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## **Language and Narrative Techniques in Selected Works of Two Nigerian Diasporic Writers**

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### **Abstract**

Language and thematic preoccupations are integral aspects of literary analysis that are intertwined to convey meanings to reader in society. Scholars have explored both themes and language in fictional works in the past. However, this study deviates from previous researches by investigating the language and narrative techniques in the literary works of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Helon Habila. The library or desk research which entails gathering information from secondary materials was adopted. Two literary texts each of the two contemporary diasporic writers were purposively selected and subjected to literary analysis. The postcolonial theory is adopted for the critical exploration of the primary texts whose writers are products of postcolonial society. Findings show that both writers employ convergent narrative techniques to convey their messages to psychologically stimulated readers. The common techniques utilized in the selected texts include the use of symbolism, pathetic fallacy, retrospective technique, use of contrast, foreshadowing, memory imagery, descriptive and epistolary techniques.

**Keywords:** Diasporic writers, Language, Techniques, Thematization, Narratives

### **Introduction**

Artistic writers often creatively deploy diverse narrative techniques to transport their imaginative and factual experiences to reader. They are psychologically conscious of the unquantifiable roles of language infused with sensory imagery invoked in conveyance of thematic preoccupations in order to attain their objectives. Language is defined in various ways by literary scholars and some of these definitions are required to enhance the understanding of this study. Yeibo finds that “language is a complex phenomenon with varied integral layers and constitutive levels, and elements of all these layers or levels are deployed or combined by a given author, to encode meaning and achieve aesthetic effects in his text” (1063). Every literary writer communicates experiences and feelings, using language and style with a view to activating the mental consciousness of reader and makes them understand the subject matter. Ike notes that “individual craftsmanship determines the quality of a literary text; a good literary text often

portrays the author's effective manipulation of literary techniques or elements. Such creative ability is mainly a function of talent, training and orientation of the author" (130). The techniques employed in the artistic works are parts of the language and style of the author meant to create aesthetics and affective responses to readers. In actual sense, both facts and fictional presentations must be conveyed through language garnished with literary devices.

Seaton notes that "literature has the potential to broaden and deepen the individual's understanding of ethics, politics, and human relations in general" (479). This can be actualized through imaginative skills of the writers which result in literary productivity. Lee observes that "through literature, we learn, express ourselves, find meaning in our lives, and heal our wounds. Literature stimulates people's brains. It inspires us to imagine a lovely future filled with perfect civilizations and human fairness" (147). Apart from the thematic preoccupations that receive attention of readers, literary works also contain figurative language that can broaden the horizon of people in society. Rivkin and Ryannotate that "the manipulation of representational devices may create a semblance of reality and allow one to have the impression of gazing through glass, but it is the devices alone that produce that impression, and they alone are what makes literature literary" (3). The forgoing view is corroborated by Fard who observes that "literary criticism supports the development of critical thinking skills and by extension provide a sense of confidence and responsibility about developing your own critical standards and judgments and not having to surrender your opinion to other's interpretations" (331). Profound knowledge of narrative techniques is capable of broadening readers "general interpretive, analytic, and evaluative skills" and also improves the "ability to make a good argument by encouraging the habit of backing up your opinions with reasons and textual evidence" (331).

Lee asserts that "literature is a means of expressing one's thoughts and feelings". The psychic and emotional conflicts of the writers are conveyed to readers through their literary works. The scholar further establishes that "A collection of written works is referred to as literature. The term has long been used to describe visionary works of poetry and prose that are characterized by the writers' aims as well as the perceived aesthetic perfection of their execution" (147). Writers often times employ peculiar narrative techniques and language with emotive words to achieve desired effects. Such narrative techniques illuminate description of characters, events, emotions and so on. Points of views are also utilized for the advancement of plot structure and make characters portrayed in the narrative realistic. Allagbe and Alagbe affirm that literature is generally perceived as the artistic, creative and aesthetic use of language. It is also considered as a mode or method of expression wherein language serves a specific artistic, creative and aesthetic function (69). In this perspective, there is no way one could understand literature without making recourse to the language that realizes literature and language complement each other in artistic writings because the former examines thoughts, thematizations, emotions and experiences of people, while the latter is the vehicle for communication, using sentences and paragraphing techniques in relation to fiction writings. The communication also involves semantics, syntactic structures and functions but not excluding the development of plot structure of the narratives.

Waham and Othoman note that "narrative technique is the logical order of events presented to the readers in a way that allows the author to show his ability and talent in

conveying the themes which are expressed within the literary work, be it a novel or a short story” (180). The utilization of appropriate narrative devices and styles in writing helps to develop the plot of the story and convey hidden meanings to readers, this in turns will stimulate their emotions and sustain their interest in the text. The scholars also observe that “Although there are numerous techniques as seen in various novels or short stories, it is undeniably vital for writers to adapt a specific and unique technique of writing literary works.” Abdullahi and Bello-Osagie establish that “the use of narrative techniques by an author can have an impact on the reader's emotional reaction to the narrative, comprehension of the characters and themes, and level of engagement with the literary text” (1). The researcher acknowledges Garrison who finds that “narrative techniques are the tools and methods that writers use to tell a story effectively. Characterization, setting, plot, point of view and symbolism are a few of these techniques. A story can be made interesting, memorable, and engaging by using narrative techniques” (Abdullahi & Bello-Osagie, 9). The foregoing studies are insightful and capable of exposing readers to the deployment of artistic language and narrative techniques in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus* (PH) and *Thing Around Your Neck* (TAYN) and Helon Habila’s *Measuring Time* (MT) and *Waiting for an Angel* (WFAA).

### Review of Related Scholarship

This section of the present study focuses on previous scholarly works on narrative techniques in the writings of Chimamanda Adichie and Helon Habila which have been carried out by researchers in the past. The current research, however, finds that no significant attention has been paid to the deployment of convergent narrative techniques in the works of the two diasporic Nigerian writers in recent times. Omolade, Adebayo and Ogunrotimi evaluate the importance and function(s) of metaphor in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Americanah* with systemic functional grammar as a theoretical framework. The model presents language as a socio-semiotic tool employed by language users to perform specific metafunctions (ideational, interpersonal and textual) (18). Twenty metaphorical expressions are randomly selected from the text based on their functional categories and contribute to thematic preoccupations and authorial style. The findings show a stylistic arrangement of metaphors to consolidate meaning and reinforce lines of thought throughout the narrative. The research concludes that Adichie employs different metaphors to convey units of meaning in ways that add to the profundity of her celebrated style in *Americanah*. The above study illuminates the current research that focuses on the utilization of language and peculiar narrative techniques in the works of the selected diasporic writers.

Ike investigates the utilization of literary techniques in two Nigerian historical fictions, namely Flora Nwapa’s *Never Again* and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun*. The two creative writers belong to different generations of Nigerian writers and they deployed diverse literary techniques in creating fictional works that deal with the sensitive issues of the Nigerian Civil War (129). The research adopts the New Historicism as a theoretical framework to evaluate, compare and contrast the utilization of literary techniques in the two selected novels. Both writers have utilized literary elements in various ways to foreground and portray the cancerous issues of corruption, ethnicity, nepotism and avarice which led to the Civil War. The foregoing view provides insights into the present research which explores the use of language and narrative techniques in the works of the diasporic novelists. Iortyer and Aava examine

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's use of history in *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun* to construct and arouse national consciousness by re-creating the history of the Nigerian Civil War through literature (24). The paper examines the two novels as primary sources of data and other critical materials about the author. This study adopts Marxism theory to foreground the discussions and views in the novels. The research finds that creative novelists do not distort history; rather, they re-invent and re-construct the history of their societies, organizing them according to existing literary trends. The research aids a better understanding, interpretation and analysis of Adichie's novels. This adds values to the current study through the exploration of artistic language which involves sound systems, associative and denotative meanings captured from the syntactic and communicative functions of the well knitted sentences and logically linked paragraphing.

Anyokwu explores inheritance of loss through the interface between narrative and history as evident in Helon Habila's *Measuring Time*. The study shows that like his first novel, *Waiting for an Angel*, the second novel, *Measuring Time* presents real-life persons, places and historical events such as wars, dislocation, migration, contemporary politics in Nigeria and elsewhere (5). Awa examines the application the techniques of linguistics to explore the stylistic value of Habila's *Measuring Time*. Principally, the artistic values of this novel are stressed (30). The scholar finds that Helon Habila embellishes his *Measuring Time* with Nigerian English, Pidgin, foreign and specialized terms, deviant collocations, sound effects, inversion of syntactic rules, African folk tradition and so on to unearth, the aridity, drought, emotional atrophy, sense of fragmentation, loss, exile, feeling of loneliness and despair which define the fictional Keti community, Nigeria and indeed Africa. Also the foregoing research illuminates the current study as it investigates language and techniques with a view to conveying thoughts and feelings of the writers through their diasporic literary productions to psychologically expectant readers. Ahgu explores the linguistic stylistic and stylistic features in Helon Habila's *Waiting for an Angel* and *Oil on Water*. This research also investigates the stylistic significance of Helon Habila's choice of style. It establishes that the style of the text is manifest in the linguistic features of the text (94). This research concludes that Habila is consistent in his style of writing because there are recurrent linguistic features common to both literary texts.

Aneke and Chidi-Igbokwe focus on critical validation of Kristeva's postulation with an intertextual survey of the world of Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*. It finds that *Purple Hibiscus* reveals identifiable inter-textual relationship with a lot of other literary works written before it. The study is foregrounded by German Julia Kristeva as a vital aspect of literary creativity, intertextuality which designates a literary text influences by some other texts produced before it (51). Chiedu examines critically the thematic preoccupation of Chimamanda Adichie's collection of short stories in the *Thing around Your Neck* with, revealing that literature is society-centered because it mirrors the society which man finds himself (51). The study finds that there are pertinent issues bothering the existence of human beings in the society with particular reference to both Africans (Nigerians) living in the African society and in diaspora. The foregoing studies provide insights into the current research in scholarship by investigating language and convergent narrative techniques employed by two Nigerian diasporic writers with a view to establishing how the artistic works capture postcolonial experiences of the homeland.

The library or desk research which entails gathering information from secondary materials was adopted. Two literary texts each of the two contemporary diasporic writers are selected for this study. The chosen texts include Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (PH) and *Thing Around Your Neck* (TAYN) and Helon Habila's *Measuring Time* (MT) and *Waiting for an Angel* (WFAA). These purposively literary works are subjected to literary analysis based on their thematic thrusts and narrative techniques.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study adopts the postcolonial theory that explores literary productions that emanate from colonies and cultures that were formerly colonized. The theory underpins literary works that reacted against actions and policies of the colonizers that were detrimental to the existence of the colonized in time past. Tyson notes that "postcolonial criticism focuses on the literature of cultures that developed in response to British colonial domination" (418). The scholar further establishes that as a theoretical framework applied to the analysis of literary texts:

Postcolonial criticism seeks to understand the operations-politically, socially, culturally, and psychologically-of colonialist and anti-colonialist ideologies. For example, a good deal of postcolonial criticism analyzes the ideological forces that, on the one hand, pressed the colonized to internalize the colonizers' values and, on the other hand, promoted the resistance of colonized peoples against their oppressors, a resistance that is as old as colonialism itself (418).

The view above reveals that postcolonial discourse interrogates issues of oppression and resistance that characterized colonial period and the attempt made by the colonized to liberate themselves from the psychological and physical bondage created by the ideologies and agents of colonialism in developing countries. Fanon responds to the foregoing by emphasizing that "in the colonial countries the peasants alone are revolutionary, for they have nothing to lose and everything to gain. The starving peasant outside the class system, is the first among the exploited to discover that only violence pays" (47). Chennell corroborates Fanon's view by noting that: "Post-colonialism is concerned with the worlds which colonialism in its multiple manifestations, confused, disfigured and distorted, reconfigured and finally transformed" (110). The researcher also observes that colonialization has several consequential outcomes in society. According to his submission:

The effects of colonisation are felt from the moment of the first colonial impact and post colonialism constitutes as its subject the way colonised societies adjusted and continue to adjust to the colonial presence: sometimes that presence was regarded as genuinely enriching; more often it was seen as demeaning and impoverishing (110).

The effects of colonization stated above are captured in literary works of African writers both those living in diaspora and the homeland. These are mostly presented as subject matters with appropriate narrative techniques employed to convey messages to the postcolonial readers.

## Narrative Techniques in the Novels of Adichie and Habila

Some of the narrative techniques employed by the two contemporary writers in portraying their experiences from the diaspora perspectives are remarkable. The various themes examined in this study are enhanced through the skilful use of language and literary techniques. Such techniques are the use of symbolism, pathetic fallacy, retrospection, descriptive and epistolary techniques, contrast, foreshadowing, memory imagery among others. Some of these techniques are highlighted in this work.

### Descriptive Technique

Helon Habila in *WFAA* provides a vivid description of the socio-political upheaval that characterised the military era in the past. In the novel, characters and events are clearly described with vividness and clarity. In the novel, Lomba the protagonist vividly describes his ordeal with his inmates in detention which include; “Loneliness Smell, Anger Smell, Waiting Smell, Masturbation Smell, Fear Smell...filled the tiny room from floor to ceiling, edging out the others. I did not cry” (16-17). Lomba describes his cell as a place whose floor was about six feet by ten, and the ceiling was about seven feet from the floor. There were two pieces of furniture: the iron bunk with its tattered, lice-ridden mat, and the slop bucket in the corner. He also describes their residential area as a slum where there are a row of identical blocks of long buildings with the roof cracked and spat, and ass-scalding latrine pit. His description of the densely populated area that lacks the presence of government makes the narrative memorable.

Descriptive technique is also employed by Adichie in her works to activate the imagination of the reader for understanding of the message being conveyed. In *PH*, Kambili describes certain natural features such trees-pine trees, cashew, coconut, orange, mango, frangipani, palm trees-surrounding the places where people live. Kambili describes her bedroom and their whole compound as bordered by flowers and trees as well as the interaction of these with human beings. She also describes her environment as a place having frangipani trees planted next to the walls already filled the yard with the sickly-sweet scent of their flowers. A row of purple bougainvillea, cut smooth and straight as a buffet table, separated the gnarled trees from the driveway. From Kambili’s description, it is obvious that her father’s house is wide and grand, but menacing. It lacks almost nothing, yet the house overwhelms and inundates her psyche instead of elevating and animating it. Eugene’s overbearing hand blinds him so that he puts premium on obedience and submission and downplays freewill. This absence of freewill decreases Kambili’s psychological and physical energies for development and pushes her from the centre to the periphery, where she becomes a captive in her father’s house.

In Habila’s *MT*, the psychological trauma caused Mamo by Zara’s marriage in South Africa is described. The narrator reports that he, “said nothing for a while, but suddenly he felt sad, and good at the same time” (244). Mamo’s romance with Julie is also described; “in his mind images of Julie’s young, supple body with her legs twined around his waist kept appearing and disappearing” (249). Also, in Adichie’s short story titled, “The Thing Around Your Neck”, there are several descriptive scenes. In “Cell One,” the narrator vividly describes how her over-pampered, indulgent brother gains freedom and maturity having narrowly escaped death in the hands of cruel and murderous corrupt police. Habila’s *MT* is not left out as the narrator describes

a scene of an electoral malpractice prior to the day of elections. According to him; “There were three men seated on a mat on the hard mud floor. In the poor light of the room, worsened by the dense cigarette and weed smoke hanging in the air, Mamo could see the sweat rolling down their faces and into their shirts” (170). The general effect of the descriptive technique on the readers is that it enhances their understanding.

### **Pathetic Fallacy**

Pathetic fallacy is skillfully deployed in Adichie’s *PH* to narrate the mysterious death of Dele Giwa, a famous Nigerian journalist that was killed through a letter bomb. Pathetic fallacy is a literary device that attributes human feelings to inanimate objects. By employing pathetic fallacy, writers try to bring inanimate objects to life so that the nature of emotions they want to convey are understood in a better way because it is easier for the readers to relate to the abstract emotions when they observe it in their natural surroundings. In addition, the use of pathetic fallacy encourages the readers to develop a perspective that is new as well as creative. According to the narrator, “It rained the day Ade Coker died, a strange furious rain in the middle of the parched harmattan (212). In essence, nature expressed grief over the death of the pressman who represents the voice of the people. In Habila’s *MT*, Mamo recounted the darkness, and the rain that fell for two days without abating. The narrator reveals that during the delivery of Tabita before her untimely death, “Lightening flashed through the window like a camera capturing this grim tableau of parturition and expiration. Tabita screamed and thrashed about and in a lucid moment just before she died” (14). According to the narrator, she died without knowing she had given birth to not one child, but two children.

### **Scenic Presentations**

Habila in *WFAA* featured several instances of scenic presentations. Scenic presentation is a technique characterized with short statements and utterances. It is dramatic as readers can imagine the characters speak, sing, quarrel, argue, fight and so on. Through the character of Lomba, several dramatic scenes such as the peaceful demonstration that turned violent were depicted. During the protest, security agents appeared as expected of them but the situation went beyond control, resulting in indiscriminate shooting of tear gas and rubber bullets by policemen while students broke their windscreen with stones. The horrible scenario eventually resulted in the death of a policeman and a Chemistry student as well as raping of female students in their hostels. Another graphic scenic presentation is the large number of housewives including some nursing mothers carrying hoes and axes and machetes who staged a protest demanding an improved condition of living. The women are fed up with their miserable lives and so went on the rampage “tearing down wooden signboards and billboards and hauling them away to their kitchens to use as firewood” (88). The action of the women precedes the violent demonstration of the inhabitants of Morgan Street representing the Nigerian citizens who are victims of economic hardship.

There are several instances of scenic presentation abound in Adichie’s narratives. In *PH*, the scene where soldiers who were milling around descended on one of the market women is dramatic in nature. According to the narrator, the market women reacted by shouting and many had both hands placed on their heads, in the way that people do show despair or shock: “A woman lay in the dirt, wailing, tearing at her short afro. Her wrapper had come undone and her

white underwear showed” (52). Also in the narrative, Adichie’s report of the horrible experience of Kambili in the hands of her dictatorial father is dramatic and inhuman. According to Kambili, he cautioned her to strive for perfection rather than interacting with an unbeliever like Papa Nnukwu but what she experienced is unimaginable and from a father who calls himself a Christian. According to her: “He lowered the kettle into the tub, tilted it toward my feet, slowly as if he were conducting an experiment and wanted to see what would happen” (201). Eugene’s inhumanity to Kambili is presented as though one were watching an unfolding drama. His action is pathetic and should have resulted to his excommunication from the church if not that he is a wealthy member who purchases the communion wine for the weekly service. Eugene’s action at this moment is dramatic because as the narrator recounts, he cried with “tears streaming down his face” while Kambili “watched the water leave the kettle, flowing almost in slow motion in an arc” unto her feet until she screamed (201).

Another scenic presentation in the narrative is found during the hot argument between Eugene and Auntie Ifeoma over the funeral ceremony of their father, Papa Nnukwu. The narrator presents this in such a dramatic manner that the attention of the audience is in a state of expectancy: “Was our father a Catholic? I ask you, Eugene, was he a Catholic? *Uchu-gba gi*” Auntie Ifeoma snapped her fingers at Papa; she was throwing a curse at him. Tears rolled down her cheeks” (195). In Adichie’s *TAYN*, dramatic scenes are also evident and one of these is noticeable in the story, “A Private Experience”, In the narrative, a non-Muslim who was gruesomely murdered by some religious extremists is presented in a dramatic manner. Moreover, as in *PH* where the soldiers maltreated the market women, in Adichie’s “The American Embassy” presents the activities of soldiers during the military regime in a dramatic but cruel manner. The narrator describes a scene where a soldier was flogging a bespectacled man with a long whip that curled in the air before it landed on the man’s face, or his neck.

### **Use of Prefiguration**

Prefiguration is used by Adichie in narrating her experiences from the diaspora. Literary artists use prefiguration as a device to imagine beforehand or in foreshadowing an event in the course of their narration. Adepoju explains prefiguration “as a narrative device through which the writer implies levels of significance that go beyond the immediate point in the narrative in which they are introduced” (81). Prefiguration often represents events expected, projected, imagined or forecast to occur in future. It sometimes reveal significant aspects of a narrative that are yet to unfold by giving an advance hint of what is to come later in the story. As a literary device, it helps to create suspense, sustaining readers’ state of expectancy as events unfold. In addition, it is capable of making an extraordinary and bizarre events appear credible as the events are predicted before hand, so that readers are mentally prepared for them. In *PH*, Kambili foresees the death of Ade Coker through nightmares; “My nightmares started then, nightmares in which I saw Ade Coker’s charred remains spattered on his dining table, on his plate of eggs. In some of the nightmares, I was the daughter and the charred remains became Papa’s (213). In another nightmare, Kambili described her dream about a sole administrator pouring hot water on Auntie Ifeoma’s feet in a bathtub but she fled without looking back.



In Habila's *WFAA*, the revelation of the fortune-teller on the beach at Badagry serve as a prefiguration. Lomba perceives the albatross of death hanging around his neck and decides to find out what the future has in store for him. The marabout's revelation changed Lomba's mood as he was told that he would be incarcerated in future. According to the narrator, when his friend asked of his result, he shrugged and said, "Prison, That was all he saw ahead of me. Go in, try your luck, ask for good fortune, don't ask too closely" (39). While the marabout foresaw bleak future ahead of Lomba, his friend is assured of youthfulness and long life. Moreover, Bola's dream about dead bodies and fire outbreak reveals the tragedy that would occur during the anti-military struggle to be staged by students. The demonstration which actually started in a peaceful manner suddenly turned violent as security agents fired teargas into the air while students resorted to setting of vehicles ablaze. The dead bodies in the Bola's dream could also portend the tragedy that later befalls his family where his parents and his elder sister Peju died in a fatal accident.

### Symbolism

The use of symbolism is evident in Habila's work. The topographic details in *MT* creates the general impression of Keti as a place characterised by aridity, emptiness, and devastation. The farming community is hungry, disinherited and wrestling a meagre harvest of crops from a drought-harassed soil. There are images of hardship and loss depicted with, "dark patches" and "jigsaw pieces" (302), "the roofless classrooms and the abandoned abbatoir, the long narrow white strip", (308). The hills in Keti are also symbols of a fortress as well as a battlefield invested as they are with mythic tonalities. The scenes are vividly painted to make the narrative memorable and appealing to readers.

In *Purple Hibiscus*, there is the use of symbols to represent ideas or objects. Palms symbolise victory or triumph. Carrying tree branches symbolises solidarity and celebration of victory. As a symbol of victory in *Purple Hibiscus*, the palm refers to the victory of Beatrice and her children, Jaja and Kambili over Eugene. The head of the family dies and his body, the other members of the family, suffer. The victorious became the losers. Eugene who was gruesomely murdered became a victorious martyr. It is a victory of good against evil. The early Christians used the palm branch in this way to symbolise the victory of the faithful over enemies of the soul, the victory of spirit over flesh.

### Epistolary Technique

An epistolary technique is also used in Habila's *MT* and through this exchange of letters, the diasporic writer is able to develop the plot of the entire narrative and several instances of this abound in the novel. Habila, through a letter written to Mamo by his twin brother, x-rays the many battles and experiences he faced in a small village on the border of Mali in the Sahara desert where a war has been going on between the Tuaregs and the government. Another letter sent by LaMamo to his brother from Moronvia revealed the sender's birthday greetings to his twin brother as they would mark their twenty-five years on 15<sup>th</sup> of January. LaMamo disclosed their movement from Mali through Ouagadougou to a village in the north of Liberia fighting for money. Through a letter, Mamo informed the police about ballot papers that had been illegally procured and transported to the house of an NVP member with the intent to rig elections (172). Habila also employs the use of letter to further develop the plot of historical and societal

development. Professor Batanda's letter to Mr. LaMang, clearly stated the contents of historical works. He also asserted that, "Most of their historical accounts were based on papers left by colonial officers and their wives' diaries, and explorers' journals and missionaries' accounts," (156). Infusion of oral histories in this fictional narrative is another feature that makes Habila's novel distinct. Historical information does not only advance the plot, but also educates readers on useful information that illuminates the narrative. While Habila employs the use of letters in conveying additional information and developing his plots as shown above, Adichie's *PH* and *TAYN* seldom use this narrative technique.

### Use of Proverbs

Chimamanda Adichie equally deploys the use of proverbs in her works. Adedimeji maintains that the sheer diversity of the academic interests of proverb scholars has enriched the literature of proverbs with several traditions of definitions (49). To him, proverbs generally are rhetorical (pithy sayings that are geared towards persuading or influencing people to do certain things). He further states that proverbs are functionally deployed to serve a broad spectrum of purposes and that they are typically conversational and rely on figurative language to offer solutions to problems. Akporobaro notes that a proverb is a form of oral literature that has proved itself to be of great continuing relevance to modern man. It has been and remains a most powerful and effective instrument for the transmission of culture, social morality, manners and ideas of a people from one generation to another. The most memorable instance of the use of a proverb in *PH* was when Eugene ejected Anikwenwa, an elder of his father's age grade from the compound of Eugene's luxurious family home in the village of Abba because the old man was not a Christian. As Eugene ordered two of his men to see the old man out, Anikwenwa "kept looking back and throwing words at Eugene: *Ifukwa gi!* You are like a fly blindly following a corpse into the grave!" (78). Other examples of proverbs in *PH* and *TAYN* include: "Our people say that after *aku* flies it will fall to the toad" (226); "You know there is a saying that it is not just the naked men in the market who are mad" (179); "My people say that a famous animal does not always fill the hunter's basket" (61). The result of the use of proverbs is that it gives the novels an African colouration. However, Habila seldom uses proverbs in his narratives.

### Use of Code Mixing

Code mixing is equally used by Adichie in *PH*; she allows her characters express themselves in words, ideas and images from her locale. Several expressions abound in the novel: When Kambili was coughing, her father thumped her back while her mother rubbed her shoulders and said, *Ozugo*. Stop coughing (22). Lunch was jollof rice, first size chunks of *azu* fried until the bones were crisp, and *ngwo-ngwo*. Papa ate most of the *ngwo-ngwo*, his spoon swooping through the spicy broth in the glass bowl. "See if the stacks of *okporoko* will fit in, too" (62).

Another instance of code mixing is "As we drove past, people waved and called out Papa's title, *Omelora!* ...three elderly men standing under the lone *ukwa* tree near our gates waved and shouted, "*Nnonu! Nnonu!* Have you come back?" (55) Adichie also continues in her experimentation and exploration of other patterns like using Igbo words without footnote or translation to aid a foreigner's understanding: "I joke with you, *nwam*, where would I be if my *Chi* had not given me a daughter? Papa Nnukwu paused. "My spirit will intercede for you so that

*Chukwu* will send a good man to take care of you and the children” (83). Apart from code mixing, there are various kinds of registers in *Purple Hibiscus*: the language of religious imagery, the symbolism of the *mmuo* (which Papa Nnukwu must interpret for his grandchildren) and the unspoken “eye language” that Jaja and Kambili invent to express their true feelings at home.

Helon Habila in his narrative, *WFAA* presents characters that combine both good English and pidgin. For instance, while addressing his friends, Brother says; “Who I get apart from una? I no get wife, I no get pikin. You be the only family I get” (127). Pidgin is also found in utterances such as; “we don finally reach end of road. We don dey together since I was born, but now time don come wey me and you must part. Bye bye. Goodnight. Ka chi foo.Oda ro. Sai gobe” (128). When Brother complains of the hot weather in the novel, he expresses this in pidgin: “Here na so so heat full everywhere. Heat and soja. If the heat no killy, soja go harass you ... See this one, na soja gund do am. Six of them, I handle five with my bare hands. When them see say I go finish them, n aim dem carry gun shoot me for leg. You don hear the story, abi?” Habila creates Brother as a character who lacks a good command of English owing to his illiteracy and poor economic background. The effect of the code mixing is that it simply depicts an urban setting where code mixing and pidgin create a common medium for communication.

### **Use of Sharp Contrast**

Contrast is also used in Adichie’s *PH* in her portrayal of characters, events and ideas. In the narrative, there is a sharp contrast between Eugene’s kindness to others outside and his harsh treatment of his family. This is recounted in the black eye and attack on Mama with the broken furniture and the scalding of Kambili’s feet in the bath. The heroine recounts a day Jaja failed to go to communion and Eugene sees this as a grievous offence that deserves severe punishment. According to narrator; “It is the body of our Lord.” Papa’s voice was low, very low. His face looked swollen already, with pus-tipped rashes spread across every inch, but it seemed to be swelling even more. “You cannot stop receiving the body of our Lord. It is death, you know that” (14). Eugene appears to be benevolent to people outside his home. As Kambili recounts; “Papa organised Ade Coker’s funeral; he set up a trust for Yewande Coker and the children, bought them a new house. He paid *The Standard* staff huge bonuses and asked them to take a long leave” (213). Eugene works hard to ensure his family does not lack anything, yet he is not bothered about their psychological and emotional stability. His houses are comfortable yet stifling, and the bedrooms are very roomy yet stuffy. Kambili’s description of the contrast between their commodious apartment and its airlessness is convincing. “Although our spacious dining room gave way to an even wider living room, I felt suffocated” (15). Coupled with the gagging temperament of Eugene’s individuality and the choking and suffocating apartment which is lifeless, the apartment sits on its own. Its description no doubt will extinguish any seeming fire of growth ignited in the protagonist.

Invariably, Eugene possesses a house but not a home. A home is supposed to represent shelter, warmth, protection and security. Kambili’s father’s house is frightening and un-homely in its very nature. It stands at attention, like a soldier ready to do battle with whoever enters or comes close. The high walls protect the house from uninvited outsiders and gives a cold, hard and uninviting stare. The house is built to keep elements out, not to welcome people in. The

Eugene's family merely size up the empty rooms; they are never able to impress their own identity on the structure that surrounds them. Eugene describes the house in an unconventional manner, portraying it not as a peaceful place, but as the site of battle. The building fights off the outside elements and stands against the influence of the natural world. The building is a negatively prophylactic edifice, which blocks its inhabitants from receiving freedoms the society appreciates.

Eugene owns a conglomerate; one of his companies is a publishing house reputed for its astuteness and unbiased reportage of the Nigerian socio-political situation, and above all its uncompromising stance against the virulent of the military regime in Nigeria. He urges his editor, Ade Coker, to ensure that *The Standard* speaks out fearlessly, yet his wife's and the children's voices are stifled because of his overbearing attitude. Silence in Eugene's house is magnified to the extent that it could be heard. Silence plays a vital role in the developmental process of Kambili's life, or perhaps, it could be described as collateral. It inundates the entire narrative.

The use of contrast is also employed by Habila in *MT* and this is seen between Mamo and his twin brother, LaMamo. The former is weak and sickly because of the sickle cell disease which he inherited from his mother while the latter is strong and energetic hence he could embark on the journey to Timbuktu for the army recruitment. In the narrative, Mamo intimates Bintou with the areas of contrast between him and his twin brother; "We complemented each other. What I did not have my brother had, and what he did not have I had. I was always ill and weak, my brother was the opposite, he was healthy and bold and reckless. I listened, he talked, I was introverted, he was extroverted" (306). Mamo's ill-health could not allow him to follow LaMamo and Asabar, his cousin and so he returned home to pursue a career in teaching. While Mamo became a famous historian in Keti village, LaMamo became the itinerant soldier fighting alongside rebels in African countries.

In Habila's *WFAA*, the military rule is excoriated by Mao who laments; "Look, we are living under siege. Their very presence on our streets and in the government houses instead of the barracks where they belong is an act of aggression" (158). The characters compare their existence under the military regime to those of hostages: "They hold us cowed with guns, so that they'll steal our money. This is capitalism at its most militant and aggressive. They don't have to produce any superior good to establish monopoly. They do it by holding guns to our heads..." (158). Habila satirizes the image of the military by describing its government as a kleptomaniac institution with a pronounced tendency to subjugate and dehumanize the masses. In *WFAA*, the memory assumes the antenna that picks the signal of a diminished social life as Lomba records social and political events while working as a journalist in Nigeria as opposed to when he was kept in solitary confinement which signals his absence from the society.

## Conclusion

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Helon Habila blur the boundaries between the historical reality of their own experiences and the fictional world of their novels. Their effective use of artistic language and narrative techniques, multiple narrators and overlapping chronological sequences in their stories contribute to the focus on defiance in the face of cultural, economic,

religious and political despair in postcolonial Nigeria. The deployment of descriptive techniques, use of symbolism, retrospective and foreshadowing techniques, epistolary writings, scenic presentations and pathetic fallacy, to mention a few, are meant to enhance the development of the plot structures of the various narratives memorable and psycho-stimulating to the readers.

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