make the following key distinctions between attributive and identifying models of relational clauses concerning the viewing direction:

A.   Viewing from below the clause, the attributive clauses have a non-specific second participant, Attribute, while the identifying clauses have a specific second participant, Identifier.

B.   Viewing the clause from around, the identifying clauses are reversible, so that the x and a can be switched around: I am the Fontomfrom or the Fontomfrom is I. The attributive ones are not reversible: the form the murdered drummer is dead cannot be reversed to the form dead is the murdered drummer.

Of the three main types of relation – 'intensive' intensive ('x is a'), 'possessive' ('x has a') and 'circumstantial' ('x is at a') outlined by Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) as operational in the English system, only the intensive relational clauses are identified in "The Oath of the Fontomfrom" and it comes in two distinct modes of being – 'attributive' and 'identifying' as discussed earlier.

According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), verbs in general in 'relational' clauses are typically non-salient the Process is structurally absent in certain 'non-finite' 'relational' clauses in English as in But unto those native sons, woe. The verb 'be' is absent and is marked by the linguistic element of pause.

3.4. The Behavioural Clauses

Halliday and Matthiessen (2004; 2014) describe a behavioural process as a process of (typically human) physiological and psychological behaviour, including breathing, coughing, smiling, dreaming, and staring. The behavioural processes are almost always middle of material and mental processes; the processes involve both mental sensing and material action. In Okai's "The Oath of the Fontomfrom", the following clauses are analysed as behavioural:

23. My brothers, my people, my brothers, till dawn, your vigil **must last**.
24. Our enemies **refuse** to remember.
25. My voice **can never fail** me;
26. Because of my friends and how I **breathe**;
27. we **have** already in our time, **outlived** the sharpness of the sword, the din of the struggle the clashes of cutlasses;
28. We **shall** yet **outlive** the weight of lead.
29. the one **to dare** will know

The participant who is 'behaving', labelled Behaver, is typically a conscious being, like the   Senser. The Behaver in these includes human elements such as *Our enemies*, *I*, *we*, and *the one* and human-like elements such as *your vigil* (of course of the human vocatives), and *my voice*.

The most typical pattern is a clause consisting of Behaver and Process only (Halliday &   Matthiessen, 2014), like *I breathe*, *No one's listening*, *He's always grumbling*. A common variant pattern is that where the Behaver carries a process to a second participant, Behaviour like *my can never fail me*; *we shall yet outlive the weight of lead*.

3.5. The Verbal Clauses

Verbal clauses are clauses of saying. 'Saying' has to be interpreted in a rather broad sense; it covers any kind of symbolic exchange of meaning, including The Process of a 'verbal' clause is realized by a verbal group where the lexical verb is one of saying.

23. In the center of the empty courtyard, the vigilant Fontomfrom **peals** forth.
24. The Fontomfrom **keeps on wailing** and **weeping** and **wailing**!
25. The Fontomfrom **keeps on booming** and **moaning** and **booming**!
26. But the faithful Fontomfrom i**s sounding** and **sending**, and **sounding**!
27. I **hailed**
28. I discovered and **warned** my brothers

There is always one inherent participant, representing the speaker, Sayer. The element performing the role of Sayer does not need to be a conscious being like *I* in *I hailed* and *I … warned my brothers*. The Sayer can be anything that puts out a signal; it may be a thing like *the Fontomfrom* in the clauses above.

The verbal clause can accommodate three further participant functions in addition to the Sayer: Receiver, Verbiage, and Target. The Receiver is the one to whom the saying is directed, for example, *my brothers* in *I … warned my brothers*. Here, the Receiver is realized by a nominal group denoting (typically) a conscious being (a potential speaker).   The Verbiage is the function that corresponds to what is said, representing it as a class of things rather than as a report or quote. The Target occurs only in a subtype of 'verbal' clauses; this function construes the entity that is targeted by the Process of saying, which may be a person, an object, or an abstraction. The Target is acted upon verbally by the Sayer, judging them positively or negatively.

3.6. The Existential Clauses

The existential clause represents that something exists or happens, as in:

23.   Their ears **are** in the village there,
24.   It **is** not in our day
25.   Because of where I **stand**,

Existential clauses typically have the verb *be* as the Process. The Process has these basic forms of grammatical relation: (1) with a copular verb *be* and an empty *there* as Subject; (2) with a copular verb *be* and the Existent as Subject and usually a circumstantial adjunct as in *Their ears **are** in the village there*; or (3) with a copular be and an empty it as Subject as in *it is not in our day*.

The existential Process has only a participant named Existent. It is the entity that is said to

exist. The Existent is typically a nominal group, for example, *their ears*, and *I* in *Their ears are in the village there*, *Because of where I stand* respectfully.

4. FINDINGS

4.1. Frequency of Process Types

The processes in "The Oath of the Fontomfrom" include material, mental, relational, behavioural, verbal, and existential and are in the following frequency distribution.

Table 2: Frequency of Process Types

Process Type	Frequency	Percentage
Material	39	42.4
Mental	15	16.3
Relational	12	13.0
Behavioural	14	15.2
Verbal	9	9.8
Existential	3	3.3
Total	**92**	**100.0**

Table 2 shows that the poem is listed in 92 distinct clauses. The material clause type is predominant. It constitutes 42.4% of the total. The least processes are the existential process type, representing 3.3% of the total processes. The frequencies of the other process types include 16.3% mental processes, 15.2% behavioural processes, 13% relational processes, and 9.8% verbal processes.

4.2. Participant Characteristics

The participants found in this study include:
•   for material processes, Actor, Goal, Scope, Attribute, and Client
•   for mental processes, Senser, Phenomenon
•   for relational processes, Carrier, Attribute, Identified, Identifier
•   for behavioural processes, Behaver, Behaviour
•   for verbal processes, Sayer, Receiver
•   for existential processes, Existent.

From this point, we highlight the elements found to perform the inherent participant roles in the categorized transitivity clauses.

Participants in the material clauses
        The participant roles in the material clauses are Actor, Goal, Scope, Attribute, and Client. The basic ones are Actor and Goal. The elements chosen to perform the Actor role include predominantly human (persons such a*s I*, *you*, *the males*, *women and girls*, *men and boys*, *they* [i.e. our enemies], *our father*; synecdoched body parts such as *hands*, *their faces*, *human hands*, *my voice*; and personified things such as the village, our dove), and

non-humans (all concrete things) such as *owl* and *cock*, *the cloud*, *the rain*, *flames of fire*, and *the fire*.

The Goal elements include predominantly non-human nominals such as the broken drumstick, our spirit, *the roofs of the children's huts*, *the river*, *our farms*, *my neck*, *the oven*, *thorns*, and *a beard*; and a few human elements such as *the village*, *the living*, *themselves* (i.e. the males in the village), *me*, *us*, and *them* (i.e. our visiting great grand brothers).

Participants in mental clauses

The participants found to have been involved in performing the mental processes in "The Oath of the Fontomfrom" include Senser and Phenomenon. The elements performing the Senser role include human nominals such as *I*, *we*, *they* (i.e. our enemies), and *the one*; and human-like entities such as body parts – *their eyes*, and *the hand*. The Phenomenon role is occupied dominantly by humans *I*, *me*, *those*, and things including concrete entities such as *the foliage of darkness*; before them and far beyond; and abstract concept such as *to break my neck, burry me alive, massacre my children, squeeze me into a bottle*; *this: that even before we **learn** to crawl our father took us a-hunting*.

Participants in relational clauses

The participant in the relational processes in "The Oath of the Fontomfrom" include Carrier, Attribute, Identified, Identifier. Both Carrier and Identified roles are dominantly performed by the persona, *I* who is attributed such qualities as *prid*e and *strengthened* and assigned such identity including *the fire*, *the Fontomfrom*, and *Africa*.

Participants in behavioural clauses

Behaver and Behaviour are the participants involved in behavioural processes in the clauses. The Behaver role is played by conscious beings typically human such as *our enemies*, *I*, *we*, *the one*, *(You)*; and by human-like human parts such as *my voice*, *that* (i.e. the hand). The Behaviour role is dominantly performed by abstraction such as *to remember*, *to die*, *the weight of lead*, *the sharpness of the sword, the din of the struggle, and the clashes of the cutlass*.

Participants in the verbal clauses

The participants of the verbal processes include Sayer and Receiver. The Sayer role is performed mainly by *the Fontomfrom* (also as *the vigilant Fontomfrom*, and *the faithful Fontomfrom*) and the persona, *I*. Interestingly, the verbal processes by these are mostly not directed at anything or anyone in particular; there is only one Receiver, *my brothers*.

Participant in the existential processes

The role of the participant, Existent, of the existential processes in "The Oath of the Fontomfrom" is performed by things such as *their ears*, and *it*.

The elements chosen to function as participants have been aggregated into humans, concrete things, and abstract things in Table 3.

Table 3: Participant Element Distribution

Participants	Material	Mental	Relational	Behavioural	Verbal	Existential	Total
Human	27	6	9	10	3	0	**55**
Concrete Things	38	7	3	6	6	2	**62**
Abstract Things	4	0	2	7	0	0	**13**
Total	**68**	**13**	**14**	**23**	**9**	**2**	**130**

Human participation in the processes of the poem is very significant, particularly in relational processes in which there is human domination. Also, elements chosen for participant roles are dominantly concrete and physical.

4.3. Persona Roles

The persona is involved in several processes either individually or in collaboration with others, including as Actor, Goal, and Client of material processes; Senser and Phenomenon of mental processes; Carrier and Identified of relational processes; Behaver of behavioural processes; Sayer of verbal processes; Existent of an Existential process. Table 4 shows the distribution of the persona's (poet's) roles in process types.

Table 4: Persona Roles

Persona Roles	Processes						
	Material	Mental	Relational	Behavioural	Verbal	Existential	Total
Only Initiator	5	1	7	2	2	1	**18**
Joint initiator	0	1	0	3	0	0	**4**
Only target	3	4	0	1	0	0	**8**
Joint target	3	0	0	0	0	0	**3**
Total	**11**	**6**	**7**	**6**	**2**	**1**	**33**

Of the total participants, the persona (or poet) is involved 33 times in performing 32 processes, representing 35% of the total 92 processes. Even though he is involved in more material processes, majority of them are directed at him (and sometimes with others) as the Goal or Client. The persona is dominantly a process focus in the relational clauses where he assigned to himself some attributes and identities such as describing himself as 'the fontomfrom' and 'Africa'. Contrary to what would have been expected of someone assuming the mobilizing role of his society during this critical period of warfare, the person undertakes fewer mental processes; the majority of such processes are rather performed by others (mostly) the supposed adversary towards him.

5. DISCUSSIONS

"The Oath of the Fontomfrom" presents the mobilization of a village against external aggression, and the activities of three groups of human participants can be distinguished in this warfare. These participant groups are the persona, other members of the village, and the village's enemies.

The persona by the use of relational processes assumes the role of the 'Fontomfrom' in the clauses *I am the Fontomfrom*, *I was the Fontomfrom*, and *I shall be the Fontomfrom*. From such understanding, it can be established that the supposed activities of the Fontomfrom are indirectly the verbal processes of the persona: weeping, wailing, booming, moaning, sounding, and sending. Besides relating with the Fontomfrom, the persona relates with other attributes like being 'the fire' and 'proud'. Such relational processes create an understanding of how the persona perceives himself in the imaginary society, a kind of positive, resilient, mobilizing role. Besides, he engages in *warning* (my brothers), *guiding* (your … great grand brothers), *leading* (them), *discovering*, *tearing down* (the mask), *breathing*, *learning* (to crawl), and *refusing* (to die). These activities include material, mental, verbal, and behavioural processes.

The analysis causes the understanding of the roles played by other members of the village: the village *rising*, the males *leaping*, *reaching out* (for spears and arrows and bows), *posting* (themselves), *and piercing* (the foliage). These processes are dominantly material and, together with the persona's activities, portray the community's warfare activities; the combatants resist the enemy forces with many concrete actions coordinated by the commanding leaders with verbal actions and few mental processes. The third group of participants is the enemies of the village. Their activities include material processes such as '*erasing* our spirit from us' and '*laying in ambush*'; mental processes such as '*aiming* at us' and '*seeking* to break my neck'. Transitivity analysis of Atukwei Okai's "The Oath of the Fontomfrom" reveals the consequential materialistic worldview of the poet. The evidence is carried in his prevalent use of material processes largely performed by concrete physical participants, including human and non-human characters. The dominant use of material processes coincides with the finding made by Haroon and Arslan (2021) in a transitivity analysis of Imdad Hussein's 'The Old Building'. The similarity here can be described as coincidental, as the two poems share very little in common, particularly geographically. 'The Old Building' is set in Pakistan in the Middle East while Okai's poem is set in Ghana, Africa. Thematically, the former reflects a description of the emptiness in the persona's life. Meanwhile, Okai in "The Oath of the Fontomfrom" portrays activities involving the persona and his immediate world. Okai's poems describe the world of the speakers paying more attention to the physical interactions involving the speakers and the physical environment. The transitivity analysis of such a poem has provided readers of the poem with linguistic characteristics forming the evidence for comprehending the reading of the poem. First, we see the processes in the poem in terms of their categorisation and implications. As the poem shows, the characters engage in more material processes than the others. Such evidence assists the reader to understand the characters as predisposed to physical or abstract action toward one another. Second, we see the participants' characteristics in terms of their configuration and roles. So, we can evidentially assert that more non-humans engage in happenings and doings than humans, for example.

By transitivity, we can account for how speakers in these poems encode in language their mental reflections of the world and how they account for their experience of the world around them. Of course, the speaker here is by extension, the poet. So, the ideological construct of the speakers is indirectly a reflection of the poet's ideology. Van Dijk (2006), uses the term ideology to refer to attitudes, sets of beliefs, values, and doctrines regarding religious, political, social, and economic life, which shape the individual's and group's perception and through which reality is constructed and interpreted.

6. CONCLUSION

Transitivity analysis has been widely used to understand the language of speakers and writers. It examines the structure of sentences which are represented by processes, the participants involved in these processes, and the circumstances in which processes and participants are involved. Using transitivity analysis, we have tried to establish that language structures can produce certain meanings and ideologies which are not always explicit for readers. In other words, transitivity analysis helps to discover the relation between meanings and wordings that accounts for the organisation of linguistic features in a text, in terms of the process types used and the participants engaged in performing the processes. Therefore, the concept of transitivity has been used in this study to shed more light on the use of language in a literary text, specifically in Atukwei Okai's poem. In Okai's "The Oath of the Fontomfrom", material processes were most frequently used, representing 42.4% (i.e. 39) of the total 92 processes. The dominant use of material processes contributes to our understanding of the meaning of the poem and the poet's ideology of warfare as dominantly involving concrete and abstract doings. The other process types include 16% mental, 15% behavioural, 13% relational, 10% verbal processes. The persona is involved in 32 processes constituting 35% of the total processes. The poet, thus, plays a very active role in mobilising his society to resist external aggression. These meanings are made clearer through transitivity analysis.

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Appendix A

Clause listing of "The Oath of the Fontomfrom"

1.	In the middle / of a moonless / night, / The village **rises** / to her feet / from sleep,
1b.	^ the village is **Aroused** / not by owl, / not by cock.
2.	In the center / of the empty / courtyard, / The vigilant / Fontomfrom/**peals** forth –
3.	And the living / **are awakened**!
4.	The males / **are leaping**
4b.	and ^ the males are **reaching** / **Out** / for spears and arrows and bows;
5.	The Fontomfrom **keeps on / Wailing**
5b.	And ^ the Fontomfrom **keeps on weeping**
5rep.	And ^ the Fontomfrom **keeps on wailing**!
6.	The Fontomfrom / **keeps on / Booming**
6b.	And ^ the Fontomfrom **keeps on moaning**
6rep.	And ^ the Fontomfrom keeps on booming!
7.	But the drummer / of the village / **Is sprawling** / dead / on his floor,
7b.	The broken drumstick / **clutched** in hands.
8.	The males, / now **armed**,
8b.	^ the males **Post** themselves / All around the village;
9.	Their faces / **are kept** / on the forest;
10.	Their eyes **pierce** / the foliage of darkness,
11.	^ their eyes **are Seeing** before them / and afar beyond:
12.	Their ears / **are** in the village there,
12b.	Where the murdered / drummer **is** dead –
13.	But the faithful Fontomfrom / **Is sounding**,
13b.	And ^ the faithful Fontomfrom **is sending**,

13rep. And **^** the faithful Fontomfrom **is sounding**!:

14. My brothers, / my people, / my brothers, / Till dawn, / your vigil **must last**.

15. It **is** not in our day [[that human hands / **Shall erase** / our spirit out of us]]

15b. … **shall erase** …

16. That I **sat** / at the feet / of my father / Not just for nothing,

17. Our enemies / **refuse** [[to remember]].

17b. … **remember**

18. My voice / **can never fail** me;

19. When you're visiting / great grandbrothers / **Got lost** at night / on their way,

19b. My voice / **guided**

19c. and **^** my voice **led** them / here.

20. When, in the past, / the women and girls / **Had gone** down / to the stream's water,

20b. And the men and boys / **Had gone** / far behind the hills / For the forest's / venison and fruits,

20c. And the roofs / of the children's huts / **Had been visited** / by flames of fire,

20d. I **hailed**

20e. and **^** I **hurried** home your sires.

21. My brothers / my people, / my brothers / I **am sought**,

21rep. I am sought

21b. because / When you **want to starve** / the ocean,

21c. You **paralyze** / its source, the river;

21rep. I am sought

22. because / two harvests ago, / When they **lay in ambush** for us / On the market day / in the white Woods,

22b. I **discovered**

22c. And **^** I **warned** my brothers.

21rep. I am sought,

23. I **am sought** / day and night

23b. Because I **have torn** down / the masks / From the faces of our ill-wishers.

21rep. I am sought

24. Because of where / I **stand**,

24b. Because of my friends / and how / I **breathe**;

25. Under their sore soles / I **am** the fire!

26. Proud I **am**

26b. And **^** I **am** even strengthened

27. That they **aim** / at me –

27b. **^** they are seeing

27c. that Those **aimed** at [[are those [[Who are / The keepers of their brothers!]]]]

27d. … are …

27e. … are …

28. But / Unto those native sons, woe

28b. By whose **unshivering**, / nerveless hands

29. Our farms / **shall be set ablaze**

29b. And the blood / of our children **^** **shall be shed**!

30. Yet they **shall** still **seek** / after me –

31. They **shall seek** [[to break my neck]], [[burry me alive]] [[massacre my children]] squeeze me into a bottle]]

    31b. … break …

    31c. … Bury …

    31d. … massacre …

    31e. … squeeze …

    32. Let no hand

    33. ^ hand carve / our tombstone / Now…

34. we **have** already / in our time, **Outlived** / the sharpness of the sword, / The din of the struggle / the clashes of cutlasses;

    35. We **shall** yet **outlive** / the weight / of lead.

    32rep. Let no hand

    33rep. ^ hand carve / our tombstone / Now …

    36. the one **to dare**

    37. **^** the one **will know**

    37b. The oven / **heated** on a pond,

    37c. And the cloud / that **rains** thorns;

    37d. The marble / that **grows** a beard,

    37e. And the **upward-falling** / rain [the rain that falls upward];

    37f. The fire that **burns** / out of stone.

    38. The hand / that **shall dare** [[to carve our tombstone now]]

    38 [[ ]]. … **carve** …

    38c. **^** the hand **shall know**

    38d. And **^** the hand **shall** ever **remember** / this:

    38e. That / even before / we **learn** [[to crawl]] [[Our father took us a-hunting!]]

    38e [[ ]]. … **crawl** …

    38e [[ ]]. … **took** …

    32rep. **Let** no hand

    33rep. **^** hand **carve** / our tombstone / Now …

    39. we **shall refuse** [[To die]]

    39 [[ ]]. … **die** …

    40. Our dove / **shall fly** / across the flames / Of the big bonfires / of time –

    41. But her feathers / **shall stay** unburnt, / Like water / on the back / of a duck –

    42. She **will not fall** / from her flight –

    39rep. And we **shall refuse** [[to die]]

    32rep. **Let** no hand

    33rep. **^** hand **carve** / our tombstone / Now …

    39rep. Because we **shall refuse** [[to die]]

    43. I **am** / the Fontomfrom –

    44. **Listen**! / Fontomfrom! … Fontomfrom! / Of you the living,

    43rep. I **am** / the Fontomfrom –

    45. **Listen**! / Fontomfrom! … Fontomfrom! / Of your great sires,

    46. I **was** / the Fontomfrom –

    47. **Listen**! / Fontomfrom! … Fontomfrom! / Of all your offspring,

    48. I **shall be** the Fontomfrom –

49.   **Listen**! / Fontomfrom! … Fontomfrom! … / Fontomfrom! … Fontomfrom! …

43rep. I **am** the Fontomfrom –

50.   I **am** Africa!

Appendix B

Transitivity analysis of the clauses in 'The Oath of the Fontomfrom"

1.	In the middle of a moonless night,	the village	rises	to her feet from sleep,
	Circumstance	**Actor**	**Material Process**	**Circumstance**

1b.	^ the village	is aroused	not by owl, / not by cock.
	Goal	**Material Process**	**Actor**

2.	In the center of the empty courtyard,	the vigilant Fontomfrom	peals	forth
	Circumstance	**Sayer**	**Verbal Process**	**Circumstance**

3.	And the living	are awakened!
	Goal	**Material Process**

4.	The males	are leaping
	Actor	**Material Process**

4b.	and ^ the males	are reaching out	for spears and arrows and bows;
	Actor	**Material Process**	**Client**

5.	The Fontomfrom	keeps on wailing
	Sayer	**Verbal Process**

5b.	And ^ the Fontomfrom	keeps on weeping
	Sayer	**Verbal Process**

6.	The Fontomfrom	keeps on booming
	Sayer	**Verbal Process**

6b.	And ^ the Fontomfrom	keeps on moaning
	Sayer	**Verbal Process**

7.	But the drummer of the village	is sprawling	dead	on his floor,
	Actor	**Material Process**	**Attribute**	**Circumstance**

7b.	The broken drumstick	clutched	in hands.
	Goal	**Material Process**	**Actor**

8.	The males,	now	armed
	Actor	**Circumstance**	**Material Process**

8b.	^ the males	post	themselves	all around the village;
	Actor	**Material Process**	**Goal**	**Circumstance**

9.	Their faces	are kept	on the forest
	Actor	**Material Process**	**Circumstance**

10.	Their eyes	pierce	the foliage of darkness,
	Senser	**Mental Process**	**Phenomenon**

10b.	^ their eyes	Seeing	before them and afar beyond:
		Mental Process	**Phenomenon**

12.	Their ears	are	in the village there,
	Existent	**Existential Process**	**Circumstance**

12b.	Where the murdered drummer	is	dead
	Carrier	**Relational Process**	**Attribute**

13.	But the faithful Fontomfrom	is sounding,
	Sayer	**Verbal Process**

13b.	And ^ the faithful Fontomfrom	is sending,
	Sayer	**Verbal Process**

14.	My brothers, my people, my brothers,	till dawn,	your vigil	must last.
	Circumstance	**Circumstance**	**Behaver**	**Behavioural Process**

15.	It	is not	in our day
	Existent	**Existential Process**	**Circumstance**

15b.	that	human hands	shall erase	our spirit	out of us
		Actor	**Material Process**	**Goal**	**Circumstance**

16.	That	I	sat	at the feet of my father	Not just for nothing
		Actor	**Material Process**	**Circumstance**	**Circumstance**

17.	Our enemies	refuse	[[to remember]].
	Behaver	**Behavioural Process**	**Behaviour**

17b.	…	remember
		Mental Process

18.	My voice	can never fail	me;
	Behaver	**Behavioural Process**	**Behaviour**

19.	when	your visiting great grandbrothers	got lost	at night	on their way
		Actor	**Material Process**	**Circumstances**	

19b.	My voice	guided
	Actor	**Material Process**

19c.	and ^ my voice	led	them	here.
	Actor	**Material Process**	**Goal**	**Circumstance**

20.	When in the past,	the women and girls	had gone	down	to the stream's water,
	Circumstance	**Actor**	**Material Process**	**Scope**	**Circumstance**

20b.	And the men and boys	had gone	far	behind the hills	for the forest's venison and fruits
	Actor	**Material Process**	**Scope**	**Circumstances**	

20c.	And the roofs of the children's huts	had been visited	by flames of fire,
	Goal	**Material process**	**Actor**

20d.	I	hailed
	Sayer	**Verbal Process**

20e.	I	hurried	home	your sires.
	Actor	**Material Process**	**Circumstance**	**Goal**

21.	My brothers my people, my brothers	I	am sought
	Circumstance	**Phenomenon**	**Mental Process**

21b.	because when	you	want to starve	the ocean
		Actor	**Material Process**	**Goal**

21c.	You	paralyze	its source, the river;
	Actor	**Material process**	**Goal**

22.	because two harvests ago, when	they	lay in ambush	for us	on the market day	in the white Woods,

	Circumstance	Actor	Material Process	Client	Circumstance

22b.	I	discovered		
	Senser	**Mental Process**		

22c.	And ^ I	warned	my brothers.
	Sayer	**Verbal Process**	**Receiver**

23.	I	am sought	day and night
	Phenomenon	**Mental Process**	**Circumstance**

23b.	Because	I	have torn	down	the masks	from the faces of our ill-wishers.
		Actor	**Material process**	**Scope**	**Goal**	**Circumstance**

24.	Because of where	I	stand
	Circumstance	**Existent**	**Existential Process**

24b.	Because of my friends and how	I	breathe;
	Circumstance	**Behaver**	**Behavioural Process**

25.	Under their sore soles	I	am	the fire!
	Circumstance	**Identified**	**Relational Process**	**Identifier**

26.	Proud	I	am
	Attribute	**Carrier**	**Relational Process**

26b.	And ^ I	am	even	strengthened
		Relational Process	**Circumstance**	**Attribute**

27.	That	they	aim	at me
		Senser	**Mental Process**	**Phenomenon**

27b.	^ they	seeing
		Mental Process

27c.	that	those [[aimed at]]	are	those [[who are the keepers of their brothers!]]
		Identified	**Relational Process**	**Identifier**

27d. [[ ]]	^ those	aimed at
	Phenomenon	**Mental Process**

27e. [[ ]]	who	are	the keepers of their brothers
	Identified	**Relational Process**	**Identifier**

28.	But unto those native sons,	[be]	woe
	Attribute	**Relational Process**	**Carrier**

28b.	By whose unshivering, nerveless hands	our farms	shall be set ablaze
	Actor	**Goal**	**Material Process**

29.	And the blood of our children	shall be shed!
	Goal	**Material Process**

30.	Yet	they	shall … seek	(still) after me
		Senser	**Mental Process**	**Phenomenon**

31.	They	shall seek	[[to break my neck]], [[burry me alive]] [[massacre my children]] [[squeeze me into a bottle]]
	Senser	**Mental Process**	**Phenomenon**

31b. [[ ]]	…	break	my neck
		Material Process	**Goal**

31c. [[ ]]	…	bury	me	alive
		Material Process	**Goal**	**Circumstance**

31d. [[ ]]	…	massacre	my children
		Material Process	**Goal**

31e. [[ ]]	…	squeeze	me	into a bottle
		Material Process	**Goal**	**Circumstance**

32.	(You)	Let	no hand
		Behavioural Process	**Behaviour**

33.	^ hand	carve	our tombstone	now
	Actor	**Material Process**	**Goal**	**circumstance**

34.	we	have	already in our time,	outlived	the sharpness of the sword, the din of the struggle the clashes of cutlasses;
	Behaver		**Circumstance**	**Behavioural Process**	**Behaviour**

35.	We	shall	yet	outlive	the weight of lead

	Behaver	Circumstance	Behavioural Process	Behaviour

36.	the one [[to dare]]	will know	
	Senser	**Mental Process**	

37.	^ the one	to dare
	Behaver	**Behavioural Process**

37b.	The oven	heated	on a pond,
	Goal	**Material Process**	**Circumstance**

37c.	And the cloud that	rains	thorns;
	Actor	**Material Process**	**Goal**

37d.	The marble that	grows	a beard,
	Actor	**Material Process**	**Goal**

37e.	And the upward-falling rain		
	the rain that	falls	upward
	Actor	**Material Process**	**Circumstance**

37f.	The fire that	burns	out of stone
	Actor	**Material Process**	**Circumstance**

38.	The hand …	shall know
	Senser	**Mental Process**

38b.	that	shall dare	[[to carve our tombstone now]]
	Behaver	**Behavioural Process**	**Behaviour**

38c [[ ]].	…	carve	our tombstone	now
		Material Process	**Goal**	**Circumstance**

38d.	And	^ the hand	**shall … remember**	(ever)	this:
		Senser	**Mental Process**	**Circumstance**	**Phenomenon**

38e.	That even before	we	learn	[[to crawl]]
	Circumstance	**Senser**	**Mental Process**	**Phenomenon**

38f. [[ ]].	…	to crawl	…
		Material Process	

38g.	Our father	took	us	a-hunting

	Actor	Material Process	Goal	Circumstance

39.	we	shall refuse	[[to die]]
	Behaver	**Behavioural Process**	**Behaviour**

39 [[ ]].	…	to die	…
		Material Process	

40.	Our dove	shall fly	across the flames / Of the big bonfires / of time
	Actor	**Material Process**	**Circumstance**

41.	But her feathers	shall stay	unburnt, like water on the back of a duck
	Carrier	**Relational Process**	**Attribute**

42.	She	will not fall	from her flight
	Actor	**Material Process**	**Circumstance**

43.	I	am	the Fontomfrom
	Identified	**Relational Process**	**Identifier**

44.	(You)	Listen!	Fontomfrom! … Fontomfrom! of you the living
	Behaver	**Behavioural Process**	**Behaviour**

45.	(You)	Listen!	Fontomfrom! … Fontomfrom! of your great sires,
	Behaver	**Behavioural Process**	**Behaviour**

46.	I	was	the Fontomfrom
	Identified	**Relational Process**	**Identifier**

47.	(You)	Listen!	Fontomfrom! … Fontomfrom! of all your offsprings
	Behaver	**Behavioural Process**	**Behaviour**

48.	I	shall be	the Fontomfrom
	Identified	**Relational Process**	**Identifier**

49.	(You)	Listen!	Fontomfrom! … Fontomfrom! … / Fontomfrom! … Fontomfrom! …
	Behaver	**Behavioural Process**	**Behaviour**

50.	I	am	Africa
	Identified	**Relational Process**	**Identifier**

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