

**APPOSITIVE NOUN PHRASES, CONFLICT AND POWER SHIFT IN  
OLA ROTIMI'S *OVONRAMWEN NOGBAISI***

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### **Introduction**

Ola Rotimi's *Ovonramwen Nogbaisi* (1974) is a dramatic presentation of the fall to the British of the ancient kingdom of Benin to the British. This three-act play presents the trials and tribulations of Ovonramwen Nogbaisi as he faced rebellion within his kingdom and his conflict with the white man who rides roughshod over Benin traditional values in order to assert his authority over the trade and political system of the kingdom. This play has attracted a number of studies. Adegbite (2005) described the features of pragmatic tactics in the play and how they account for the sources of conflict. Nasiru (1979, p. 28) commenting on the importance of music, song and chant in Ola Rotimi's plays, and particularly the reliance of *Ovonramwen Nogbaisi* on traditional Edo performances comes to the conclusion that this play is "a classic example of an approach to drama which places greater emphasis on performance than on reading the play as literature."

This paper, however, concentrates on a syntactic-semantic analysis of appositive noun phrases. These we consider have contributed in no small measure to the understanding of the subject matter of the play. This is because the appositive noun phrases enable us to see the status of the major characters of the play and the conflicts can be used to account for the inevitable power shift in the play. The appositives are used elegantly to indicate the dominance of Ovonramwen Nogbaisi at the beginning of the play, followed by the simultaneous rise in profile of the white man and the decreasing status of Ovonramwen Nogbaisi as the play progresses.

This study examines the use of appositive noun phrases in the context of the play because it is only within a contextual framework that we can determine the contribution of this linguistic structure to the overall presentation by the play. As Mey (2001, P. 41) states:

Context is more than just reference. Context is action. Context is about understanding what things are for; it is also what gives our utterances their true pragmatic meaning and allows them to be counted as true pragmatic acts.

We also follow the theoretical framework of Biber *et al.* (1999) in trying to examine this play by focusing on actual use of grammatical structures in real situations. Biber *et al.*'s focus "constitutes (1999, p. 4) an extra dimension for grammatical description, one that is important to real language communication as the structural catalogue of elements and constructions." They further contend that

the vocabulary and grammar that we use to communicate are influenced by a number of factors, such as the reason for the communication, the context, the people with whom we are communicating and whether we are speaking or writing. Taken together these choices gives rise to systematic patterns of use in English.

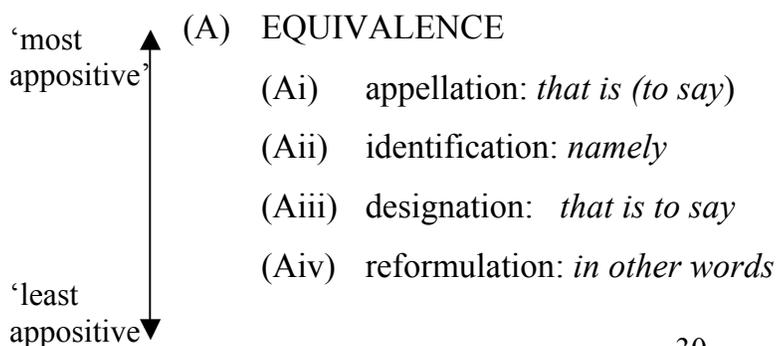
It is our contention in this study that the use of appositive noun phrases by the characters is highly systematic depending on the linguistic and non-linguistic factors playing out in the dramatic presentation.

The descriptive framework of this study follows Biber *et al.* (1999) and Quirk *et al.* (1985). According to Biber *et al.* (1999:639) appositive noun phrases are a “maximally abbreviated form of postmodifier, are favoured in the registers with highest informational density” and they further contend that when appositives are used with focus on the action of human participants they are “primarily used to provide background information about people”. Quirk *et al.* (1985, pp. 1300-1301) describe apposition as “primarily, and typically, a relation between noun phrases and that units in apposition which may be two or more must normally be identical in reference, or the reference of one must be included in the reference of the other”.

Appositives, which belong to the same syntactic class as noun phrase + noun phrase are said to be in strict apposition, whereas those from different syntactic classes (*e.g.* noun phrase + clause) are in weak apposition. In this study we concentrate on appositives in strict apposition because virtually all the appositives used in the play are such.

Appositives in non-restrictive apposition fall in different information units and this is indicated in speech by their inclusion in separate tone units and in writing by their separation by commas, semi-colon or colon. Appositives that are restrictive are in the same information unit with the second appositive unlike non-restrictive apposition where the second appositive has a subordinate role; in restrictive apposition we cannot say that one of the appositives is subordinate to the other.

Apposition is, however, typically noun phrases in non-restrictive apposition. Quirk *et al.* (1985, p. 1308) identify three major semantic types of apposition: equivalence, attribution and inclusion and the semantic relationships between the appositives:



- (B) ATTRIBUTION [= non restrictive relative clause]
- (C) INCLUSION
  - (Ci) exemplification: *for example, say*
  - (Cii) particularization: *especially*

With appellation, there is a unique reference between the appositives and the relationship is a naming relationship. Both appositives are usually definite, with the second more specific than the first. The second appositive can also be replaced by a corresponding relative clause, *e.g.*

*The class representative, Yemi is getting married.*

With identification, there is no unique equivalence between the two appositives because the first appositives is typically an indefinite noun phrase while the second appositive is more specific in identifying what is given in the first appositive *e.g.:*

*A renowned author, Wole Soyinka was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature.*

Appositives in designation relationship are commonly definite noun phrases, but unlike appellation and identification, the second appositive is less specific than the first *e.g.:*

*Wole Soyinka, a Nobel Laureate, teaches in an American university.*

With reformulation, the second appositive is a rewording of the lexical content of the first appositive. Quirk *et al.* (1985, p. 1311) identify four groups of reformulation:

- (a) reformulation based on linguistic knowledge
- (b) reformulation based on factual knowledge
- (c) more precise formulation
- (d) revision

Reformulation based on linguistic knowledge is usually a synonymous expression:

He was referred to *a cardiologist, a heart specialist.*

Reformulation based on factual knowledge is based more on the knowledge about the external world.

He spent his childhood in *Bujumbura, the capital of the Republic of Burundi.*

With reformulation based on more precise formulation, the second appositive conveys more precise reformulation or a correction of the content of what was said in the

first appositive. In this kind of appositive relationship the purpose may be repetition for communicative effect and embellishment *e.g.*

He teaches at *a university, a private university* in Nigeria

An appositive in revision relationship with another is selected to present a more accurate or more precise information than what is given in the first appositive. This type of revision is a common feature of impromptu spoken English and any part of the utterance may be subject to revision. In this study, however, we limit our scope to that of noun phrases only.

The second major type of apposition is attribution. Attribution involves a relationship in which an appositive is more or less a description or attribute of a given appositive. The defining appositive is usually an indefinite noun phrase which can be replaced by a non-restrictive relative clause:

*Chinua Achebe, a distinguished novelist, wrote Things Fall Apart.*

The third major type of apposition is inclusion. Inclusion, according to Quirk *et al.* (1985, p. 1315), “applies to cases of apposition where the reference of the first (defined) appositive is not identical with that of the second (defining) but rather includes it”. Quirk *et al.* (*ibid*) identify two types of inclusion (i) exemplification and (ii) particularization. In exemplification “the second appositive exemplifies the reference of the more general term in the first appositive” and accept explicit indicators of apposition such as for example *e.g.*:

A lot of people here, for example, John, would prefer coffee.

Particularization “requires an explicit indicator which shows that the particularization has been chosen because it is in some way prominent” (Quirk *et al.* 1985, p. 1316). It is our considered view that the usage of appositive noun phrases has contributed in no small measure to the description of the characters, their changing status, and the conflict that represents the heart of the play. It is the noun phrases in apposition in this play that constitute the major thrust of this study.

### **Analysis and Findings**

The appositive noun phrases in the play were identified and they constitute the data for this study. The type of apposition, the addressee, the addressed, the context of usage, and their contribution to the narrative in the play provide the major thrust of the study. We examine the appositives used for the noun phrase *Oba Ovonramwen Nogbaisi* the major character in the play. Appositives used by Ovonramwen himself for the names of the characters that interacted with him are also examined. Other appositives used by other characters that are important to the story line in the play are also examined particularly those used by the whitemen.

*Ovonramwen Nogbaisi*, the god-king of Benin, is the major protagonist and 121 appositives are used for him in this play. This is the highest number of appositives used for any character and this not surprising because of his place in the drama. Of these 121 appositives, 43 are used in Act One, 22 in Act Two, and 56 in Act Three. The appositives used for the noun phrase *Ovonramwen Nogbaisi* and their frequency of occurrence are presented in the table below:

**Table 1: Appositive Noun Phrases used in apposition with *Ovonramwen Nogbaisi***

	ACT 1	ACT 2	ACT 3	TOTAL
Overami	0	01	42	43
Your majesty	13	06	01	20
Your greatness	10	04	02	16
Your Highness	06	01	01	08
Home-Leopard	06	01	0	07
The Oba	0	06	03	09
My Lord	2	0	0	02
Great One	0	0	2	02
Son of Adolo	0	1	1	02
Bold one	1	0	0	01
His majesty	1	0	0	01
Fetish Priest-king	0	1	0	01
A big man	0	0	1	01
Ovonramwen	0	1	0	01
Oba Ovonramwen	0	0	1	01
Great son of Adolo	0	0	1	01
My master, great son of Adolo	0	0	1	01
Oba Alaiyeluwa	1	0	0	01
Oba Alaiyeluwa, Home-Leopard of Benin Race	1	0	0	01
Oba Alaiyeluwa, Lord of Benin	1	0	0	01
Alaiyeluwa, Lord of Benin people	1	0	0	01
	<b>43</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>121</b>

As seen in Table 1 above, most of the appositives for *Ovonramwen Nogbaisi* are used in Act One and Act Three, *i.e.* 43 and 56 respectively. These appositives indicate his status, power and influence. In addition they indicate how he is perceived at various stages in the play by his people, his chiefs, surrounding communities in the Benin kingdom, and the white men.

In Act One, *Ovonramwen* is in control of his kingdom and he is held in awe by virtually everybody. This is reflected in the 43 noun phrases used in apposition with *Ovonramwen Nogbaisi* identified here. Of these 43, we have 13 instances of *Your Majesty*, and all the 13 are used by Gallwey and Flutton, two white men who come to visit *Ovonramwen*. We have 10 instances of the usage of *Your Greatness*. Of these 10, Ijekiri traders use this appositive twice and in addition they acknowledge *Ovonramwen*'s supremacy by paying homage:

Kneeling and bowing, their foreheads touching the floor.  
(OVON, p.8)

The elders of Ekpoma, a community under *Ovonramwen*'s rule, who were summoned before him used this appositive four times and the five remaining instances are used by *Ovonramwen*'s chiefs, notably Okpele, Okavbiogbe, and Ologbosere. *Your Highness* occurred six times, used twice by Ijekiri traders, thrice by *Ovonramwen*'s chiefs and once by Gallwey. *Home-Leopard*, an appositive used as a metaphor for *Ovonramwen* to indicate his power, size, and ferocity is used six times, four times by *Ovonramwen*'s messengers and twice by his chiefs. *My Lord* is used twice, once by the visiting Ifa Priest from Ile-Ife, the cradle of the Yoruba race, and once by Iyase, *Ovonramwen*'s chief. The other following appositives for *Ovonramwen Nogbaisi* in Act One are used once each. *Bold One*, used by Uzazakpo, *Ovonramwen*'s court jester, *His Majesty* by Gallwey, and the remaining, *i.e.* *Oba Alaiyeluwa*; *Oba Alaiyeluwa*, *Home-Leopard of Benin race*; *Oba Alaiyeluwa*, *Lord of Benin*; and *Alaiyeluwa*, *Lord of Benin people* are used once each by the Ifa priest.

These appositives used for *Ovonramwen* in Act One show us that we have a powerful king, exercising authority over his people and neighbouring communities *e.g.* Ekpoma, Ijekiri, Akure, etc. and to whom the white men give great respect, even if only insincerely. This is a king that is tending towards autocracy. We see this autocratic tendency clearly in the appositive *Bold One* used by Uzazakpo to castigate him, especially for the way he handled the case of the four people accused of killing Uwangué Egiebo, *Ovonramwen*'s adviser. Uzazakpo used the term of respect *Bold One* while pointing out that *Ovonramwen*'s judgment was too harsh:

UZAZAKPO. *Bold One*, that is not the way to go about it.  
(*Ovonramwen disregards him*).

OVONRAMWEN. Ukoba!

UKOBA (*a messenger*). My Lord

OVONRAMWEN. Where are the Whitemen?

UKOBA. In the yard, my lord, resting

OVONRAMWEN. Tell Edogun to take them round the city. I shall talk to them later. [*To another messenger*] You bring in the traders from Ijekiri

(*Messengers hurry out; Ovonramwen turns to Uzazakpo*).

Snake at your feet, a stick in your hand. Rebellion within, rebellion without, and you say that is not the way to treat them!

UZAZAKPO. In my madness, I served Oba Adolo, your father. That same madness has helped me keep my body in this palace as jester under your full moon. If you will listen to me and my madness, I will tell you frankly that the way you talked to the chiefs was not the right way. (OVON, p. 8)

All the appositives show Ovonramwen has no tolerance for rebellion, disloyalty, or disrespect for his authority. When one of his chiefs, Iyase, tries to raise a query of the death sentence passed on four brothers, Ovonramwen's response is swift and uncompromising:

OVONRAMWEN. Let the land know this: Ovonramwen Nogbaisi is henceforth set to rule as king after the manner of his fathers before him... henceforth, a full moon's, my glow-dominant, and unopened to rivalry throughout the empire. (OVON, pp. 6-7)

By Act Two, we notice changes in the number and significance of the appositives used for Ovonramwen. 22 noun phrases are used in this Act. Of these, we have six instances of *Your Majesty*, six instances of *the Oba*, four instances of *Your Greatness*, one instance each of *Ovonramwen Your Highness*, the *Home-Leopard*, *Son of Adolo* and *Fetish Priest-King*. An examination of the users of these appositives and the context of usage reveals the conflict that is gradually unfolding. All the six instances of *Your Majesty* and the single occurrence of the *Home-Leopard* are used at the climax of the Ague festival where for the last time in the play Ovonramwen is in full control of his kingdom. The six instances of the use of *the Oba* arise in the dialogue between Okavbiogbe, the chief policeman of the Benin Empire, and the white men who insisted on entering Benin during the Ague ceremony. The white men use the appositive thrice while Okavbiogbe also uses it thrice. From Act Two, Scene 4 when the war with the white colonialists starts, there is a marked difference in the context of the usage of appositives for Ovonramwen as compared to that in Act One, both by his chiefs and the white men. For instance, the context of the usage of the four instances of *Your Greatness* by Ovonramwen's chiefs indicate a gradual shift in power as the conflict with the white men has started to challenge his power and authority. In the contexts, as seen below, the use of the appositive *Your Greatness* for Ovonramwen is pitiable, and almost ironic:

OSODIN. **Your Greatness** too must take to hiding. (OVON, p. 42)

UZAZAKPO. **Your Greatness**...let us take shelter in the bush.  
(OVON, p. 42)

OSODIN. **Your Greatness**, you must now leave the palace. (OVON, p. 43)

OSODIN. **Your Greatness**, listen to reason. The Whitemen will bring death here any moment.  
(OVON, p. 44)

The contexts of the other appositives are not different from those highlighted above. The appositives may sound grandiose but they are now being used for Ovonramwen who has lost his power and grandeur:

EZOMO. Asoro has been killed in Sapoba, **Your highness**; the white men are rushing towards the city burning everything in sight. (OVON, p.43-44)

UZAZAKPO. **Son of Adolo**, stop being stubborn. Let us take to the bush!

(OVON, p.44)

The remaining three appositives (*Overami*, *Ovonramwen fetish priest-king*) used for Ovonramwen in Act Two are used by the white men and they show their new assessment of him as distinct from that in Act One. Phillips, a white man who earlier in this act referred to Ovonramwen as *the Oba*, now uses *fetish priest-king* as an appositive for Ovonramwen as seen in the following text:

PHILLIPS... But for how long gentlemen, must British trade policy remain crippled by the whims and ritual taboos of a *fetish priest-king*? (OVON, pp. 31-32).

With Phillips dismissing the Ague festival as a “ritual taboo,” he decides to enter Benin during the Ague ceremony, an action which would be interpreted as an act of war on the Benin Kingdom as Okavbiogbe explains:

OKAVBIOGBE ... the Oba is busy with the Ague ceremony, and custom forbids him to see strangers white, or strangers black. (OVON, p. 30)

The other appositives *Overami* and *Ovonramwen* used for Ovonramwen by the white men finally show the contempt they have for him:

PHILLIPS. Take this stick to **Overami**! (OVON, p. 32).

Ovonramwen has not only been stripped of his titles, his name has been Anglicized. This is a fore-runner of the complete takeover of Benin Kingdom by the white men. By the end of Act Two, after the white men have captured Benin and the palace, Moor leading other British offices, declares:

MOOR. I said I want **Ovonramwen** dead or a-l-i-v-e! (OVON, p. 45)

By the end of Act Two, just as the power equation has changed, the appositives used for Ovonramwen have also changed.

By Act Three, the Benin Kingdom has been overrun and 56 appositives are used for Ovonramwen, reflecting the power shift. Of these 56 appositives. *Overami* is used 42 times by the white men, *the Oba* is used three times by Ovonramwen’s chiefs, *Your Greatness* is used twice (once by his Chief and once by the watchman where Ovonramwen has gone to hide). *Great One* is used twice; once by his chief and once by Uzazakpo. All the other appositives are used by his chiefs and other hangers-on.

Ovonramwen's loss of power is shown clearly by the persistent use of *Overami* by the white men. The potency of the usage of *Overami* to humiliate him is seen clearly in the surrender scene:

ROUPELL. Very well then, I shall proceed to accept your formal surrender.  
 [Crosses to a far end of the stage]  
 Let **Overami**, rise up, and come forward.  
 (Ovonramwen remains seated)  
 I said: Let **Overami** rise up and come forward!  
 (No response)  
**Overami** is wasting time!  
 [Ovonramwen rises slowly, absently. Aided by some of his chiefs, he is led forward, stopping about mid-distance from Roupell.]  
**Overami** will now pay homage in native fashion.  
 [Ovonramwen and his chiefs stand transfixed with horrified disbelief]  
 I said **Overami** will pay homage.  
 (Nothing happens)  
 Or has **Overami** again changed his mind about surrendering?  
 IYASE. He has not changed his mind  
 ROUPELL. Then let him not waste time.  
 OSODIN. We beg the white man to let **the Oba** pay homage in private, if he has to.  
 ROUPELL: The terms of surrender will be my prerogative,  
 Chief Osodin. If **Overami** honestly wants to surrender, let him do as I say, or I shall call off this meeting, and he can go back into hiding until our soldiers catch him. Then he will have no choice but to be disgraced in public.  
 [More chiefs come out and gather round Ovonramwen, conferring. After a while, the chiefs come forward and kneel before Roupell.]  
 ROUPELL. What is this?  
 CHIEFS. We are paying homage on behalf of **the Oba**.  
 ROUPELL. No, no—it has to be **Overami** himself. Your turn will come. But **Overami** first. Well?  
 [Chiefs rise resignedly, and cluster round Ovonramwen again]  
 I give you one minute to make up your minds. One minute!  
 (OVON, pp. 52-53)

In the extract above Roupell repeats *Overami* many times for effect. It is the same Ovonramwen that the white men in Act One copiously referred to as *Your Majesty* and *Your Highness*. While Osodin and other chiefs of Ovonramwen still refer to him as *the Oba*, Roupell ignores this and continues to call him *Overami*, and even goes on to use other appositives to mock Ovonramwen., e.g. *a big man*:

ROUPELL. Go tell Overami that he has nothing to fear from the white man in matters of fair play. Tell him that a big man must believe like *a big man*.  
 (OVON, p. 49)

Ovonramwen's chiefs still continue to use such appositives as *Your Greatness*, etc., for him, but they are now used for a defeated and fleeing monarch. These

appositives must be seen in this context and this reflects the point made by Mey (2001, p. 42) that

no matter how natural our language facilities or how convention-bound their use, as language users, we always operate in contexts. Therefore the context looms large, and has to be taken into account wherever we formulate our thoughts about language.

Consider the following:

OSODIN. You must set out quickly, **Your Greatness** (OVON, p. 64)

WATCHMAN. Only our friends know the way to this place, **Your Greatness**. It is all bush. (OVON, p. 73)

The other appositives used for Ovonramwen such as *Great One, son of Adolo, my master, great son of Adolo*, only humor him as there has been a complete reversal of fortune for not only him but the Benin Kingdom. This is seen clearly in Uzazakpo's dream as narrated to Ovonramwen himself:

UZAZAKPO. It sounds like my dream. When I slept under that tree for a short while. I dreamt I was heading for the market place—the Oba's market.

Suddenly, a huge crowd. The whole market broke up: men and women, children and old—all thronged around Uzazakpo!

'Uzazakpo', they called out to me, 'Obakpolo Uzazakpo, they cried aloud. 'Hunh'. I answered. 'Obakpolo Uzazakpo', they said, 'we hear that the Oba is now under your charge' they yelled. 'Y-e-s!' I hollered back to them, 'Even so; the great Oba of this great empire is now under my care', I said to them, this great empire is now under my care', I said to them, simply 'Under the care of crazy Obakpolo Uzazakpo; not crazy Uzazakpo under the charity of the great Oba, but the great Oba under the grace and mercy of crazy Uzazakpo, I tell you! Not the other way, but the other way round which is not the same as that way, but the other way round which is not the same as that way, but the opposite of that way which is quite different from this way which is unique!'

[Stares blankly at Ovonramwen]

(OVON, pp. 73-74)

Ovonramwen, an almost divine figure at the beginning of the play, has by the end of the play lost his throne, power, and influence and all this is shown in the usage of appositive noun phrases for the noun phrase *Ovonramwen Nogbaisi*.

It is not only appositive noun phrases used for Ovonramwen that reveal the conflict and the power struggle in the play. Appositives used by him also show the progression in the play. In Act One, as mentioned earlier, Ovonramwen is full in power. His anger towards those who killed his adviser, Uwangue Egiebo, and whom he sentenced to death is captured in the string of appositives used: *brothers, rebels, the whole rout, rebels*:

OVONRAMWEN. Brothers, ha! Rebels—all: Obazelu, Obaraye, Eribo, Osia – the whole rout: rebels. (OVON, p. 4).

*Brothers* for which a co-appositive *rebels* is used. *Rebels* itself has an identification relationship with the listed names because the names help us to identify the *rebels* and indicators of identification such as *namely, in other words, that is to say* can be listed before the list of names.

In his dealings with Ijekiri traders, the noun appositives used also reveal his attitude to the Ijekiri nation: “Go back to your chiefs – Chief Dare, Chief Idudu and the rest of them”. (OVON, p. 8)

Here we see *Chief Dare, Idudu and the rest of them* are in an inclusion relationship with *your chiefs*. Similarly we see a haughtiness deriving from Ovonramwen’s position of power in his relationship with a neighboring ruler, the Udezi of Akure. He refers to him as “Odundun or whatever his name—that Udezi of Akure.” With these appositives we see that he has no slight regard for the Udezi of Akure and this is further seen in his accusation of the Udezi as “fashioning for himself two royal swords” (OVON, p. 9). His contempt for this action is shown in the reformulative appositive used for *the two royal swords* as “those cursed swords” (OVON, p. 9). With this second appositive he revises the first appositive to include his emotional relation to the two swords. He orders the seizure of the swords which he considers an effrontery, and he destroys them.

Towards the end of Act One, a sense of foreboding descends on Ovonramwen, especially with the divination of the Ifa priest Ovonramwen’s fear is reflected in the appositives: “*civil war—the final curse of internal intrigues*” (OVON, p. 15). These appositives fall under the Equivalence reformulation with the second appositive *the final curse of internal intrigues* being a rewording of the first appositive to make the enormity of the reference sink in.

By Act Three power has slipped from Ovonramwen’s hands. The appositives used by him reflect this sad reality. He now recognizes the potency of the white men. *The Bold One* now recognizes fear and that “the white man was at last bringing *war: the father of all fears*” (OVON, p. 59). *War, the father of all fears*, are used as appositives with the second appositive being a reformulation of the first appositive based on factual knowledge.

After his formal surrender Ovonramwen is still able to engage once more in empty self-adulation with a string of appositives:

OVONRAMWEN... I am still Idugbowa, the son of Adolo... Home Leopard of the Benin Empire  
– O-v-o-r-a-m-w-e-n N-o-g-b-a-i-s-i! (OVON, p. 62)

In a more realistic self-review he uses two noun phrases depicting his dire situation: *an Oba, a wisp of cotton wool* and he comes to a sober conclusion:

OVONRAMWEN (*appraising his body*). Gods... what has become of me? An Oba? No  
...a wisp of cotton wool, fiercely yanked off its stalk by the wind in harmattan and cast  
into space, wafting aloft, helpless, at the mercy of airy whims far beyond its control.  
(OVON, p. 71)

It is now apparent that *Ovonramwen Nogbaisi* has come full circle from the palace to hiding in a “yam house” (OVON, p. 73). Appositive noun phrases are also used to present to the

audience materials such as titles and traditional gods that may not be readily understood by those unfamiliar with Benin culture, *e.g. Osanabua, the great god of our father* (OVON, p. 23), where the first appositive in Edo language's reformulated in English. Similarly *Okavbiogbe, the Chief Policeman of the Benin Empire*, where the second appositive is used to present Okavbigbe's designation.

A closer look at another table, especially at the first five items, indicates that appositives connoting positive attributes are used more in Act One than in Act Two.

**Table 2: Positive and negative appositives**

Appositives	Positive			Negative		
	Act 1	Act 2	Act 3	Act 1	Act 2	Act 3
Overami	0	0	0	0	1	42
Your majesty	13	6	1	0	0	0
Your Greatness	10	4	2	0	0	0
Your Highness	6	1	1	0	0	0
Home-Leopard	6	1	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	35	12	4	0	1	42
	51			43		

The first appositive, *Overami*, is somewhat negative in that it is the personal name of the king. Because of the respect people have for their kings, kings are rarely addressed by their personal names. And, as shown below, nobody addressed the king as Overami in Act One and he was addressed only once as Overami in Act Two. This was when he was in control of his kingdom. In Act Three where he was no longer in charge, he was addressed 42 times as Overami. The other four positive appositives show a similar trend. While the four positive appositives, taken together, occurred 35 times in Act One, they occurred 12 times in Act Two and just four times in Act Three. This means that out of these 51 occurrences of the four positive appositives, 68.6 percent was used in Act One when the king was revered, 23.5 percent was used in Act Two and only 7.8 percent was used in Act Three. This can help us see the transition of Overami from a bold, courageous, and powerful king to a submissive, powerless king who had to abdicate his throne.

## Conclusion

This study has shown that appositive noun phrases play an important part in depicting the characters, the changing relationships between the major characters, and the presentation of the conflict in the play. This study also reveals the importance of context in the evaluation of linguistic structure in utterances. Through the use of appositives, the writer presents useful background of the traditional setting represented in the person of Overanwen, the political and socio-cultural values of the traditional Benin Kingdom as most of the appositives in Act One show and how these values were eroded. In terms of the frequency of the appositives that demonstrate the king's prowess, we notice a gradual decline from Act One to Act Three and the decline in the frequency of these appositives is metaphoric of the King's and the empire's

decline. A closer study of the use of appositives can lead to a better understanding and appreciation of the play.

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