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**A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ENVIRONMENTAL STRUGGLES IN THE
POETRY OF TANURE OJAIDE AND MARILYN DUMONT OF FIRST NATIONS
(CANADA)**

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ABSTRACT: *Earlier studies on the Niger Delta poetry of Nigeria and First Nations poetry of Canada have focused primarily on the environmental and minority concerns in the individual literature of these two regions. The environmental concerns in these two literary traditions are a result of the minority status of the regions with hegemonies depriving the indigenous people of control in the ways their landscapes and waterscapes are engaged. This present study takes these issues to a comparative level, investigating how the two marginal groups are reacting to the hegemonies that pushed them to the peripheries and the aesthetics the selected poets employ to combat local and global environmental changes in their collections. Tanure Ojaide's Niger Delta Blues and Other Poems, and Dumont Marilyn's The Pemmican Eaters are comparatively explored with the focus of exposing the similarities and differences in the portrayures of their environments. This study finds that the selected poets from both regions depict the primordial symbiotic relationship that existed between humans and non-humans in their environments, especially prior to the commencement of mineral resources exploitation in their regions. Poems from both regions compare the harmonious past with the disharmony of the present to raise global awareness of the problems caused by capitalist agents in the exploitation of the environment. Similarly, oral traditions are depicted as viable aesthetics which promote the harmonious human-environment relationship. The selected collections of poetry have political undertones and represent the people's collective aspirations, it is against this that they recreate the myths around their activists and heroes to document the history and raise environmental consciousness among the people. The poets of the two literary traditions compared, however, differ in the following areas: the poets of First Nations are more impressionistic in depicting environmental struggles while Niger Delta poets rely on metaphors and images to portray their environmental struggles. The study concludes that the environmental and minority struggles portrayed in the selected collections show the pursuit of environmental justice for their marginalised regions, and by extension, it is a contribution to the global environmental discourse.*

KEYWORDS: Environmental Struggles, Poetry, Niger Delta poetry of Nigeria, First Nations poetry of Canada



INTRODUCTION

Tom Burgis's *The Looting Machine* and Robert Kaplan's article in 1994 in the *Atlantic* titled: "The Coming Anarchy's" are instructive in understanding the history of European stewardship exploitation of the environment in the margins. Kaplan, on the one hand, and from a position that justifies European presence in Africa, argues that Africans are unable to give proper of their environment without the West's assistance. He adds that Africans are excessively "tribal" and innately given to corruption and violence (24). In other words, they would need assistance to be able to administer their territories, thereby justifying the exploitation of the African environment.

On the other hand, Burgis poignantly mentions those who are implicated in the exploitation of resources in the margins in *The Looting Machine*. He argues that the big extractive corporations whose headquarters are in New York, Beijing, Amsterdam, Paris and London are to be blamed for the exploitation and destruction of the environments where earth resources are extracted particularly in the margin. He mentions the Chinese state-owned corporations, BP, Total, and other Western oil companies that constitute themselves as giant trading houses of natural resources in the margin to fuel their economies.

These companies and institutions do not mind that those that lived in the spaces where minerals are being mined are affected by their activities. Over the years, they have also refined their operations and to paraphrase Tom's words: they have in "the place of the old empires are hidden networks of middlemen and potentates with state and co-operate powers. They have aligned themselves to the transnational elites that have flourished in the era of globalisation so as to serve their own enrichment" (9). However, from the Green Belt Movement of Kenya to the Narmada movement in India, to the International Campaign for Justice in Bhopal, to Accion Ecologia in the Ecuadorian Amazon, to the First Nations in Canada, and the Niger Delta people in Nigeria, are indigenous people who have constituted themselves into oppositions in the margins, lending their voices to the issues raised in Burgis' article which is the exploitation of the environment in the margin.

In other words, these indigenous people are raising resistance against those forces both local and international that constitute pains to the sanctity of their environments. Activists particularly poet-activists at the margins have also been using their works to sue for ecojustice. They can no longer sit and watch their people struggle under the weight of imperialism, environmental pollution, deterritorialization and displacement. Hence, they have reinvented their works to contribute to the fight against environmental colonisation. This research, hence, engages Ojaide's *Delta Blues and Home Songs* and Dumont's *Pemmican Eaters* with the purpose of portraying how these two texts are reacting to environmental changes in their regions from a comparative point of few.

Conceptual Clarification

Oscar James Campbell in his 1926 work, attempts to delimit the very wide scope that over the years has been identified with comparative literature. He said that comparative literature ... endeavours, in the first place, to discover general laws which transcend any one literature, such as the development of types and forms under the progressive relationships of different pieces of literature and reveal relations of affinity within two or more pieces of literature. In the second place, it focuses on the similarities and differences through the comparison of literary traditions



across borders. In other words, comparative literature like scientific investigation studies literature by factoring the processes, and appraisals between or among literary works across different historical spaces, time, and bioregional frontiers. Oboke (1978) for instance, from a mythological point of view, compares Soyinka's "Abiku" and Clark's "Abiku" by comparing the manner the poets represent the Abiku phenomenon and thus contributing to a discourse on this mysterious African cultural beliefs. Finke (1998) explores Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and J.M. Coetzee's *Foe* by comparing the linkages and the depth of the parody that Coetzee has done with Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* in the light of colonialism and with the counter text, *Foe*. Finke's critical work represents one of the many ways that comparative literature can be engaged. The critical discourse that intertextuality has provided over the years to a larger extent also gives a sense of comparative discourse. Olofinso in *Intertextuality and African Writers* critically examines works that have intertextual linkages: Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, he said can be compared in terms of how both ambivalently engaged the African milieu. Similar engagement with the African milieu has elicited comparison also with Ngugi's *A Grain of Wheat* and Conrad's *Under Western Eyes*. Comparative works can also be done in the manner the authors explore the historical or postcolonial environments for instance postcolonial disillusionments can be comparatively discussed in Achebe's *No Longer at Ease*, *A Man of The People*, Armah's *Beautiful Ones are not yet Born*. This is because of the manner these writers express the pessimism of post-independent Africa. Naguib Mahfouz's *Children of Gebelwei* which makes use of traditional epic structure can also be compared with epics like J.P Clark's *Ozidi Saga* and John Milton's *Paradise lost*. Therefore, comparative literature offers limitless linkages and comparisons of textual materials and realities outside the texts/

Unlike literary studies, comparative literature does not just seek or produce aesthetic delight, but rather creates new models of understanding literary production across borders. René Wellek and Austin Warren delineate the scope of comparative literature to that which includes the specific procedures of literary studies--- comparison between works of literature – or even movements, figures and works etc. It, however, does not occlude studying literature in its totality, like "world literature," or "universal" literature.

From the foregoing and for purpose of this paper, comparative literature is that which compares one literature with another. Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek's (1999) definition of comparative literature constitutes a guidepost in this critical comparative discourse in the manner of factoring in marginal literature and various text types. The construction of the marginal identities of the Niger Delta region and First Nations elicit a comparative discourse of Ojaide's *Delta Blues and Home Songs* and Marilyn Dumont's *Pemmican Eaters*.

Theoretical Framework

Ecocriticism is adopted for this study because of the centralisation of environmental issues in this paper. Ecocriticism seeks to examine how metaphors of nature and land are used or abused. It is a broad area of literary scholarship which has elicited combative debates on how nature or the environment is and ought to be reflected in literature and literary criticism. Ecocriticism strives to make all kinds of environmental exploitation and discrimination visible in the world and in so doing helps make them obsolete (Graham and Tiffin 5). It promotes environmental justice in places where the people and the environment have been marginalised. Lawrence Buell's critical imagination of the environment is central to literary discourses that have emerged from ecocriticism. Buell articulates his concept of ecocriticism in *The Environmental*



Imagination: Thoreau, nature writing, and the formation of American culture (1995) and his waves of ecocriticism in *The Future of Environmental Criticism*. He sets the waves of ecocriticism to create stability to the various notions of ecocriticism and his contributions to date helped in the exploration of literature and the environment. Rueckert, William's *Literature and Ecology*, Kerridge, Richard and Neil Sammells, eds. *Writing and the Environment Ecocriticism* are also important works on nature writing. The validity of using this theory is etched in the fact that the environment and the problems that both regions suffer are the abuse of their environments by capitalist interests.

A Brief on Niger Delta and First Nations of Canada

Niger Delta

The Niger Delta is one of the six geopolitical regions of Nigeria. It has a vast oil basin of some 70,000 sq. km. and a population of roughly 28 million. It possesses a massive oil infrastructure consisting of 606 fields, 5284 wells, 7, 000 kilometres of pipelines, ten export terminals, 275 flow stations, ten gas plants, four refineries and a massive liquefied natural gas (LNG) sector. (Watts 639). The Niger Delta's closeness to the Atlantic Ocean has made it reachable to foreigners and encouraged the region's trade with foreigners since the sixteenth century. It is seen as one of the most ecologically diverse places in the world and accommodates over forty ethnic groups, including the Ogonis, Ijaws, the Urhobos, and the Itsekiris. Fishing and farming are the basis of the traditional economy of the people. The activities are mainly for subsistence use and surplus produce is usually sold in the local markets or transported to bigger cities like Port Harcourt to maximise profit.

Although Christianity has filled the region, belief in traditional gods and the reverence of ancestors are still common. One of the most important deities for the Ijaw is Egbesu. It is considered to be the god of justice, which penalises injustice when invoked. The gods, the landscapes, flora and fauna, and the tradition of the people remain the primary sources from which the poets from that region draw inspiration, symbols, and metaphors for their environmental struggle.

First Nations

The territory called Canada has always been multicultural. "Even before settlers' colonisation, it was inhabited by a great number of distinct First Nations (Indians), who spoke about different mutually unintelligible languages that belonged to at least eleven different language families" (Lutz 52). The First Nations are made of people of Indian descent, the Inuits (formerly called Eskimo), who traditionally speak variations of the same language, which ranges from the North-easternmost, Siberia, all across Alaska and arctic Canada to Green land. There is also the Metis who came into being as a result of intermarriage between Europeans and First Nations women. There are other different ethnic groups with different ethnic names such as Montagnais, Ojibway, Cree, Sioux Okanagan and Nootka. (Lutz 52). These people have rich traditions that are tied to their relationship to the environment and their cultural practices accentuate their indebtedness to these traditions

From the foregoing, we can, therefore, say that First Nations constitute a multi-ethnic and multilingual indigenous group. According to Eigenbrod, Kakengenic and Fiddler: "Aboriginal, Indigenous, Native, and First Nation" can be used interchangeably (1). Several scholars have



also suggested that these descriptive epithets should be in a cap to indicate that reference is being made to a Nation or Nations.

Comparison

Ojaide and Dumont in their poems portray the indigenous people both in the developing countries of Nigeria and a developed Canada respectively. Their works describe the fight for environmental justice in their individual regions. The comparisons of the environmental issues portrayed in their works are explored below:

In “October 1869: to Smoke...” Dumont conjures the images relating to extraction practices that release toxins and other harmful chemicals that destroy the environment:

Boring mineral veins
Drilling wells
Forcing steam down bored holes
Extracting dark thick fluids
Stabbing the land belly
Sucking every seam
And filling the gaping holes with
The toxic unseen (20)

From the above lines, capitalist agents masqueraded as the Canadian Federal government were criticised as they bury the crime of destroying the earth by dumping toxins underneath the earth in Canada. “Stabbing” of the earth draws the visual image of their annihilating method of mining. Their approach reveals their scanty regard for environmental protection even in a so-called first world. A similar pattern of environmental destruction is depicted in Ojaide’s “Delta Blues” because the foreign oil explorers do not care if “barrels of alchemical draughts flow” on water (3), and the “barrels of oil” (28) destroy the environment of the Delta. The frightening impacts of human-induced destruction are portrayed thus:

My birds take flight to the sea,
the animals grope in the burning bush
head blindly to the hinterland
where the cow’s enthroned (22)

The above lines show the monumental impacts that the destruction has on the general landscape, flora and fauna. The destruction of the environment in both Canada and Nigeria is frighteningly portrayed by both poets as caused by capitalists’ invasion.

Both poets’ volumes of poetry portray their environments as connected, animated and alive. The humans and non-human lives of both environments are in harmony before the present disharmony occasioned by agents of capitalism represented in the texts. For instance, in the



opening lines of “When Green was the Lingua Franca”, Ojaide reminisces on that time in history when the ecology was untainted green and the natural vegetation communed with human habitats in childlike innocence. The diversity of the ecology of that region reveals communion. Such that:

Snails and koto lured him

The owe apple fell to me

...*ikere* froglets fell from the skies

That covered the land

Undergrowth kept as much

Alive as overgrowth, the delta

Alliance of big and small

Market of needs, arena

Of compensation for all (12-13)

The lines above metaphorically portray a balanced harmony of humans, fauna and flora as well as human dependency on the environment for food and survival. The local food economy thrived before the disharmony occasioned by the activities of oil companies in that region. The result of the disharmony is such that: /glamorous fish... refused to grow big/ because of the oil spills and their destructive impacts which alter the biosphere of that region. In the poem, the international oil conglomerates: Agip, Chevron, Shell, Texaco etc. were indicted for breaking the harmony that the environment once enjoyed. The metaphors that connote destruction such as victims of arson, restless soles, wiped, cut; beheaded (13) squarely describe the destruction that these companies brought to the Niger Delta people and their environment. The destruction is not far from the oil companies’ failure to follow international best practices in their exploration of oil. The impact of the destruction is seen in oil spills and other forms of pollution in the Niger Delta region.

A similar pattern of human connection with the environment is depicted in Dumont’s “Sky Berry and Water berry”. Here, the flowers are personified as her sister and brother to emphasise the unity of culture and nature. /Her sisters, the flowers/ her brothers, the berries/ (1-2) remind us of a similar relationship that resonated in Ojaide's “When Green was the Lingua Franca” when: Snails and koto lured him/ the owe apple fell to me/. In “Not a Single Blade” also, Dumont romanticises the environment using personification. The lines: /No a single blade/ of grass on the prairie/ you do not know/ not a single blade/ will betray and/ reveal your whereabouts/ (1-6) suggest the reliability and emphasis of the bond that the environment has with the indigenous people is primordial and sealed. From the foregoing, both poets portray closeness and connection to the flora and fauna of the environment and so indicate that it was settlers’ colonialism that broke this harmony



Both poets depend on defiance and humour in depicting their resistance to the colonisation of their environment. In Ojaide's "I will save my enemies" defiance and humour are used to convey resistance against environmental terrorism in the Niger Delta. Lines such as: "I will not defile my scars and the memory of /marching daily to the gallows for a surprise end/inflicting shame on a defeated enemy" (12) depict the wiliness to be hanged like their environmental martyr, Ken Saro-wiwa, who was killed for daring to stand up for that region against the Nigerian military junta in 1993. Ojaide's "Dance of defiance" also deploys a metaphor associated with defiance to resist foreign oil interest in that region. He said:

I will still climb towards
the thin neck of the magic palm
to get my wine fresh from the top.....
Let me be the eyareya grass
shaken relentlessly by the winds
but will not fall in the frenzy.
Let me be that perennial river
that will continue to swagger in my course of torrents (69).

The lines above also remind us of the poet's indebtedness to the Udje poetry as a strategy of defiance to weigh down their oppressors. The perennial river mentioned is a symbol of Ken swaggering in the course of the torrents of exploiters in defiance. The use of natural elements to depict defiance and resistance is critically explored by Ojaide in that poem.

Similarly, Dumont's use of metaphors to portray defiance is to express resistance against settlers' colonisation of their environment. Dumont's "Letter to Sir John A. Macdonald" is a response to Sir John Macdonald, the First Prime Minister of Canada. He once described the First Nations as pemmican eaters in one of his many hate speeches against them. The poem is, therefore, a response in defiance to Sir Macdonald's altercation. Poetry for Dumont is used to challenge a lopsided historical overture. She defiantly responds thus:

Dear John: I'm still here
and halfbreed,
after all these years
you're dead, funny thing.
That railway you wanted so badly,
...
after all, that shuffling us around to suit the settlers. (9)

In other words, despite the name-calling and the effort to displace them, they are still resistant and will continue to speak against those issues that have confined them to the margins. The



allusion to Meech Lake (line 14) is to bring to remembrance an event in the early 1990s when the First Nations stood against parliamentary legislation that is supposed to deprive them of their indigenous rights as enshrined in the constitution. The resistance by civil society groups and First Nations prevented the law from being passed. Dumont thus appropriates real instances of struggle into her poetry to depict that First Nations are not savages or weak as often portrayed but are people that have stood against forces that pushed them to the fringe.

Both poets wrote tribute poems to celebrate their environmental activists. In *Delta Blues and Home Songs*, Ojaide, being from that region assumed the role of a poet-activist and mouthpiece of the region. That is, his poetic evocation is the representation of the collective thoughts and mindset of the people in their region. ‘Wail’ which is a tribute poem, Ojaide eulogizes Ken Saro-Wiwa, his friend through the reliance on Urhobo Udje dirge songs:

Another ANA meeting will be called
and singers will gather
I will look all over
And see a space
that can take more than a hundred
the elephant never hides
I ask the god of songs
whether all the singers will come (81).

The technique of rendering the traditional oral poetry of the Ijaw people called Udje to mourn the death of Ken is to raise consciousness among the locals. Udje usage within this context is to create organic memory of that event which would linger in the mind of the region. This approach is expected to rally the Ijaw nation, especially the Niger Delta people to be united after the killing of Ken. The poet chants: that when the meeting of the Association of the Nigerian Authors (ANA) is called, Ken is the elephant that would not be there. The elephant in some African folk tales is the king of animals of enormous strength. Therefore, Ken’s strength or activism in the pursuit of ecological harmony will be missed by all.

Also, in “Wail”. Ojaide uses lacrimation as a weapon to elicit compassion from those in power by searing their conscience over the death of Ken. The poet sings:

Streets echo with wails
A terrible thing has struck the land,
everyone is covered with shame and sorrow
this death exceeds other death.
They have murdered a favourite son
this news cannot be a hoax
for the love of terror
they have hanged a favourable son (“Delta blues”18).



From the above, the memory of Ken's death resonates among the people as they wailed over his death. The metaphors that connote violent killing like 'hanged' and "murdered" cut across the poem to signify the brutality of the military against a region. However, there is an attempt at the end of the poem that suggests that the activist (Ken) did not die, that he actually translated. The symbolism of translation is more pronounced with Ojaide's "Elegy for Nine Warriors" where the Ogoni nine are described as walking "back erect from the stake" (25) which suggests defiance and that the activism that Ken stood for is still alive with the people. From the foregoing, Ojaide has made a statement that the death of Ken did not put to an end the agitation in that region as the Nigerian Government has thought; it has rather fuelled it.

Dumont also explores tribute poetry in relation to what Ojaide did with Ken. Dumont's "Our Prince" explores the life of Louis Riel. The eulogy: /our prince, our prophet/ and it will manifest in the marking of places/ previously touched by you, Louis (26-27) expresses the monumental personality that he exemplified. The legendary Louis can be described as a visionary and should be celebrated. Also, Dumont portrays Gabriel Dumont in "Notre Freres" and "Li Bufallo" as an activist whose revolutionary approach to defending the earth can be emulated. He was also martyred (hanged) like Saro-Wiwa for advocating against the dispossession of their land by the European settlers in the 19th century. The use of buffalo as a metaphor for Dumont's steeliness in "Notre Freres", and the elephant as the metaphor for Ken in "Wail" points to an important point of convergence and how these poets pick faunal symbols from their immediate environment to celebrate their heroes. In "Wail" Ojaide says that: /the singers will never be complete/ without the elephant in their midst/ (81) to emphasise his importance in the Niger Delta. Ojaide, Ken and Riel risked their lives; even to the point of death to oppose state-sponsored violence against those at the margins.

In "October 1869: To smoke their Pipes and Sing their Songs", for instance, Riel is portrayed as thus:

Louis planted his beaded moccasin on the survey chain
 Cutting across Andre Nault's river lot
 Pitched there by men
 Slung with transits, levels and measuring sticks
 Men looking to the horizon
 Calculating the *free land* for homesteaders
 "you go no further" commanded
 Blocking their lines of sight
 Their ledger of lines (18)

In the first line the synecdoche: "beaded moccasin" exemplified Louis' resistance to the occupation of their land where he also stands as a defender of the earth. This is against the background of settlers' idea of *terra nullius* which sees the whole space of the land of Canada as that which is to be taken without considering that there are people that have lived with the environment for centuries. Dumont portrays Louis as a good mobilizer of women. He



positioned them in trenches to stand against those that wanted to take over their territory. The “Trenches, the lines of women and children,” (43) is one instance of the many attempts of the poet in documenting the history of activism of Louis. The lines:

Did the survey record in its calculation?

Witness whose lives were fragmented by their precise coordinates?

....

Could their instruments

Determine the number of years

Nault had lived and cleared brush

Harvested firewood on the same land he

Was now barred from. (19)

From above, the survey chains, nault (abbr. for nautical miles) and survey records are symbols of settlers’ deterritorialization. Those items are instruments of taking over native land. Dumont, hence, attempts to retell the history of activism in that environment with those instruments and the revolutionary vision of Gabriel against the territorial takeover of their land which is part of the struggle for environmental justice for the region.

As Dumont attempted to list the instruments that were used to take over the land, Ojaide, however, lists those that were immediately and remotely implicated in the destruction of humans and their environment. For instance, in “Army of Microbes” there is the image of “Hyena and his cavalry of hangmen that litter the landscape with mounds (13-14) to symbolise the Nigerian military. They are depicted as culpable at that time on Friday when Ken was killed. Ojaide repetitive evocation of the metaphor of the hangman, Friday and the “Nine” is to create a painful memory of the death of Ken and the impact it has on the collective psyches of the region.

In the “Army of microbes”, those that stood invariance to the activists are identified and they are the international oil conglomerates and the Nigerian government. They constitute a larger problem for the Niger Delta people and their environment. He metaphorically portrays them as a “usurper chieftain” with “rabid guard dogs” and deploys synecdoche to describe how they oppress the people of the region. The military closes “people’s mouth with trigger-ready hand” (4), has “creased faces” (14) and; they are ‘the insatiable microbes’ (7): that milk the region of his resources dry at the expense of those that produce it. He also uses metaphors such as: “Hyenas and his cavalry of hangmen” (13) and ‘the robbers’ (15) to describe the military. These are those that are responsible for the death of his friend, Ken Saro-Wiwa. There is also the reoccurring image of the executioner. The executioner is a metaphor for the military: /who maimed the land totem’s pet/ (18). The totem is a symbol that carries the very essence that Ken stood for. Ojaide later assumed the position of a poet-activist, as he decries the military leader and his soldiers whom he symbolised as a robber baron and his far-long accomplices (10).



Recalling this event serves as a memory and a positive spirit for the region to continue the struggle for environmental justice.

Many traditional African beliefs see the environment as animated or spirited. Chuka Albert argues that “a traditional African cares for his environment basically for the human good either to avoid punishment from the gods or for the future generation” (144). This ethical view connotes that nature has its respect which must be accorded lest man suffers for it. Therefore, the African man seeks to preserve his environment according to the traditional African system not just for himself but for the future generation and in honour of his ancestors. Similar traditional practices are found in the First Nations. These beliefs are expressed in Ojaide’s and Dumont’s works

In “My drum beats itself” Ojaide makes an invocation thus:

Inside the drum hides a spirit

that wants me to succeed beyond myself.

I foresee a thunderstorm breaking out in my head-

I wonder how I can contain the gift in lines

that I must chant to earn my griot’s name.

I bow to the master who never forgets my service

If I can wait and listen

Iyeiye

Brother and sister, if my ears will open wide

Iyeiye

If I will sleep awake every season

Iyeiye .(2x) (10 -11)

From above, drums and song aesthetics are harmoniously blended and interface with the spirit world through which we were told that the spirits urge the poet to abandon his personal call for a collective struggle. This is justified when the poet chants: “inside the drums hide a spirit” and “a thunderstorm breaking out in my head. In other words, the poet assumed the role of a mediator for the environment for the purpose of bringing the attention of the world to the environmental problems occasioned by human-induced destruction.

However, unlike Ojaide, Dumont appropriates dance aesthetics to depict their indigeneity and contest the narratives that relegated their environment to the background. In Marilyn Dumont’s “Fiddle Bids us”, the poet persona says:



Our Red River jig and step-dance will witness
 That we long kissed this earth with our feet
 Before the surveyors executed their dance
 Of lines and stakes at the corners to witness (29)

From the above lines, there is a reference to the jig and step-dance of the First Nations. A jig is a ritualised form of dance that involves leaping movements and step-dancing. From the poem, the propitiation of the earth is the mark of connection to the earth through a kiss as expressed in dance. She contrasts settlers' dance which is with their 'lines and stakes'. They, hence, executed their dance' which ironically suggests their territorial control of the capitalist enterprise. "We long kissed the earth with our feet" (line 8) further suggests that there is a history of the relationships between the earth and the natives which questions the whole settlers' idea of the environment as being a space where no human exists. At the end of the poem, the poet reiterates that they would continue to "fiddle, jig and bow/(and) when the fiddlers arrive, we'll vote with our feet?"(22-23) and the interpretation is that they will continue their land-based advocacy as a form of commitment to the land and project resistance in the face of European occupation. It is clear that Ojaide uses drums and songs as the connecting rod to the spirit world while Marilyn deploys dance and songs. There is a connection between both poets ritualising their oral literature as an instrument of protest and advocacy for the environment.

Both poets berate government institutions, for instance, Ojaide's "Hallucinations" portrays the perfidy with which institutions of government are run. Hallucination is an experience in which you see, hear, feel or smell something that does not exist because you are ill or have taken a drug. The title is sarcasm on government institutions in Nigeria that collaborate with the big oil multinational conglomerate operating in the region to rape the land of its resources. They must be sick or suffering from hallucinations. Ojaide derides them using metaphorical gabs like "the legendary hunter", and "the slayer" who "daily chokes the earth" (5). The fitting descriptions suggest that they have no sanctity for the people as well as the environment and this is not far from the truth that government presence has not significantly improved the conditions of the natives. More so, that government actions many times have shown that they are unmindful of the environment in the margins.

Similarly, In Dumont's "What We Don't Need" and "To A fair Country" condemn the settlers who constitute a large chunk of the Canadian government and how they use the institutions e.g. the media as an instrument of deception and occupation. In "To A fair Country" she queries:

I want to forget their ordinary ledgers
 Lists, records
 And deceptively even-handed calculations
 I want to forget the fraud and forgery
 Crooked schemers, connivers and collaborators (52-53)



The crooked, schemers, connivers and collaborators are metaphors for the big institutions and government agencies that took their land from them and turned the media against them through massive adverts and documentaries.

FINDINGS

The poems of Ojaide and Dumont compared meet in the area of romanticising the environment to depict the harmony that their environments once enjoyed before the infiltration of agents of disharmony. They employed paradox to contrast the seasons of harmony and disharmony through forms, and depict riveting imageries and symbols to contest their marginalised statuses. The season of harmony for the Niger Delta is before the discovery of oil and the season of disharmony is after the discovery of oil. Multinational oil corporations are primarily responsible for the destruction of the environment in the Delta.

However, the poets of the First Nations depict the season of harmony as the period before settlers' colonisation and the season of disharmony as the present settlers-colonisation that pushed them to the fringe. From the comparison, this study discovered that foreign interlopers are constant threats to both environments. They are there not for the interest of the indigenous people or the environment but for their selfish interests. These poets deploy oral aesthetics which is evident in the metaphors, images and symbols used to signify their struggle against the hegemonies that pushed them to the fringe. Ojaide and Marilyn attempt to document the legendary roles these activists played in their struggle against marginalisation. Another important meeting point of these poets is that poets like Ojaide and Marilyn Dumont are environmental activists who are actively involved in environmental justice advocacies in their regions. They are poet activists and are actively involved in environmental justice advocacies in their regions. These mindsets must have been the reasons for them wanting to narrate the history of their environment in poetry to create social awakening. Thus, narrating the history of their marginalisation and the martyrdom of their heroes are dominant in their poetry.

In conclusion, this comparative work has problematized environmental issues and the poets have shown that their regions are victims of different levels of environmental colourization. Ojaide's poems are tailored toward addressing these problems occasioned by the activities of the multinational oil interests in that region while Dumont centred her works on the colonisation of their environment as a result of the coming of the (white) settlers to Canada.

Both poets comparatively portray environmental pollutions which affect the quality of drinking water of the natives; displaces the people; separates them from the primordial site of connection with nature. They have used their poems as agencies of resistance to government and institutions that are working in variance to ecological harmony. The environments of the two bioregions convey meaning and saturate places with emotive attachments of natives to their environments as portrayed in the analysed poems



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INVESTIGATING THE EFFECT OF CHART ON SECOND LANGUAGE (L₂) IGBO LEARNERS' PERFORMANCE IN IGBO LANGUAGE WORD FORMATION IN NIGERIA COLLEGES OF EDUCATION: A CASE STUDY OF FEDERAL COLLEGE OF EDUCATION OKENE

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ABSTRACT: *This research study focused on investigating the effect of charts on the second language (L₂) Igbo learners in Igbo language word formations in all the colleges of education in Nigeria using Federal College of Education Okene as a case study. Federal College of Education Okene is in the Okehi Local Government Area of Kogi State. It is the general poor performance of all second-language Igbo learners that led to this research work. The researcher thought it wise that the use of instructional materials despite the level might help. With this, this research was carried out on the effect of charts on learners' performance in Igbo language word formation by second-language Igbo learners in Colleges of Education. This research study has three research questions and three hypotheses that were based on the purpose of the study. The study adopted a quasi-experimental design. The learners were in two groups. The groups are the experimental group and the control group. The experimental group was further subdivided into two groups. They are text chart groups and un-text chart groups. From the population of 130 students, 70 students comprised of 38 females and 32 males were selected. A pre-test and post-test were given. The instrument for data collection was the Performance Test in Igbo Language Word Formation (PTIWF), and which has 20 items multiple questions in it. Mean and standard deviation was used to answer the research questions while analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was used to test the hypothesis at the level of 0.05. This research study showed that those taught with charts performed better than those taught without charts. Again, the un-text chart group performed better than the text chart group, and the female equally did better than the male counterpart. The researcher equally proffers solutions by giving out some suggestions on the way forward which include that, they curriculum planners should ensure that different instruction materials especially chart is included in their curriculum planning and learners must be involved in the production of their teaching aids.*

KEYWORDS: Language, Igbo Language, Second Igbo Language Learners, word formation and chart.

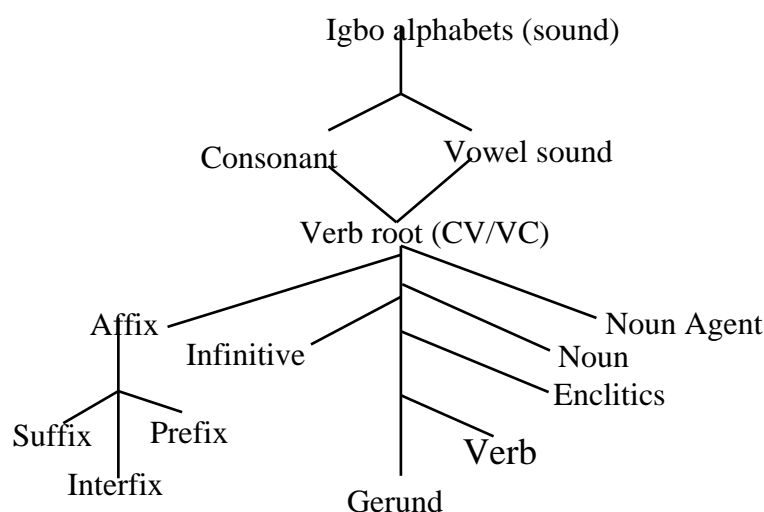


INTRODUCTION

Language is an organised sound arranged to form words used in making meaningful sentences among speakers. It is simply defined as a medium of expression of ideas, feelings, emotions, and desires. All these mentioned above are communicated through complex, vocal and written symbols. It is the medium of human communication either spoken or written consisting of the use of words in structured and conventional ways. In language lies the individual, community and global growth and development. The development and growth of technology hinge on communication which is rooted in language. In support of this are Eme and Mba (2010) who says, "Language functions as a medium of thought and transmission of culture". Culture is the total way of life of people. This implies that the development and growth of technology are embedded in peoples' way of living which metamorphosed from abacus to analogue and finally to digital where it is presented with the notion that it will still grow into another stage. All these sprang up from individuals' thoughts, ideas, emotions, dreams, minds and feelings communicated with one another through language. Its uniqueness, dynamic, vocal, systematic, creativity and conventionality make it interesting in learning.

Of all the numerous languages spoken in Nigeria, Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba were the only three languages selected by the Federal Government of Nigeria to be used for national issues, especially in the area of education (National Policy of Education (2014). Igbo language being inclusive is a language of the South Eastern part of Nigeria. Some areas in South-South like Rivers & Delta State and North Central like Kogi and Benue do speak Igbo too. It is the principal language and native language of the Igbo people with approximately thirty dialects. It is used by native speakers as a medium of expression of ideas, thoughts and feelings and equally a tool for the promotion of culture, education and trade. Igbo language according to Eme and Nkamigbo (2009), is a language that is so important in the lives of the owners. It can be learnt either from home (acquired) or through education (learnt). According to Ifeagwasi (2014), "any Igbo child brought up in the Igbo language performs wonderfully in anything that has to do with leadership, religion and in any other aspect of life that concerns planning in Igbo land and beyond. It equips him/her with the four language skills which are listening, speaking, reading and writing. Reading and writing have been a thorn in the flesh of learners. Uzochukwu (2001) explained that many years ago, some Igbo newspapers, magazines and the like include Ogene, Anyanwu and Udoka. But recently, these informational books are no longer in existence because of the negligence of the Igbo language by the indigenes. The worst of it all is that higher institutions like universities, polytechnics and colleges of education in Nigeria have more than enough journals, magazines and the like in their libraries written in Hausa and Yoruba language; only a few are written in Igbo. The Igbo lecturers in particular write their papers for publication in English. All these are a result of a poor foundation laid from the beginning.

Teaching and learning the four Igbo language skills, especially in word formation has been a great challenge facing Igbo Learners both indigenes (L₁) and second language (L₂) Igbo learners. The foundation has always been weak because of the negligence of many things which include the use of instructional materials like charts in teaching and learning. The foundation starts from alphabet/sounds like a, b, ch, /a/, /b/, /ch/ and the like which are learnt from the beginners level to forming of Igbo words like 'bia', 'rie', 'jee' and 'see' and finally using the formed words to make sentences which could either be simple sentences 'bia ebe a', compound sentences 'bia ebe a buru nri gi rie' or complex sentences 'nne siri nri ma anu adighi ya n'ime, ma azu di ya egheghi eghe.'



This illustration above defines clearly the different ways in which Igbo words are formed starting from alphabets/sounds. A Word formation as said by Hadmud (1996) is the creation of new words. He further explains that the verb root is formed by bringing two sounds consonant + vowel or vowel + consonant(c+v/v+c) together. Igbo word formation, therefore, is the creation/formation of Igbo meaningful words understood and spoken by the indigenes and second language speakers which starts from sounds to verb roots. This verb root extends to affixes, infinitives, gerunds, noun agents, nouns, enclitics and verbs. Igbo words can equally be formed through borrowed words. The following are ways in which Igbo words are formed/created.

1. **Using sounds to form verb root:** Sounds include all alphabet sounds. The alphabet sounds are divided into two. They are consonant sounds and vowel sounds. One consonant sound and one vowel sound forms a verb root.

Example:

a. c + v = cv

s + i = si verb root

b. j + e = je

c. gb + a = gba.

Therefore si, je and gba are all verb roots.



2. **Formation of verbs:** Verbs will be derived from these verb roots by adding suffix examples include:

a. verb root + suffix = verb

si + e = sie □ (cook)

je + e = jee □ (go) verb

gba + a = gbaa □ (shoot)

3. **Gerund:** Gerund is derived through the addition of prefixes and repetition of verb root examples:

Prefix + verb root + verb root

o+ si + si = osisi □ (cooking)

o + ji + je = ojje □ (going) gerund

o + ri + ri = oriri □ (celebrating)

4. **Infinitive:** It is derived by adding prefixes and verb roots.

Example:

Prefix + verb root = infinitive

i + ri = iri □ (to eat)

i + si = isi □ (to cook)

i + je = ije □ (to go)

5. **Enclitics:** It is derived through duplication of infinitive with inter fix in between

Examples:

Infinitive + inter fix + infinitive

agu + m + agu = agumagu □ (literature)

aba + d + aba = abadaba □ (broad)

echi + m + echi = echimechi □ (coronation)

ome + k + ome = omekome □ (miscreant)



6. **Borrowed words:** These are words owned and spoken by other tribes which have been Igbonised by the Igbo people.

Examples:

Komputa computer English

Osikapa shinkafa Hausa

Akamu akamu Yoruba

Kaboodu cupboard English

Isam isam Ijaw

7. **Formation of past tense:** Igbo past tense is formed by adding “rv” to the verb root. In rv, it means that ‘r’ is constant while ‘v’ means vowel.

Examples:

Verb root + rv = past tense

ri + ri = riri (ate)

si + ri = siri (cooked)

je + re = jere (went)

me + re = mere (did)

8. **Formation of past participle:** It is formed by adding the prefix (a/e) and suffix (la) to the main verb in accordance with vowel harmony.

Examples:

Prefix + main verb + suffix = past participle

e + rie + la = erielā (have eaten)

e + sie + la = esielā (have cooked)

a + saa + la = asaala (have washed)

a + zaa + la = azaala (have swept)

Igbo words could equally be formed through other means like duplicating verb root to form verb example pu + ta = puta (come out), the combination of two or more words to form noun/name example onye + di + ka + chi = onyedikachi, joining of prefix and verb root to form a noun/doer (as in person) or doer (as in machine) example o + ri = ori (nri) = food consumer and m + bu = mbu (ibu) load carrier.



The explanation above indicates different ways Igbo words could be formed/created and all are embedded in sound and verb roots. The teaching and learning of all these sounds and verb roots stemmed from foundational/beginner's level which could either be in L₁ language class or L₂ language class. Therefore, it is pertinent and imperative that word formation should be taken into cognizance in the teaching and learning of the Igbo language as a second language because it is the bedrock or pivot upon which language revolves. Word formation is an attempt to use the sounds of the alphabet to make readable words derived from the verb root. It is an ability to create new words or write down words pronounced without error.

The researcher is optimistic that following these with instructional materials like charts will have a great positive effect on the second language learners and at the same time improve other areas of the Igbo language like essays and literature.

Many researchers have actually contributed immensely to the way forward for the poor performance of second-language Igbo learners in Igbo language teaching and learning. But the area of tackling it from the grass root is yet to be given adequate attention. Teaching and learning of Igbo language both as L₁ and L₂ are very important in the life of Nigerian citizens for it creates peaceful co-existence among the speakers. It was based on this that the National Policy of Education (NPE) insisted it must be taught in schools as one of the three major languages. Again, Onwuka (2010) asserts that teaching and learning of Igbo language are very important in the life of the Igbo people. Igbo people here include all Igbo language speakers both those from South East (L₁) and those from other parts of Nigeria learning it as a second language (L₂). According to the source, the teaching inculcates moral values, and the religion of the people and at the same time enhanced cordial relationships among speakers promoting good business partnerships and peaceful co-existence and mutual understanding of the indigenes. Okudo and Ifeagwasi (2014) supported the assertion by saying that every Igbo man in the Igbo language (both L₁ and L₂) does well in all ramifications of life like in leadership, religious practices and the like.

Furthermore, Mba and Mba (2009) opine that the Igbo language is a language written as spoken. This implies that the spelling of Igbo words (word formation) goes as it is being pronounced. For example, in pronouncing "ekete (basket) will be e+k+e+t+e and in pronouncing edemede (composition) will be "e+d+e+m+e+d+e". The teaching of the Igbo language for second language learners with charts should be given due attention from the foundational level; starting from the alphabet to forming of words and sentences that are meaningful and well understood by the speakers, second language learners inclusive.

The second language, as the name implies, is a language spoken aside from one's indigenous language. It could be acquired or learnt. This implies that it could be learnt/spoken consciously or unconsciously through interaction with the indigenes in the environment one finds oneself aside from one's original environment. It could be equally learnt through formal education. Formal education here means learning the language within the four walls of the classroom. According to Abdullahi (2015), "second language is a language learned in an area where that language is not generally spoken. It is a language acquired or learnt in addition to one's native language.

In learning a second language, there are challenges that face the learners. These challenges include listening problems, native language differences, cognitive variables such as (language aptitude, individual differences, brain function and pedagogical tasks) and affective variables



such as (anxiety, motivation and personality). These challenges could be averted through the use of charts which could either be text charts or un-text charts.

Charts play a vital role in achieving this. Asogwa (2009) remarks that a chart is an information carrier designed properly to aid in achieving the aims and objectives of every particular teaching and learning. Again, Akolo (1999) writes that a chart is a prepared instructional material made to enhance learning in the class. Inyiaku (2015) supported this by saying that a chart is one of the visual materials that enhance the senses, especially the sense of seeing. To sum it all up, a chart makes learning lighter, faster, easier, permanent and more interesting. A chart is also a sheet of information in the form of a table, graph, or diagram. A chart can be a graph, table, tabulation, grid, histogram, diagram, guide, scheme, figure illustration, bar chart, pie chart, flow chart, map, plan, blueprint, graphic and the like. It is a diagram, picture or graph produced to make information easier to understand. It is a drawing on a sheet exhibiting information in a simple way. A chart is one of the teaching aids that simplify abstract information through visual display either drawing or through pictures. In support of this was Nwoji (2002) who exerts that charts are graphic learning materials, which form a distinctive medium for visualisation. They are hand-made drawings, graphs, and diagrams made on cardboard paper. It is the most useful visual display after the chalkboard in Nigerian schools today.

The effectiveness of charts in teaching as opined by Nwoji (2002) includes the following;

- They must be properly prepared
- They must be relevant to the content
- They must be spaced with bold letters
- They must be legible
- They must be properly designed and beautified
- They must be simple and attractive and not complicated and distracting

Types of Charts

The researcher divided charts into two namely:

1. Text charts and
2. Un-text charts

Text Charts: These are charts with write-ups. They are pictures, drawings, illustrations, graphs and diagraphs that carry with them letters, words, phrases or simple sentences. It projects instant dual information (seeing and reading). Text charts have to do with affective variables. It promotes rote learning. It makes the brain to be less active because each picture, drawing or illustration has its information on the blueprint. Text charts make some learners unserious and inactive but at the same time boost the ability to attempt to pronounce. It equally quickens the development of the learners' reading skills, for instance, when a figure like a body part is drawn, with part names written, the learner will quickly and instantly make attempt to pronounce what is already written with less stress in thinking. According to Umeano (1999),

there are two most important senses for keeping in contact with the environment. They are the auditory and the visual senses. The auditory is omnidirectional because it makes one hear in all directions at the same time while the visual is directional because it focuses on what is being seen. Auditory sense has little function in the use of text charts because the sense of seeing and the ability to pronounce what is seen (written) is high. The visual which is directional as asserted by Umeano (1999), is actively high in learning with text charts because it has to associate the picture, drawing or chart with the letters, words or sentences.

PICTURES OF TEXT CHART





Un-text Chart: This is a chart with neither letters, words nor sentences. It is mono-information oriented. (Seeing only) goes with cognitive variable challenges thereby requiring active brain function. The learners must be conscious and alert when the pictures/words of the picture/drawing are being taught. Learning with an un-text chart makes use of the three stages of memory which are;

- Encoding
- Storage and
- Retrieval.

Encoding Stage: In the encoding stage, the second language learner perceives and categorises the information to be remembered as the chart is un-text. Example: when a learner is learning parts of the body in the second language class with an un-text chart, he/she will be active, alert and conscious, to encode the body parts into the memory code bearing in mind that the so-called chart has no text. The ability to make attempt to call the body parts in the next class shows that s/he placed it in the code of memory.

Storage Stage: this is the stage the learner holds the information over time. When learning with an un-text chart, the learner makes a conscious effort to store the information by repeatedly repeating what is being heard/learnt with an un-text chart and this encourages memorisation through constant learning.

Retrieval Stage: Retrieval stage is the stage where the learner makes a conscious effort to bring out information stored. Retrieval means that the learner recovered the name from the storage at the time the un-text chart is being used for the second or more times. Once the learner is constantly practising what is heard during learning, the information will unconsciously register in the memory and even remain permanent that where ever she/he sees the chart without the text, she will mention the parts because it has been permanently registered. Learning with an un-text chart covers the three domains (cognitive, affective and psychomotor domain). Each of these charts has its own advantages and disadvantages.

UN-TEXT CHART

iji ụdaume eme mkpụrụokwu (Construction of Igbo Words with Vowel Sounds)



This prompts the researcher to research it in order to investigate its effects on the second language (L₂) Igbo learners' performance in Igbo language word formation irrespective of gender.

Gender according to Obi, Amaechi, and Azubiike (2017) refers to the social construction of males and females based on sociocultural norms and power. It refers to the social attribute of being male or female as prescribed by society. Penner (2000) supported this by saying that those with male attributes have stronger veins, arteries and bones than those with female attributes. Okolo (2016) sees gender as the difference in mental and emotional characteristics between the two sexes as prescribed by society. Umo (2001), states that females perform better than males in anything language.

The problem of Study

The second language (L₂) Igbo learners in Nigeria irrespective of their level are expected to perform brilliantly in Igbo word formation as this determines the quality of their output in other Igbo language areas of specialisation. Philians and Wanjobi (2011) opine that the better the performance of the students, the more effective the system is assumed to be. It is assumed that the use of charts in teaching and learning Igbo language word formation will immensely affect



second language learners. In the olden days, the use of charts took precedence over every other teaching aid and was planned by curriculum planners. The teachers then implemented the curriculum line, hook and sinker; and the output was excellent.

Recently, over decades now, both the curriculum planners and all the stakeholders in Igbo language teaching show no interest again in using teaching aids, especially charts to teach, and this made second language learners lose interest in learning the Igbo language, and even in speaking the language. These learners see the Igbo language period as a free period. They neither pay attention nor show any interest because there is nothing to motivate them, especially in this era of technology where every student wants to be a doctor, lawyer, engineer and the like. The choice of Igbo language as a course by second language Igbo learners is now adversely affected. They see the Igbo language as a course meant for only the indigenes, dullards inclusive. Therefore, introducing a chart at the grass root level will make the lesson interesting, lively and concrete. It will entice these learners to develop an interest in learning it as a second language, thereby strengthening their perception of the Igbo language as a course from the grass root level.

Purpose of Study

This study is designed to investigate the effect of charts on second language learners' performance in Igbo language word formation by second language Igbo learners in Nigeria colleges of Education using the Federal College of Education as a case study. Specifically, the study seeks to find out the following.

1. The effect of charts on second language Igbo learners' performance in Igbo language word formation by second language learners in Federal College of Education Okene, Kogi State.
2. The difference between the mean score of the learners taught with a text chart and those taught with an un-text chart.
3. The difference between the mean score of male and female students taught with charts at posttest.

Research Questions

1. What is the effect of charts on second-language Igbo learners' performance in Igbo language word formation?
2. What is the significant difference in the mean score of learners taught with a text chart and learners taught with an un-text chart?
3. What is the mean score of male and female students taught with a chart at the post-test?

Hypothesis

From these research questions, the following hypotheses were formulated for testing at 0.05 levels of significance.

HO₁ There is no significant difference in the mean score of the learners taught with charts and those taught without charts.



HO₂ There is no significant difference in the mean score of the learners taught with text charts and those taught with un-text charts.

HO₃ There is no significant difference in the mean score of males and females taught with charts at posttest

METHODOLOGY

The study used a quasi-experimental design involving a pretest and posttest. One group (experimental group) was taught with charts while the other group (control group) was taught the same concept using the traditional method. The experimental group was further subdivided into two groups. One group was taught with text charts and the other with un-text charts.

The target population of this study comprised all non-Igbo students offering Igbo as a second language in Nigerian Colleges of Education, using Federal College of Education, Okene in Okehi Local Government Area of Kogi State as a case study. From the population of 130 students, 70 were selected. The population comprises 32 males and 38 females.

The instrument for the collection of data was the Performance Test in Igbo Language Word Formation (PTIWF). It has 20 item multiple choice questions. The questions were from The National Commission for Colleges of Education Minimum standard. The researcher used four Igbo language lecturers from the school to help in administering the test. The researcher taught those assisted lecturers how to administer the test. The assisted lecturers strictly followed the instruction and the lesson plan given to them. The researcher supervised the administration of the pretest and posttest. The two groups were homogenous according to the result before the commencement of the experiment study as PTIWF was administered as a pretest to both the experimental group and control group. The two subdivided Experimental groups (text chart group and un-text chart group) and the control group were taught for seven weeks. At the end of the seven weeks, a posttest was given. The answer script was collected, marked and scored.

Mean and standard deviation was used to answer the researcher's questions while analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was used to test the hypothesis at an alpha level of 0.05



RESULTS

Research Question One:

What is the effect of charts on second language Igbo learners' performance in Igbo language word formation?

Table 1

Group	POP	Pretest		Posttest		Adjusted mean
		\bar{X}	SD ₁	\bar{X}	SD ₂	
Exp. group	40	40.58	11.32	70.03	16.67	70.09
Control group	30	40.69	10.79	55.50	10.46	55.44

Table 1 above shows the effect of charts on learners. The table showed that the experimental group had a pretest and posttest. In the pretest assessment, the experimental group had a mean and standard deviation of 40.58 and 11.32 respectively. While they score 70.03 and 16.67 in their posttest mean score and standard deviation respectively. This indicates that there is an increment in their mean score achievement. Again, the control group had 40.69 in their mean score and 10.78 in their standard deviation of the pretest. They also had in the posttest 55.50 as the mean score and 10.46 as the standard deviation. The adjusted mean of both the experimental and control group were 70.09 and 55.44 respectively. Though there was a little increment in the mean score of the control group during the pretest and posttest, the adjusted mean (70.09 and 55.44) indicates that the use of charts is effective in the performance of L₂ learners' performance in Igbo language word formation.

Research Question Two:

What is the significant difference in the mean score of learners taught with a text chart and learners taught with an un-text chart?

Table 2

Group	No	Pretest		Posttest		Adjusted mean
		\bar{X}	SD ₁	\bar{X}	SD ₂	
Text Chart	22	48.08	10.11	55.02	12.10	45.35
Un-text chart	18	48.11	13.15	65.26	18.50	50.02

The experimental group was further subdivided into two groups namely Text chart and Un-text chart group. The table above shows that the text chart groups have pre-test and posttest too. They had 48.08 in the pretest mean score and 55.02 in the posttest mean score with a standard deviation of 10.11 on the pretest and 12.16 on the posttest. The adjusted mean of the text chart and un-text chart group is 45.35 and 50.02 respectively. This implies that the use of an un-text chart is more effective on the learners' performance on Igbo language word formation than a text chart



Research Question Three:

What is the mean score of male and female students taught with a chart at posttest?

Table 3:

Gender	Posttest		
	NO	\bar{X}	Standard deviation
Male	32	60.76	14.47
Female	38	64.20	16.39

Table 3 indicates the mean scores of male and female students assessed at the posttest level. The male pupils had 60.16 in their mean score while the female had 64.20. With a standard deviation of 14.47 and 16.39 respectively. The above mean scores indicate that the female learners' performed a little bit better than their male counterparts. This shows that the chart is slightly more effective among the female pupils than the male pupils

Testing of Hypothesis

To test the three formulated hypotheses, Analysis of covariance was used as presented in Tables 4, 5 and 6 below.

HO₁ There is no significant difference in the mean score of the learners taught with a chart and those taught without a chart.

Table 4:

Group	Pop.	Mean (X)	SD	DF	Sig	Effect Partial square
Exp. group	40	70.0311.32		1	.000	.531
Control group	30	55.50	10.46			

Significant at P=0.05

The result in table 4 showed that f value (1) is significant at $.000.000 < 0.05$. This implies that the difference in the mean performance scores in Igbo word-formation between the experimental group and the control group is significant. Therefore, the hypothesis is rejected. The adjusted mean for the experimental group is 70.09 while that of the control group is 55.44. The adjusted mean indicates that the experimental group performed better than the control group.

HO₂ There is no significant difference in the mean score of the learners taught with a text chart and those taught with an un-text chart.

Table 5:

Group	Pop.	Mean (X)	SD	DF	Sig	Effect Partial Square
Text	22	55.02	12.10	1	.000	.442
Un-text	18	65.26	18.50			

Significant at P= 0.05



The result in table 5 indicates that f is significant at .000 and it is < 0.05 . With this, the hypothesis formulated is hereby rejected.

HO₃ There is no significant difference in the mean score of males and females taught with a chart at the posttest.

Table 6:

Group	Pop.	Mean (X)	SD	Sig	Effect Partial Square
Male	32	60.76	14.47	0.47	0.36
Female	38	64.20	16.20		

Significant at $P < 0.05$

Table 6 indicates that p is significant at $.047 > 0.05$. With this, the hypothesis formulated is hereby retained.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

There is no gain in saying the fact that the chart has an effect on the performance of second-language Igbo learners in Igbo word formation. The result of this study has shown that learning the Igbo language as a second language by second-language speakers will be more effective through the use of charts. There is ample evidence from the performance of learners taught with charts and those taught without charts. Asogwa (2009) provided support for the findings of this present study where the resource remarks that a chart is an information carrier designed properly to aid in achieving the aims and objectives of every particular teaching and learning. These findings agree with Anikwese (1995), Epuche (2006) and Inyiaku (2015) who found that charts like pictures, drawings, and the like are more important, useful and reliable in the learning of the Igbo language. The researcher who categorised charts into text chart and un-text chart equally found out that un-text chart is more effective on the performance of L₂ Igbo language learners on Igbo language word formation. The findings revealed that the un-text chart which affects cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains makes learning permanent, unlike the text chart which affects only the affective domain and is easily forgotten when the write-up is not attached. Again, the findings of the mean score of male and female learners at the posttest showed that females performed better than males. The female mean score was higher than that of the male. These research findings are in alignment with the views of Umo (2001) who found out that females did better than males in the research work.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the performance of second language learners in Igbo language word formation is solely dependent on the proper use of instructional materials which the chart is inclusive of. The research equally moves further to categorize the chart into text chart and un-text chart on which findings were carried out by the researcher on both, and the findings reveal that an un-text chart is preferable because it affects the three stages of memory code, and the findings showed that its mono information oriented makes learner brain active and learning permanent. An un-text chart is equally learner-centred because the learner is fully involved in the learning.



RECOMMENDATION

The following recommendations are made in line with the findings

- Igbo teachers should always endeavour to bring in charts to the classes so as to entice the second language Igbo learners to develop an interest in learning the Igbo language starting from word formation.
- Curriculum planners should ensure that the chart is always included in the academic planning work.
- Government should also provide assorted Igbo charts in line with the scheme of work to schools so as to motivate second language learners.
- Teachers and school management should equally endeavour to improvise chart of different kinds, especially un-text chart since it has been proved that it is more effective than text chart.
- Learners should be involved in providing/improvising charts suitable for each topic.

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A LEXICO-SEMANTIC ANALYSIS OF EYOH ETIM'S *DON'T MARRY ANGELICA*

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ABSTRACT: *This work attempts a lexico-semantic analysis of 'Don't Marry Angelica' in order to reveal the author's creative deployment of language to foreground his pre-determined intentions in the text. The study, which adopts Halliday's Context of Situation as a theoretical framework, shows how the author uses his vast knowledge of linguistic techniques and fecundity of his mental construct to expose the ills of the African society through the use of figures of speech, connotations, direct translations and creative coinages among others in the text to develop the themes of poverty, under-development and his criticism against stigmatization of adoption, abortion and other social practices against women and children in the society, among others.*

KEYWORDS: Lexico-Semantic, Foregrounding, Context of Situation, and Stigmatization.



INTRODUCTION

Lexico-semantic features in stylistic analysis combine two formally distinct levels of style markers—lexical and semantic features. This level of stylistic analysis, according to Khan and Jabeen (2015, p. 128), is the study of the way in which individual words and idioms tend to pattern in different linguistic contexts on the meaning level. At the level of lexico-semantics, the focus is on the style of speaking or writing determined by the choice of words of a speaker or writer, and on any use of words which will not give a literal interpretation unless interpreted imaginatively. According to Lyons (1977, p. 24), ‘lexical semanticists are usually concerned with the meaning of words, how they are depicted in the mind of the speaker and the way in which they are employed in texts and discourse.’ The diction of a writer or author could be denotative, which means the words do not have any further interpretative meaning. It could be connotative, in which case, the words attracts various associated meanings, feelings and ideas that usually cannot be obtained from the bare form of the word itself.

The main aim of literary artists is to model and remodel the society to become an enviable environment. This is often achieved through the use of different characters to express the thoughts and processes. The preoccupation of this work is therefore to examine how Eyoh Etim exploits his creative word coinages, connotations, phrases and sentences to bring out certain identifiable patterns of meaning relationship in the text ‘Don’t Marry Angelica’ by carrying out a lexico-semantic study of the text in order to highlight the various themes in the novel.

Lexical semantics focuses on the meaning of words and how meaning is created through context. Lexical semantics also often involves breaking down individual lines of text to study root words, nouns, verbs, adjectives, idioms and how they are arranged (<https://www.supersummary.com>).

Speaking in the same vein, Beaugrande (1997, p. 21) listed the seven principles of textuality to include: cohesion, coherence, intentionality, acceptability, informativity, situationality and intertextuality. This demonstrates how richly every text is connected to your knowledge of the world and society, even a telephone directory. The principles apply wherever an artifact is ‘textualized’, even if someone judges the results ‘incoherent’, ‘unintentional’, ‘unacceptable’ and so on. Such judgements according to Beaugrande (1997) indicate that the text is not appropriate (suitable to the occasion) or efficient (easy to handle) or effective (helpful for the goal), but it is still a text.

The graphic representation of sounds (speech sounds) on paper is called writing. Writing is done in different ways for various purposes and by different people. It is because of this that Ikpotokin (2017) observes that the study of stylistics as well as lexical semantics becomes necessary and an important area to both linguists and critics.

Background to the Novel

Eyoh Etim paints a graphic picture of the life of a young woman, *Angelica*, who was born in a bizarre or unusual circumstance and was later dumped into a refuse heap somewhere in Mbiabong Etoi, Uyo, in present day Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Growing up under her adopted parents, her virtues and accomplishments could not be counted for her because of her hidden identity. As she tries to give herself an identity through marriage, the opposition she encounters



becomes too enormous to bear...will she succeed? That is the rhetorical question that the author wants his readers to unravel in the novel 'Don't Marry Angelica.'

The main preoccupation of the novel is the problem of poverty and underdevelopment that defines the life of most Africans, especially those resident in the rural areas. *Angelica*, the heroine of novel is used by the author to criticize some traditions and cultural practices in the society, such as stigmatization against child adoption, abortion and other social ills against women and children. The author's creativity and mastery of words are examined in addition to how his use of narrative technique and other devices further add meaning to the core themes of the novel.

Theoretical Framework

Halliday's Context of Situation forms the theoretical framework of this research. The Polish anthropologist, Bronislaw Malinowski (1884-1942), is often regarded as the earliest proponent of this theory, succeeded by his student, John Rupert Firth (1890-1960) and subsequently Michael Alexander Kirkwood Halliday (1925-2018). In Malinowski's words, the primary function of language is to be regarded as a mode of action and not a countersign of thought (Malinowski, 1923, p. 297). For Malinowski, Firth and Halliday, language is not a mental system but a mode of action, and thus, the context of situations is an indispensable approach to meaning analysis.

Malinowski practically distinguished his claims through his study of Kiriwinian language spoken by the inhabitants of the Trobriand Island in the South Pacific. From his study, he came to a conclusion that the physical as well as the cultural environment of a people help shape the best approach toward the full experience and understanding of any natural language. In other words, language cannot be taken in isolation, but as a crucial derivative of the way of life of the people seeking it. Thus, the daily activities of the Trobriand Islanders—fishing, hunting, paddling, magic practice, cultivating, etc—were to be taken into consideration when accounting for the meaning of their language. Malinowski observes that,

...utterances and situations are bound up inextricably with each other and the context of situation is indispensable for the understanding of the words. Exactly as in the reality of spoken or written languages, a word without linguistic context is a mere figment and stands for nothing by itself, so in the reality of a spoken living tongue, the utterance has no meaning except in the context of situation (Malinowski 1923, p. 307).

According to Langendon (2016, p. 65), even though Firth is particularly known for his contributions on the prosodic analysis and phonological aspect of language, he, like Malinowski, draws attention to the importance of context in language. He affirms that whatever is said must be understood within the context of the particular situation. Firth builds on the ideas of Malinowski but goes a step further by evaluating context as a part of the linguist's tools, just as the grammatical categories which he uses.

Halliday's Context of Situation consists of these aspects: Field, Mode and Tenor. He explains field as the subject matter of the text. It answers such questions as what the text is all about and what the participants in discourse are doing. Halliday and Hasan (1994) describe it as 'the total events in which the text is functioning, together with the purposive activity of the speaker or writer; it thus includes the subject matter as one element in it.' In this aspect, a writer or speaker is interested in what he or she will write or speak about, in other words, the concern of the



language user. This could be in registers such as fishing, engineering, science and technology, etc. It could, on the other hand, be topical, portraying symbolic language such as metaphors, simile, etc, and because it uses words from different fields, it justifies the name ‘topical’ (Halliday & Hasan, 1994, p. 22).

Mode of discourse, for Halliday and Hasan, ‘is the function of the text in the event, including therefore both the channel taken by the language—spoken or written, extempore or prepared—and its [genre], or rhetorical mode, as narrative, didactic, persuasive, “phatic communion” and so on (1994, p. 22).

‘Tenor’ deals with the participants involved in the discourse. It includes such issues as the status of the participants with one another. It refers to ‘the type of role interaction, the set of relevant social relations, permanent or temporary, among the participants involved’ (Halliday & Hasan, 1994, p. 22). The three aspects of Halliday’s Context of Situation can be applied on any event of language use and when taken together, help to identify the situational context of the discourse; thus, they account for the aspect of language in use.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Etim’s ‘Don’t Marry Angelica’ serves as the primary source for the data. However, the purposive sampling method was used to select words and features considered relevant for analysis. What informed this method was that not all the words or features in a text can be selected and analysed.

This is in conformity with what Adejare (1992) describes as ‘notion projection’ which he observes is useful because:

...in any text, the linguistic structures conveying the message projected at the different levels would be evenly distributed throughout the text and thus enable the analyst to select the proper examples from the data (Adejare, 1992, p. 14).

This accounts for the method applied in the work for the selection of sampled data for the analysis with regards to the lexico-semantic level of analysis mentioned earlier. The methodology used is both descriptive and analytical. Lexico-semantic features such as figures of speech, connotations, loan words and creative word coinage, etc are used in the analysis of data sourced from the primary text. The library was also consulted since the work is a library based research. Besides the main sources of information, journals, reviews and books related to the topic were also invaluable to the study.

Purposive sampling method allows the researcher to gather qualitative responses, which lead to better insights and more precise research results. Because the researcher collects information from the sampled participants, the results are relevant to the research context. A purposive sample is where a researcher selects a sample based on their population. The participants are chosen based on the purpose of the sample, hence the name (<https://www.formplus.blog/purpose>).



Syntactic/Paradigmatic Relations

Idiomatic Expressions

Eyoh (2005, p. 1) defines an idiom as an expression whose meaning is not decipherable through knowledge of the individual meanings of the constituent words, but lies subtly beyond the words and within depth of the expression.

It has a particular meaning that is different from the meanings of each word on its own. Some of the examples in the text are:

S/N	Idiomatic Expressions	Pages	Meaning it conveys
i	What about Ngozi? Is she no more the only skeleton in your cupboard?	p. 98	The biggest challenge or problem you are facing
ii	It was a <u>dead trap</u> even up to the late 90's	p. 110	A dangerous route
iii	The beautiful ones are not yet born!	p. 98	Mostly referring to the girl child, the society brings forth more beautiful women
iv	Anthony was <u>trapped in between the legs</u>	p. 102	Someone in a serious dilemma
v	I thought you'd <u>take the production for lunch</u>	p. 103	To appreciate what is available
vi	I'm thinking about home	p. 105	Digging deep to know someone's roots or background
vii	That's <u>the gospel of politics and patriotism</u>	p. 109	Leadership and service
viii	One plus one	p. 113	What marriage entails. What belongs to one belongs to the other partner too.
ix	Life was a waste living was a nightmare	p. 118	The irony of life, because of poverty people are faced with hardships and difficulties

This is one of the ways in which the author uses these idiomatic expressions to give a clearer picture of his message and enhances creativity of the work.

Connotation

Connotative or emotive meaning, as Udofot (1998, p. 22) observes, refers to the type of meaning which a word or expression conveys other than its ordinary everyday meaning. Thus, two words may have the same connotative or emotive meaning. Connotative meaning is classically unstable and is often influenced by the age, the sex, education, culture and environment of the speaker and hearer among others (cf Udofot, 1998; Ogunsiyi, 2002).



Some examples of connotative usages in '*Don't Marry Angelica*' are shown below:

S/N	Connotative Usages	Pages	Interpretations
i	She had <u>bought pregnancy belt</u> , oh God!	p. 2	Trying to hide her pregnancy by packing same with a big belt
ii	How she feared <u>the poor thing would be disfigured</u>	p. 2	The unborn baby or foetus could be hurt by the belt tightening measures
iii	Like a <u>lamb being led to the slaughter</u>	p. 3	It shows the helplessness of the young girl abandoned inside by the mother
iv	<u>Epileptic power supply</u>	p. 4	Unstable power supply that is prevalent in most Nigerian cities.
v	Fascinated about the fantastic tales about Nigeria and her peoples	p. 5	Stories about the rich cultural heritage of Nigeria, people and natural resources
vi	Each sexual act should produce life!	p. 9	Each sexual intercourse should led to pregnancy or procreation
vii	<u>Taking the baby to 'government'</u>	p. 9	Motherless Babies Homes
viii	Imagine the baby <u>as an unfortunate gold in a pig's hands</u>	p. 8	The new baby though precious is found in a home she is not welcomed
ix	After <u>nights of purpose-driven intercourses over the last three months</u>	p. 21	Sexual intercourse whose real aim was to produce children unfortunately, the woman's dream of pregnancy was abortive.
x	She knew she was dead. But she also knew she was alive. Something was live in her.	p. 147	Though the woman (Angelica's mother) knew she was dead, her dream of a better life or success remains in focus despite the temporary setback.

As seen in the examples listed above, the underlined words or expressions connote extra strong feelings or emotions and deeper meanings which help to drive home the message in the text. These expressions are used metaphorically as deployed systematically by the author. For example, the expression pregnancy test in Example One connotes efforts made by the pregnant woman to hide the unwanted pregnancy away from the prying eyes of the people who strongly detest or kick against having a child out of wedlock. The poor thing in Example Two typically refers to the helpless and hapless situation the unborn baby may have faced through no fault of hers.

In Example (iv), reference is made to epileptic power supply, which is a common occurrence in most African countries particularly in Nigeria, and it may not create any meaning before an LI Speaker of English. Again, taking the baby to 'government' in Example (viii) in the Nigerian context refers to taking motherless babies to motherless babies homes for their safety and



proper upkeep. It may make no meaning to an LI speaker of English who may not possibly decode the other meaning of “taking the baby to government.”

In the same manner, the fear of infertility and barrenness had been of serious concern to most African women. Nigerians not an exception. The reference to nights of purpose-driven intercourses in Example (ix) above is a pointer to this assertion, and anyone that does not share a common experience or affinity with speakers of the language in the immediate environment are not likely to share the full meaning of the said expression. It should however be noted that the various underlined words and many others in the text could only make sense in an African setting.

Direct Translations

Direct translation is and indeed attempt by a writer to translate words or expressions from one language into another. Most direct translations in Eyoh Etim's *'Don't Marry Angelica'* are taken from Ibibio which is the writer's mother tongue (LI) or language of the immediate environment into English (L2). Below are some examples from the text:

- i. There was such a great commotion in the crowd (p. 6)
- ii. Maria now trained her observant eyes on the crowd (p. 7).
- iii. A baby from a mother who threw it away might grow up to be like the mother (p.20)
- iv. There were many who thought like Mike in Mike's society (p. 20).
- v. His wife had had one of her child haunting nightmares (p. 21)
- vi. She lost her confidence and began to worry about the idea of growing old without having a child (p. 21).
- vii. A die-hard sadistic wizard, had locked up her womb, the very day he collected her bride price (p. 22).
- viii. A lion cannot give birth to a goat (p. 32)
- ix. It was this exaggerated politeness that pained Helen and Chris more (p. 39).

The use of direct translations, as shown in the examples (i-ix) above and others in the text, are indicative of the author's originality and an attempt to bring in local colouration in his work as well as give credence to the view that the text is a product of a second language situation.

Loan Words

Loan words are words which are taken from a language or languages into the vocabulary of another language. They oftentimes act as enablers to offer expressions to the language in use. Various examples of loan words are found in the text. The following are some of the examples:



S/N	Loan Words	Interpretations
i.	Alalok or Aka Uke (p. 4)	- Commercial motor cyclists
ii.	Abasi Ibom (p. 6)	- The Supreme Being or God
iii.	Prayer Houses (p. 6)	- Proliferation of Churches or miracle centres
iv.	Government 'Pikin' (p. 9)	- Motherless babies
v.	Uyai Mkpo (p. 11)	- A beautiful woman or a maiden
vi.	Ukpa Oton and Afia Eto (p. 13):	Wild trees mostly found in forest
vii.	Ekpo Nyoho, Ekpe, Eka Ekpo, Inuen Ekpo (p. 19)	- Various forms of masquerade displaying rich cultural heritage
viii.	Eka Chris (p. 39)	- Chris' mother
ix.	Mammy Water Baby	- A mermaid child often seen as cursed by the gods.

The writer uses loan words in order to demonstrate primarily his deep attachment to the language of the immediate environment, the Ibibio, Nigeria's fourth largest ethnic group which is dominant in Akwa Ibom State where the narrator drew inspiration for his story.

Secondly, the author strives to retain the freshness and originality of the meanings that the text conveys. This is perhaps because of the heterogeneous linguistic situations in most African societies. This device also helps the novelist in attaining cohesion in the work as it adds to its cohesive quality and textuality.

Creative Coinages

This is the word formation process in which a new word is created either deliberately or accidentally without using the other word formation processes, and often created from seemingly nothing. Linguists define creativity as "the native speaker's ability to extend the language system in a motivated, but unpredictable way" (<https://prezi.com>). Some examples of creative coinages in *'Don't Marry Angelica'* are given in Table 3 below:



S/N	Coinages	Pages	Interpretations
i	Macrebre deaths weren't heavenly	p. 35	Multiple deaths
ii	She was deeply seduced by death	p. 35	Tortured by death
iii	If she cried, she cried happily	p. 37	State of her misery, which she is accustomed to.
iv	If she complained about anything that was denied her, she complained with joy	p. 37	She is living in fear, hence could not speak or voice her anger over issues
v	She mixed her frown with smile and was merry in anger	p. 37	The woman faces a lot of challenges
vi	The blood flowed: the blood of tears and the tears of blood	p. 29	Tries to be happy despite her troubles
vii	Sleepless and ceaseless agonizing lamentation	p. 17	State of poverty induced pains
viii	The confidence they exhibited as bravery. <u>The pains they enjoyed as pleasure.</u>	p.7	Shows spirit of ability to endure difficult situations
ix	<u>What they laugh at could make humanity cry</u>	p. 7	As people are different, so are their situations showing enormity of their differences

The creative deployment of words by the writer, such as mixing pains with pleasure as in Example (viii), laughter with crying (ix), blood and tears (vi) as well as crying and happiness in Example (iii), etc add value to the textual quality of the work. The unusual literary coinages create rhythmic effect and also sustain the reader's interest and emotional and rhetorical appeal in the text. This the writer deploys to his advantage in the text.

Lexical Fields

Eyoh Etim's *'Don't Marry Angelica'* consists of various themes, each having a distinctive set of lexical items. Some of the lexical items relating to the major themes discussed in the text are shown below:

Themes	Lexical Items
Poverty	Of what use was her life? (p. 141), left nothing behind, except hungry children (p. 145), dropped out of school, Bayelsa or suicide (p. 2)
Abortion	Her mother died (p. 140), attempting an abortion (p. 140) threw away her baby, now dying in a strange land (p. 140), she swallowed tablets, another set, another set (p. 141).
Abandonment	Where could she be? (p. 122), not in this life (p. 139), unfortunate creature (p. 124), death trap (p. 10)
Guilt	Not while I am alive (p. 116), unfortunate creature (p. 124), Feel (p. 142), Angel (p. 127)



Murder and Agony	A matter of death (p. 145), pure and innocent soul (p. 124), one decision today (p. 140), where will it lead you? (p. 140), life is a trick (p. 140), disserted (p. 115), tears (p. 123)
Infertility and Barrenness	Death I died (p. 120), fulfilling (p. 146), childlessness (p. 39), diplomacy (p. 121), obvious diplomacy (p. 39), sexual act (p. 9), lamb (p. 3), baby (p. 8)
Adoption and Stigmatization	Was she born by someone? (p. 121), identity, AIDS sufferer (p. 37), without pleasantries (p. 117), stigmatization session (p. 47), murmuring and scorn (p. 41).
Corruption	Corruption (p. 45), corruption is number one (p. 123); a lion cannot give birth to a goat (p. 32)
Love	Love was not selective (p. 91), love Angelica so much (p. 120), good morning love (p. 124), beautiful ones finally been born (p. 98), asunder (p. 113), one plus one is one (p. 113), my baby (p. 113)
Marriage	Relationship (p. 106), your son is getting married (p. 107), this is my fiancé (p. 107), darling (p. 109), Angelica my dear (p. 109), welcome home (p. 111), my daughter (p. 111), my blessings (p. 115), fiancé's mother's outbursts (p. 121).

From the above, we can posit that the lexical items helped to enhance the coherence and cohesion of the text and also made significant contributions to the textual quality of *'Don't Marry Angelica'* as a whole.

Figures of Speech as Narrative Strategies

Figures of speech are literary modes of expression whereby words are consciously used in a special way either in speech or in writing. They are used in extraordinary senses to lay emphasis on a statement and how to achieve special meanings, or its effects on its audience. *'Don't Marry Angelica'* brings some perspectives on this subject with some examples shown below:

Simile

Simile is a trope of meaning in which two different objects, concepts or ideas are compared with one another with the use of 'like', 'as', 'than', 'resembles', 'similar to', etc. Examples:

The man is treating us like slaves.

Udoma's wife behaves as a prostitute.

The following are some examples from the text:

- i. Maria felt like a missionary, a Mary Slessor (p. 8)
- ii. The question came as a hard slap on her chip (p. 1)
- iii. The 'poor thing' had not uttered a sound, like a lamb led to the slaughter' (p. 3)



The similes above are deployed to clear some ideas. They are often used to clarify abstract ideas and also for clarity of expressions.

Metaphor

This type of figurative language is a comparison of two unlike things that suggests a similarity between them. It uses words not literally, but figuratively. It takes words from their original context and uses them on another. Some of the examples in the text are as follows:

- (i) 'Ours has been a super story' (p. 158)
- (ii) God forbid! You'll be a super mom! (p. 159)
- (iii) Year, so you just act the big brother (p. 159)
- (iv) Then you'll always be my idol (p. 159)
- (v) Ideowo realized that loneliness was dead (p. 156)
- (vi) What is not known cannot hurt (p. 84)
- (vii) Secrecy is power (p. 84)
- (viii) She was all smiles as waves of happiness rocked her heart (p. 158)
- (ix) Happiness was mere heavenly (p. 158).

The author uses some metaphoric expressions to highlight his points while those that are unclear or abstract in nature are given a concise and clearer meaning to the expression in the text.

Personification

Personification is used to give human attributes to non-human or non-living entities. Perrine (1969, p. 67) defines personification as 'giving the quality of a human being to an animal, an object or an idea, as where inanimate and non-human objects, ideas or concepts are endowed with human feelings, actions, etc. Some of the examples in the text are as follows:

- i. She jerked back to the present and suddenly felt pain where her friends words stabbed her at the centre of her heart (p. 10)
- ii. She was deeply seduced to death (p. 35)
- iii. The baby as an unfortunate gold in a pig's hand (p. 8)
- iv. The question came as a hard slap on her chin (p. 1)
- v. Her resistance was lame (p. 1)
- vi. There was the glory of loneliness and the eloquence of darkness (p. 63)
- vii. She stared at the innumerable volumes, which also stared back at her (p. 76).
- viii. Helen's heart was smiling (p. 130)



The author deploys this literary device to great advantage in order to give his readers a clearer picture of his message and also improves the textuality of the novel.

Hyperbole

A hyperbole is an exaggerated utterance, meant for artistic effect, which suggests no untruth or deception. Some examples of this device in the text are shown below:

- i. Angelica's mother then turned and walked faster than the wind (p. 3)
- ii. So much was said in that moment that even eternity could not contain (p. 42).
- iii. The pictures kept coming—pictures that explained themselves at a speed faster than light (p. 153).

The careful deployment of hyperbole by the author aptly ignites strong feelings and passion in the story and also helps to keep the reader spellbound. It further cements the bond of unity and cohesion in the text.

Rhetorical Question

A rhetorical question is posed not to elicit an answer but to emphasize a point or create a dramatic effect as enthused by (Udofot & Ekpenyong, 2001, p. 82). Quite a number of these questions are used by Eyoh Etim in '*Don't Marry Angelica*'.

For instance:

- i. Was what she was holding refuse? (p. 1)
- ii. Or were they sentiments? (p. 20)
- iii. It was in the blood, wasn't it? (p. 20)
- iv. How was one to smile when there were malice and hatred in one's heart? (p. 34)
- v. How was one to be friendly with one's enemy? (p. 34)
- vi. At least can't people die a healthy death? (p. 146)
- vii. What in heaven was happening to the world? (p. 146)
- viii. How could a once healthy robust young lady be reduced to a pack of bones? (p. 146)
- ix. Was she such a bad child? Was she a cursed child? (p. 151).

Eyoh Etim made use of rhetorical questions in order to give a deeper comprehension of the text. They are used as a strategy of probing into the mind of the reader and also make the reader think deeply about the issues raised in the text. They are also used to engage the readers in the development of some of the themes of the text. This again adds to the cohesive quality of the entire text and reduces the chances of digression.



Repetition

Repetition is the use of the same word or statement in two or more places in speech or writing to secure emphasis. Some examples of repetition in the text are given below:

- i. What could have driven her from Lagos, what could have driven her to Bayelsa and what could have driven her to suicide? (p. 145).
- ii. Please discourage prostitution; discourage unfair trade.
- iii. It is unfair to the person who buys and it is unfair to the person who sells (p. 147).
- iv. Everyone gets hurt in the long run. Bad business, no? (p. 147).
- v. You see, my sister, I died of AIDS. Yes AIDS. And the tragic thing is that I had all the money yet I died of AIDS (p. 147).
- vi. Health is wealth but wealth is never health (p. 147).
- vii. Please keep how I died a secret. Nobody, I repeat, nobody in the village or in Lagos should know about this (p. 148).
- viii. She knew she was dead. But she also knew she was alive (p. 151).

Repetitions are used to register deep impression in the minds of readers and probably also to give an insight into something or a detailed information. Here, the author deploys this device into proper use as seen in the text.

Generally, figures of speech are used to clarify meaning. They are also used in deepening meaning of the expression. They are deliberately used to give necessary or vivid details and useful descriptions which enable the readers to understand the people and the environment where they appear. It is also used to emphasise on the aforesaid expressions in order to fully bring out meaning as well as create a sense of originality and rhythmic quality in the text.

CONCLUSION

This work examines devices that bring out meaning of '*Don't Marry Angelica*', taking note of how the author through the fecundity of his mental construct uses some lexical and semantic features to create meaning and cohesion in the text. The author achieved this through his effective deployment of words, which created a heightened effect and originality in the text among his readers.

We can also conclude that the author's lexical wealth and his proper usage facilitate meaning sharing, cohesion and textual quality of the novel which provide ample opportunity for the core themes of adoption, abortion, stigmatization, segregation and other harmful practices against women and children to be foregrounded in the psyche of the people.



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IDENTITY CONFLICTS IN POST-COLONIAL NORTHERN NIGERIA: AN EXAMPLE OF E. E. SULE'S *STERILE SKY*

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ABSTRACT: *Ethnicity and religion have continued to play significant roles in preventing the attainment of national identity in post-colonial Nigeria. Within the ambit of the post-colonial theory, this study examines the concepts of identity and hybridity in the inter-ethnic and inter-religious relations that result in the recurring Northern Nigeria's violent crises as expounded in E.E. Sule's novel, Sterile Sky. This study shows that the north of Nigeria has, to a great extent, been unable to achieve a hybridized identity with the rest of the nation. Ethnic and, especially, religious identity remain the preferred identity as well as the primary cause of conflicts in Northern Nigeria. In Sterile Sky, ethnic, and especially religious identity are identified as the preferred identity in the cosmopolitan city of Kano, and the primary cause of conflict in Northern Nigeria. This work is a contribution in providing an understanding of the post-colonial conflicts in Nigeria through literary evaluation.*

KEYWORDS: Identity, Postcolonial, Conflict, Religion, Hybrid.



INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is a nation where sectionalism and conflicts, in the form of ethnic, regional and religious differences, have continued to widen the crack in the superficial wall that was erected by the colonial system to keep the country intact as a post-colonial nation-state. The division and the dividing factors are becoming 'louder' than the paradoxical song of cohesion, which the 'nation' has so laboriously chanted. In the north of Nigeria, sectionalism and exclusionism have pervaded the social, political and economic lives of the people. Yet, in comparison to the literary representation of the post-colonial conflict situations, especially the Nigerian civil war as portrayed by writers of southern extraction (Chinua Achebe, Elechi Amadi, Flora Nwapa, Eddie Iroh, Isidore Okpewho, and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, among several others), not much has been written about the situation in the north. This might be so since Nigerians, for the most part, do not define themselves by a common national heritage. Ogundipe (2014) argues that Nigeria has no national literature that reflects and promotes a single identity of the nation. Nigerian Literature, therefore, reflects the true picture of the diversity and divisions that distinguish the country. He maintains that what Nigeria has is a collective body of the country's literary production.

Turning the spotlight on the prevailing northern Nigerian crisis has become imperative. Among the numerous perspectives that have been adopted by Nigerian writers in presenting the historical experience and the post-colonial conflicts in the country, writers of Northern origin have recently taken on the problems of ethnic and religious conflicts, which have besieged the region. Novels by northern authors about the experiences of the north have addressed issues of ethnic conflicts, religious riots, and the insurgency in the North East, North West and North Central; as well as the settler-indigene dichotomies in the North Central, among other problems associated with the post-colonial identity in Northern Nigeria.

Within the space of the two decades between Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Kano* of the 1960s, as portrayed in her novel *Half of a Yellow Sun*, to Sule's *Kano* of the 1980s in *Sterile Sky*, a deeper sense of separate identity from the rest of the country's other ethnic and religious groups has developed among the people of Kano. By the 1980s, the struggle for a primarily ethnic, and especially religious identity has led to an increase in violent conflicts in the city. It is worthy to note at this point that in Northern Nigeria, ethnicity and religion go hand-in-hand and can therefore not be evaluated entirely as separate notions. While some writers from the north, such as Ahmed Maiwada in his novel *Musdoki*, have addressed the misconception that the north is a monolithic entity, it remains a fact that there is a strong religious dimension to the northern identity. Therefore, while they are seen generally as the people of the "Hausa North" by the southern part of the country, the religious and ethnic differences that cause separation within the north continue to prevail. Sule's fictional account of the Kano crisis provides an example of the conflicts as they affect the Northern city of Kano. However, unlike some writers who have focused on the historical and sociopolitical implications of issues that have led up to the conflicts, Sule has focused more on how the conflicts have impacted the everyday, and especially, the socio-economic lives of ordinary citizens. Sule's contribution to the narrative on post-colonial conflicts has, however, provided some insights on the Nigerian post-colonial identity question.



THE POST-COLONIAL IDENTITY AND HYBRIDITY

The post-colonial discourse has continued to find application in literary studies as it combats the residual effects of colonialism in post-colonial societies. Tejumola Olaniyan (2007) cites Ngugi wa Thiong'o's description of the post-colonial condition as a "more dangerous cancer" than the colonial experience (639). In the 2010 Audrey Richard's Annual Lecture in African Studies, Achebe (2011) has also asserted that what is happening in Africa today can be traced back to colonial experiences, which have resulted in disjointed, inexplicable, tension-prone nation-states today. Ashcroft et al. (1994) describe the term as one which is now used to primarily examine the processes, effects of and reactions to colonialism from its onset to the present times.

Scholars of post-colonial African studies have attempted to answer the question of identity and the history of the colonized African people. The post-colonial identity is one that has been influenced by the history of colonialism. Theorists and scholars have given various perspectives on post-colonial identity. Edward Said (1993), for example, has rightly stated that whatever the colonial influence is in any society, existing cultural identities cannot be denied. Said however points out that today, no one is purely one thing if actual experience is to be considered in the definition of identity. Bhabha (1994) argued that cultures do not have fixed and unchangeable traits. Bhabha, through his concept of hybridity in post-colonial studies, has suggested a position of in-betweenness. Bhabha's argument is that a new alliance formulates itself when there is a new situation (Bhabha, 1990). Thus cultural differences among post-colonial people can be articulated in the hybridized space.

Expressing the popular view held by many Nigerian writers and critics, Okafor (2008) has identified the lack of national identity in Nigeria as a problem caused by the colonial administrative systems. In his view, nurturing and encouraging the nation to grow under separate identities did not make room for harmonious relationships – the South with its Western orientation while the orientation in the North was Islamic. In a similar observation, Wilfried Fueser (1986) described the politics of pre-independence Nigeria as one, which took on an ethnic complexion that can be paralleled to the colonial emphasis on tri-regional instead of national administration as formulated by the Richards Constitution of 1951 (1986). Achebe (1983) takes the blame further in *The Trouble with Nigeria*. He condemns the "pre-mature", "half-hearted", and "plain deceitful", "threatening gestures" that have been made against the word tribe (6). According to him, the word has continued to stay around since work has been provided for it to do; for instance, a Nigerian child is made to state his religion, sex, state of origin and tribe on an admission form. Merit is denied in favor of several partisan considerations (Achebe, 1983).

Indeed, the identity issues in *Sterile Sky* are major divisive, and by extension, conflict factors, which continue to widen the gulf between the northern Muslim and other Nigerians. The violence that rages in post-independent Nigeria, like that of India as portrayed in Salman Rushdie's novel, *Midnight Children*, is typical of a people struggling with postcolonial hybrid identity, which quickly gives way (if ever it was attained) to narrowed identities; the concept of nation gives way to ethnicity, religious beliefs as well as political convictions. It is obvious that, like the concept of unity described by Frantz Fanon (1980), the idea of unity only served the temporary function of shaking colonialism to its very foundation after which the idea crumbled in the struggle to occupy the posts vacated by the colonial masters. Fanon (1980) rightly predicted further that the fight that ensued will also lead to religious rivalry.



It is, however, important to observe that pre-colonial Islamic influence has positioned the Muslims in the North to retain an Islamic identity, considering Edward Said's argument on the role of actual experience in the definition of identity (Said, 1993). The contact with Islam in the North has given the northern Muslims an identity that is different from the post-colonial identity of other parts of the country. Among the Hausa – Fulani Muslims of Northern Nigeria, the ethnic identity has not only been totally integrated with religious identity, but is also on the verge of being completely submerged by it. The influence of Islam before colonialism in Northern Nigeria has resulted in what Bhabha (1990) has described in his interview with Rutherford as a new alliance, which has demanded the translation, rethinking and extension of principles. In other words, the Muslim identity has been formed and nurtured several years before contact with the West.

Islam has also influenced the contribution of northern Muslims to colonial discourse in literature. It is clear that, just as the deep-rooted Islamic-Arabic influence has strongly contributed to the shaping of the Northern Nigerian Muslim identity, Islamic influence has also contributed to the silence of the north in colonial discourse in mainstream literature of Nigeria. Shehu (2014) posits that West African Literature has privileged the colonial period which has inhibited the study of the significant impact of Islam on literary production in the north. She insists that it is important to question the gap and examine the critical silence on colonial influence in narratives that demonstrate that there are other cultural influences worth considering other than colonialism and Christianity in literature. Thus, when fiction, in this true and broad sense, is allowed to take root in the North, for the writer, the older and stronger influence, which is Islam, is bound to dominate.

In the same way that Islamic influence has contributed to the long silence of the North in colonial discourse in the mainstream literature of Nigeria, the deep-rooted Islamic – Arabic influence has strongly contributed to defining and shaping the Northern Nigeria Muslim hybrid identity. Christianity and colonialism, on the other hand, have influenced or redefined the identity of non-Muslims. The promotion of an Islamic – Arabic identity by Muslims in West Africa, and Northern Nigeria in particular is similar to the preference for an Arab identity in North Africa. According to Olusegun-Joseph (2012), “there is an enduring view by many North Africans that they belong to pan-Arabic confederacy rather than to the African Socio-ideological bloc” (p. 223). For example, the Northern Nigerian Muslims, just like Egypt, Libya and Sudan in North Africa, share a common ethnic, cultural, linguistic and Islamic identity that significantly distinguishes them from the rest of the people within their geopolitical location in Nigeria and Africa, respectively. The colonial administration had accepted the rejection of Western influence on the Hausa/Islamic cultures of the people. Gérard (2007) has noted generally that “the Muslim cultures of black Africa have shown uncommon resilience to the impact of Europe, presumably because they are proudly grounded in one of the great religions of the world” (p. 20). Thus, while the work of Christian missions gave an additional Christian identity to the African traditional religion, for non-Muslims, Fredrick Lugard's promise of support, protection and preservation of the native institutions of the Muslim emirates and religious non-interference and exclusion of Christian missions from the emirates kept the Islamic identity strong (Lipdo, 2015).

It is worthy to note at this point that in Northern Nigeria, ethnicity and religion go hand-in-hand. Many scholars from the North have attempted to counter the views that the North is a monolithic entity, often seen as the “Hausa North” by the Southern part of the country. Writers such as E. E. Sule have projected the religious dimensions to the Northern identity. In



spite of this conception of the Northern identity, the religious and ethnic differences that continue to cause separation within the north are fierce. Both Muslims and Christians of Northern Nigeria have interpreted history and their experiences differently.

DISCUSSION

Conflicts in Northern Nigeria and their causes have been reported in various fields of study. The recent literary outputs by writers such as E. E. Sule, Richard Ali, Dul Johnson, Abubakar Adam Ibrahim, Elnathan John and Edify Yakusak, among others, have taken the subject matter of the Northern Nigeria conflict to a deeper and more poignant dimension. Indeed these literary expressions prove that “imaginative identification is the opposite of indifference; it is human connectedness at its most intimate” (Achebe, 2007, p. 113). For this study, Sule’s *Sterile Sky* does not only provide the context required for a literary assessment of the Kano riots, but points to clear-cut examples of identity issues that are fundamental to a meaningful analysis and understanding of the situation.

The Questions of Post-colonial Identity in *Sterile Sky*

Sule E. Egya (2012) presents the problems that bedevil Nigerians living in the cosmopolitan city of Kano amidst ethnic and religious tensions. More than the socio-political cause or the implications of the conflicts, Sule’s focus is on the everyday lives of his characters, which reveals that ethnic background, and especially religious beliefs delineate the identity of the characters in the novel. It is this lack of a common national identity that triggers the tension and incessant violence in the city, thereby putting the question of cultural hybridity at bay.

From the very first page of Sule’s novel, the central issue in the story is presented. Kano is experiencing another religious violence as a reaction against the planned visit of the renowned German-American Christian evangelist, Reinhard Bonke for a crusade. A horrendous mood prevails throughout the novel, in the typical Northern Nigerian city, with its recurrent religious crises in which several people are massacred. The effect of the violence on the lives of the poor people is very strong. The people live in perpetual fear and a sense of insecurity. The non-Hausa settlers from different parts of Nigeria live mostly in Sabon Gari. Like Murtala’s family, after every crisis, the non-Muslim seek refuge in the Sabon Gari Divisional Police Station and remain there until calm returns to the city. Using Okwudiba Nnoli’s illustration, Amuta (1983) has traced the establishment of distinct residential areas for different ethnic groups in the various regions of the nation to emphasis on ethnic separateness in the new Nigerian nation-state. This is seen in the “Sabon Garis (home of aliens) in Northern Nigeria” and the “Sabos (Hausa-Fulani areas) in Southern towns” (87).

The North is made up of several ethnic groups; however people from this part of Nigeria are erroneously referred to as ‘Hausa’ by the southerners. When Odula, Murtala’s father tries to explain that his state of origin, Plateau, is North Central and not North, the DPO responds scornfully, “North is North, nothing like central nonsense. Plateau, Ha-wu-sa” (p. 220). Language is central to the identity of a people. Omobowale, as cited in Joseph (2015) has noted that “the centrality of diffusion and the consequent prominence of Hausa has given the language and culture a hegemonic character which at times silences the other languages and cultures” (p. 24). The DPO then sees to it that Odula is dismissed from the Police Force after



he fails to find the armed robber who has escaped under his custody. When Odula goes to beg the DCO to help him plead with the DPO, he is told that SP Ibekwe is adamant; “That’s the position he takes if the culprit is from the North” (p. 235).

It has been established thus far that in post-colonial Nigerian society, individuals, societies or groups possess anyone of an ethnic, religious or hybrid identity. There is no gainsaying to the fact that the preferred identity for the Northern Muslim is the religious identity. Religious identity manifests itself most strongly in confrontations with people of a different religion. In Northern Nigeria, the conflicts are usually between Muslims and Christians. *Sterile Sky* is concerned with the religious riots associated with the typical cosmopolitan but predominantly Muslim Northern cities, where most of the non-Muslims are from other parts of Nigeria. The identity issues in *Sterile Sky* are majorly divisive, and by extension, conflict factors, which continue to widen the gulf between the northern Muslim and other Nigerians, specifically those living in Kano. Sule’s novel focuses on the destructive power of nurturing a purely religious identity and sentimentalities. The ‘strangers’, who are already nurturing pre-existing post-colonial conflicts of identity, are caught in the clash of identity assertion that sums up the Kano violence.

Social integration and the attainment of national identity become even more difficult with memories of past ethnic and religious clashes. During a conversation in Murtala’s class, a student who had been injured in the fight, tells the others that her mother had told her that Muslims have killed Igbos before the civil war and that it was since then that “The North and the South started hating each other” (p. 42). When a student observes that the crisis is between Christians and Muslims, and not Igbos and Hausas, Millicent, Murtala’s classmate sums it up, “Most people from the North are Muslims and most people from the South are Christians” (p. 42). Ethnicity and religion therefore continue to define the identity of the individual Nigerian; and as revealed in *Sterile Sky*, the North is synonymous to Islam and the South to Christianity (Sule, 2012, pp. 42, 219 and 220).

The lack of integration transcends generations. When Murtala tells his primary school mate, Aminu that he has been admitted to Tony Cheta College, Aminu sneers at him and says the school is full of Nyamiris (Igbos) and Kafirs (non-muslims) (pp. 42-43). The establishment of schools such as Tony Cheta College can be linked intertextually to ethnic issues like the one that led to the establishment of the Igbo Grammar School by the Igbo people living in Kano in the 60s in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun*, when the Igbo children are refused admission into schools in Kano (p. 38). In the notebook in which Odula, Murtala’s father has been writing down the events that have led to his dismissal from the Police Force, the issues are further enunciated. SP Ibekwe, the DPO who fires Odula, is on a mission to strike back in quiet ways against the Northerners for killing his parents and two siblings in one of the Kano crises. In the novel, the origin of Kano violence is traced to the violence that preceded the civil war, “when the North and the South started hating each other” (p. 42). The ethnic and especially, religious identity, continue to widen the gulf between the Hausa Muslims of Kano and settlers in their midst since the days of the independence heroes to the post-civil war conflicts. In Sule’s novel, Ijaguwa, Murtala’s mother, desperately and repeatedly expresses her wish to leave Kano and return to her own village. The violence creates a rift between Murtala’s parents, which eventually drives his father into substance abuse and the desertion of his family.



Murtala, the protagonist and narrator, himself a victim, observes helplessly, as the violence takes its toll on his parents, siblings, neighbors and acquaintances. Under the weight of incessant religious violence in the city, Murtala's father, Odula, and his mother, Ijaguwa, are forced to take decisions that tear the family apart. With an ending that borders on hopelessness of the situation in a society that has become increasingly partisan and violent, the possibility of acquiring a national identity becomes more and more doubtful, if not bleak altogether. Therefore, Sule's novel does not only provide the context required for a literary assessment of the Kano riots, but it also points to clear-cut examples of identity issues that are fundamental to a meaningful analysis and understanding of the Northern Nigerian situation.

Interrogating Post-colonial Hybrid Identities and Worldviews in *Sterile Sky*

The Islamic identity is nurtured and fortified against external influences, which are perceived as threats to the pre-colonial Islamic identity of Northern Muslims, while the identities of the non-Muslims have been altered by colonial – Western influence. On the whole, the lack of a common national identity continues to trigger the tension and incessant violence portrayed in *Sterile Sky*, thereby putting the question of cultural hybridity at bay, no matter how long Muslims and Christians have co-existed in Kano.

Sterile Sky projects how the Hausa – Fulani – Arabic hybridized identity fosters an Islamic-Arab alliance, resulting in an international religious unity, in opposition to national unity. Religious identity impels the Kano Muslims to identify with world Islam and Islamic ideologies. As portrayed in the novel, the religious crises are also often inflamed by news of international conflicts between the West and Muslim Arab nations. These external wars usually translate into religious tensions in Northern Nigeria. Murtala has once seen a poster which depicts hostility between America's George Bush and Iraq's Saddam Hussein during the Gulf War. "In God We Trust" is written close to Bush's head and "Inshallah we shall win the war" is written near Hussein's head. The poster has multi-coloured figures of soldiers, armored tanks and machine guns, and there are mangled bodies of people in a flame at the bottom of the poster (p. 56). At another time, a Saddam poster celebrates his victory: "ALLAHU AKBAR; WE HAVE WON A JUST WAR" is written on the poster above Saddam's image (p. 159). These external events easily inflame crises and inspire a complete rejection of Western ideals or identity. This, by extension, means a rejection or hybridization of cultures – a rejection of an alliance with the West. It also implies a refusal to translate, rethink and extend principles as proposed by Bhabha (Rutherford, 1990), regardless of the colonial experience.

The Muslims characteristically express a totally Islamic worldview. An example is seen in the attitude of Hadiza, a Muslim woman who is severely burnt after being set ablaze by Christian youths in Sabon Gari. When Mama tells Hadiza that it is the killers' fault that she now looks horrible, Hadiza insists that "It's Allah's destiny" (p. 113). From the people's actions in defense of Islam, to their language of expression, the Northern Muslims exude a strong religious identity, an identity which they do anything to proclaim and defend. They consider every non-Hausa – Fulani, and especially non-Muslim, as "kafiri", whose presence and non-Islamic practices hinder the purely Islamic identity the people seek to promote. The first crisis in the novel, being one of several others, is a reaction against the planned visit of the renowned German-American Christian evangelist, Reinhard Bonke for a crusade. From the very first page of the novel, the horrendous mood, which prevails throughout the novel,



soars on the wings of religious assertiveness in the typical Northern Nigerian city, with its recurrent religious crises in which several people are massacred. People who have lived together for several years easily take up arms against their neighbors. Murtala's neighbor, Umar and his mother think that it is better to give up a meal than miss out in the war against "Kafiris" (pp. 6 and 7).

In the second account of violence narrated by Uncle Tony, Murtala's maternal uncle, the Muslim students of the university have risen up in defense of Islam, to punish two students for defiling the holy campus with sins of the flesh (p. 163). The two students, a Yoruba boy and a Calabar girl, have broken the rule, which prohibits male or female students from entering each other's hostels. The two students are killed; their bodies are mangled and publicly displayed to serve as an example to other students. The action leads to protest and retaliation by non-muslim students, who kill four Muslim students, two males and two females, in ways similar to how the other two students were killed. The President of the Muslim Students' Association declares a Jihad (pp. 161 – 153). The university is shut down following the violence that ensues.

The third religious crisis in the narrative begins with the allegation that a woman has torn out a sheet of paper from the Koran to clean her child's backside. The woman is beheaded and her head is impaled on a stick (p. 256). Riot breaks out and non-Muslims seek refuge in Sabon Gari Police Station as usual. The three instances of violence recorded in the narration have their root causes in identity conflicts that stem from perceived disregard for the Islamic identity which the city struggles to uphold against the invasion of strange cultures. In Sule's fictional account of the Kano conflicts in *Sterile Sky*, the clash of worldviews, which is the root of post-colonial conflict in Northern Nigeria, complicates the moral question that simply seeks to identify who is right and who is wrong.

There is an irony in the Muslim – Christian conflict however, as portrayed in *Sterile Sky*. While the conflict is mostly tagged as Muslims versus Christians, in reality most of the people on the Christian side of the divide do not hold unto a purely Christian identity and often do not share an identity. As seen in the earlier evaluation of Mama, Murtala's mother's conflict of identity, and for most of the non-Muslims in the novel, their traditions and their contact with Western culture and religion have simply produced a hybrid identity, which is neither purely traditional African nor Western Christian.

In the novel, Odula, Murtala's father who suffers the agony of religious violence with his family for being a Christian rarely goes to church, and whenever he does, he returns home with a litany of criticisms (p. 54). When his wife reports that their daughter Imatum no longer attends the same church with her and their other children, he responds, "I don't interfere in such trivial issues as church problems" (p. 143). Even his son, Murtala loses interest in God, church or prayer (pp. 40, 221 and 223). After leaving his family and starting a different life, Odula remains poor, hopeless and helpless but becomes more philosophical, and religion, especially God, now totally has no place in his worldview.

However, by the time Odula is re-introduced in *Makwala* (Sule, 2018), a sequel to *Sterile Sky*, it is obvious that Odula has not entirely stopped believing in the powers of a supernatural being. He screams for help as he single-handedly takes the difficult delivery of his son by the mad woman he impregnated; "God, why don't you come to our aid? How could you be so



wicked! Help! Help! Help! Help! Is there any person or god who can help?! ...(p.26). By the end of the novel though, Odule once again expresses a total loss of faith.

Sterile Sky also presents the humanist and African traditional views of Omodiale, Murtala's neighbor, and Uncle Tony, Murtala's uncle. Both Omodiale and Tony, who have escaped death for being "Kafiris", during the Muslim – Christian crises, cynically present rationalist views on the killings and other issues of life. They dismiss the significance of God or religion in human affairs. Omodiale has faith in nothing. He smokes marijuana and sleeps with different girls, including his neighbors' daughters, Fatima and Murtala's sister, Imatum. Omodiale blames the killings on religious instructions. He relates the conflicts to the history of humans and traces the history of human beings killing one another to religious injunctions and holy instructions, as well as man's desire to dominate others. Omodiale condemns the violence on which primitive societies are founded; religious accounts of killings that were based on holy instructions; empires' conquests, the world wars, the Holocaust, the Great Purge of the Soviet Union, slave trade, colonialism, the brutality of apartheid in South Africa; and racial violence across the world (p. 91). Omodiale places the blame on religion, especially Christianity and Islam. Sule presents a parallel, albeit, minor character to Omodiale in his novel,

When Uncle Tony refuses to go to church during a visit to Murtala's house, Murtala's mother questions his action and he simply says, "Don't worry about me, Big Sister. Christianity and Islam are foreign religions that don't merit my attention anymore...The ancestral way our fathers worshiped God is the best way for me" (p. 40). In response to her question on whether he still believes in Jesus, he says "Oh yes, I know he existed in history.... Jesus Christ was a great humanist of his time. Every history has its great humanists" (p. 40). The various examples of identity conflicts, especially among non-Muslims have located them in positions of in-between identities. Mama's religious worldview, as portrayed in the novel, is however not purely Christian. Mama calls on both God Almighty (p. 83) and her ancestors (p. 84). The syncretism of religions exhibited by Murtala's mother is mostly associated with non-Muslims who have ended up with "...a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 4). It is worthy to note that Mama reads her Bible and sings Christian songs whenever she is angry with her family (pp. 126, 153 and 218). Early morning family prayer becomes serious only when her husband deserts the family and on some occasions, Mama questions God for their plight, as she desperately seeks to return to her village. Religion becomes relevant to the extent that it serves Mama's purpose. In a similar manner, Baba Fatima, Murtala's neighbor, does not hesitate to convert to Islam in order to escape death during one of the Kano riots. He hopes to go back to Christianity when he retires to his village (p. 87).

The Northern Nigerian situation can be captured in Stuart Hall's evaluation. Hall (1994) asserts that the intervention of history is what determined what we have become. To him, cultural identity is both a matter of 'becoming', as well as of 'being'. To Hall (1994), identity is whatever name is given to the different ways the narratives of the past position a people or the ways they choose to position themselves (p. 394); identity is thus, "a positioning" and not "an essence" (p. 395).

Sule challenges the 'positioning' in Nigerian communities through his portrayal of the relationship between Ola's parents in *Sterile Sky*. Ola's father is a Christian and Yoruba, while his mother is a Muslim Hausa woman. Murtala wonders how a Christian and a Muslim



who “always hate each other” can be married when his own mother does not even like them to have Muslim friends (p. 73). It is noteworthy that through the marriage of the wealthy and enlightened parents of Murtala’s friend, Ola, Sule shows the possibility of harmonious coexistence by the two religions. Sule takes a stand with Bhabha, who questions established categorisation of culture and identity and argues that a new alliance formulates itself when there is a new situation, which may demand that principles should be translated, rethought and extended (Rutherford, 1990). As the theorist to first use the term hybridity in post-colonial studies, Bhabha (1994) has argued that while hybridity “is not a third term that resolves the tension between two cultures ...it is always the split screen of the self and its doubling, the hybrid (p. 120).

CONCLUSION

As a subject matter that has mostly been the preoccupation of writers from the Southern part of the country (especially the Nigeria-Biafra Civil War), post-colonial conflict, as treated in *Sterile Sky* provides a much needed insight on the different dimensions to the conflicts. While existing literary works have contributed much in presenting and analyzing writers’ concerns on the Northern Nigerian situation, the ethnic and religious identity questions in literary works by contemporary writers such as E. E. Sule provides significant perspectives and further understanding on the postcolonial issue. Sule’s novel focuses on the destructive power of nurturing religious identity and sentimentalities. With an ending that borders on hopelessness of the situation in a society that has become increasingly partisan and violent, the possibility of acquiring a national identity becomes increasingly doubtful.

People have continued to define themselves by increasingly different identities that make living cohesively in the culturally heterogeneous society difficult. Earlier works have simply viewed issues along the North/South divide. It is however clear that, ethnic origin and especially religion, determines a person’s identity within the Northern states, resulting in the frequent violent conflicts in the region. The problems identified in this study do not merely remain as answers to the questions on identity and conflicts in Northern Nigeria. They reveal that the solution to the problems of lack of national identity must be pursued deliberately. The solution to fostering a national identity does not primarily lie with the individual Nigerian who are still grappling with the concept of nationhood in their ethnic and religious enclaves. The task of making national policies that will foster oneness lies with those who have taken on the responsibility of building the nation. When the solutions continue to be sought only in helpless supplications of the suffering Nigerian people, which affirm their religious positioning, despair pervades; with bloodshed and fumes from the charred carcass of nationhood beneath the sterile sky.



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**A STYLISTIC APPRAISAL OF SELECTED POEMS IN SOLA BABATUNDE'S
THE VALLEY OF VISION**

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ABSTRACT: *Creative writers, poets, novelists and playwrights deploy linguistic forms that characterise literariness. More specifically, the peculiarity of language use in the poetic genre proves its suitability for stylistic appraisal. We analyse selected poems in Sola Babatunde's The Valley of Vision from a stylistic point of view to examine how the sociocultural standpoint of the poet is reflected in the poems. Six poems were selected purposively from the poetic collection and analysed using the conceptual bases of rhetoric and lexico-semantic variation. From the data analysis, it was found that elements such as figures of speech, analogy, transfer, idiom and loan words are employed in the text to unveil the linguistic background of the poet, unveil the thematic preoccupation of the poem, stir readers' emotion and create mental images in the minds of the readers. In conclusion, the use of stylistics as the conceptual basis for the study has revealed the reasons behind the choices made by the poet to attract readers' attention by making his poems accessible. The use of the tools of rhetoric and lexico-semantics has also revealed some facts about African poetry to facilitate readers' sense of interpretation.*

KEYWORDS: Stylistics; African Poetry; Rhetoric, Lexico-Semantics; Style Variation



INTRODUCTION

The essence of language cannot be overemphasised, as the removal of a language from a human based community will throw the society into chaos and pandemonium. Regarding this, Chomsky (1957, p. 196) states that if one has not developed language, one simply does not have access to the most of human experience, and lack of human experience results in the inability to do things properly.

Poetry is a literary genre which deploys language to communicate human experiences in the world. Since language is a medium of thought, a means of expressing our intentions and emotions, poetry uses a specialised language to communicate these elements of the human experience to the world. Poetry is an expression of thoughts through deliberate violations of lexico-grammatical rules which do not only foreground the poem as a medium but also highlight the poet's purpose. To discuss the language of poetry is to reveal those stylistic features which conform to the norms of language and those features which are deviations from these norms. Poets sometimes manipulate language to suit the communicative purposes based on the category of the audience for which the piece is meant, or sometimes, to reflect their linguistic identities. All these encapsulate the styles of the poets. Hence, this study examines Sola Babatunde's *The Valley of Vision* from a linguistic stylistic perspective. The reader expects to learn about Sola Babatunde and his literary incursions from this.

The Concepts of Stylistics and Rhetoric

Among the notable scholars who have contributed to the description of the field of stylistics, its analytical tools and tenets are Crystal and Davy (1969) and Turner (1973). Crystal and Davy (1969, p. 8) view stylistic analysis and its description as an art of clarifying linguistic problems of interpretation. Turner (1973, p. 7) on the other hand defines stylistics as a linguistic approach which concentrates on variation in the use of language often, but not exclusively, with special attention to the conscious and complex uses of language in literature. Turner's definition complements that of Crystal and Davy. Their view on stylistics is that it provides solutions to the problem of complexity in the use of language, especially in literary text through analysis and interpretation.

Also, Strazny (2004) opines that stylistics is the study of style in spoken and written text. Style is a consistent occurrence in the text of certain items and structures or types of items and structures among those offered by language as a whole. To him, a full stylistic analysis of a given piece, spoken or written, would describe the text at all traditional levels of linguistic description, i.e., sound (phonology), form (morphology/lexis), syntax and meaning (semantics). This view corroborates Simpson's (2004) claim that stylistic analysis is a method of textual interpretation in which there is primacy in language as a function of text in the context of time, place, psychology and culture. Simpson's description of stylistics above relates to the concept and domain of rhetoric. Gobir (2017) claims that stylistics and rhetoric are inseparable phenomena since a branch of rhetoric, which is Elocutio, serves as the basis for stylistics. In simple terms, Elocutio constitutes tropes and schemes deployed as tools of stylistic orientation. Gobir's description corroborates Wales' (2001, p. 372) exposition regarding the evolution of stylistics from rhetoric. Wales' submission transcends the historical foundation of rhetoric; her discussion extends to the description of the relationship between stylistics and rhetoric. She opines that the scope of rhetoric covers the display and exhibition of public speaking skills towards appealing to listeners' emotive senses.



Not only Elocutio, the Aristotelian tenets of rhetoric—which include Logos (tools that are symbols of fact and figures for justification of claims), Ethos (tools that signify and give credibility to claims), and Pathos (tools which are symbols of appeal and empathy)—constitute elements that are capable of persuasive manifestation by virtue of their stylistic imports (Higgins & Walkers, 2012). These tools do not only perform persuasive roles, but they contribute to style variation in all kinds of texts, especially the spoken texts.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework for this study is Adegbija's (1989) typology of Lexico-Semantic Variation of Nigerian English. Lexico-semantics as a linguistic concept constitutes two distinct but interrelated words: 'lexis' and 'semantics'. Lexis is the vocabulary of language which consists of all the words in a language: all word forms, having meaning or grammatical function. Semantics on the other hand, "is the study of the conventional meaning of words, phrases and sentences in a language" (Yule, 2002, p. 114). Contextualising the concept of lexico-semantics, Alo (2004) states that the language (words) spoken in a community mirrors the life of the people of the community. The vocabulary more or less faithfully reflects the culture whose purpose it serves (p. 74).

In relation to the submission above, five stages in relation to language development cycle were identified by Schneider (2007, p. 56). These are foundation, exonormative stabilisation, nativisation, endonormative and differentiation. This study is interested in the third stage in the developmental process given by Schneider. As part of the differentiation process to the nativisation of English in the Nigerian environment, the meaning of some words has changed. Some of the words are used in a new sense and as new words are created in likeness of the word formation process of English.

Adegbija (1989, p. 171) identifies five major classes of lexico-semantic variation in Nigerian English as 'transfer', 'analogy', 'acronyms', 'semantic shift or extension' and 'coinages' or neologism. This typology alongside the rhetorical features of stylistics is analysed in the section on analysis.

METHODOLOGY

The data for this study constitute selected poems in Sola Babatunde's *The Valley of Vision* for data presentation and analysis. Six poems were selected purposively based on their thematic preoccupation from the poetic collection and analysed using the conceptual bases of rhetoric and lexico-semantic variation as features of stylistic analysis. Features of lexico-semantic variations by Adegbija (1989)—which include transfer of mother tongue (idioms and loanword), analogy, acronymy, coinages, semantic shift or extension, etc.—are identified and analysed in the poetic-texts.

Data Analysis

This section presents the lexico-semantic and rhetorical analysis of the selected poems in Sola Babatunde's *The Valley of Vision*. The data analysed in this section are examined on the basis



of the tools of stylistic significance. It is expected that these tools of *stylistic analysis* will considerably reveal the styles in the poem. The analyses of the poems are presented one after the other.

Datum One: *The Valley of Vision*

Houses are felled
to fortify the stronghold
and the earth is laid waste.
the hands that toiled are cut
and the branches are severed from the root
the birds are perched flew
the branches withered
and the earth is laid waist.
the earth is laid waist
for stomachs rumble like festival drums
the suppliant outstretched hands grow numb
and peep at the over-fed pockets and bellies,
peep behind the masked faces.
the earth is laid waste
spurious sacrifices float
for rumbling stomachs must not wither
and the parched throats must be assuaged.
the stronghold is perforated and plundered
and the guards feign ignorance;
the neglected hands sustaining the guards withdraw:
and the earth is purged:
Houses are felled
to fortify the stronghold
and the earth is laid waste.



Lexico-Semantics Analysis

The poet deploys lexical items to make meaning. An analysis of the lexical structure of his writing is a necessary step toward explicating his message or ideas.

Idiom

This is derived from the indigenous language of a community. It is used in a special way to convey meaning; it also deals with a peculiar language use. Illustrations abound as follows:

“the hands that toiled are cut”

“the stronghold is perforated and plundered”

“the earth is purged”

Rhetorical Analysis

Hyperbole

Hyperbole simply describes the use of exaggerated words and expressions. For example,

‘... outstretched hands grow numb,’

In the illustration above, the ‘hand’ that is ‘outstretched’ is overemphasised to stir the readers’ emotions.

Synecdoche

Synecdoche employs a part of the referent to stand for the whole, e.g.,

‘... outstretched hands grow numb,’ ‘for rumbling stomach must not wither.’

‘Stomach rumbles like festival drums.’

In the example above, ‘stomach’ and ‘hands’ are used in a symbolic manner. The words represent the complete individual. In the case of “stomach”, the poet refers to the bourgeois in the society while ‘hands’ represent the masses. These two words are used as a caricature of stratification in society.

Simile

Simile describes an indirect comparison of one thing to another. An illustration in the poem is

“...stomachs rumbles like festival drums.” Simile is used in the illustration above to generate humor.



Personification

Personification is an act of giving inanimate objects human qualities. In the poem, the following examples abound:

“... branches are served from the root.”

“... and peep at the over-fed pockets and bellies.”

“... the neglected hands sustaining the guards withdraw....”

Inanimate entities that are personified in the illustrations above include ‘branches’, ‘pocket’, ‘bellies’, and ‘hands’. Personification in the illustrations are issues as means of stirring the emotion of the readers, for the purpose of creating humour.

Datum Two: PSALM ONE

I am the *gbedu* tree

I can defy the billows of your storm.

I am the banana tree

I can parade my fresh plumpness

In the front of the carver.

I am the calabash

I won't pay homage at the bed of your sea.

I am not the reed

Tossed by the whims of your tide.

I am not the chameleon

That walks the earth so gingerly

And pleases them all with its colour.

I am the elephant

The grass that falls under my feet

Shall feel the weight of the forest mountain

I am the palm tree

I grow steadily to caress the clouds,

To defy your terrestrial dwarfing roof.



Lexico-Semantic Analysis

Loan Word

Loan word is a means of borrowing a word or words from the mother tongue (L1) to English or a second language. An illustration that abounds in the text is exemplified as follows:

“I am the *gbedu* tree.”

The word, ‘*gbedu*’, emanates from the name of a tree, ‘*gbedu*’, which describes a tree known as ‘teak’ with high social and economic values such as transportation, building, production of furniture, and so on. The use of the loan word, which is of Yoruba origin, is to epitomise strength.

Transfer of Mother Tongue

Transfer of mother tongue is a direct transfer of meaning from the immediate language (mother tongue) to the second language (English). Illustrations are cited as follows:

“I am the *gbedu* tree.”

“I am the banana tree.”

“I can parade my fresh plumpness...”

In the examples above, the sentences are direct translations of the mother tongue to the English language. The implication of these illustrations is to simplify the language of the poem for a better understanding of the poet’s message. Also, it is used to reflect the sociolinguistic background of the poet as a second language speaker of English language.

Rhetorical Analysis

Metaphor

Metaphor is a means of comparing one thing to another in a direct form. It usually compares two entities: the target and source domain. An example of metaphor in the poem is cited below:

“I am the *gbedu* tree.”

“I am the elephant.”

“I am the banana tree.”

In the poetic illustrations above, the target is the poet, which is represented with the lexis, ‘I’, while the sources for which attributes are used to represent the poet are ‘*gbedu*’, ‘Elephant’ and ‘banana’. The poet uses the first two words which depict strength, and the last one, which depicts the freshness of the poet.



Hyperbole

“I am the Elephant.

The grass that falls under my feet shall feel the weight of the forest mountain.”

The overemphasised ‘weight’ of ‘the elephant’ in the illustration above is not only for the purpose of creating humour or stirring the readers’ emotions; the use of hyperbole in the text simply explains the might of the poet compared to that of an elephant.

Datum Three: THIS DARK NIGHT (*ForThe Discourse at the Border*)

It is midnight

The enveloping darkness beclouds this terrain

Even to the accustomed feet

Walking the night is breath-taking

Ile to t oju eni su

Ma ma ti nderu bani o

Onile semi pele alejo mbo

Okunkun ko meni owo

In this palpable darkness

The familiar refrain is “*Iwo tani?*”

Night fall becomes the cloak for the night urchins

To hawl immodesty and deposit emptiness

On every unsuspecting door steep

Ile to t oju eni su

Ma ma ti nderu bani o

It is night fall

The erudite minstrel on our harried tower

Pawns the starved lectern



For a lousy rostrum

And in our syllabi of mutations

Electioneering gimmicks and theorems

Rank high at informed gatherings:

Eyete flies on in our forest of marionettes

As the hawk becomes the watch-dog for the brood

In this chocking darkness

We only mutate on political permutations

On our drained tower

The owl mans the gate at our clan's feast

The raven supplies the immaculate *aso-ebi*

As the vulture renders the melody

For our race' dance of miss-fortune.

Ile to t oju eni su

It is a long night

And in the long night of walk

The unseeing eyes recede in their sockets

At the frightening sights on our ambushed terrain

War cries resound in frightening and guttural tones

In the masquerading darkness

As a marauders gamble

With the sign posts of our legacy

In the harried night rest

The mind becomes a bee-hive!



Will there be a new dawn
When mystical beasts drown the long night
With shrill gender-less notes
In a self- annihilating syndrome
Of the sufferhead?

BUT the thickest night is always nearest to day.

There must be a new dawn
On the wheels of progress
To banish this long night of insanity.

Lexico-Semantic Analysis

Analogy

Analogy is described as an influence in word formation and a corrupter of idiom. Illustrations of analogy that abound in the data include:

“Sufferhead”

“*Aso-ebi*”

“night rest”

“unseen eyes”

The illustrations above exemplify the expressions and words used as analogy for the description of specific situations. ‘Sufferhead’ depicts oppression, ‘Aso-ebi’ describes the uniformity in terms of background, culture and history, ‘night-rest’ explains a period of relaxation after a day full of activities, and “unseen eyes” describes supernatural beings. All of these are specially created words employed for achieving stylistic effect through formation of words.

Loan Word

Illustrations of loan words in the poem are exemplified thus:

“*Aso-ebi*” (a uniform dress or dress code that is traditionally worn by the Yoruba or some African cultures as an indication of culture and solidarity during ceremony and festival period), and

“*Eyeye*” (a kind of bird also regarded as dove or pigeon).



The two words illustrated above are of Yoruba linguistic orientation. The borrowed words are used to achieve linguistic variation and also reflect the linguistic background of the poet.

Rhetorical Analysis

Hyperbole

Hyperbole in the poem under investigation is exemplified as follows:

“In this choking darkness...

...The owl mans the gate at our clan’s feast...

As the vulture renders the melody

the mind becomes a bee-hive.”

On a basic level, the attribute ‘choking’ is bestowed on ‘darkness’, ‘manning of the gate’ for the ‘owl’, ‘rendition’ for ‘vulture’, and the ‘mind’ having the might of transformation. The essence of these usages is to create humour, and pass a serious message in a less serious manner by the poet.

Personification

Personification is an important rhetorical tool that abounds in the poem under consideration.

Examples include:

“The owl mans the gate at our clan’s feast...

As the vulture renders the melody

“war cries...”

In the foregoing illustrations, ‘owl’, ‘vulture’ and ‘war’ are given the attributes of human beings—“manning of gates”, singing, and crying to stir the emotions of the listeners and create a humous atmosphere amidst tension.

Synecdoche

An illustration of synecdoche is evident and prevalent in the lines of the poem investigated in this study. For example,

“... Even to the accustomed feet.”

“The unseeing eyes recede in their sockets.”

‘Eyes’ and ‘feet’ are characteristics of humans. In the lines of the poem, however, two categories of people are identified. ‘Feet’ refers to the first category of people, who are different from the ones represented with the ‘eyes’. Synecdoche is used to pass symbolic messages to readers.



Datum Four: IF A MAN DIES (*Dedicated to the memory of Fadoju and Mogaji*)

The fattened cow
Tells the long tale
Of a sumptuous dish
With its discarded bones
Condolences.

The glamorous petals of nature
Become laudable sacrifices

On the amorous altars
Of violent lovers,
Condolences.

If a man dies
Does he live again?

The straight and robust *Iroko*
Seldom ages in the forest
Neither does the luxuriant grass
Escape the graze of a famished cattle,
Condolences

The bitter-leaf scarcely sees
The defacing mandibles of insects

But the sweet potato
Must always host scavengers,
Condolences.

The salutary taste of honey
Soon fades on the tongue
But bitterness lingers
In the dark corners of the mouth,



Condolences.

If a man dies

Doesn't ne live again?

For

the decimated flesh witnesses

corruption

a processing into the primordial

loam

a mere dust

if a man dies,

he lives in dreams and nightmares

no more the reassuring breath

and the soothing caress;

not again the seeming immortal

presence.

If a man dies

Doesn't ne live again?

He lives in the dreaded transition

The spirt to the spiritual

The terrestrial to the celestial

He lives in the cycle of temporality

Leaving his kins to harvest the

fruits

Of his labour here.



Lexico-Semantic Analysis

Analogy

Analogy is characteristic of the poem under study and illustrations of analogy in the poem are cited as follows:

“The bitter-leaf scarcely sees the defacing mandibles of insects

But the sweet potatoes must always host scavengers....”

In the examples cited above, the instance and attributes of bitter-leaf and sweet potatoes are used as illustrations to explain the phenomenon at hand. Analogy is employed in the poem stylistically for effects.

Loan Word

The only loan word, which abounds in the poem is “*Iroko*”. The word is a Yoruba word which literally describes a tropical African tree regarded as a teak substitute. In the poem, the *Iroko tree* is alluded to pass a specific message across to the readers. In the poem, the inevitability of death is emphasised using the strength and long existence of the tree as justification. Despite all these attributes, the tree wanes with time.

Rhetorical Analysis

Hyperbole

“The fattened cow
Tells the long tale
Of a sumptuous dish...”

In the lines above, the use of hyperbole is to downplay the seriousness of the message being passed across to readers of the poem. Though humorous, the ‘cow’ which ended up as a sacrificial lamb emphasises the vanity of life and indispensability of death.

Personification

‘The bitter-leaf scarcely sees’
The defacing mandibles of insects...’

In the illustrations above, bitter-leaf is given the attribute of human being, which is the ability to ‘see’. Even though insects use the bitter-leaf as a means of sustenance, its strength of sight, which is bestowed upon it by the poet, is a means of achieving language variation in the poem.

Metaphor

In an attempt to describe and emphasise the vanity of life, the poet refers to man as ‘a mere dust.’ The entire text of the poem is metaphorical in nature; the lines are a direct comparison



of man and what is left of man after he dies. The use of metaphor by the poet is a means of creating mental images in the minds of the readers.

Datum Five: BYGONES

Let

Time's ceaseless motions

Heal the red scars

Of wounds inflected

By

Yesterday's blind passions

Erupting from ignorant hatred

Gone

Should be violent reprisals

Of calumnious campaigns

Be

Of immutable resolve

To rid our festering sores

Of all septic spots

By

Expunging cutthroat

Like an aching tooth,

From our troubled polity

Gone

Should be the ashes

That bequeathed deceitful smiles

Of contentment-fire flies

In our blinded view-

During yesterday's blaze



That ravaged this terrain.

So let bygones

Sprout a new dawn

From the pitfalls of yesterday

Of the gone by dawn

Let the rising sun

Dry our purple tears

As it sucks the dew

On the chaste leaves,

Opening our informed view

To the coming spring

1991

Lexico-Semantic Analysis

Analogy and Transfer

"...By yesterday's blind passion

...That bequeathed **deceitful smiles**...

In our blinded view dry our **purple tears**"

"Expunging cutthroat

like an aching tooth"

In the illustrations above, there are instances of analogy and transfer. "Deceitful smiles" and "purple tears" are both elements of transfer and analogy. This indicates that the poet uses a direct L1 translation technique for the description of the series of events in the poem to drive home his point, to make the poem easy to interpret. The 'smile' is not ordinary, hence the use of the adjective, 'deceitful' for adequate and precise description. The same is applicable to the 'tears' which are 'purple'. The colourful tears simply depicts deceit.

Rhetorical Analysis

Simile

In the poem direct comparison is made between two things or words, or words of unlike nature. Simile, as used in the illustration below, is used for achieving clarity of expression and meaning. The comparison in the illustration is made through the use of 'like'.



“Expunging cutthroat like an aching tooth.”

Personification

“That bequeathed deceitful smiles....

Yesterday's blind passion”

“Let

Time’s ceaseless motions,

Heal the red scars...”

In the poetic illustration above, ‘smiles’, ‘passion’, ‘time’ and ‘scars’ are personified through the endowment of the attributes of the animate entities, which are ‘bequeath’, ‘blindness’, mobility (‘motion’), and ‘healing’. The significance of personification in the poem is to stir readers’ emotion in a humorous manner.

Datum Six: SUPPLICATION

O Agelee Rock, implant me in your love

Let eternal sinews engraft my heart to yours.

Steel my heart against snaring wolves

That I might not be crushed by envious canine.

Break my dam against the ebbing floods

Pushing from the slit-arteries of time’s ceaseless flow.

Shield my lily-white robe from being soiled

Walking along their streets seething with runnels of slime.

Guide me against elephants of concern

That my budding spores may not see sad fruition in their
trod.

O Rock of offence, root my feet in your firm grip

That I might not be tempest tossed.

Let my banana stem flaunt its fleshy pumpness before
their carver.



And my *gbedu* be firmly rooted against their cyclone

Tutor me in your legend to over-flow

That I might perpetually proclaim your might.

Amen.

Lexico-Semantics

Transfer of Mother Tongue

The illustration of transfer of mother-tongue in the poem as exemplified below depicts the direct arrangement of lexical items in a manner that represents and conveys messages directly as it appears in the poet's L1.

"O Ageless Rock, implant me in your love"

"That I might perpetually proclaim your might"

"Amen."

The use of transfer in the lines above is a form of apostrophe, an ode to an entity, which metaphorically symbolises the superordinate being, God. The transfer is used in a humorous manner to communicate the poet's message in a less serious manner.

Rhetorical Analysis

Metaphor

Metaphorical expressions are presented in this poem through the use of an apostrophe. In the illustrations below, the supernatural being, creature of the universe, God, is described using the symbol of the 'rock'. The word is repeated twice throughout the poem. A rock is unshakable and immobile; this depicts the might of God as being untouchable and ever-living/immortal, hence, the choice of ageless.

"O Ageless rock"

"O Rock of offence"

Personification

The inanimate object which is invested with human qualities in the poetic extract below is the 'rock'. The 'rock' is given attributes which include the ability to 'love', and the ability to make things possible, such as the ability to "Let eternal sinews engraft my heart to yours."

"O Ageless rock, implant me in your love."

"...Let eternal sinews engraft my heart to yours."



The use of personification is to achieve language variation and create words of strong lexical qualities.

DISCUSSIONS AND FINDINGS

In terms of meaning explication, the rhetorical devices as well as lexico-semantic features—such as figures of speech, analogy, transfer, idiom, loan words and so on—are employed to unveil the thematic preoccupation of the text. The poet made extensive use of metaphors like ‘gbedu’, ‘banana tree’, ‘elephant’, ‘calabash’ and so on, to depict strength, ability, freshness and so on. He compares himself with great things of life; not even the socio-political structure of the society can hinder his success, growth, physically or financially because he is firmly rooted by the spirit of God. Also, metaphors such as the comparison of the supreme being, God, with the rock depicts strength and immortality.

More specifically, synecdoche, idiom and analogy are used in the poem to create mental images in the minds of the readers, personification, metaphor and hyperbole are used in the poem to stir readers’ emotions, create a sense of humour and for the presentation and conveyance of serious messages in less serious manners. Loan words and transfer are especially used to display the linguistic background of the poet as a second language speaker of English, and also, to make the poem easier to understand by potential readers.

CONCLUSION

This study centers on the examination of selected poems in Sola Babatunde’s poetic collection, *The Valley of Vision*, from a stylistic perspective. More specifically, the tools of rhetoric and lexico-semantic features of stylistics are used to interrogate the text under investigation. The use of the rhetorical tools, as well as the identified lexico-semantic tools of Adegbija (1986) in his classification, has helped to demystify the myth behind specific styles and linguistic choices of the poet. Not only this, the use of the stylistic tools of rhetoric and lexico-semantic orientations aid meaning explications, as understanding the underlying and inherent meanings of poetic lines require the understanding of specific linguistic attributes of the poet and the context of the text.

The use of stylistics as the conceptual basis for this study has made this possible.

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NATURE AND CULTURE: A COMPARATIVE READING OF SELECTED CARIBBEAN NOVELS

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ABSTRACT: *This article titled 'Nature and Culture: A Comparative Reading of Selected Caribbean Novels' examines the depiction of nature in relation to human culture in Michael Anthony's *The Year in San Fernando* (1965), Herbert De Lisser's *Jane's Career* (1972), Earl Lovelace's *The Dragon Can't Dance* (1979) and Rene Maran's *Batouala* (1922) to reveal areas where they show sameness in their attempts to evoke human culture with the undercurrent connectedness to nature. The research deploys the insights and poetics of Ecocriticism to the evaluation of the selected texts to demonstrate their signification of the interactivity of nature and culture in their interdependence and mutual constitutiveness in the Caribbean ecosystem. The involvement of man in the exploitation of nature and the effect that it has on the social texture of society is also part of the focus of this paper. The study is situated in the second wave of the literary development of the field, where the purview of Ecocriticism locates vestiges of nature in urban areas. It thus makes for the possibility of analysing works that are not necessarily interested in nature, since the selected texts had been written before the evolvement of Ecocriticism to examine nature-oriented works. In a careful survey of the Caribbean literary works that have been subjected to a comparative lens, the selected texts are found not to have been given nature-oriented attention in a combined form as done in this research. The texts argue that there is a confluence of environment and miscegenation, slavery, identity formation, etc in the understanding of Caribbean literature. This paper posits that writers should reinvent portraying nature, not as a framing device for human culture. This would serve as a stimulus for reorganising Caribbean political thought.*

KEYWORDS: Ecocriticism, Miscegenation, Nature, Culture, Environment



INTRODUCTION

This paper is a comparative analysis of the representation of nature concerning human existence in selected Caribbean novels. The research is inspired by the fact that previous studies of the selected novels have not been given comparative interest to the implication of nature on human culture, in their attempt to create ecological consciousness. The research is also prompted by the assumption that excessive use of science and technology to meet human needs has caused serious destruction to the natural world. From his ecological law of optimum, Dansereau (as cited in Phil-Eze, 2009) gives credence to the assumption: 'no species encounters in any given habitat (environment) the optimum condition for all its functions' (p.390). Man attempts to modify his environment to satisfy his needs and desires. In doing this, the ecological balance is affected, thus causing disequilibrium in the natural world.

Analytical Tool

Several definitions have been given of Ecocriticism, as many scholars have attempted to describe it. From the point of view of Slovic (as cited in Obakachi, Abdulmalik and Aliyu, 2021), it is the 'study of explicitly environmental texts from any scholarly approach, or conversely, the human-nature relationships in any text, even texts that seem, at first glance, oblivious of the non-human world' (p. 74). Ecocriticism is a literary theory that takes 'an earth-centred approach to the study of texts' (Gerrad, 2004, p.1). In line with Gerrad, Tosic posits: 'Ecocriticism is concerned with the relationships between literature and environment or how man's relationships with his physical environment are reflected in literature' (p. 44). Elaborately, Dobie (2012) views it as:

- The study of the relationship between literature and the environment.
- The study of literature and environment from an interdisciplinary point of view where all sciences come together to analyse the environment and brainstorm possible solutions for the creation of the contemporary situation.
- The celebration of the pastoral and the sublime (p. 239).

From the foregoing definitions, it is discernible that ecocritics argue for priority attention to be given to nature in literature, and that the role of nature in the formation of human culture should not be seen as a passive one. Therefore, Ecotheory accounts for how human culture is connected to the natural world, affecting it and affected by the natural world. The relevant strands of Ecocriticism that would be adopted to examine the ecological implication of Caribbean socio-cultural life are the ones propounded by Buell (1995):

- (i) The non-human environment is present not merely as a framing device, but as a presence that suggests that human history is implicated in natural history.
- (ii) Human accountability to the environment is part of the text's ethical orientation (pp. 7-8). Bartens (2008):
 - (i) Social ecology: This is interested in the social cost of environmental problems like pollution and waste disposal.



- (ii) Ecological ecocriticism: It involves the interpretation of literary tropes in relation to nature. In the examination of literary works, attention should be drawn to the 'sense of rootedness in place in a particular ecosystem (pp. 24-25).

Plot Summary of the Texts

The Year in San Fernando is a fictional representation of the author's experience at the age of twelve years while working for a family. This was because his father died and the upkeep of the family became difficult for his widowed mother. The dispossessed Aborigines were left to grope in the dark after the plantation period. This was the difficult situation that Ma faced with four orphans, Francis included. The author is fictionalised as Francis leaving his rural home to become a houseboy to Mrs Chandles in San Fernando. He now interacts with the natural world in the urban setting. It is a recreation of the changing seasons and the effect of the seasonal variation on the activities of Francis, the health of Mrs Chandles and the reverberating effect it has on her negative disposition to Francis and Mr Chandles. It also narrates the destruction of the environment through the burning of the cane field and the heat and smoke that pollute the environment caused by the Usine Ste Madeleine.

Jane's Career celebrates the role of the natural world in shaping the historical experience of a girl child, Jane. It 'reveals how Western patriarchal ideologies and a history of violent colonialism exploit and harm both women and the environment and how women's bodies and the land are inscribed with this history' (Fitzpatrick, 2008, p.1). The novel is about Jane's transient journey towards self-actualisation. It involves looking at Miss Burrell's labyrinthial search for success in Kingston, in confirmation of the Edo proverb rendered in the conjoin voices of Adekutu and Ajadi (2019): 'the hare say when he falls, the race becomes doubled' (p. 274). The Burrells are pauperized. They are, hence, compelled to live in their homes as such, allowing Jane to accompany Mrs Mason to Kingston, enduring the vagaries of life in search of a better living standard. It unveils the nature and ecological implications of Jane's story and relates it dialogically to other stories in the novel. She is strengthened by her symbiotic relationship with the environment, to transgress the boundary of wish to reality.

De Lisser's *The Dragon Can't Dance* explores post-plantation socio-cultural experiences especially literary descriptions of the historical root of the ambivalences of Trinidadian custom of carnival celebration, rebellion, prostitution, calypso and poverty with their undercurrent connectedness to the natural world. The novel is an evocation of a Trinidadian slum concerning the characters' experience 'using the festival as both metaphor and form to dramatise its potential as a ritual of regeneration and self-assertion while at the same time exploring its meaning and significance for the deprived characters of the slum' (Dabydeen and Wilson-Tagoe, 1987, p. 68). The deprived Caribbeans suffered harsh realities of post-plantation socio-economic life. As a consequence of natural determinism, Fisheye, Pariag, Cleothilda, Philo and Sylvia are segregated to occupy the ghetto. The people's eventual consciousness of their sordid condition leads to the character's insistence on regeneration as the thrust of the carnival celebration.

Batouala is a parody of Caribbean people's nostalgic feeling of a complex, diverse and fruitful relationship with their environment before colonialism. The incursion of the imperialists disturbed their harmony with nature. It recreates the strengths of Caribbean pre-colonial life, particularly the relationship between the characters and landscape, flora and fauna. Kortenaar (2003) describes the pre-colonial Caribbean as 'an ahistorical, organic whole disrupted and set



upon the path of history by the brutal entry of the Europeans' (p. 39). The influx of colonialists resulted in the split of the spirit of oneness and the erosion of Caribbean socio-cultural life. The novel explores the story of the Ubangui-Shari village in its primitive stage, reinforcing the cordialness that existed between nature and culture through Macoude, Bissibin'gui, Yassingui'ndja, According to Mwangi (2004), 'the novel depicts black man's village life and its richness as an organic self-sustaining forest with almost everything that the West - in its ignorance - claim to have come to introduce' (p. 2).

The Polemics

The common concern of the texts is instilled by the various environmental and social issues that are consequences of post-plantation through the pre-colonial life of the people of the Caribbeans. The socio-economic life of the Caribbeans after the plantation did not really change for the better because of the intense and protracted devastation of the environment by the colonialists. The liberated slaves were not employable because they did not learn any handwork, trade, or skills to either qualify them for employment in civil service or self-employment. They were therefore not gainfully employed nor could they do anything lucrative because they were ruined by colonial rule. Emancipation was a pivotal change to a harsh condition akin to the colonial period. It is analogous to the situation faced by the deprived people of Ilmorog in Ngugi's *Petals of Blood* (1977), after their exodus to Nairobi to agitate for a change in their poor socio-economic condition. The split between the rich, and poor that constitute a larger segment of society is reinforced by the differences among urban, slum and rural levels of living. The dualism is further heightened by a division on the racial background so that the small enclave of the privileged ones claims superiority.

Jane's Career, *The Year in San Fernando* and *The Dragon Can't Dance* are parodies of Caribbean post-plantation life. They delineate Caribbean life after emancipation, using different subject matters in their connectedness to nature. *The Year in San Fernando* and *Jane's Career* celebrate specific periods in the growing up male and female negroes respectively in the process of getting improved conditions of living against their changed rural background to city life. In the two novels, the writers illustrate through their interaction with nature, how children embark on identity development. Nature, in this context, functions to sustain human culture. Francis and Jane make moved from rural to urban locations for the same purpose of getting the improved living condition. The authors depict the natural environment to show that nature is actively involved in the character development of these protagonists.

These texts, as a result of what can now be termed its ecocritical orientation, argue from different perspectives the need for mutual consecutiveness and interdependence of nature and culture. The interactions of these children with nature, divided into rural and urban, enable us to assess the built and unbuilt environment as they affect the attitude of the characters. Francis and Jane, in their city life, are 'far' removed from rustic nature. Jane is depicted to be cordial with nature in her rural setting when she assists her brother in sowing the yam seedlings on the farm. Her interactions with built nature are different in Kingston, especially in Mrs Mason's house, in the street and market. Francis spends one year in San Fernando with the seasonal variation dictating the mood of his relationship with Mrs Chandles, especially in watering the flower plants, going to the market and several other objects of nature. Their labyrinthian search for greener pastures is implicated in natural history.



Francis and Jane had similar experiences as they got to their mistresses' houses on their arrival to the city. Francis is welcomed by the 'blindingly bright light', thus giving him a tip of an urban environment. The connectedness of Francis to the luxurious nature of Mrs Chandles' house is captured in his voice: 'I was reluctant to sit on such fine looking chair, but then I sat down. I could not remember being in any place so grand and rich looking' (p. 13). Francis continues: 'things in this were so many and of such richness. There were nice pictures and nice cabinets and there were new chairs in the drawing room' (p. 35). As for Jane, she soiled Mrs Mason's Mahogany table, exposing her rural experience that would likely impede her struggle for self-independence in the city. Jane's impression of her entry into a sophisticated setting is succinctly captured in these words:

When Jane enters Mrs Mason's house, she had never seen such a large house before; in a vague sort of way she wondered how many hundred persons lived in them, so spacious did the Villas of Kingston gentry appear to her unsophisticated eyes' (p.28).

These experiences launched them into the threshold of urban life to feel what obtains between the rich and the poor, mistresses and maids with underpinning connectedness to the environment.

Also, racism, an inevitable evil of the colonial era shows itself in the distrust of negro servants in the post-colonial period, particularly in *Jane's Career* and *The Year in San Fernando*. In *Jane's Career*, it noted in Jane's connectedness to some objects of nature make Mrs Mason question her integrity which aggravated the already sour relationship between them. Specifically, Jane's intention not to cheat her mistress or be indebted to the retailers in the neighbourhood dispels the rumour of iniquity and insincerity levelled against her. Similarly, in *The Year in San Fernando*, certain distrust is found in Mrs Chandles' disposition to Francis until the weather condition changed from dry to the rainy season, thus, allowing her to relate in an unstudied manner with Francis. Invariably, the rural background of the negro servants is endowed with purity as a consequence of their cordialness with unsullied nature in the rural setting. Therefore, racism and slave-like conditions as human historical experiences are implicated in the natural environment. The interactions of the negro servants reveal their integrity and purity which the whites and the Caribbean elite glossed over or misinterpreted as synonymous with iniquity.

As a mark of dissimilarity, De Lisser fails to note the effect of seasonal change throughout Jane's stay in Kingston, good or bad, on Mrs Mason's health and emotion, unlike what happened to Mrs Chandles. It implies that old age accounts to some extent for Mrs Chandles' susceptibility to the heat from the burning cane field, cropping season and Usine Ste Madeleine. De Lisser argues that there is a change in weather conditions, but its underpinning effect does not belie Mrs Mason's ill disposition to Jane or affect her health. In other words, Mrs Mason might not be as old and vulnerable as Mrs Chandles to feel the impact of the heat from the dry season, the burning canes and Usine Ste Madeleine. This gives credence in part to the excuse to Mr Chanles that old age is the cause of Mrs Chandles' ill disposition to Francis and himself, not solely the harsh weather condition and heat from Usine Ste Madeleine. This accounts for the differences in the historical experiences of Francis and Jane despite the fact that shared the same geographical region, the Caribbean.

The representation of 'sameness' in the people's suffering and struggles right from the pre-colonial to the post-colonial in the texts is aptly captured in the images of the trees and wind,



particularly in *Batouala*: ‘the leaves of the Kapok tree stopped moving at moment. The breeze stopped caressing the giant grasses. In the distance, smoked columns climbed straight upward. But, inflamed, hallucinated, unquenchable, the song of the Cicadas had intensified (p. 32). To the blacks, the presence of the European imperialists made life static and monotonous as signified in ‘the leaves of the Kapok tree stopped moving’. The traditional life of the Caribbeans has been suppressed by the overwhelming Western culture of individualism and exploitation. The people have no rest of mind as the oppositional Western antics do not benefit the Caribbeans who have suffered cultural humiliation and environmental degradation, ‘the breeze caressing the giant grasses’ confirms this. ‘Song of the Cicadas is metaphoric of the people’s murmuring for a possible way of going to unite with their natural world and traditional life. The Pombo has its own way of symbolising the going home of the people:

With a hoarse and sweet voice, the Pombo swollen with rains of night and with the contributions of its tributaries, hummed the beautiful laments that water murmurs night and day to the river banks which listen and drink in his words’ (p. 50)

The exploited people represented by the Pombo are a formation of several people of African, Indian and Chinese descent. With their various experiences, they lament the unsuitability of Western culture on Caribbean soil. ‘Night and day’ is used like the continuous grinding of canes in *Usine Ste Madeline* in *The Year in San Fernando* to express the persistent cry for cultural liberation similar to ant others elsewhere.

In *The Dragon Can’t Dance*, it is the habitual practice of Miss Cleothilda and Philo to meet in Cleothilda’s two-room apartment strictly on invitation. The exploitation of Philo concerning the rooms is connected to the haughty and selfish behaviour of Miss Cleothilda, to satisfy her seasonal mood in preparation for the carnival. Philo’s movement within the apartment is restricted to the sitting room. Whereas, Sylvia goes to Guy’s room on volition after the first prompting by her mother. Unlike Philo and Cleothilda, that of Guy and Sylvia is not seasonal but perpetuated throughout the year. However, Philo’s infatuation which is perceived as a weakness, is what Philo considers good enough to strengthen Guy and Sylvia’s relationship. Philo observes that Guy may not value the beauty and potential of Sylvia, just like the proverbial blind man and the garden. This is because, to Guy, anything that lacks pecuniary value is piffle. As such, ‘he would destroy without even knowing it, for how could a man who is blind (and foolish too) avoid trampling on the plants in a garden through which he walks believing it to be a highway’ (p. 208). The ‘where’ of the couple’s relationship is in their rooms in the city slum. In opposition, Bissibi’ngui and Yassigui’ndja in *Batouala*, at the beginning of their amorous relationship, engage in an illegal love-making spree in a nearby forest. This clearly exemplifies the connectedness of man’s activities to rustic nature. It was after the couple had had some fun in the forest that they shifted their rendezvous to *Batouala*’s house, even after his death. Maran argues that the exploitation of nature is depicted in the image of Yassigui’ndja. Lovelace, on his own part, argues that what was obtained in the pre-colonial Caribbean was also obtainable after contact with the whites, but in a different place: a city slum.

Batouala’s dissimilarity with other texts lies broadly in the agrarian, simple life of the people advocated by the first wave of Ecocriticism. It is a reflection of the rural experience of the people of the Caribbean before the coming of the European colonizers. The differences in the placeness of human relationships; and man’s relationship with nature that are located between the three texts and *Batouala*, ironically account for their convergence as one in the context of the second wave, in the common task of raising environmental awareness. This is bringing to



bear on our understanding of the texts the collapse of the slippery boundary separating nature and environment.

The Dragon Can't Dance, unlike *The Year in San Fernando* and *Jane's Career* expresses the suffering that binds the male characters especially together as portrayed in Fisheye, Aldrick, Philo and Pariag. Fisheye is pauperized such that he has nothing to do to earn money. This resulted in his brutality to extort money from people on the street corner. Aldrick is immersed in knitting the dragon costume for the carnival, an enterprise that is not lucrative. Philo is engrossed in producing Calypso to express nostalgia and inspire the deprived people to take their destinies into their hands. Pariag is involved in selling petty items until he breaks away to start something meaningful. Aldrick, Fisheye, Sylvia, and Cleothilda with other characters, each represent particular aspects of human suffering, for instance, prostitution, rebellion, envy and brutality. These social consequences are linked to the natural world around them. The thoughts and actions of these characters represent the whole deprived people of the Caribbean agitating for self-assertion and regeneration.

There is dissimilarity in Jane's mother's gift of fruits and yams; from Francis' mother to register her presence and care in nature. However, implicit in Jane's reaction outside the understanding of parental love expressed in the fruits, is the de-motivating social condition in the house of Mrs Mason which the gift items could not ameliorate. The objects of nature are not used to frame human actions but are imbued with meanings that reverberate beyond their literal presentation. The sudden departure of Jane to avoid the inhibiting social condition attests to the ineffectuality of her mother's gesture in nature. Ironically, women are involved in the feminization of poverty as female servants experience harsh conditions in their servitude to their mistresses, comparable to slavery and, or the exploitation of nature in the plantation period. It is the same poor condition of living that prompted Mary and Elizabeth to expend their labour on the coffee plantation, thus illustrating the feminization of poverty. *Jane's Career* shows how women are 'subjected to docile and uneventful life from childhood' (Ngwaba 2020, p. 96).

The Dragon Can't Dance further distinguishes itself from the other texts based on its physical setting in the city slum. The inability of the liberated slaves to cope with the unfavourable economic policy of city life necessitated their withdrawal to the ghetto, commensurate with their social status. Meanwhile, the rich class occupies the central and other well-developed arts of the town where there are available social amenities. On the contrary, *Batouala's* peculiarity lies in its pre-colonial setting. It is the influx of the imperialists that changed the agrarian nature of human existence in Ubangui-Shari.

As a subsequent development in a reaction to the unfavourable environmental condition, Lovelace uses his characters, especially Aldrick, Fisheye, Philo, Small and Pariag and a few other slum fellows to argue for collectivism in the struggle for change, particularly holding the police hostage as a form of remonstrance against their drab social condition. These characters are of different racial backgrounds, but they de-emphasize the cause of individuality and pursue that of generality because they are bound together by the same historical experience. That is why the characters, especially Miss Cleothilda Alverick repeatedly say 'all of we is one'. Regardless of their ancestral home – Africa, India, China and Caribbean Islands – they are bound together by the same environmental issues which when addressed would positively redefine their social status. The spirit of collectivism is not in *The Year in San Fernando* and *Jane's Career* which show male and female individuals respectively trying to carve a niche for



themselves in the face of hardship. The collective struggle in *The Dragon Can't Dance* shows some elements of similarity to the one depicted in Ngugi's *Petals of Blood* (1977), where the exploited majority shows collectivism for a positive change. Contrariwise, Chui, Mzigo and Kimeria, of different racial identities exhibit, in a negative way, collectivism in the exploitation of the less privileged.

Concerning the literary tropes of the texts, the figures of speech and imagery used are drawn from nature. However, one significant figure of speech, onomatopoeia distinguishes *The Year in San Fernando* from the other novels. A few of the numerous examples used suffice: 'screeching' and 'booming' describes the sounds of Mrs Chandles and Mr Chandles' voices in their row at home. Also, the 'rumbling' sound of thunder and 'tap tap' of the rain are phonological representations used by Anthony to express sound effects. This employment of sound effects of nature is deficient in other texts. Importantly as a mark of difference, *The Year in San Fernando* and *Jane's Career* scarcely make use of animal imageries either to embody human qualities or epitomize unpleasant human conditions. One can suggest that the three texts essentially dwell on post-colonial Caribbean life that hardly has little or no connection to wild animals in their socio-cultural interactions. But, *Batouala* is pre-colonial, hence the life of the characters is embedded in rustic nature, and their mutual interactions, particularly with the fauna. This is demonstrated in their creative imagination and the combined memories of African homes with plantation experience to bring folk expressions and folktales, using animals as characters in the stories. The tales as celebrations of human spirits are filled with emotions of sorrow, love and hope. An instance out many are the tale of M'bala, the elephant and Gato, the chicken. Maran shows that the people are immersed in safari life rich in wild animals. Apparently, Maran chooses imageries of non-human life to teach certain morality, human strength and weakness. In general, it confirms the perception of the natural that shapes the literary trope.

The novels link their ecological stance to the post-plantation through the pre-colonial life of the Caribbeans. But, the quest for ties with the root necessitated Maran's literary sensibility to locate French Equatorial Africa as part of the locale of *Batouala*. Obviously, other texts are imbued with African nuances, but it is only *Batouala* that exhibits much affinity with the African experience compared with the other texts investigated. Therefore, nature, either raw or transformed, tends to bolster the claim that human history is implicated in natural history, and that Africa looms large in the Caribbean imagination. *Batouala*, being much of a pre-colonial experience, exemplifies the embeddedness of ritual in nature, unlike the other texts. For instance, the people have a way of tracing the cause of the 'untimely' death of their sons and obituary announcements to the general public of Ubangui-Shari. An instance is located in the death of *Batouala's* father where 'they opened the throat of a black hen' (p. 82) to cast a spell on whosoever is instrumental to his death. By implication, the fate of the black hen would be replicated through spiritual means on Yassigui'ndja, the principal suspect. Yassigui'ndja believes however that *Batouala* is behind the diabolic machination to ruin her life like the black hen, in revenge for her coquetry. Also, the death of Coquelin was announced by the shiny black bird that hovered in the sky at his death. The point of emphasis not found in the other texts is that the hen and the bird are united in colour sameness that portends sorrow. This symbol of the oneness and unity between the blacks in Africa and those in the Caribbean Islands with related colonial historical experiences of exploitation of their labour and environment.

In the evocation of socio-cultural experiences in relation to nature, the aspect of superstition is silent in *The Year in San Fernando*, *Jane's Career* and *The Dragon Can't Dance*. But,



Batouala explicates the embeddedness of superstitious beliefs in nature. Superstitious beliefs may be didactic, to teach sociocultural values that would develop the individual and society. 'Women', for example, 'who wanted to be mothers could eat neither goat flesh nor turtle meat. Those who fed themselves could be stricken by sterility while those who ate of the turtle would have only prematurely old children' (p.22). The traditional belief of being struck with infertility and premature children is linked to the people's natural world. However, the substantive connectedness between the cause and the effect of the belief is still hollow but has become established in society for certain moral lessons.

All the novels celebrate human existence in relation to terrestrial, avian and aquatic nature. Aquatic nature is portrayed particularly in the connectedness of the fisherman, Macoude to the fish that he eats with *Batouala* and *Bissibi'ngui*; and Mrs Mason's likeness for the red fish, not Carite. Avian nature has to do specifically with the black bird and black hen, while terrestrial involves the connectedness of human activities to the earth, especially husbandry (farming and keeping of animals).

CONCLUSION

The selected Caribbean novels argue via the prism of Ecocriticism on the relationship between man and the natural world. Events that show similarity and dissimilarity between and among the texts are analysed to point out the common thrust of creating ecological consciousness, that is, people's sensitivity to the degraded environment and human health. Put differently, the differences in the treatment of the subject matter, time and locale of the texts strengthen their common stance of awakening people's consciousness of environmental issues and human existence. It would therefore serve as a stimulus for a re-organisation of Caribbean political thought. It is established that the authors attempt to open up a community of people connected to land, water and animals from socio-cultural and economic angles. They argue that there is a confluence of environment and identity formation in the understanding of Caribbean literature. The selected texts in the vast disparity of time and space show a comprehensive representation of the shades of common historical experiences across the Caribbean Islands.

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