



**THERAPOETICS: AN INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF THE HUMANITIES**

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# About the Journal

*Therapoetics: International Journal of the Humanities* is a peer-reviewed journal published by the Professor Kontein Trinya International Conference at the Department of English and Communication Art, Faculty of Humanities, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt, Nigeria. Papers presented during the annual Professor Kontein Trinya International Conference are published in a conference edition. The journal receives multi-disciplinary articles from scholars on the dynamics of affective art, as well as advancing the scholarly works and thoughts of Professor Kontein Trinya. The editions shall be available in print as well as in e-copies at the conference website. Authors shall receive a complimentary print copy of the edition in which their article appears.

## Guideline for submission of articles

1. Papers should bear the title, name of author(s), institutional affiliation(s), email address(es) and phone number(s) on the cover page.
2. Each paper must be accompanied with an abstract.
3. Recommended font and size would be 12pt Times New Roman, in double line spacing, except the abstract and reference pages.
4. Submissions should not exceed 18 pages, including the abstract and reference pages.
5. Given the multidisciplinary posture of the journal, reference style shall be the most current APA and MLA style.

## Submission

All submissions should be made electronically as Microsoft Word documents sent to: [therapoetics.kontein@gmail.com](mailto:therapoetics.kontein@gmail.com). Authors who submit or present papers during the annual international conference will pay ₦8,000.00 for assessment of their papers and ₦25,000.00 for publication in the journal, while non-conference participants shall pay ₦8,000.00 for assessment and ₦30,000.00 per publication of their articles. The bank details are:

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Articles are received and reviewed all year round for the non-conference edition published in June. The conference edition is published in December. All scripts will undergo blind peer reviews.

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Peter Obi's Post-Election Speeches and Peace Building: Searching for Therapoetics Or Toxic Ingredients

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**Abstract**

This study employed Fairclough's three dimensional framework of critical discourse analysis and Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar to scrutinise the post-election speeches of the Presidential Candidate of the Labour Party made on March 2, 2023 and April 18, 2023 post on his X (formerly known as twitter) handle. For the first time since the return of democratic rule in 1999, many Nigerian youths participated in the democratic process with a view to electing a leader in the Labour Party candidate, Peter Obi, whom they thought was passionate about confronting Nigerian challenges and taking back Nigeria from the corrupt political class. However, the Independent Electoral Commission (INEC) proceeded to announce Bola Ahmed Tinubu winner amidst reports and disputations of electoral illegalities. Subsequent to INEC's action was the narrative that Peter Obi's verbal language was contributory to the post-election peace in the country. Thus, this study investigated the therapeutic ingredients in his speeches that might have forestalled the civil unrest that would have ensued after the controversial announcement. The findings of the texts showed that Obi's speeches, following Tinubu's announcement as winner of the election, had been therapeutic, and devoid of toxicity that could have caused unrest in the country and even in the diaspora. Therefore, it recommended that Nigerian politicians prioritise peace building by emulating Peter Obi's positive disposition, qualities and language style that engenders peace and unity.

Keywords: Language, Politics, Peace Building, Therapoetics Communication, Post-election

**Introduction**

The trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership. There's nothing basically wrong with the Nigerian character. There's nothing wrong with the Nigerian land or climate or water or air or anything else. The Nigerian problem is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to the responsibility, to the challenge of personal example which are the hallmarks of true leadership (Achebe, 1983, p.1).

Achebe (1983) is spot on with the foregoing assertion because there is no contestation to the fact that in Nigeria many political office holders are only keen on looting the treasury dry and leaving office richer. Ostensibly, this has also encouraged some citizens to think crookedly, too. Besides, they were once ordinary citizens before the position; thus, corroborating the fact that when an individual is upright as a commoner, it is likely he or she could maintain some level of honesty when he or she gets into office. However, this is not the case in Nigeria, as even people that were once seen as honest end up being corrupt when bestowed with political power because, according to Sogunro (2014), “the alternative is dangerous..., the price of honesty outweighs the consequences of corruption... there is no safety net for the honest person”. Thus, validating the axiom that says absolute power corrupts.

Indeed, as Achebe asserted, the Nigerian character appears to be polluted to the extent that many Nigerians have resolved to be financially successful through fast and crooked ways. As a matter of fact, the media space is proliferated with funny but annoying, weird and heart-breaking news on a daily basis. If it is not about snakes swallowing millions of Naira, it is that one Nigerian has been jailed for

fraud and cybercrimes abroad. If it is not about ritualists being caught with skulls of human heads, it is that monies are retrieved from government buildings and no one has been prosecuted for looting. If it is not about young girls losing their lives and their body parts, it is that government officials have been linked with bribery, money laundering and racketeering. If it is not about terrorists abducting citizens, it is that armed robbers have perpetrated a bank heist. If it is not about a trigger happy policeman gunning down someone over his/her refusal to bribe him, it is that drug kingpins, human traffickers, yahoo boys (swindlers) have been apprehended. If it is not about some secret cabals hijacking the presidency, it is that some individuals in government have committed financial crimes with impunity. If it is not about religious leaders feeding their followers with canards, it is that Trade Unions, academic staff of public universities are embarking on strike. The list is endless.

Needless to say that truth has become like a scarce commodity in Nigeria. Those who stand for truth are silenced. Truth is seen as weakness, whereas lies are seen as strength. Some Nigerian comedians have gone on to make thought provoking jokes that the pervasive nature of corruption in Nigeria has polluted even unborn Nigerian babies, whose prospective parents are yet to meet, let alone to copulate. The utterances of many Nigerian youths in the 21st century reveal that they would even do worse than the set of leaders running the country as of the time of this study. And this is corroborated by a former governor of Rivers State, Rotimi Amaechi, who when addressing journalists said Nigerian youths are emulating the wrong leadership model of the current set of leaders which may jeopardise their future if caution is not taken (Opejobi, 2017). The foregoing simply means that these youths have been polluted by the destructive ideologies of the political class and they have resolved that the quickest way to make it real big in Nigeria is by getting into politics.

However, progressive minded Nigerians saw a glimmer of hope that the country could be redeemed from the existing mess her image has become in the global polity when former President Muhammadu Buhari promised a free, fair and credible election; an election that would enable them determine the future of Nigeria; one that would produce that leader that would kick-start the transformation of the Nigerian character that Achebe (1983) had referred to. Buhari's pledge gave birth to popular mantras such as A-New-Nigeria-is-Possible championed by Mr Peter Obi of the Labour Party.

The assurance that 2023 election would be credible got the young people really interested in the election to the extent that the electioneering atmosphere and energy were like never before since the return of democratic rule in 1999. The majority of Nigerian youths who were tired of the old order were determined to change the abysmal leadership narrative and corruption that have bedevilled the nation since independence. Eighteen political parties fielded candidates but only four candidates – Bola Ahmed Tinubu of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Atiku Abubakar of the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP), Peter Obi of the Labour Party (LP) and Rabiu Kwankwaso of the New Nigeria People's Party (NNPP) – happened to be the frontrunners. As a result, the electorate was divided among these four heavyweights. The Presidential and National Assembly elections, scheduled for Saturday, February 25, 2023 were conducted amidst widespread voter intimidation by syndicates of certain political parties as evidenced in videos published on various social media platforms.

The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) correspondents' post-election reports of the 2023 Presidential Election and the European Union Observation Mission (EUOM) final report on the General Election, like the majority of progressive-minded Nigerians, indicted the Independent Electoral Commission (INEC) of breach of trust. BBC correspondents' – Chiagozie Nwonwu, Peter Mwai and Karina Igonikon – May 16, 2023 investigative report on the Presidential election suggested that the results INEC announced may have been manipulated. This is evidenced by the 'significant anomalies in Rivers State'. Their investigation reveals a horrible disparity between what INEC declared for Rivers State and what they collated directly from the polling units. For instance, the INEC's manually collated

result saw Bola Tinubu of the ruling APC polling the majority votes, whereas from the BBC correspondents collation, Peter Obi of LP had polled most votes by a very wide margin. Figures 1, 2 and 3 show evidence of the anomalies of the results in Rivers identified by the BBC correspondents.

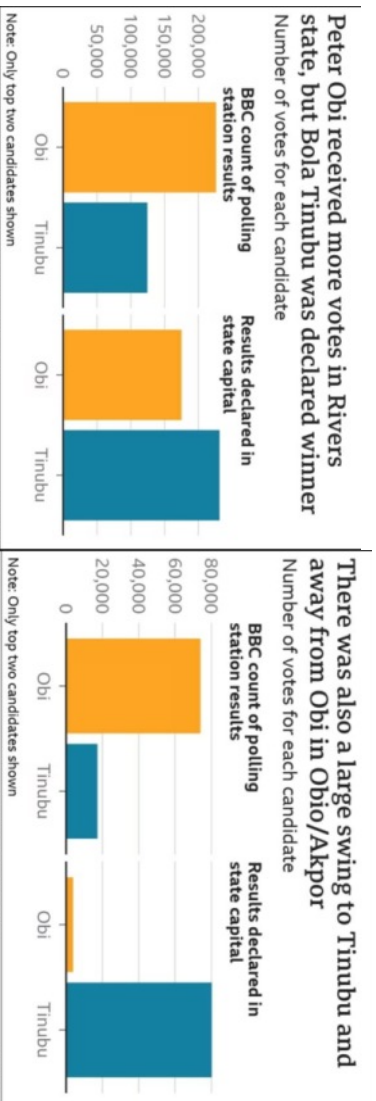


Figure 1: BBC vs INEC results for Rivers State

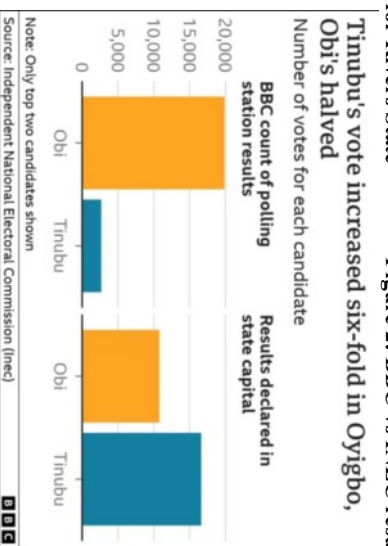


Figure 2: BBC vs INEC results for Obio/ Akpor LGA

Source: <https://www.bbc.com/news/65163713>

Unfortunately, Bola Tinubu of the APC surprisingly was declared winner in Rivers State amidst state-wide rejection of the result. The report of the BBC correspondents as shown in Figures 1, 2, and 3 attest that Peter Obi clearly won Rivers State. However, his votes were supposedly reduced and Tinubu's increased through manipulations allowed by the INEC.

As for the EUOM's report, in the first paragraph of its Executive Summary, it reveals that: The 2023 general elections did not ensure a well-run transparent and inclusive democratic process as assured by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). Public confidence and trust in INEC were severely damaged during the presidential poll and was not restored in state level elections, leading civil society to call for an independent audit of the entire process... Media raised voters' awareness, fact-checkers stood up against disinformation and civil society demanded INEC's accountability. The overall outcome of the polls attests to the continued underrepresentation of marginalised groups in political life. Positively, candidates and parties disputing outcomes took their complaints to the courts, although the number of such cases was extensive (p.6).

Indeed, the electorate was disappointed with INEC reneging on the only promise that was the motivation for many Nigerians to participate in the election. Those who had never voted before and had developed apathy for elections because they held the opinion that votes had never counted before in Nigeria's political election, were inspired to storm voter registration centres to get their Permanent Voter Cards

(PVCs). More specifically, it was the promise that results would be transmitted to the INEC Result Viewing (IREV) Portal in real time that inspired the mass registration for PVCs. Similarly, the Bimodal Voters Accreditation System (BVAS), a technology for reading Permanent Voter Cards and authenticating voters before voting was promised to transmit results from the polling units to the IREV portal after voting; that is, Polling Officers (POs) were mandated by the electoral law to take a photograph of the result sheets with the BVAS and upload them on the IREV portal in the presence of voters.

The electorate believed in the Professor Mahmood Yakubu led INEC and hoped that the innovation would see to the birth of the new Nigeria. Unfortunately, the commission reneged on its promise, reporting a glitch in the technology that hampered the transmission of results for the presidential election only, whereas the National Assembly elections experienced no glitch as results were transmitted successfully. When representatives of the two leading opposition parties – the LP and the PDP – reminded the INEC Chairman of his promise of comparing the manually collated results with the results uploaded on the IREV portal, their protest reminding was ignored; rather the INEC Chairman stuck with manual collation which had been alleged to be fraudulent. At the end of that collation, Bola Ahmed Tinubu of the APC was declared winner with 8,794,726 votes, followed by Atiku Abubakar of the PDP with 6,984,520 votes and Peter Obi of LP who came third polling 6,101,533 votes (Bankole, 2023).

Though Tinubu supporters were excited about the outcome, many Nigerians, at home and in the diaspora, were disappointed at the hasty announcement. Supporters of Peter Obi all over the country were eager to protest the declaration of Bola Tinubu as winner of the election but the verbal and non-verbal language of Peter Obi appeared to have quelled the probable unrest that would have erupted.

Thus, the objectives of this study are to use critical discourse analysis:

1. to examine the therapeutic ingredients in Peter Obi's speeches that could have been responsible for the relative peace after the declaration;
2. to determine whether or not there were toxic elements in Peter Obi's speeches.

It is significant to analyse Peter Obi's speeches because speeches of highly influential political figures like him may look very ordinary, but the sense behind the diction and the way the messages of the texts are structured could be both intricate and elusive (Mahdiyana et al, 2013). This is the problem this study seek addressing. Language is the medium through which ideologies, attitudes, and feelings are expressed, whether they be written or spoken; and through the analysis of speeches, the thoughts and emotions of the speaker concerning an event or phenomenon could be determined. This is even more critical when the remarks, comments or texts of politicians are considered because their ideologies and intentions are usually not expressed in clear terms. Van Dijk (1997b) believes the written or spoken texts of political speeches are like icebergs of information where only the 'tip' is actually conveyed in words and sentences; thus, the need to analyse the text to excavate the essential ideologies.

Hence, the research questions this study intends to answer are:

1. What are the therapeutic ingredients in Peter Obi's speeches that could have been responsible for the relative peace?
2. How possible could Peter Obi's speeches be devoid of toxicity having claimed to have been short changed?

Language as ingredient for peace building

Iniamagha's (2022) explication on language posits that 'language is what makes man complete because it is the tool or medium humans use to convey their ideas, feelings and needs to other fellow humans'

(p.21). Also Tiware and Shivhare's (2018) perspective on language holds that language comprises two kinds of competences – linguistic competence and communicative competence (cf. Chomsky, 1957 and Hymes, 1972). This simply means language constitutes some intangible principles that are psychologically and sociologically relevant in determining an individual's level of proficiency in a particular environment or situation. In other words, these principles enable a person to lay hands on limitless number of sentences to describe concrete situations as well as present him/her the wherewithal to comprehend and manufacture fresh sentences.

The growth of a nation to a large extent is dependent on how its language is used for purposes of peace building. Nigeria is a country that is multilingual with over 520 languages (Ofoegbu, 2017), and because of this feature, English language serves as the official language of commerce and business, government and education medium of communication (Ituen, 2011). This is because Nigeria was a former colony of Britain, coupled with the fact that English language has become, 'for all practical purposes, the world's lingua franca... It is the principal international language in the fields of communications, information technology, entertainment, science, business, diplomacy, and so on' (Kperogi, 2015, p. ix).

The reality in the world is that one's use of language can cause conflict in a society as was the case in Rwanda, or can engender peaceful co-habitation among people, with the Mandela example in South Africa as reference. This is because mutual agreement is, to a large extent, dependent on the language spoken in a given society. This was evident with the Tower of Babel story in the Bible as Iniamgha (2023b) and Cook (2013a) mentioned. The people of Babel who were once united in the course of building a Tower into the heavens were disunited as a result of God introducing different languages in their midst with the intention to stop their effort. It is assumed that the various languages spoken at the site of the project led to serious disintegration as one individual was unable to comprehend what the other was communicating. Hence, there was a breakdown of peace, leading to permanent separation. Since Nigeria is a multilingual society, a common language spoken by the diverse people would be the only reason for peace to exist. How would it look like if Nigeria does not have a common language (English language) that unites her peoples? The answer is simple: there would be no country. Nevertheless, even with the existence of a common language, language users must not use it to express feelings and emotions that would cause conflict; rather, expressions that foster peace must be chosen carefully and deliberately. This is the foremost objective of this investigation: how Peter Obi used language for peace building.

The verity is that a multilingual society that disregards the significance of that (language) which unites its peoples would end up experiencing crisis of nepotism, favouritism, tribalism and other social ills (Ngwu & Adimelechi, 2021). The foregoing, in point of fact, is a result of the consciousness to give special attention to people who share the same linguistic background. In addition, ignoring the effective application of the lingua franca would lead to the bridging of peace in the multilingual society.

Having established the significance of language to human existence, which is used either through speaking or writing (Odudigbo, 2014), it is noteworthy to further mention that caution must be taken in the way it is employed. It is therefore important for every language user who thinks of peace building to choose expressions that are public-friendly. Put simply, for purposes of peace building, language users must ensure clarity and unambiguity, devoid of hate speech. A peace building conscious language user must embrace less complex and intelligible expressions that his/her speech audience would relate with. This is because language can ignite unrest, war, disunity, and anarchy in the society if wrongly used (Sewaje, 2005). As a matter of fact, instances abound where communities have been destroyed because of language use. The perfect example to explain this is the Rwandan genocide that occurred between April 1 to July 15 1994 – the conflict between the Tutsis and Hutus. According to Ekere (2013), language is a powerful tool that can quench a bloody war within a short while and return peace. And this is the

main concern of this investigation: the peace building ingredients that constituted the speeches of Peter Obi after the announcement of election results using critical discourse analysis techniques of political speeches.

#### Language Appropriateness for Communication

According to Ngwu and Adimelechi (2021), there are three elements that affect the use of appropriate language for communication. First of them is illiteracy. Nigeria has a large population that is not literate, who particularly live in the rural areas. This is coupled with the fact that the country, though many indigenous languages, has English as its official/ national language, while the indigenous languages remain solely with the natives and aliens who happen to live in the locale where a given local language/dialect is spoken. Since English language appears difficult for those in rural areas to speak fluently, communication becomes a challenge at that level. Careless application of the English language at this point would lead to misunderstanding and chaos. And the moment there is a language gap among users of a language, conflict is inevitable (Calistus, 2015). A society that is multilingual and dominated by illiterates, there is the tendency for information to be misunderstood if not properly disseminated, which could lead to strain and watersheds.

The second element is ignorance. This is one disease that affects people and it greatly determines whether or not communication would be effective. Ignorance and awareness deficiency could destroy a society. They breed conflicts and every other vice that are anti-peaceful. These two give birth to racism, terrorism, tribalism. And it is the improper application of language that could cause the foregoing to thrive. It is ignorance that makes an individual not to be conscious of his/her environment to the extent of uttering careless comments that could burn the society. This has destroyed societies; one of these instances as has been mentioned earlier is the Rwandan genocide. It is ignorance that makes people to make negative utterances that may disintegrate a society. A typical example of such behaviour is depicted by the erstwhile governor of Kaduna State, Nasir El'Rufai who in his post-election speech made divisive utterances on Muslim dominance in the country; how Islam had emerged victorious with Muslim-Muslim leaders being installed both at the state and federal level, and how all Muslims must ensure this trend is sustained even in the future. Such an utterance is capable of causing war. This is a typical instance of ignorance and insensitivity. Though some argue that he was quite aware of what he said, because he uttered those words with conviction, some still believe it was the ignorance in him that spoke.

Poor communication is the third. This is, in fact, the major cause of conflict. The El-Rufai example also fits in here perfectly. It is simply the lack of applying the appropriate diction during one's speech. It destroys understanding. When understanding is absent between two or more interlocutors, communication is assumed to be ineffective. In every gathering of people, good communication is paramount. The moment the goal for which the communication is intended is unclear, there is bound to be mix-ups. Poor communication yields unpleasant feedbacks and vice versa. Therefore, words play key roles in producing positive or negative feedbacks. In terms of peace building, one's choice of words could determine whether there would be peace or war in the communication environment. In societies that are multilingual, it is advisable for speakers to choose their words carefully when engaging in public speaking in order to avoid misinterpretation of the intentions of the speaker(s).

#### Theoretical Framework

This study adopts the Critical Discourse Analysis theory as described by Fairclough (1989, 1995, 2000, 2003) and the Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar (1978, 1994). These two happen to be the leading theories that are often applied when engaging in critical discourse studies.

Iniamagha (2023a) explains that by the close of 1970s, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), happened

to be one of the interesting theories in discourse studies. CDA's aim is to recognise how social power is misused; the way text and discourse connote, raise, and confront authority and inequity in both political and social backgrounds. According to Mahdijan et al (2013, p.36), Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) sees language in a dialectic relationship with social reality, i.e. a communicative act (act of translation or interpretation) is affected by social reality and is used to sustain or change the social reality... the usage of text-linguistic elements reflects the text producer's aims and affiliation to a special ideology, which, in its turn, may establish unequal power relations (class struggle, ideological struggle) between the participants of the communicative event.

CDA specifically focuses on political speeches, advertisement, newspaper, official documents and so on. It basically examines the relationship among the language, ideology, and power. It investigates how language dominance is measured through text.

Talking about Halliday's (1978) Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG), it is the foremost linguistic theory that is often used to complement or applied alongside the critical discourse analysis theory. In fact, Fairclough employed SFG to analyse text because it possesses a significant function in interpreting critical linguistic expressions in diverse discourses. Noteworthy, the SFG model has to do with grammar description, where language is taken as a network of systems that creates meaning.

### **Methodology**

This study adopts an interpretive approach where the texts of the selected speeches that were retrieved from Vanguard Newspaper Online and posts on his X page are qualitatively analysed to excavate the therapeutic, and perhaps the toxic elements or language style embedded in his speech that may have been responsible for the post-election peace or (unrest as it were) experienced in the country. In other words, Fairclough's three dimensional framework and Halliday's (1978) semantic units of ideational functions, the interpersonal function, and the textual function will be employed to analyse the text of Peter Obi's speeches/language.

The ideational function, particularly, represents that which provides the basis for comprehending human experience as a resource type for actualising the truth (Halliday, 1994). In grammar, the ideational function as mentioned in Imiamagha (2023, p.129) is represented by the Transitivity system that is comprised of the material processes, which are the physical actions in the actual world; relational processes, which have to do with expressing possession, equivalence, attributes...; mental processes, which are the methods of cognition, affection and perception; verbal processes which simply are the methods of communication; behavioural processes, which are hybrid methods that are simply the combination of a material process and mental process; and existential, which are methods of existing by an empty there in subject position.

As for interpersonal function, Zhuanglin (1988) says it represents language usages in expressing social and personal associations, while O'Halloran (2006) thinks the textual metafunction is connected to style –the core arrangement of the text; how the text is organised and communicates an idea or thought.

### **Presentation and Discussion of Data**

This study analyses Peter Obi's post-election speeches and examines the effects they had on the Nigerian electorate thereby ensuring peace in the country after Bola Tinubu was announced winner by INEC. Table 1 gives a statistics of Obi's March 2, 2023 speech and his April 18, 2023 tweet.

**Table 1: Statistics of Obi's March 2 and April 18, 2023 post-election Speeches**

<b>Terms</b>	<b>Statistics for</b>	
	<b>March 2 speech</b>	<b>April 18 tweet</b>
Words	805	294
Sentences	50	16
Paragraphs	13	6
Average Words per sentence	17	18
Average Words per paragraph	62	49
Articles	66	27
Pronouns	87	31
First person	44 (50%)	21 (67%)
Second person	11 (13%)	Nil
Third person	13 (15%)	Nil
Prepositions	89	46
“to be” verbs	21	14
Pauses	Nil	Nil
Questions	Nil	Nil
Similes	Nil	Nil

The statistics in Table 1 shows Obi's March 2 post-election speech which includes 805 words that consist of 50 sentences and 13 paragraphs. He employed an average of 17 words per sentence, and 62 words per paragraph. Obi used 66 articles, 87 pronouns, with the first person pronoun constituting about 50%, the second person 13% and third person 15%. He used 89 prepositions, and 21 “to be” verbs. Since it was a prepared text which he delivered verbatim, he consciously did not observe pauses, neither did he ask questions.

The April 18 post comprises 294 words broken down to 16 sentences and 6 paragraphs. He employed an average of 18 words per sentence, and 49 words per paragraph. He used 27 articles, 31 pronouns, where the first-person pronoun takes about 67% and he did not see the need to address the second and the third persons. He employed 46 prepositions, and 14 'to be' verbs. For the fact it was a tweet, no pauses were observed. He did not ask questions.

As a three-dimensional analysis, Halliday's semantic units of ideational function, interpersonal function and textual function are adopted for the analysis.

### **Ideational Function**

First off, Iniamagha (2023) citing Thompson (1996) says Transitivity describes the entirety of the clause rather than defining the verb and its object. Actually, the Ideational function is signified by the transitivity (system) which comprised the components of processes, participant and circumstances. This study considers only the processes component of material, mental, and relational.

- I. Material Process has to do with 'doing' or 'happening'; it is made up of two participants including:
  1. The 'Actor' who is one that performs the action.
  2. The 'Goal' who is the one that is the recipient of the action.

One significant thing the Material process does is the use of either abstract or concrete action words.

### Transitivity text analysis of Obi's speeches

**Table 2: Material Process**

March 2 post-election speech		
Actor	Process	Goal
I, we, ... supposed leaders, God, Datti, committed citizens, all of us	see, release, thank, speak, give, participate, believe, work, say, remain, know, look, stab, announce, conduct, rob, build, require, generate, assure, act, govern, explore, recall, win, prove, despair, enjoin, vote, bless, troop	the people (electorate), the media, Nigerians, God, true citizens, dear country, the youth, New Nigeria, Lady Jennifer, the electoral rules, controversial elections, the election, the Nigerian youth, the Federal Republic of Nigeria, existential election
April 18 tweet		
Actor	Process	Goal
I, we, ...the forces, the millions of Nigerians,	encourage, remain, achieve, expect, reiterate, invest, cast, deter, stay, deserve, transform, muddling, break, lift, deserve	their mandate, New Nigeria, the journey, my commitment, every Nigeria, their votes, their hopes, me, the millions of Nigerians, their hopes, justice, the course, the lies, propaganda, the law, the obstacles, people, poverty

Below are selected paragraphs showing the distribution of the material processes and participants in the texts:

March 2, 2023 speech

#### Paragraph 2

I (actor) thank (material process) all of you for your understanding (goal). For me (actor), it is a very simple thing to speak (material process) to Nigerians (goal) who on the 25th of February trooped out (material process) en masses as committed citizens (actor) to participate (material process) in what all of us (actor) have called (material process) an existential election (goal), for a supposedly free, fair, credible presidential (goal) and national assembly election (goal). We (actor) give (material process) thanks to God (goal).

#### Paragraph 9 and 10

I (actor) assure (material process) the good people of Nigeria (goal) that we (actor) will explore (material process) all legal and peaceful options (goal) to recall our mandate (goal).  
We (actor) won (material process) the election (goal), and we (actor) will prove (material process) it to

Nigerian (goal).

#### **April 18 tweet**

##### **Paragraph 1**

I (actor) encourage (material process) Nigerians (goal) to remain calm and steadfast (material process) in the journey to reclaiming their mandate of a new Nigeria (goal). I (actor) will never give up (material process) on this journey (goal) until victory is achieved (material process).

##### **Paragraph 4**

The millions of Nigerians who voted for me (actor) did not just cast (material process) their votes (goal) but they (actor) invested (material process) their hopes in me (goal) and they (actor) deserve (material process) justice (goal). So, we (actor) must stay (material process) on the course (goal).

The material process as shown in Table 2 reveals Obi's temperament or body language in ensuring peace is sustained in Nigeria, regardless of the announcement of Tinubu as winner; a declaration that did not augur well with many Nigerians. It shows the action words that describe the pain that Nigerians felt after the announcement and how they were denied of their joy. It shows how his choice of words gave hope to the Nigerian people, believing that the new Nigeria dream would never be dampened in spite of the unfortunate announcement. It presents in strong terms the resolve to adopt lawful procedures to fight against the suppression of truth without causing mayhem. As Table 2 indicates, the pronouns 'I and WE' show that he (Obi) and his running mate, Datti, are at the forefront in fighting injustice. Sometimes, the 'WE' denotes how he is willing to carry the millions of Nigerians along in the process of restoring sanity. It confirms why the frequency of the first person pronouns as shown in Table 1 is very high. He and his running mate are the action leaders that would battle tirelessly to restore the hopes of Nigerians from the grip of the so-called corrupt 'supposed leaders' as he rightly puts it.

- ii. Relational process is the next transitivity system. The modes, identifying relational process and attributive relational process, come handy when it is considered in discourse analysis. When one means that one object/unit is used to classify or ascertain the other, it falls in the category of identifying relational process. The verbs 'to be' (am, is, are, was, were, be, been, being), become, etc, fall in this category (Iniamagha, 2023a). Halliday, (1994) says the attributive relational process denotes that an object possesses some features that could be attributed to it. Some verbs that describe this process include: look, cost, play, sound, gets, seem...etc. Table 4 provides some evidence.

**Table 4: Relational process**

Attributive relational process	Identifying relational process
<b>March 2 Speech</b>	
... We will <b>WORK</b> for that new Nigeria.	... My last comment to the media <b>WAS</b> immediately after voting on the 25th, and I've never done so until now.
... We won the election, and we will <b>PROVE</b> it to Nigerians.	... Datti's commitment, my commitment <b>IS</b> total.

**April 18 tweet**

... The millions of Nigerians who <b>VOTED</b> for me did not just <b>CAST</b> their votes but they <b>INVESTED</b> their hopes in me and they <b>DESERVE</b> justice.	... We <b>ARE</b> on the right path and we will remain committed to the course.
I <b>ENCOURAGE</b> Nigerians to remain calm and steadfast in the journey to reclaiming their mandate of a new Nigeria.	I <b>AM</b> therefore not afraid of the lies and propaganda against my person

iii. Mental Process is made up of verbs that describe or discuss perception, cognition, affection and desire. Examples of some of these verbs are know, think, feel, hear, see, like, hate, please, and etc. The subject of the sentence is usually regarded as the 'sensor'; whereas the foregoing verbs are the 'mental process'. Table 5 presents some sentences in Obi's speeches that explain how the mental process works.

**Table 5: Mental process**

<b>March 2 speech</b>	<b>April 18 tweet</b>
<i>I (sensor) know (mental process) how they (sensor) will be feeling (mental process) now because of the way the elections have come and gone.</i>	<i>... There may be more mudslinging (mental process) from those who are against the emergence of the new Nigeria (sensor)...</i>
<i>"Please (mental process), do not despair:</i>	<i>I (sensor) would never be deterred (mental process) by the obstacles along the way to victory.</i>

The instances given in Table 5 show that the sensor of thinking and perceiving comprises the process human beings tend to show their deep feelings to conscientise the sense of other people. Political leaders employ mental verbs to transmit and connect their political philosophies with the beliefs of the people. Obi's use of 'know' and 'please', for instance, in his March 2 speech simply connects his passion and views of a better Nigeria with the aspiration of Nigerian people who wanted him to see him become the president in order for the country to experience progress.

### Interpersonal Metafunction

As regards this metafunction, a very important tool for analysing it is 'modality'. It is used to show why a proposition is acceptable – the extent of the acceptability of a proposition. In fact, the speaker's view or estimation is indicated by his expression.

Iniamagha (2023a) quoting Guoling (2006) and Wang (2010) says modal verbs (modal auxiliary verbs) as presented in Table 6 are the ones used to express modality.

**Table 6: The category of Modal verbs**

	<u>low politeness</u>	<u>median politeness</u>	<u>high politeness</u>
<b>Positive</b>	can, may, could, might, dare	will, would, should, shall	must, ought to, need, has/had to
<b>negative</b>	Needn't, doesn't/didn't, need to/have to	Won't, wouldn't, shouldn't, isn't/wasn't to.	Mustn't, oughtn't, can't, couldn't, mayn't, mightn't hasn't/hadn't to

**Table 7: Modality analysis of Obi's speeches**

Total no. of words	Low politeness		Median politeness		High politeness		
	No	%	No	%	No	%	
805	+	1	0.12%	8	0.99%	16	1.97%
	-	0	0%	1	0.25%	0	0%
294	+	1	0.34%	5	1.70%	3	1.02%
	-	0	0%	4	1.36%	0	0%

Low politeness

There **MAY** be more mudslinging from those who are against the emergence of the new Nigeria... (paragraph 5 of April 18 tweet)

Median politeness

... We **WILL** work for that new Nigeria... (paragraph 3, March 2 speech)

I **WILL** never give up on this journey... (paragraph 1, April 18 tweet)

High politeness

We **MUST** now require that we do the right things... (paragraph 8 of March 2 speech)

Table 7 indicates that high politeness has the highest rank of 16 words (1.97%) for Obi's March 2 speech. In this speech, he used the modal verb 'WILL' of median politeness several times. It was followed by 'MUST', a high politeness modal verb and then "can". Mr Obi used modal verbs in the speech to show how civilly resolute he was to follow the path of peace to do what is right. Particularly, his use of WILL demonstrated how he and his running mate are unwavering to follow the rule of law, and not through violence, to show that he won the election.

Halliday's (1994) SFG also considers tense (past, present and future) after the modal verbs. Table 8 presents the statistics of the tenses used in the speeches

**Table 8: Statistic of tenses used in Obi's speeches**

Total number	March 2					
	Present		Past		Future	
	Simple	Perfect	Simple	Perfect	Simple	Perfect
805	53	5	10	Nil	16	Nil
Total number	April 18					
	Present		Past		Future	
	Simple	Perfect	Simple	Perfect	Simple	Perfect
294	14	2	8	Nil	9	1

Table 8 shows that out of 805 words that constituted Obi's March 2 speech, 53 of them are simple present verbs; 5 present perfect verbs. 10 are simple past verbs and there are no past perfect verbs. The simple future verbs are 16 in number while there are no perfect verbs. The Table also shows that in his April 18 tweet which had 294 words, 14 of them are simple present verbs and 2 present perfect verbs. There are no past perfect verbs, but 8 simple past verbs. The future tense verbs include: 9 simple future and only 1 future perfect verb.

Peter Obi was troubled by the state of the country, and this is the reason for his frequent use of the simple present to relate the country's expedition from the past to the present. He analysed issues based on the evidence that he had gathered, and this could have only been done through description; and to be descriptive requires simple present tense.

### **Personal Pronouns**

From Table 1, it is revealed that Obi's March 2 speech has 87 pronouns and the April 18 tweet, 31. Interestingly, for the March 2 speech, 44 out of the 87 pronouns are first person pronouns I and WE; whereas for the April 18 tweet, he employed 21 first person pronouns out of the 31 pronouns used. The use of these shows how involved, personal and passionate Obi is about the state of the country; it connotes how deeply moved he is to fix the issues that bedevil the country.

### **Textual Analysis**

Iniamagha (2023) quoting Wang (2010) says that Textual metafunction considers the internal organisation of a text with the aim to constructing a message; specifically, how the text is coherent, organised and logical in convincing its audience. In this study, the consideration is on how Obi organised his text to tranquilise his followers and discouraged them from perpetrating violence. The following are the sub-themes in the texts for analysis:

## March 2 speech

- i. **Disclaiming of fake news:** *Again, my dear people, let me correct an impression because I'm seeing some people saying in the media that I released one news or the other: I have never, directly or indirectly, spoken or r released any message since after voting on the 25<sup>th</sup> ...*
- ii. **Appreciation...** *the number one thing is gratitude. Gratitude to God Almighty that continues to protect and bless our dear country Nigeria. Number two is gratitude. Gratitude to Nigerians that participated in the election, answering the call as true citizens in our dear country.*
- iii. **Emphasis on the Nigerian spirit for hope:** *The resilience, the hard work, for a new Nigeria should not wane. Datti and I remain committed to that new Nigeria... The commitment of Nigerians, even in the face of unwarranted attacks, is a testimony that a new Nigeria is indeed possible...*
- iv. **Stating the fact:** *...It is a clear violation of the electoral rules and guidelines as we were promised. This election did not meet the minimum standard expected of a free, transparent, credible fair election. It will go down as one of the most controversial elections ever conducted in Nigeria.*
- v. **Call for peace:** *I must appeal to all Nigerians to remain peaceful, law-abiding, and conduct themselves in the most responsible manner*
- vi. **Demand for justice:** *...We must now require that we do the right things... I assure the good people of Nigeria that we will explore all legal and peaceful options to recall our mandate.*
- vii. **Pledging commitment:** *... I assure you that I am totally committed to a better future in this country, and nothing will stop that. Datti's commitment, my commitment, is total.*
- viii. **Assurance of hope:** *Please, do not despair... We must build a better Nigeria where Nigerian youth will be happy, glad to call their own country.*

## April 18 tweet

- i. **Reiterating and emphasising on peace and orderliness:** *I encourage Nigerians to remain calm and steadfast in the journey to reclaiming their mandate of a new Nigeria.*
- ii. **Acknowledging the rough path to liberating Nigeria from the hands of non-progressives:** *I never expected the journey to a new Nigeria to be an easy one. The forces, who had over the years lived off the old order, are bound to fight back as is being experienced now... There may be more mudslinging from those who are aga inst the emergence of the new Nigeria but I would never be deterred by the obstacles along the way to victory*
- iii. **Pledging commitment:** *We are on the right path and we will remain committed to the course. I reiterate my commitment to building a Nigeria that will be beneficial to every Nigerian*

- iv. **Guaranteeing to stick with the rule of law:** *I have always lived my life in the most law abiding manner...I will never knowingly break any law.*

From the foregoing textual breakdown, there is no gaining saying that Obi's language style and disposition is worthy of emulation. The answer to the research questions, '*what are the therapeutic ingredients in Peter Obi's speech that could have been responsible for the relative peace?*' and *how possible could Peter Obi's speech be devoid of toxicity having claimed to have been short changed?*', appears straightforward as his tranquil, literate, knowledgeable and effective communication approach exemplifies what peace building truly is. Indeed, there are no recognisable toxic/controversial elements in Obi's speeches that could have caused trouble.

This simply means Peter Obi is not guilty of the three elements that affect the use of appropriate language/communication as earlier highlighted. His style of language/communication is peace building itself. The following excerpts from his speeches confirm it:

*'...I must appeal to all Nigerians to remain peaceful, law-abiding, and conduct themselves in the most responsible manner...'*

*'...I encourage Nigerians to remain calm and steadfast in the journey to reclaiming their mandate of a new Nigeria...'*

*'...I have always lived my life in the most law abiding manner...I will never knowingly break any law...'*

The verbs, 'must appeal', 'encourage...to remain' and 'will never' indeed confirm the therapeutic nature of his speech.

### Conclusion

This study adopted Fairclough's three dimensional frameworks of critical discourse analysis and Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar to examine two of the post-election speeches of the Presidential Candidate of the Labour Party. It aimed at investigating the therapeutic elements in the speeches that may have been the reason there was no conflict after INEC announced Bola Tinubu as winner of the election. The investigation showed that Obi's March 2 post-election speech had 805 words that comprised of 50 sentences and 13 paragraphs; an average of 17 words per sentence, and 62 words per paragraph; 66 articles (definite and indefinite combined); 87 pronouns, with 50% of them being first person pronouns, 13% second person 13% and 15% third person. The text had 89 prepositions and 21 "to be" verbs. His April 18 X post had 294 words – 16 sentences and 6 paragraphs; an average of 18 words per sentence, and 49 words per paragraph; 27 articles (definite and indefinite combined); 31 pronouns – 67% being first person pronouns, and interestingly no second and the third persons. 46 prepositions and 14 'to be' verbs were used. The findings indicated that Obi's speeches, following Tinubu's announcement as winner of the election, had been therapeutic, and devoid of toxicity that could have caused unrest in the country and even in the diaspora. The utterance, 'I must appeal to all Nigerians to remain peaceful, law-abiding, and conduct themselves in the most responsible manner' among others, is evidence. The study, therefore, recommends that Nigerian politicians make peace building a priority by imitating the positive qualities, language style and disposition of Peter Obi which engender peace and unity.

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Poetry As An Elixir: A Therapoetics Reading OfTanure Ojaide's The Endless Song And Ken Saro-

Wiwa's Songs In A Time Of War

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### **Abstract**

This paper exploits the emerging critical proposition of Kontein Trinya termed: “Therapoetics, Perspective of Affective Arts” which is at its experimental stage. It explores the themes of creative works by revealing their meanings beyond “arts for arts sake” of the structuralist and formalist schools. Trinya's model looks at literary arts and their thematic relevance to the socio-economic, political, religious, philosophical, psychological, etc. undertones of either the author or the reader or both. This is also known as “affective literature” or literature with social intents. The researchers utilise this critical model in reading the poetry anthologies of two prominent Niger Delta poets: Tanure Ojaide and Kenule Saro-Wiwa. Even though the poets have written other works, this study is delimited to The Endless Song and Songs in a Time of War, respectively. Also inclined to a Marxist reading of both works, this study evaluates the social contexts in which the themes of the poems are effectively and affectively revealed. It is literary research, where the researchers critically engage both anthologies by extracting the poetic elements in the works to reveal their themes. References are also made to other relevant critical materials with the aim of revealing meanings intended by the poets. Evidently, the poets use their arts like balms to ameliorate the stress and strain emanating from societal pressures. The study, therefore, asserts that a “therapoetics” reading of both works is one of the ways of adducing the, hitherto, hidden meanings of the poems in the anthologies and recommends same to other readers and researchers engaging these and others works.

Key Words: Poetry, Elixir, Therapoetics, Reading, Trinya

### **Introduction**

In his 2019 inaugural lecture, Professor Kontein Trinya has espoused a literary model called “Therapoetics: Perspective of Affective Art”, which is being discussed, especially, by his students and scholars within the literary circle. It engages literary discourse within the effective utilization of their sociological themes.

This is unlike the formalist and structuralist backgrounds that see literature only as a holistic property that looks nowhere for its meaning other than itself or what is popularly called “art for art sake” or its mere aesthetic appreciation. But in his literary theory, Trinya is of the view that Literature serves some therapeutic effect, that is to say, literary engagements play significant roles in healing the minds of either the writer or the reader and sometimes both.

Thus, exploring this social utilization of which literature is gleaned; this paper evaluates the thematic essence of Tanure Ojaide's The Endless Songs and Ken Saro-Wiwa's Songs in Time of War. It attempts to highlight on how the poets derive some therapeutic benefits, while musing and crafting their works. Both anthologies are criticized with the aim of bringing out the health implications associated with the thematic targets of the poems in both anthologies. The discourse reveals how both poets effectively use

their poetic engagements to fight for social justice and by so doing enjoy some tranquil condition of their psychic states.

#### Ojaide and His Fearless Therapeutic Songs

The poet, Tanure Ojaide sets forth his poetic journey in his the endless song armed with spiritual fortifications, not in the mold of foreign spiritual engagements such as Christianity or Islam, but as a traditional practitioner.

This is the reason that the poet persona says: "I traverse the earth with a feather -/talisman, falling and rising" (1). The possible reason for this is that he may have been disenchanted with orthodox Christian and Islamic practices here in Africa. The poet feels that, although both religions have dominated the spiritual spheres of his nation or continent, yet all manners of evil pervade the nation's or continent's ethereal and physical spheres. This is the reason that the poet personalises his mission as sole adventurer with the first person pronoun, "I". Thus, he finds his decision in this direction as a blessing, "I count it a blessing" (1), even though, in the course of the said journey aimed at cleansing the land of its infamies, the poet reveals the degrees of personal afflictions that he has to face, "bruising my feet on the stone-path/towards a fresh pitch;/my blood is inseparable from my voice" (1).

The poet takes solace in the healing powers of his poetic musing by gladly informing, "and the song keeps me fit. Night bothers not my feet... the palm bows to the wind" (1). This suggests that the poet is encouraged by forces of nature that make things work in mysterious ways beyond his control:

What propels the wind to sing in a clearing,  
what turns on the eagle in its high nest  
lights up the wanderer's eyes  
on a long, long road through frontiers (1).

The poet is aware of the fact that the mission he is to embark on is not easy. He knows that the journey of cleansing a filthy land like his own corrupt nation is an onerous task, hence, he sees it: "Like the boa entering the stream to journey to the sea, or the cat; vexed with demosticity, breaking into the bush". (1). Armed with the health affective instruments of poetry, Ojaide uses the above symbolisms symptomatically of his freedom from repressive forces. He sees poetry as a kind of affective therapy that could become an elixir, potent enough to cure him from his sickly socio-economic and political plights, hence, he says:

I celebrate with them  
their zestful meeting with longing -  
I thirst for that draught  
that will fill me with bondless joy (1).

The poet's lack of freedom is identified as an ailment, and the only cure being his soothing and healing songs crafted in poetic renditions, which is akin to the liberty gained by a domestic cat that does not seek permission from his captors/his owners, but forcefully breaks himself lose from domesticated homely bondage. However encapsulated, the poet sees where he is as a bondage that limits his freedom. With such self-realisation, he no longer minds the risk associated with the wild that he is venturing into "their zestful meeting with longing." The poet sees the only potent therapy for him in the seemingly caged state of his existence, as his immutable poetic songs; though, he feels that the poetic engagement itself is like such other curative practices that come with relative pains, "falling and rising" (1). Even at that, he is not perturbed, because he is already poetically fortified in "a feather-/talisman" (1).

The spiritual fortification which the poet is endowed with in the first poem, becomes a morale booster that takes him away from any morbid fear that could lead to "anxiety neurosis and anxiety hysteria"

(Freud, 331) while on his poetic mission. Reflexes of such fearlessness resonate in the anthology, especially in the, “the vision” (3), because with it, the poet is sure that nothing will happen to him, even as he embarks on the odious adventure.

Fear is a biochemical source of trauma being a disease of its own. But the poet has taken care of it by getting himself therapeutically immune to a predisposition to the ailment called morbid fear. According to Mary Carole Moore, Joan Klemp and Anthony Moore: “When you realize through personal experience that you live beyond the physical body, you are released from the fear of death... you will feel energized” (19-20). This is the reason that the poet is optimistic that: “The Leopard that haunts us will die maybe in our lifetime, maybe not; time plies the ambush with an invisible hand” (3). The image of the “leopard” projects a symbolism of a cannibalistic oppressor, which stamps out the repressive socioeconomic and political systems that the poet is fearless of. But with the armour of his poetic instrument, the poet is shielded and joyfully awaiting the end of his oppressors and of course, the traducers of the poor masses. He remains unperturbed, however sharp and potent the invisible destructive claws of the oppressors might be, because, according to the poet, “time plies the ambush with an invisible hand” (3).

The poet awakens his kinsmen to wear the armour of vigilance, even though, a preliminary encounter with the agents of destruction has been seemingly won: “Let’s not dance because we won the mock-battle; the imagined foe doesn’t stretch us far enough” (3). As a precautionary measure, the poet suggests that, the battle for freedom at the “twilight” of military dictatorships to democratic regime, is partially won, there is still need for extra vigilance: “We have to incur debts to buy new weapons/or mend our broken ones, then go to the bush to prove our mettle” (3). The poet relies much on what comes out of the head, which in this instance, can be identified as poetry, “what head is too small for desires?” (3). He posits that:

It is not the habit of the hunter  
to blind himself with drinks; no  
he must have a clear vision of the game,  
then listen to movement, breath and smell-  
silence is his guide (3).

Having immersed himself in extraordinary poetic protection and foresight, the poet “knows where to hit the big game once just once, and it falls.” (3). Ojaide has further assurance that “as for the leopard that haunts us, it will surely die, the ambush taur” (3). He is seemingly inoculated against the disease of morbid fear said to kill even faster than hunger that the masses are often subjected to.

What the poet initially clothes himself with, as a mere spiritual amour is made to graduate into physical protective weaponry in his third poem titled “in the closet” where his “closet of metal always/accumulates steel and stone” (4). Having therapeutically outgrown the ailment of fear, Ojaide goes further to assert: “I nourish obligation/with a thousand offerings” (4). Like an efficacious ophthalmological therapy, the poet’s vision is also enhanced, so as “to keep the night aglow/not to be short of sight” (4), anymore.

So immune with poetic therapy, the poet is no longer afraid to engage in his solo fight for the oppressed as he volunteers:

I bear the weapons of the assaulted  
in the night,  
keep the misery of the robbed  
in vaults of vengeance;  
in my veins course tears of the wounded (4).

He is optimistic of the success of his mission, because:

when the explosion comes, it startles -  
a break-through in annals of silence  
in the weary face;  
hatched, the miracle incubating  
in the closet of metals (4).

This is a testimony that the poet gives, because they “have witnessed smiles impregnated/ with steel and stone” (4). Still, he reasserts his optimistic therapeutic stance “in the growth of the hunger... the helpless wear his talisman outside his arms...”, adding that “nakedness is his armour,” (4), with “arms” being a synecdoche for his therapoetics musing, a sort of mental medications, like a patient that is sustained by oxygen pipes – “there’s succor as breath is about to fail” (4).

The poet remains fearless, because his “closet of metal” being the protective instrument of poetry “always accumulates steel and stone, accumulates strength with patience” (4), as well.

As the endless song progresses to the forth poem, Ojaide changes his point of view to the plural pronoun “us” and “we”, projecting the Marxist stance of the oppressed struggling against the oppressors in the society. Yet, poetry remains the weapon of the poet, who assumes the leadership frontline of the battle aimed at surmounting the oppressors. He wishes to fully engage and sustain the battle, hence:

From the scaffold of the pain we keep watch over them,  
from the perilous precipices of misery we keep watch over them,  
from the exposed post of holiness, cold and clammy,  
from the slums of existence, we keep watch over them (5).

While the first pronoun “we” represents the downtrodden “slums” being led by the poet, who is already poetically armed spiritually and physically, the third person plural pronoun “them” represents the tyrannical and dictatorial leaders that, “savage us” and “we withdraw to cabal” (5). Rather than the pressures exerted by the oppressors decimating the poet and his oppressed comrades, it ends up toughening them for the enduring battles.

According to the poet, the oppressed have developed immunity to repressive system with “experience” gathered “over the ages” (5). Such experience has helped them through odious experiences, including but not limited to “our women know how to march naked at twilight/and rid the land of tormentors, or men know how to bury despots with their paraphernalia” (5). The experiences make the poet and his comrades to always regroup in the shadows of their “fallen warriors” (5). This suggests that it is the oppressors that have always lost the raging socio-economic battles, not the oppressed, who often emerge triumphantly.

The repressive forces are symbolically represented in the poetic personae, such as tyrants like Orodje (the tyrannical first King of Okpe in Urhobo Kingdom in the Niger Delta) and King Ogiso (a historical Benin Oba) whose excess tyranny and rule might have led to the emigration of the Urhobo people from the dynasty of the Benin empire (5 - 6).

But the wall of the oppressed is surprisingly strengthened further by additional elastic stretch from the despondent efforts of the tyrants. The historical despots are mere symbolism of the contemporary despotic leaders, identified in military configurations as:

when Ogiso wielded his sword against his own subjects,  
he fired the guns loaded in our guts;  
when the tortoise grew fat as others thinned out,  
he stepped into our death-charges (5).

Intriguingly, the poet sees the efficiency of poetry as a potent bait or weapon to ensnare, entrap and kill despotic systems or their leaders. This musing gives the poet much reliance on his poetic capability and reoccurs as a veritable curative medication to healing the national stress induced by despotic regimes. Consequently, “each praise-song brought them closer to the ambush” (5). This is because, the poet being a man who poetically diagnoses, knows “what they loved most and what would ruin them” (5), the despots.

Being their therapy against induced suffering and stress, the “will” of the poet and his comradesly oppressed “is the Iroko tree rooted in our hearts, it survives whatever stormrages them” (5). Thus, rather than being depressed, the poet persona and his comrades have developed the courage to “hold” themselves “and laugh cynically at” their “tormentors”, because by their musing, they “know more than the beast terrorizing” (5) them. The unbroken comradeship leading to the collective triumph of the poet and the masses is identified by Kum Song as “the demonstration of collective heroism” (11).

The poet already immune to such unhealthy stress as the Nigerian nation and populace are facing currently, is optimistic that the despotic leaders “will fall into a deep hole/as they cavort in our streets” (5) and oppressing the populace.

Therapeutically stoic, the poet reechoes “our will has become our god” (6), knowing how best to lead their “persecutors away”, “before unleashing thunder”, “in the night of their power” (6). This captures the sudden death (before daybreak) of the erstwhile military despot, Gen. Sani Abacha. The news of Abacha dying after eating “an apple while enjoying amidst two ‘imported’ babes from India” (Adeniyi, 231) changed the political landscape of the nation he once held tyrannically.

Ojaide paradoxically takes a soothing balm in his poem, “no prescription cures a country nobody loves”, noting that “...exceptions” such as the poor in the society outstretching alms giving to the poor of the poorest is an elixir to his existence and also “gladdens the heart” (8). This spotlights the poet’s pathetic encounter with “a nameless school girl...” surrendering “her recess-rice coin to a beggar, one smeared with the sitting indifference of passers-by” (8). The poet exhilarates his passion in humanity’s show of compassion to one another, unlike where the rich look the other way, while the poor groan in pains of abject poverty that bit them to death.

Ojaide’s agony is relieved, as soon as he encounters the poor school little girl giving all that she has to the one that needs it most, at the material time. To the poet, it is antithetical to those, who have in excess, but cannot give, even when the poor languish to death. One could sadly recall how the excessively rich in Nigeria stashed huge sums of monies to rot in obscure places while the poor who needed money for their daily upkeep emaciate in hunger during the recent current swap in the country.

According to the poet, the action of the care-free rich in the society is synonymous with the hateful disputation they display to the nation, leading to its retarded growth, because “no prescription cures a sick country nobody loves” (8). The poet regrets that the all-she-has, that the poor school girl gives as charity to the poorest of the poor makes no national news headlines, unlike the insignificant and un-impactful that those who rape the nation naked showcase in national and international media outfits.

The poet laments that the nation’s leaders do not love the country and assumes that love for his country in the next poem “for my love”, where, the poet’s love for the nation is seen in the fashion of revolutionary instruments. He feels that revolution is a potent requisite therapy that can heal the nation of infamies or change the state of anomy as it was done in Cuba, wherein, the country’s president, Gen. Fidel Castro pulled the trigger and “shot in the vein” (9). This is symbolic in his Castro’s “revolutionary” strike in Cuba, when he led the country “from 1958 to 2008” (Wikipedia) that changed the Cuban

political history for good.

The poet's inspiration, more like an energy giving therapy is "spirited, thanks to the prayers of Waiters, in our avowed desires – we will not forget our steps/will not lose our bloodsprung notes to the austere winds" (9). The poet, who has an inseparable bond with the masses, is again energised by the inspiring revolutionary news he gets from faraway lands, such as the Cuban revolutionary political history.

This is the reason he says "we grow stronger with the news of rain from afar" (9), which synchronises with Jack Tressider's revelation that "... the gods determine whether to withhold rain, unleash it with punishing force or sprinkle it sweetly like a blessing..." (158). He reckons that the expedient time for his country revolution is now: "Here is the hour, not a transference of duty to those/worse equipped than us in time to work up the wonders" (9). The energizing therapy of the poet is injected from: "The lesson of our spendthrift lives" executed by the nation's leadership, which to him, "brings us fresh weapons/after a mean statement of account at a long term's end." (9). As an elixir, the poet resorts to songs rendered in seemingly tranquilizing lullaby; so he says "I sing of the moment with its own warriors angered/by a million abuses of freedom, of human love" (9).

Like the "dialyzer machine" ([www.narayanahhealth.org](http://www.narayanahhealth.org)) that aids ailing patients with blood and renal diseases to resuscitate back to life, the poet uses the song as a pipe to link with the masses, wherefrom, he draws his strength, stressing: "I sing of this day with its arsenal of a common will" (9). The "common will" is the general will of the proletarian class to consistently fight to break through the powers of the bourgeoisie which, according to the poet, will lead to the eventual liberation of the poor.

With his poetic weaponry, the poet is energised, hence, he refuses to be daunted out of his endangered liberation struggle. He does not need any orthodox or traditional pain killer medication to keep him strong and fit on the battle field; rather, he needs just his therapeutic songs rendered affectively to engender his relentless fight, no matter how murky and risky the battle front may seem.

Infused with such therapoetics energies, the poet antithetically assumes the position of a liberator tyrant, who is equipped with requisite poetic weaponry. So armed, he ready in full combat mood to fight the real despots in the society: "O the shadows of the tyrants we raise in our blood jostle us in daily walks out of our senses" (10). Being mentally equipped, thus far, the poet goes further to seek his comrades' spiritual supports from the traditional power spheres, saying:

we move into the cult house to invoke the god  
of our desired mountains, lose ourselves  
in the dance at the sight of one possessed;  
we are in the service of a brute for livelihood,  
damned with inordinate desires. (10).

Enejite Oseoghene Ojaurage agrees that: "Ojaide incorporates in his poetry the people's affinities with these deities" (500), espoused above.

Because of his mental and spiritual emersions that therapeutically fortifies, make him whole and fit for the battle afore, the poet is weary of those who stand aloof or on the fence: "So many stand on tiptoe on stools mounted on tiled ego/without getting to the peephole of fresh insight" (10). Even at that, he is unperturbed, but ready to go and face the daunting liberation battle front. Nonetheless, as the battle becomes fiercer, the poet remains unruffled, because he is conscious of the fact that success is at the corner "who knows if we are so near, in the dark, in the outskirts of a misted destination?" (10). He drums his insights from his poetic foresight, which continues to inject him with required fighting strength or energy boosting zests.

Even though, the poet is aware of the weapon of the oppressor which is induced hunger: “The orphaned hope of a failed struggle disturbs with the sandfilled prospect of a beach squad, dependents abandoned to the fangs of austerity” (10) he refuses to get famished by the misery exacerbated by hunger. This is because his system is already saturated with spiritual and therapeutic energies, which are capable of sustaining him till success is sure at the battle front.

While at the battle front, the poet does not want to give a second thought to the tempting trick of hunger, hence he says: “This debate defeats despite the bold tenor of the act” (10). According to the poet, evidence of suffering abounds, while engaging ferociously at the battle ground. Such pieces of evidence include, but not limited to “...itches (of the hands), sweats, mud, or some stench as testaments...” (10). Accordingly, the poet says, the long-expected time of liberation is now, because so much times had been gravely wasted already “an hour’s grace, already sentenced” (10). This is because: “Only the God we do not know knows what lies in wait/iff there is no cushioning from the karmic rocks” (10).

He rhetorically wonders why the oppressors refuse to see the vanities in excessive materialism that often ends in the graveyard “... that life that ends with cows, mansions, and bodies dressed for consumption?” (10). As the bible says, Ojaide reechoes those worldly acquisitions of materialisms often pursued by desperate money mongers, are all but vanities abandoned by man when his last breath ceases.

In his, “the dogma of patience”, the poet persona and his comrades seem to have lost grip of the energy they have in the previous poems, because all the while, they have been hoping on the “promised respite”, hence, patiently, their “lives/have been wandering paths, almost ending in the morass of pain” (11). Getting so feeble due to the effect of biochemical exhaustion, owing to induced hunger, they find it relatively difficult to continue to pull themselves off the shackles and perpetual pull of poverty:

Asked to sacrifice to lift ourselves  
from the depth of misery,  
we have neither the luck of a bull gift  
nor the cash to buy the rare offering (11).

Being part of them, he sees the downtrodden as being so ceaselessly trampled into the depth of poverty, that they either have lost the physical strength to fight their ways out or lack the financial muscle to buy or bribe their ways through, as it has become the unconventional norm in his society, Nigeria, where corruption has become so endemic that the poor lack “... the cash to buy the rare of offering” (11).

Though not giving up having been so endowed by the potency of his poetic zeal, the poet is to be distracted by the concession of unseen forces:

... these days of brightly draped idols,  
there are no gods contended with humility  
to accept tears in a place of drinks  
or sweet in place of bull “blood” (11).

These are identifiable artificial and spiritually defects that seem to derail and weaken the energy that the poet and his fighting comrades already garnered: “Dampened, then stoked by the same waiting, wanderers lose their tiredness in a new road where waiters will be restituted for past tears” (11). This is a state of bliss that the poet expects when they win the battle.

But as the poem progresses towards the end, we see the poet persona suddenly jerking out of that seeming slumber that comes to drain his poetic energy and spirit. Here we hear him retorting: “And we shall peel the god sent yarns before eating, despite the hunger biting us, wash our hands clean before the feast” (11). This sudden realization reinvigorates the poet’s consciousness to the fact that, after every toil is boom, “the feast.” (11). It is noteworthy, that the masses epitomised by the poet, especially, has been denied the common feast, hence, in the next poem “taking breath” (12), the poet laments “sometimes I

feel that those who fall eternally behind turn to stones, and I know how it hurts to fail" (12).

The poet laments, "we could have gone further than here by now, but... we are where we ought to be" (12). He draws his soothing poetical balm from the fact that "the baobab, once abused, is an ally in our loneliness" (12). Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala confirms the poet's lament when she says: "By the time we began our economic reform program, Nigeria had become synonymous with corruption" (81, 2012). Again, the poet is consoled that, luckily, "they did not break down before the lion's den, lucky that in famine we did not choke ourselves with poisonous fruits" (12). Ojaide diagnoses that the starvation in the nation is direct evidence of corrupt practices leading to the rich living in opulence, while the poor starve to sickening untimely deaths.

Undeterred, the poet celebrates "here we take breath in the race: let the evil djinns go with the passing storm; we'll proceed in the vigour of our rejuvenation" (12). The joy which the poet exhilarates in the course of his musing, is a therapy against the lack of it, which causes high blood pressure and hypertension. But having found requisite therapoetics joy in his god of poetry, the poet feels hale and hearty.

In Ojaide's "the day's resolve", we see how his ideals, dreams, and ideologies become a therapy that strengthens his resolve to face the seemingly impossible task of fighting to restitute his ailing nation. This is as the poet wakes up to search for the wealth he "discovered in his "dream", stressing that "night can make me a fighter in its magic fraught-armor ... then as a lizard I can kill the elephant, or a bushrat maim the provocative leopard" (31).

The poet tells us clearly that he can only do this, once he is inspired by his poetic musing: "If I invoke the god that irregularly haunts my heart" (31). To engage successfully in the said combat, the poet has to reject offers baited in the form of bribery and corruption, or stoically shun the glamour of life, hence he says:

I have to barter delicacies for steel;  
my heart will turn its back on every bitch  
that can show me down,  
my appetite has to reject the farm  
that will send me to sleep at noon,  
and my eyes blind to the seduction of a colourful world (31).

All these are poetic armors deliberately crafted as therapeutic weaponry to guard and guide the poet at the battle front knowing that he is out, not to fight dwarfs, but giants. He is in an "adventure to wipe off weakness" and also fight never to "retreat" (31) despite encountering everything frightening:

the half nose, half eyes,  
the half everything others think will finish them;  
I will kick the monster in the face,  
for I know he can't hurt me (31).

This is the reason that Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala in her *Fighting Corruption is Dangerous* sees Nigerian corruption as a monster that fights fiercely back, once it is fought. But even at that, Ojaide is undeterred in his fighting spirit.

As a hunter fighting alone, Ojaide says: "I seem to go alone" and which is not enough weakness to deter the poet in his avowed liberation fight, because he knows he "cannot arrive at the rainbow's end/without a shield" (31). That shield is his poetic inspiration or energy. The more the poet is ridiculed over his

adventurous engagement, the more his muse energises him. Thus, he says “even through ridicule/which has driven me out of lethargy, driven me this far into what was another world” (31), he is not deterred. His muse becomes his armour and god of fearlessness; so with it, he is ready to face any intimidating Goliath of his time. It is evident that without his muse, he could not have come all-out to face the frightening war.

Ojude's shielding by his poetic muse clearly resonates in “the wanderer's song” (32), where as “a drought stricken nomad drenched by rain”, the poet persona says: “I boast as gun in the battle-front/to really let myself go” (23). With his poetic foresight, instead of being afraid to die at the warfront, as a rights activist and journalist, Dele Giva was blown off via a concealed bomb parcel, the poet rather stoically reassures: “I smell the salt of happiness” and he reassuringly informs: “I run with cheetah legs, I am mad without rags” (32). He speaks of his “footway to the oasis” being his poetic protective concoction, where his “life will have its fill” (32). Through the inspiration of many who do not have the wherewithal that the poet has and who often die at the still births of similar struggles, the poet's adventure is of an assured essence, because of the affective powers of his musing.

With this reason, he undauntedly says:

These days aspirations crash on the wide road,  
but as I gaze through transparent days and nights  
I seek a walking-pace caravan  
coming to me though a vast time scape (32).

This is to say that, like medicated lens, the poet can, by his musing, see further than he ought to have seen, even into a seemingly bleak future, “darkening horizons” (33). A similar thematic atmosphere is also threatened in the following poem, “desert rain”, wherein he says: “I did not relent with my voice ... with offerings to the god of songs”, his muse. Like a man who is been resuscitated with life-giving blood or tranquilizers, the poet says “now a magic farm relieves the starving body/I drink my fill and have the heart to move” (33). Whatever tribulations that the poet encounters in course of his fight, is stoically considered as therapeutically cleansing agents, hence, “the rain washes dust/off its flowery feathers” (33).

In his “song for ita: 11”, the poet reveals, that what is pushing him to fight are forces beyond him “... this struggle beyond me” (35). Then, he goes further to say:

Something is working on me  
in the direction of a dance  
I have to lead in spite of myself  
I have intimation of a priest (35).

This foregrounds a celebrative success mood in “song for ita: I, where he boisterously reveals:

we create idols  
against idols, I dwarfing monsters  
that once shook us  
hands and feet  
with threats of death (34).

It is so revealing that the poetic musing in Ojiaide is like the military general's command being marshaled from within him and nothing stops his dutiful compliance: “We can now tell, having been born weak why we cannot hold back the army within us with only prayers and resolutions” (36). This is also in tune with his taking” the first steps in obedience to dictates/which have no room for our smiles” (36).

The inspirational or compelling force is further revealed as “the blood of desire whirling in the eyes, we that find freedom on the road, in the very veins that keep us fit” (36), which purports a physiotherapeutic

leaning of the poem's thematic essence as we see in his, "song for ita: I V".

The poet reassures that being so medically fit to move to the battle field, his:

arrival is preordained and  
and my eyes and your feet shall take us  
into the planet that will render us abler  
than mere sight seers and sprinters (37).

Kontein Trinya asserts that "the struggle to ensure a better society is that, which creative writers have also joined their weapons, offering themselves as a voice to the voiceless" (2018, 400).

In his "emergency kit", it is evident that Ojaide sees his poetic power as a natural immunization against any form of oppression and makes it evident that with his oratory poetic prowess, he will eventually triumphant in any eventuality, hence, he commands: "Folks, let's drink ourselves to death in the party as long as we wear sponges in the tongue", (40). Sponges in the tongue means the cleansing antiseptics of poetic medications. He adds "let's stay awake in our unending dreams so that nobody will take us for gone and cheat us out of our lives". The poet comes plain to clinically announce: "I have a lifesaver installed in my body/just in case I am knocked..." (40), while fighting the powers-that-be.

In his "quest at a rotary dinner", we encounter how the poet fights to resist being lured via bribery to abandon his avowed struggle to liberate the oppressed, but he adamantly, resists: "I will never be ready for the champagne cup, never be ready to hold down the beast/that I am, never be ready for the wheel" while stoically stressing "take away the dishes" (41). In this light, Femi Okremuette Shaka has argued that Ojaide's poetry attacks modern vices attributable to political authoritarianism (514).

His clinical lens is so efficacious that he quickly sees the bribery offer by the bourgeoisie as trying to lure him, "the beast into a glittering case" (41). The oppressors think that the poet-beast will be attracted by the baiting glamour of the shining cage, get ensnared and entrapped, not knowing that already, Ojaide has therapeutically been immune to such baited traps, before setting out to the frontline to fight all repressive forces, thereby sustaining "the dripless song on the "lips" of the poet, meaning his therapeutic energy.

### **Conclusion**

This paper discusses how poetry serves as an elixir in very turbulent socio-economic and political atmospheres. It does this by critically carrying out a therapoetics reading of Tanure Ojaide's poetry anthology entitled *The Endless Song*. The research effectively highlights the usefulness of poetic engagement, which serves as a sort of therapy to poets, especially when they find themselves in atmospheres that seem gloomy. The poet is seen as an advocate for a peaceful and egalitarian society, where true humanity should be restored. Even though, Ojaide writes in times when no physical war is declared and fought, yet he thematically highlights that there is a persistent ravaging socio-economic war between the rich and the poor in the society.

In all, through his thematic exploration, Ojaide has demonstrated that, indeed, poetry is therapeutic in diverse forms; especially serving to heal the poet, while musing or creating his arts. From the analyses, it is also pertinent that, perhaps, the reader could be so positively impacted, while utilising the artistic work.

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THE RAPPOETICS, THE AFFECTIVE SOCIO-POLITICAL AND MARXIST LEARNING OF JOE  
USHIE'S ECLIPSE IN RWANDA

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### Abstract

This research seeks the utilitarian values of the poetry anthologies of Joe Ushie, entitled *Eclipse* in Rwanda. The poet hails from the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, but uses his poetic crafts to engage in critical national and international issues beyond the confines of his region, which is now facing serious ecological challenges. The challenges being faced by the region principally emanates from the socio-economic and political crises of crude oil explorations and exploitations. Critically, this work espouses Kontein Trinya's concept of: "Therapoetics, Perspectives on Affective Art" to engage the anthology in an attempt to adduce relevant socio-political and economic themes that are revealing in work. Trinya's emerging critical model seeks to deconstruct the ideas that creative works merely use aesthetic vehicles to speak only to itself, as formalists and structuralists have insisted creative arts should be viewed or utilized. The model espouses that works of arts have utilitarian values, both to the authors, readers and society, wherefrom the works are crafted. This is hinged on the fact that arts are products of the society, thus, necessarily serviceable to societal essence. The discourse beams on the fact that Trinya's budding critical model underscores the utilitarian values of literature in addition to the aesthetic outlooks it conveys. For ease of effective discourse, the poems are treated almost serially by engaging those that are relevant to our discourse, while other works are consulted to help in unearthing the target themes. The study recommends in-depth scholarly engagements of this critical model which is sure to make some difficult poetry such as Wole Soyinka's, Christopher Okigbo's, etc. accessible to readers.

**Keywords:** Therapoetics, Socio-political, Affective, Marxist, Learning

### Introduction

Literature over the ages has been the engagement of creative artists in their attempt to reflect on man's physical and spiritual worlds, especially things that affect mankind negatively or positively. As the oldest genre of literature, poetry has often not suggested its meaning at its surface reading. Its meanings are usually encoded, but revealed through close reading and evaluation on the background of certain critical apparatus and various interpretation tools like metaphors, images, symbols, and other literary devices.

It is from this background that this research explores an emerging critical perspective espoused by Kontein Trinya called: "Therapoetics and Affective Literature". The critical model seeks to unravel how creative works; especially poetry goes beyond the level of suggesting meanings to the next level of utilization anchored on the healing effects of poetry either to the author, reader or both. From this perspective, this paper carries out an interpretative discourse on the therapeutic effects of the poetry of Joseph Ushie in his anthology entitled *Eclipse* in Rwanda. The therapeutic reading of the poems reveals that, apart from their social themes gleaned from the Marxist perspectives, the poets have also derived some therapeutic values in the course of their creative enterprise.

Ushie and his Affective Marxist Therapoetics

Joe Ushie's *Eclips* in Rwanda serves as part of the emerging Nigerian voices in verse, coming after the

first generation poetry from the country. His poetic practice is modeled in the Marxist fashion to display his love for a better society for all. It is in this essence that the second poem in the anthology: "Songs of Sisyphus" serves as a sort of baptism of the poet, which immersion into the poetic sphere arms him for the battle he sets out to execute, hence, he says:

Quartered in this shell  
which shapes my tongue  
how can I change my song  
when the hills burn still  
and the smoke choke the valleys? (14)

His deliberate immersion into the realm of the muse or engagement with his god of poetry is like an initiation into an ethereal cultic sphere that provides some antidotes with which he feels fully protected to face the daunting challenges we find in successive poems.

Like the title of the poem suggests, a Sisyphian task is a task that is ceaseless, painstaking, difficult and interminable. According to Allen Walker Reed "Sisyphus" is "in Greek Mythology, a crafty, greedy king of Corinth, condemned in Hades forever to roll up hill a huge stone that always rolled down again" (1175). The societal burden, especially injustice seen in how "the Sahara slaves still the clan's beard the Atlantic plays cruel games with our huts and no one asks why?" (14) is a daunting and intimidating task that cannot be dutifully confronted without the poet's immersion antidote. The poetic antidote is expected to clothe and so immune the poet from anticipated, but genuine fear that would come from "the claws of that leopard on throne... deep in the flesh of our clan's sheep still" which is "administering a tiered death?" (14) to the susceptible masses.

Yet, the poet refuses to "change" his "song", even as terrorising and frightening as when:

the cursed hands of  
our gods of war have turned  
their sword on our throats  
breaking the fences of  
our grain field for pests to  
ravage our natural shield? (14).

ravage our natural shield? (14).  
It is as the Sisyphian song progresses to the fifth stanza that we see the poet coming out plainly to pitch his tent with those he chooses to advocate for, having been successfully immersed. They include but not limited to: "... that child orphaned by design... that woman widowed by plan; our streets peopled by bones;" (14). These are metaphors that are utilised by the poet to symbolically suggest the impoverished masses that suffer in the hands of their tyrannical rulers. John Okpoko terms the situation as "playing politics with the lives of starving Nigerians" (3).

Being so armed and going out fearlessly for the war, Ushie sharpens his poetic song to become a veritable weapon as it turns "a spear or a dagger and hounds and bounds the leopard that pounds on our fragile sheep" (15). At this point, we see the poet's deliberate affinity with the downtrodden, who suffer from the "predatory politics of ruling elites seeking personal gain, often precipitating violence for their own ends" (Meredith, 688)

The Poet vehemently resists what he calls "my fear-anchored inaction" because the ghosts of his "proud ancestors curse" him "for selling the clan's honour" by his "fear-anchored inaction" (15). Ushie is able to confront or risk the daunting task of fighting the mighty, because he believes in the antidote of his poetic protection. This is the reason that he becomes fearless to face the monster eating up all the good things that nature has provided for the betterment of humanity. Therefore, he insists on fearlessly singing "same

song lifelong” (15). This suggests that with the efficacy of his poetic weaponry, the phobia of fear is cured, so he can go headlong to fearlessly fight to correct societal ills, regardless of the imminent risk inherent in the onerous task.

In “Town-crier”, the poet identifies the oppressors he is out to fight. They are symbolic in “the mouthing of those iron-fisted, self-armoured laws of the leopard” (16). Jack Tresidder sees the image of the leopard, like the lion, as symbolizing: “ferocity, pitiless force... battle emblem... associated with evil both in ancient Egypt and Christian tradition” (110). The poet is conscious of this fatalistic symbolism, yet fearlessly ready to confront it.

But that is not all, because the poet identifies another complex character, who serve as a middle villain that intermediates to become advocate of the oppressor. This is seen in his “Excellency’s sigh-reign”, being a pun, which the poet persona laments that it blows to “agitate the ears of the learn sales boy;” (16). They are the gullibly paid to praise-sing the oppressors, “the cosmetic camaraderie of the rented, camera-daring crowd shouting hosanna to the leopard, long live the General!” (16). The word “General” spotlights the decades of military era in the Nigerian political space, where Generals like Sani Abacha and Ibrahim “Babangida”, “returned with armed troops” (Siollun, 197) held the nation by the throat and chocking it and its people to socio-economic suffocation.

Ushie is satirical of the praise singers of the perilous times as he calls them “gushing flood of endless double-talk” (16). The poet uses words such as “dead rich villains”, “General”, “leopard” and “veiled hangman’s” to suggest military despotism. Ushie symbolically uses the words to lament that tyrants succeed in their malevolent games, because they maliciously hire few gullible people from within the suffering masses to engage in cheap flattery advocacies. To the poet, such negative advocacies are potent weapons that help the dictator to thrive in their treacherous enterprises. Hence, the poet rhetorically interrogates in refrain that runs in three stanzas of the poem: “how much is your pain how much is your gain” (16). This is because the poet is disappointed that a gullible few could offer themselves as cannon fodders that align with their perpetual oppressors for the sake of collecting peanuts.

He sees the peanuts as merely criminally greasing the chain of endemic corruption already suffocating the populace. This is the reason, the poet exclaims: “Ah, poor crier, you can’t beat the rich” (17). This is to emphasise that the rich cunningly use whatever is given to the praise-singers as mere bait to sustain their continued oppression.

The poet is unequivocal in exposing the rich in the next poem, where he decries that those, who deceive the poor that manner no longer falls, are the same people that ensure that the manner that still pours does not drop down to the poor. The poet is dismayed that the rich use wide “trays” to block the manner coming for everybody from dropping down to the hands of the poor signified by “us here bellow” (18). But with his poetic hindsight, Ushie refuses to be deceived, because he is aware that:

manner falls still  
And no fall in its fall;  
But stops in the trays of few  
Fixed high in the sky  
who must block its fall (18).

Poetically immune to the phobia of military generals in public “administration” (Agbese, 306), the poet fearlessly agitates such inequality as the bane of societal injustice identified with the symbolism of: “Cacophonies of conferencing/skeletons of famished streets” (19) in the next poem.

In “Tale of an applicant”, the poet juxtaposes the worlds of the poor and the rich and takes lulling poetic pleasure in the fact that both the rich engulfed with security phobia and the poor straying about looking for survival are chained in one form of imprisonment or the other. It is satirical that the rich ironically wall themselves off the poor applicants roaming the streets while seeking for his survival “with a mansion-nesting wall” with security warning: “Beware of dogs” (20). By walling themselves that way, the poet observes that the rich themselves are not also enjoying the natural liberty freedom and which places them in one form of psychotic and social quagmire or the other.

While musing on the vanity of the high wall security, the poet is comforted or healed by the reality that both the rich occupying the palatial abodes and he, (the poet) personifying the poor roaming the streets in search for jobs are both philosophically imprisoned, one way or the other. This is why he says: “Prisoners are we both –I, by your greed, you, by dread of me.” (20). Despite his pathetic socio-economic state of misery, the poet takes enduring therapeutic pleasure with the realization that “... while this wall marks your misery, I tread on your little finger whose pain you’ve ignored” stressing that “my misery, mark on our two faces” (20).

The poet’s association with the downtrodden and the symbolism thereof, is showcased in “Homereel”, that demonstrates the poet persona’s homeward trip, wherein he faces the reality of the countryside dwellers. The poet regrets that it is at the countryside that the politicians derive their powers in every election season “where the chameleon politician reaps his votes” (24), yet they leave the inhabitants perpetually rejected, poor and dejected till the next election time. Ushie decries that the poor countryside dwellers are in the innocent habit of freely giving the power-brokers the light, but in return, the politicians usher them darkness: “They gave you the light but you would not reflect” (24). The poet’s agonizing empathy for the poor lies in the reality that the plights, thereof, remain an inescapable burden, even on the rich: “But your heart bears its own cross for the people’s lean necks bearing the middlemen’s weight” (24).

The poet sees the retrogressive fortunes of the poor as “the people’ (sic) fall from yam to cassava.....” (23). He is concerned about the irony of the poor, who stoically forget their temporal plights in search for a better ethereal life, hereafter, especially on Sunday Christian services:

in the solemn church building  
where anxieties are covered  
every Sunday, palms thunder cracks  
your eardrum, the women headgear  
swish in the offering-charged air  
the men bellow songs like the wee-hours  
humming of the village wooden song (23).

The poet stands as a double middle man, one as a poor poet-fighter standing with the oppressed to fight the oppressor. Next, he is a middle class man working to earn his lean income. That advantage of earning income is symptomatic of the rich, which is the vantage point that he stands to fight while stretching his hands of comradeship to pave the way to poor so that they join the rich class someday. His sojourn to the countryside is symbolic of that link with the helpless presented in the image of “palm wine”, “tapper”, with “his string of singing calabash on his shoulder, heads for the hills” (22).

According to Ushie, the “Amagashi Market” is a microcosm of unhealthy traditional market environment, where the poor buy and sell, unlike the sanitized supermarkets that the rich transact their own businesses. But what could make the poet to slip into a sad psychotic state is efficaciously cured by the reality that the “market” of the poor is “ever-defying death” (23). Panch Ramalinga names such therapy as: “Hydroxyzine: a drug that relieves anxiety without causing drowsiness” (114). This means

that, despite leaving the poverty stricken sight or site of the country side dwellers “with your tears, your guilt”, the poet is therapeutically soothed that the oppressed will never ever die under the oppressors’ “violence like a bug-infested rag” (Brutus, 112) in the then Apartheid regime of South Africa.

In “To my unborn children”, the poet seeks a remedial effect for his unborn children by using his god of poetry to redirect his future children from coming through him to a society he is already at war with its leaders, who make the world uninhabitable. He does not want his unborn children to be part of his endless battle of righting the wrongs of his society. The poet does not want his children to join in his society of uncertainties, so he muses:

in the solemn church building  
where anxieties are covered  
every Sunday, palms thunder cracks  
your cardrum, the women headgear  
swish in the offering-charged air  
the men bellow songs like the wee-hours  
humming of the village wooden song (23).

Presumably, the poet says if “these thorns defy times” then his unborn children should quickly “sail sail away from my bair” (25). Metaphysically redirecting his unborn children away from his society lacking in social security, is another way that the poet feels relieved of future psychical trauma, which is more or less a therapeutic analgesic against such impending psychotic pains, that the poet would have been subjected to should he see his children born to suffer as envisaged.

In his eponymous poem: “Eclipse in rwanda”, the poet uses the power of his artistry to ease off the psychogenic effect that the gory sight of the genocidal action or scene in: “Rwanda” would have caused him. He does this by graphologically lower-casing the initial alphabet of the name of the country, “rwanda” which is very instructive of how the poet feels the nation and her humanity have been reduced to at such needless wartime.

Despite the fact that the poet hyperbolically sees the television documentary that aired the killing spree in the country as “these sharp needles at heart a screen filled with Rwanda woes” (26), he refuses to break down totally in health. Rather, he chooses to resort to “hypnotic analgesia” (Ramalingam, 115) a sort of therapy administered via his musing state. However, he empathetically beholds mind-tormenting “valleys turned into bowls of human flesh” and when scenes of “innocent child urging the fallen/mother to rise and go, for its night fall... youth perforated by man-crafted death” and “farmlands ploughed my (sic) missiles” (26), his musing keeps him hale and hearty. To the poet, it is his musing that serves as an elixir against such heart-wrenching genocidal plights that are potential sources of heart attacks. Standing with the downtrodden, the poet consoles himself and even the directly impacted in Rwanda that “silent earth will always be there to heal the wounds of the losers” (27). He rhetorically probes: “But death O death, how come your sling’s stone always lands on the innocent?” (27).

It is evident that the poet is pained by the fact that those who ignited the war are not at home to suffer its woeful impacts. He however, sees them as the “real vultures perched on foreign trees/... they were sharing in the smoke from the flame they have fuelled” (27). In related situation in Nigeria during the thirty month civil war, J. P. Clark classifies such people as the real “casualties of the war” (113). Consequently, Ushie sees humanity both in his country and Rwanda as one and associates himself with its sufferings, anywhere.

We can see the poet emerging strongly invigorated, cheerful and hearty in the poem titled:

“For gani”, where he clearly celebrates the stoic character of the late human rights lawyer, Ghani Fawehimi, with whom the poet sees “black Maria” (30) as his official car because of his incessant extra judicial arrests by government officials. According to the poet, Fawehimi’s persistent intellectual and professional confrontations with the repressive governments of Nigeria had been the cause of his unwarranted incessant arrests. While musing on other historical figures engaging in human rights struggles across the globe such as Socrates, Galileo, Gandhi, Guevara, Ortega and even Nelson Mandela of South Africa, the poet derives inner joy and a sense of satisfaction with the fact that the struggle for the emancipation of mankind is ceaseless and will be successful, sooner than later.

This gives him a sense of responsibility, prospect, hope, satisfaction, cheerfulness and healing from the stress that he bears in the course of speaking and fighting for the masses like the aforementioned historical personae. With such sense of therapeutic fulfillment, Ushie carefully takes the anticipated success story to the next poem: “Volcano”. Here, the poet is in celebrative mood, because he foresees the battle of the masses against their oppressors as gushing like volcanic lava that will forcefully flow out to cleanse the land of all infamies.

Hence, he says “his no man’s hill standing here in silent surrender can erupt” (31). He goes on to give further assurances that “his earth-tearing bubbles, hotter than the bellows fired metal, will wash down the seams of the hill” and “like a punctured dam... the angry flood will veer into burrows and crevices, will flush out the thousand season’s mountain of squalor” (31) The poet is joyfully optimistic that the unstoppable force that will cleanse the land of all atrocities:

...will push past  
palaces of princes, kings and those  
architectural cynosures housing  
trader, clergyman, civil servant  
and politician, housing carsore  
tales, housing eyesore deeds (31).

We hear, see and feel the celebrative bliss of the poet shouting: “Wooa Wooa Wooa” stressing:

the flood will roar down  
the hill, will be reinvigorated  
at every hurdle by those  
long-chained sparks in the  
heart of the hills, long  
bottled... (31).

He calls the uprising upsurge of the masses “fermented energy” that “will fire upwards”, “unlock the hill”, “dart dirtwards until it will wash this immovable hill of filth into that all cleansing ocean...” (32). His mood is anti “hypocondria”, which according to Ramalingam, is a psychological condition where one has exaggerated concern for one’s health or state (116).

With such optimistic vision, the poet’s “psychoneurotic condition” (Freud, 331) owing to his distressed socio-economic state are therapeutic relieved. He therefore, spotlights on such socio psychic agonies in the next poem: “Fallow forge” and calls them “a mite of mind’s troubles” then puns on the word “subvival”, like “Polypheumus, holds our genius in bondage” (33). Sigmund Freud terms his slipping state at the moment as “Ordinary Nervousness” (321). But Ushie eases himself off such nauseating psycho-socio-economic bondage, via his poetic outbursts, because he is sure that: “There will be a volcano here at this unknown hill this noon” (32). Such health remedy is merely therapeutically induced.

Emotional sights of social maladies such as: “In the beggar’s own coins” where, rather than having money to pour in the outstretched beggar’s tray, the cashless poor poet merely pours his prayer “in lieu of cons”, which irks the poor roadside beggar, that in turn retorts: “Oga na prayer I go chop?” (36), is a kind of “hypoergasia” (Ramalingam, 116), but the poet merely eases it off with his musing. Such ill-fated social encounters are enough to break the poet down psychologically, but he is rather, strong-willed, which is engendered by his poetic vision. The poet further terms the efficacy of his poetic engagement as “...heart-healing beams, for they are/the sole source of my soul’s bliss” in his: “Song to the sun” (46).

By the poet persona’s stoic resilience, who himself represents the voice of the oppressed masses and which runs through majority of the poems in the anthology, Ushie finally wears a celebrative garb or crown in his last poem: “The orange tree.” Here he uses the resilience of a perennial orange tree against all seasons and nature’s pressure to epitomise the triumph of the oppressed over their oppressors. For this, he joyfully informs:

Yes, the spirit. And I can  
See it smiling triumphantly  
Even from the marrow of this  
Weather-tossed orange tree as  
It assures of rain tomorrow (71).

He symbolically stresses that “the echo of its laughter booms on the wings of the wind... and to all lands” (72). Medically, laughter is a medication that relieves “hypertension”. According to The New International Webster’s Pocket Medical Dictionary, hypertension is a health condition that “...causes heart attack, kidney failure, or stroke” and often leads to high “blood pressure” (105) and consequent death.

When the anticipated success is achieved, the poet joyfully says, in good health:

... We’ll assemble once more,  
you, me, neighbours and passers-by  
under the canopy of this orange tree  
.... To feed from her bowels (72).

From his poetic engagement of fearlessly fighting dictatorial regimes that are armed with all forms of lethal weapons, including parcel bombs such as the one that killed Dele Giwa called: “Parcels of Fate” (21) in Ita Mbaba’s anthology, Blast at Noon, Ushie immunises himself against what Ramalingam calls: “Hypegiaphobia” (115). The disease situation is identified as a sort of fear of bearing responsibility.

As noted afore, the celebrative and joyful mood which the poet persona exhilarates, is therapeutic in nature with an affective poetical outcome. This is the reason in his preface to his anthology, Blast at Noon, Ita Mbaba says: “Whereas every person appreciates the benefits of happiness only a few are ready to make others happy by sacrificing selfish interest” (vi). This is to underscore the usefulness of happiness, which poets enjoy to enhance their healthy states while musing.

### **Conclusion**

This paper explores and exploits the therapoetics perspective of the affective literature, an emerging literary critical theory being espoused by Kontein Trinya to discuss the socio-political themes gleaned from the Marxist standpoint in Joe Ushie’s Eclipse in Rwanda. From the discussion, the study highlights the poet’s thematic engagements in the course of fighting to emancipate the oppressed masses for all to have an egalitarian society. He does this by his poetic musings.

Hence his poetic preoccupation becomes a sort of protective therapeutic shields that benumbs him from

socio-political and economic stress. And like medical therapy, his poetic concerns help to engender his mental state and of course, his balanced health status. By seeking the wealth of the society, the poet, who in the course of his musing gains a balance healthy status is emblematic of the health of the society that he fights for. The equitable socio-economic balance that the poet seeks via his Marxist ideological imperatives thematically becomes a healing therapy for the poet and perhaps, the society that he fights to improve.

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## Therapoetics: Ogbowe's Affective Art and Failure of Leadership In The Niger Delta

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### **Abstract**

The essence of this critical study amongst others is to examine how well therapoetics as a literary apparatus masticates creative works and how it is used to spill forth literary nutrients that are nourishing and easy to assimilate. We engage the razor sharp critical perspective of therapoetics in studying Gilbert Ebinyo Ogbowe's poetry in three collections: song of a dying river, the town crier's song and the heedless ballot box. The study reveals the extent of ecological, psychophysiological, political, economic, and social violence the Niger Delta and her people suffer. This work is an exhaustive study of nine poems, three each from a poetry collection to show the poet's commitment to revealing the unsavoury ordeals of wealthy Niger Delta that wallows in abject and miserable poverty and impoverishment. The study reveals corruption, poverty and physical trauma as the perennial neighbours of Niger Deltans. The article exposes the pangs and pains of power and moral failure of the socio-political foundations (leadership) that undergird the structure of statehood. A therapoetics analysis of the selected poem reveals that the poet employs the medium of poetic discourse to unburden and share the environmental treason committed against the Niger Delta environment and her people. A therapoetics re-reading of the poetry as engaged herein reveals the functional measures and solutions that the poet hints at and considers as relief to the eco-social and politico-economic conflict. Ogbowe's art offers several measures of finding relief to the perennial leadership challenge includes; the need for resource democracy, ecological reorientation and sustainability legislation and implementation and leadership beyond moral compromise.

**Keywords:** Therapoetics, re-source democracy, eco-criticism, leadership, conflict, ecological degradation, environmental sustainability.

### **Introduction**

Literary works and writers have been described by some as mere appendages of the prevailing ruling class. There is no gainsaying the fact that such position had merit in its time and place. However, if literature is fashioned from the crucibles of elitist ideology, then very many works of literary art of the kind that emanates from peasant ancestry would be of no relevance and lost to all humanity. Critical theory and criticism could be likened to the mitochondria driving literature is evolutionary and not a sterile and stagnant but is incapable of adjusting to the vicissitudes and the versatile taste and trends of literary palate the world over. The Niger Delta region of Nigeria was first known for her

literary resource before it was known for her mineral resources. The coming to limelight of Niger Delta literature through publishing of Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) the same year that oil was struck in commercial quantity in Oloibiri (Bayelsa State) and Kegbara Dere (Bomu oil field) in Gokana, Ogoni Rivers State is a grand testimony to the fact that literary wealth is as significant to the Niger Delta region as mineral wealth.

It is noteworthy that this geopolitical regions (Niger Delta) of the Nigerian state should not only be the albatross of Nigerian Literature but also constitute a major thematic preoccupation of failure of leadership. Chinyere Nwahunanya cites Onyerionwu's observation thus;

One of the most momentous occupations of the Nigerian novel of the 21st century is the Niger delta oil crisis...some Nigerian critics consider the Niger Delta crisis as the biggest event available to Nigeria literature writer as a subject matter. (xiii).

One may wonder what is there to write about a single region that has made it the biggest event available to writers of Nigerian and non-Nigerian descent. Of a truth the Niger Delta region and her psycho-psychological and environmental catastrophe is long lasting than the historical subject of the Nigerian civil war experience. The subject of discourse in the theme of the Niger Delta is aptly captures the primacy and urgency of the need for effective leaders. Chinyere Nwahunanya writes:

In a lot of the writings from the Niger Delta, the social dislocations engendered by oil exploration are interrogated through the poetic, dramatic, and fictional evocation of certain inherent contradictions that have featured in the physical and psychological landscape of the region. As the land is exploited, so also are the people. As the land bleeds oil, so the people bleed tears in their abject poverty, and real blood as they fall under the constant assault of government agents sent to silence their protests. (xvi).

Gilbert Ebinyo Ogbowei is one of such poets Chinyere Nwahunanya speaks of above as employing literature in foregrounding the continuous abuse and dehumanization of the Niger Delta region. Gilbert Ogbowei (henceforth Ogbowei) have written the following poetry collections: *let the honey run* (2001), *the heedless ballot box* (2005), *song of a dying river* (2009) and the town crier's song (2009) and most recently *Marsh Boy and Other Poems* (2013). From the five collections listed above we shall examine nine poems from three collections of Ogbowei's poetry as affective art using the new theoretical paradigm of therapoetics. The poems that will engage us include the following: "song of a dying river", "what tale trinya", and "the plundered province". These three poems are from the poetry collection entitled, *song of a dying river*. From the second poetry collection, the heedless ballot box, we shall study the poems: "may 29, 1999, a failed federation, and the heedless ballot box". The third collection of poetry: the town crier's song will give us the following poems for study: "letter to the minister, heroes of the wasteland, and lament of an overcropped land". We shall endeavour to do justice to the study of these nine (9) poems across the three poetry collections as an attempt to creating an inroad to understanding how his art illustrates as it were the trauma of a region and her people whose leaders have failed them and how the poet provides soothing therapoetics relief in the same artistic broth.

#### Review of Related Literature (Gilbert Ebinyo Ogbowei Creative Genius)

We are of the opinion that poets or creative writers and critics are not completely read off, understood, or easily interpreted by merely reading their bio-data. Ogbowei was born in 1955 and he is a poet, teacher and also a pastor. Ogbowei as he his fondly called attended University of Lagos for his Bachelor of Arts Degree in English and University of Port Harcourt for his post-graduate studies. He teaches at the Department of English and Literary Studies, Niger Delta University, Wilberforce Island, Bayelsa State. He was also two times Chairman of Bayelsa State Chapter of Association of Nigeria Authors (ANA). He is one of the most significant Nigerian (Niger Delta) poets to emerge in the 1990s with six published poetry collections and counting: *let the honey run* (2005), *the heedless ballot box* (2006), the town crier's

song (2009), song of a dying river (2009), and marsh boy & other poems (2014), and Matilda (2018) to his credit.

There is a handful of critical works and commentary on Ogbowei's art. Odingwei M. Kwokwo in the work entitled "Language and Style in Ebinyo Ogbowei's Marsh Boy and Other Poems" writes on the merit of Ebinyo Ogbowei as a poet and his poetry collection song of a dying river thus:

Ebinyo Ogbowei who is a Bayelsa-born Nigerian is the author of several other volumes of poetry which include let the honey run and other poems (shortlist, LNG Nigeria Prize for literature, 2005), the town criers' song, the heedless ballot box (Joint winner ANA Bayelsa Isaac Boro price, and the song of a dying river (shortlisted in the LNG Nigeria prize for literature, 2009). (2).

From the above review of the poetry collection, song of a dying river, it is clear that the anthology in this study is not just a mere collection of poems but a master craft of literary prowess that has been evaluated severally by the finest of critical minds and found worthy of appreciation and literary engagement. Joseph A. Ushie in "Niger Delta Threnodic Verses: G. Ebinyo Ogbowei and Ogaga Ifowodo" posits that song of a dying river is peculiar in that most of the poems in the collection is addressed to the Niger Delta situation.

Here, we find poems which look at the same issue from different perspectives including the national and global dimensions of the crisis. The title poem, "song of a dying river" offers a picture of the impact of the ecological exfoliation on the environment, and it begins, as typical of Ogbowei's poetry from a playful calm manner that makes the poem's destination unpredictable. (535).

Joseph Ushie's critical exposition bares the skin on the major thematic thrust of the poetry collection song of a dying river. His critical insight provides the clue on how to approach the subject of environmental destruction in the region of the Niger Delta at the communal, national and global levels. It foregrounds the adverse effects of oil exploration and exploitation on humans, flora and fauna in the region. The second collection, the town crier's song has also attracted some critical reviews. Joseph A. Ushie in "Niger Delta Threnodic Verses: G. Ebinyo Ogbowei and Ogaga Ifowodo" posits that the town crier's song "are devoted entirely to the global national issues" (532). This is a pointer that matters discussed in the collection go beyond personal, communal and national issues. It helps us appreciate the poet as one with a global perspective on issues. The back blurb review of the town crier's song reveals as it reads that,

*the town crier's song* is a passionate account of a poet's concern for his homeland in the throes of decay and death. The poems here are deep and resonate with anger and frustration. They are also songs of a wasteland in dire need of restoration and healing. (*the town crier's song, back blurb*).

The anthology the town crier's song is a lyrical narrative that examines the political issues that surrounds the crisis of the Niger Delta. The poet takes on the persona of a town crier to bring us into the world of oddities. The town crier's song is a metaphor signifying that the poet is sounding an alarm on the state of corruption and poverty that have ravished the Niger Delta. Niyi Akingbe in the work entitled "Genocide in the Oil Creeks: Reclaiming the Niger Delta in Ebinyo Ogbowei's Poetry: Lessons for Zimbabwe", writes;

*Genocidal violence rejects the concept of human rights and invokes hierarchies to re-imagine a new social order" (O' Neill 2012, 1). the town crier's song, song of a dying river, the heedless ballot box, let the honey run, marsh boy and matilda as poetry collections which*

*espouse resistance can be read as the Niger Delta's genocidal texts. Apparently, Ogbowei's poetry depicts genocide as a disruption of the social order of things in the Delta communities; a disruption which has remarkably altered the well-being of people in the region. (66).*

The essayist above makes a case for the socio-environmental degradation of the region of the Niger Delta as a form of genocidal violence caused by the laxity of its leaders. The commitment of Gilbert Ebinyo Ogbowei as a “prophet” or minstrel of the people of the region for whom he writes. The back blurb of the heedless ballot box reads:

the heedless ballot box provides a platform for poet, like a prophet, to forewarn greedy and wicked leaders; to watch closely our ravaged homeland, the agony of the people, the pains and despair on their faces; as they seek to rule us. (the heedless ballot box, back blurb).

Our understanding from the blurb review is that the poet-prophet warns the public of the pains and despair that the people face in the hands of heartless and self-serving politicians and leaders that self-appointed themselves over the people and their resources. In the heedless ballot box Kontein Trinya writes of the poet's personality and thematic inclination thus:

Ogbowei is a private poet with a public eye. He sings of love in such intimate poems as “i sing to you” where the lyric persona addresses himself directly to a lover; but he also sings of collective woes as in “a failed federation”. In this collection, the first half of the poems are essentially private; the second half is where the poet assumes his communal roles, illuminating better his social commitment. (Introduction, the heedless ballot box, 9)

There are certain salient points to emphasize here. The poet performs a duo role: that of a prophet minstrel warning against unjust leaders and an eco-advocate against socioecological injustices both personal and communal. The communal role of the poet-prophet is such that he is a beacon or light bearer who sheds light on the ecological devastation of the people and the region of the Niger Delta.

The style of Ogbowei's writing is complex and the text of his poetry is not easily comprehensible to young and new readers of literature. This is so because of the peculiar features of his script. Kontein Trinya in the introduction to the heedless ballot box posits that “one huddle that tentatively confronts the young newcomer to Ogbowei's poetry is his characteristic omission of punctuation marks, except the imperative possessive or hyphen. No capitals, no commas, no full stops” (9). This clearly shows that Ogbowei has a distinct style, through the deliberate abandonment of certain graphological principles and the insistence and consistent use of others. Kontein goes further to liken Ogbowei's style of writing to that of the American poet E.E. Cummings. He avers that,

With Ogbowei, it is an adopted style, and perhaps a function of a similar vision of the world so blurred by tears of pain that no capital theme looms out merely on the tiptoes of punctuations but through the craft of metaphor and no commas impede the rhythm of the reader's poetic path (10).

Another critic that Ogbowei's poetic style attracts is Odingowei M. Kwokwo that describes Ogbowei's art in these words:

Ogbowei has dexterity in manipulating the resources of language to communicate his thoughts using a myriad of complex strategies such as graphological violations, clausal manipulations, lexico-semantic choices as well as imagery and symbolism. Although there is over-boiling anger that nearly marred the aesthetic pleasure of the poems, the poet, Ogbowei has demonstrated that he is a master of (poetic) language. (13).

It is thus obvious that Ogbowei's poetic style of writing without certain punctuation signs like commas, full stop, and the use of lower case are deliberate stylistic choices made in order to foreground the peculiarity of his art. When the poet makes a deliberate choice on the syntagmatic axis of language the result is the stylistic rendering that we see as the text of the writing which is of great significance on the paradigmatic axis where meaning is implied. It is a truism that one among the several purposes of literary theory is to offer the critic a repertoire of literary investigative lens through which creative works are scrutinized, analysed, and anaesthetized in order for it to be truly appreciated.

#### Theoretical Framework (New Bottle for New Wine)

There is no such thing in literary art and criticism as the almighty formula or one theory that fits all. This feature of literary art implies that it possesses the ability to continuously rewrite itself by an internal process of automatization which leads to the evolution and emergence of novel critical approaches and theories often in line with societal trends. Our choice theoretical perspective for this study is therapoetics as set forth by Kontein Trinya. Accordingly, this critical perspective in the words of the proponent, is, on the one hand, a perspective on utilitarian affect in therapeutic terms whether or not the therapy had been an authorial or poetic intent. It also, on the other hand, in a psychoanalytic sense, an interest in the therapy that the creative process offers the poet; the healing or health or palliation that comes from the 'expressive' release of toxic pent up emotions; the relieving pleasure of a fantasied escape through the passage of poetry into a dream land of bliss or other; the healing of the soul through a creative 'confession' of acts that in a somewhat Freudian sense, it might have been 'unsafe' to declare except through the disguise of art (30).

It is apparent from the foregoing that therapoetics is an eclectic theoretical framework that incorporates principles from diverse disciplines such as literature, psychology, and medicine. . Kontein uphold this by emphasizing that; "therapoetics is also conceived as the interdisciplinary and clinical application of poetry to diagnosed conditions, as music has been." (31). Therapoetics as a critical perspective according to the proponent has three cyclic and interwoven parts thus:

1. The self-'medicating' employment of poetry, whether or not poetry had been sought or applied consciously for the purpose (patient-focused);
2. The caregiver's conscious clinical application of poetry to target a given condition (physician-focused);
3. The 'healing' prospects in the creative process of poetry (poet-focused).

From the above core tenets of therapoetics as a literary perspective for undertaking the explication of texts we infer the following features:

- a) That literary works exhibits trans-textual affective ability or influence on the audience or readers.
- b) Literary criticism is purposed in the discovery of the extra-textual realization of art.
- c) It supports the notion that literary art is founded on the bipolar conception of form (aesthetics) and its function (sociology)..
- d) It emphasises the emotional affect or disposition of literary works on readers or audience.
- e) The critic studies the power of art to stir psycho-physiological response (laughter, cry, smile, frown etc) of the audience/readers.
- f) Seeks to describe the affective power of literary art that exist between the shared codes between the text and the reader.

#### Ogbowei's song of a dying river: Images of Corruption, Poverty and Physical Trauma

A poet's commitment is envisioned in the imagery that his arts evoke in the minds of readers. In Ogbowei's poetry collection song of a dying river his artistic inclination reveal his literary commitment as a writer committed to the wellbeing of the people for whom he is a voice. In an interview with Ajiri-

Oghene Oreh of the Guardian Newspaper Ogbowei replies to the question: why did you choose to write the nation, and the Niger Delta region in verse?

As an activist concerned about the violation of the rights of our people, I write about the deplorable human condition in our country and beyond. Nigeria and the Niger Delta remain in the foreground, but the poetic canvas is enriched by a long history of hate and treachery.... When I interrogate pollution in the Niger Delta, I look at it in the light of such disasters as the Exxon Valdez disaster in the William fjord in Alaska, the Minimata Bay chemical disaster in Japan, the Alpha Piper fire disaster in the North Sea or the recent Gulf oil spill off the Gulf Coast in the U. S. Critics fail to see this wide scope sweep and the rich tapestry woven into my tales of betrayal and savagery. (2).

The Niger Delta environment of which Ogbowei writes in his poetry has witnessed first-hand diverse forms and intensity of environmental degradation by the neglect of leaders in position of power and in the region that should stand as safeguard against unjust human and environmental despoliation. In the poem song of a dying river, a piece of six stanzas, comprising twenty-nine lines, addresses itself to these issues. The poet laments the need for environmental safety and sustainability. The poet persona reveals that the lovers are two dolphins who are “squeezed” rather than swimming and living in their natural habitat. The dolphins are uncomfortably squeezed by the presence of other seemingly competitors in their “dying river” by a helpful hand or maybe a hungry fisherman who is an opportunist. The lover dolphins are probably squeezed out of their watery habitat by the fiery heat emanating from “a burning Christmas tree”. One wonders what a Christmas tree is doing in the river.

The “Christmas tree” according to the poet persona “grows monstrous hot and bright”. This graphic portrait gives us the picture of a gas flare. It is unfortunate that until this very moment amidst the current technology that is available in the field of crude oil and natural gas extraction, the oil and gas multinational companies and the federal government of Nigeria have continued to flare gas into the atmosphere of the Niger Delta in several locations and in very high density and intensity. Another two lovers in the poem as we move on are the “two cold Cormorants” who are not cold from living in water but “cold” as in dead and stiff. The cold cormorants are also not flying nor fishing as their habit but are drowning in the very river where they are used to live, fish and play as lovers. The poet goes further to portray that the cormorants are drowning in their “oil-clad creek”. This reveals the cause of the bird’s inability to swim in the creek as crude oil has clad the entire surface of the creek like a new free-flowing garment.

The poem “song of a dying river” is a memorial to the largest crude oil spill in the history of the United States of America. Exxon valdex, a super-tanker owned by Exxon corporation that ran aground on the Bligh reef in Prince William Sound, Alaska, at night on March 24, 1989, spilling 260,000 barrels of crude oil. The effect of this environmental degradation was the untimely and painful death of about 250,000 seabirds, 3,000 sea otters, 300 harbour seals, 250 bald eagles, and some 22 killer whales and a countless amount of salmon. This is environmental poverty and impoverishment inducing. There is certainly no known method for recovering the lost environmental assets listed. It is traumatic for humans, fauna, floral, and the aquatics.

In our second poem “what tale tinya”, the poet adopts the posture of an ode of ten verses of uneven sizes to raise pertinent questions at the subject “tinya,” who the poet believes is nonpartisan and objective in giving honest answers to his questions. The tale is doleful, probing, carries a communal and regional voice, and are questions to the leaders at all levels demanding answers to the many political, social, and economic injustices and sufferings of his people, as in;

Line 7 “...did the dodgy politician/tell the starving state”?

Line 15 “...what kinship kontein does the drover claim/with the winkle gatherer”?

Line 38 “...what fraternity Felicia between canoeist and camel rider”?

The images evoked in the interrogative questions of the poet are very symbolic and contrastive. The first question makes a distinction between the leaders and the led, those in power and those oppressed by the powers that be. It contrasts the rich political class and the poor starving masses or state. It seeks to know the common ground between the crafty, corrupt and sly politicians and the trustworthy, gullible electorate? The second question interrogates the geopolitical sensibilities of brotherhood and nationhood called Nigeria through the occupational symbols of the North (drover of herds) and the South (gatherer of periwinkles). These particular questions seem to assert that the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern protectorates by Sir Frederick Lord Lugard in 1914 that later led to the emergence of the Nigerian state has since expired. The cultural diversity as represented in the occupational difference might be a strong reason for this question. The third question seems to follow from the second and demands for the relationship between a camel rider whose path is in the arid desert and the canoeist who ply the creeks of the Niger Delta?

The opulence of the ruling class (politician) with “his humming hummer/gleaning in the sun”, contrasts with that of the poor fisherman scraping together his meal from the polluted creeks. lines 9-10. What is the nature of “kinship” between these two classes of individuals? Is the politician and the poor fisherman from the Niger Delta from the same tribe? do they both come from the same country, are they both free citizens? The poor fishermen living and surviving from the river and creeks of the Niger Delta is made to bear the brunt of “spills from ships”, “seepages from old corroded pipes” and leakages from expired and worn out storage tanks that can no longer hold its contents. The region and her people are very often labelled the “saboteur he pays the penalty”. The ghastly penalty and pay back that the environment and people of the Niger Delta receive for their crude oil is “his blackened beaches/reeking rivers and coated creeks” (lines 24-25).

The poet persona queries the contractual union of the major regions which he labels “casualties of a cursed marriage” (line 26) of a nation that lumps the fisherman and the drover and miller grower together in a union “contrived for convenience” (line 26).. The questions are targeted at leadership and all tiers of government authority. “What fraternity Felicia/between canoeist and camel rider” (line 38-39). The poet’s use of contrastive imagery continues as he makes another striking statement, “the lion and leopard/cannot hunt together/cannot share their kill/the lion the winner takes all”. The poem seems to insinuate that there will never be a trustworthy relation or alliance between the ‘camel rider’ and the “canoeist’, neither will the business union between the lion of the savannah and the leopard of the tropics enjoy mutual understanding in the sharing formula.

Using symbols, metaphors and figures from the bipolar regions of the nation, the poet persona alleges that the unholy alliance of a nation is a corrupt fabrication meant from the onset to profit one group as against the other. The last eight lines of the poem portents evil for a region, “the leopard starves to death/which has no tree/to make safe his kill/the leopard is prey/that roams the savannah/with a coalition/pursuing profit of the group/strays too far from safety of tree”. The poem is a dire warning cautioning “leopards” from coalitions with savannah lions in the name of group profit that would only benefit the lions who takes all when the leopard has strayed far from the safety of the tree and becomes a prey instead of the hunter.

Our third poem is entitled “the plundered province”. The poem is a composition in three uneven verses, comprising of twenty-four lines. The poem’s scansion entails; first verse of nine unequal lines, the second verse is the biggest with eleven lines and the third and last verse is but four lines only. The poem describes a place it calls “the plundered province” (no doubt the Niger Delta region) where others hack the “syrup it drips” and where snakes (symbolic of political craftiness and fraudulent manoeuvrings) “steal eggs” and where others are seen freely “foraging for food”. In this poem one party is portrayed as

scavenging of resources and food while the other is about protecting the environment and conserving its resources. In the poem, “the plundered province” there is a dichotomy of the producers (Niger Delians) and the plunderers (political scavengers) that careless about the region but are more careful of devising political tables, cabinets and chairs for ploughing her resources and people.

The plunderers “hack at my hope tree/with malicious machetes/to unfix the eagle’s nest”. The plunderers, “disperse the fire ants/colonies of carpenter ants/infesting the plundered province/foraging it for food”. The poet points to where this plundered province is, by the expression, “along the receding shoreline/a rookery for herons and harriers/a rookery for ibises and songbirds”. This description marches the region of the Niger Delta where such wild life like herons, ibises, songbirds and harriers breed.

It also underlines the homestead status of the region, its’ protective shelter and habitat for Pisces, avian, flora and fauna of the Niger Delta. However, colonies of infesting carpenter ants that are traceable to “boards and cabinets”, a mockery of failed leaders have infested the plundered province foraging it for food and ravaging its ecological structure. This expression is heavy laden with metaphors and imagery of great implication. The colonies of carpenter ants may insinuate mass exodus of a certain tribe, ethnicity or culture with animal tendency of been scavenging and destructive as carpenter ants. The poet notes that the infesting colonies of ants seeks to mingle their culture and seed with those of the indigenous people. The infesting, invading colonies of ants are ushered into the province for plundering through the instrumentality of political boards, cabinets, and chairs’. The people of the plundered province are left with the task of, “so we seal cracks and openings/correct leaks/cut back tree limbs and climbers/hugging this hunted house” after it has been foraged and ravaged by several colonies of carpenter ants. Symbolically, one will not be far from the truth if the plundered province is a futuristic vision of the Niger Delta region after it has been exploited of its crude oil reserves.

Ogbowei’s the town crier’s song; Pangs, and Pains of Power

Power through the instrument of government authority ought to provide comfort, succour and hope for its people. When power fails through the agency of leadership poets like Ogbowei must write for power to be put in check. Ogbowei third collection being considered now are passionate lamentations filled with anger and frustration? For consideration are the poems; “letter to the minister”, “heroes of the wasteland”, and “lament of an over-cropped land” these poems demonstrate through very vivid imagery, tone, and diction the pangs, pains and corrupt powers of state, working in collaboration with oil multinationals, ethnic opportunists and political racketeers against the Niger Delta community to which the town crier laments.

In the piece, “letter to the minister” a narrative piece of four movements, comprising over twenty-seven verses and multiple refrains that serve as chorus. The poem is a metaphorical letter between the minister and his constituents. In the first movement the letter of to the minister issues from the common people, a family who lost their son in the Northern university of abu, a dying wife who would have survived if not for hunger, the headmistress and headmaster, the pupils, the village chief and clerk, the market women and women fish traders are some characters. What is interesting about the different groups or persons mentioned is that the letter addresses their peculiar form of exploitation and poverty.

The family lost ‘my grandson/slain at abu/my broken toy/my lost joy’. This clearly portrays the deprivation of an heir suffered by a family whose son died studying in a university far from home. The people’s recompense for the letter is to be compensated with ‘gas flare/above the mangrove/ our electric lamp’. In a similar manner the head mistress and head master lament the poor learning conditions and meagre pay. The village chief turns a thief and the village clerk also because ‘only the dollar speaks a parable they like’. The market women and the fish traders also lament in their response in the letter to the minister. The refrain sums up the consequence of their unjust exploitation in the name of democracy

thus; “sickness will not kill me death will not kill me only agadagba shakes hands with me” (the town crier’s song, 23).

The second movement focuses on how the people of the Niger Delta are manipulated and exploited on the grounds of belonging to a contrived democracy. The second verse of the second movement narrates “we are adjusting/in dark structured streets of democracy/sunken eyes with vacant stares” (the town crier’s song, 24). The poet persona narrates how the siphoning of the oil resources of the Niger Delta people makes the minister and his accomplices to walk the edge of naira ropes and into shops. Ironically, while others are smiling to the banks and supermarkets the constituents are besiege with funeral drums resulting from a polluted and impoverished environment.

The third movement of the poem portray graphically the picture of exploitation in the guise of democracy and the resultant painful effect. The poem laments the pepper soup coup d’état and the pounded yam elections, and the landslides victories that leave our hungry mouths wailing, and cheering despot until they are too far gone to care for our suffering, and losses that brought them to power. The fourth movement portrays the despicable oppression and dictatorial government the people are made to suffer for belonging to such a nation. The government engages in one wasteful venture or another. They duplicate agencies and institutions and treat the electorate with disdain. The persona narrates, “in the confined forest of oppression/where the details dart among the trees/you bring out of the lollipop edge of tyranny/hope a bloated rotting corpse”. (the town crier’s song, 27).

The poem “heroes of the wasteland” is of four uneven verses with accompanying refrain stanzas. The poem bemoans the Niger Delta (homeland) which the poet persona describes as ‘wasteland’. Two major subjects stand out in this poem; the ‘heroes’ and ‘the wasteland’. The heroes are instrumental and culpable in the wasting of the land through poor policies, association, and lack of sustainable development projects. The poet compares the heroes of old who wrote their names on the edge of the cutlass to the modern day heroes that litter the land with wastes from the waterside.

The modern heroes of our time are accused by the poet of cowardice as “for spoil they bring back butter harlots/not queens not maundy matriarchs our heroes are warriors/with half-past-four eyes high-placed by akor and blood spilled cry from back streets/and office cabinets”. (the town crier’s song, 77). The talking drums that celebrated the home-coming of true heroes have ceased and have caught HIV/AIDS. The modern heroes have neglected their homeland for foreign lands and their region has become a wasteland where dog and lizard shit grows. The poet seem to insinuate that the resultant pains and pangs of power are but the aftermath of poor capacity persons in positions of power.

Our third poem is entitled “lament of an over-cropped land,” (the town crier’s song, 108) this poem was written on 30th March 1990. The poem is of seven verses of uneven lines and stanzas. The poet persona bemoans the inhuman exploitation of the region of the Niger Delta, which is the symbolic land that is over-cropped. It is a tragic narrative of the fate that has and will befall the region of the Niger Delta. The poet-prophet foretells of the season of neglect coming for the region when her nutrients will have been drained. The farmer shall then abandon the region in poverty and hunger in search for greener pasture. On the other side of the divide the poet persona engages in a rhetorical question that is quiet very disturbing. He asks ‘can i regenerate sufficient vegetation/to attract again the farmer/ who lashed and burnt/intensively cultivated the fertility of my youth’. These questions are some of the fuel propelling agitations from the region of the Niger Delta in response to how the future of the region will be when the natural oil reserves would have been drained.

The poem is also an indirect indictment of the farmer (national and local) of been rascally in the cultivation of the land in the region. Such anti-ecologically and unfavourable practices like “bushfire

burning, over-cropping, overworking, and exhausted” are terms in the poem that portray the environmental hazards and excessive exploitation that constitute the over-cropping of the land. The poet frowns at the utilization of the mechanism of federal resource control measure under the guise of belonging to a federation by the national farmer to exploit one region at the expense of another. The land suffers loss of its fertility and the vigour of her youthful years of optimum productivity and has nothing to show for it in its old age. The democracy where the principles of democratic governance become tools of ethnocentric exploitation and domination by the major tribes and hegemony is suspect and criminal. This Nigerian system of democracy is to be discontinued and disallowed.

Ogbowei's the heedless ballot box; Misuse and Misery by Ministers  
The New International Webster Dictionary defines ministry as “the office and duties of a minister; a department of government or the building in which it is housed; the care of others” (292). Iain McLean and Alistair McMilan in the Oxford Concise Dictionary of Politics defines a minister as; “member of a national government, either in charge of a government department or available to work in a variety of policy areas at the behest of the head of government” (347). Christopher Anyokwu gives insight into the poetry collection by his explication of the motif of the anthology the heedless ballot box thus:

G. Ebinyo Ogbowei's second collection of poems, the heedless ballot box, has a green motif suggestive of, on the one hand, the rank and verdant vegetation of the Niger Delta region, and the colour symbolism of Nigeria as a country situated in the equatorial belt, noted for its dense biodiversity, on the other. However, this 'Horn of Plenty' known as Nigeria is perennially beset with electoral malpractices perpetuated by the “demons of democracy”. The vandalized ballot box and the image of the shark on the book's frontispiece tell it all. (139).

The poems that we shall examine under the subtheme above are “may 29, 1999, a failed federation, and the heedless ballot box”. These poems all have one thing in common; they speak of leadership failure, or the incapacities of governance, the collapse of the moral backbone of governance and government.

The poet captures and undertakes his social responsibility as a poet activist in the poem entitled “may 29, 1999”. The poem “may 29, 1999” is written in honour of a Niger Delta statesman A.K. Dikibo. The poem's title marks the date of the swearing in of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo as a civilian president of Nigeria. The first two verses of the poem portray the nature of the ministers or leaders and their corrupt ministry or tendencies that brought them into power. The back door of election malpractice according to the poet is the 'kitchen door' through which these corrupt politicians who are metaphorically addressed as 'repression arrives' and a 'blundering conqueror' access the corridors of power. Contemporary African political leaders fit smoothly into this garb. Instead of being serving ministers or representatives who care for the citizens; they are labelled by the poet as repression or better put representative of themselves.

The poem “may 29, 1999” could be described as counter-hegemonic poetry. The nature of politicians in Nigeria's political arena is aptly captured in the second verse of the poem. The poet persona calls them 'judas chiefs' who are on their way 'dancing down the road to ruin'. This macabre dance to destruction is propelled by the bribery and corruption in which they have been addicted as they 'receive death money'. They do much worst as they keep other sons who speak up against their ineptitude locked away and their mouth 'sealed up in suleja' prisons. The effect of the bankruptcy of the failed leaders is the subject that interests the poet in the next stanza of the poem. The poet paints a very lucid picture of the inhumanity of the slave masters to their people. The masses are oppressed and suppressed by their own elected representatives. The poet speaks of his environment-the Niger Delta when he calls them 'swamp dwellers'. The people of the region are not allowed to elect whom they will to represent them but are

rather 'keelhauled and out-rigged'!

The essence of verse three of the poem is to acquaint us with how we came to be part of the contraption of a nation where some animals are more equal than others according to George Orwell's Animal Farm. The poet insists that the Niger Delta was shackled to this contrivance of a nation. The next verse brings us to the evidence of grim and sordid reality that have come to characterise our form of democracy and democratic rulers who dispense misery generously and freely. The poet begins with a symbol of national unity; the flag of the nation. Unfortunately, the poet describes the flag as 'a shredded flag fluttering above the ruin of brick house'. These two lines portray that things are out of place. The torn flag speaks of crises, conflict and civil unrest. The position of the flag is given us as the 'brick house' which is the official title for the government house in River State.

The poet continues in the fourth verse of the poem in his diatribe on the failure of the minister a symbol of leadership, the resulting corruption and poverty. He describes the committee of political rulers at the helm of affairs as 'a decapitated force rumbles over'. The poem persona suggests that the crop of African leaders are heedless because they are headless or decapitated. They rumble over 'to the conqueror's side' because they have no head and mind of their own. They do not think and plan for themselves and for their people (Africa) but are rather too quick to align with their colonial overlord and conquerors.

The government in her bid to curtail the uproar against her many atrocities sends out a murder squad to silence true leaders and ministers of the people. The protesters unaware of the danger of the sniper 'two blocks down' continue into the jaws of death. The rifle 'barks authoritatively' as it spits fire and death and the bleeding survivors/staggering out stunned/are knocked down'. The protesters not believing that their own government could imagine evil and death against them are taken by surprise and knocked out. Their protest against the failed leadership offered by the government of the day is met by the brute force of the barrel of a gun and the fire of sniper rifles as their cries are cut short/they spin and fall in the gaping doorway. The state takes on the garb of a tyrannous institution according to Achille Mbembe cited in Isidore Diala:

Mbembe reiterates this fact when he remarks that the tyrannous state does not only strive to create a master code that governs "the logics that underlie all other meanings" within a society but also to "institutionalize this world of meanings as a 'socio-historical world' and to make that world real" by turning it both into a "part of people's 'common sense'" and "the period's consciousness" (Mbembe, 2001: 103). The censor, the mental asylum, the force, the court, the prison, the guillotine, or the cup of henlock, are representative institutions or procedures for checking the rival discourse and extorting conformity. (3).

The final verse portrays how the people of the Niger Delta are caught in the web of failed and corrupt leadership of Nigerian. The poet describes the nation as conquered colony mired in greed the greed of the minister or leaders who keep them tied and mired in the mould of their colonial masters. Leaders are hoodwinked by Europeans and their natural resources freely exploited for nothing. However, the region of the Niger Delta is regarded as the distrustful delta/ is a sizzling saucepan. The region with its class of effective leaders and robust intellectual army is not easily misled and therefore a distrustful ally in the game of politics as it is played presently in the African continent. Consequently, the people 'anger and fear fanning/the coals of nationalism. The people agitate for a better deal from the newly inaugurated democracy that comes into power on the 29th of May, 1999.

Our next poem is entitled "a failed federation" written August 24th 2002. The poem is a single blank verse of eight compact lines. This poem is a political lament against state terrorism as witnessed in Odi massacre. Environmental Rights Action/ Friends of The Earth, Nigeria, (2002) in their publication A

Blanket of Silence: Images of the Odi Genocide writes;

By the time the military operation ended, 2,483 people, including women and children lay dead. Many more were injured, displaced, traumatized and an inestimable number of properties destroyed. The immediate reason for these grave human rights atrocities was that a band of lawless youths operating from Odi, Bayelsa state, murdered seven policemen despite interventions from several well-meaning persons, including the President of the Ijaw Youth Council (IYC). (7).

The above background provided by the Environmental Rights Action and Friends of the Earth gives the much needed insight into the military jargon employed by the poet in the poem. The poet begins with the marking off of the place for the attack. The poet narrates in the voice of the commander in chief of the armed forces of the federation. “Odi’s the sector”, the leader of the invasion force points at the map. The extra-judicial killings in Odi and other similar locations in the Niger Delta according to the poet not only killed our people but was the shot that killed our faith in the state and their goodwill in ensuring the protection and provision for the welfare of all. These genocides in Odioma, Odi, Kaa, and several other locations in the Niger delta has put paid to the fact that the people no longer believe ‘in a failed federation/where contentious constituents/disdainful of minorities wage war against them in other to keep them down while their resources are exploited. It is true that many such genocide killings in the Niger delta are mere attempts of protecting oil resources. Elias Courson in “Odi Revisited? Oil and State Violence in Odioma, Brass LGA, Bayelsa State”

The Odi and Odioma massacres are clear evidence of the State’s misuse of its apparatus of coercion and protection in the delta of Nigeria. Both cases were instigated by allegations of actions by militant youth groups that were not and never investigated before the deployment of military men and artillery by the government. State violence against its citizens in Nigeria has a long and ugly history and in the in the delta cannot be understood outside of the state definition of oil as a national security issue and its desire to ensure that the oil keeps flowing. Thus, after the destruction of Odi, Nigeria’s then minister of Defence General Theophilus Danjuma, in the course of addressing the Economic Committee of West African States (ECOWAS) ministerial conference on November 25, 1999 was quite explicit when he said: “This Operation HAKURI II, was initiated with the mandate of protecting lives and property—particularly oil platforms, flow stations, operating rigs terminals and pipelines, refineries and power installations in the Niger Delta” (The Guardian, Lagos, November 26, 1999). (4).

Odi as one of the oil producing communities in the Niger Delta suffered invasion as a means of government cover up not because of any criminal youths. This is clear from the comments of the then minister of defense and collaborated in “A Blanket of Silence: Images of Odi Genocide” thus;

They therefore want to conquer the Niger Delta by force of arms, the easier to sustain the rape on the people and their resources. Nigeria’s Minister of Defense General Theophilus Danjuma, while addressing the Economic Committee of West African States (ECOWAS) ministerial conference on November 25, 1999 was very clear about this when he said: “This Operation HAKURI II, was initiated with the mandate of protecting lives and property particularly oil platforms, flow stations, operating rig terminals and pipelines, refineries and power installations in the Niger Delta.” (The Guardian, Lagos, November 26, 1999). Odi is an oil community with three capped oil wells controlled by Shell Petroleum Development Company Ltd. (7).

The people of Odi which is representative of the Niger Delta are mired in the maligned marshland. The people of the marshland of the Niger Delta region are living in harmful and unfavourable conditions. It is only in a failed federation that the government in connivance with other state actors utilize state security apparatus to maim, kill and destroy its citizens without due recourse to alternative conflict resolutions mechanisms. The last poem that we shall examine under the subtheme of misuse and misery by the

minister is the signature piece of the collection entitled 'the heedless ballot box'. The poem is a piece of twenty-eight lines rendered in five verses of uneven short lines. The poem is a lampoon of the democratic electoral process in Nigeria and how the region of the Niger Delta is raped through the instrumentality of the electioneering process. Kontein Trinya collaborates this in his "Shadows of Development in the New Poetry of the Niger Delta", "In the heedless ballot box, however, the poet has moved out of the private cocoon to the public pedestal, with a more prominent social ring and a louder echo of the "Niger Delta theme." (17).

The narrative of the poem 'the heedless ballot box' begins with the snatched and vandalized ballot box which is symbolic of fraudulent and flunky politicians. The persona recounts that the heedless ballot box/drunk dances to a choir, this implies that the ballot box is hijacked by the heedless politicians and their goons who are spurred on a by a select few that comprises a choir 'of grieving guns/clapping cutlasses joining/in the stampede dance. The first verse portrays the fighting over who takes charge over the ballot box containing the votes cast. It is a fight between the contestants from the opposition and incumbent ruling party. As the fight to take and possess the ballot box goes on the persona recounts that 'a cold sniper rifle/adjust its sight/spits once'. The heedless ballot box (a person symbolic of the region/nation) is unaware that there is a sniper out there whose job is to ensure that the ballot box is safe in the hands of the anointed candidate.

Consequently, the sniper rifle spits once, signalling a single killer shot. The effect of the shot is the boastful ballot box/is knocked down. The poem sees the killing of the heedless ballot box (metaphor for the killing of democracy) as the abomination celebrated at the eagle square/poured out in the street. Thus, when the heedless ballot is shot three entities are shot and killed. The electoral process and by extension democracy and secondly the elected statesman. The third person is the Niger Delta region and her people and by extension the nation dies by symbolic association.

The fourth verse speaks of how the unfortunately caught opposition politicians are maltreated by the government security agents. The brutality as the obscenity is stunned by blows/his courage cut to pieces/by an avenging terror. The politician who may also be a citizen with the heart to contribute towards nation building by joining politics discovers that the politician themselves do not play according to the rules. The last verse portrays the celebration of the election winner at the eagle square. The celebration is symbolic and significant in that it unfortunately signals the triumph of evil over good which in itself is an irony and misery.

#### Conclusion (Finding Relief)

Wordsworth employed tranquillity and poetry in the same line of a sentence, thereby making poetry synonymous with peace, cessation of strife, resolution of conflict and the finding of relief from diverse forms of traumatic experience. Ron Eyerson in his, Cultural Trauma: Slavery and the Formation of African Identity observed that trauma is not an experience by an individual but a collective memory endured in slavery resulting in traumatic retrospect. Trauma inflicted by psychological memories, or physical wound is quite different from cultural trauma as the former is individualistic, while the latter is a complete mayhem or upset experienced by a group of persons either directly or indirectly requiring mediation. National trauma refers to incidents that cannot be easily forgotten by individuals as it continuously replays over and over again in the subject's consciousness, inbuilt in collective memory which also reflect cultural trauma. A careful appraisal of Ogbowei's art through the lens of individual, communal, and national trauma captures the tri-dimensional ecological damage suffered by the Niger Delta region (environment) and her people.

The poet's social responsibility as a committed writer is to help the people of the Niger Delta find relief by reliving their ordeals as a means of purgation and catharsis. Ogbowei seems to desire something

better for the people of the Niger Delta which he ironically calls “wasteland, over-cropped land, marshland” and many other unfortunate names. The poet identifies images of corruption, poverty and physical trauma not because he enjoys its proliferation in his homeland but he is enraged and engages in a clarion call of societal transformation of ideals. He frowns at the sordid squalid and squatters yard which the region has become. He laments the syphoning of the wealth of the Niger Delta region and her environment which has left her generations unborn impoverished. Ogbowei decries the pangs and pains of political power deployed against his constituents. He insinuates that democratic principles, processes and powers are employed to exploit the people and region of the Niger Delta. His art underlines the dire need for effective purposeful and morally upright leadership in the Niger Delta region as a key factor to her rescue and relief from socio-ecological genocide.

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Exploring Emotional Connections: The Role of Epistolary Communication In Ebidenyefa Tarila-  
Nikade's 14 Letters To My Lazy Lover And Jude's Reply

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**Abstract**

This work explores the concept of epistolary writing in Ebidenyefa's novels, specifically: 14 Letters to My Lazy Lover and Jude's Reply. Epistolary therapeutics refers to the healing power of letters and written communication as a form of emotional cleansing and personal growth. Ebidenyefa's protagonists, Ayefa and Jude, employ letters as means to processing their emotions, confronting their failed love and seeking closure. Through the intimate and confessional nature of their letters, the characters engage in a therapeutic dialogue with themselves and their recipients, unraveling complex emotions. Drawing upon the theory Discourse analysis, this work seeks to shed light on emotional expression and the therapeutic value of letter writing; it tends to highlight the transformative power of epistolary communication in navigating the complexities of love. This analysis also reveals how characters use language to negotiate blame, convey remorse, and seek understanding, shedding light on the characters' emotional states and their societal context.

**Keywords:** epistolary, therapeutics, healing, communication

**Introduction:**

Epistolary literature according to Evan Gottlieb (2020) is a genre of writing that consists primarily or entirely of letters, diary entries, or other forms of correspondence exchanged between characters within a literary work. These letters serve as the primary narrative element, driving the plot forward and revealing the thoughts, emotions, and experiences of the characters involved.

It provides a unique and intimate perspective, allowing readers to witness events and emotions through the personal letters of the characters involved. The term "epistolary" is derived from the Latin word "epistola" meaning "letter." This form of storytelling has a long history and has been used by writers from various times, periods and cultures to explore a wide range of themes and narratives. Epistolary novels have been popular since ancient times and have continued to be influential in literature throughout the centuries.

One of the earliest examples of epistolary literature according to Gottlieb is The Persian Letters by Montesquieu, published in 1721. It presents the fictional correspondence between two Persian travelers who visit Europe and provides a satirical critique of French society and politics. Montesquieu's work was influential in popularizing the use of letters as a narrative device.

Gottlieb (2020) in his article writes about Dracula by Bram Stoker, published in 1897, as another renowned epistolary novel that employs a collection of diary entries, letters, and journal excerpts to tell the story of the infamous Count Dracula and the attempts to thwart his evil plans. This format adds a sense of immediacy and suspense, as readers experience the events through the personal accounts of the characters.

In modern literature, The Color Purple by Alice Walker, published in 1982, presents a narrative

composed of letters and diary entries. Through these intimate forms of communication, the novel explores the lives of African-American women in the early 20th century, addressing themes of racism, gender oppression, and personal growth.

The Perks of Being a Wallflower by Stephen Chbosky, published in 1999, is another well-known example of epistolary literature. The novel is written as a series of letters from the protagonist, Charlie, to an unnamed recipient. These letters offer insights into Charlie's struggles with adolescence, mental health, and his quest for acceptance. These references illustrate the diverse range of epistolary literature and its ability to convey complex narratives, evoke emotions, and provide an intimate connection between readers and characters.

By using letters and other forms of correspondence, authors can offer unique perspectives, showcase character development, and create a compelling and immersive reading experience. The use of letters as a narrative form can serve various purposes, such as capturing the characters' thoughts, revealing their inner conflicts, and providing multiple viewpoints on a story. This literary technique often creates a sense of immediacy and authenticity, as readers become privy to the characters' most private thoughts and experiences.

### **Epistolary Literature and African Writings**

Epistolary literature has made its mark in African writing, contributing to the diverse and vibrant literary landscape of the continent. The use of letters and correspondence as a narrative device allows African authors to write personal stories, societal issues, and cultural contexts in a unique and intimate manner. Epistolary literature in African writing encompasses a range of themes and styles, reflecting the rich diversity of experiences across the continent. By employing letters, diary entries, emails, or other forms of communication, these works offer glimpses into the lives of characters, their inner struggles, and their interactions with their surroundings.

One notable example of epistolary literature in African writing is *So Long a Letter* by Mariama Bâ, published in 1979. The novel is composed as a long letter from Ramatoulaye, a Senegalese woman, to her friend Aissatou. Through her letter, Ramatoulaye shares her thoughts, emotions, and experiences as she navigates widowhood, societal expectations, and the challenges faced by women in a changing African society. This novel not only explores the personal journey of the protagonist but also provides a window into the broader issues of gender roles and cultural transformation.

Another significant work is Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*, published in 1988. The novel is narrated through the diary entries of Tambudzai, a young Zimbabwean girl, who explores her personal growth, education, and the complexities of colonialism and gender inequality in her society. The epistolary form allows readers to intimately engage with Tambudzai's thoughts and aspirations, providing a multifaceted portrayal of her experiences.

In the context of Ebidenyefa's twin novels, 14 letters to my lazy lover and Jude's Reply, the nature of epistolary literature, highlights how letter writing can serve as a powerful tool in dealing with heartbreak. By engaging in this form of self-expression, the protagonists in these novels are able to navigate the complexities of their emotions, find solace in their own words, and embark on journeys of personal growth and healing. These narratives underscore the transformative power of epistolary communication, shedding light on ways in which letter writing can facilitate emotional release, self-reflection, and the attainment of closure in the face of unreciprocated affection.

Overall, epistolary literature in African writing adds a distinct and powerful dimension to the literary landscape. Through letters, diaries, and digital exchanges, African authors weave intricate narratives

that illuminate personal struggles, social dynamics, and cultural perspectives, contributing to a deeper appreciation and understanding of African literature as a whole.

#### Theoretical Framework

Discourse analysis, as a theoretical framework, provides a robust lens through which to explore the emotional dynamics and identity construction within epistolary communication. According to Gee (2014), discourse analysis involves the study of language in use, focusing on how language shapes and is shaped by social practices. This approach allows us to explore the many perspectives of how language is used to express and negotiate emotions, thereby revealing deeper insights into the characters' psychological and emotional states.

By focusing on Ayefa's and Jude's letters, we can examine the specific linguistic strategies they employ to articulate their feelings of lost love, abandonment, and remorse. These letters serve not only as a medium for personal expression but also as a site where their emotional identities are constructed and negotiated. Discourse analysis enables us to decipher these strategies, such as the use of metaphors, narrative structures, and rhetorical devices, to convey complex emotional experiences (Johnstone, 2018).

In our novels of interest, the characters' written communications are rich with emotional content that reflects their inner turmoil and personal growth. Discourse analysis facilitates an in-depth understanding of how these emotions are linguistically constructed and communicated. For instance, we can explore how Ayefa and Jude use language to navigate the themes of blame and forgiveness, how they frame their past experiences, and how they seek to make sense of their emotional journeys.

Furthermore, incorporating discourse analysis enriches our comprehension of the novels by illuminating how language functions within the broader societal and cultural context. Gee (2014) emphasizes that discourse analysis allows us to explore how societal norms and expectations influence the characters' emotional expressions and how their letters reflect and challenge these norms. This framework also highlights the performative aspect of letter writing, where characters not only express but also perform their identities through language (Butler, 2006).

Through discourse analysis, we can uncover the intricate ways in which language constructs emotional experiences and shapes characters' identities. This approach also reveals how the act of writing itself becomes a therapeutic process for the characters, facilitating personal growth and reflection (Schiffin, Tannen, & Hamilton, 2015). By examining the interplay between communication, society, and individual transformation, we gain a deeper appreciation of the emotional and psychological dimensions of Ebidenyefà Tarila-Nikade's novels.

In summary, discourse analysis is not only relevant but essential to the thrust of this paper, as it allows us to systematically investigate and interpret the linguistic construction of emotional experiences in epistolary writing. It provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the multifaceted ways in which language mediates and transforms emotional connections within the narrative.

#### Methodology:

This paper adopts a qualitative approach to comprehensively explore the dynamics of epistolary therapeutics in the selected novels. The methodology comprises mostly of textual analysis. In-depth textual analysis of 14 Letters to My Lazy Lover and Jude's Reply is conducted to identify instances of epistolary therapeutics, emotional expression, self-reflection, and coping mechanisms. The aim is to bridge the realms of literature and psychology, offering a perspective on how fictional characters' therapeutic journeys can resonate with readers and potentially contribute to their own emotional

growth. Also, by analyzing the language choices and tone in their correspondence, we can explore how societal norms influence characters' choices and decisions.

#### Research Questions

1. How does the process of writing and exchanging letters contribute to the development and transformation of the characters in 14 Letters to My Lazy Lover and Jude's Reply?
2. In what ways do the characters' letters in the novels serve as a means of self-reflection, allowing them to explore their own emotions, motivations, and personal growth?
3. How does the epistolary format provide a platform for the characters to address and confront their inner conflicts, dilemmas, and unresolved emotions in both novels?

#### Analysis:

14 Letters to My Lazy Lover by Ebidenyefa Nikade is an emotive work that adopts the epistolary style to explore the complex emotions of lost love and abandonment between two lovers, Ayefa and Jude. Through a compilation of 14 letters, Ayefa, the protagonist, embarks on a journey of reminiscence and lamentation, probing into the depths of her love affair with Jude and the subsequent headache caused by his abandonment.

Through Ayefa's heartfelt letters, readers witness the emotional rollercoaster of love and loss, grappling with the aftermath of Jude's betrayal caused by his "laziness" and his subsequent abandonment.

In letters 1-4, the early stages of their love affair, Ayefa's letters hint at a sense of coyness and bashfulness she displayed when being wooed by Jude. This coyness serves as an indication of her vulnerability and reluctance to fully embrace her feelings for him. It is not uncommon for individuals in the initial stages of a romantic relationship to experience hesitancy and a sense of self-preservation. Ayefa's vulnerability makes her character more relatable and human, and readers may identify with the complexities of opening oneself up to love.

However, as the love affair progresses, Ayefa's letters become imbued with a profound sense of intimacy and passion. The author employs vivid language and imagery to convey the depth of emotions shared between Ayefa and Jude.

“The kiss in the aisle... was romantically sliding...  
it was warm and salty, elevating and satiating  
with a good feeling of assurance of alliance...  
I was in paradise and eternity beckoned.  
I felt all the nerves in my body loosen up  
to receive the magnetic currents transmitted by your tenderness  
as we traced lips.” (p. 10)

The excerpt provided portrays a highly romantic and passionate moment between Ayefa and Jude. The language used is filled with imagery and sensory details, evoking strong emotions associated with love and intimacy. The passage conveys a deep emotional connection between Ayefa and Jude. Words like "romantically sliding," "warm and salty," and "good feeling of assurance of alliance" indicate the intensity of their emotions. The language suggests a profound emotional bond between the two characters.

The mention of "paradise" and "eternity" suggests that Ayefa and Jude's love transcends the present moment and has a sense of timelessness. This indicates that their affection is not fleeting but rather has a profound and everlasting quality, as if they have found a love that knows no bounds.

As the letters progress, subtle hints and foreshadowing begin to surface, suggesting the possibility of Jude's betrayal. These signs include changes in Jude's behavior, distant communication, Ayeefa's intuition that something is amiss and the big "elopement". The author skillfully builds suspense and tension, allowing readers to brace themselves for the heartbreaking revelation – the elopement.

"Let me tell you how I felt when I receive the DHL parcel that sort of announced your ill fated return... I knew that you had eloped with your cousin-turned-lover but I didn't know where... Then a sickening dimness fell upon the room. Even though I had always looked forward to your return for me, a stroke of sadness hit me. You shouldn't have left in the first instance." (p.21)

The turning point of the narrative occurs when Ayeefa finally confronts the harsh reality of Jude's betrayal. The emotional intensity of this moment leaves readers shattered alongside Ayeefa, as they witness the crumbling of the love they once believed to be invincible. The betrayal not only undermines the foundation of their relationship but also damages Ayeefa's trust in love in itself.

"Even when I found my fantasy in the phenomenal tall, dark and handsome hunk of a guy in my college group, I couldn't muster the courage to follow my heart.

It's been horrifying trying to love again." (p.30)

But in spite of the harrowing effect of Jude's betrayal, Ayeefa in Letter 14, is determined to move on:

"So, today and the years to come, I let you go, my darling.

If our paths cross again, it shall be for friendship...

This is my reality - loving you, still... moving on...

I deserve better." (p.31)

Ultimately, this work stands as a testament to the enduring power of love and emotional resilience in the face of life's trials.

#### Jude's Reply

"Jude's Reply," the second novel by Ebidenyefa Tarila-Nikade, explores the intricate interplay between love and deception. In this novel, the protagonist, Jude, writes back to Ayeefa, wherein he confesses the reason for his sudden abandonment. He attributes his actions to the influence of his friends, who led him astray, resulting in an unfortunate deviation from the path of true love. Jude finds himself entangled in a web of deceit, leading him to hurt the person he loves the most, Ayeefa. In this 8 letters novel, Jude reveals his inner turmoil and the influence of his misguided friends on his actions. Despite Jude's apparent sincerity of love, he was wrongly influenced by his friends which becomes evident that other factors contributed to his actions – lust and external pressure.

"What you didn't know was that I had a bet with my friends who already taunted me for my strict loyalty to you.

The figures that they contributed were too mouthwatering to resist.

They put my masculinity on trial...

They said a man was not made to love only one woman...

according to them it was an aberration to be without a backup plan,

an intimate plan B." (p.10)

The excerpt from the novel sheds light on the destructive impact of external pressure on Jude and Ayeefa's relationship. It highlights the factors that led to their eventual estrangement, it is made evident how society's preconceived notions of masculinity and loyalty distorted Jude's judgment, causing irreparable damage to the couple's once loving connection.

Jude's friends taunted him for his strict loyalty to Ayeefa, questioning the very essence of his masculinity. The notion that a man should not love only one woman fueled the misguided idea that fidelity was a sign

of weakness. Society's toxic portrayal of masculinity as synonymous with promiscuity and the need for multiple backup plans cast a shadow on Jude's genuine feelings for Ayeefa. In succumbing to this pressure, he prioritized conforming to societal norms over the authenticity of his emotions.

The existence of the bet and Jude's wavering loyalty eroded the foundation of trust upon which a healthy relationship thrives. Ayeefa, who had placed her faith in Jude's love and commitment, faced the painful realization that her partner had succumbed to external influences.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, "14 Letters to My Lazy Lover" and its sequel "Jude's Reply" by Ebidenyefa Nikade stand as emotionally charged examples of epistolary literature that shades light into the intricate realms of lost love, abandonment, and personal growth. Through the narrative devices of letter writing and introspective confession, these novels establish a profound connection to societal themes and offer readers avenues for personal reflection and growth.

Both novels offer readers opportunities for personal growth through self-reflection and introspection. Ayeefa's and Jude's letters provide a platform for characters to confront their emotions, leading to self-discovery, emotional release, and ultimately, personal healing. "Jude's Reply" exemplifies the transformative power of self-awareness, as Jude acknowledges the consequences of his actions and takes responsibility for his choices. By witnessing these journeys of emotional exploration and growth, readers are prompted to embark on their own paths of introspection, potentially fostering emotional resilience, empathy, and personal evolution. It introduces a layer of societal reflection by addressing the influence of peer pressure and external factors on personal decisions. Jude's confession about succumbing to his friends' influence and abandoning Ayeefa speaks to the broader theme of societal pressures and the battle between individual and social conformity.

By employing discourse analysis, this study has not only explored the emotional connections between the characters but also highlighted the broader societal dynamics at play. The letters serve as a microcosm of larger social issues, such as gender roles and the impact of societal norms on personal relationships. This approach has enriched our understanding of the novels, demonstrating how language constructs and conveys emotional experiences, and how these experiences are intertwined with societal influences.

Ultimately, the use of discourse analysis in this study underscores the power of language in shaping human connections and emotional landscapes. It provides a comprehensive framework for examining the intricate ways in which individuals communicate their innermost thoughts and feelings, and how these communications can lead to personal growth and transformation. Through this lens, we gain a deeper appreciation of the therapeutic potential of epistolary communication and its role in fostering emotional resilience and healing.

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In Defence Of Motherhood: A Therapoetics Reading Of Some Selected Poems In Ibiere Ken-Maduako's Sounds Of Motherhood

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**Abstract**

One of the corresponding reactions to the import of literature to the society is that, literary works play significant roles in nation building. No doubt, works of art are used in this wise to expose the many ills of the society which includes gender related ills. And sometimes, voices are not loud enough in the conventional media platforms concerning these issues; thus, works of art in poetry, prose or drama forms, become a competent platform to raise the loudest protest in the righting of whatever wrong ideology sold through hegemonic influences. In this article, the dialectics of motherhood in Africa is considered as the artistic focus of Ibiere Ken-Maduako in Sounds of Motherhood, and that she carefully portrays motherhood as a virtue and corporate responsibility of both sexes, through her uncommon use of simple but appealing (therapeutic) languages. This is done against the backdrop of the invading ideology of radical feminism which seems to adulterate the African society with rather alien manifestos. Thus, this paper takes into consideration the therapeutic approach of the writer in extolling motherhood as a virtue, as against the radical feminist ideologies. Womanism and Therapoetics are the twin theories with which this work is done.

**Keywords:** Womanism. Radical feminism. Therapoetics. Didacticism

**Introduction**

Charles Nnolim had expressed hope in the positive role the modern African literature plays "because of the permanency of its nature". And according to him, such literature has a "pervasive influence" on the generations of the society both old and young. To say the least, the above opinion bring to bear the didactic enormity of literary works especially African literature in all its genres irrespective of themes and concerns. Nnolim characterizes this claim in a very simple term when he says "the literary voice, tiny and most often overhead rather than heard etched itself on our psyche" (182).

African female writers are a notable voice in the circle of modern African literature with particular attention on themes bothering on, redefining the rights of women, womanhood in Africa and indeed motherhood. This artistic task had in the company of Western radical feminism enthroned alien ideologies and doctrines that can best be described as "strange gods". Feminism indeed, seeks to advocate for gender equality and social, political, economic liberations of the women. And to add, there is nothing wrong with liberation or to seek egalitarianism. What we find alien here is that, using the modern day African society as a case study, even the male gender equally deserve some liberation from domestic violence as much as the females deserve. Yet, what is often spoken of in many female writings in African literature is the stereotyped story of gender based violence against women, without taking into cognizance, the possible violence against men even in their own marriages. Ibiere Ken-Maduako's Sounds of Motherhood takes a different turn on this.

Modupe Kolawole noted that "in addressing the issue of gender in Africa, historical and cultural context are fundamental". She writes further to assert that "the failure to consider context accounts for misconceptions of the relevance of feminism in any Black African societies, including the rejection of feminism" (204). The historical and cultural context referred to here simply allude to the truth that

women are not altogether oppressed in every African societies and that each society is peculiar with its cultural aesthetics. One of such cultural aesthetics is "motherhood". And in another dimension, Ogundice-Leslie agrees that "there were indigenous feminism" in Africa and that there were indigenous patterns within traditional African societies for addressing the oppression and injustices to women"(548). One of such traditional pattern is the practice of "aman-Obolo" in Andoni (Obolo) ethnic nationality of the Niger Delta region. Aman-Obolo is a traditional system set up to protect women and the dignity of womanhood. A system that gives the woman the rights to her father's inheritance including Kingship. A man is not allowed to mistreat his wife, or even use abusive, derogatory or vulgar words on her (Nsan Eneyo 14).

This study believes that, "the trajectory of the more recent movements of African feminism draws an arc that is most disquieting in its implications"(Nholim 217). It is this concern that inspired the focus of this work. The focus here is, rather than antagonism, aggression, militancy or violent confrontation, feminism should be more interested in mutual corporation and existence between the both sexes. This mutual corporation will in turn encourage motherhood or in other words, womanism. Womanism according to Leslie Ogunyemi "wants meaningful union between black women and black men and black children, and will see to it that men will change from their sexist stand" (cited in Nholim 5). Margaret Nutsukpo explains that womanism as a "concept formulated by Alice Walker which is black-centred, advocates an end to sexism and a meaningful relationship between blackwomen and men, and children"(88). It extols womanhood and motherhood. Womanism is different from the Western radical feminism which "emerged from the energies of small groups of women disaffected with their male peers in civil rights and New Left movements: ... often full of anger and incredibly bold in their identifications of the world's wrongs" (Imelda Whelehan: 42).

In Sounds of Motherhood, the theme of motherhood is espoused and brilliantly captured, without anger, as a major dialectics of African feminism - womanism. Here Maduako, captures the bittersweet experiences of motherhood, the failures of the society in protecting the girl-child through equal treatment of the both sexes as "Womanism" advocates. She offers through the persona, life-sustaining counsels for effective and successful familial life with her plain and simple expressions "language of sensory appeals". Her feminist ideology in this collection of poems is rather womanistic. Her persuasive poetic approach for the protection of every child including the girl-child, is rather therapeutic. Rather than violent confrontation, radical approach, Maduako in this collection takes a turn that can be described as the use of 'womanism' with 'therapoetics' as her approach.

Therapoetics is an emerging critical theory propounded by a Nigerian professor of poetry, Professor Kontein Trinya. In his inaugural lecture at the Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt, Nigeria, where this theoretical framework was introduced, he considered among other things, art and life, affective art, the nature and therapy of poetry and the power of words. In 'art and life' Trinya reveals the social influences art (literature) has on the society. This influence is interpreted in the fact that art is not only sufficient to itself, but also to other purposes. These other purposes' open the social perspective of art to life. The "social purpose has been increasingly inevitable, often as an alternative voice for the voiceless, or as a furtive voice where censorious laws stifle or threaten the plain voice of art" (Trinya: 13). He concluded his argument here in establishing that "art, especially poetry, has made no 'aesthetic' pretences about its prominent engagement with social issues"(13-4) because "it has been the nature of art to hold hands with the society, walking down the isles of time"(15). In Sounds of Motherhood, the social engagement between art and life is practically shown in the extolling of motherhood as an inevitable virtue in Africa.

On 'affective art', Trinya equally established that "it is the power of art to stir psycho-physiological responses from its audience, making them laugh, cry, smile, exclaim, raise a hand or jump"(18). He

derived this position from the concept of 'affective criticism' which he explained that it "refers to the emotional effects or dispositions that literary works arouse in the audiences or readers, akin to catharsis" (18). Here, the emotional appeal of a literary work and its implications on the psychological or moral attitude of the society, is what affective art defines. This affective feature of art might perhaps have informed Nkeme Okoh when he said that "literature can instruct us enormously, providing us with knowledge regarding the wider world, the physical, psychological, religious, and cultural canvases of man" (3). This affective ability of literature to instruct, appeal, influence, according to Trinya "lies in the appeals of language, especially the sensory appeals through metaphor; it lies in the evocative properties of metaphor; metaphor in the generic sense by which poetry is able to transport the reader or hearer into that other world of alternative realities. Images, because they are the imitation of motions and moods in the reader's or hearer's recesses, stir up latent but familiar fireplaces that release the affective forces" (20). Language here is considered as the vehicle or device within which the 'affective' or therapeutic nature of art is revealed. Not just language, but such that has the "sensory appeals through metaphor". In other words, a poem's therapeutic apparel must be considered by the enthralling beauties of its expression.

The scholar in 'the nature of therapy of poetry' offers two perspectives to the interpretation of 'therapoetics'. On the one hand, he considered therapoetics from the therapeutic effect it has on the poet or author in course of the creative process. And on the other hand, from the therapeutic effect it has on the reader. He seems to suggest here that Therapoetics offers the necessary therapy to both the writer (poets), and the readers which accounts for the 'reader-response' perspective of the 'affective art'.

Thus, the therapeutic reading of Sounds of Motherhood here referred to is to consider how Ken-Maduako's poems offers healing to those victims of domestic abuse through her choice of words, and how her art brings into focus the daily realities of some women, mothers, girl child and boy child respectively. Those victims who through peer group influences, become rebellious to their husbands and families. Those who think that the tenets of radical feminism is the alternative solution to gender related issues. Those who think that it is only the female child that is abused and thus pay no attention to the boy-child. Those women who do not appreciate the virtues of motherhood and would rather prefer surrogacy to actual motherhood. Her approach to these sundry social issues in the poems is 'counselling' in nature, and thus therapeutic, and on the other hand, therapeutic.

### **The Therapoetics of Motherhood**

In Sounds of Motherhood the theme of motherhood is espoused and brilliantly captured as a major dialectics of African feminism. In this poem collection, the writer reflects on the bittersweet experiences of motherhood, the failures of the society in protecting the girl-child through equal treatment of both sexes as advocated by Womanists. Whereas Maduako's work is poetry, yet the concept of motherhood characterised the work just like any other African prose narrative. Boma Obi implied that gender based issues are the focal point of Maduako's artistic concern. Some of the issues she noted in her explanation are: gender violence, stereotypes, sex preferences, high bride price, rape and child abuse, and women's right (Icheke 313-21). These issues are indeed replete in the collection of poems. However, in identifying the ills and shortcomings, Maduako radiates her poems with the aesthetics of motherhood as the foundation of it all. She combines both advocacy against gender based violence and advocacy that extols motherhood as a virtue.

Her concern on gender stereotypes are geared towards correcting any imbalance among the both sexes, not just women alone. Shirley Kontein and Atang Basseyy noted that Maduako's "gender issues do not only concern the women" (cited in Nutsukpo 82). They explain further that "gender studies must be concerned with every form of discrimination against both sexes" (82). This is the balance that Maduako creates in her work which is different from every other feminist writers. She acknowledges the fact that, gender stereotypes, violence, is evil and should be corrected, and taking into consideration an aspect that

is often time ignored - that men could also be victims of gender related violence or imbalance. In 'Hammer Blows' the evil of domestic violence and the beastly attitude of beating one's wife is condemned. A man who hides under the cloak of marriage to unleash terror on his wife can best be described as a coward and weakening. Through the lines of this poem one could see a submissive mother who fell prey to a beastly husband. Note also, that there are beastly wives unknown yet, who may not necessarily hurt with the fist but their tongue thus, in the poem 'Her Tongue' the writer, through the persona, admonishes women to learn the art of containing the tongue. Perhaps, to also forestall unnecessary bickering and attendant violence in the home. In the words of the persona,

But tame the tongue  
You must!  
O! Woman  
Sweeten it  
Quieten it  
Freshen it  
Season it (lines 7-13)

because, the woman has a duty to love with tender care and building bridges of peace in the home. This is exemplified in the poem 'The Woman: A Pledge'. In the voice of the personae;

I  
I am a woman  
Love, my mission  
Tenderness, my goal  
A bridge, to forge  
Of love and peace

The evangelistic tone found in the lines of this poem is not only therapeutic, but also a pointer to the fact that the writer beyond promoting gender equality speaks of the godliness of an African mother and her place as a nation builder through the building of a peaceful home. This is further demonstrated in the poems 'Forgiveness' and 'The Peace of God' where the persona calls for forgiveness on the part of whoever is hurt especially, hurting mothers. Then offers some prayers of peace and restoration to those who are hurt as a result of any form of violence using herself as an example. The image of a woman created here is that of a woman of virtue which is what African women represent.

Unlike Agnes in Flora Nwapa's *Women Are Different*, whose motherhood is a total disaster as shown in her daughter Zizi's prostitution business at age fifteen, snatching of other women's husband at eighteen and worse still, drug trafficking; and in *One is Enough*, despite Nwapa's portrayal of African mothers as failures in the character of Amaka's mother who encourages Amaka to sleep around, Maduako in 'A Song for the Mothers' thinks otherwise. She thinks that African mothers

....are a blessing  
Mothers are nice  
They spend their lives  
In sacrifice...  
Mothers are a rock  
Mothers are kind.

Note that, Mary Modupe Kolawole had considered "the African woman as a transmitter and vector of cultural, spiritual, social and moral values"(94). She believes, that an image of the African woman created in any work of art should reflect same because the writer owes that to the society in which he or she belongs. We should also not forget Trinya's position above that "it has been the nature of art to hold

hands with the society". The question is, how does art holds hand with the society in the poem 'Sounds of Motherhood'?

In 'Sounds of Motherhood', the stress of being a mother is vividly captured. It reminds one of the complexities associated with motherhood. Her experiences - both sweet and painful, are portrayed as the sounds of motherhood. In other words, the writer here seems to suggest that motherhood is not a piece of cake and shouldn't be seen as such. However, further analysis reveals that, it is only natural that a mother, who pays so much sacrifices, deserves a song at least, not battery, mutilation, oppression and the likes. Maduako's therapeutic inclinations in the lines of this poem is the musical effects of the onomatopoeic words and the rhymes that are best associated with toddlers. For example, the lines;

Cock a doodle Doo;  
Coo...coo...roo...coo...!  
Goes the clock

Suggest the coming of the bedtime and the short rest the mother often have before morning comes again so swiftly, for another round of daily routine. Yet, the lines are composed in a form that is not only musical, but with sounds effect associated with the cooing of the baby. In this poem the mother will wake early to attend to the children, prepare them for school, pack their breakfast and lunch, clean them up for bedtime, receives their complaints about one another. The mother is always at the beck and call of the children. The affective appeal here is shown in the diligence of a mother who is ready to attend to her children. This poem, unlike radical feminist ideologists, extols motherhood as a virtue. It is in that regard that the writer in another poem entitled 'What Could Be Sweeter?' reveals that a mother's love is 'unselfish', 'affectionate', 'undying', 'strong' and an 'umbrella' that provides Sheila even to the worst of a naughty child.

In 'A Mother's Pain' the writer bemoans the abuse of the male child. The poems reflect on the manner older female folks take advantage of unsuspecting male minors. The child is lured; At every dark spot/Cornered/By aunts big and small (12-14). He's made a 'plaything' and influenced negatively by being taught 'small little crimes' and 'dirty little tricks'. Such social and moral debauchery against male children are often not talked about by 'overzealous' feminist writers. Consequently, here the girl-child is not the only victim of sexual abuse or gender based violence or assault. The feminist Inclinations of the writer here is rather objective and decidedly, realistic. Her simple metaphors employed in the poems are nonetheless, equally therapeutic.

Therapoetics insists on how poems and indeed art offer a healing process either to the writer or to the reader. In this collection of poems, the languages of admonition in the poems are on one part therapeutic and on the other impressionistic. The concept of impressionism here is derived from the theory of 'art and life' already propagated as an aspect of Therapoetics. The writer's objectiveness in handling gender based issues constitutes an ideology of fairness, and thus, implied motherhood.

### **Contribution to Knowledge**

This work makes a very frantic attempt, albeit implicitly, to challenge the narrative of western radical feminism which characteristically promotes the anti-child ethos. It comes with the intention to promote womanism as the most suitable version of feminism healthy enough to the moral life of the African society using Ken-Maduako's Sounds of Motherhood as the focal point. The study is therefore carried out through a careful reading of about seven poems in the collection. This work too, considers most importantly, the place of Therapoetics as an emerging theory in literary analysis. Thus, it is our hope here, that this work will stimulate more thinking and studies in these directions.

## Conclusion

Therapoetics considers art (literature) as having significant roles in the building of the society. Therefore, writers must take into consideration the underlying fact that every piece of work created has an implication on the social, moral, psychological, political and spiritual life of the society. Thus, he or she must choose what implication(s) such work must or should have - positive or negative. Therapoetics also, thrives on the use of language as a vehicle to establish the affective art. How language is employed by poets, novelists, and playwrights is significant to whatever 'affective' impact such work should have. And, this study observes that Sounds of Motherhood is written in the most simplest of words with choices of words that are inherently therapeutic in context and style.

Finally, the consistent reference to children on one part, and the portrayal of gender problems among the both sexes on the other hand, exemplifies the writer's sense of Motherhood that is not only interested in the girl-child alone, but also the boy-child. The feminist aesthetics found in this poetry collection negates the anti-child ethos of western radical feminism.

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Identity And Nationality in Chimamanda Adichie's Half Of A Yellow Sun

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**Abstract**

This study examines the issues of Identity and nationality in Chimamanda Adichie's Half of a Yellow Sun published in 2006. Utilizing the National Identity and postcolonial theories, this paper contends that Adichie explores the impact the Nigerian Civil War on individuals and generally on society, delving into the lives of characters as they navigate the intricacies of their identities and nationalities in the context of the conflicts of the Biafran War. The paper discloses that the central subjects of identity and nationality are key aspects that are formed and altered by historical events and personal experiences. Finally, the paper concludes that through Adichie's narrative structure, she invites readers to reflect on the intricate ways in which individuals navigate and define themselves within the context of a changing nation.

**Keywords:** Adichie, National Identity theory, Postcolonial theory, Identity

**Introduction**

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Half of a Yellow Sun is a pivotal novel that captures the essence of the Nigerian Civil War and its insightful effects on individuals and society. The novel provides a rich narrative that explores themes of identity, nationality and the enduring impacts of colonialism and the complexities of individuals and their experiences shaped by struggles and negotiations involved in defining national identity in a postcolonial Igbo milieu of Nigeria. We can state from the start that the concept of Pan-Igbo identity predates the arrival of Europeans. As Adichie's narrative records "Go and ask the elders in your village about your history," Master exclaimed. "The problem is that Odenigbo is a hopeless tribalist; we have to keep him quiet," Miss Adebayo remarked (HYS 34).

Interestingly, studies on Half of a Yellow Sun has largely focused on its historical accuracy, its portrayal of the Nigerian Civil War and its feminist perspectives. However, there is a gap in the literature regarding the nuanced exploration of identity and nationality within the novel, which this paper aims to address.

The Nigerian Civil War, also known as the Biafran War of 1967-1970, was a central event in Nigerian history. It arose from ethnic tensions and conflicts over political power and resource control, leading to the secession of the southeastern region as the Republic of Biafra. The war had devastating effects on the population and significantly influenced national identity.

In her work Half of a Yellow Sun, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie explores the identity of the Igbo nation through the use of their language, which plays a crucial role in every aspect of life. She carefully exposes the interests of the Igbo people as a nation, providing a geographical context through the use of cardinal zones, as described in the text – the Eastern and Northern regions or dichotomy in Nigeria.

It is noteworthy that the main focus of our discussion is the events that unfolded within the geographical

space called Nigeria and the near secession of the Igbo group, which declared itself as the Biafra Republic in Nigeria. Adichie draws global attention to the marginalization of the Igbo nation between 1966 and 1970 and the implications of the Nigerian Civil War. She explores the reasons behind the Igbo people's deep grievances and their quest for freedom through secession to form the Biafran nationality.

In the historical context of Nigeria, it was the Igbo East that directly clashed with the Northern Fulani, though the reasons were not directly explained. The interests of these ethnic groups eventually led to the Nigerian state being drawn into the widely-known civil war, often referred to as the Biafra war. The root cause of the conflict was the struggle for leadership and control of economic power, exacerbated by the perception of marginalization of the Eastern region in the pre-civil war period of 1966. In her work, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie emotionally expresses the identity and feelings of the Igbo people in Nigeria.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's work is rich in emotion. In line with Hogan P.C's argument in "Literature and Emotion," he emphasizes that, "As is clear from almost any review of a movie, our responses to stories are suffused with emotion, and this emotion is created by the writer, ranging from enthusiasm to outrage, grief to joy" (1).

From a critical perspective, *Half of a Yellow Sun* is used to emotionally project the identity of the Igbo tribe and to promote global awareness of their desire to be recognized as the Biafran nation. Considering Michel Foucault's essay "What is an Author?" in Worgu's *Literary Criticism* it's evident that Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is not only emotional but also socially engaged in her role as a writer (Worgu, 94).

Adichie strategically introduces tribal sentiments at various points in the plot to convey her identity and her stance on the issues related to the Biafran war in Nigeria as a nation. In line with what was mentioned earlier, she accomplishes this by using English and Igbo as a stylistic blend to narrate her story and clearly convey sameness, selfhood and the desire for recognition as a distinct entity. The Igbo language is an essential tool in achieving these objectives. In summary, it is accurate to assert that language is a key element in her tribal projections and their expression of identity and nationality.

The primary objectives of this study are to: basically examine how personal, cultural and ethnic identities are portrayed in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. as a further source, it seeks to analyze the construction of national identity in the context of postcolonial Nigeria. Additionally, it explores the interplay between identity and nationality within the framework of National Identity and Postcolonial Theories.

This study employs National Identity theory and Postcolonial theory to analyze the themes of identity and nationality in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. These frameworks provide the tools to evaluate how Adichie navigates the complexities of personal and collective identities within a postcolonial nation. In a manifest way, this paper contributes to the understanding of how literature reflects and shapes the concepts of identity and nationality, particularly in postcolonial contexts; by focusing on how Adichie's novel highlights the ongoing struggles and negotiations involved in defining national identity in a postcolonial nation.

The interested reader should note that National Identity theory explores how individuals and groups construct their identities based on national affiliation. Key theorists like Benedict Anderson and Anthony Smith provide insights into how nations are socially constructed and the role of historical and cultural narratives in forming national identity. On its part, Postcolonial theory examines the effects of colonialism on former colonies and their people. Theorists such as Edward Said, Homi K. Bhabha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak offer frameworks for understanding how colonial legacies influence

contemporary identities and power dynamics.

We shall now turn our attention to the Analysis of Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*.

#### Postcolonial Experience and Power Domination

Adichie delves into personal identity through her characters, particularly Olanna, Odenigbo and Ugwu. Their journeys reflect the search for self amidst the chaos of war and societal expectations. Adichie exemplifies the challenges of forming a cohesive national identity in a postcolonial state. The novel reflects the competing narratives and historical grievances that complicate this process.

The postcolonial literary movement began after World War II, as many countries that were once under colonization achieved independence. Writers from various regions emerged during this period, including countries like India, the Caribbean, Nigeria, South Africa and more. In Nigeria, postcolonial literature refers to works written after the country gained independence. Frantz Fanon, in his 1961 book *The Wretched of the Earth*, written in French, examines the anti-colonial violence that occurred worldwide after colonization.

Another influential postcolonial theorist is Edward Said, whose significant contribution to the world was his book *Orientalism*. In this work, Said argues that "Orientalism was ultimately a political vision of reality whose structure promoted the difference between the familiar (Europe, the West, 'us') and the unfamiliar ('them,' the East)" (38). The term "Oriental" often refers to a portrayal of people as feminine and weak compared to the strong and masculine Western image. Said proposed that Westerners divided the world into two parts, the East and the West, creating the concept of "us" and "them." This division extended to areas such as the colonized and the colonizer. According to Edward Said, colonialism was a powerful tool that distinguished between Europeans and non-Europeans. The purpose of orientalism was to strengthen the interests of imperialism. In Nigeria, during both the colonial and postcolonial periods, the country experienced various challenges, ranging from imperialist rule to post-independence power struggles.

The postcolonial experience and the political interests of certain groups in the country for power ultimately led to the secessionist decision of the Igbo Nation. Odenigbo in the story is introduced as a freedom fighter, symbolizing the aspirations of the entire Igbo Nation. His sense of sadness arises from the marginalization of his fellow tribesmen, especially in terms of political power, which directly influences economic and political control.

This marginalization lies at the core of the conflict depicted in the story, eventually leading to the rise of tribal sentiment among the Igbo people and the declaration of the Biafra Republic. Chimamanda Adichie has effectively illustrated the role of the artist in contemporary African society and beyond through her work.

In *The Signature of Women* by Udumukwu, Achebe's concept of the artist is referenced. Achebe's perspective suggests that an artist, as a human being with heightened sensitivity, must be acutely aware of even the faintest nuances of injustice in human relations. It is the artist's duty not to be indifferent to the monumental injustices suffered by their people (Achebe, 1975:79).

Adichie's storytelling style aims to vividly outline the genuine experiences of the Igbo ethnicity and the mistreatment of the Biafran people during the war. Ethnic identity as we are made to understand plays a central role in the narrative, especially regarding the Igbo people's experiences and struggles. The war amplifies ethnic divisions, forcing characters to confront their affiliations and loyalties. The story reveals a series of coups in the lead-up to the conflict, with the year 1966 marked by significant political upheaval. The coup in January 1966 favored the Igbo tribe, but the counter-coup in July 1966 not only

overthrew the Agu-led military dictatorship but also led to the deaths of several key Igbo military personnel, including General Agu Ironsi. These events intensified tensions and hostility, particularly against the Igbos.

The Igbo tribe saw these acts as severe oppression and dehumanization, prompting them to call for secession as the Biafra Republic. This marked a significant shift in the relationship between the Igbo and other Nigerian ethnic groups. Undoubtedly, the novel portrays the rich cultural diversity of Nigeria, highlighting the tensions and harmonies between different ethnic groups. Adichie examines how cultural identity is preserved and transformed in the face of external pressures.

The Nigerian Civil War clearly served as a catalyst for the exploration of national identity in the novel. The conflict forces characters and communities to reassess their notions of nationhood and belonging. The course of Igbo marginalization, as well as the power dynamics between the North and East in Nigerian political space, is not adequately explained. Social, cultural and economic factors all played significant roles in the religious, cultural and political crises that unfolded, ultimately leading to the division of the nation during the Biafran conflict.

In the pre-civil war period of 1967, Igbo people faced significant disadvantages due to government policies that undermined their ability to maximize their political and economic potential. The political actions of the Northern cabal that took power from General Aguiyi Ironsi aimed to sideline the Igbo region by creating states instead of maintaining a regional structure. This frustrated the Igbo people's political aspirations and tensions escalated, ultimately resulting in the Nigerian Civil War.

The Eastern region's leader, General Odumegwu Ojukwu, declared the Eastern region as the independent Biafra Republic. Adichie, through her storytelling, revives this important but often overlooked history, conveying the emotions and experiences of the Igbo people. In conclusion, the denial of political representation and power-sharing in Nigeria from 1966 to the present has created a power vacuum. No individual of Igbo extraction has held the presidency. Adichie's work in *Half of a Yellow Sun* raises thought-provoking questions about these historical and contemporary issues.

#### The Effect of the Civil War on the Biafra State

Nigeria gained independence in 1960. However, within five to six years, the military took control of the country, citing corruption as the reason. The military government was led by Major General Aguiyi Ironsi, who assumed power through a coup d'état in January 1967. Shortly after, another coup led by General Gowon toppled Ironsi's government.

The impact of the war was particularly devastating for the Igbo people. Adichie, in her novel, vividly portrayed the negative consequences and the massacres that occurred within the Eastern region, also known as the Biafra Republic. Several characters in the novel suffered the effects of violence due to the war.

From Edward Said's perspective on cultural hegemony, it is evident that Westerners have often been considered superior, while Easterners are viewed as inferior. In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Major Madu asks Richard Churchill, a white man, to write a letter to the British to seek external support for the Biafrans, believing that the West would be more attentive to a letter from a Westerner. The Biafrans assume that Western support would resolve their problems. As a result, when Richard wrote his letter, two journalists were dispatched from England to Nigeria. They regarded one dead European man as equivalent to a hundred Black men.

One of the journalists even made disparaging remarks about African women, falsely claiming they had

sexually transmitted diseases. This demonstrates how Europeans perceived African women. Moreover, the white journalists criticized the diet of the Black population, unaware of the wartime conditions and the scarcity of food. They did not realize that the boundaries were sealed, making it nearly impossible to import food. This misunderstanding led to derogatory comments about the Biafrans. Even though the Biafrans were in the midst of a war and experiencing starvation, the journalists remained uninformed.

Adichie's work sheds light on the untold stories of the war and how the world, which the Biafrans had trusted for support, condemned and mocked them. To emphasize the war's effects on the Igbo region, Adichie wrote: "Let's give you a tour," Kainene said to Olanna, after Father Marcel left. "I always start with the bunker." Kainene showed her the bunker, a roughly dug pit covered with logs, before they walked toward the building at the far end of the compound. "Now to the point of no return." Olanna followed. The smell hit her at the first door. It went straight from her nose to her stomach, churning the bold yam she had for breakfast. Kainene was watching her. "You don't have to go in." "I want to," Olanna said because she felt she should. She didn't want to; she didn't know what the smell was, but it was overpowering, and she could almost see it, a foul, brown cloud. She left faint. They went into the first classroom; about twelve people were lying on bamboo beds, mats, or the floor. Not one of them reached out to swat away the flies. The only movement Olanna saw was a child sitting by the door, unfolding and refolding his arms. His bones were visible, and his arms were flat in a way that should have been impossible without some flesh under the skin. Kainene quickly scanned the room and then turned to the door. Outside, Olanna gulped in the fresh air. In the second classroom, she felt as though even the air inside her was becoming contaminated and wanted to pinch her nostrils shut to prevent the mingling of the indoor and outdoor air. A mother sat on the floor with two children lying beside her. The children were naked, and their protruding bellies wouldn't fit in a shirt anyway. Their buttocks and chests were collapsed into folds of wrinkled skin, and their heads were covered in spots of matted hair. Olanna met the mother's unflinching gaze and looked away quickly. She swatted away the flies from her face, reflecting on how robust the flies appeared, full of life and vibrancy.

The woman lying on the floor, face down, with a thin baby clinging to her back, was dead. Kainene meant to refer to another woman when she said, "That woman is dead; we have to get her removed." But Olanna protested, as she couldn't believe that the woman with the unwavering gaze was dead.

The harrowing experience of malnutrition, hunger, swollen bellies, and the large heads of children painted a grim picture of suffering within the bunker. Those who survived were primarily among the upper class, including characters like Odenigbo, Olanna, and Kainene. In contrast, individuals like Ugwu and his aunt, Harrison, and the three houseboys, as well as other minor characters, were mostly uninformed about the events of the war and its consequences. The common people, who suffered the most under conditions of malnutrition and ignorance, had no other choice. These experiences shaped their identities.

The Igbo people faced the hardship of a struggle for the Biafra Republic, declared by the then Governor General of the Eastern region, Odumegwu Ojukwu. This struggle resulted in significant destruction of the Igbo identity and their future. The Biafra state came under siege for most of the war, and the civilian population suffered tremendously, with a significant number of feminicides and the deliberate policy of blockades that led to the intentional starvation of the Biafran people.

Adichie, through her work, exposes how many young girls died due to indiscriminate bombings. She shared: "Edna came in crying, her eyes swollen red, to tell her that white people had bombed the Black Baptist Church in her hometown. Four little girls had died, one of them was my niece's schoolmate." (Adichie, 299).

The war's effects included loss of life, starvation, and the destruction of countless young lives. The Biafrans, however, remained hopeful and confident, believing they would succeed in their fight for nationhood. Adichie illustrates this through the character of Odenigbo, who proclaimed, "Biafra is born! We will lead Africa, we will live in security! Nobody will ever attack us again! Never again!" (Adichie, 202).

The devastation experienced during the war is not easily forgotten. Adichie, although not born during that time, uses her creative talents to retell and share this historical fact with the world. She advocates for change by using literature to project her Igboness and the collective identity of the Igbo people, as well as to shed light on the silence of the world in the face of human massacres that occurred during the Nigerian Civil War against the Biafra believers. The war led to over one hundred thousand military casualties, with a deliberate policy of blockades that resulted in the intentional starvation of the Biafran population.

The ethno-religious violence, the anti-Igbo agenda in Northern Nigeria, a series of military coups, and the persecution of the Igbo people living in Northern Nigeria all contributed to the eruption of the war and its devastating impact on the Eastern region. Chinua Achebe, in his book *There Was a Country*, profoundly laments the devastating effects of the Nigerian Civil War and the pitifulness and destruction experienced by the Igbo nationality and their future.

According to Obiora Uzokwe, the author of *Surviving in Biafra*, in his introduction, he stated that: In 1966, several waves of riots in northern Nigeria culminated in the brutal massacre of thousands of Easterners by their northern Nigerian counterparts. Fearing for their safety, the Easterners fled to the Eastern region and established an independent nation called Biafra (Obiora, 2).

His analysis reveals that numerous people died, not only during the war, but also during the riots in the Northern Region, displacing many Igbo people who died for no apparent reason. The region that was most affected was the Eastern region or the Igbo tribe. It is crucial to emphasize that the negative effects of the Nigerian Civil War primarily affected the Igbo tribe, a region that was then known as the Biafra Republic. The events during this period, as narrated by Adichie, were extremely traumatic and painful for the Igbo people and other individuals living in that geographical area, which was referred to as Biafra. Alienation and Foreign Influences

Colonial presence in Africa brought about significant changes, affecting culture, tradition and customs. This, in turn, impacted people's ways of life and influenced their characters. However, it also introduced education to the land, including not only standard schools and colleges but also universities. Adichie, in her novel, makes an effort to depict all of these aspects in her historical storytelling.

Characters like Odenigbo, Miss Adebayo, Olanna, Kainene and Harrison were all influenced by foreign knowledge. Specifically, Kainne and Olanna received their education abroad, particularly in the UK. Adichie's portrayal of these characters, who are twin sisters, highlights their sense of alienation. They are perceived as civilized and from a high-class background because of their foreign education and their prestigious, affluent family.

Their foreign background led to admiration by high-ranking government officials and enlightened members of society. While Olanna, despite her Western influence and education, maintains a degree of homeliness, she is still seen as Westernized due to her background. In many postcolonial experiences, countries place significant value on Western education and other forms of civilization. As described in the story, Odenigbo lamented, "It is now that we have to begin to decolonize our education! Not tomorrow. Now! Teach them our history!" (Adichie, 98). This is a point of realization, signifying the alienation resulting from the education people had, both in the past and to some extent today.

Alienation has a significant influence on culture and traditions. The colonial masters turned many people into cooks and servants, regardless of gender. Kaimne introduced three able men with brown khaki uniforms and commanded them to serve Richard Churchill, the white writer and researcher. In her introduction, she said, "Three men in ill-fitting khaki uniforms" and they responded in unison. This act of commanding men as houseboys is a clear example of alienation and Western influence. In a traditional Igbo society, such a chauvinistic role reversal would not be tolerated.

Harrison is another character portrayed by Chimamanda as alienated in the story. As a cook, he excelled in preparing foreign dishes. Even when Richard Churchill expressed a keen interest in African or Igbo delicacies as a tourist attraction, Harrison showcased his prowess in preparing foreign dishes. This situation of a professional cook emphasizing foreign cuisines, even while in Africa, is an example of alienation.

In addition, Ugwu, portrayed as a typical village Igbo man, is seen in the story trying to prepare "fried rice" during Olanna's first visit to Odenigbo. Despite the Western influence in the characters' backgrounds and behaviors, they remain deeply rooted in their Igbo identity, contributing to the complex identity presented by Adichie. Chimamanda Adichie also uses a mixture of tribal languages and English in her storytelling, which showcases the blending of different cultural and linguistic elements to highlight identity and nationality.

### **Conclusion**

From the foregoing, this paper highlights how identity and nationality intersect and influence each other. The characters' experiences reflect broader societal dynamics and the complexities of nation-building. The analysis calls attention to the relevance of Postcolonial theory in understanding the lasting effects of colonialism on identity and nationality. Adichie's novel exemplifies the ongoing negotiations of these concepts in postcolonial societies. The investigation considers the implications of the novel's themes for the future of Nigerian national identity. It suggests that a nuanced understanding of history and culture is essential for fostering a cohesive national identity.

The paper contends that Half of a Yellow Sun offers a profound exploration of identity and nationality, revealing the complexities and contradictions inherent in these concepts in a postcolonial context. The paper concludes by maintaining that Adichie uses Half of a Yellow Sun to explore the traumatic experiences endured by the Biafra Nation and the individuals belonging to that nationality. She delves into the effects of war, identity and the consequences of foreign influences. Her work is a representation of the Biafra struggle, the Igbo identity and a narrative of self-discovery and the realization of national identity in the face of trauma, highlighting the struggles and resilience of individuals and communities in defining their place within the nation.

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The Psychotherapeutic Narrative Strategy and Female Emancipation In Charlotte Perkins Gilman's  
The Yellow Wallpaper And Alice Walker's the Color Purple

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### **Abstract**

The vast literature on the psychotherapeutics as a practice remains the dominant consideration of medicine, as a form of treatment that aims to aid individuals comprehend their emotions, beliefs and conducts in more beneficial and restorative ways. This paper intends to portray the therapeutic in the novels of Charlotte Perkins Gilman's The Yellow Wallpaper and Alice Walker's The Color Purple, and how those authors manipulate their narratives to draw attention to the traumatic experiences of female characters and their processes to healing. As a narrative strategy within psychotherapy, these novels give insights into the social constructs and gender roles that have prejudiced women self-perception and behaviours. Through the feminist cum psychoanalytic lens, this paper explores the role of education and self-determination as psychotherapeutic tools in fostering feminine emancipation. Finally, the paper reveals that employing the psychotherapeutic narrative strategy can function as a potent tool in promoting female emancipation by endowing women to reconstruct their stories, contest gender norms, and promote positive change in their lives.

**Keywords:** Alice Walker, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, medicine, narrative strategy, psychotherapeutic,

### **Introduction**

Feminine emancipation refers to the process of achieving social, political, and economic equality for women, allowing them to break free from oppressive structures and gender norms. It involves empowering women to have agency over their lives, make their own choices, and pursue their aspirations without being limited or dictated by patriarchal expectations. While feminine emancipation seeks to dismantle gender-based discrimination and create a more inclusive and equitable society where women can thrive and contribute on equal footing with men, Butler (2015), looks at it from the angle of challenging traditional gender roles and stereotypes, and promoting women's participation in various aspects of society, including education, economy, politics and culture (2). Meanwhile, Mohanty sees it as the liberation of women from patriarchal oppression, enabling them to achieve equal rights, autonomy, and self-determination (2013:1).

The pursuit of knowledge and self-determination has long been recognized as a powerful catalyst for female emancipation (Hooks, 2010; Mohanty, 2013). In the context of patriarchal societies, education and self-awareness can serve as a liberating force, enabling women to challenge oppressive norms and forge their own paths (Freire, 2018). This is particularly evident in Charlotte Perkins Gilman's The Yellow Wallpaper and Alice Walker's The Color Purple, two seminal works that illustrate the transformative power of education and self-determination in the lives of female protagonists. Through their narratives, Gilman and Walker exemplify the psychotherapeutic potential of storytelling, facilitating a process of self-discovery and empowerment that resonates with contemporary feminist theories (Crenshaw, 2017; Ahmed, 2017). By examining the intersections of education, self-

determination, and psychotherapeutic narrative strategies in these works, this study aims to contribute to ongoing conversations about the role of literature in fostering female empowerment and social change.

Priyanka Sharma and Jitendra Kumar Sharma (2024), attest that “The female protagonists in Walker’s works face and conquer injustice with courage, tenacity, and ingenuity, but Walker is honest about the terrible effects of the ‘twin afflictions’ of racism and sexism”. In the analysis of *The Yellow Wallpaper* and *Alice Walker’s The Color Purple*, both stories resonate with themes of feminine emancipation as they depict the struggles of female characters against patriarchal constraints and their journey towards liberation, from psychological trauma. Both authors engage the use of psychotherapeutic strategies in proffering mental healing for their female characters.

What is Psychotherapeutic?

Psychotherapeutic is an approach in the field of psychosis that deploy ways for which psychothic challenges and barriers are treated. According to Wheeler (2010), psychotherapeutic strategy like psychodynamic, somatic re-experiencing, and interpersonal are utilized in psychiatric nursing practice. These strategies involve narrative approaches that can be applied to the topic of female emancipation in literary works like *The Yellow Wallpaper* and *The Color Purple* to explore themes of mental health and empowerment.

Fávero et al. (2021) discusses the effectiveness of various psychotherapeutic approaches in treating adult victims of child sexual abuse. It highlights the benefits of psychological intervention in reducing symptoms resulting from such traumatic experiences. This is relevant to the topic of psychotherapeutic narrative strategy in literature, as it underscores the importance of utilizing different psychotherapeutic avenues, such as narrative therapy, in addressing issues related to trauma and empowerment, as seen in works like *The Yellow Wallpaper* and *The Color Purple*.

Psychotherapy is a voluntary relationship between the one seeking treatment (client) and the one who treats (therapist). Though there are no mention of clinics and counsellors in the primary texts order than an introduction to Dr John, as the husband to Gilman’s protagonist, one can put the authors as literary therapists who, like the novelist who is regarded as a teacher (Achebe 1966), these female authors are Literary Psychotherapists; who use their literary works to proffer emotional redemption for their suppressed and oppressed female characters and their readers.

Psychotherapeutic Tools Employed by the Authors

According to Nurbayani (2021), the character Celie in *Alice Walker’s* novel *The Color Purple* undergoes multifaceted suffering encompassing physical, psychological, and sexual dimensions. This study delves into the depiction of Celie’s suffering and its various forms through the lens of literary psychology, shedding light on the complexities of female experiences in the narrative, and how she overcomes using education and self-determination.

In *The Yellow Wallpaper*, the protagonist’s experience reflects the confinement and subjugation that many women faced during the late 19th century. Her husband and society dismiss her feelings and desires, relegating her to a subservient role (2). As she becomes increasingly fixated on the yellow wallpaper, the story becomes a metaphor for her desire to break free from the confines of her oppressive environment. Her mental breakdown and ultimate rebellion against her husband’s control demonstrate her fight for self-expression and autonomy. The story critiques the prevailing attitudes towards women’s mental health and illustrates the need for feminine emancipation.

In *The Color Purple*, Celie’s journey is a poignant exploration of feminine emancipation. She endures immense hardship and abuse, yet through her resilience and determination, she finds her voice and inner

strength. Celie's relationship with Shug Avery empowers her to reclaim her identity and desires, challenging the oppressive norms that sought to keep her powerless. Moreover, the novel's emphasis on sisterhood and female support networks highlights the importance of solidarity in the fight for feminine emancipation.

Both narratives advocate for women's rights and the dismantling of patriarchal structures that restrict female agency and autonomy. They shed light on the transformative power of education, self-determination, and self-expression in the pursuit of feminine emancipation. These stories resonate with the broader struggle for gender equality and highlight the importance of empowering women to assert their rights, challenge societal norms, and achieve true liberation. Delving into the profound psychological dimensions of literary works and their potential therapeutic impact, the psychotherapeutic approach to literary research, used in this research work, seeks to illuminate the complexities of human emotions, experiences, and mental states portrayed in literature, while also exploring how literary texts can function as therapeutic tools to facilitate self-reflection and emotional healing. By encouraging scholars and practitioners to increasingly recognize the profound interplay between literature and mental health, this approach is sure to gain traction as a valuable avenue for understanding the human psyche.

Proponents of the psychotherapeutic approach to literary research advocate for a nuanced analysis that incorporates psychological theories and concepts to interpret characters' motivations, struggles, and emotional transformations. By integrating elements of psychoanalysis, cognitive psychology, and other therapeutic frameworks, researchers aim to unlock the underlying emotional landscapes within literary narratives. One of the key goals is to bridge the gap between literature and clinical psychology, allowing for a comprehensive examination of how literature can both mirror and shape the human mind.

Numerous literary works have been subjects of psychotherapeutic analysis, showcasing the versatility and applicability of this approach. For instance, Sigmund Freud's seminal work, "The Interpretation of Dreams," laid the foundation for the psychoanalytic approach to literature, highlighting the significance of symbolism and unconscious desires in literary texts. Virginia Woolf's novel *Mrs. Dalloway* has also been extensively studied from a psychotherapeutic perspective, examining its portrayal of complex mental states and the protagonist's introspective journey as a means of coping with trauma.

Moreover, the renowned short story *The Yellow Wallpaper* by Charlotte Perkins Gilman has been a significant focal point for psychotherapeutic literary research. Scholars have explored the protagonist's descent into psychoses and her quest for self-liberation as a poignant representation of women's struggle for autonomy and agency in a patriarchal society. Through psychotherapeutic analysis, the story's exploration of postpartum depression and the impact of social constraints on mental health have been deeply examined, further enriching our understanding of psychological distress and resilience.

### **Psychotherapeutic Strategies in both Novels**

*The Yellow Wallpaper*, is a story that belongs more to the Gothic horror genre or the feminist literary fiction genre. A modernist novel first written in 1892, it is the story of a young lady (the Narrator) and her physician husband, John. They had rented a mansion for the summer so that she can recuperate from a "slight hysterical tendency." The narrator is living in a house in which she feels uncomfortable, in a room she hasn't picked out, and is forbidden from engaging in the one activity she enjoys; writing, because the husband feels, "... am absolutely forbidden to "work" until I am well again" (p. 330). As the days roll by, the narrator grows increasingly anxious and depressed. She is denied a "visit to Cousin Henry and Julia", because John says the journey would weary her and that "I wasn't able to go, nor able to stand it after I got there" (p.334). Meanwhile, he threatens he would send her to Weir Mitchell in the fall if she does not get well soon.

**Self-Expression:**

To ease protagonist of boredom, the author proffers reading and self-assertion as a psychotherapeutic strategy and escape for the protagonist, as she gets absolutely obsessed with the yellow wallpaper in her room; Thereby unveiling one of the central themes of the story, which is the portrayal of women's societal constraints during the late 19th century. The protagonist's husband, a physician, assumes the role of her caretaker and makes decisions about her treatment, disregarding her desires and feelings. The room with the yellow wallpaper becomes a metaphor for the restrictive and patriarchal environment in which women were often confined, devoid of agency and autonomy. This theme highlights the limited opportunities for women to express themselves and their struggles to assert their independence within a male-dominated society. From the narrative, restraining women from expressing themselves, is one of the reasons for psychosis, and the best therapeutics treatment is allowing them to do that thing the love most to do.

The above remedy becomes potent as the narrator locks herself in her room, at night, and continues stripping the wallpaper. She hears shrieks within the wallpaper as she tears it off. She contemplates jumping out of a window, but the bars prevent that; besides, she is afraid of all of the women that are creeping about outside of the house. When morning comes, the narrator has peeled off all of the wallpaper and begun to creep around the perimeter of the room. This self-determination exhibited in spite of eternal restriction, gives her freedom and satisfaction.

Charlotte's characterization of the protagonist's husband, John, is a symbolic representation of the oppressive atmosphere that restrains the woman. For the woman to break free from the clutches of societal oppression, she has to be oblivious of every other thing but herself and passion. Thus When John eventually breaks into the room, the narrator does not recognize him. She informs him that she has peeled off most of the wallpaper so that now, no one can put her back inside the walls. John faints, and the narrator continues creeping around the room over him.

The wallpaper takes on a symbolic significance as the protagonist becomes obsessed with deciphering its patterns, and the wallpaper's design becomes increasingly menacing in her mind. The creeping, entangled patterns mirror the protagonist's entrapment in her confined space and oppressive reality. The story's vivid portrayal of the protagonist's descent into psychosis, reflects the consequences of repressing one's emotions and stifling self-expression, especially for women who are expected to conform to societal norms.

**Education:** According to Ganapathy et al. (2020) "Education plays a crucial role in helping women navigate psychological stress" (45) Affirming the importance of education as a strategic tool for female emancipation, Rorintulus (2023), also opines that "... Education is often portrayed as a means of resistance against hegemonic forces...." (5).

Both authors advocates for psychological emancipation, using education as a tool for emancipation. This can be observed as Nattie escapes the torture and hatred from her father by choosing to go to school when the opportunity came. Nettie is educated and adventurous. She leaves home to become a missionary in Africa, and her letters to Celie provide insights into her experiences there. Nettie is a symbol of hope and connection for Celie, as she represents a link to a brighter and broader world beyond their oppressive circumstances. Gilman advocated for education as a means for female emancipation, when the woman in the Yellow Wallpaper saw desire to write, but for "heavy opposition" (3).

Gilman uses psychological realism as a form of educational knowledge, for female emancipation. Her portrayal of the protagonist's mental decline and her inner turmoil reflects a psychological realism

that allows readers to empathize with her struggles and explore the complexities of the human mind. As then reader reads and empathizes with the character, the reader also gains healing. For instance, she resolved to self-blame when she lost her voice to that of the men around her,

You see, he does not believe I am sick!  
And what can one do?

If a physician of high standing, and one's own husband, assures friends and relatives that there is really nothing the matter with one but temporary nervous depression-a slight hysterical tendency-what is one to do?

My brother is also a physician, and also of high standing, and he says the same thing (2).

This is the reality before most women, as society subjugates them under the grip of some men, in the name of marriage, thus losing their voices. By skillfully using these literary devices, Charlotte Perkins Gilman crafts a haunting and impactful narrative in *The Yellow Wallpaper*, which continues to be celebrated and analysed for its exploration of gender roles, mental health, and the human psyche.

*The Color Purple*, by Alice Walker, is a powerful and thought-provoking novel that delves into themes of racism, sexism, and self-discovery. Set in the early 20th century, the story follows the life of Celie, an African-American woman, through a series of letters she writes to God and her sister Nettie. Celie endures various forms of abuse, both physical and emotional, as she navigates through a life marked by hardship and discrimination. These leaves her psychologically drained as she is “thingified” and reduced to a sexual gratifying object to the men in her life. Through her letters, Walker sheds light on the intersectional challenges faced by black women, highlighting the struggles and trauma of marginalized individuals in society.

However, Alice Walker is able to dispense psychotherapeutics healing for the female characters, in *The Color Purple*, thereby leading to their emancipation, using some strategies which include education. Education for Celie lies in information. According to the Paedagogical Historical, “schools were considered powerful instruments in socializing people according to the ideological or political preferences of the system” (2).

As the narrative progresses, Celie's character undergoes significant growth and transformation, through education; education in this instance being an “informal means of socialization” (James 2023). She gets information that liberated her mind, on her worth from Shug. All she needs to know about her sexuality and her children. Knowing that her children are alive brought so much enthusiasm and desire to live in her. Realizing that her husband hid letters from Nettie to her, empowered her to decide to take a walk from her abusive husband and marriage. Therefore, education is a tool presented by both Gilman and Walker, as psychotherapeutic tool for emancipation.

Walker's writing style is remarkable, as she employs a unique narrative structure through Celie's letters, allowing readers to intimately connect with the protagonist's thoughts and emotions, especially psycho-traumatic experiences she has to put with. Education enable the female characters to express themselves in writing, either to God or to themselves.

Using Sisterhood as another therapeutic strategy, in line with educational awareness, Alice Walker is able to propel her female characters in their journey towards self-discovery and empowerment. The protagonist's life is sharpened by the relationships she forms with other strong women, particularly Shug Avery and Sofia. According to Bill, “the concept of sisterhood has been an important unifying force in the contemporary women's movement... this concept has been a binding force in the struggle against male chauvinism and patriarchy” (qtd. In Lynda Ston. 4). The female characters in the novel: Celie, Nettie, Shug Avery, Sofia and Mary Agnes are all unified aesthetically in an intimate sisterhood. These

connections or “informal means of socialization” play a crucial role in Celie’s ability to find her voice, assert herself, and ultimately reclaim her sense of identity and self-worth.

Overall, Alice Walker’s *The Color Purple* remains a significant literary work that continues to provoke discussions about social issues, human rights, and the importance of self-empowerment. Its impact on readers and its contribution to the exploration of African-American experiences in the United States make it a timeless and influential piece of literature.

**Self-Willled, Determination and Unwavering Resilience:**

Both narratives shed light on the struggle for women’s rights, gender equality, and the need for social change to break free from the chains of patriarchy and male dominance. The woman in *The Yellow Wallpaper* kept creeping and making frantic efforts to free the women in the yellow wallpaper. For these women to get healing, they must put the following in place:

Firstly, the woman must be able to look beyond *The Yellow Wallpaper* to see that society has trapped her in the *Wallpaper*. In order words, *The Yellow Wallpaper* is a deception that traps women under the force premise of a beautiful and colourful (yellow) life, where the man is her protector and prince charming.

Secondly, Gilman is of the opinion that women should not wait for the men to fight for them, no matter how enlightened and educated they may be. This is because; it is only the entrapped that feels the pain of entrapment. “There are things in that paper that nobody knows but me, or ever will!” (p.335). This can be seen from the cries of the woman in *The Yellow Wallpaper*. She is crying to be set free. The narrator is the only one that see, hear and can free her. And until she decided to be the one to free the woman, she did not perceive the smell of the colour! The Smell. That is the glimmer of hope! Catherine’s definition of what and who a feminist is, tends to give a little explanation to what this ‘smell’ is: consciousness raising. Using her own words,

“As Marxist methods is dialectical materialism, feminist method is Consciousness raising: the collective critical reconstruction of the meaning of women’s social experience, as women live through it.” (Mackinnon 83)

If we must raise the consciousness of the woman and that of the society to the suffering of women in patriarchal society, then there must be a “smell” that is called “consciousness raising.

The third point that Gilman presents to the reader is that there is hope for the woman, if only she can perceive the scent of freedom. That is the propelling force that drives the narrator to start peeling the yellow wall paper. Until she perceives the smell, he continues to be trapped. Until a woman is educated and gains mental and financial emancipation, she remains entraps.

Another point that the author presents to the reader is the fact that women are not and should not be regarded as stupid and nut. When the narrator told John that the key to the room “is down by the front door under a plantain leaf”, he never believed her, until (with her persistency), “he had to go and see, and he got it of course, and came in” (Gilman 340).

Conclusively on Gilman’s points, when the woman, in spite of the challenges around her decides to get out of the shackles of patriarchal domineering force, the men and society a large, will have no option but to give up on their failed battle to keep the woman caged. This can be seen from John bewilderment when he saw the narrator creeping all over the floor.

He stopped short by the door. “What is the matter?” he cried. “For God’s sake, what are you doing!”

I kept on creeping just the same, but I looked at him over my shoulder.

“I’ve got out at last,” said I, “in spite of you and Jane. And I’ve pulled off most of the paper, so you can’t put me back!”

Now why should that man have fainted? But he did, and right across my path by the wall, so that I had to

creep over him every time! (p.340)

It is remarkable to note that even though the narrator succeeded in getting her desired freedom, the man still fainted across her path. This is significant because, even in his dying state, or fainting state, the man still chose to 'block' the woman's path. This is to say in the patriarchal society, the man will stop at nothing to keep the woman under his dominance.

Hope in the cruellest situation. Gilman provides solution to women who are held bound by the patriarchal society, in any form. Her first solution is for the woman to do what gives her joy, especially reading and writing. We see that the narrator finds joy in writing. Secondly, she is on the opinion that the woman should not give in to the patriarchal voice 'not to think' about her predicaments. Until one thinks, solution cannot be gotten. When the narrator decides not to think about her problems, she began to grow worse. But, as soon as she began to think about the yellow wall paper, she began to see that there is a woman trapped behind the walls and also the smell began to fill the room. Not 'thinking' is a subjugation tactics of the patriarchal society on women.

### **Conclusion**

Through their portrayal of female protagonists who employ education and self-determination as psychotherapeutic tools, Gilman and Walker underscore the liberating potential of these strategies in fostering feminine emancipation. By highlighting the transformative power of knowledge and autonomy, the authors illustrate the capacity of women to challenge patriarchal norms and reclaim their agency. The novels demonstrate that education and self-determination are essential components of a psychotherapeutic narrative strategy, enabling women to reframe their experiences, resist oppressive forces, and empower themselves. Ultimately, the works of Gilman and Walker suggest that true emancipation can be achieved through the cultivation of self-awareness, critical thinking, and autonomous decision-making, underscoring the importance of education and self-determination in the pursuit of gender equality and social justice.

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differently.

Language is used to communicate meaning because meaning itself manifests in forms of morphemes; (bound or free), phrases, clauses and sentences. Sentence is the largest unit of grammatic analysis. Words, importantly direct the reader towards the semantic values of the text or narrative as intended by the author artist. Languages in a narrative text manifest as diction which is an important aspect of style. Diction is seen as the writer's or speaker's choice of words which he has carefully chosen, combined and manipulated for a particular reason or effect. It is therefore lucid to state that words reveal the writer's intention and we can aptly construct a particular effect and identity as the artist writer's style in view of his linguistic choices.

Style according to Joel Lebe and Barileera Georgewill, "is language, dressed up in a particular form, either linguistics; literary or otherwise. Style is both internal and external" (147). By internal manifestation of style, it suggests the stylistics implication realised at the semantic level and by external it implies stylistics value is realized at the graphological layer. So, graphological level and semantics layer of language are at work to account for stylistic implication of a narrative or text.

Indeed, to understand the role language and style play in the realization and comprehension of the writer's vision and thematic concerns, is to recall the goal of literary stylistic, as explained by Geoffrey Leech and Michael Short that:

The motivating questions are not so much what, as why and how... it is, why does this author here choose this form of expression? From the literary critic viewpoint, it is, how is such and such an artistic effect achieved through language (10).

The view of Leech and Short is significant here because of the questions of "why" and "how" as it allows the analysts to engage in different layers of interpretations as language manifests in the act of use. The why reveals the reasons behind the author's choice of form of expression (language). "How" underscores the way and manner a writer has manipulated the resources of language in order to animate a specific meaning in a text. It is therefore apt to observe that language and style co-exist or co-function in a bid to establish the writer's primary concern vision.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Multimodal stylistics is a strand or brand of stylistics analysis which is multimodal as its name denotes. It employs all the devices of language at the linguistics, semiotics and pragmatics levels in its analysis of the text. It looks at the typography of the text, the book cover (front and back) symbolism, pictures and the colours employed in the analysis of writer's style.

Stylistics is inherently plural in form and singular in meaning. It is seen as the linguistic study of style. Gerald Memenanin observed that "style is not a uniform concept in language" (126). Commenting on the protean nature of style, Jurgen Esser concludes that "style is like a chameleon" (172). This implies that style has extended significations, it could mean a person's manner of expressing himself herself. It could also describe patterns of fashion or person's behaviour. For example, I like the style of your clothes.

Geoffrey Leech and Michael Short see style as "the linguistic characteristics of a particular text" (12). Onyemaechi Udumukwu corroborates this view when he submits that "A more profitable means of studying style is to focus on the linguistic features of a specific text and see how that text can be understood as an instance of parole" (164). It is believed that Udumukwu's view is influenced by the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure's concept of langue parole signifier signified in the interpretation of a text. Langue being the code or system of rules common to speakers of a language (such as English),

Multimodal Stylistics Study of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Purple Hibiscus And Tanure Ojaide's The Activist

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**Abstract**

This paper is an attempt to discuss how Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Tanure Ojaide in their prose craft animate language in an aesthetic manner to unearth their thematic concerns. The study examines the careful manipulation of language and style in Adichie's Purple Hibiscus (2003) and Ojaide's The Activist (2006) in a bid to understand the writers' commitment. The study is anchored on Ihere Ken-Maduako's the multimodal critical approach with insights from M.A.K. Halliday's Systematic Functional Linguistics. The work reveals that language and style are consciously created or developed to enable the writer address himself/herself to issues confronting the society. It further unfolds that an apt understanding of stylistics features will not only contribute to the enjoyment of the reader but will also allow the reader to discover more about the vision and obligation of the artist. The study concludes that Adichie and Ojaide's skilful and elegant manipulation of the resources of language contributed immensely to the creation of meaning and its realization.

Keywords: Multimodal, style, language, craft, thematic concerns.

**Introduction**

Prose is one of the genres of literature where the resources of language are manipulated in an aesthetic manner to address some burning existential issues. Literary artists animate language stylistically to reveal their ideologies, visions and deep sense of commitment. Critical and creative writers' linguistic choices are primarily influenced by the realities of their environment because no language engagement is independent of its context.

It is fundamental to note that it is at the school of literature that language manifests its stylistics function. It means that language functions in literature differently than it does in everyday use. It also shows that literature has linguistic properties which other communication or utterances do not have.

Indeed, stylistics function of language manifests in what Viktor Shklovsky called "defamiliarization". In the words of Shklovsky, defamiliarization is the process through which literature distorts, and deviates from practical language, in order to make us see (qtd. in Udumukwu 124). Here, literature distorts the conventional ways of seeing things, thus, enables us to see things in a new form and perhaps

and parole being the particular uses of this system, or selection from this system, that speakers or writers make on this or that occasion.

Stylistics is not a mono notion concept but an eclectic in nature. Directly or indirectly in our attempt to undertake a stylistics study of a text or an authors' work we undertake the dual form of stylistics inquiry. Obviously, Odingowei M. Kwokwo consciously observes that:

Stylistic as a branch of linguistic study has two broad strands of language use to analyze. The first strand is concerned with the way writers use language to express meaning and emotions while the second strand is concerned with the aesthetic embroidery of the literary work. These two concerns literally divide into linguistic and literary stylistics. Linguistic stylistics refers to the description and explanation of the formal or structural features of language found in a literary text. This is the use of structural linguistics as espoused by Halliday (1961). It involves the study of the linguistic forms that perform the transitive or ideational metafunctions of language which convey the content or ideas of the writer. The aesthetic strand of stylistic study is concerned with what aspects of language use create the most aesthetic impression on the reader or listener. This approach is the realm of literary stylistics (3).

It is lucid from the foregoing that stylistics study could be literary or linguistics depending on the interest and aim of the analyst, though, the two strands overlap towards effective creating of meaning as well as its realization.

Ibiere Ken-Maduako and Ikenna Kamalu believe that “style can be seen as the linguistic choices made by the writer in the process of creating meaning and it ranges from his/her lexical choices, syntactic choices, phonological choices, morphological choices, to several other aesthetic choices” (12). Kamalu and Maduako's view is quite significant here because it underscores an apt combination and manipulation of linguistic choices which accounts for different layers of interpretations. It also establishes why a writer decides to choose a particular word or syntactic structure against the other in order to create a specific effect in a text.

Obviously, style can be viewed as the individual, a form of deviation from the norm, as a dress of thought, as a manner of expression, a study of the linguistic characteristic of a work of art, a way language is used in a particular genre, and style as choice.

In a bid to find a dependable definition to a protean concept as style, has pushed us to x-ray some of the views and perceptions of style. This work subscribes to Leech and Short's perception of style as “the linguistic characteristics of a particular text with their semantic implications” (12). It further agrees with the idea of style as explained by Maduako and Kamalu that style is the linguistic choices made by the writer in process of creating meaning. The choices made by the writer are geared towards creation of meanings in the text or discourse.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Our frame of reference or theoretical perspective for this study is Multimodal Critical Pragmatic (MCP) as set forth by Ibiere Ken-Maduako and insights from M.A.K. Halliday's systematic functional linguistics. In the words of Ken-Maduako:

The multimodal critical pragmatic (MCP) theory of meaning, explains meaning from the smallest linguistic forms. It is a theory which incorporates all the fields of linguistics from the level of phoneme to the text or discourse. The phoneme is the smallest unit of language which combines meaningfully at the syntagmatic level with other phonemes to form morphemes. Phonemes are distinctive sounds which may bring about meaningful changes in a word. (62-3)

It is obvious that the Multimodal Critical Pragmatic is eclectic in nature as it incorporates different fields of linguistics in a bid to expose the ideological assumption of a text or discourse. The text has many layers of meanings or interpretations.

The proponent further reveals that “a MultiSimodal strategy pays attention to the context of speech, the morphological structure and its semantic value, choice of words at the lexical level and their pragmatic implication, word order and its semantic value” (65). This reveals that meaning realization is tied to many factors and these factors are not independent but rather interconnected. For instance, the context of speech, the phonemes, the morphological structure, the choice of words and sentence arrangement all contribute to the meaning creation.

Systematic Functional linguistics by M.A.K. Halliday underscores or establishes the interdependence of meaning and context of situation. It was Bronislaw Malinowski in 1923 that first coined the phrase “Context of situation.” He perceives meaning as a function in context. Malinowski believes that a word without linguistic context is mere figment and stands for nothing by itself, so utterance has signification or semantic value when it is tied to the context of situation. It is very apt to note that Malinowski's concept of context of situation is seen as one of strong pillars of the theory of pragmatics today. The context of situation suggests the environment of the text. In the words of John Haynes “all texts fit into a situation which always has some effect on how the text is constructed and understood.” (4). Haynes' position further illuminates and substantiates the idea or philosophy behind context of situation. It clearly shows that meaning is a product of both linguistic and extra-linguistic factors.

### **Multimodal Stylistics Study of Purple Hibiscus**

The novel cover page has a picture of a girl in a state of melancholy. The back page has the portrait of the author looking excited and comfortable. The novelist creatively and aesthetically deployed this picture device to portray the different layers of life. The damsel in a state of melancholy is in need of adequate attention. It could be likened to the state of Nigeria in serious need of professional attention.

The colour of the novel is symbolic indeed; there is white, pink, gold and black representing different perspective of life. The white colour depicts purity, pink portrays joy and love, gold denotes royalty and black represent sorrow and sadness.

Chinamanda Ngozi Adichie's novel, *Purple Hibiscus* starts in medias res to show a stylistic pattern that is revealing in nature. The novel is divided into four chapters which are 'Breaking Gods' speaking with our spirits', 'The Different silence – the present. The novelist Adichie presents a homodiegetic narrator who performs as both the narrating “I” and the experiencing “I”. The novel adopts the first person of view where Kambili the narrator tells us all the happenings in their family. The novel explores sensitive issues such as religious fanaticism, patriarchal domination/consciousness, domestic violence, gender inequality and female assertiveness. The novel opens on a crisis note, that Kambili the narrator informs us on how the crisis in the family begins. She tells that:

Things started to fall apart when my brother, Jaja did not go to communion and papa lung his heavy missal across the room and broke the figurines on the étagère. We had just returned from Church. Mama placed the fresh palm fronds, which were wet with holy water on the dining table and then went upstairs to change. They would stay there until next Ash Wednesday, when we would take the fronds to, to have them burned for ash (11).

Diction in the above excerpt aptly captures how the conflict between Jaja and Papa started. The conflict manifest when Jaja blatantly refused to take communion. Some words or phrases in the above help us to understand Papa's penchant for domestic violence. “Papa lung his heavy missal across the room”, broke the figurine on the étagère. The words logically unearth the salient image of papa through which the

theme of domestic violence is established. Again, through an apt manipulation of words, we are introduced to a family well rooted in Catholicism, where all the catholic rituals are respectfully kept and carried out. The evidence of words like “holy water”, “figurine” “missal” showed a family that dedicated and committed to catholic tradition and practices. Stylistically, we observe that the narrator Kambili uses the first person narrative technique to drive her message home.

The “my” is deployed to underscore that Jaja and Kambili are sibling, and “we” point to Kambili’s sense of participation in the actions and activities she is discussing/speaking about. Onyemaechi Udumukwu commented on Adiche’s prudent application of the first person narrative style “my” and “we” in *Purple Hibiscus* and posits that:

...as a form of the first person, it... allows us to hear her as a subject in her own right and also as a female who has a brother. This is Adiche’s way of underscoring that one can be female and also a subject. Subjectivity... does not exist only for the advantage of the male (141).

Udumukwu’s view suggests that before now women were basically known to have occupied the object position which the novelist sees as unhealthy and apartheid in nature. Adiche’s concern or view is that male gender bias should be stopped, hence, Kambili is given a subject role or function.

Kambili further informs us that her father Eugene is a man who adhere to catholic rituals. She says, “Papa, wearing a long, grey, robe like the rest of the oblates, helped distribute ash every year. His line moved the slowest because he pressed hard on each forehead to make a perfect cross with his ash covered thumb” (11). Here, language gives us a vivid picture of Eugene as a zealous fanatic catholic who is committed to his religious responsibility or duty. On the surface, we see a man who demonstrates so much passion, enthusiasm and dedication to his faith.

He loves catholic tradition and rituals with his whole being. Beyond the surface value, we see a man who is a religious bigot and callous. He inflicts pain on the church members under the guise of religious ritual, “Ash Wednesday”. His line moved the slowest because he pressed hard on each forehead to make a perfect cross with his ash, shows papa’s parochial understanding about catholic rituals. In a way, Adiche is calling on pastors and religious leaders to see the propagation of the truth as the most important thing, and the wearing of long robe religious custom should be less emphasized.

Besides, Eugene is further portrayed as a religious saint who has distinguished himself from other worshippers. Kambili says:

Papa always sat in the front pew for mass, at the end beside the middle aisle, with mama, Jaja and me sitting next to him. He was the first to receive communion. Most people did not kneel to receive communion at the marble altar... but papa did. (12).

Here, diction enables us to capture/picture papa’s sitting position in the church as well as his wife, son and daughter. We also note that he is the first person to receive communion. Importantly, he knelt to receive communion but most people did not. The altar is rich and sophisticated as it is made of marble. The mode of presentation of Eugene by his daughter is stylistically done to underscore or highlight his uniqueness and difference. Indeed, Kambili contrasts him from other, members of the church by using the word “but” to re-emphasize his commitment to practice of his faith. His sitting position during mass is foregrounding, to attract attention of the audience. Jim Martin and David Rose see foregrounding as “The tendency for texts to make some meanings, stand out against others” (214). It is obvious that foregrounding underscores certain linguistics items or expressions in a bid to enhance full comprehension of the narrative under analysis. We also observe that it is not only Kambili that uses the

stylistic contrast “but” Father Benedict does. Father Benedict states:

Look at Brother Eugene. He could have chosen to be like other Big men in this country, he could have decided to sit at home and do nothing after the coup, to make sure the government did not threaten his businesses. But no, he used the standard to speak the truth even though it means the paper lost advertising. Brother Eugene spoke out for freedom (13).

Here, father Benedict deployed the “but” to stylistically contrast Eugene from other big men in the country who are afraid to speak the truth in the face of intimidation and threat from repressive government. The contrast further underscores the righteousness of Eugene as well as his unquenchable passion for the truth. Eugene does not bother about the consequences of speaking the truth, even if speaking the truth de-markets “The standard”, a newspaper published by Eugene. He uses “The standard” to question the excesses of the government as well as promoting Catholicism. “The standard” speaks for the voiceless; hence, it attracts government unusual criticism.

Working within the function of language as postulated by M.A.K Halliday, that language serves for the expression of content, we are surprised at the manner and pattern Eugene insists on preserving a culture by keeping discourse at a static fixed level. Kambili says:

Jaja stared at the missal on the table as though he were addressing it The wafer gives me bad breath, I stared at Jaja. Had something come loose in his head? Papa insisted we call it the host, because “host” came close to capturing the essence, the sacredness, of Christ’s body; “wafer” was too secular (14)

It is sacrilegious or contemptuous of Jaja to refer to communion as “wafer” instead of “host” as it is known within Roman Catholic liturgy. Eugene is insisting on host because of its sacredness which shows his commitment to the truth of his faith. It also reveals him as a man who bent to preserve Catholic tradition at all cost. However, Jaja insisting on the connotative value of words, highlight the fact that words function to reveal the writer user’s intention. In a way, Jaja is of the opinion that meaning is not fixed.

It is also crucial to note that style in narrative work manifests as figurative expressions as well as code-mixing. We observe that while Eugene encourages his children to be hard working in a bid to succeed in life, he deployed flashback to aid a full comprehension of his message. Eugene declares:

Why do you think I work so hard to give you and Jaja the best? You have to do something with all these privileges. I didn’t have a father who sent me to the best school. My father spent his time worshipping gods of wood and stone. I would be nothing today but for the priests and sisters at the mission. I was a houseboy for the parish priest for two years. Yes, a houseboy. Nobody dropped me off at school. I walked eight miles every day to Nimo until I finished elementary school (55).

Here, we observe that flashback is at work. It is aesthetically deployed to encourage the children of Eugene to make prudent use of the privileges they had. It brings to the fore the resilient and resolute nature of Eugene. It also gives us a clear picture, the type of gods papa Nnukwu, Eugene’s father worshipped. We can deduce the total commitment of Rev. Fathers and Sisters towards education and liberation of Eugene. The repetition of the word “houseboy” is to emphasize that his children are better off compared to his days under the tutelage of the priests. Flashback presents events and incidents that happened before the time at which the work started.

In a bid to communicate effectively, Adichie deployed code-mixing and simile to aid the realisation of her intention. For instance, Kambili says; “Welcome, Aunt, Nno, I... rising to hug her. She clasped me in her arms and held me tightly against the soft of her body, uttering Kambili, Kedu” (79). Here, we observe a conscious mixing of two codes, two different languages, Igbo and English Language. The essence is to ensure that the intents of the sender is understood. It further projects the cultural background of the novelist that she is not on literary exile. “You are like a fly, blindly following a corpse into the grave” (78). Simile here, attempts to re-examine Eugene’s strait-jacket acceptance of western culture against the interest of his family, especially (Jaja and papa Nnukwu). Adichie is not against Eugene embracing Catholic faith but the manner and pattern of compelling or forcing everybody to accept it without considering the issue of choice.

The theme of female assertiveness is realised through the skilful manner and boldness Aunt Ifeoma manages her speech. Kambili underscores her boldness, thus:

Every time Aunt Ifeoma spoke to papa, my heart stopped, then started again in a hurry. It was the flippant tone; she did not seem to recognise that it was papa, that he was different, special. I wanted to reach out and press her shiny bronze lipstick on my fingers (85).

In the above, we observe the degree of awe Kambili had for Aunt Ifeoma’s assertive nature. The way she treats papa like any other person. Ifeoma’s boldness vitiates papa’s authority. For Kambili, papa is “special” unique distinguished from other men. For Ifeoma papa is not a god or paragon of beauty; therefore, can be talked to or addressed like any other person.

It is revealing that through apt and proper use of language and style, Eugene is able to create different self-images for different people. Self-image means or suggests the picture image the individual has of himself herself or the kind of person an individual claim he she is.

#### Multimodal Stylistics Study of The Activist

It is revealing to note that the novel cover page has a portrait of a lad in shadow of himself. There is also a picture of the sun not radiating brightness as a result of mass cloud. The colour of the novel is ash in nature which suggests hopelessness, abandonment, rejection and not wanted. The novelist deployed ash colour to foreground his thematic concern and commitment.

Tanure Ojaide’s *The Activist* is a prose narrative that discusses extensively the environmental issue confronting the Niger Delta people. In the words of Enajite Ojaruega, a critic and scholar of Niger Delta literature:

Tanure Ojaide’s the activist presents an impressive perspective on oil exploitation and its attendant effects on the environment and people of Nigeria’s Niger Delta region. The narrative highlights the incontestable reality that oil exploitation has been (and still is) a case of the strong, taking by force, the natural resources that rightfully belong to the weak (39).

Ojaide’s art captures the sad reality of the Niger Delta Region. An endowed region is now object of humiliation and pity. In *The Activist*, Ojaide uses simple language and style to call global attention to the precarious and deplorable situation of the Niger Delta region. In *The Activist*, Ojaide employs the third person narrative to assess the individual character contributions to the development of the plot. The novelist, presents characters who decry the suffering, hardship, exploitation and environmental degradation of the Niger Delta region.

In the work, we see an endowed oil rich region being looted by the oil merchants while the owners of the

oil wealth are denied the proceeds from the oil. The narrator informs us that:

In the company's inordinate hunger for more barrels of oil to ship out to increase yearly record profits, the land was gradually turning into wasteland. Residents of producing area had become helpless before... the oil company and the military government. But there were many other changes too (53).

Here, language paints a lucid picture of injustice and ecological disaster. Obviously, irony is at work as the multinational interest for more money has turned the once fertile land into wasteland. Wasteland suggests valueless, unproductive and not marketable. It is clear therefore that the natives of the oil producing area are helpless as the oil firm and the government of the day connive to work against the region. The environment is no longer conducive for fishing and agricultural activities.

Environmental pollution has caused a lot of negative changes both visible and invisible. Significantly, Ojaide's environmental concern is further revealed through his apt linguistic choices. The narrator says ... Niger Delta had a new face, an ugly or rather sick face that is different from the pristine one (54). It is obvious that during the pristine era, the Deltans were better off, the environment was conducive for fishing and farming. The current Niger Delta represents retrogression, environmental degradation and other ecological hazards. The "ugly" and "sick face" of the environment further underscores the risks the people are exposed to. It shows that personification is at work as human attribute is given to the environment. The dominant image we infer from the above words is ill, unpleasant, repulsive, unattractive and unlovely.

The issue of displacement is aptly discussed in The Activist through simple diction. One of the displaced woman narrates her ordeal to colonel Duda that:

You know what happened to us; fortunately, none of us died, but we are all homeless and in refugee's tents, we have survived till now because of a few generous that handed us food, but things have become really hard for us. We want go back to our village., we need assistance to rebuild the village (201).

We observe that the issue of forced relocation is established here, and language captures the helplessness of the people as their means of survival depends on charity and compassion. When people are forced to migrate to urban area as a result of degraded environment, it creates food insecurity and untold hardship.

In a bid to paint a vivid picture of a degraded and polluted environment, Ojaide deployed the flashback device. The narrator says:

Ebi recollected how as a young girl, she and her mother use to row far to the mouth of the ocean and go to a small island where they secured their boats, took off their clothes, and swim in the salt water. The ocean water and breeze were very soothing to the body... it had a special recuperative and enlivening effect... (99 – 100).

We observe that before the kick off of oil exploration in the Niger Delta region, the ocean has the healing power and recuperative tendencies which oil exploration activities had destroyed. The air was also therapeutic as it has enlivening effect on the body. The lamentation of Ebi and other characters in the novel is informed by the insensitive and callous nature of the oil firms operating in the Niger Delta region. Corroborating the above point, the narrator declares, "The paradise of the olden days was degenerating fast into a kind of hell. The water that was used to be an elixir had become a poisonous

brew. Something had to be done to detoxify the water” (104). By recalling the past glory of the Niger Delta region, it is expected that the oil firms operating in the region should stop their shenanigans method to safe humanity from unimaginable destruction. Through this flashback device, the oil firms are warned to adopt methods that are eco-friendly so as to avoid environmental crisis.

Besides, the narrator further highlights the degree of environmental hazard perpetuated in the Niger Delta, tells the reader that Ebi wants to return to her childhood. “I want to return to my childhood” (105), suggests that during Ebi's childhood days, the environment was chemical free and human interest was established on moderation and understanding of others; hence, Ebi's is longing for the past.

We also observe that Ojaide in a bid to establish his thematic concern deployed pidgin which also contributes to the enjoyment of the readers. The narrator says:

The driver coughed. The activist realized that the cough was meant to draw his attention. I hope you are fine? He asked the driver. I fine? For Lagos nobody fine: This is a beautiful and happy city, the returnee told the driver. Eno be as you dey see am I come from Ibadan come drive taxi for here. But everywhere for country dry well well. E dry pass harmattan time self. Wetin happen make am so dry ... E no supposed to be so with plenty money from oil, you no fit be somebody for this our country now unless you steal, all the big men be thief, the driver resumed. If you work hard, you go be rich too (16).

The sudden switching from a formal simple diction to pidgin English radiates light on the social experiences of the Nigerian youths. The style reveals the perception or ideology of Nigerian youth in relation to becoming rich in Nigeria setting. The novelist underscores the fact that despite the wrong perception and other social vices which has become the new normal in Nigeria, hard work is only surest way to walk into riches.

Pidgin English without doubt is the dominant medium of interaction or communication across different social groups in the Niger Delta region. It is used to differentiate between educated characters and uneducated ones. It is obvious that the writer's vision is appreciated through a skillful manipulation of language.

### **Phonological Patterning**

At the phonological level of analysis, Adichie deployed sounds like plosives, fricative and nasal to depict an unpleasant situation, she creates these sounds to reflect the chaotic situation in family of Papa Eugene. Ojaide also creates sounds like labiodental fricative, and plosives to draw attention to the Niger Delta situation.

### **Morphological Analysis**

At the morphological level of analysis, both novelists employed the past tense and past participle morphemes to show that issues discussed occurred sometime in the past. For example: Start+ ed, Return+ ed, Move+ ed, Place + d, Press+ ed, Cover + ed,

Again, both works also employed initialisms at the morphological level, that is, abbreviated names are used to refer to certain items and concept. For instance, TV, MC, CV, VC, BCC, CNN Wodefor, Bo etc. are commonly employed in an informal situation. This reduces the formal nature of the texts and helps to give the reader sense of familiarity, and meaning realization.

### **Syntactic Analysis**

At the syntactic analysis layer, both artists employed simple sentences, complex sentences, compound

sentences, multiple sentences to highlight different issues raised.

### **Semantics**

The writers employed words appropriately to match their vision. The overzealous fanatic nature of papa Eugene is established in relation to catholic faith. The cruel nature of multinational oil firms towards the Niger Delta region is underscored

### **Pragmatic Interpretation**

Indeed, reading beyond the surface interpretation, one gets the impression that Adichie satirises papa Eugene's pattern of worship; the way he relates with his family as well as non-Catholic members. Ojaide decries and condemns the attitude of the government and oil firms towards the Niger Delta region. It is ironical that where oil wealth is located in Nigeria, is not considered when the proceeds are shared.

### **Conclusion**

The study reveals that language and style co-exist in a bid to bring out the writer's thematic concerns in a work. The multimodal stylistics uses all devices of language as well as pictures in a bid to reveal the implicit intention of the writer. It is the challenges and issues in a particular environment that animates the type of linguistic forms and style that will be developed and deployed to express them. The two novelists discussed issues that are peculiar to their environment which shows why a writer chooses a particular word/phrase/sentence against the other. Recommendations

Language and styles without doubt co-exist in the narrative fiction or non fictional work to create certain impressions or to reveal the writer's ideology or thematic concerns. Accessible language and style are invaluable to understand the writer's primary concerns. Therefore it is expected that writers deployed language and style which are simple and accessible in content to enable the reader audience comprehend their intentions.

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CONFLICT AND INSECURITY IN THE NIGER DELTA: A STUDY OF THREE NIGER DELTA  
FICTION

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**Abstract**

The discourse of conflict and insecurity has often provoked certain factors, some immediate others remote. However, in the Niger Delta, environmental despoliation and degradation due to the activities of multinational oil companies is a situational and causal factor for perennial conflict and insecurity. This is aptly captured in literary works from within and outside of the Niger Delta. Previous studies on literary texts about the Niger Delta crisis have identified the negative socio-economic and political impacts of oil exploitation as responsible for the conflict and ecoactivism in the Niger Delta, neglecting the role of conflict of interest that alienates or the systematic erosion of their individuality (Niger Deltans), further fuels the crisis. This study, therefore, examines the indicators of conflict perspective as projected in selected prose texts on the Niger Delta conflict and crisis. This is with a view to establishing how the literary writers connect conflict perspectives and ecoactivism to environmental degradation. The research adopts the Eco-critical and Marxist theoretical framework as instruments for the analysis of the literary texts: Helon Habila's *Oil on Water*, Kaine Agary's *Yellow-Yellow*, and Chimeka Garricks' *Tomorrow Died Yesterday*. Their selection was based on the shared experiential knowledge and their accurate portrayal of the conflict perspective of the Niger Delta crisis from diverse perspectives, and the themes of ecological degradation and ecoactivism, which are common in their works of fiction. These texts were subjected to literary analysis and criticism. The study made the following research findings: Ecological degradation and internal conflicts are linked by the three texts to the oil and gas exploration and exploitation activities of the oil multinationals and these generate a sense of clash of interest and dispossession that leads to intense conflict for survival and ecoactivism in the area. The research recommends dialogue, communal involvement in oil exploration, implementation of environmental best practises and internal security systems.

**Introduction**

In life and fiction, nature maintains a system of balance which function through the principle of duality. There is light and darkness, black and white, up and down, good and bad, peace and war and more importantly conflict and resolution. The principle of conflict is what pre-empt the response of resolution. Whenever and wherever humans are confronted with conflict there is an innate mechanism that strives towards attaining a form of resolution equal to the degree of conflict experienced. Consequently, conflicts exist in diverse forms and are in a way peculiar to the nature of environment where such conflicts arise. In literature conflict underlines every good work of artistic expression. It is expressed in diverse forms and modes. The two primary modes of conflict are the internal and external forms of conflict. In the Niger Delta region of Nigeria conflict has taken the form of being the daily norm of the people and the environment. Niger Delta literature as a vehicle of representation of the experiences of man in society portrays vividly the graphic details of the myriad forms of conflict.

The various perspectives on conflict by the African novelist could be regarded as committed attempts to capture the experiences of man in his environment. When South African novelists for instance represent the apartheid story in their novels they engage in portraying a conflict perspective between the white minority oppressors and the African oppressed majority. When Chinua Achebe in his *Things Fall Apart* evokes the rich African literary and cultural heritage, he is indirectly engaged in a conflict of representation of the true image of Africa before the advent of Europeans in Africa. So also does Elechi

Amadi, when he writes of the nobility of the gods in the African cosmology in his *The Concubine and The Great Ponds*. Elechi Amadi makes a strong case for Africans as being morally enlightened and possessing a religious system with well-established institutions. Literary discourse on conflict in African literature is not a new thing. It is rather one of the major elements that every African expects in a well told story. In African oral literature there exists fictional works that portray conflict between animals, conflict between animals and humans, conflict between humans and spirits as aptly portrayed in Amos Tutuola's *The Palmwine Drinkard*. There is also in the African literary corpus conflict between the world of the living and the world of the dead or unborn. African novelists have taken it upon themselves to write, restore or represent their conflicts as a means of engaging with the aggressor in their search for resolution. African novelists are confronted with the dilemma of working within two traditions. Pius Olusegun Dada in "The Tradition of the African Novel" holds that,

We can therefore say that African writers are very much in this situation. For while there is the influence of foreign tradition, alongside it, there is also an indigenous folkloric tradition which continues to influence their writing. Folklore has had a very strong influence on the development of modern African writing. (28).

The dual traditions available to African writers create a wide room for creative manipulation of plot, narrative structure and language texture. This makes African novels exotic and appealing to their audience. African novelists utilize the novel to portray the conflict between social forces within their society-environment which has led to one form of change or the other. This is the inclination of Onyemaechi Udumukwu in *The Novel and Change in Africa where he posits;*

The issue of change as the desire to become different is the enduring factor of social experience in Africa in this postmodern era of diversity. This desire for difference has engendered the change from colonial domination to national independence; change from traditional prestige way of life to modernity and hybridity; change from military dictatorship to an era of nascent democracy. In this overall desire to be different from what we were in Africa, the novel is not only the channel for communicating the pattern of change; it is also the veritable instrument for fashioning out the desired change. (1).

The change Onyemaechi Udumukwu speaks of above comes into play and is communicated as the result of the conflict between two opposing forces. When the forces of environmental degradation and environmental preservation and justice clash the result is one form of change or the other. Consequently change as portrayed in the African novel is a direct fall out of conflict within the society. This is not to say that the African novel characterizes man as always being in conflict with himself or his environment. The African novel on the contrary portrays man as responding to the unsafe conditions within or in his environment. Ime Ikiddèh in "Ideology and Revolutionary Action in the Contemporary African Novel" writes;

It is not optimism in itself that distinguishes these novels; it is the positive manipulation of group action to achieve a reversal of odds through revolutionary action that signals the possible advent of a new order. To that extent, they express a new reality which marks them out as imaginative strides towards an African recovery. (37).

The African novel is consequently a conflict driven literature that explores the African experiential complications inherent in African society. Conflict in literature is a pervasive concept and one that is central and fundamental to the actualization of literary aesthetics and structure. In the five primary elements of fiction: plot, settings, character, point of view, and theme we find that conflict is involved in their makeup and sustenance. In *A Longman Pocket Anthology: Fiction second edition* Gwynn R.S. writes on the role of conflict in plot;

The appearance of “trouble” constitutes the second part of a plot, the complication; the appearance or event that shakes up the stable situation begins the rising action of the story. Complication in a story may be either external and internal or a combination of the two... typically the complication of a plot is heightened by conflict between two characters who have different personalities or cannot (10).

Consequently, we observe that conflict is an underlying factor that sustains such elements of fiction like; plot, character, setting, themes, and point of view. In African literature the writer's responsibility is to engage his or her art in the re-storying of the diverse shades of inherent conflict in society. The African writer/novelist has a responsibility of employing his or her art in mediating resolution to the conflict and contradiction as his/her art pulsates with an energy that is public in origin. Our objective in this study is to portray through a critical investigation of three Niger Delta novels how Niger Delta novelist capture the theme of conflict and insecurity in the region and their various attempts at proffering resolution to the identified malaise of conflict and insecurity.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theory that undergirds this research and serves as the pivot upon which it turns is the theory eco-criticism and that of Cheryl Glotfelty and Harold Fromm in their work *Eco-criticism Reader: Land Marks in Literary Ecology*, (1996). The term is a broad and eclectic domain and has been utilized in explicating all the literary genres. The fundamental stand of eco-criticism and eco-critics is that the ideas and structures which govern the interactions between humans and their natural environment are important and that if we can get a handle on our ecological predicament every other form of societal malaise will be laid to rest. Eco-criticism is a major approach in which humanists fight for their habitat or home. This is because there are rising frustration exacerbated by emerging environmental crises such as depletion of the ozone layer, oil pollution of aquatic life, deforestation, over flooding, gas flaring, plastic waste invasion, and desertification and so on. These environmental emergencies have made people unable to derive tangible and maximum benefits from their God given environmental wealth. Ann B. Dobie in *From Theory to Practice: An Introduction to Literary Criticism* says the following about ecocriticism:

Several scholars have built on Cheryl Glotfelty and Harold Fromm's fundamental definition by adding an extra literary purpose to it. Lawrence Bull, for example, points out that 'any study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment should be conducted in a spirit of commitment to environmental praxis'. Simon Estok extends Lawrence Bull's comment by saying that 'ecocriticism takes a stand by its commitment to the natural world as an important thing rather than simply as an object of thematic study and by commitment to making connections'. Camilo Godínez too recognises its social purpose when he speaks of motivating audience to live within a limit that will be binding over generations'. In Shakespeare and Ecocriticism, Estok broadens ecocriticism to include the study of 'any theory that is committed to effecting change by analysing the faction, thematic, artistic, social, historical and ideological tenets of the environment or aspects of it; represented in documents (literary or otherwise) that contribute to material practices in material worlds (243).

According to Cheryl Glotfelty and Harold Fromm in their ground breaking work, *Eco-criticism Reader: Land Marks in Literary Ecology*, (1996), eco-criticism is “the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment” (xviii). It is also agreed among eco-criticism scholars that the duo developed the blend of literary and ecological principles fully into the eco-criticism theory. However, before the advent of their book several pioneering works, essays and ground breakers served as their forerunners ushering in the theory and sub-field of eco-criticism in modern literature. One of such pioneering work is “A Fable for Tomorrow”, in Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962) this piece

depicts nature's serenity and an environment of pastoral peace that later degenerates into catastrophic dysfunction due to man's selfish and callous relation to the environment. According to Michael P. Branch in a collection of essays entitled "Defining Eco-critical Theory and Practice," where he avers that,

The word "ecocriticism" traces back to William Rueckert's 1978 essay "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism" and apparently lay dormant in critical vocabulary until the 1989 Western Literature Association meeting (in Coeur d'Alene), when Cheryll Glotfelty not only revived the term but urged its adoption to refer to the diffuse critical field that heretofore had been known as "the study of nature writing." (1).

As an eclectic critical theory as illustrated above, eco-criticism lays claim to several basic tenets or principles, five primary ones include:

1. That nature and culture are inseparable the same way matter and process are, though opposites constantly mingle like water and soil through the agency of language.
  2. That the two modes of analysis: science or literatures are parallel. Since the process through which we know or experience nature is through words and images. The question of truth in science or literature is inescapable as validity could be found through data or metaphor.
  3. Place (landscape, natural or environmental elements) is considered a literary category. Place is a literary element such as plot, theme, diction or character(s). In such instance, landscape includes the non-human elements of place, the rocks, soil, trees, animals, air as well as human perceptions and modifications.
  4. It favours the reading of literary texts from an earth-centred approach (ethnocentric) perspective rather than the popular human focused criticism, the anthropocentric worldview of criticism that has led to man's insensitivity to nature and his destruction of the environment.
  5. It advocates an eco-ethical criticism and advocacy against the cruel culture of man's inhumanity to nature and the ecosystem with the purpose of understanding the ecological ethical system required in reforming, sustaining, and mediating in the global crises and ecological war.
- Though, eco-criticism as a theory came into prominence in the 20th century it has been in existence in Africa and has been practised by Africans long before any proponent came forward with the idea. African literature and philosophy of life from time immemorial supports environmental conservatism and preservationism.

Conflict and Insecurity for Survival in Chimeka Garricks' Tomorrow Died Yesterday  
Chimeka Garrick's debut prose work *Tomorrow Died Yesterday* recounts the story of four childhood friends Doughboy (Doye), Amaibi, Kaniye and Tubo who grew up together in the oil rich town of Asiana, situated in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. The novel is a story of the kidnapping of oil expatriate Brian Manning by Doughboy, the leader of the Asiana Freedom Army. Doughboy demands ransom from the employers of Manning, Imperial Oil and asks that his childhood friend who is the communication officer of the company, Tubo, should secure the release of the man. His childhood friend and university lecturer Amaibi is asked to deliver the money because he is the one Doughboy trusts with the negotiation. From this point onward the tale snowballs into a complicated drama of brutality, senseless killings, and environmental violence. Chimeka Garricks outlines the multi-layer conflict against which the people of Asiana (Niger Delta) are pitched.

Asiana is the metaphorical symbol of the Niger Delta. Asiana is polluted beyond recognition. Gas flaring and oil spills soon become a daily occurrence in their lives. Even the little boys, Doye, Kaniye, Amaibi and Tubo recognize the hell in their land. Thus, the conflict in the novel is multifaceted; there is the conflict of personal interest among the childhood friends, there is the conflict of Asiana people against the Oil company and there is the legal conflict that ensued in court over the kidnapping and

ransom money and there is the conflict of the Niger Delta people against the hegemony of the federal government and the oil multinationals. Asiamama which represents the Niger Delta is raped to the extent that her people are rendered homeless and hopeless as fishes float and turn up dead and farmers cannot farm because their farms are soaked in oil spills, which Imperial Oil company does not clean up or remediate properly as expected. Asiamama is pitched against the Nigerian state that through the machinery of governance and nationhood invades Asiamama and exploits her mineral resources. Asiamama is also up against the European oil multinationals operating in her lands. She is also in conflict within her with her sons who have been bought over by the government of Nigeria with Imperial Oil dollars.

A whole region is being raped, ecologically vandalized and sociopolitically marginalized, yet the government and oil companies keep mute because of the wealth that accrue from the oil business of the region. Eco-activism thereby falls on militant characters like Doughboy to advocate for both the sustainability of the environment and the marginalized people. It is noteworthy that Doye is not the only victim of the marginalization. Amaibi becomes a victim too. Although he is a respected lecturer and environmental activist, he is not spared the oppressive hands of the oil companies and the government.

Chimeka Garricks' *Tomorrow Died Yesterday* brings us face to face with characters that are representations of the system of things and the layers of conflict and insecurity in the nation. Chimeka's characters are dynamic and complex, evolving with the narrative of the story and the socio-political weather of the region. There is Kaniye the hero and protagonist of the novel. He is the one who bears the conflict of moral conscience against pervasive corruption. Doughboy is popularly known as Doye in the underworld of crime and criminality in the ghetto and creeks of the Niger Delta region. He is the conflict and insecurity symbol against the failed system of government protection and security agencies. There is Tubo the communication officer of the oil-company operating in Asiamama. He represents the common Niger Delta person who is in conflict with himself for the sole purpose of survival. The hardship, suffering and stakes are so high he sells his soul for bread. There is Amaibi the intellectual, environmental activist and lecturer who is resolute, determined and morally steadfast. These four characters are the pivot on which the plot of the novel turns. They are all childhood friends and the novelist uses their stories to portray how oil exploration activities in their community have affected their lives by pitching them against each other. Kaniye is a train lawyer and an excellent cook, with a compassionate heart. Tubo is unscrupulous fraudster who lives by his wits and his persuasive capability. The kidnap of the expatriate oil worker Brian Manning pitches him in the dock against his childhood friend Amaibi. The four friends are pitched against each other by the oil-multinationals in a legal battle that is symbolic of the manipulative strategy used to thwart attempts by Niger Delta elites to evolve a united front in tackling the neglect and socioeconomic insecurity suffered by the region in the face of surplus.

Chimeka contorts this multiplex conflict into a heightened state of insecurity when he reveals that within the context of the narrative of the novel that the government is the mafia whose interest is in getting unfettered access to the crude oil wealth of Asiamama which is a character symbol for the Niger Delta. With the emergence of Doye as the fearless and ruthless leader of Asiamama Freedom Army and Amaibi as a lecturer and environmental activist whose pen is mightier than the sword in protesting the unwholesome exploitation and degradation meted against Asiamama (Niger Delta) they come in conflict against the government's agenda.

Sir James Kaniye's father reveals the mafia posture of the government as Kaniye warms up to take up the case of Amaibi that; "the government wants Amaibi out of the way. In this country the government is the mafia. Everything has already been arranged. The trial will be merely to rubber stamp his predetermined conviction and the rest is history". (*Tomorrow Died Yesterday*, 69). One cannot forget the dastardly

character of the Nigerian army captured in the novel; the killing of thirty-eight persons for one dead soldier, the rape of Dise in the vestry of the church in the presence of the husband Amaibi and other soldiers and the ruthless beating suffered by one-hundred and forty-two persons reflect the impunity and outright lack of professionalism in the Nigerian army. The soldiers are not pacified with the cold blooded killing of Mpaka, Doye's father, and the many other countless atrocities committed, they go as far as making a fellow human being eat his excrement publicly without provocation. Kanyie recounts,

He would make no mention of the thirty-eighty people his soldiers had killed in reprisal. He would take no notice of the one hundred and forty-two people who were beaten and injured. He would feign ignorance about the robberies, rapes, arson and looting committed by his men. And he would never understand the tragic destruction of families, the murder of dreams, and the irreparable damage to the collective psyche of a people (377).

The display by the army in the novel implies that the security architecture of the nation is in a sorry state. It further points at the security agencies as a major factor causing insecurity in the Niger Delta. The fraudulent nature of the oil-multinationals in the region of the Niger Delta is captured through the characters of chief Dumo Ikaki the commissioner of special duties and the owner of Tortoise Shell Company who works for Imperial Oil, the multinational that operates in Asiana. Wali the chief security officer of Imperial Oil who also doubles as a government spy foreshadow the role of the Nigerian security agencies in perpetrating insecurity, political unrest, socio-economic instability, physical, environmental injustices against the people of Asiana and by extension the region of the Niger Delta.

#### Resources Democracy, Conflict and Insecurity in Kaine Agary Yellow-Yellow

Kaine Agary's Yellow-Yellow is a narrative that portrays the conflict between resources exploitation and resources democracy. Zilayefa or Yellow Yellow as she is popularly called is the result of an affair between an Ijaw woman, Binaebi, and a Greek sailor. Agary portrays the ugly reality of children fathered by Europeans, Asians, Portuguese, Syrians, Lebanese, Filipinos, and Americans who come to do business in the region. At the expiration of their contracts, they abandon the women they have impregnated and flee the country, leaving the women to bear the brunt of raising their children as single mothers. Zilayefa belongs to the 'born-troyays', rejected by our fathers, or, worse, non-existent to them' (74). The conflict here is that of the exploited and abandoned. The European sailors and oil workers exploit Niger Delta women sexually for pleasure and abandon them. The same group exploit oil from the Niger Delta and abandon the region without providing sustainable alternatives. The government through the oil multinationals and politicians also exploit the region and the people. The region's women, and by extension the sexual and economic value of the Niger Delta women are exploited like the crude oil without recourse to resource democracy. Nnimmo Bassey holds that:

Re-source democracy hinges on the recognition that a natural resource belongs to Nature and secondly to communities of species and people who live in the territory or have traditionally held the territory where the 'resource' such as forests, rivers or grazing lands exist. Re-source democracy is about stewardship that recognizes the right of citizens to establish rules and to act in line with traditional as well as best available knowledge to safeguard the soil, trees, crops, water, and wildlife first as gift of Nature and secondly to enjoy the gifts as necessary provisions that support their lives and livelihood as well as those of future generations. Re-source democracy calls on us to re-source, to re-connect with Earth our source of life-and to respect her as a living being with inherent rights and not just a resource to be exploited (6).

Drawings from the fundamental principles or core ideology of re-source democracy one is bound to make the following inferences. The government and the oil-mineral extractive companies and the oil-bearing communities are called into a partnership of stewardship of the gifts of nature. However, it is saddening to observe that they are rather exploiters and manipulators with the sole purpose of

commodification of natural endowments to the detriment of the earth and the communities. The gluttonous frenzy and abandon with which the Niger Delta natural resource is exploited in comparison to that of Northern state where gold is mined does not provide for support of lives and livelihood and those of future generations of Niger Deltans. It is also unfortunate and paradoxical how Kaïne Agary portrays the irony of Re-source dictatorship instead of democracy of the exploitation of both Niger Delta crude oil and women by European and their Nigerian hegemony. There is no recognition that natural resources belong to communities of species and people who live and hold a territory where such natural resources are found.

Kaïne Agary portrays a slice of the conflict between the people of the region and their environment in this manner. Zilayefa puts it this way, “one of the pipes that ran through my village broke and spilled oil over several hectares of land, my mother’s included’ (3). Due to the destruction on the farmland, Zilayefa says that by the time I finished school, my mother did not have enough money for university. I could not even take the qualifying examinations because she did not have the registration fee’ (10-11). This is the plight of many young school leavers in the Niger Delta, which is a conflict of the people against the socioeconomic politics of the state. The wealth of the nation is gotten from the region and her people are the poorest of the nation. There is a conflict of the people of the Niger Delta against the system in operation in the country. There is an orchestrated systemic programmed conflict that hinders the people of the Niger Delta from moving ahead in life. It appears that certain socioeconomic and political positions and advantages are reserved for others outside the Niger Delta through the major ethnic group dichotomy. The oil companies are manned, ran, and its profit shared not by Niger Deltans who are denied access and disadvantaged by the oil exploration activities but by the hegemony of major ethnic groups of Yorubas, Hausas, and Igbos, while the minority Niger Delta languishes in penury. From an eco-critical perspective, Vandana Shiva in her preface to *Ecofeminism* (2014) suggests that the violence which the environment undergoes in the hand of multinational oil explorers resonant and is equivalent to the rape of women by men. Thus, the sexual exploitation of Zilayefa by the men equals the exploitation of their land. Ecofeminists argue that the subjugation and the link between woman and the non-human other (the environment (land, rivers, animals, air - henceforth referred to as nature) is evident in the exploitation and violence that prevent the physical and self-actualization of the two (women and environment).

In a similar fashion Kaïne Agary’s narrative in *Yellow-Yellow* begins in a rural Ijaw setting where crude oil polluted farmlands drives the villagers to seek for alternative means of survival. It portrays the lives of the protagonist and narrator Zilayefa a.k.a “Yellow Yellow”, and her mother Binaebi or simply Biti and other rural women who struggle with complications arising from crude-oil-polluted barren land and water. In contrast to rural women, affluent and rich elderly Madam George a.k.a Sisi and her young assistant Lolo reside in the city of Port Harcourt. They care for downtrodden girls seen in the way they serve as Zilayefa’s urbanised surrogate mothers. The village and Port Harcourt present contrastive aspects or perspectives of abject poverty and affluence which women, and the land, rivers and resources undergo in the novel. The two settings prepare readers for the show of shame and pity to which Niger Delta women and her environment are subjected. The novel *Yellow-Yellow* has two spatial settings: a village which is the den of poverty, hunger, filth, polluted water, and land deep in crude oil despoliation. Port Harcourt the urban setting displays comfort and wealth enjoyed by male characters; while foreigners and Nigerian capitalists who see and use the local women as objects of pleasure. Agary’s rural setting on the contrary depicts mostly female characters; girls, single mothers and abandoned wives whose lives have no prospects. With no specific name of the village, it represents a microcosm of the Niger Delta oil bearing villages where female characters eke out a living amidst crude oil spills, gas flares, and badly polluted water ways with dead ecosystem. The two settings suggest poverty amidst plenty; it parodies and satirizes the economic paradox of Nigeria, a rich nation with higher percentage of her people wallowing in abject poverty. It is a narrative of socioeconomic insecurity

amidst surplus. There are other forms of conflict and insecurity in the novel. Second, communal insecurity suffered by oil-bearing communities of the Niger Delta region. Third, ethnic clashes and wars fought over boundaries. A common denominator to these three layers of insecurity as portrayed by Kaine Agary is that it revolves round resource control, power and profit. Zilayefa affair with Admiral offered her momentary bliss which is blown away at the slightest thought of her being pregnant. For instance,

Communities were fighting over who legitimately owned what land after more local government areas were created, after local government boundaries were reviewed, and after local government headquarters were relocated. Due largely to the politics involved in the distribution of funds by the federal government and the oil companies in the Niger delta, all parties believed, rightly or wrongly, that whoever, owned the land controlled the local government and whatever funds it received (Yellow-Yellow, 109).

Taking a cue from the cause of communal crises in the region it would be right to say that personal insecurity graduates into communal insecurity and communal insecurity depreciates into personal insecurity as the actors are located in the same region. The third type of conflict and insecurity portrayed is that of ethnic clashes.

### **Conclusion**

The very existence of the notion of peace, bliss and security presupposes the opposite. Where there is no peace, bliss and security there is the likelihood or certainty of turmoil, crisis and insecurity. History has it that the Niger Delta region and her people are a peace-loving and hospitable as any other. Through the palm oil trade, or the crude oil exploitation of the Niger Delta the region and the people have remained peace loving. However, the European merchants, and oil multinationals and their government sponsored security agents have without provocation used brute force and armed violence against the Niger Delta region and her people.

In Kaine Agary's Yellow-Yellow, there are three dimensions of insecurity and conflict. First is the insecurity of Zilayefa who is a metaphor for the Niger Delta environment. Second, communal insecurity suffered by oil-bearing communities of the Niger Delta region. Third, ethnic clashes and wars fought over boundaries. A common denominator to these three layers of insecurity as portrayed by Kaine Agary is that it revolves round resource control, power and profit. Zilayefa affair with Admiral offered her momentary bliss which is blown away at the slightest thought of her being pregnant. The admiral who had looked boyish earlier as he explored and exploited her wares is now 'more like a frightening apparition' (162). No one finds peace, bliss or security relating with a frightening apparition. Also on the personal scale of conflict and insecurity, there are personal 'miniwars' which possibly stem from oil money meant for communities in personal accounts. Kaine narrates that 'everyone who could afford it had their own little army they could call on to fight their wars' (106). The means there is a general state of unrest in the region. The communal level of insecurity is almost a new normal in the Niger Delta. This is often followed by the third tier of conflict and insecurity.

This tier of insecurity involves armed violence that often involved youth groups and militia who employed guerrilla tactics. At this tier countless lives are lost, socioeconomic progress and development is halted and there is general turmoil and unrest across the region. This insecurity is basically driven by a feverish greed for control of the land, its resources, money and political power. Zilayefa laments the loss. 'Each side claimed they were the victims of the other's barbaric tendencies. So many people of mixed Ijaw and Itsekiri parentage had been killed in the conflicts. It was all just senseless' (157).

Chimeka Garricks' Tomorrow Died Yesterday is a work of conflict and myriad forms of insecurity. The

bottom line for the hydra-headed monster of insecurity portrayed in the text is that it is a systemic form of insecurity caused by internal rot and decay within the security architecture. I shall limit myself to that conflict between the people of Asiamana an icon representative of the Niger Delta and the government security apparatus an extension of the security department of the oil multinational companies. The insecurity and conflict portrayed in Chimeka Garricks' novel reveals that the Nigerian security agencies are brazenly deployed by the oil multinationals as their avant-garde force, with the purpose of causing disaffection, promoting violence and outright extra-judicial killing of innocent and unarmed Niger Deltans for the sole purpose of operating carefree without recourse to environmental sustainability, nor mining laws. For instance, the raping of pregnant Dise in the vestry of St. Joseph's church by a bunch of soldiers is cowardly and dastardly. However, it was not enough with the countless Asiamana lives in the bid to arrest the perpetrators of the riot at the Imperial oil base camp.

Unsurprisingly the soldiers who committed the above criminal acts instead of being court-martialed or reprimanded for acts misdemeanour are rewarded with juicy posts as guards of Imperial Oil flow stations. Hence, it is easy to understand why the region perceives the oil multinationals and the government as one and the same because they are partners in crime as portrayed in the novel and collaborated by Atojoko O. Okunnu in Niger Delta Environmental Roundtable: a Book of Readings that, "as far back as the 1970s, a number of ethnic communities had begun to mobilise against the so-called 'slick alliance' of oil companies and the government" (74). Similarly, in *Oil on Water* by Helon Habila three layers of conflict and insecurity is portrayed with graphic acuity. The primary sort of conflict is that which occurs over the control of natural resources and the environment. Habila narrates the sad experience of the nameless village beside the Yellow Island where life was close-knit and the people lacked nothing but were fishermen, hunters, and farmers. This state of bliss was shattered by the oil company's offer to buy the entire village and the people were divided. Though Chief Malabo refused on behalf of the entire village, his conservatism of the environmental heritage only pitched them against the desperate oil merchants. The conflict over their acceptance or rejection of the oil money escalates to communal insecurity in which the community resorts to armed patrol on their waters with bows and arrows and guns against multinational crude oil predators. The secondary conflict is the carnivorous feature of oil multinationals who in the name of security creates insecurity in the domain where they prospect for oil in order to enable them employ the security architecture of the state to destroy their host communities. This conflict of interest manifests as oil wars between militants and the military. The unfortunate side of this insecurity is that the military kills its citizens they were trained and paid to protect. Helon Habila narrates; 'communities like this had borne the brunt of the oil wars, caught between the militants and the military' (*Oil on Water*, 34). The tertiary level of conflict and insecurity occurs when oil bearing communities and the oil multinationals and their government collaborators clash over the right to exploit natural resources by force, and without regard to the rights of the people.

The aesthetics of literary art lies within its creative genius of proffering resolutions to the multifaceted conflicts portrayed in fictional representation. Where the author of Yellow-Yellow symbolically portrays the sexual exploitation of Zliayefa as a metaphor for the reckless and feverish eco-terrorism unleashed on the Niger Delta environment, she also inserts within the narrative her expectation for finding a resolution to the unrest. Like Yellow-Yellow running from pillar to post for quick fixes like she did having sexual relations with men will only offer momentary pleasure. The Niger Delta region requires the faithfulness and responsive support that is as permanent as those of a husband to his bride. This implies that the immediate on-the-spot-assessments, poverty alleviation, remedial agencies and political appointments are secondary and temporary. A more primary and permanent structure in handling the situation would involve renegotiating the mining concessions with the people in order to create a bond that favours both parties. Providing for the continuous sustainability of the environment in order for both parties to continually enjoy a common ground through programs and projects meant to

preserve nature. The government must as a matter of urgent attention make provision for permanent programs of rural employability and employment, basic healthcare, electricity, agro-allied industries setup and development, resource democracy and conflict resolution orientation amongst others.

This is a fundamental systemic failure of government institutions that must be addressed from within in order to ensure security in the Niger Delta and by extension the nation at large. Immoral, impudent, and unprofessional agents, soldiers, and officers of the law, judiciary and others should be sacked where applicable, retrained, reassigned, and reprimanded for misdeemeanour. Militant youths of the Niger Delta should be engaged in peaceful deliberations in order to learn their grievances and how they can be part of the system of addressing the challenge. They should be trained and employed to man and secure oil installation. Sacred sites, and heritage locations should be conserved and preserved from predatory oil exploration activities to ensure generational cultural sustainability. Oil royalty payment in oil bearing communities of the Niger Delta should ceased to be paid to individuals who pose as communal representative but to families, and individuals who have been identified as bonafide citizens of such communities.

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A Therapeutic Critique of The Abureni Poem Amun Obhel 'The Tide of The Time' In Etire's  
Abureni Poetry: Expressions, Folktales And Lyrics

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### **Abstract**

People groups crave to live in a peaceful environment and employ many ways to tackle the problems that affect it. They include distressful situations that affect a people in various ways and intensity, as individuals or group. Each generation experiences its own share of problems, some of which are traceable to cultural and societal changes, manifesting in strange behavioural patterns among children, youth, and the elderly. A common response is for them to firstly pour out their emotions, then seek help from within or without their immediate environment. The objective of this paper is to highlight the place of poetry as a communication and peace building tool that addresses the hearts and minds of people who feel distressed over issues that unfold around them. The study uses a poem titled Amun Obhel 'The Tide of the Time' in Etire's "Abureni Poetry: Expressions, Folktales and Lyrics," as a case study. It applies Pierce's Theory of Sign, focusing on the premise that sign is encoded in three elements: the object, the referent, and the interpretant. The purpose is to bring out the affectual meaning of the various sub-themes of the poem under discourse, and apply the learning points to the economic, social, political, physical, and psychological experiences of people in the present day. The study concludes that translating, explaining, and communicating a focused theme therapeutically, helps to heal the mind of the affected persons, and provide hope amid the harsh realities of the time.

**Keywords:** communication, peace, poetry, sign, Abureni.

### **Introduction and Objective**

In the linguistic circles, Abureni is classified under the Benue-Congo, Cross River, Delta Cross, Central Delta family (Williamson 1989; Faraclas 1989; Ndimele, Kari and Ayuwo 2009). Abureni is spoken in communities located along the southern border between Bayelsa State and Rivers State in the South-South geopolitical region of Nigeria. Communication in Abureni has been predominantly by oral tradition (R.T. Etire 1998, Daniel 2017, Robert 2019, Etire, Daniami & Patience 2021) and the people use various genres such as drama, proverbs, euphemism, song poetry to express their views or grievances over issues. In the same vein, Paul et al (2023) note that oral literature has been the dominant means of communication among Abureni native speakers and that it is used as the principal source for the documentation of historical accounts and cultural features of the people. The objective of this paper is firstly to highlight the place of poetry as a communication and peace building tool that addresses the hearts and minds of people who feel distressed over issues that unfold around them. Secondly, to contribute to the solution of an earlier identified problem of scarcity of literature on Abureni, by documenting an aspect of the culture of the people. In Taiwo, Ogunkeye & Adeniyi (2017:33), Etire (2017b) stated that "The Abureni language and culture had been communicated by verbal means, which threaten the future existence of the language."

### **Literature Review**

The therapeutic discourse encourages people to speak out about problems such as suffering, deprivation, oppression, criminality, injustices, and similar vices which they experience as individuals or group that used to remain unarticulated in public. Some individuals, indigenous people groups and linguistic scholars the world over have continued to use various forms of poetry to communicate their thoughts outwardly. According to Mozimo (2023) in Trinya et al (2023: 17), "The work songs, lullabies,

and dirges in local traditions in Nigeria and Africa, have been on for ages and had – and still have – utilitarian roles in the everyday lives of indigenous people.” Specifically, the ‘therapoetic’ approach addresses an aggrieved conscience over unhealthy social-political, economic, and cultural changes that impact both the physical and psychological wellbeing of the individual and attempts to subtly heal their minds in the process. Oftentimes, especially in the present age, such issues trend in the literary space locally and internationally. They create awareness and challenge the minds of the audience to seek solution to the identified problem, depending on its impact and significance on the individual or groups of persons. In Trinya (2013:160), Etre (2023) observes that “the practice of using song poetry to heal depressed minds has continued till the present day and African cultures are not exempt.”

### Theoretical Framework

The study applies Peirce’s Theory of Sign, focusing on the premise that sign is encoded in three elements: the object, the referent, and the interpretant. Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914) stated that “meaning is non-existent if there is no sign pointing to another sign.” Scholars have used Peirce’s theory of signs (semiotic) and its possible application to literary criticism and critical theory in general. For example, Atkin (2013) describes it as “an account of signification, representation, reference and meaning.” According to San Juan (2011), Peirce’s Theory affords a mode of inquiring into how we approach texts/discourses on different levels, depending on what our purposes are. The purpose of this study is to bring out the affectual meaning of the various sub-themes of the poem under discourse, and apply the learning points to the economic, social, political, physical, and psychological experiences of people in present times. In a discourse on therapeutic politics, Suvi Salmenniemi (2019) notes that the therapeutic discourse has opened a new discursive space for speaking out about suffering and injustices that used to remain unarticulated in public. In terms of its deployment as a psychological tool, they observed that it has been gaining increasing cultural traction in Anglo-American liberal regimes and the Nordic welfare state of Finland, and that it captures something essential about people’s lifeworld. Suffice it to say that the therapeutic discourse, specifically ‘therapoetics,’ has also been gaining significant traction in indigenous cultures such as Abureni and other Nigerian language groups with dominant oral tradition.

### Methodology

The original Abureni texts in each line of the twenty-seven stanzas of the poem under discourse is firstly transcribed, back translated, and explained to provide an English gloss. Secondly, the signs and symbols that are used to communicate the themes are further broken down into three semiotic elements to provide their contextual meanings. Both the original poem/gloss without explanation and the explained version were tested with selected native speakers and nonnative speakers. The intent was to check their level of understanding of the poem and the issues it has raised, as well as ascertain its impact on their thoughts and responses. The author’s native speaker intuition of the Abureni language and its oral tradition was also relied upon.

*Table 1 The twenty-seven stanzas of the poem Amum Obhel with gloss*

Abureni	English gloss
Amum obhel Ōkpò erorobhi nà eten igomogo Wo-o, aleighān amum! Amum ibholohol edim oṅo Orige asubhuhh ekal ipe Wo-o, aleighān amum! Amum wā agwō atei wā abhin N’ obhin ikarabh nā odioḡhom eḡlīa Wo-o, aleighān amum!	A new tide of time Arms have become jingle bells Oh, what a bizarre generation! That nudity is openly displayed Spreading pubic hair is fashion Oh, what a bizarre generation! A tide of might is right and winner takes all Evil is used as ingredient to sweeten wealth Oh, what a bizarre generation!

Abureni	English gloss
<p>Amum ogir dō ude  Wā akodu asuma nā agerina  Wo-o, alegħan amum!  Amum isoweī nā akpe  Onon anī onon anwa  Wo-o, alegħan amum!  Amum ewogina ɔtō  Ologi otu esi ɔrɔ bɔ,  Eire te te te  Wo-o, alegħan amum!  Amum igbara nā ikei ileghān  Ođiom bo, ekiel bo  Wo-o, alegħan amum!  Amum adeghelegel  K'agui adugh, k'albal akpe  Wo-o, alegħan amum!  Amum ologhologh  Amānini n'āren egbedi  Wo-o, alegħan amum!  Amum ib'itotogel  Kparanome nā aghudum,  Kparanome nā aghudum  Wo-o, alegħan amum!  Amum eky ɔtō  Enaiyy nā alologian;  Adugh nā agelemini  Wo-o, alegħan amum!  Amum rekai nā igbe  Ob'amum aru!  Wo-o, alegħan amum!  Amum ugin amasue  Wā asul nā oghī ozu oboghom  Wo-o, alegħan amum!  Amum akya mā ozu  Oghara gnyi nā oghī;  Okei-oni nā oghī  Wo-o, alegħan amum!  Amum apuru mā aīkēkēkēl  Adiġh okpīran, adiġh iyɔ  Wo-o, alegħan amum!  Amum etutu akun  Iyā ologi abhir ugir agira  Wo-o, alegħan amum!  Amum ihuhuhom  Esi arɔ āten adiġhan bɔ  Wo-o, alegħan amum!  Amum aghel izo  Wā ihhelehel onu wā udoni  Wo-o, alegħan amum!  Amum oghoroghor  Ođiġh ewel bomy  Wo-o, alegħan amum!</p>	<p>A tide that people eat fat without labouring  Just wake up one morning and you are rich!  Oh, what a bizarre generation!  A tide of restiveness and trouble making  Nobody forgoes anything, no forgiveness!  Oh, what a bizarre generation!  A tide without a hiding place  Neither secure nor safe at home  Outside environment is horrifying – a no go!  Oh, what a bizarre generation!  A tide that young and old are agemates  Can't differentiate right from the left side  Oh, what a bizarre generation!  A pregnant hanging tide  Perils at nightfall; troubles at dawn  Oh, what a bizarre generation!  A tide of harsh uncertainties  Kidnapping and murder have become drama  Oh, what a bizarre generation!  A tide that calls for caution in all things  Living in fear and panic  A state of rage and horror  Oh, what a bizarre generation!  A tide without clear destination  A sky full of signs and wonders,  And Devil deceiving tirelessly  Oh, what a bizarre generation!  A tide of different prongs  A huge tidal swell indeed!  Oh, what a bizarre generation!  A tide that rejects gifts and honour  Apprehension greets wealth that lands ashore  Oh, what a bizarre generation!  A tide that disowns its colour  The young exude danger  And adults similarly dreadful  Oh, what a bizarre generation!  A tide that demands lasting stamina  Whether sailing against current or in its direction  Oh, what a bizarre generation!  A tide that has banished sacredness  Inappropriate behaviours displayed at will  Oh, what a bizarre generation!  An obviously restless tide  Never feels satisfied anytime anywhere  Oh, what a bizarre generation!  A tide that rejects and breaks covenants  Levity and insincerity have become virtues  Oh, what a bizarre generation!  A tide characterized with loud noise  No more forbearance or pardon  Oh, what a bizarre generation!</p>

Abureni	English gloss
Amum ase iyel dugh Àten Wàlèm bhel Wo-o, leghàn amum! Amum nà ođe mà iyobh Wà agò mà enaiiny digh abadi Wo-o, leghàn amum! Amum etere nà ib'ileriom Àzibà nà abhel! Wo-o, leghàn amum! Amum susuom imom 'Yà jina nà abhunugi, agyò ogbà bọ Wo-o, leghàn amum! Amum akuyon inju Ekiet nà ođiom isorogi D'aman akpè Wo-o, leghàn amum! Amum abadi Onon amum aru! Wo-o, leghàn amum! Amum dien tọ Ob'amum aru Wo-o, leghàn amum! Amum ob'lugbo Eblayi, nà ede nà egiom oduđul Wo-o, leghàn amum!	A tide that justice is passed in favour of evil A situation that only the Creator can salvage Oh, what a bizarre generation! A tide of extravagant and spurious spending Anyone that sees a ray of success <i>'hits the ocean'</i> ! Oh, what a bizarre generation! A dreadful tide with incredible happenings In the midst of it all, God still protects Oh, what a bizarre generation! A tide that offloads new merchandise continually With volumes of import immeasurably high Oh, what a bizarre generation! A tide that gathers curses as a hen guides her chicks Abominable acts adorn its left and right sides Nuisance its back Oh, what a bizarre generation! A tide of the wide seas and oceans What a sumptuous tide in admittance Oh, what a bizarre generation! A tide without a real nametag An awesome tide of time Oh, what a bizarre generation! A tide of incredible wealth and riches All squandering to posterity Oh, what a bizarre generation!

Source: Efire 2017a:43-49

### Data Analysis and Findings

Each line of the poem being critiqued is transcribed/tone-marked, translated, and explained with relevant comments to provide their contextual meanings. It is observed that the expression Wo-o, leghàn amum! 'Oh, what a bizarre generation!' is repeated as the last line of each stanza to acclaim the magnitude of the impact of the sub-theme being described. It represents the crescendo of the emotions being poured out by the poet in response to each strange happening, albeit in a self-consoling manner.

Wo-o, leghàn amum!

Oh how.full water (tide)

'Oh, what a bizarre generation!'

Amum obhel /àmòm óbèl/

Ọkpọ erorobhi nà eten igonogo /okpọ eroròbì ná etèn igònògò/

Wo-o, leghàn amum! /wóó -lèyàn àmòm/

Amum obhel

Water of.time

'The generation of the time.'

Ọkpọ erorobhi nà eten igonogo

Things dangerous have turned jingle bells

'Weapons are openly brandished with thrill' or 'Weapons are displayed recklessly with excitement.'

Amum ibholobhol edim tọ /àmòm íbòlòbòl edim tọ/

Orirè subhubbh ekal ipè /ò-rirè súbùbùb èkal ípè/

Wo-o, leghàn amum! /wóó -lèyàn àmòm/

Amum ibholobhol edim tọ

Water public.region honour without

'A generation that shamelessly displays nudity.'

Orìrè asubhubb ekal ipe  
To spread pubic hair is type of fashion  
'Walking naked is a treat of fashion.'

Meaning: The poet describes two scenarios in one – the open display of nudity and spreading of pubic hair, decrying that they have become a norm in the society, instead of being seen as inappropriate behaviour. The generation under review is plagued with abhorrence and seems to worry less about indecent dressing and moral decadence. Such behaviour was frowned at in the past, and if anybody was believed to be engaged in it, then it would be proclaimed publicly in form of poetry or similar genre. Etire (2020) in Udoh and Ekpo (2020:233), opined that,

Song poetry is one of the subtle tools that Abureni people use to reinforce moral values... it is used to expose and discourage inappropriate behaviour. In those days, the society protected the privacy of women and they themselves were not expected to display nudity in any form.

Amum wà agwo atei wà abhin /àmòm wá-guò à-téi wà-ḡin/  
Nà obhin ìkarabh nà odioghom eḡlḡlḡ /nà ò-ḡin eḡlḡlḡ nà ò-diòyóm eḡlḡlḡ/  
Wò-o, àleghān amum! /wóó á-lèyān àmòm/  
Amum wā agwo atei wā abhin  
Water that hand that reaches is who takes.  
'A generation where peopleembezzle resources at the slightest opportunity.'

N'obhin ìkarabh nà odioghom eḡlḡlḡ  
They take evil and eat with wealth  
'Wealthy criminals are celebrated.'

Amum ogir dō udē /àmòm ó-gir dǒ ú-dé/  
Wā akodu asuma nā agerina /wè á-kóǒú á-sómá ná á-gérinà/  
Wò-o, àleghān amum! /wóó á-lèyān àmòm/  
Amum ogir dō udē  
Water that they work not but eat  
'A generation where people do not work to earn a living.'

Wā akodu asuma nā agerina  
Anyone that sleeps wakes up becomes quick turnover  
'People become extremely rich from nefarious activities.'

Meaning: This stanza criticizes the way some people generate wealth from nefarious activities or illegal businesses.

Amum isowei nā akpē /àmòm isówèi nā àkpé/  
Onon amì onon anwa /ònón àmì ònón áṅ<sup>w</sup> à/  
Wò-o, àleghān amum! /wóó á-lèyān àmòm/  
Amum isowei nā akpē  
Water troubles and cases  
'A generation of festiveness and disputes.'

Onon amì onon anwa  
This is me this is you

'I do not accept it, neither do you; so, the fight between us continues.'

Meaning: Nobody is ready to forego anything or forgive anybody for their wrong. Everybody claims right.

Amum ewogina otò /àmòm è-wàgìná òtò/

Ologi otu esi grò bọ - etire te te /òlògì òtù ètìrè té té/

Wò-o, àlèghàn amum! /wóó àlèyàn àmòm/

Amum ewogina otò

Water hiding: place without

'A generation where safety and security are not guaranteed.'

Ologi otu esi grò bọ - etire tetete

Inside house place to: stay is: not - outside no no no

'A person is neither safe at home not in the public.'

Meaning: It decries the poor safety and insecurity situation.

Amum igbara na Ikei ileghan /àmòm igbàrà nà Ikei iléyàn/

Odiom bo, ekiel bo /òdíòm bọ èkiél bọ/

Wò-o, àlèghàn amum! /wóó à-lèyàn àmòm/

Amum igbara na Ikei ileghan

Water small and elderly are: equal

'A tide that young and old are agemates.'

Odiom bo, ekiel bo

Right is: not left is: not

'Right and wrong cannot be differentiated.'

Meaning: It decries disrespect of constituted authority and lawlessness in the society, especially among some youths.

Amum ateghelelele /àmòm àtèyèlèlè/

K'agul adugh, k'abal akpe /k'agùl àdùy k'ábal àkpè/

Wò-o, àlèghàn amum! /wóó à-lèyàn àmòm/

Amum ateghelelele

Water hanging

'A generation that is hanging in the balance in terms of security.'

K'agul adugh, k'abal akpe

If night: falls danger if day: break trouble

'The night is full of perils and day breaks with numerous troubles.'

Meaning: It decries the poor safety and insecurity situation.

Amum ologhologh /àmòm ólòyólòy/

Amánnì n'áten egbedi /àmánnì n'átèn égbédi/

Wò-o, àlèghàn amum! /wóó àlèyàn àmòm/

Amum ologhologh

Water hanging: to: fall: or: not

'A tide of harsh uncertainties.'

Àmàní n'átén egbedi  
Waylaying has become drama  
'Kidnapping and murder have become drama.'

Meaning: The statement 'A tide of harsh uncertainties' alludes to the high rate of occurrence of security related incidents, both in rural and urban areas. Similarly, 'Kidnapping and murder have become common' suggests that such happenings are commonplace practices that the assailants openly undertake with impunity.

Àmùm íb'ítótogì/àmòm íb'ítótogì/  
Kpàranome nà aghudum, Kpàranome nà aghudum /kpàrànómé nà àyúdùm/  
Wò-o, àlegħan amùm! /wóó ó-lèyàn àmòm/

Àmùm íb'ítótogì  
Water great procedures  
'A generation that calls for caution in all things.'

Kpàranome nà aghudum, Kpàranome nà aghudum  
Be: frightful and life Be: frightful and life  
'People live in fear and panic due the prevalent rage and horror.'

Meaning: It further decries the state of insecurity as people are frightened by the frequent occurrence of life-threatening incidents. It therefore calls for people to be cautious in all they do to avoid falling victim to them.

Àmùm èkú otí/àmòm èkú ótì/  
Enàny nà àlologìàn; àdugh nà agelemeni /énàny nà àlòlògìàn àdúy nà àgèléménì/  
Wò-o, àlegħan amùm! /wóó ó-lèyàn àmòm/

Àmùm èkú otí  
Water category without  
'An unpredictable generation.'

Enàny nà àlologìàn; àdugh nà agelemeni  
Heaven is showing. wonders evil is deceiving  
'A generation characterized with new phenomena - natural changes, man-made disasters and inexplicable vices.'

Àmùm rēkal nà ígbé/àmòm rēkal nò ígbé/  
Ob'amùm aru! /òbàmòm àrú/  
Wò-o, àlegħan amùm! /wóó ó-lèyàn àmòm/

Àmùm rēkal nà ígbé  
Water aspects and potentials  
'A generation different strokes and traits.'

Ob'amùm aru!

Big.water came

'A generation with myriad dispositions.'

Meaning: It refers to a generation of different prongs. It has become difficult to predict the way people respond to the problems that happen around them. Often, some people display strange and unacceptable behaviours in their attempt to tackle emerging challenges in the society. For example, the spate of lawlessness and thugger, which at instances, is engaged with impunity and condoned.

Amum ugin amasue /àmòm ùgìn àmàsùé/

Wà asul nà oghil ozu oboghom /wè ásùl nà òyíl òzù òbòyòm/

Wo-o, àleghàn amum! /wóó ò-lèyàn àmòm/

Amum ugin amasue

Water they.reject gift.of.honour

'A generation in which the people are cautious in accepting gifts, including the traditional honorary gift from a kinsman.'

Wà asul nà oghil ozu oboghom

Anyone who.berths they.are afraid.to.pour fish.meat

'People are afraid of welcoming a kinsman who has returned from an adventure as his luggage might be suspect.'

Meaning: A generation in which family elders are apprehensive over receiving the traditional honorary gift from a kinsman's proceeds. If the targeted recipient doubts the source of the income, especially if it might be ill-gotten, then it would be better for them to outrightly reject the gift than being counted as an accomplice. In Abureni tradition, it was common practice for a fisherman or hunter to honour an elderly person of their choice with a piece of their catch. The elder would then appreciate and bless him on behalf of the larger family, but the custom is gradually dying due to greed and other vices that decimate the values that hitherto enhanced love and peace in the society.

Amum akua mà ozu /àmòm àkúá mà ózù/

Ogbara gnyì nà oghil; Okei-gnì nà oghil /ògbàrá ǵnì bǝ òkìní bǝ/

Wo-o, àleghàn amum! /wóó ò-lèyàn àmòm/

Amum akua mà ozu

Water it.denies its body

A generation of shocking revelations, making it difficult for one person to vouch for another.'

Ogbara gnyì nà oghil; Okei-gnì nà oghil

Little child we.are afraid; Elder.person we.are afraid

'People live in fear and suspicion as crime is found among young and old folks.'

Meaning: 'A generation that disowns its colour' metaphorically refers to a generation that is full of surprises and unpredictability. If a person who has been living in falsehood is exposed, people who are familiar with them often get shocked, especially if they had previously held such a person in high esteem. The poet observes that the youth of the generation under review exude danger, and its adults are similarly dreadful. It implies that neither of the category of human beings is exempt of committing crime or displaying inappropriate behaviour. According to the poet, many things occur in an unpredictable manner under the current dispensation.

Amum apuru ma alikéleké/àmòm èpúru má alikéleké/  
Adigh okpiran, adigh iyò /édiy ókpirán édiy iyò/  
Wò-o, aleighan amum! /wóó-ó-lèyàn àmòm/

Amum apuru ma alikéleké/  
Water asking for stamina  
'A generation that full of demands – survival for the fittest.'

Adigh okpiran, adigh iyò  
Whether sailing against tide, whether sailing along tide  
'You need wisdom and strength to tackle issues, irrespective of the angle you are coming from.'

Meaning: People need to apply caution, wisdom, and willpower to survive under the harsh realities of the present time. A person may face a difficult problem that its solution may not necessarily depend on their background or the angle from which they tackle it, but a sustained resolve often yields positive result.

Amum etutu akun /àmòm étótó àkún/  
Iya ologi abhir ugir agira /iyè ólogi àbír úgír àgírà/  
Wò-o, aleighan amum! /wóó-ó-lèyàn àmòm/

Amum etutu akun  
Water sacredness extinct  
'A generation that prohibits nothing.'

Iya ologi abhir ugir agira  
Ofheart desires they do do even  
'Anybody does what they like with impunity.'

Meaning: The statement 'A tide that has banished sacredness or 'Inappropriate behaviours displayed at will and with impunity' decries lawlessness. The situation is like the English idiom 'throw caution to the wind' which Cambridge Dictionary (n.d) defines as 'to do something without worrying about the risk or negative results.'

Amum ibhuyhuyom /àmòm íbóβòòm/  
Esi arò aten adighan bo /èsi aró átén ádfyén bò/  
Wò-o, aleighan amum! /wóó-ó-lèyàn àmòm/

Amum ibhuyhuyom  
Water of fuss  
'An insatiable generation.'

Esi arò aten adighan bo  
Place stay pass fits.it is not  
A generation that is characterized with restiveness.'  
Meaning: It refers to an obviously restless generation where people never feel satisfied with what they have. They are always on the move to get things done their own way, no matter the consequences.

Amum aghel izo /àmòm àyél izò/  
Wà ibhelèbhel gnu wà udoni /wá íbèlèbèl ònú wà údóní/

Wó-o, àlèghàn amùm! /wóó á-lèyàn àmùm/

Amum aghel izò

Water rejects covenant

A generation that people fail to honour agreements.'

Wà ibhelehel onu wà udoni

Person babbling mouth is whom we honour

'A generation where a dishonest person is given accolade.'

Meaning: On one hand, 'A tide that rejects and breaks covenants' refers to lawlessness. On the other hand, 'Levity and insincerity have become virtues' describes the seeming acceptance of the identified ills by the generality of the populace. It decries how such negative vices have badly impaired the fabric of society.

Amum oghoroghor /àmùm òyóróghòr/

Odigh ewel bõmu /òdíy éwèl bõmò/

Wó-o, àlèghàn amùm! /wóó á-lèyàn àmùm/

Amum oghoroghor

Water noise

'A generation characterized by noise.'

Odigh ewel bõmu

To enter goat no more

'People fail to endure pain and forgive one another whenever dispute occurs.'

Meaning: A tide characterized with loud noise. No more forbearance or pardon. These statements refer to a quarrelsome generation in which people find it difficult to forgive one another over issues. Instead, they toe the line strife with each party claiming right.

Amum asè iyel àdugh /àmùm àsé ijél àdùy/

Àten Wàlèm gbhel /àtèn wàlèm gbèl/

Wó-o, àlèghàn amùm! /wóó á-lèyàn àmùm/

Amum asè iyel àdugh

Water judgment favours evil

'A generation in which criminals are set free and the innocent scoffed.'

Àten Wàlèm gbhel

Except Creator to favour

'People can still trust God to deliver them from such predicament.'

Meaning: A tide that justice is passed in favour of evil. A situation that only the Creator can salvage. Here, the author condemns partiality and injustice, and prays for the intervention of the Creator of mankind.

Amum na ode ma iyobh /àmùm ná ódé má ijób/

Wà agò mà enainy adigh abadi /wà ágò mà ènàp/ ádíy ábàdì

Wó-o, àlèghàn amùm! /wóó á-lèyàn àmùm/

Amum nā ode mā iyobh  
Water that: they eat in extravagance  
'A generation in which people engage in extravagant spending.'

Wā agō mā enainy ādigh abadi  
Anyone who: tears a heaven enters ocean  
'Anybody who breaks even considers himself wealthy, then lives extravagantly.'

Meaning: This verse criticizes the inability of some people to plan properly for their lives and live within their income.

Amum etete na ib ileriom /àmòm étè è nà ib ilerìòm/  
Azibā nā abhèl! /àzìbá nà abé!/  
Wó-o, aleighān amum! /wóó-ó-lèyān àmòm/

Amum etete na ib ileriom  
Water dreadful and big: omens  
'A dreadful generation that is characterised with strange occurrences.'

Azibā nā abhèl!  
God is favouring  
'Yet, God protects and delivers people from harm.'

Meaning: The statement 'A dreadful tide with incredible happenings' refers to the way evil has infested the society. 'In the midst of it all, God still protects' is a statement that encourages people to place their hope in God who readily helps those who call on him in trust.

Amum asusuom imom /àmòm àsúsúóm ímòm/  
'Yā ina nā abhunugi, aguo ogba bō /j'è inà nà əbunùgì àgòò ógbà b'ó/  
Wó-o, aleighān amum! /wóó-ó-lèyān àmòm/

Amum asusuom imom  
Water that: lures new: things  
'A generation where people are continually tempted with strange evil practices.'

'Yā ina nā abhunugi, aguo ogba bō  
What it has offloaded no means to tell.  
What it (evil consequences) has succeeded cannot be ascertained.'

Meaning: The statement 'A tide that offloads new merchandize continually, with volumes of import immeasurably high' attempts to describe the volume and enormity of the problem. It means that evil has impacted various aspects of the society under different strategies and appearances.

Amum akuom inu /àmòm àkúóm ínù/  
Ekiel nā odìom isorogi; D'aman akpe /èkièl nà ódìòm isòrògì dāman àkpè/  
Wó-o, aleighān amum! /wóó-ó-lèyān àmòm/

Amum akuom inu  
Water that: rears talks

'A generation that attracts negative comments with its actions and inactions.'

Ekiel nà odìom isorogi; D'aman akpe

Left and right dropped.items; At rear dangerous.cases.

'There are many disturbing situations affecting the populace, widespread impact.'

Meaning: Isorogi /isòrògi/ 'dropped items' metaphorically refers to the suite of troubles that is being fomented. It indicates that the populace is faced with many disturbing situations. These problems relate to safety and security, having widespread impact on human, asset, environment, and reputation. People cry out in distress, and often rain curses against the perpetrators of evil and their cohorts in the society.

Amum abadi /àmòm ábàdì/

Onon amum aru! /ònón àmòm àrù/

Wo-o, alegehan amum! /wóó àlèyàn àmòm/

Amum abadi

Water of ocean (or sea)

'A generation that displays unfamiliar attributes.'

Onon amum aru!

This is water came

'What a formidable generation.'

Meaning: A tide of the wide seas and oceans. What a sumptuous tide in admittance. The foregoing statements refer to the numerous incidents that occur, which the people regard to be strange.

Amum adien otq /àmòm àdièn ótq/

Ob'amum aru /òbàmòm àrù/

Wo-o, alegehan amum! /wóó àlèyàn àmòm/

Amum adien otq

Water name without

'A generation of inconsistencies, making it difficult for it to be assigned an identification code or nametag.'

Ob'amum aru

Big water that has came

'A generation that is faced with huge challenges.'

Meaning: 'A tide without a real nametag. An awesome tide of time.' This stanza notes that the generation under review is faced with huge challenges in all facets of life. The learning point is that people ought to recognize the enormity of the social issues and together seek solutions, as nobody or group of persons is exempt from the consequences of doing nothing.

Amum ob'alugbo /àmòm óbàlùgbó/

Eblayi, na ege na egigim odudu! /ébláìyì nà egeé

Wo-o, alegehan amum! /wóó àlèyàn àmòm/

Amum ob'alugbo

Water big.richness (or huge wealth)

'A generation of plentiful intrigues.'

Eblayi, na ede na egiom odudu!  
 All of it they are eating and giving to posterity  
 'All the attributes and challenges of this generation will pass to posterity.'

Wo-o, aleighan anjum!  
 Oh how full water (tide)  
 'Oh, what a bizarre generation!'

Meaning: 'A tide of incredible wealth and riches. All squandering to posterity.' This is the final stanza of the poem which is intended to console and encourage the audience to feel good. They should note that the intrigues or distressful situations facing them currently are temporary and find a place only in the annals of history.

It is observed that the poem has twenty-seven stanzas, and they address various sub-themes, using signs and symbols that require encoding. To understand the meaning of the sub-themes, each of the symbols and symbols is represented in three semiotic elements following Pierce's Theory of Signs as illustrated in Table 1 below.

*Table 2 Sign chart of selected themes from the poem Anjum Obhel 'The Tide of the Time'*

Stanza	Object	Referent	Interpretant (meaning)
1-27	<i>anjum</i> 'water'	tide	generation of people
1.	<i>igonogo</i> 'jingle bells'	entertainment	Illegal and uncontrolled carrying of weapons has become common practice.
2.	<i>ibholobhol</i> 'genital area' <i>asubhubh</i> 'pubic hair'	nakedness, nudity sexual immorality	The open display of sensitive body parts, e.g., through indecent dressing. Sexual immorality, sex trade, etc.
3.	<i>agwo</i> /àgòò/ 'hand'	opportunity	Fraud or embezzlement.
4.	<i>kođu</i> ( <i>adila</i> ) 'sleep'	rest	Slothfulness or not engaged in any trade.
5.	<i>anwa na amì</i> 'you and me'	relationship	The opposing parties involved in a dispute, representing unforgiving spirit.
6.	<i>ologì otu</i> 'inside house' <i>etire</i> /ètrè/ 'outside'	home outside environment	Safe place. Risky place.
7.	<i>ođiom na ekiel</i> 'right and left'	source	The humans involved in the activities, as actors or victims of the problems.
8.	<i>ateghelegel</i> 'a loosely hung object'	insecurity	The perils in the day and night, especially the threats to life.
9.	<i>ologhologh</i> 'fight' <i>egbedi</i> /ègbèdí/ 'drama'	uncertainty play	Safety and security threats. Kidnappings and killings are now common occurrences in open view.
10.	<i>itotogì</i> 'procedures'	pathways	Cautious responses or strategies.
11.	<i>ekū</i> /èkò/ 'placement' <i>enainy</i> /ènàñ/ 'sky' <i>adugh</i> /àdúy/ 'danger'	destination environment dangerous situation	Categorization of the happenings. Business and economic space. Security or safety hazard.

Stanza	Object	Referent	Interpretant (meaning)
12.	<i>rɛkál /rɛkál/</i> 'aspects' <i>ìgbè /ìgbè/</i> 'prowess'	differences potentials	Different strokes and traits in a person. Myriad dispositions of a people group.
13.	<i>ámásue</i> 'gift of honour' <i>oboghom</i> 'fish or meat'	respect harvest or bounty	Culture of honouring a family elder. The symbolic traditional gift item.
14.	<i>ozu /òzù/</i> 'body' <i>ogbara onyi</i> 'small child' <i>okei-oni</i> 'old person'	colour youth adult	Personal attitude and behaviour. Young population or generation. Elderly population or generation.
15.	<i>alíkèkèkèl</i> 'stamina' <i>òkpìran</i> 'against tide' <i>ìyò</i> 'along with tide'	effort water current/struggle water current/ease	Solution, success. Obstacles and challenges of life. Simple and happy livelihood.
16.	<i>ètùnù /étùtò/</i> 'sacredness'	uprightness, compliance	Cultural values and ethos.
17.	<i>ìbhuhuom</i> 'fuss'	unsteadiness	Restive and insatiable attitude.
18.	<i>ìzò /'ìzò/</i> 'covenant' <i>ìbhelehel onù</i> 'babbling mouth'	agreement dishonesty, breaking of vow	Cordial relationship. Loss of integrity, moral ethics, and cultural values.
19.	<i>oghoroghor</i> 'noise' <i>ewel /èwèl/</i> 'goat'	unforgiving spirit. fool	Strife. Peaceful disposition.
20.	<i>ase /asé/</i> 'lawsuit'	assessment/appraisal	The justice system.
21.	<i>ìyobh</i> 'extravagance'	expenditure	Lifestyle.
22.	<i>etete</i> 'dreadfulness' <i>ìleriom</i> 'omen'	fear consequence	Insecurity or sufferings. Evil or crime or inappropriate behaviour.
23.	<i>imom /imòm/</i> 'new or strange things' ' <i>Ya nà àbhumgi</i> 'offloaded items'	strange/alien or unfamiliarity merchandise	Evil practices or emerging behaviours that are considered strange to the culture.

### Conclusion

The study notes that the poem has described various societal problems of the present day with an outpour of emotions over the real and potential consequences. The key learning point is that, even though the identified challenges are huge and impactful, people are encouraged to develop a mindset that acknowledges them as true but temporal. Such a disposition potentially enables an individual to cope with emerging issues and remain psychologically healthy, no matter how shockingly strange they might be. The study concludes that translating, explaining, and communicating a focused theme therapeutically, helps to heal the mind of the affected person, and provide hope amid the harsh realities of the time. Afterall, nothing is permanent as generations come and go – all to posterity.

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Reunion And Other Poems

By

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**Reunion**

By

**Boma KARIBO**

Love so sweet, so divine

Beckon'd my heart

To yield her fullest

Well, I reasoned and gave in

Not all, just part ---

Hmmm, let the heart have its dictates

And still flutter a bit.

Love so patient allowed the choices ---

You would rather learn

Than read or lean?

There, the bumpy ride

Tidily rough

Steadily brief

Sharp blades that cut the heart

Tossed over the balance and calm

Stormy sea, tinted surf

Frothy and swirling

Swollen and spinning

Pain indescribable

Shame inextricable

Sorrow unshakeable

Blotchy eyes, vacant soul

Limbs like two chopsticks

Traversing a rocky terrain.

By why suffer, My wounds

Still bleed for you?

Love so tender, kind, forgiving

Demands my all: I give it!

Claims my love: You have it!

Embraces my heart: Take it!!!

Things taken for granted

Are not granted

Understandings are fickle  
The vast mystery who can unfathom here  
All we need now is in abundance  
Total yieldedness is the answer.

### Heaven

By

### Boma KARIBO

I wonder how heaven will be  
Told the streets glitter with gold  
So o believe it!  
And mansions fair and bright  
Oh, oh, my ...  
Gentle swishing streams flow by  
Springs spurning life and health  
Lord!!  
Darkness forever shut out  
With its works unwelcome there  
How then can its workers  
Sprise open the gallant gates  
Stealing a glint of the glamour thence?

Not a chance, my friend  
Get it right, get it right  
Jesus Christ, the Ever-living Ticket  
Gains you entrance into this everlasting arbour  
Of purest bliss no mind can imagine  
For thoughts down here are formed  
Assured by the basest choices  
But, allow the glitter of Light in  
Dissipate every darkness  
Choose the right, though not trendy  
The Hope of Glory still invites  
And wait, watching and praying  
Till heaven gained  
Your glorious hallelujah rings out!!!

### Anointing

By

### Boma KARIBO

The anointing breaks the yoke  
Many a doubter a different tale would tell.  
Ever wonder how bones are formed  
In a cocoon of fluidity?  
Wonder again how synchronic  
The fleshy tongue and jarring teeth  
Move in unison their duties perform ---  
When working with food  
Their host to satiate  
Or contending with emotions that surely surge

They rarely strive.  
Even the feet,  
Two narrow broads  
Lift the body, no matter its size  
To accomplish dreams, daily and sustained.

Marvel yet believe  
The Maker commands them so.  
Yes, everything is at His command  
Mountains move, seas divide  
Dirt rises from the dust  
Beauty reclaims the ugly  
Wow, the low makes the top  
Ais flash off  
As He reaches forth  
His anointing..  
His anointing breaks every yoke.

Face-Threatening Acts in Timubu's "Fuel Subsidy Is Gone" Utterance

By

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**Abstract:**

This paper examines the face-threatening acts (FTAs) embedded in President Tinubu's notable utterance, "Fuel Subsidy is gone." The theoretical framework for the study draws specifically on the concepts of positive and negative faces within the politeness theory proposed by Brown and Levinson (1978/1987). It intends to analyse the pragmatic implications of the utterance—how the announcement of fuel subsidy removal presented the bald-on-record politeness strategy devoid of mitigation and the broader societal interpretation of the context of the proclamation. Additionally, the study explores the multidimensional nature of face-threatening acts and their consequences in disseminating political information of that magnitude (a nation's socio-economic policy at the presidential inaugural ceremony). The findings from the study enunciate a profound understanding of how language use can shape the existential realities of a people within a few minutes of a proclamation. By way of recommendation, the study advocates for the government's consideration of robust linguistic evaluations and effective communication strategies prioritising the essence of good governance. In doing so, such policy changes can be effectively communicated in order to alleviate the adverse effect on the citizenry instead of posing massive threats to their positive and negative faces.

**Keywords:** Fuel subsidy, Timubu, politeness theory, positive and negative face, FTAs,

**Introduction**

Information dissemination constitutes one of the most significant characteristics of human existence, enabling the definition of perspectives and steering communication across many human interactions. The legendary philosopher Aristotle asserts that man, by nature, is a political animal (Aristotle, 350 BCE). This assertion resonates through the annals of history. It encapsulates the intrinsic human proclivity to organise themselves into clusters, be it familial units, councils, states, or nations, for collective deliberation and governance. Shanmah and Kegaru (2018) acquiesce that the concept of governance is just as civilisation is as old as language. That is to say, language and governance are, substantially, the linchpins for human survival. They are codependent and largely influence each other in delivering their natural roles.

Trask (1995), cited in Ihejirika (2020), opines that language is what makes us human, and Ihejirika (2006), mentioned in Ihejirika (2020), further admits that the nature of man would have been miserable if language had not existed. Language is bound to meet power whenever the need for governance arises. When that happens, it becomes a relevant and dynamic tool capable of swaying public opinion, mobilising constituents, and eventually defining the course or tone of governance and, in the same vein, eliciting the citizen's response to it. This phenomenal interplay between language and power exhibits itself in the orb of political communication. As one of the high-flying tenets of political communication, that merger fosters a connection between the leader and the leader.

Swanson and Nimmo (1990), cited in Ray (2022), describe political communication as the strategic use of communication to influence public knowledge, beliefs, and actions on political matters. In their words, the crucial factor that makes communication is not the source of the message but its content and purpose. They emphasise the strategic nature of political communication, highlighting the role of persuasion. Ray further emphasises that, among other things, it is concerned with the production,

dissemination, transmission, and impact of information in a political setting. In summary, it is the practice of political means of expression.

For instance, during the great depression of the 1930s, Franklin D. Roosevelt, the 32nd president of America, employed the "Fireside Chats" radio broadcasts to connect with the American public in a conversational tone where he provided reassurance and outlined policies in a manner that transcended the conventional or formality accompanying that calibre of political discourse. Millions of Americans found comfort and renewed hope in those speeches (history.com:2010). On the other end of the spectrum, on August 29, 1972, in a press conference, Richard Nixon downplayed the severity of the Watergate scandal with his meticulously crafted responses and that served more as cautionary notes than an admission of guilt. Even though he resigned in disgrace almost two years later, his manipulative use of language to minimise the scandal's impact that led to the erosion of public trust elongated his tenure and averted immediate prosecution. (Glass 2018)

Thus, a leader's choice of words goes beyond merely conveying information. Instead, it is a crucial interchange of language in which the political environment and, by extension, the entirety of their administration is influenced as every word, every phrase choice, and every sentence or paragraph becomes a vital building block in governing the given democratic community. Such is the case with President Tinubu's declarative statement, 'Fuel subsidy is gone,' a seemingly innocuous utterance with implicit socio-political implications which inadvertently established a somewhat detrimental agenda for his administration as president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Therein lies the basis of this paper.

Inaugural speeches usually embody moments of exhilaration and anticipation as citizens are eager to grasp the ideology and strategies of their incoming leader. They are traditional and symbolise the dawn of a new era. During Buhari's inaugural speech, he declared an open-door policy with his historic declaration of "I belong to nobody, I am for everybody." Though that was hardly ever the case in his eight-year tenure, applause welcomed it in the hope of a coming change as had been widely publicised in his election campaign. However, Tinubu's blunt proclamation of abolishing fuel subsidies piloted a period of uncertainty and economic hardship and has since left a miserable note of dissatisfaction in the hearts of millions of Nigerians home and abroad. This study, therefore, aims to evaluate the linguistic impact of that singular utterance and its far-reaching consequences in various social and political spheres and the ensuing complications it portends for social cohesion and governance.

#### Research Questions

In a bid to briefly elucidate the aim of the study, the research questions are as follows:

1. What are the face-threatening acts identified in President Tinubu's utterance?
2. How do these acts threaten the individual and collective identities of Nigerians?

#### Literature Review

Bamgbose and Adepotu (2016) did a comparative analysis of politeness among public and private school teachers in Ibadan. The study used the Brown and Levinson politeness strategies and Locher and Watts relational work to analyse data collected from six schools, three public and three private schools, respectively. The study discovered that the teachers employed all four politeness strategies in coordinating classroom activities in public and private schools. Positive politeness ranked highest, negative politeness, bald-on record, while off the record ranked the lowest. However, the discursive analysis of the verbal performances of teachers in all the classroom activities surveyed indicated instances of political verbal behaviour, especially in the utterances of teachers in public schools. This shows that outright face-threatening acts (insults) are often considered inappropriate within the confines of any given social context.

In a related study, Adepotu (2018) examined the public faces inherent in Buhari's 2015 Presidential

Media Chat in Nigeria through a discursive analysis using the relational strategies of Locher and Watts' theory of relational work, which helped in expounding the interpersonal interaction and the self-perception of faces among participants in the media chat. The study demonstrated how negotiations are carried out in a media chat and further showed that the amount of verbal work invested by the participants and the outcome of oral judgments is based on the self-perception of the work on the public faces of the individual, in this case, the president helps in determining if works in that classification are considered as being face threatening or not. This study differs from the current study's concerns regarding the implicit connotations embedded in the president's inaugural speech, which presents a preponderance of the bald-off record politeness strategy and has no classification of the citizens' emotional import, thereby directly threatening their negative faces.

Similarly, Ayansola (2016) pragmatically analysed facework and Christian counselling strategies among feuding couples. The study focused on reconciling feuding couples during a counselling session with a Christian counsellor using Brown and Levinson's facework models, where the manifestation of the facework indicated a desire to ventilate ongoing frustration without compromising the relationship. It also showed that as an exception, a face assertion with a bald-on record may escalate the feud if not adequately managed by the counsellor. The study concluded that facework, in reconciling couples, is characterised by the underlying desire to preserve the marriage. While this current study is not concerned with any conciliatory measure involving the president and the citizens, it is interested in the public perception and opinions espoused in President Tinubu's inaugural utterance, which set the tone for the hue of his administration and the FTAs enacted therein.

Cahyaningrum, Rajeg, and Ediwan (2022) analysed the face-threatening acts of the main character in 'The Half of It' movie focusing on the types of FTAs enacted by Brown and Levinson's work on FTAs and how the main character uses these FTAs. The pragmatic analysis of the research showed that the main character used four types of politeness strategies: positive, negative, and bald on-record and off-record strategies. Applying these strategies minimised the FTAs. The current study reveals that despite the facework framework in communication, the FTAs needed to be effectively mitigated to address citizens' concerns adequately.

Mullany (1998), cited in Adepotu (2018), studied the linguistic politeness and sex differences in broadcast interviews wherein the data collected from the interviews were viewed either as political (competitive) or non-political (cooperative). On the one hand, the cooperative interviews were considered to be non-confrontational. As such, the study revealed that female participants were far more cooperative than their male counterparts as they inadvertently appeared to pay more attention to their addressee's facial needs in both political and non-political settings. This study does not align with the survey of FTAs embedded in President Tinubu's inaugural statement as it does not consider sexist language and gender preferences. However, the strategies for analysis are alike.

#### Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is anchored on Face-Threatening Acts (FTAs), which are heavily embedded in the politeness theory proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987). According to them, everyone has a positive and a negative face, and these concepts describe two fundamental aspects of our social and communication needs. The positive face refers to our need for inclusion and approval from others. It is the desire to be liked and to have our self-worth acknowledged. A positive face enunciates maintaining a sense of belonging and social identity. Compliments, showing interest, and paying attention to a person's needs are some strategies that enhance politeness.

The negative face refers to our need for autonomy, independence, and the avoidance of imposition. It often desires the freedom to act and think without feeling constrained by social obligations or rules. The negative face emphasises maintaining personal space and individuality. Giving opinions and opinions, making requests indirectly, and showing deference are ways the negative face expresses itself in human interaction.

Brown and Levinson (1987/1978), Richard and Arndt (1993), Jim (2007), and Locher and Watts (2005), cited in glottopedia.org (2014), state that FTAs may threaten either the speaker's face or the hearer's face. A distinction can be made between the FTAs that threaten [positive face](#) and those that threaten [negative face](#), and the FTAs that threaten the hearer's face and FTAs that threaten the speaker's face.

FTAs Threatening the Hearer's Face

1. Positive Face

FTAs threatening the hearer's self-image include (i) expressions negatively evaluating the hearer's positive face, e.g., disapproval, criticism, complaints, accusations, contradictions, disagreements, etc., as well as (ii) expressions which show that the speaker does not care about H's positive face, e.g. expressions of violent emotions, taboo topics, bad news, emotional topics, interruptions, opinions, etc.

Examples:

Criticism: "I think your report was not concise enough." - The hearer's positive face is threatened because s/he is blamed for having done something poorly, i.e. their self-image is negatively evaluated.

Expression of emotions: "You're feeling sad because of your ex-boyfriend, aren't you?" The speaker addresses a topic that involves a state of emotional weakness on the part of the hearer. The speaker does not care about the hearer's 'public self-image', thus threatening their face.

1. Negative Face

FTAs restricting the hearer's personal freedom include (i) acts predicting a future act of the hearer, e.g. orders/requests, suggestions/advice, reminding, threats/warnings/dares, (ii) acts predicting a future act of the speaker towards the hearer, e.g. offers/promises, and (iii) acts expressing a desire of the speaker towards the hearer or their goods, e.g. compliments, expressions of emotions.

Examples:

Order: "Please give me that book." The speaker anticipates the hearer's future action, which thereby restricts their personal freedom.

Promise: "I promise I will come by tomorrow." - The speaker states a future action in which the hearer should be involved.

Compliment: "I really like you." - The speaker expresses positive emotions towards the hearer, which may involve anticipating a positive reaction by the hearer (giving thanks/expressing positive emotions towards the speaker).

FTA Threatening the Speaker's Face

1. Positive Face

FTAs threatening the speaker's self-image include apologies, acceptance of a compliment, breakdown of physical/emotional control, self-humiliation, confession, etc.

Apology: "I think I made a huge mistake." -> The speaker makes a statement about their shortcomings, thereby 'damaging' their cheerful self-image/face.

II Negative Face

FTAs threatening the speaker's personal freedom include the expression of thanks, acceptance of thanks/offers/compliments, apologies, excuses, etc.

Example:

Expression of thanks: "Thank you so much for your help." - The speaker expresses thanks because they feel obliged to do so. His freedom of action is thus threatened in the moment of speaking.

Adistana, Chandra & Al-Arief (2021) also assert that an act that challenges the wishes of the faces (whether positive or negative) of interlocutors is considered a face-threatening act (FTA). However, Simpson (1997: 156), cited in Osisanwo (2010), opines that FTAs are necessary for language usage, or

else there will be monotony and boredom. Doing FTA is part and parcel of language usage. If it weren't for verbal interactions, It would become extremely odd, as no one would ever complain, no one would ever ask a question, and no one would ever ask anyone to do anything.

In addition, Grundy asserts that Brown and Levinson worked with Goffman's notion of 'face', a property that all human beings have and that is broadly comparable to self-esteem, while Yule (2002:134) cited in Osisanwo (2010) says that 'face' in pragmatics is a person's public self-image. (1967: 5). This implies that individuals assume different faces depending on the particular event or occasion they are involved in. Adepoju (2018) asserts that the specificity of the involvement in a communicative space is the reason Locher and Watt (2005: 12) see faces as masks, on loan to individuals for the duration of different kinds of performance and as emotional investments that can be lost or gained, everyone strives to protect this investment (Adepoju 2018).

The politeness theory, an integrative principle of pragmatics, espouses meaning within the specificity of its contextual appearance, where a person is said to be polite or impolite based on how the communicative item is presented. In Brown and Levinson's (1987) submission, cited in Ayanbola (2016), specific linguistic strategies such as hedging, indirectness, consideration for negative face, empathy, or apology would enable interlocutors to respect each other's face needs to mitigate FTAs. These politeness strategies, as categorised by Brown and Levinson, include:

- **Bald on Record:** This strategy usually does not attempt to minimise the threat to the addressee's face. It is a direct way of saying things, without any minimisation of imposition, in a direct, clear, unambiguous, and concise manner. Bald on-record strategies consist of great urgency, speaking as if excellent efficiency is necessary, being task-oriented, having little or no desire to maintain someone's face, and alerting and welcoming offers and requests.

- **Positive Politeness:** A positive politeness strategy is usually seen in groups of friends or where people know each other reasonably well. Brown and Levinson (1987), cited in Supriyata (2017), state that a positive politeness strategy attempts to attend to the hearer's interest, wants, and goods. Positive politeness strategies consist of noticing attending to the hearer; exaggerate, intensifying interest in the hearer; using in-group identity markers; seeking agreement, avoiding disagreement; presupposing/rising/asserting common ground; joking, conveying that the speaker and the hearer are cooperators; assert or presuppose speaker's knowledge of and concerns for hearer's wants; offer, promise; be optimistic; include both speaker and hearer in the activity; give or ask for reason; assume or assert reciprocity; fulfilling hearer's wants; and give gifts to the hearer.

- **Negative Politeness:** Negative politeness is "the heart of respect behaviour" and is "more specific and focused." It consists of being conventionally indirect, questioning, hedging, being pessimistic, minimising the imposition, giving deference, apologising, and impersonalising the speaker and hearer. State the FTAs as a general rule nominalise and go on record as not incurring debt or indebting the hearer.

- **Off the record:** This strategy usually involves the use of indirect language and removes the Speaker from the potential to be imposed. In this case, the hearer must make an inference to recover what is intended. Besides, it indicates that the speaker can employ the strategy if they want to avoid their responsibility of doing FTAs. Off strategies include giving hints, being vague, sarcastic, or joking.

The extent to which each of these strategies is employed differs in varying degrees, such as the power gauge, the distance, and the imposition rating. From those above, suffice it to say that "Fuel Subsidy is Gone." The extent to which FTAs can be performed or redressed by speakers in their various

engagements depends on those variables.

In highlighting the relevance of effective message dissemination, especially within the political discourse realm, Nye (2017) argues that soft power is another influential perspective in political communication and that a nation's ability to shape preferences through appeal and coercion or payment is a form of power which extends to the realm of political communication where the skilful use of words can enhance a nation's soft power on the globe. This model underscores the multifaceted nature of political messages and their influence on diverse audiences. It also aligns with the essence of this study, which seeks to evaluate the FTAs associated with the utterance under study.

**Methodology**

The data used for this analysis was retrieved from the video clip of the full inaugural speech presented by President Tinubu during his inauguration ceremony, which was unavailable in the print copy retrieved from Facebook earlier. The video was downloaded online via <https://youtu.be.com> and reviewed. The utterance Fuel Subsidy is gone statement was made at the 33rd minute of the presentation as an addendum. Following the Brown and Levinson facework theory and politeness strategies, the data was examined to identify the various kinds of FTAs accompanying the utterance. The identified FTAs were classified and presented in a table. An unstructured interview was randomly conducted for 50 people, and the questions were also aimed at answering the research questions and buttressing the implicit presence of FTAs. A quantitative and qualitative analysis of the findings was presented in short paragraphs.

**Data Presentation and Analysis**

Datum: 'Fuel Subsidy is Gone'

Two aspects of the utterance exhibit FTAs identified based on Brown and Levinson's (1978) assertion of face in the politeness theory. There are two instances of the hearer's positive face being threatened, two instances of the hearer's negative face being threatened, one instance of the speaker's negative face being threatened, and one example each of the bald-on-record politeness strategy highlighting lack of edging, lack of transparency, and lack of empathy.

The FTAs and the politeness strategy enacted in that utterance are presented in below.

ASPECTS OF THE UTTERANCE	Threatening Hearer's Positive Face	Threatening Hearer's Negative Face	Threatening Speaker's Positive Face	Threatening Speaker's Negative Face	Politeness Strategy Employed
It is a directive to remove fuel subsidy	It disregards the need to seek public approval and social acceptance	It imposes the policy change without regard for public engagement and social cohesion	Not threatened	Imposes policy reversal without empathy	Bald-on-record-directness, absence of hedging
It fails to address citizens' concerns and the imminent suffering it will impose on them	Dismisses concerns and criticism as irrelevant to governance	Disregards the need for empathy and acknowledgement of the harrowing outcomes.		Immediately dismisses the need for transparency and accountability in governance	Bald-on-record-absence of empathy

## **Unstructured Interview Analysis**

### **Demographic Profile**

Age: 45% of the respondents ranged from 55-70, 35% 35-54, 20% 20-34

Gender: 45.9% were females, while 55.1% were males

Occupation: Professionals comprised 40%, Students 20%, entrepreneurs 25%, and retirees 15%

Income level: 30% of the participants were low-income, 45% moderate, and 25% high.

Location: 68% urban, 22% suburban, and rural 10%

Educational level: 25% of the respondents were SSCE and diploma holders, 40% had bachelor's degrees, and 35% had postgraduate degrees.

Political Affiliations: 25% of the respondents supported the government, 55% opposed it, and 20% were neutral.

Out of the 30 respondents randomly interviewed, 75% expressed shock, worry, and confusion over the proclamation, 15% voiced hope, and 10% were indifferent. 80% expressed grave disappointment with President Tinubu's statement as part of his inaugural speech, 15% had mixed feelings, and 5% expressed excitement over the president's willingness to abolish the subsidy regime, which was considered a conduit. 75% said a profound financial strain and a gross inability to save as before, 10% indicated a somewhat manageable strain and minimal savings, and 15% were way below management and without any savings. 85% of the respondents criticised the government for not consulting widely and evaluating the outcome before the sudden announcement and implementation of subsidy removal. 15% claimed it was the president's prerogative to do as he deemed fit for the economy and the citizens. 89.9% criticised the government for failing to provide sufficient support for the citizenry before subsidy removal while 10.1% hoped the government would send the much-desired support in due course. 90% stated they were very frustrated with the current conditions orchestrated by the subsidy removal, 7% were not very frustrated, and 3% were not frustrated. When asked why, they said it was a phase that would pass. 60% suggested that the government should give the citizens a sense of belonging by paying close attention to their concerns before policy reformation, 23% suggested calling for townhall meetings to seek public opinion, 17% called for a phase-by-phase removal of the subsidy to lessen the burden on the citizenry. 75% recommended more transparency and accountability in dealing with citizens, and 25% were neutral. 88.6% perceived the directive to remove subsidy as unfair, and 11% thought it was reasonably considerate. 50% expressed concerns for the survival of the average Nigerian, 35% expressed visible frustration over their status as Nigerians, and 15% expressed mixed feelings, uncertainty, and a strong desire to migrate to other African or European countries where citizens' welfare is valued. 35% stated that their perception of the president shifted from messianic to disenchantment, 30% noted a hint of tyranny, 20% described him as an outright dictator, and 15% called him insensitive.

The findings of this study indicate that the prevalence of the hearer's face-threatening acts without corresponding politeness strategies underscores the implicit authoritarian tone of the speaker and the profound impact on the hearers. By employing the bald-on-record approach in the given instances without mitigating the potential threats to the citizens' faces, President Tinubu not only enabled the imposition of his will on Nigerians but subtly presented himself as an authoritarian ruler. Furthermore, it shows the poor communication style of the speaker as the absence of hedging, etc., indicates adamancy and a missed opportunity to soften the impact of the speech. As such, the speaker's credibility and public trust in the overall effectiveness of governance were eroded, negating Nye's (2017) advisory to political leaders to embrace persuasion instead of coercion.

How a message is framed can either be a catalyst for understanding, acceptance, and social approval or the harbinger of confusion and frustration. The language employed in President Tinubu's subsidy removal utterance instantly misrepresented him as the anticipated saviour of Nigerians from the woes of a dwindling economy shortly after surviving the harshness of the cashless policy. Further dampening

the citizens' confidence was the dreary, unempathetic manner in which the declaration was made as if it were the manifestation of a unanimous agreement by Nigerians to offer mass suffering to themselves after casting their ballots for a candidate who inspired hope. So far, the pronouncement and the onward implementation of subsidy removal have signalled a shift in the economy towards austerity measures, which have far-reaching implications for social welfare and government spending priorities. While it may have led to some perceived savings for the government, it has led to higher costs of living and potential social unrest as supporters and opponents have become entrenched in their varied positions of the government's policies, leading to exacerbating political polarisation and reduced the willingness to engage in constructive, communicative exchanges.

Also, most of the respondents' expressions of disappointment, frustration, and utmost concern for their well-being after hearing about the fuel subsidy removal and its subsequent implementation have left many Nigerians disenchanted. It has also imbued a sense of injustice and inequality in the citizenry, heightened socio-economical and socio-political uncertainties, and threatened social cohesion and harmony. There is a visible shift in public perception as a considerable number of the populace represented by the data analysis from the interview sessions no longer perceive the president as a messianic figure but as a source of anger, anarchy, and antagonism. In summary, the findings of this study underscore the impact of policy decisions and policy announcements on individual and collective identities as well as the power and social dynamics.

### Conclusion

The focus of this paper has been the manifestation of the FTAs embedded in President Tinubu's subsidy removal utterance. The study has shown that official statements and the language used in government communication should be subjected to linguistic scrutiny before pronouncements are made. Doing so will aid in the mitigation of misunderstandings, ambiguity, and perceived deception accompanying such critical vociferations because the kind of language used in communicating socioeconomic and socio-political policies can either reinforce or undermine citizens' trust in the government's ability to govern well or erode confidence in government and its institutions. Hence, this study recommends that the government, its agencies, and administrators collectively and consciously deploy the requisite communication strategies for some pre-proclamation analysis of speeches and utterances, including addendums, before publicising them. That way, it prioritises the citizenry's emotive responses and their psychosocial well-being. Thus, the adverse psychological and social effects on the citizenry will be all. **The FTAs and the politeness strategy enacted in that utterance are presented in call** leaders should learn to stick to the scripts written for such special occasions so that policy changes such as the one studied in this paper can be communicated within the confines of effective political communication.

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Campaign On Insecticide Treated Net and The Utilization Rate Among Pregnant Women in South-South, Nigeria

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**Abstract**

This study has analysed the utilization rate of the campaigned insecticide treated net among pregnant women in the South-South, Nigeria. The study was guided by four objectives. The survey design was adopted for the study with a population of 16,075,096 which comprised the whole women in the South-South. A sample size of 384 was derived from the population using Philip Meyer sampling template where a multi-stage sampling technique was adopted to reach the respondents. Among other things, the study found out that there was high level of insecticide treated nets (ITNs) ownership among pregnant women, but poor utilization among them. Many of the pregnant women do not regularly sleep under the net due to hot weather condition, lack of space and itching on the body. It was equally found out that health workers do a great sensitization exercise during antenatal. It was found out that a majority of the respondents perceive insecticide treated net as providing some remedy from mosquito bites. However, some respondents argue that sleeping under the net may not protect one from malaria since mosquito can bite while outside net, therefore, they rely on local herbs and cleaning their surroundings as a better remedy against mosquito bite and malaria. Based on the findings it was recommended that ITNs should be produced as window screens and health workers should follow the sensitization with bulk text messages (SMS) reminding them to remember sleeping under the net.

**Introduction**

Malaria has been reported as one of the major causes of death globally. Many countries have made concerted efforts to eliminate mosquitoes, the sole cause of the sickness, from their environment. Some countries have succeeded in this effort that today; they are certified malaria-free by the World Health Organization (WHO). Similarly, some countries have recorded fewer cases of malaria infection. It has been observed that most of the countries that are malaria-free are rich and do not fall under the malaria endemic regions. WHO (2015) admits that “malaria remains an important cause of illness and death in countries in which it is endemic.”

As one of the malaria-endemic countries, malaria is about the most common ailment in Nigeria especially in south-south region. This region has a lot of water bodies and swampy bushes where mosquitoes can naturally breed very easily and in large numbers too. In addition to this, waste management hygiene and general sanitation has been observed to be poor in this region. The National Malaria Elimination Programme (2016) reports that in Nigeria “malaria accounts for 60% of all outpatient hospital visits, 30% of all hospital admissions, 11% of maternal mortality, 25% of infant mortality and 30% of under-five mortality”. According to the World Health Organization (WHO) Malaria Report (2021) Nigeria accounts for 27% of malaria cases globally and the highest in Africa. Mosquitoes are the carriers of the parasite (plasmodium) causing malaria.

Malaria has existed for several centuries and despite being preventable and treatable has remained the number one reason for illness, hospitalization and death in Nigeria. A person gets malaria when bitten

by an infected female *Anopheles* mosquito which transfers a parasite called plasmodium into the victim's blood. The parasite, according to Gyang (2009) “develops in the liver and red blood cells causing significant destruction to the red blood cells. This results in fever, headache, joint pains, weakness and if untreated, the disease leads to anaemia, spleen enlargement, jaundice, kidney failure, coma and death” (p.6). Malaria is a deadly disease and very difficult to eradicate because in the views of Dzedzie (2010) it “mutates so easily to ensure its own survival” (p.13). There are four variants of malaria. They are *p.falciparum*, *p.vivax*, *p. malariae* and *p. ovale*. Of all these, the most prevalent and dangerous is *p.falciparum*..

*Falciparum* malaria is always severe and potentially life-threatening. This parasite has developed resistance to the use of common malaria drugs such as chloroquine or meprine. WHO (2000) states that “severe malaria usually occurs as a result of delay in treating an uncomplicated attack of *falciparum* malaria” (p.iv) which may eventually result to cerebral malaria. This malaria variant is the one prevalent in Nigeria. Schantz-Dunn (2009) observes that pregnant women are threefold more likely to contract severe malaria and possess twice the risk of mortality than non-pregnant women. Corroborating this, WHO African Region (2003) notes that “pregnant women are particularly vulnerable to malaria as pregnancy reduces a woman's immunity to malaria, making her more susceptible to malaria infection and increasing the risk of illness, severe anaemia and death”. The Regional Office goes further to say that “West Africa has the highest prevalence of exposure to malaria during pregnancy (39.8%) which can lead to low birth weight which is a risk factor for neonatal and childhood mortality. Schantz and Nour (2009) add that malaria causes higher rates of miscarriage, intrauterine demise, premature delivery, low-birth-weight neonates and neonatal deaths” (p.188). Plasmodium *falciparum*, sequesters in the placenta of a pregnant woman, where it affects erythrocytes and infiltrate the immune cells causing maternal and infant mortality in extreme cases. In summary malaria infection increases maternal and infant mortality.

To reduce the havoc malaria is causing in Nigeria and south-south region in particular, is to reduce the number of pregnant women with the ailment. This is in line with the 2014–2020 National Malaria Strategic Plan, which has promised to provide at least 80% of the targeted population with appropriate malaria preventive measures by 2020. Of all measures outlined to curtail mosquito and subsequently malaria, the use of Insecticide Treated Nets (ITNs) appears safer and cheaper. The WHO (2004) and Roll Back Malaria (RBM) recommend that distribution of Long Lasting Insecticide treated Nets (LLINs) be free or heavily subsidized to achieve greater equity of coverage, and that a variety of distribution systems be used to achieve universal access, including targeted campaigns to deliver nets to most-at-risk populations, which include pregnant women and children under five years of age

In Nigeria, “these nets are distributed through mass campaigns and through routine platforms to pregnant women at antenatal care (ANC) facilities and children under age five during immunisations” (NMEP, 2020). Mass media and some health workers were equally engaged to sensitize the people on the need to own treated nets as against using ordinary net or other means of mosquito control. However, it is not clear if pregnant women in south-south zone sleep under the treated net.

### **Literature Review**

#### **Understanding Health Communication Campaign**

Health communication campaign falls under public communication. No public communication happens by chance, it is always planned and strategically executed to yield the targeted result. Campaign as it is often referred to, is done for the purpose of influencing attitude or behaviour among a group of people. Atkin and Rice (2013) define campaign as “purposive attempts to inform or influence behaviours in large audience within a time period using an organized set of communication of activities and through multiple channels to produce noncommercial benefits to individuals and society” (p.3).

Campaign is systematic and strategic; it involves series of persuasive, coherent messages disseminated with the intention of changing or modifying behaviour, attitude or belief among people.

For a health communication campaign to succeed, it must attract and sustain the attention of the target audience. Every campaign has a target that is always called the most affected or risk group. Atkin and Rice (2013) note that “effectiveness of campaign can increase if the message content, form, style and channels are tailored to the attributes and abilities of the sub-group whose practices are at issue and the primary focal behaviours that the campaign seeks to influence” (p.6). A campaign cannot be successful if the message does not include strong persuasive appeals (such as fear, reason, emotion, rationalism, etc.). These appeals should “emphasize why the audience should adopt the advocated action or behaviour. The campaign should also emphasize the incentives and benefits for performing the prescribed behaviour” (p.9).

Pervanta (2011) sees health communication as “the use of communication strategies to inform and influence individuals and community decisions that enhance health” (p.3). Health communication always targets disease prevention and promotion of healthy behaviour at individual and public levels. It believes that communication can be used to forestall outbreak of diseases and equally encourage people to adopt certain practices that lead to healthy life style. Schiavo (2014) presents a more elaborate meaning of health communication campaign. He notes that health communication involves “influencing and supporting individuals, communities, healthcare professionals, policy makers and special groups to adopt and sustain a behavioural practices or a social or policy change that will ultimately improve health outcomes” (p.5).

White, Stallones and Last (2013) observe that, “the biological, social and physical influences on human health and development are not clearly demarcated and the three are in many ways overlapping and interdependent” (p.26). At the centre of these factors that affect health in society are nature and human actions/activities. Human beings are the drivers of the social and somewhat the physical aspects of life while the biological is, to a large extent, nature. Both communicable and non-communicable diseases are ravaging humanity now. WHO in 2015 organized a workshop to accelerate research and development to “improve interventions and products such as diagnostics, vaccines and therapeutics, scientific knowledge to allow the design of better disease control measures” (WHO, 2015, p.1). It has been observed that social and behavioural public health measures contribute significantly to the reduction of the spread of certain diseases including malaria. The behavioural patterns are always guided by the beliefs, assumptions and values of a people.

Interacting with people living in one physical and social environment about health situations offers them the opportunity of sharing their own perspectives and understandings of community life and health issues. Community engagement is germane to the success or otherwise of health communication. The Clinical and Translational Science Awards Consortium (2011) says that community engagement involves sensitization, motivation and mobilization of individuals and communities for the prevention and control of an outbreak. Similarly, Center for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC] (1997) define community engagement as “the process of working collaboratively with and through groups of people affiliated by geographic proximity, special interest, or similar situations to address issues affecting the well-being of those people”. Supporting, Coreil (2009) notes that influencing lifestyle patterns (behaviour) and social context in which people live is fundamental to prevention of the major health conditions facing society today (p.9). In this era of many public health challenges, the action or lifestyle of one person can affect an entire community. It is always cheaper to prevent disease than treat it. Community engagement utilizes existing community structures to disseminate useful information that would mobilize the people to participate, own and trust health service delivery.

Community engagement makes health campaign achieve its target as it will offer the message recipients the opportunity of being co-creators of the message and approved health practice. Jain, Shisler, Lane, Bagai, Brown, et al (2022) agree that “community engagement is rooted in social justice, which requires that the health needs are identified by communities themselves and they mobilize themselves into action to make changes within the community”. Engaging the people in what concerns them is not only necessary, but a just action. To engage the community in the health campaign requires that the people should be involved in the process from the beginning to the end.

### **Malaria Prevention and Control Strategies**

Fighting malaria starts with fighting mosquitoes. Beier et al note that “in the absence of effective control, these diseases have a major impact on public health and socio-economic development”.

There are four ways to prevent and control malaria in a malaria endemic community. They are:

1. Vector control
2. The use of drugs
3. Use of insecticide treated nets, and
4. Communication

Roll back malaria (RBM) campaign started in 1998 and the target was to reduce malaria by half in 2010. This is the second comprehensive effort at eliminating or controlling malaria spread. WHO (2006) notes that “vector control remains the most effective measure to prevent malaria transmission” (p2). Environmental sanitation, use of petroleum oil to alter reproduction, use of residual spraying insecticide etc are all means of vector control. Vector control is the method usually used in the control of disease where there is no vaccine or where drugs are costly to treat or prevent disease.

Another method is the treatment of symptomatic cases with antimalarial drugs. This is, however, the costliest way of controlling malaria spread. Antimalarial drugs are expensive and sometimes, this malaria develops resistance against some drugs thereby requiring a second round of treatment. The WHO (2015) says that “malaria control requires an integrated approach including prevention and prompt treatment with effective antimalarial agents” (p.16). Initially, malaria was treated with a single drug such as chloroquine, fansider, quinine among others, but today a combined therapy of artemisinin-based combination therapy (ACT) is the recommended medication for effective relief or cure for malaria.

The third method is the use of insecticide treated nets (ITNs). Insecticide treated nets are a form of personal protection from mosquito bites while asleep. “Mosquito nets normally have a mesh size of 1.2–1.5 mm, which is sufficiently small to prevent mosquitoes from entering” (WHO, 1997). It is a highly cost-effective means of preventing malaria. “This net kills mosquitoes on contact or repel them when entering the room” (p.13). “if high community coverage is achieved, the numbers and longevity of mosquitoes will be reduced and even people not using a bed net will enjoy some protection” (p.13). WHO (2006) notes that ITNs can reduce mortality rate of children due to malaria by 17%.

The fourth method is the use of communication. Many people do not know the extent of disaster malaria can cause and the need to fight it. Due to lack of information, many people appear ignorant of the fact that most of human activities contribute to the breeding and spreading of mosquitoes and malaria. In order to fight and win malaria, certain behaviours toward the environment have to change. Behavior change comes from communication that is aimed at making people health and environment conscious. Singha (2005) says that “fever should not be neglected and must be checked for malaria. If suspicious take full course of anti-malarial drug. People should avoid stagnation of water, full coverage of the body with clothes, regular use of mosquito nets.”

## **2.2 Theoretical Framework**

This study is anchored on two theories –Health belief model (HBM) and theory of reasoned action/theory of planned behaviour. HBM was developed in the 1950s by a group of social psychologists namely Irwin M. Rosenstock, Godfrey M. Hochbaum, S. Stephen Kegeles, and Howard Leventhal at the U.S. Public Health Service in an attempt to understand “the widespread failure of people to accept disease preventives or screening tests for the early detection of asymptomatic disease”. This theory believes that two variables rule human behaviour as it relates to health. There is that natural tendency to (1) avoid illness (or if ill, to get well); and (2) the belief that a specific health action will prevent illness or reduce the possibility of one falling sick. For this reason, the individual gets consciously get exposed to actions that would reduce or eliminate the threat of sickness.

The model agrees that before a person takes a certain health-related action or performs certain behaviour, he/she evaluates the advantages and disadvantages of such action or behaviour. For instance, if people notice that using ITN would keep them safe from malaria, they would use it, but if they see it is not advantageous, they would leave it. This is why HBM predicts that people’s response to health campaign is hinged of the following predictive indices –perceived susceptibility to risk, severity of risk, benefits to action, and barriers to action, cues to action, self-efficacy, confidence and health motivation. Strecher, Champion and Rosenstock (1997) identified the components of the theory thus:

**Perceived susceptibility:** This refers to one’s subjective perception of the risk of contracting the ailment. If a pregnant woman, in this case, thinks she is likely or vulnerable to contracting malaria, she would acquire and make use of the ITN.

**Perceived severity:** this has to do with the feelings of the seriousness of the illness (malaria) and the consequences such as death of the mother or fetus. “the combination of the perceived susceptibility and severity constitute has been labeled perceived threat” (p. 74).

**Perceived benefits:** The first two perceptions discussed above suggest that the individual has accepted that she is susceptible to the illness and it is going to be severe makes her take an action considered beneficial and efficacious. The action was to reduce the threat associated disease. The higher perceived threat the higher likelihood of engagement in health-promoting behaviors.

**Perceived barrier:** Certain conditions may hinder one from taking a recommended health action. If there is a potential negative aspect of the action, the individual sees that as a barrier to the new behaviour. “a non-conscious cost-benefit analysis occurs wherein the individual weighs the expected effectiveness of the action against perceptions that the recommended action might be expensive, dangerous, unpleasant, time-consuming etc. People act in the face of less barrier” (p.74).

**Cue to action:** this involves certain triggers to action such as gender, educational attainment, possession of certain information. At this point the element of communication plays a role in inducing one to perform the recommended behaviour.

**Self-efficacy:** this refers to the result an individual expects to get from taking such action or behaving in a certain way. Bandura (1977) defines self-efficacy as “the conviction that one can successfully execute the behaviour required to produce expected outcomes” (p. 74). In other words, it is one’s belief in oneself to perform a certain action that would bring about the perceived benefits therein. “Lack of self-efficacy is viewed as a perceived barrier to taking a recommended health action” (p.74).

Similarly, Quine, Rutter and Arnold (2013) write that HBM “believes that people will be willing to take

a positive health action if that will reduce or eliminate the threat of falling sick and the consequences it comes with". However, Rosenstock (1966:p.98) as cited by Quine, Rutter and Arnold (2013) observes that "the individual's readiness to act is determined by perceptions of personal vulnerability or susceptibility to a particular health threat; severity with which that threat might affect his/her life". The action is taken with the hope and belief that it will be beneficial as against the barriers to the benefits.

Abraham and Sheeran (2005) break the model into –threat perception and behaviour evaluation. To them threat perception is equally made up of two components –perceived susceptibility to the illness or health problems and anticipated severity of the consequences of the illness" (p.30). The behavioural evaluation also consist of two sets of beliefs –those concerning the benefits or efficacy of a recommended health behaviour and those concerning the costs or barriers to enacting the behaviour (p.30). However, health related action can be triggered by information or other socio-psychological or economic factors.

### Methodology

The survey design was adopted for this study. This method is considered the most appropriate since this study is concerned with the perception, opinion, belief and attitude change of respondents on a particular matter. The population for this study comprised the whole women in south-south zone, which according to the 2006 census was 10,297,948. However, this figure was projected to 16,075,096 in 2023 using the growth rate of 3.3% as recommended by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS). A total of 384 respondents were purposively selected from antenatal patients in six hospitals in Rivers, Delta and Akwaibom States.

### Result and Discussions

Data presented here is based on the 384 copies of the questionnaire administered during antenatal sessions in the six hospitals studied. The whole copies were well completed and retrieved. From the questionnaire, the age range of respondents was from 26 years and above.

#### Ownership of ITN

Item	Number of respondents	Percentage
Yes	231	60.2
No	153	39.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>100</b>

The table shows that more than half of the sample (60.2%) owned insecticide treated bed-nets within the period of the study.

#### Method bed net acquisition

Item	Number of respondents	Percentage
Gift from someone	2	0.9
Free during mass distribution	186	80.5
Purchase	43	18.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>231</b>	<b>100</b>

The table shows that people could acquire mosquito bed net through different ways, but the majority of the respondents got theirs during the mass distribution of net in the areas covered.

**Frequency of bed net usage while pregnant**

Item	Number of respondents	Percentage
Every night	72	31.2
Once a week	23	10.0
More than twice a week	28	12.1
I don't use it	57	24.7
I cannot remember how often	51	22.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>231</b>	<b>100</b>

Information in the table shows that pregnant women in south-south nigeria are not regular users of ITNs when pregnant. Some of the respondents 24.7% do not even use it all while pregnant.

**Education on how to use ITNs**

Item	SA	A	D	SD	Total	WMS	Remark
During antenatal clinic, I was given a free bet net	36	93	170	85	848	2.2	Rejected
I was encouraged to sleep under the net during antenatal	109	221	34	16	1191	3.1	Accepted
I was taught the importance of bed net during antenatal	98	193	68	25	1132	2.9	Accepted
You still remember what effective mosquito net is	18	45	237	84	765	2.0	Rejected
I understand the danger of malaria to an unborn child	128	202	46	08	1218	3.1	Accepted

The table shows that the respondents were not given free net during the antenatal clinic sessions even though they were taught the importance of treated net and encouraged to sleep under it. The table also reveals that respondents were not taught the technicalities associated with treated net and this is why the statement on that scored 2.0 and was therefore rejected.

**Discussion of Findings**

Research question one: To what extent do pregnant women in south-south Nigeria own insecticide treated net?

In response to this question, the first and second tables were used to analyse bed net ownership among pregnant women in South-South. It was found out that 60.2% of the respondents owned bed net within the period of the study. The respondents however got information about free net distribution through various media of communication. This finding is in consonance with Kawuki, J, Donkor, E., Gatsi, G and Nuwabaine, L. (2023) who found out that 69.5% of pregnant women reported owning a mosquito net. Singh, Brown and Rogerson submit that “in 2010, there were enough insecticide-treated nets (ITNs), primarily LLINs, procured on the African continent to cover 73% of the at-risk population”. In comparison with other African countries where similar studies have been conducted, the bed net ownership rate in the South-South, Nigeria can be adjudged high.

Research question two: What is the extent pregnant women in south-south Nigeria sleep under insecticide treated nets?

This question was addressed by the third table. The finding shows that bed net usage among pregnant women in South-South, Nigeria was low as only 31% of the respondents sleep under the net every night.. Between 2000 and 2004, there was a reported decline in ITN use from 58 to 46% in Nigeria, despite an increase in ownership rates. Similarly, [Dun-Dery, et al \(2022\)](#) note that “among pregnant women, ownership of ITNs nationwide increased slightly, from 32.8% in 2015 to about 41% in 2016, but only about half of the 41% who owned ITNs used them during this period”. Similarly, [Ankomah et al \(2012\)](#) observe that “only 25% of pregnant women who owned ITNs actually slept under one the night before the survey. Supporting the foregoing, [Oyira, Osuchukwu, Opiah, Emeh, and Awo \(2015\)](#)

[note that “36% of the pregnant women that attend antenatal at the University of Calabar Teaching Hospital utilize ITNs. It can be seen that ownership of ITN does not necessarily translate to use. The issue of regular bed net usage has always been an issue in Nigeria and Africa generally.](#)

van Eijk, et al (2017); Asuquo, et al (2011) found out that the reason for failure to use available ITNs by pregnant women in sub-Saharan Africa, “included discomfort, heat or inconvenience, the chemicals used in treating the nets are harmful, perceived limited benefit of ITNs, and preference to use other malaria prevention methods”. Some respondents believe that the use of LLINs over time can cause respiratory and skin problems.

Research question three: Extent to which health workers in South-South, carry out the ITNs sensitization among pregnant women during antenatal clinics?

Information on the last table provides answer to the above research question. Findings show that the health workers play a very crucial role in the sensitization and education of pregnant women on the collection and use of the ITN. This finding is supported by Okafor and Ogbonnaya (2020) in their assertion that “ITNs awareness is also created by the community health extension workers and through antenatal care centres”. Nadew, Obsa, Alemayehu and Hajji (2022) report that “pregnant woman who had antenatal clinic visits are two times more likely to utilize ITN than those who had not begun the clinic”. Similarly, Karema, Wen, Sidibe, Smith, Gosling, et al (2020) admit that “there is a significant relationship between mosquito bed net use and the pregnancy trimester”. When compared, “women in the second and third-trimesters were twice as likely to use bed nets, and the usage of bed nets was influenced by recent visits to a medical facility”.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Malaria has been adjudged by the WHO as the number one killer disease in the world, where over 90% of the deaths happen in Africa and south-south Nigeria having the highest. It has been reported by many studies that pregnant women have a weak immune system and, therefore, become very vulnerable to malaria. In order to arrest the situation, the National Malaria Strategic Plan 2009-2013 recommended the use of ITN by all pregnant women in Nigeria. The findings show that there was high penetration and acquisition of insecticide treated nets by pregnant women in South-South, but they scarcely sleep under the net because nets make some of them feel hot, discomforts them and some said they had small size-rooms to hang nets among other reasons. Based on the findings from the study, the following recommendations were made

1. Insecticide-treated bed nets should be manufactured for use as window and door screen in the house.
2. Pregnant women should be encouraged to register early for antenatal clinic and receive net to protect themselves and that of the baby.
3. Health workers should follow up the sensitization exercises with phone calls or automated text messages that the pregnant women get every evening reminding them to protect themselves by sleeping under treated nets. This type of calls has helped remind mothers of immunization of their children in Zimbabwe.

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Audience Response Approach of Izon Wrestling Songs, Andaduma

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### **Abstract**

Izon wrestling songs are some of the famous ceremonial folksongs that represent the varieties of creative performances of the people. The songs are classified as panegyric or praise poetry and feature prominently during festivals to show the rich cultural heritage of the people. Investigations of Izon oral poetry often centre on the unusual nexus between the mundane and the cosmic universe with less attention to the affective aspects of the poetry. This study spans beyond the utility of the songs to show audience response during performance of Izon wrestling songs, in the Kolokuma/Opokuma dialect. It shows the strategic role of the performer to involve the audience during the performance. In order to establish the link between the audience and the entertainer, the study adopts the theoretical framework of Carl G. Jung's model of Archetypal theory to describe the performer's motives in engaging certain repetitive patterns of the songs to stimulate audience consciousness. Audience participation is through the crowd-puller expressions in the songs. The paper concludes that the affective power of Izon wrestling songs creates social bond and peace especially among a people generally conflicts.

**Keywords:** Audience Response, Izon wrestling songs Andaduma, Archetypal theory, Curative and Affective

### **Introduction**

Every culture recognizes certain functions of their oral art that underscores the foundation of Izon wrestling songs. The songs as in most oral traditions, are unwritten. Izon wrestling songs are called Andaduma. They are one of the panegyric forms that cut across some African oral traditions. For instance, wrestling is called anda in the Kolokuma/Opokuma dialects, some Igboid and Eastern Ijo language call it egelege.

The Izon traditional wrestling sport is an open performance, usually in an arena, involving two or more group of contestants engaged in a combat. The winner is celebrated as the champion. The wrestling has a referee, the wrestlers and the performers on stage. The performance could be between families, compounds, communities, tribes or states.

The performance opens with eulogizasions of traditional titles that is called "kule" or "Amatemeso" that serve the utility functions of entertainment, as well as enlisting and educating the audience on the praise names and the stories they tell. The wrestling songs are usually accompanied with the drum beats, especially the talking drums Okumaeze. The songs and drums are inseparable the same way the audience response compliments the performer. It is this form of connection that positions the performer as the healer in Izon wrestling songs. This study therefore investigates audience response as the effect of unique expressions of Izon wrestling songs by the performer.

### **Theoretical Framework- Archetypal Theory**

The theoretical framework of the study Carl Gustav Jung's model of archetypal theory to show the recurrent prototypes of the songs. David Carter states the importance of Jung's strand of archetypal criticism which considers

the existence of a collective consciousness, which is common to the whole human race and contains universal archetypes. These are primordial and universal images, revealed in dreams artistic and literary productions, primitive religions and mythologies. One of the most important archetypes is that of the animus/anima. The animus is a woman's archetypal image and the anima is the man's archetypal image of a woman. (79)

It shows that Jung modifies the psychological aspects to embrace shared opinions because of the recurrent style of representation of both male and female characters during performance.

Emeka Ikechi states that the archetypal approach to criticism originates from Carl Jung, a Swiss Psychologist who accepts and improves on Sigmund Freud's principles of the unconscious to show the pattern of repetitive imagination spanning from generation to generation (75). Ikechi identifies the difference between the philosophers, "to Freud, every person's unconscious is unique but to Jung, a part of the unconscious is linked by historical associations and communal 'memories' to the unconscious minds of all people" (75). It implies that both Freud and Jung view the significance of the subconscious human mind during performances to recall past events. The repetition of certain expressions creates lasting impressions in the mind to cause involuntary actions.

### **Communal participation in Izon wrestling songs**

One of the most significant features of Izon wrestling songs is the performer's interpretation of the songs. The imaginative ability of the performer creates lasting impression and arouses some form of musing from the audience. Finnegan affirms that in oral African presentations, some individuals are vested with the gift of singing, which is an element of performance because the songs fulfill various functions of the narrative (385-386). For instance, Izon wrestling songs commence with some kind of praise in exaggerated expressions in salutation to tradition.

The enology is expressed in specialized and figurative, language which usually requires the performer to understand the talking drum, Okuma or Opu Eze, which announces the presence of some members of the audience, mostly in order of eminence:

#### **Izon**

Kuro Opokuma niigbodugbu,,sifgha ondeko

#### **English translation**

Brave Opokuma clan, twenty  
dead, millions remaining (this is  
the praise name for the people of  
Opokuma clan).

Aluku dogo, dogo, dogo, kainingha kainingha sei bide  
The old cloth that refuses to be  
torn (this is praise name of the  
people in Kolokuma clan).

These are epithets of the Kolokuma and Opokuma clans respectively. The Okuma Eze is used to sound praises, which is what Okoh describes as "concatenation of ideophonic paraphernalia and duplication" (44). The Okuma Eze is the master drum among other drums, not just because it is bigger but the uniqueness of its deep sounds in the traditional accolade of the people to invoke emotions not only of the performer but also of the audience as well.

The audience, who are represented in their clusters, sets in immediately to sing the praise of the contestants:

#### **Izon language**

Eieeee Eieeee (2x)

#### **English translation**

affirmation

Womiegahaye keme miegha  
Womini ye egbe Anyabara kanikein  
Womini keme tolumo otu

what we cannot do, does not exist  
we are very fit  
we are the tutors

The drum epithets

Not only use of symbolic description of the contestants but the repetition of certain expressions also bridge the gap between performer and audience:

**Izon language**

O Iye e, Iye e, Iye-egbe  
Yei yei dengi mi  
Tu, wakiyei, wari de yei  
Owomo dau, Iye-egbe  
Wariege, amaegbe  
Wofayokpo, woe mi yo  
Wotorufu, Okiti dengidengi  
Alakiri ofa yei  
Waribargha yei  
Gini ma, Gina, gilo gilo  
Kirina, kurokeme, olotu  
Krenegebe, dekegebe  
Zoru imbeleno,  
Oweila muna, owei oko

**English translation**

Affirmation!  
Affirmation!  
No alternative  
The father of our children  
We are very fit  
Our absence is also our presence  
Like no other with a thick waist line  
Not a husband from a distance  
Husband that does not forget home  
Sparkling  
Well-grounded champion  
An artist  
An entertainer  
A real man

These enologies are said in admiration of achievements in previous performance, while hoping for more success. The chant shows encouragement for more victory during the performance. The women are the major supporters and praise singers. William Haviland argues that “whether a particular work of art is intended to be appreciated purely as such as to serve some practical purpose, [...] it will in every case require the same special combination of the symbolic representation of form and the expression of feeling that constitutes the creative imagination” (392). F.B.O. Akporobaro argues that

Literary forms especially, poetry and other art forms emerge from a cultural environment that shapes and determines the themes, imagery and musical forms through which the poetic form is configured. Yoruba Ijala, Oku Pipe, Ekunlyawo, Rara, Ewi, and other Ifa chants, and Ofo are examples of how social context and situation – or events as occasion determines and appropriate a subject matter and is also a ground or basis for the selection of incident and imagery, allusions, and micro-events (327).

This shows that the narrator is a professional with retentive memory, and creative ability for improvisation to capture the attention of the audience. This is one of the strategic traits of the performer to inspire audience participation.

Again, one of the significant tools of audience response is the dance. The wrestlers dance and their supporters dance to the amazement of the audience because of the unique lyrics. The praises, songs, chants and drum beats inspire the contestants into the arena, they chant thus:

**Izon language**

Anda o! Owei o! Owei o!  
Anda o! Owei o! Owei o!  
Anda o! Owei o! Owei o!

**English translation**

Wrestling! Aman! Aman!  
Wrestling! Aman! Aman!  
Wrestling! Aman! Aman!

At this, the contestants retire to the cheers of their supporters and audience responds thus:

<b>Izon language</b>	<b>Izon language</b>	<b>English translation</b>
<b>Greetings</b>	<b>Response</b>	
Haa Ama	Eheeeeeeee	Greetings to the community
Haa Ama	Eheeeeeeee	Greetings to the community
Haa Ama	Eheeeeeeee	Greetings to the community
Ama kemefa moni, keme-emi	Emi 000	Are people absent or present-affirm
Ama kemefamoni, keme-emi	Emi 000	Are people absent or present-affirm
Amakimifamoni, keme-emi	Emi 000	Are people absent or present-affirm
Paya womiegima	Miegimioo	In the event, are we ready- we are
Paya womiegima	Miegimioo	In the event, are we ready- we are
Paya womiegima	Miegimioo	In the event, are we ready- we are

<b>Izon language</b>	<b>Izon language</b>	<b>English translation</b>
<b>Greetings</b>	<b>Response</b>	
Ose wanda	Ye fa	Fight for all, no cause for alarm
Ose wanda	Ye fa	Fight for all, no cause for alarm
Ose wanda	Ye fa	Fight for all, no cause for alarm

The use of assonance or vocalic rhymes gives euphonic effect to the songs. Apart from the repetitive sound patterns, it shows the social function of unity among the people because of the belief system of the people.

The songs sometimes come in the form of invocations, with the performer in a trance, demonstrating some form of possession in what Tarikye Angaye and Odingowe M. Kwokwo describe as “charged into the terrestrial world” (97). It shows the collective participation of the audience in the presentation of the trado-religious activities of the people. Crapo states thus:

the experience of trance, which are sometimes also called altered state of consciousness is the subjective state of mind in which experiences are interpreted not in terms of normal symbolic categories of one's culture, but in various ways common to all human beings. Trances may be rather mild and undramatic experiences (135).

After the chants the performers dance to the drum beats to the amazement of the audience. At this point in the performance, the various supporters brag to each other in songs such as:

<b>Izon language</b>	<b>English translation</b>
Kuro-oweiamabofako ode gheema?	Are you boastful because of the warriors' absence?
Olotuamabofako ode gheema?	Are you boastful because of the warrior's absence?
Kuro-oweiamabofako ode gheema	Are you boastful because of the warrior's absence?
Olotu amabofako ode gheema?	Are you boastful because of the warriors' absence?
Ye bo lama gha, ye bo la ma, Zilai O	Did the things get to you? NO.
Kuro-oweiamabofako ode gheema?	Are you boastful because of the warriors' absence?
Ye bolamagha, ye bo la ma, Zilai O?	Did the things get to you? NO.

Here, it indicates the dignity of the traditional Izon rhetoric of asking titles and responding accordingly

and it is another pointer to audience participation and the performer responds to this chant:

**Izon language**

Pabo Kuro-oweipabo  
Andaoya o!

**English translation**

Come o warrior  
It is a wrestling contest

The song invites the contestants, who are willing come to the arena and start the game properly. Sometimes the songs also caution reluctant or indolent members of the audience against daring the fight. It is a way their cowardice.

**Izon language**

Kuro Owei O!  
Bona anda bo mu o!  
Ama botimi duremo aki

**English translation**

Champion!  
Go to the wrestling field  
Rather, you stay behind to inherit  
widows

This is another major technique of getting audience response to the songs. It shows opposition between a powerful and lazy person and their complementary roles to provide the atmosphere and opportunity for fairness. The song about the inheritance of widows shows the use of satire to describe the contestant's fear of the opponent. The song criticizes persons who fear the wrestling performance, who is an anti-hero. For a man to prefer to stay at home and inherit widows rather than contest, shows his weakness the aesthetic value of wrestling songs is demonstrated, and participation of the audience is encouraged.

At the stage of the performance when a champion emerges, he is awarded with praises, if there is a stalemate, the audience raises this song:

**Izon language**

Ma Olotu anda siriki  
Ma Olotu anda siriki  
Ma Olotu anda siriki  
Ma Olotu anda siriki

**English translation**

There is a tie in the contest of two champions  
There is a tie in the contest of two champions  
There is a tie in the contest of two champions  
There is a tie in the contest of two champions

The onomatopoeic sound in the song is a special effect that summons the Judges for the verdict, and it shows the affective role of the performer to get the audience's attention. The tie situation in the performance creates anxiety and suspense and the tempo of the music increases. The singers at this point control the tempo of the performance by diverting attention to the wrestlers with songs and drumming. As a way of bringing down the tempo of the performance, the drum beats change.

**Izon language**

Kurodukpo dukpu  
Kurodukpo dukpu  
Kurodukpo dukpu

**English translation**

championship competition  
championship competition  
championship competition

The repetition is done four times to show the four cardinal points of the Izon masculine number. This particular drumbeat is both an allegro as well as alliteration because they explore the dynamism and quick repetition of the consonant sounds to show the relevance of Izon oral tradition.

At the end of the performance, a winner is bound to emerge, and high crescendo songs accompany the drumbeats:

**Izon language**

Seri o ye  
 Imomo andaowei ye niimiemo  
 Seri o ye  
 You kumo  
 Seri o ye  
 Imomo andaowei ye niimiemo  
 Seri o ye ahaaa  
 You kumo

**English translation**

Arise  
 My competitor did something to me  
 Arise  
 Weep not  
 Arise  
 Arise  
 My competitor did something to me  
 Arise  
 Weep not

This song comes in a subtle manner to control the rhythm and expectations of the audience. It shows the reawakening of the performance to ensure a winner. Izon poems show the rich culture of the people. The use of figurative expressions defines the audience response in the performance, and the defeat of one contestant the opponent the winner. Then the singers raise the song of victory for the winner and the audience reacts accordingly:

**Izon Language**

Ogonosuboye kirigbelegha o! soloweri  
 Beikeniboanda  
 Ogonosuboye kirigbelegha o solo weri

**English translation**

what goes up must not come down  
 This is a sole competition  
 What goes up must not come down

Beikeniboanda  
 Ogonosuboye kirigbelegha o solo weri

This is a sole competition  
 What goes up must not come down

Beikeniboanda  
 Ogonosuboye kirigbelegha o solo weri

This is a sole competition  
 What goes up must not come down

**Izon Language**

Anye yu o  
 Anye yu o  
 Kuro yei nanabuogha  
 Suyei nanadeni  
 Toru toru kayei di mo  
 Uge e (Chorus)  
 Uge e euge (3times)  
 Malei O!  
 Kuroyei O!  
 Suyei O!  
 Anda tiri koyeileleimo  
 Uge e euge (2times)  
 Malei O!

**English translation**

Chanting  
 Chanting  
 Refusal to marry a wrestling champion  
 Now married to a lazy man  
 Now see with your eye  
 Victory  
 Victory  
 Compare the two persons  
 Champion of husband  
 Lazy husband  
 both are shown in the wrestling field  
 Victory  
 Compare the two of them

This song of victory for the champion the contest is poetically rendered to show the affective aspect of Izon wrestling songs.

**Conclusion**

Izon wrestling songs are one of the cultural performances that engage audience participation. They show the creativity and social consciousness to capture social issue. The songs draw attention to the symbolic value of the talking drum as the unique cultural heritage of the people. There is

interconnectivity in Izon wrestling songs: the drumbeats and the performance process, and audience participation. The songs display the belief system as distinct, because it represents ideas inherited from earlier generations. The varieties of performative techniques in the songs and the audience response show core values of the Izon traditional belief system.

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