

**THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CHOICE OF DICTION IN THE
S'WAMBA FOLKSONGS OF THE PEOPLE OF EDINA
TRADITIONAL AREA, GHANA.**

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ABSTRACT

S'wamba is a collection of terse slow-paced antiphonal traditional folk songs performed by the people of Edina in the Central Region of Ghana. This verbal art of the people is expressed in work songs, play songs, traditional verses, riddles, stories and prayers, but the folk song, from the researchers' observation is arguably the most popular of their oral forms. The folksong owes its popularity among the people to the fact that it is found in almost every aspect of their lives since almost every significant event is celebrated in song. The study sought to find out how suggestive references in the diction of the song texts are used to communicate ideas to enrich meaning. The study combined the use of both purposive sampling and random sampling methods to select respondents to reach the well-informed among the informants who were contacted for information on the songs. The deconstructive literary theory was adopted. In all, fifty (50) songs were recorded, transcribed, translated and analysed. After the analyses, it was revealed that the S'wamba folk is poetic because the pithy and terse references used in the diction of S'wamba song texts grant the few words of the song texts with layers of meaning and this in turn lends the song texts to different literary approaches of interpretation like any good poetry.

Keywords: folksongs, translation, S'wamba, songs, diction

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In his editorial article, Jones (1992) reports that there have been serious attempts over the decades at collecting, translating and publishing orally transmitted narratives, poems and songs (p.8). Examples of these works include J. H. Nketia's study of funeral dirges of the Akan people in Nketia (1955), Kofi Awoonor's poems and further use as inspirational material of Ewe dirges in Awoonor (1974), Okot P'Bitek's study and imitation of Acoli traditional songs in P'Bitek (1975) and Okai's imitation of Ga traditional sound devices in Okai (1978).

In view of this, collecting, translating and analysing the S'wamba folk songs of Edina, which have been ignored, is a way of continuing what has been started in portraying another unknown traditional oral art to the world. According to Angmor (1996), it is understandable that an analysis of African literature takes account of its social and historical context, because of its influence on the thematic material (p.1). Therefore, as a prelude to appraising this African literary undertaking, it would be pertinent to take a quick look at the fundamental realities of the society from which it has emerged, for, "literature is life: that is to say, a piece of literary work is a projection of its writer and its background, its society" (Angmor 1996, p. 1).

Folk songs are simply indigenous songs sung in the traditional style of a community, whose members share common ideals and beliefs, common customs and institutions. Folk song performance by the Edina people is a feature of their oral tradition. It is believed that different groups of people came to live on the coast and finally settled as the people of Edina. As a result, stories that recount the history and explain the oral tradition of the people vary. What can be concluded from various accounts of different historical records is that more than a single group migrated to the area and settled later as the Edina people. It is usual that when a group of people migrate they

do so, especially with the intangible aspects of their culture such as beliefs, language, stories and songs. Since the various groups brought with them various forms of folk songs and finally got settled as one group, a pool of folk songs, rich in terms of variety, was born. Examples include “Adenkum”, “S’wamba”, “Moses”; “Akitsiwta,” “Mbombae” and “Asafo” among others.

The people’s love for oral poetry is evident in the diction of the traditional appellation of the people, which has been cited and translated by Wartemberg (1973) thus:

Edina butwa eku, Asamankoma, katakranka Aborokvir kaakra,
eye [sic] hu a nnko, eko so a mmba.

Meaning:

Edina – city of ingenious stone cutters,
The home of the brave and tough Asamankoma;
This little Europe (Holland) which the coward shrinks
to enter and which the daring on entering no longer
desires to return. (p.26)

It is for such folklore that the Edina area in the Central Region of Ghana was chosen as the research area for this study.

S’wamba is a collection of terse slow-paced antiphonal traditional folk songs performed by the people of Edina in the Central Region of Ghana. The term is a shortened form of the conditional clause “*se iwu amba a*” literally meaning, “if death does not come...” Of course, if a people are spared by death then they have life and all that come with life: birth, childhood, courtship, marriage, games, war celebrations and these are exactly what the songs present. Death, as used in the name (*se iwu amba a*) S’wamba is symbolic and does not refer just to the loss of physical life. Semantically, *S’wamba* stands for what we have, in the absence of the misfortune of death. As the name suggests, S’wamba has been created for every human activity and may be sung at traditional weddings, festivals or at durbar grounds, among others.

The study will be guided by the following questions:

- i. What type of diction is found in S’wamba song texts?
- ii. How does suggestive use of diction in S’wamba songs communicate ideas, enrich meaning and make the songs poetic?

1.1 The Problem Statement

The study of diction in literature generally and specifically in folk songs is important. This is because diction is one of the components of a piece of work without which meaning and, consequently, communication gets affected. Ideas represented by the diction of literary pieces are specific or suggestive. Suggestive use of diction obviously, however provides more room for investigation because of the multiple meanings which are associated by the ideas they present.

Varied ways by which suggestive references employed in the diction of S’wamba folk songs to enrich meaning make the songs poetic is noteworthy. However, because the folk songs have not been critically and rigorously studied by scholars and documented, the literary value contained in how the varied use of suggestive references in the diction make the songs poetic are not explored.

The analysis and documentation of the diction of the songs to identify how suggestive use of diction employed to communicate ideas, enrich meaning and make the songs poetic will help reveal the layers of meaning that the song texts possess. The exercise will help highlight their literary value, preserve the songs and save them from possible extinction.

This study is, therefore, occupied with collecting, translating and analyzing S'wamba folk songs to explore ways by which suggestive references used in the diction to communicate ideas enrich meaning and make the songs poetic. The aim is to illuminate and publicize the literary qualities of the songs such that the work would serve as resource material for students, and critics of oral literature.

1.2 Significance

According to Jones (1992), "It is a known fact that traditional poetic forms have quite significantly influenced the work of modern African poets, some of whom made a study of their particular traditions and then quite deliberately imitated their form and style in their own composition" (p.2). Jones (1989) also says that, "Modern Ghanaian poets and scholars like Awoonor (1970), Okai(1978), Anyidoho (1978) and Nketia (1975) have undertaken to collect and present samples of their peoples' poetry to the outside world" (p. 8). Their acts of collecting and analysing the folk songs of their people exposed the songs to the world and prevented them from dying out. Some researchers such as Acquah (2002) and Hope (2005) have studied and documented Mfantse folk songs. It appears, however, that the S'wamba folk song of Edina has not been studied.

Analysing and documenting the S'wamba folk songs of Edina would save the verbal art from possible extinction. The study will also help project the songs as Edina oral tradition to the world. Subjects of mystery of life and death, war and others are explored in the songs, and these induce layers of meaning contained in the diction. The ways by which suggestive references are employed to communicate ideas in the songs leave one with the desire of knowing more about S'wamba. The enjoyment and satisfaction as well as the promising contributions of the songs to Ghanaian poetry cannot be overlooked. This study will thus enlighten readers on how the various suggestive references used in the folk songs enrich meaning and make the songs poetic.

2.0 PERSPECTIVES ON FOLK SONGS

The folk song as a component of oral literature will be examined in order to define the art and show its place within the broad context text of literature. This will be done by reconsidering the characteristics of the art as a way of arriving at an operational definition for the term. It is the aim of this work to unearth and reveal richness in language, inherent in suggestive references in the diction of S'wamba songs of Edina, Central Region-Ghana.

Folk songs can generally be said to be songs sung in the traditional style of a country or community. This definition of folk song divides the art, so that there is a song part and there is a folk part. The folk aspect of folk song which represents the community or country, referred to in the definition, could be one of students, fisher folk, housewives, soldiers, aristocrats or peasants. "The term "folk" according to Dundes (1965), can refer to any group of people whatsoever who share at least one common factor" (p.2). The folk may have a song that is sung in a style of their

tradition so that they can be identified by others as a distinct group. If a group can be identified by their folk song, then it follows that we could have folk songs of Australia or of Western Nigeria, of the country side in America, or of Edina in the Central Region of Ghana.

This contemporary literature has been fed by the oral traditional forms, culture and literary forms known to these literary artists and still exists in the fabrics of the Ghanaian society as Angmor (1996) points out:

For most Ghanaian writers, the oral art is their first encounter with literature. In their ideal to give expression to their indigenous culture, a number of the writers draw on this literature for their creative writing. The oral tradition has served not only as a source of material for the new literature; it has influenced its spirit and style in many instances. (p. 9).

On the Ghanaian scene several literary artists have fallen on folk songs for inspiration and also, as raw material or impetus for their works. Notably among these Ghanaian writers is Kofi Anyidoho who wrote "From Earth her Gifts of Songs". He believes that "song or poetry is a gift from the gods, which has to be transmitted to the people by the poet".

According to Okpewho (1988), "There are many situations in which poetry was, and still is, spoken or sung in traditional African society..." (p. 4) Two basic ways in which a piece of poetry appeals to its audience are by touching the audience emotionally, so that they feel either pleasure or pain; the other is by stirring minds deeply so that the audience reflects on some aspect of life or some significant idea. The ability of folk songs to primarily perform this function predisposes them to being consigned to poetry. Songs are not composed to be read but are performed openly for an audience to appreciate with their eyes, ears, hands and feet, and indeed the entire body. This way, an oral poetry or folk song performance may be usefully compared to a modern stage play, in which a performer has to support his/her words with the right movement of the body or control of his/her voice so as to make an effective impression. The main difference between oral and written poetry, as Okpewho points out, is that the context texts in which the performers of oral poetry operate are somewhat restricted, in the sense that the poet may be charged with chanting a specific type of poetry and would need to have undergone a formal training for the purpose.

Brevity or economy in words is a feature of S'wamba songs. The songs are repeated a number of times, not only for continuity and variation but also as a result of the excitement they arouse in both performers and audience, that make them sing the songs over and over again. The thoughts expressed are therefore condensed in terse language. To prevent monotony and boredom, phrases chosen to compose the folk songs tend to be such that they allow different pronunciation. Punning, antithesis, euphony, epithets, allusion, parallelism, symbolism and other sound devices are employed for this purpose. These and other devices are found in the analysis of the diction of S'wamba song texts.

Vivian and Jackson (1962) have defined diction as the selection of words to express ideas. Good diction is the choice of words effective and appropriate in meaning, as well as suitable to the subject, audience and occasion. If diction is the selection of words to express ideas then it implies that the unit of diction is the word. "The word", to the linguistic analyst Sapir (1949), is one of the smallest, completely

satisfying bits of isolated “meaning” into which the sentence resolves. It has such features as cadence, accent, associated feeling – tone (p. 25-26).

According to Mayes (1994), “Words are the basic building blocks of poetry. Any literary piece is made word by word. No other choices the artist makes – Subject, Structure, Speaker – are more important than the quality of individual words” (p.36). Sometimes a piece of composition can mean little or nothing, yet the stimulus of words alone wins the attention of its listener. The listener may begin to invent the meaning for him/herself. The pleasure of listening to interesting sounds of the words could prick the ears of the listener. Words in a piece of composition have a coherence which listeners may be unaware of until the flow of sounds of the words is interrupted. To quote Myers and Marshall (1963), “Diction is a poet’s whole knowledge of language”.

2.5 Theoretical Framework

The literary theory for the study is the deconstructionist theory. The approach is a poststructuralist critical thought which arose as a reaction against the certainties of Ferdinand de Saussure’s Structuralism in the 1970’s. Like structuralism, deconstruction identifies the songs’ textual features but concentrates on the rhetorical rather than following structuralism’s emphasis on the grammatical.

Structuralism proposes that language is non-referential since it refers only to our concepts of things in that world. Structuralists argue that we tend to conceptualize our experiences in terms of polar opposites called *binary oppositions*. Structuralists use the word *sign* to denote the basic element of communication and define sign, as illustrated by Tyson (1999) by the following formula: **Sign = signifier + signified.** (p. 244).

The signifier is the sound, image or gesture. The signified is the concept to which the signifier refers. That is, the “thing” that is pictured in the mind which the sound, image or gesture refers to. So a word is a linguistic sign. If the sign for example, is the word *flower* then the signifier is the group of letters written or pronounced as a unit – “flower” – and the signified is the picture that comes to mind. Deconstruction accepts the analogy of song text to syntax as propounded by Ferdinand de Saussure and adapted by the structuralists. However, deconstruction takes the non-referential feature of language further by saying that language is non-referential because it refers neither to things in the world nor to our concepts of things but only to the play of signifiers of which language itself consists. But then it becomes obvious that in response to the signifier in the example above, different people may probably picture different kinds of flowers. A semiotic formula for the word flower then could be written as:

$$\text{Sign} = \text{signified} + \text{signified} + \text{signified.}$$

Apparently, any given signifier can refer to any number of signifieds at any given moment. As Guerin, et al (1992) point out, “Although context often helps to limit the range of possible signifieds for some signifiers, it simultaneously increases the range of possible signifieds for others.” (p.255).

Consequently, what is considered the “obvious” or “commonsense” interpretations of a given song text are really ideological readings - interpretations produced by a culture’s values and beliefs - with which people are so familiar that we consider them natural. We create the meaning and value we “find” in the song text. Just as authors cannot help but draw upon the assumptions of their cultural milieu when they

construct their song texts, readers cannot help but draw upon the assumptions of theirs when they construct their readings. Therefore, both literary and critical song texts can be deconstructed.

Since this paper examines the ways by which suggestive references employed in the diction of S'wamba song texts to enrich meaning make them poetic, the analysis required a critical approach that offers a close reading and concentrates on the rhetorical. The deconstructive framework has, therefore, been chosen as the literary framework for the analysis in this work because it is the approach that encourages a song text to be analysed closely and in isolation from its reader and its author. Given that no single person can claim authorship to the S'wamba songs, and so authors' biographical and historical information as well as commentaries were out of the question, the theory is appropriate for the study. The study's overriding focus on how language is being used to express what is being said and not so much on the world around the song text necessitated the choice of deconstructive criticism. However, it is obvious that critical approaches may overlap. As Madden (2004) has said "...approaches may easily overlap and critics will often combine them in their analysis...song text based approaches, though emphasizing the song text, [and] may interpret the elements of the song texts through context textual knowledge" (p.17). The social and cultural contexts are, therefore, considered in the analysis when appropriate.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

The methods employed in collecting data for the research were participant observation and in-depth interviews. Participant observation – being actively involved in the performance in order to capture the true poetic life of the songs - offered a first-hand experience that not only made the researchers learn to sing the songs but also enjoy the process. Two tape recorders were used at the same time in the recording process for one to serve as a back-up, should the other fail. Owing to its flexibility, the in-depth interview provided a face-to-face opportunity to elicit information to get the right connotations of some words in the songs, in the beliefs, customs, values and history of the people.

Purposive sampling was employed for the collection of data. Though it was the aim of the study to analyse and investigate diction of S'wamba folk songs it was impossible to list every S'wamba folk song ever composed and sample randomly from the list. So, instead, the researcher used subjective opinions of experts to identify a "sample" of S'wamba songs, through recorded performances, for inclusion in the study. The population of members and people associated with S'wamba performance from which the interviewees were selected number about a hundred.

Used alone, the purposive sampling method suggests some degree of subjectivity. Therefore, the purposive and random sampling methods were combined to reach the well-informed among the informants who were contacted for information on the songs. By this approach, simple random sampling was employed on initial visits to the Edina Township to get the people who were well-versed in the S'wamba folk song and its performance. The interviews revealed that *Turow mu* was the seat of the Edina S'wamba folk song. Members of the ensemble numbered about 20. Subsequently, the number of people in *Turow mu* S'wamba ensemble was chosen as the target population. Through purposive sampling, samples were obtained from this group to represent the entire research population.

The sampled population was made up of four men and four women, all members of the ensemble. Two members of each group were literate and the others were not. The ratio is then derived from equating the number interviewed to the people in the selected area of study. The sampling ratio is $8: 20 = 2: 5$. It means that every two people picked from the Turow mu ensemble for the study, represented 5 people in the community.

3.2 Transcription and Translation

To be able to fully study and reveal what the songs actually say, there was the need to translate the transcribed songs. The use of language to transmit experiences outside its own semiotic universe normally results in translation. "Translation", according to Bell (1991) is the expression in another (or target) language of what has been expressed in another (source) language, preserving semantic and stylistic equivalences. (p. 6). Since Mfantse, the source language - the original language in which the song texts are represented and English, the target language - the language to be translated into - are different in the sense that they have distinct codes and rules regulating the construction of grammatical stretches of the languages, to shift from one language to the other would require altering the forms. The contrasting forms may convey meanings which cannot but fail to coincide totally, for there is no absolute synonymy between words in the same language, let alone between languages.

S'wamba songs are traditional folk songs that reflect not only the cultural and social peculiarities of its linguistic group, but also the whole psychological make-up, the thinking habits, and the spiritual background and values of the group. This implies that in analysing the song texts, some situations may require the literal translation whilst others require the creative to provide a better meaning.

The application of a blend of literal and creative or idiomatic translation did not only preserve the semantic and stylistic equivalences required for the analysis of the song texts, it also provided an avenue for revealing significant aspects of creative language use and made it possible to ascertain the degree of creativity in the song texts.

4.0 DEVICES FOR CREATING S'WAMBA SONG TEXTS

Several devices and tools are adopted by the S'wamba song writers to create beautiful lyrics that appeal to the ears. These devices are similar to those adopted by poets to drive home the meaning of the poems. They are in two folds. They are devices of comparison (like similes, metaphors synaesthesia, and personifications) and devices obtained through word association (like onomatopoeia, oxymoron, metonymy and synecdoche).

4.1 Devices of Comparison used in S'wamba

Di Yanni (2000, p.42) has said that "the heart of the figure of speech is comparison – the making of connections between normally unrelated things, seeing one thing in terms of another." In composing or creating their song texts, composers of S'wamba make the effort to use diction such that old expressions that have ceased to intrigue would seem new to the audience. That is, to create new expressions that strike listeners out of old familiar ones. The result is that the diction gives pleasure as well as surprise to the imagination. To do this, composers end up expressing one thing in terms of another, so that a connection is established between things that are normally not associated. By using these tools of creation, the composers expand sense of

perception beyond the literal meaning and also intensify the deeper intention in the songs by adding the new dimension of the figurative image.

4.1.1 Simile

One of the devices employed by the composers to compare one item to the other is the simile. According to Mayes (1994), the word comes from the Latin word *similes* and means “similar” or “like”. The comparison done in a simile involves mentioning the two items to be compared and the addition of “as”, “like” “as if”, and sometimes “seems” or “appears.” It is imperative to say that similes are sparingly used in S’wamba since the example below, identified in song text #42 is the only one found in the song texts collected.

Hon ho bon tsede sin’ew birefi mu! - (They smell like the storage place of the crab)

In this example, the (topic) is the smell, the referent, the storage place of the crab, and “like” the vehicle. *Sin’ew* is a type of crab usually found on the muddy banks of rivers. The crabs are usually kept in storage containers called *birefi* when they are captured and taken home for consumption. With the containers covered to prevent the crabs from escaping, they are fed with pieces of left- over cassava, palm nuts and other foods. Some of the crabs die, decompose and emit an unpleasant scent. The smell of the decomposing dead crabs mixed with that of decaying food crumbs and the lack of exposure to air gives the *birefi* a characteristic foul smell. Comparing a person’s body odour to the inside of a *birefi* is a way of telling the person that he or she has a foul smell. With the choice of a simile in the song, the composers insult the people of Esuekyir of their bad smell by comparing their smell with that of the abode of the *sinew* crab. Deconstructing the texts, the overt ideological project of the song text might be stated as the song text satirises the group lifestyle of the people of Esuekyir. The binary opposition structuring the song text is between bad sides of communal life and good sides of communal life. Because we see the situation from the speaker’s point of view, which refers negatively to the people’s group life, it is safe to say bad effects of communal life are the privileged term.

4.1.2 Metaphor

Another device of comparison identified in the diction of the song texts collected is metaphor. The word “metaphor”, according to Cuddon (1985) comes from the Greek roots which mean “to transfer” or to carry from one place to another and is a figure of speech in which one thing is described in terms of another (p. 391). Metaphors, like similes, connect unlike things having common qualities that the poet wants to emphasize.

The presence of metaphors in S’wamba songs enriches the diction of the song texts in that, through them, the composers impart vigour by the inclusion of another sensory detail. In analysing a song text like “*Esi Amoaba Kotoko*”, meaning *Esi Amoaba, the porcupine*, the main idea was found by finding all the evidence the text offers in support of the theme. The porcupine is avoided or approached with caution by both humans and animals because of its spines. In the context of the song text, the persona has been compared to the porcupine because she does not bear a child. The persona advocates wretchedness, insignificance and isolation resulting from the inability to bear children. Thus the binary opposition structuring the song text is between weakness and strength. Because we see the situation from the speaker’s point of view, our sympathies lie with her. It is safe to say weakness is the privileged

term. The main theme or the poem's overt ideological project might be stated as: the poem criticizes the disregard of childless women in the society. Evidence offered by the song text in support of the identified theme include the phrases "look at me", "the one", "gave birth to non", and "porcupine" as used by the speaker undermines or contradicts that of the persona and suggests this time around that Esi Amoaba has developed resilience since she has been able to live in the society in spite of their contempt of her and is therefore strong and defensive like the porcupine.

Esi's isolation and insignificance in the society are intensified by the direct link. The porcupine has no friends because of its spines. No hunter will purposefully hunt for one. Comparing Esi Amoaba (the childless woman) to such an animal is to tell how insignificant childless women are viewed in the community. The comparison here is compressed. It is between Esi, the tenor and referent and *k[t]/k* (the porcupine) the vehicle without any other connective words.

Another example of metaphor can be found in the third and fourth lines of song text "Akwaaba" (*welcome*)

Asafo wo ye ndam	warriors so sharp
Ye ma hom akwaaba o!	We welcome you

The warriors have been compared to attributes of razors or swords. These are sharp implements. Therefore, describing a group of warriors as "sharp" transfers this attribute of fierceness of the razors to that group Asafo is the tenor and ndam (sharp) the vehicle. The binary opposition structuring the song text is between glorification of war and condemnation of war.

The overt ideological project is the glorification or fierceness and bravery of warriors. But then, since warriors are fierce and "sharp", it implies that they kill without mercy or reason. That makes them murderers. And so the other meaning the song text disseminates is that warriors are not as admirable as they have been portrayed. The song text therefore deconstructs itself by contradicting the ideological project that it advocates.

4.1.3 Synaesthesia

This is another literary device that makes use of comparison. One sensory perception is expressed in terms of a different sense doubling and interweaving the physical connections. An example can be found in song text #19 - Takuwa Akese.

TAKUWA KESE	BIG TAKUWA
Takuwa akese wommbo no gyan e!	Making big takuwa is not for nothing
Takuwa akese wommbo no gyan e	Making big takuwa is not for nothing
S'wamba a yerebo o!	S'wamba! Here we play
Takuwa akese wommbo no gyan e	Making big takuwa is not for nothing
Wommbo no tsetse akondor mu!	make it in the taste of the ancient tradition
"Takuwa akese wommbo no gyan"	(making big takuwa is not for nothing)

The song from which this line is picked is one that praises the S'wamba art as one that possesses qualities such as beauty, style and elegance and so can be made or

performed by the skilful and intelligent, gifted by the gods and ancestors. There is an implicit comparison of the art of making S’wamba folk songs and that of making big (not just any) *takuwa* headgear. *Takuwa* is a beautiful headgear woven from very fine silk threads and worn usually by Mfantse women on special occasions. The weaving activity is so demanding it requires more than a single pair of hands. The bundles of fine muffled and delicate silk threads need to be patiently and painstakingly sorted and dusted to eliminate dirt, straightened, dyed and oiled before the weaving begins. The actual work is team work. The leader makes the main framework as the helpers “fill in” with the threads to give body to the piece. In the Edina dialect of the Mfantse language, the verb that describes the act of making the *takuwa* headgear is “*si takuwa*” meaning, make /create *takuwa*. Rather, it is the art of making or creating music such as playing drums that is described with the verb “*bo*” or other examples, “*bo ayer*” or “*bo ndwom*” meaning, play drums or make music. “*bo*” is used to refer to making ordinary headgears though e.g. *bo duukuu*). In this line, the verb “*bo*” has been used to describe the action of making the *takuwa* headgear. In using the verb “*bo*” to describe the act of creating *takuwa* in “*Takuwa Akese Wommo no Gyan*” instead of *wonnsi* the usual verb, the sensory perception of weaving the headgear has been expressed in terms of a different sense – of making music. This has been done in order to compare the making of S’wamba art and its music to the distinguished art of the *takuwa* whilst emphasizing their semblance. It is also to suggest that the cherished and distinguished *takuwa* is as cherished and distinguished as the S’wamba folk song. The two activities making S’wamba music and weaving *takuwa* have been expressed one in terms of the other, doubling and interweaving the physical connections. Thus a Synesthesia is realized. The device as a tool has obviously been deliberately employed to show the ideological project that the distinguished beauty and or worth of the S’wamba song can only be compared to that of the *takuwa* (the most elegant and cherished headgear of the land). The binary opposition is hence between beauty and tediousness. The song text deconstructs itself as it suggests that because S’wamba requires so much activity it is an irksome endeavour and not attractive as has been portrayed.

4.1.4 Personification

Personification is another device of comparison used in the diction of S’wamba song texts. It involves the embodiment of some quality or abstraction; the attribution of human qualities to inanimate objects. The comparison is subtle in this device because it is limited to giving human qualities to inanimate objects. S’wamba #4 goes as such:

OWU AYE ADZE A WONNYE
ABOMINABLE

Iwu!

Egya Wu

Iwu ei Iwu!

Owu aye me bon o!

Iwu ei Iwu!

Odomankoma wu amma Manka m’asem o!

Iwu ei Iwu!

Owu aye adze a wonnye o!

DEATH HAS DONE THE

Death!

Father Death

Death O death!

Death has wronged me!

Death O Death!

Almighty death prevented me
from uttering my last words

Death O Death!

Death has done the abominable

In these lines, death has been given the human quality of being vile. In other words, death has been compared to a person, father, and almighty, so powerful that he has the ability to deprive the persona of speech. It is however ironic that such a powerful “person” as Death should wrestle a mere human and commit an abominable crime against him/her. The ideological project of the song text is: the power of death. The binary opposition then is between strength and weakness. The poem deconstructs itself as it contradicts the ideological project by suggesting that death is after all not powerful. If death should wrong a human, then another meaning that the song text disseminates is that death is powerless hence, weak.

4.2 Devices Obtained Through Word Association

Allusion is one of the devices of association and ways by which suggestive references are used to communicate meaning in the diction of S’wamba song texts. Allusion refers to those implicit references to people, objects, or events outside the poem. It is often a kind of appeal to a reader to share some experience with the writer. Allusions could be historical, biblical or political but because this work does not set out to analyze allusions exclusively, the kinds that appear in the song texts collected will be looked at under the broad heading of allusions. For example, in this line from song text #38,

Hye me ndansa mo boko Sekunde (give me three days and I will go to Sekondi)

The persona’s plea to be given three days to go to Sekondi (an old pepper growing town in the Western region of Ghana, then Gold Coast), carries more meaning than meets the eye. The meaning of the line can only be shared by an audience who share historical experiences, especially of southern Ghana. During the days when Sekondi flourished with all kinds of commercial activities, people travelled for three days to get to this commercial centre, and back. They had the opportunity of meeting and chatting with other traders who plied the road whilst they journeyed, on arrival in the town and on their way back. In the town, one was greeted with all sorts of delightful scenes, tastes and sounds that served as sweet memories days after the visit. The long journey to Sekondi then was though difficult, very pleasurable and people who embarked on the journey returned satisfied and fulfilled. With time, the term “going to Sekondi”/ “*ko Sekunde*”, became a euphemism for a long lasting and fulfilling act of sex that many Mfantse adults adopted. Obviously, the song is one that mocks men who are unable to “perform” in bed.

In the foregoing line, the speaker’s plea to be given three days to go to Sekondi is an allusion to a term used commonly among the people to signify a plea to his partner to be given some time to treat his impotence and be able to provide a long lasting sexual act on his partner. The use of the device enables the performers of S’wamba to talk about obscenities without sounding immoral, especially in the presence of children and guests for whom the group may perform. They enrich the diction of the songs by association and give it depth, since the composers assume a body of common knowledge and tradition shared by the audience and which the audience is expected to have an ability to “pick up” from the reference.

4.2.1 Onomatopoeia

An onomatopoeic word is one whose sound imitates its meaning. It is the formation and use of words to imitate sounds; a figure of speech in which the sound reflects the

sense. For example: dong, cradle, Moo, Pop, Whiz, Whoosh, and Zoom. Of the enactment of meaning in onomatopoeia, Yankson (1987) has this to say: “Any sound features which a poet may employ to echo, suggest or enact meaning can work only in conjunction with the meaning of the poetic song text.” (p.55). This means that *Moo* for example enacts the sound made by a cow and so the word suggests the meaning. In S’wamba folk songs, composers sometimes choose words whose sounds enact the sounds of the main item of the subject to reflect the sense and affect meaning. Among the songs collected, this example in song text #17 could be isolated:

Oye wo a a!
Ko mpoano e!
Oye wo a a!

In the song “oye wo a ...” wo a (pronounced [waa]) imitates the sound made by the sea’s waves when they wash upon the shore. This type is what is described by Yankson (1987, p.55) as the suggestive power of words. “*Waa*” can be said to echo the sound made by the sea. The song talks about the arrival of S’wamba group and suggests to those who are not in favour of the group and its activities to rave like the sea waves or better still go to hell (the sea shore). The choice and use of the onomatopoeic word in the song reduces the number of words which could have been used to tell off enemies of the art. By so doing, immediacy and impact are enhanced.

4.2.2 Oxymoron

In their bid to express certain ideas as vividly as possible, composers of S’wamba sometimes use words that are nearly contradictory in meaning and place them side by side. For example in song text #43 - “*Munko su*”(I won’t cry), we find the addressee described as “*akatasia aberwa*” (young old woman) thus:

Ose manwo ba o!	Says I did not have a child!
Odze awo edzi m’e nyaw e!	Has insulted me with child birth
Akatasia aberwa	The young old woman
Oze awo edzi me’nyaw	has insulted me with childbirth

The persona in this song is peeved because, as can be seen from her complaint, the addressee referred negatively to her inability to bear children. In return, she insults the addressee back with as biting an insult as possible. The choice and use of the oxymoron *Akatasia Aberwa* (young old woman) affords the speaker that brevity in time and space and the immediacy to achieve the aim of hitting back at the addressee to enable the latter feel the pain of the insult.

4.2.3 Metonymy

This is a figure of speech in which an identifying emblem or the name of an attribute is substituted for the whole name; an associated quality speaks for the whole. Common examples are an “old salt” for a sailor, “the stage”, the theatrical profession and “the bench” for the judiciary. “The pen is mightier than the sword” is another good example, just as “*se na se serew naaso nna obon ye koo*” (teeth and teeth smile but on gum so red) is.

#47. NYIMPA NE TSIR MU
Nyimpa ne tsir mu a ennko hu.

IN THE HEAD OF HUMANS
You will never see inside the
head of a person

Se na ise wo serew	Teeth and teeth would laugh together
Nyimpa ne tsir mu dze ennkohu.	But inside the head, you will not see
Ebon kor	Gum so red

People usually laugh or smile at others when they like them and in the process, show their teeth when they laugh to each other. The teeth, therefore, because of their association with smiles or laughter have been used in this song to stand for nice, happy persons. Hence, “*se na se serew naaso nna ebon ye koo*” (teeth and teeth laugh but on gum so red) ...” is another way of saying that nice, happy looking persons may have evil intentions behind their nice smiles.

4.2.4 Synecdoche

In this literary device, a piece or part of the whole represents the whole, as in “the long arm of the law”. One synecdoche found in the song texts collected is in song text #35:

Awondze papa da bow do	The worthy bead lies out in the dew
Da bow do	lies out in the dew
Ntonton rowe no o!	Chewed by mosquitoes
Odwounku ee! Ohye dan no mu	The hip bone sleeps in the room!
<i>Odwuonku e ohye dan mu!</i>	

Dwuonku is the name for the hip bone in Mfantse. The name has been used to refer to the woman with whom the persona in the song above sleeps in the room. Usually women who are slim have little fat on the hip bone. Calling a woman a hip bone suggests that she is skeletal, in other words, she is all hip bone. This is a way of poking fun at the persona. The synecdoche here lies in the fact that the hip bone - part of the body of a skinny woman - has been used to represent her whole being. The effect is that the depiction (of the bonny woman) adds to the taunt of the song, since the song is one that satirizes promiscuity in marriage. The writer is therefore successful with his aim of making the audience laugh at the personae whilst at same time pointing to and attempting to correct the frailty of the society.

5.1 CONCLUSION

The deconstructionist’s literary approach was chosen for the study because of its concerns with defining a piece of work by approving precision and permitting that, the words of a song text be “mined” for all the connotative and denotative values. The song texts have not been critically and rigorously studied and so no commentaries or literature could be used for the interpretation of the song texts in the analysis except the song text themselves.

Because the study sought to explicate the songs to reveal ways that the uses of suggestive references in the diction of the song texts to communicate ideas enrich meaning, the deconstructive literary theory was useful. The use of the theory afforded the researcher the autonomy to explore the song texts from the researcher’s own point of view and to come out with possible interpretations in the song texts. Recording transcribing, translating and analysing the song texts has been an intricate

undertaking, not free of problems. Some of the findings of the study are summarized below.

1. Two ways by which references communicate meaning in the diction of S'wamba folk songs are:
 - i. through the use of devices of comparison and contrast such as metaphors, similes, personification, and irony.
 - ii. through the use of devices of word association such as allusions, synecdoche, metonymy and oxymoron.

Thus, in S'wamba folk songs the use of these rhetorical figures is not an accidental feature that serves only for decoration. It is a purposeful means of communicating aspects of Edina culture and history.

2. The analysis of the study revealed that the S'wamba song is poetic because the pithy and terse references used in the diction of S'wamba song texts grant the few words of the song texts with layers of meaning and this in turn lends the song texts to different literary approaches of interpretation like any good poetry.
3. Again, the words in the songs encourage performers to add subtlety and drama, pathos or humour to performance. The suggestive references used in the diction give rise to figurative devices such as rhymes, metaphor, similes, allusions, repetitions, euphemisms, personification, metaphor, synesthesia, proverbs, ironies, metonymy, synecdoche, puns and symbolism and so on, that abound in the song texts and which make them poetic.

The songs also require a social context text and audience participation and come to life through performance like all good poems do.

The S'wamba song has the power to appeal strongly to appreciation by its audience and lift the audience up in the sense of forcing them to recognise its effect. The uplifting of the audience is shown in two ways:

- a. It has the ability to touch the audience emotionally so they feel pleasure or pain.
- b. It has the ability to stir the minds of the audience deeply so that they reflect on some aspect of life or some significant idea.

The diction of S'wamba was found to be concrete rather than abstract. Diction has been described as the selection of appropriate words, important in all types of communication, which is especially important in writing and which must convey ideas and attitudes without facial expression, intonation or gesture. This is because the performers support their choice of words with due amount of the semantic components in the form of gestures, grimaces, etc.

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