

LANGUAGE IN THE PORTRAYAL OF THE PROTAGONISTS OF ACHEBE'S NOVELS

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ABSTRACT: This paper analyses the language used in the portrayal of the characters of Chinua Achebe's novels. This is the language used by the characters in discourse, and the narrators in the novels. The study reveals that the protagonists start off as heroes and eventually end up as antiheroes on account of high-handedness, dishonesty, corruption, violence, sexual promiscuity, ill temperament, vindictiveness, and murder. The study applies the theory of deconstruction in the assessment of the characters and reveals that the protagonists are antiheroes rather than heroes: Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart* (1958), Obi Okonkwo in *No Longer at Ease* (1960), Ezeulu in *Arrow of God* (1964), Odili Samalu in *A Man of the People* (1966), and Sam in *Anthills of the Savannah* (1988). In deconstructing the protagonists, the five primary texts are read the first time and they reveal the protagonists as heroes. This first reading forms the basis for the second deconstructive "critical reading" which unveils the heroes as antiheroes. The publications and the themes of the novels of Achebe span over pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial Nigeria. Subsequently, the paper concludes that as antiheroes, the protagonists are barbaric and are not good exemplary African leaders. The characters therefore present the novels they appear in as colonialist, rather than anti-colonialist literature. This paper therefore recommends that Achebe's novels should be seen as colonialist literature.

KEY WORDS: Language, Hero, Protagonists, Antihero, and Deconstruction

INTRODUCTION

This paper, "Language in the Portrayal of the Protagonists of Achebe's Novels" examines the language deployed in portraying the protagonists of the novels as heroes and later as antiheroes. The evidence are in the references made by Achebe himself. One of them is the wife of the British diplomat in Nigeria, who is piqued and subsequently objects to how Achebe portrays African characters in his *A Man of the People* as antiheroes and uncivilized. According to Achebe: "After the publication of *A Man of the People* in 1966 I was invited to dinner by a British diplomat in Lagos at which his wife, hitherto a fan of mine, admonished me for what she called 'this great disservice to Nigeria'" (1982:7). Although a comment about *A Man of the People*, this opinion as well goes for all the other novels of Achebe whose protagonists are also portrayed in the same light of antiheroes.

Looking at the various infractions committed by Achebe's protagonists, this study wonders why he portrays his protagonists as morally depraved and savages. By what Achebe has done, he is considered as one of those writers who do not see the need to portray African characters as heroes and heroines in their works. Achebe himself inadvertently recalls the words of Nicol to justify this position (1982:16):

The distinguished and versatile Sierra Leonian, Davidson Abioseh Nicol – scientist, writer and diplomat – explaining why he wrote, said: '... because I found that most of those who wrote about us seldom gave any nobility to their African Characters unless they were savages or servants or facing impending destruction. I knew differently'.

Going by the negative portrayals of the protagonists of his novels, Achebe, in deed, completely fails in giving nobility to his African characters. He portrays them as savages in dire need of civilization. The paper looks at the language and linguistic devices used in delineating and exposing the protagonists. In doing this, some passages about the protagonists are examined for the purpose of revealing the literary elements that enhance the projection of the protagonists as "...the "others" – the "savages"... [who are] usually considered as evil as well as inferior (the *demonic other*)... therefore not fully human" (Tyson, 366).

To successfully examine the structures of the language and literary elements unconsciously or deliberately employed by Achebe in portraying the protagonists of his novels, attempts are made at looking at the relationship among language, linguistics, literature and stylistics. A clear understanding of these four key elements and their inter-relationship will go a long way in enhancing the language structures and literary elements used in the delineation of the characters.

Language has been explained as "the system of communication in speech and writing that is used by people of a particular country or area" and also as "a way of expressing ideas and feelings using movements, symbols and sound: the language of mime" (Hornsby, 834). What this means is that language as a means of communication uses speech, sound, gestures and symbols.

Leach and Short see language in a different light. To them, "it is virtually the medium in which man, the 'speaking animal', exists, defining for him his relation to his fellow human beings, his culture, even his own identity" (6). For them, language is a means of communication as well as of personal and cultural identification. In the face of many definitions of language, McIntosh and Halliday add that "language is organized noise" (1). They also observe that there is a close relationship among language, linguistics and phonetics. In explaining this relationship, the two scholars say that "[l]inguistics and phonetics are the two disciplines whose purpose it is to account for language. Phonetics studies the noise, linguistics the organisation" (McIntosh and Halliday, 1).

Chapman sees linguistics to be "concerned with language as an observable phenomenon of human activity, both in its general principles and in the particular realizations which we call 'language' – English, French, Malay, Arabic and so on" (4). Abrams and Harpham define linguistics as "the systematic study of the elements of language and the principles governing their combination and organization" (193). From this definition, the relationship between linguistics and language, is one of the former studying the latter.

The effort at pointing out the relationship between language and linguistics is also to show that both are connected with literature. While language is the means by which literature is created, linguistics studies the principles governing the combination and organization of elements of language used in literature. Having explained the relationship among language, linguistics and literature, it is proper to define and explain literature. Nnolim's definition of literature throws enough light on this issue. Nnolim regards literature:

[M]ainly as imaginative writing... that writing which is more emotionally moving than intellectually instructive; that writing which primarily deals with a make-believe world; that writing whose language is highly connotative rather than denotative, symbolic rather than literal, figurative rather than plain; that writing we regard as "verbal works of art", that writing that is remarked by its fictionality and imaginative import; that writing in which ideas are wrapped up in symbols, images, concepts; that writing which normally catapults us into another world of appearance and reality through the powers of the imagination[...] writing in which aesthetic function dominates; writing in which the ultimate aim of the author is to produce an object of art (47).

By Nnolim's definition, literature can be summarized as a product of imagination relayed by means of language.

Closely related to language, linguistics and literature is stylistics. Stylistics is derived from style, "the distinction between what is said and how it is said or between the content and the form of a text" (Abrams and Harpham, 387). What is said constitutes the "content," "message," "information," or "propositional meaning", while how it is said is the style, "the variations in the presentation of this information that serve to alter its aesthetic quality or the reader's emotional response" (Abrams and Harpham, 387). Style therefore suggests the various ways language is exploited for the purpose of literary creativity.

In analysing the stylistic features or "formal properties" of a particular literary work, or of an author, or a literary tradition, or an era, critics examine the phonological (patterns of speech sounds, meter, or rhyme), or syntactic (types of sentence structure), or lexical (*abstract* vs concrete words, the relative frequency of nouns, verbs, adjectives), or rhetorical (the characteristic use of *figurative language*, *imagery* and so on) (Abrams and Harpham, p387).

Apart from what has been tagged "narrower mode of formal stylistics" above, there is a second mode of stylistics which emerged since the mid-1960s. Among the numerous theories of proponents, is the definition of stylistics as "the study of the use of language in literature, involving the entire range of the 'general characteristics of language... as a medium of literary expression'" (Abrams and Harpham, 388). What this means is that, language, the means of expression in literary works is subjected to analysis in order to get to the meaning of literary works.

In all, there is a strong tie and relationship among language, linguistics, literature and stylistics. However, language has been stretched to have relationship with culture, politics, society, history, ideology, etc. by Fowler, Carter, Simpson, and others in the 1980s. This scholarship gave rise to socio-linguistic functional stylistics (SFS). According to Nwanyanwu (42), SFS "is a linguistic method that crystallises the ways social factors and ideologies therein are implicated in lexical and syntactic structures."

In examining the language of the quoted passages, effort is made to show the linguistic features and literary elements through which the characters are presented. Leach and Short, infer that language plays a great role in communication among human beings as well as defining and revealing their characters. The understanding of language involves not only understanding the issues of rules of grammar but also the linguistic devices and formal elements or figurative expressions implicated in it. "...[T]hese meanings are a product primarily of four kinds of linguistic devices: paradox, irony, ambiguity, and tension" (Tyson,121), while the figurative language embodies images, symbols, metaphors and similes. According to Tyson, "figurative language is language that has more than, or other than, a strictly literal meaning" (124). By its very expressive nature, literary language conveys tone, attitude, and feeling (Tyson, 120).

Theoretical Framework

Deconstruction as a theoretical framework in the criticism of literature, is a theory and practice of reading that subverts and undermines the belief that language system is "based on grounds that are adequate to establish the boundaries, the coherence or unity and the determinate meanings of a literary text" (Abrams and Harpham, 77). Deconstruction, aims to reveal that in a text are conflicting (forces of) ideas which controvert and destabilize the seeming stable structure and meaning into indefinite unstable and disagreeable meanings. It follows therefore for deconstruction that "literature is as dynamic, ambiguous and unstable as the language of which it is composed" (Tyson, 252). To deconstruct a literary text, according to Tyson, is to reveal the 'undecidability' and/or reveal the complex operations of the ideologies of which the text is constructed. These include character, events, images, etc., which show how the interpretations conflict with one another and still go on to produce more conflicting interpretations endlessly. It is based on this meaning of the theory of deconstruction that the protagonist Achebe's novels are analysed in this paper entitled "Language in the Portrayal of Achebe's Novels".

Language Analysis

In the analysis of the protagonists of Achebe's novels, we examined the language used in the discourse of the characters. Okonkwo is introduced on page 3 of the novel as an important and great man of Umuofia. The choice of words in describing Okonkwo projects him as a hero.

1. Okonkwo was well known throughout the nine villages and even beyond.
2. His fame rested on solid personal achievements.
3. As a young man of eighteen he had brought honour to his village by throwing Amalinze the cat.
4. Amalinze was the greatest wrestler who for seven years was unbeaten, from Umuofia to Mbaino.
5. He was called the Cat because his back would never touch the earth.
6. It was this man that Okonkwo threw in a fight which the old man agreed was one of the fiercest since the founder of their town engaged a spirit of the wild for seven days and seven nights (3).

Sentence 1 is a compound sentence of two clauses joined by the coordinating conjunction "and" but controlled by one subject "Okonkwo". The first clause of the structure contains the phrase "well known", made up of an adverb of certainty, well + known, a participial verb, emphasizing on the popularity of Okonkwo. The extent of his popularity is captured in the relationship of the preposition "throughout" with the noun phrase, "nine villages and even beyond". Sentence 1 shows the vast area where Okonkwo's popularity is felt and known.

In sentence 2, the subject, “His fame”, though a nominal in function is structurally made up of an adjectival possessive pronoun modifying the noun, “fame”. As a deictic structure, the phrasal subject noun refers to Okonkwo in sentence 1. Raymond Chapman says a deictic is a “word with function of pointing or demonstrating” (14). This abstract nominal structure is a statement harping on the greatness of Okonkwo. Besides, the same abstract nominal is personified. According to Abrams and Harpham, personification is a term “in which either an inanimate object or an abstract concept is spoken of as though it were endowed with life or with human attributes or feelings” (132). “His fame” is linked with the preposition “on” to another important aspect of the structure, “solid personal achievements” which highlights Okonkwo’s greatness. The structure is a combination of two adjectives and a plural noun, solid (adj) + personal (adj) + achievements (plural noun). Sentences 1 and 2 highlight Okonkwo’s greatness and nobility.

Contrast is used in further throwing more light on the status of Okonkwo. Contrast “is a difference between two or more people or things that you can see clearly when they are compared or put close together; the fact of comparing two or more things in order to show the differences between them” (Hornsby, 317). Ogunyemi (26) consolidates the meaning by adding that contrast “is very effective because when two contrasting things are placed together, their qualities are intensified.” Sentences 3 and 4 though they contrast, are related. They contrast in the sense that sentence 3 talks about the defeat of Amalinze by Okonkwo while sentence 4 gives us information on the greatness of Amalinze who has been defeated by Okonkwo. However, the two sentences are related because they firstly promote the greatness of Okonkwo who beats Amalinze who himself is also a very great and popular man. Okonkwo’s achievement is well highlighted in sentence 4 for beating Amalinze who has been unbeaten for “seven years”, “from Umuofia to Mbaino”, covering a wide territory. Although sentences 5 and 6 dwell on Amalinze’s achievements and greatness, they foreground Okonkwo’s greatness well above Amalinze’s. Although great, he is dethroned by a greater man, Okonkwo. “To foreground is to bring something into prominence, to make it dominant in perception” (Abrams and Harpham, 108). By foregrounding, Okonkwo is projected and promoted over Amalinze. The technique shows Okonkwo as superior and Amalinze as an inferior person.

Sentences 3 and 5 are embodiments of metaphors. “In a metaphor, a word or expression that in literal usage denotes one kind of thing is applied to a distinctly different kind of thing, without asserting a comparison” (Abrams and Harpham, 130). The expressions, “Amalinze the Cat” in sentence 3 and “He was called the Cat...” in sentence 5 are metaphors referring to Amalinze. The meaning and the importance of the metaphorical expressions are also extended to sentence 5, “He was called the Cat because his back would never touch the earth.”

Among the sentences in the passage, sentence 6 stands out on account of its peculiarity. It is made up of multiple subordinate clauses – hypotaxis. More significant is its expression of myth. “... [T]he founder of the town engaged a spirit of the wild for seven days and seven nights”. A myth is:

“[A] ...story in a mythology – a system of hereditary stories of ancient origin which were once believed to be true by a particular cultural group, and which served to explain (in terms of the intentions and actions of deities and other supernatural beings) while the world is as it is and things happen as they do, to provide a rationale for social customs and observances, and to establish the sanctions for the rules for which people conduct their lives. (Abrams and Harpham, 230).

The story embodied in the sentence is one of heroic and supernatural deed in which the founding father of the community is believed to have engaged a spirit in a fight for seven days and seven nights. It is this remarkable achievement that Okonkwo's defeat of Amalinze is likened to. Further there is a conscious effort to present and project Okonkwo as a man of great means. The sentences in the passage that follow are carefully chosen to achieve this effect.

1. Okonkwo's prosperity was visible in his household. 2. He had a large compound enclosed by a thick wall of red earth. 3. His own hut or *obi* stood immediately behind the only gate in the red wall. 4. Each of his three wives had their own hut which together formed a half moon behind the *obi*. 5(a). The barn was built against one end of the red walls and (b) long stacks of yam stood out prosperously in it. 6(a) At the opposite end of the compound was a shed for the goats and (b) each wife built a small attachment to her hut for hens. 7. Near the barn was a small house, the 'medicine house' or shrine where Okonkwo kept the wooden symbols of his personal god and his ancestral spirits. 8(a). He worshipped them with sacrifices of kola nut, food and palm-wine, and (b) offered prayers to them on behalf of himself, his three wives and eight children (10).

In sentence 1, the expression "Okonkwo's prosperity" is a noun phrase made up of a possessive noun "Okonkwo's", functioning as an adjective modifying the abstract noun, prosperity. Okonkwo's + prosperity functions as the subject of sentence 1 expressing a state of being, while "was visible in his household" functions as the predicate element, giving information about the subject. Apart from the syntagmatic characters of the sentence, the abstract subject is personified and linked by the predicate through the verb "was" in order to project Okonkwo's prosperity and nobility. The adjectival phrase/complement is a word or group of words that qualify or refer back to a noun, pronoun, or nominal in a sentence (Ahaotu, 169–170). The adjectival phrase/ complement refers back to the subject, "Okonkwo's prosperity" for the purpose of emphasizing the subject.

The deictic, "He", and the adjective of size, "large", in sentence 2 also refer to Okonkwo telling the vastness of his compound as an evidence of wealth and nobility. Sentence 3 is cast in the mode of sentence 1, "His own hut or *obi*" is a concrete noun phrase, subject of the sentence which is also personified, and the predicate/ adjectival/ complement component makes statement about its prominent position among other things in Okonkwo's compound. The prominence of Okonkwo's hut or *obi* among others in his compounds also adds to Okonkwo's prosperity and status in Umuofia.

Sentences 4 – 6, highlight Okonkwo's opulence. Sentence 4 is complex and declarative as it "makes a statement or states a fact" (Ahaotu, 172). The noun phrase and subject, "Each of his three wives" is linked to the predicate element which highlights the personal huts of the wives as evidence of Okonkwo's affluence. The subordinate clause "which together formed a half moon behind the *obi*" explains the power and authority relations between Obi and his wives. The information in the clause locating Okonkwo's wives' huts behind his *obi* is appropriately conveyed by a subordinating clause as evidence of Okonkwo's wives subordinated to him.

Sentence 5 is a compound structure. Both clauses 5(a) and 5(b) have concrete noun subjects, "barn" and "long stacks of yam" which emphasize on Okonkwo's wealth. It is observed that the phrasal subject, "long stacks of yam" is also personified by virtue of it declaratively standing "out

prosperously”. While clause 5(a) shows order in terms of the location of the barn in Okonkwo’s compound, clause 5(b) highlights the wealth of Okonkwo.

The structure of sentence 6 is like that of sentence 5. It is a compound sentence made up of two clauses joined by the “and” coordinating conjunction. Like 5(a) above, clause 6(a) emphasizes on the position of Okonkwo’s goat sheds while 6(b) informs us of his wives’ attachments for their hens. Like the other sentences in the passage, sentence 6 informs us that Okonkwo has more than one wife and that his wives each has a hut and an attachment for hens. These pieces of information on Okonkwo’s property show that Okonkwo is wealthy.

In portraying Okonkwo as a great man, the passage reveals the various aspects by which a man is judged wealthy in Umuofia society including the presence of a place of worship within the compound. Sentence 7, a complex structure, not only reveals the location of the “medicine house or shrine” but also informs us of the presence of the facility.

The mention of the items of sacrifice to Okonkwo’s personal god and ancestral spirits in sentence 8 is a follow up to sentence 7. The deictic “He” in the sentence refers to Okonkwo as the subject. The sentence is a compound structure highlighting the financial ability of Okonkwo not only to provide for his human family members but also his god and ancestral spirits who are fed with kola nut, food and palm wine. While clause 8(a) provides information on the items of sacrifice, clause 8(b) informs us that Okonkwo has three wives and eight children. The large size of Okonkwo’s family, wives and children, is an evidence and a means of measuring his greatness by Umuofia standard.

What the passage has achieved through various sentence structures and linguistic devices is to portray Okonkwo as a wealthy and great man by Umuofia standard. It shows the various departments by which a man is judged great. These include the introduction of his prosperity in sentence 1, the largeness of his compound in sentence 2, the prominent position of his hut in sentence 3, the position of the wives’ huts in sentence 4 and the location of his barn and the size of his yam stacks in sentence 5. Sentence 6 dwells on his livestock and that of his wives while 7 highlights the presence of his god and ancestral spirits who are well provided for by Okonkwo and sentence 8 harps on the size of Okonkwo’s family by giving the number of his wives and children.

Okonkwo is portrayed as a great and notable man on pages 3 and 10, while page 21 presents him as a violent, barbaric and mean wife beater.

1(a) ...And when she returned (b) he beat her [Ojiugo] very heavily, (c) in his anger he had forgotten that it was the Week of Peace. 2. His first two wives ran out in great alarm pleading with him that it was the sacred week. 3. But Okonkwo was not the man to stop beating somebody half-way though, not even for fear of a goddess (21).

Sentence 1 is a compound-complex structure. Clause 1(a) of it, beginning with the coordinating conjunction “And,” is a compound clause structure, while the subject of the clause, and the deictic “he” in clause (b) refer to Okonkwo, the subject of the segment. Segment 1(a) shows Ojiugo as the sufferer of the beating, while segment 1(b) presents Okonkwo as the beater. In presenting the degree of beating, the adverbs “very” and “heavily” are used in modifying the word “beat” which Ojiugo receives from Okonkwo. The adverbs reveal the intensity of the beating as well as the bitterness and cruelty of

Okonkwo. Component (c) of the sentence, also a clause, tells us the consequence of the intensity of his anger which is the desecration of the “Week of Peace”.

Sentence 2 builds up the intensity of Okonkwo’s brutality and his desecrating of the Week of Peace. The deictic, “His”, in combination with “first” (cardinal, “how many things there are”) and “two” (ordinal, “the serial order of the thing or things in question”) (Uba, 68) form the possessive noun phrase which functions as the subject of the sentence. The sentence proves that Okonkwo’s anger does not recognize conjugal/ family affinity and so would not be assuaged or abetted.

There is further emphasis on the intensity of Okonkwo’s anger and his disregard for the Earth goddess and even his wives who try to mediate in sentence 3. The three sentences are related because of their reference to Okonkwo, his anger and lack of respect for both humans and deity. Sentence 3 also embodies a phonological scheme called alliteration. It is “the repetition of consonant sounds at the beginning of words or stressed syllables” (Ogunyemi, 38). The alliterating scheme is located in the expression, “for fear”, in sentence three. The repetition of the consonant /f/ sounds in “for” and “fear” does not only give auditory pleasure but also emphasizes Okonkwo’s lack of fear and respect for the earth goddess which every normal Umuofia man should have. The entire passage of page 21 presents Okonkwo in a negative light, as a brute and an antihero. The antihero is “the chief person in a modern novel or play whose character is widely discrepant from that we associate with the traditional protagonist or hero, of a serious literary work. Instead of manifesting largeness, dignity, power, or heroism, the antihero is petty, ignominious, passive, clownish, or dishonest (Abrams and Harpham,12). That Okonkwo shows extreme anger, is violent, will not hear appeal to stop beating his wife, does that in defiance of the Earth goddess and her Week of Peace and his community, presents Okonkwo as a savage.

Okonkwo commits more sacrilege against himself, the tradition of his community and the earth goddess. This abomination is captured thus:

1. It is against our custom. 2(a). It is an abomination (b) for [Okonkwo] a man to take his own life. 3(a). It is an offense against the Earth, (b) and a man who commits it will not be buried by his clansmen. 4(a). His body is evil, and (b) only strangers may touch it. 5(a). This is why we ask your people to bring him down, (b) because you are strangers? (147).

The narrative consciousness in sentence 1, simply declares the message of the structure. The simple declarative sentence presents a negative situation without exactitude. This introductory sentence builds the reader’s anxiety and curiosity to know more, perhaps from the next sentence. “The declarative sentence makes a statement or states a fact” (Ahaotu, 172).

Following sentence 1 in functional purpose and structure, sentence 2 declares, emphasizes, and gives more information on the nature of what “[...] is against our custom”. Sentence 2 makes explicit the issue that has been in sentence 1. Structurally, sentence 2 is complex, having an independent and a dependent clause. While the dependent clause 2(a) harps on the atrocity by using the noun word “abomination”, the dependent clause 2(b) explains the nature of the atrocity or “abomination”. Both sentence 1 and clause 2(a) are forerunner structures heralding the delayed and unveiled information on the nature of what is “against our custom” and “abomination”. The “it” subjects in sentences 1, 2 and

3 are “referring subjects” (Scott, Bowley, Brockett, Brown and Goddard, 181) to “for a man to take his own life”.

The emphasis on desecration continues on the dependent noun functioning as a subject, sentence 3, a compound structure. Clause 3(a) informs us that the crime is “an offence against the Earth”, while clause 3(b) emphatically tells us that “a man who commits it will not be buried by his clansmen”. Structures 1 to 3(a) gradually build up, harp and hype the crime against the Earth while structure 3(b) declares the consequence of the crime.

Sentence 4 with the deictic adjective/ possessive pronoun, “His,” modifying “body”, as phrasal subject, refers to “a man”, the subject of clause 3(b). Sentence 4(b) also harps on the point that the body is “evil” while 4(b) offers a conditional action using the modal auxiliary verb “may” to explain the possibility of strangers touching the body – “strangers may touch it”.

Why the body has to be brought down by strangers and the request for the service are embodied in the complex structure of sentence 5. Independent clause 5(a) makes a request while dependent clause 5(b) ascertains that those being appealed to are “strangers”.

The importance of sentences 1 to 5 is that they do not specifically mention Okonkwo. It is only sentence two that refers to “a man” which gives the impression or infers that Okonkwo is the referent. This is the use of erasure, as “[t]he colonized other doesn’t count, becomes invisible to the eyes of the colonizer...” (Tyson, 437). The five sentences in the passage do not show Okonkwo as their subject but only infer. The structures are so used to demean Okonkwo as insignificant because of the sin of suicide or sacrilege he committed against the Earth goddess, himself and his Umuofia society. By not being mentioned by name, he is treated as an outcast and an antihero.

In *Arrow of God*, Ezeulu is presented as a hero and a very important figure in the society. He is important in Umuaro because he is the Priest of Ulu who mediates between the people and the deity. Ezeulu’s importance is revealed as he addresses Ulu deity:

1. Ulu, I thank you for making me see another new moon. 2. May I see it again and again. 3. This household may it be healthy and prosperous. 4(a). As this is the moon of planting (b). May the six villages plant with profit. 5(a). May we escape danger in the farm (b) the bite of a snake or (c) the sting of scorpion, (d) the mighty one of the scrub and 6. May we not cut our shinbone with the matchet or the hoe. 7. And let our wives bear male children 8. May we increase in numbers at the next counting of the villages so that we shall sacrifice to you a cow, not a chicken as we did after the last New Yam Feast. 9. May children put their fathers into the earth and not father their children. 10. May good meet the face of every man and every woman. 11. Let it come to the land of the riverain folk and to the land of the forest peoples (6). (Italics as in the book).

This address of the deity is referred to as apostrophe – “exclamatory address to a particular person, or personification” (Moody, p205). According to Abrams and Harpham, “[...] apostrophe is a direct and explicit address either to an absent person or to an abstract or nonhuman entity” (345). Although abstract, nonhuman and unseen, Ulu is talked to as if concrete and seen.

Sentence 1 is an embodiment of an address by an addresser to an addressee, Ulu deity, a singular second person, represented by the pronoun “you”. In periodic sentence, the addresser represented by the first person singular pronoun “I” appreciates the addressee for protection. “A periodic sentence in a strict sense is one which saves its main clause to the end... more loosely,... any sentence has a periodic structure if anticipatory constituents play a major part in it” (Leach and Short, 225). The structure is made up of two parts, an independent clause as in 1(a) and a dependent clause as in 1(b). Leach and Short “mean by anticipatory constituent any subordinate or dependent constituent which is non-final” (225). Constituent 1(b) is a subordinate adverbial clause and can also come at the initial position while 1(a) can come at the final position as a trailing constituent.

It should be pointed out that in sentence 1, the addresser is not expressed and identified by a proper noun but by a pronoun and we only infer that it is a reference to Ezeulu by virtue of his role and relationship to Ulu as his priest. Besides, the expression “new moon” in the same sentence is an Igbo language transliteration of a “new month”.

Clearly, sentence 1 shows that the relationship between the addresser (Ezeulu) and the addressee (Ulu) is one of unequals. The addresser is inferior (a subordinate or dependant), while the addressee is superior (a principal or independent). This state of inequality is carried over to sentence 2, 5, 6 and 9. The sentences beginning with the subjunctive verb, “May” express wishes and requests by the addresser from the addressee. Sentence 2 embodies emphasis achieved through the lexical repetition of the word “again” in “again and again”. The repeated word does not only indicate the desire of the addresser to see the new moon first, once more, but rather to see it continuously. According to Leach and Short, formal repetition is the “repeated use of an expression (morpheme, lexical item, proper name, phrase, etc) which has already occurred in the context” (244).

From focus on the addresser, represented by the first person singular pronoun “I” as the subject of sentences 1 and 2, attention shifts to a third person collective noun, “household”. The use of the demonstrative/ emphatic adjective, “This”, in “This household” reveals the close relationship between the addresser and his “household” being talked about. The addresser shows how important “This household” is by making it the subject of the sentence as well as attributing it with the wish of good health and prosperity as seen in “healthy and prosperous”.

In sentence 4, attention shifts to the community, from the addresser’s household in sentence 3, while sentences 1 and 2 have the addresser as the focus and the subject. As observed, sentences 1 – 4 are arranged in order of importance from the addresser’s perspective. Sentences 1 and 2 come first as they address the needs of the addresser, followed by that of the household who are closer and lastly the community that are distant to him. Sentence 4 is a complex structure made up of 4(a) (dependent noun clause) and 4(b) (independent clause). The full meaning of 4(b) is dependent on 4(a) which embodies the prayer and petition of the addresser to the addressee on behalf of the “six villages”. Also notice the recurrence of the word, “moon”, meaning month.

The subjects of sentences 5 and 6 are first person plural pronouns, “we”. The “we” pronoun shows the sentences presented from a plural first person point of view. This indicates that the addresser is part of the “we” subject being interceded for in a prayer of safety from danger to Ulu. Note the reference to Ulu in 4(d), as “the mighty one of the scrubland”, an epithet, “...an adjective or adjectival phrase used to describe a distinctive quality of a person or thing...” (Abrams and Harpham, 113). Here, might and

valour are ascribed to Ulu with whom Ezeulu as priest, associates and also derives his own might and power perceived by the community.

The tone of the prayer in sentence 7 is one of fruitfulness of wives bearing male children. It also reveals the patriarchal nature and culture of Umuaro society. Patriarchal means “male – centred and controlled, and is organised in all cultural domains: family, religious, political, economic, social, legal and artistic (Abrams and Harpham, 122). The prayer, “And let our wives bear male children” excluding the female children, is an indication of the discriminatory and patriarchal culture of Umuaro society.

Sentence 8 embodies an appeal to Ulu to grant population increase to the community. The expression “counting of the villages” is a transliteration from Igbo language. The prayer for longevity and prevention of early death is captured in sentence 9. The sentence suggests that the natural order of children burying their parents should prevail and not the other way round. The sentence is an expression of Igbo worldview or experience in English language. Both sentences 8 and 9 embody the examples canvassed by Achebe, that “[t]he African writer should aim to use English in a way that brings out his message best without altering the language to the extent that it’s value as a medium of international exchange will be lost” (61). The sentences are transliteration of Igbo expressions in English language.

The use of personification is observed in sentences 10 and 11. The abstract noun of quality, “good”, and its referent pronoun, “it”, in sentence 11 are personified. According to Maduka and Eyoh), “[I]n personification attributes of a human being are given to an object, animal or concept” (38). The noun, “good”, and pronoun, “it”, also function as the subjects of the sentences they occur in. In sentence 10, “May good meet...” and in sentence 11 “Let it come” attribute to the subjects, human actions as embodied in the action words or verbs “meet” and “come”. Besides, the two structures are transliterations of Igbo language expressions in the English language. These expressions, Amuta sees as “the distinguishing characteristic of the language of the novel [which] is its utilization to convey the immediacy and historicity of social experience” (107). By sentences 10 and 11, the English language is made to bear and convey Igbo social expressions.

The entire passage from sentence 1 to 11 is a supplication to Ulu deity for favours. These requests are embodied in sentences 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 which are introduced by the subjunctive verb, “may”, expressing wishes and expectations from Ulu deity.

The prayer session to Ulu, shows the exclusive and intermediary role of Ezeulu, as well as, presents him as a highly placed and important member of the society. By this function Ezeulu is classified as a notable man of Umuaro.

Achebe’s reliance on transliteration of the Igbo worldviews is very prominent in his novels. This practice can be linked to his decision expressed at the 1962 conference of African Writers of English Expression in Makerere, Kenya, “...that it is better for an African writer to think and feel in his own language and then look for an English transliteration approximating the original” (Wali, 282–283). It is on this premise that the following passage from *Arrow of God* is examined.

1(a). Go back and tell Ezidemili (b) to eat shit. 2. Do you hear me? 3. Tell Ezidemili that Ezeulu says he should go and fill his mouth with shit. 4. As for you, young man you may go in peace because the world is no longer what it was. 5(a). If the world had been what it was (b) I

would have given you something (c) to remind you always of the day
(d) you put your head into the mouth of a Leopard (54).

In the passage, Ezeulu tells Ezidemili's messenger and errand boy in sentence 1 to return to Ezidemili and tell him "to eat shit". The sentence is an imperative and therefore expresses a command (Ahaotu, 172). The phrase, "to eat shit", is a to-infinitive. "Infinitives are mainly used as nouns but may also perform adjectival or adverbial functions (Ahaotu, 81). "[T]o eat shit" is a transliterated derogatory Igbo expression.

Sentence 2 is a rhetorical question – "a sentence in the grammatical form of a question which is not asked in order to request information or to invite a reply, but to achieve a greater expressive force than a direct assertion" (Abrams and Harpham, 347). Although the messenger is hearing him, Ezeulu asks the question for the purpose of emphasis.

For the purpose of emphasis, the idea in "to eat shit" is recast and repeated in sentence 3 in the expression "...fill his mouth with shit." The use of repetition ensures that the idea expressed in sentence 1, if not well understood, will be well comprehended in sentence 3.

Sentence 5 is a compound-complex sentence made up of four clauses – independent and dependent. The 5(d) sub-structure, "you put your head into the mouth of a Leopard" is not only a transliteration but suggests a high risk adventure embarked by, and danger faced by the priest of Idemili's messenger. The structure also uses a metaphor, "mouth of a leopard" (the concrete) to infer and connote danger (the abstract). Metaphor is the descriptive application of qualities from one thing to another, often from the concrete to the abstract (Moody, 207).

The entire passage is divided into two. While sentences 1 to 3 show Ezeulu's anger against Ezidemili, sentences 4 and 5 show that he is a man who can control his temper in the face of provocation. This trait of nobility explains why Ezeulu exonerates Ezidemili's messenger from blame and punishment for his role. This singular disposition portrays Ezeulu as an elder and a leader.

Ezeulu as a man of integrity is guided by the Igbo belief that in all circumstances a man must tell his son the truth. Ezeulu tells his son, Nwafo:

1. A man does not speak a lie to his son. 2. Remember that always.
3(a). To say *my father told me* is (b) to swear the greatest oath. 4(a).
You are only a little boy, (b) but I was no older (c) when my father
began to confide in me. 5. Do you hear what I am saying? (93). (Italics
as in the book).

Sentence 1 is an English transliteration of Igbo language expression. The sentence is a simple declarative structure "which makes a statement or states a fact" (Ahaotu, 172). The fact is that a father does not lie to his son. Unlike 1, sentence 2 is also an imperative. It is a charge to Nwafo. In sentence 3, there are two to-infinitive structures, 3(a) and 3(b). Segment 3(a) is the antecedent in the structure followed by the complement in 3(b). The complement is a word or group of words that qualify or refer back to a noun, pronoun or nominal in a sentence (Ahaotu, 170).

Like 1, sentence 4 is a declarative complex sentence with "you" as the subject of 4(a), an independent clause, while "I" is the subject of 4(b), the dependent or subordinating clause and "my father" the

subject of 4(c). The sentence tries to note the age difference between Nwafo and Ezeulu whose father started confiding in at a very tender age.

Sentence 5 is interrogative and asks a question (Ahaotu, 172). It tends to elicit an answer from Nwafo, to ensure that he understands what Ezeulu has been explaining to him. At the same time, it appears a rhetorical question with the purpose of emphasizing on the ideas or issues raised in the preceding sentences.

The above passage therefore highlights the integrity of Ezeulu as a truthful and honest father. The passage also portrays him as a man of honour in Umuaro society.

Achebe makes use of figurative elements in his delineation of characters, especially that of Ezeulu.

1. The world is changing. 2. I do not like it. 3. But I am like the bird Eneke-nti-oba. 4. When his friends asked him why he was always on the wing he replied: "Men of today have learnt to shoot without missing and so I have learnt to fly without perching." 5. I want one of my sons to join these people and be my eye here. 6. If there is nothing in it you will come back. 7. But if there is something there you will bring home my share.... 8. My spirit tells me that those who do not befriend the white men today will be saying *had we known* tomorrow (45 – 46). (Italics as in the book)

In sentence 1, Ezeulu in a simple structure states that the world is changing. In sentence 2, he negates the change still in another simple structure. In sentence 3, he compares himself to Eneke-nti-oba through the use of simile: "But I am like the bird Eneke-nti-oba." Chapman says that "a simile is tripartite: one thing is likened to another, and the ground of likeness is specified" (82). The specified ground of likeness between the bird and Ezeulu is "to fly without perching".

The bird, Eneke-nti-oba is also personified in the same sentence as he performs human speech act of saying that: "Men of today have learnt to shoot without missing and so I have learnt to fly without perching." This speech act is an expression of proverb. According to Finnegan, "[P]roverbs are a rich source of imagery and succinct expression on which more elaborate forms can draw.... [A] feeling for language, for imagery, and for the expression of abstract ideas through compressed and allusive phraseology comes out particularly clearly in proverbs" (389–390). Generally, a proverb is a medium of communication in Africa. It is good to note that sentences 3 and 4 which embody the figurative elements of a simile and a proverb are used in portraying Ezeulu as a wise and cautious man.

In sentence 5 is observed the use of the figurative element of synecdoche, "a part of something is used to signify the whole, or (more rarely) the whole is used to signify a part" (Abrams and Harpham, 132). Ezeulu in this sentence, wants one of his sons to be his eye there: "I want one of my sons... to be my eye there". As a synecdoche, one of Ezeulu's sons, a whole human being, is used to represent or function as Ezeulu's eye. Ezeulu's eye is a representation of Ezeulu as a person.

Sentences 6 and 7 are conditional complex sentences introduced by dependent "if" clauses. The two sentences contrast each other. While sentence 6 is an embodiment of a negation, 7 is positive. "...[A] negative is used generally speaking, when there is need to deny some expectation (in the mind of another reader, character) that the positive is true" (Leach and Short, 104). However, sentence 8 consolidates his position and decision. It is the synthesis or the conclusion of the matter which starts

with antithesis in sentence 7 and moves on to sentence 8 as the thesis. The entire passage, from sentence 1 to 8, is used in revealing the high and heroic quality of Ezeulu's character. The sentences and figurative expressions portray him as a careful and visionary leader.

Beside the positive side, Ezeulu's negative and antiheroic attitudes are also revealed through his choice of words and expressions. He tells his wife, Matefi:

1(a). This madness they say you have (b) must now begin to know its bounds. 2. You are telling me to go and find cassava for you.... 3. I have told you many times that you are a wicked woman.... 4. Don't let me speak my mind to you today. 5(a). If you want this compound to contain the two of us, (b) go and do what I told you.... 6(a). Go away from here (b) before I rise to my feet (62).

Sentence 1 embodies personification. "Madness", the subject of the sentence and an abstract noun is talked about as a human being: "This madness... must now begin to know its bounds." The statement reveals Ezeulu's growing anger by referring to Matefi's innocent request as madness.

Sentence 2 is a repetition of Matefi's request for cassava which is the source of Ezeulu's anger. The repetition here emphasizes on Matefi's request as well as heightens Ezeulu's anger. Sentence 4 is Ezeulu's threat to speak "his mind". Although he says he does not want to speak his mind, he however does so by calling her a [mad] and a "wicked woman." Ezeulu's statement and the contrary action that follows, constitute paralipsis, "someone says that he need not, or will not say something, then proceeds to do so" (Abrams and Harpham, 347). The expression "Don't let me speak my mind to you..." is a transliteration of an Igbo language expression. The same nature of expression is observed in 5(a): "If you want this compound to contain the two of us." The same goes for 6(b) "...rise to my feet." "[T]o my feet" is a redundant holophrase as the verb, "rise", implies standing on his feet. A holophrase is a "group of words understood as a single unit of meaning" (Chapman, 115).

The entire sentences from 1 to 6 portray Ezeulu as a harsh, rude and hostile person on account of Matefi's innocent request. By his utterances in the passage, Ezeulu is seen as aggressive, an intimidator, a brute and an antihero. Further, Ezeulu's aggressive tendency is revealed as he addresses Oduche:

1. I am asking you [Oduche]. 2(a). And don't you tell me to ask another (b) or a dog will lick your eyes this morning. 3. When did you people learn to fling words in my face? 4(a) Let one of you open his mouth and make *fim* again (b) and I will teach him (c) that a man does not talk (d) when masked spirits speak (129). (Italics as in the book).

Sentences 1 to 4 are all transliterations. Sentence 3 in particular is a rhetorical question which tries to emphasize on the boldness and rudeness of Ezeulu's family members to Ezeulu. There is the presence of onomatopoeia: "*fim*" in 4(a). Onomatopoeia is an "imitation of natural sounds" (Chapman, 115). The word "*fim*" represents a sound produced by the mouth. The combination of segments 4(c) and 4(d) constitute a threat couched as a proverb. The phrase: "...masked spirit speaks" personifies "masked spirit" who engages in human speech act, "speak". The expression, "spirits speak" embodies alliteration as "s" consonantal sound is observed at the beginning of the two words. Alliteration is the repetition of a speech sound in a sequence of nearby words (Abrams and Harpham, 10).

Ezeulu's address to Oduche, from sentence 1 to 4 involves transliteration, onomatopoeia, proverb, personification and alliteration in the portrayal of the character of Ezeulu. They project Ezeulu as fiery tempered, violent and unable to manage his emotion of anger in the face of provocation by a family member. This attitude and others categorize him as an antihero.

Obi Okonkwo, the protagonist of *No Longer at Ease* is described as very brilliant right from the primary school to university, presenting him as hero. His academic brilliance is captured thus:

1(a). At the age of twelve or thirteen (b) he [Obi] had passed his standard six examination (c) at the top of the whole province. 2(a). Then he had won a scholarship (b) to one of the best secondary schools in Eastern Nigeria. 3(a). At the end of five years (b) he passed the Cambridge School Certificate (c) with distinction in all eight subjects. 4(a). He was in fact a village celebrity (b) and his name was regularly invoked at the mission school (c) where he had once been a pupil (7).

Sentences 1 to 4 are carefully structured to declare Obi's brilliant academic performance while he was in school. As declarative sentences, they make statements or state facts. In sentence 1, "he [Obi] had passed his standard six examination at the top of the whole province." Sentence 2 infers that on account of his brilliance, "he had won a scholarship," while sentence 3 informs us that "he passed the Cambridge School Certificate with distinction." Sentence 4 concludes that "[h]e was in fact a village celebrity".

It should equally be noted that the action verb in each of these sentences is qualified by an adverbial phrase. In sentence 1, structure (c) qualifies the verb "passed" in structure (b). In sentence 2(b) "to one of the best secondary schools in Eastern Nigeria qualifies the verb "won", in segment 2(a). In sentence 3(b) "he passed the Cambridge School Certificate," the verb, "passed" is qualified by segment (c) "with distinction in all eight subjects". Sentence 4 is a compound-complex sentence made up of three clauses. Segments 4(a) and (b) are independent clauses while 4(c) is a dependent adjectival clause.

The passage, the sentences and their segments are structured to portray Obi as a hero, a brilliant and a very promising member of Umuofia society. Beyond Umuofia, Obi's academic background props him up as a very important member of the senior civil service and the Lagos society.

Further, Obi is presented as a hero and an achiever by the non-Christian old Umuofia man who comes to greet Obi on his return from England. In an altercation with Obi's father, the old man says:

1. Who talked about sacrifice? 2(a). Here is a child returned from wrestling in the spirit world (b) and you sit there blabbing about Christian house and idols, (c) talking like a man whose palm-wine has gone into his nose (47).

Sentence 1 is a rhetorical question directed at Obi's father, purely for the purpose of emphasis or stress on the idea raised by the question. In sentence 2(a), the deictic "Here" is the antecedent of the subject of the segment, "child". The expression, "wrestling in the spirit world", in structure 2(a), is a metaphor – "a word or expression that in literal usage denotes one kind of thing if applied to a distinctly different kind of thing, without asserting a comparison" (Abrams and Harpham, 130). "Wrestling in the spirit world" is a metaphor for effort at studying abroad or overseas for the purpose of acquiring academic education. By the old man's assertion, Obi is a hero.

There is the presence of simile in 4(c), “talking like a man whose palm-wine has gone into his nose.” Obi’s father is compared to a man whose palm-wine has gone into his nostril. This is a derogatory remark about Obi’s father, suggesting an abnormal behaviour. The sentence also is a transliteration in the English language intended by Achebe to enrich his idiom and imagery by drawing from his own Igbo traditional source (87). While sentence 1, segments 2(b) and 2(c) are about Obi’s father, 2(a) clearly refers to Obi. By commenting about Obi, the segment shows Obi as a success and a noble person who has distinguished himself and made the community of Umuofia very proud as a worthy ambassador.

With the passage of time, Obi deteriorates and degenerates from nobility to savagery and therefore seen as an antihero. He loses the respect and confidence Umuofia people repose in him. The narrator tells us:

1(a). “...[W]hy a handful of people [Umuofia Union Members] expressed the view (b) that there was no reason (c) why the union should worry itself over the trouble of a prodigal son (d) who had shown disrespect to it only a while ago (4).

The above structure is a complex sentence. “A complex sentence is one that consists of one independent clause and one or more dependent clauses” (Ahaotu, 174). Although a complex sentence, the independent clause of the above quotation is absent or deliberately omitted, leaving only the dependent clauses. The dependent clauses are 1(a), (b), (c), and (d). However, of concern to us is part of 1(d) “a prodigal son”. This is the use of a metaphor, transferring the quality of one thing to the other... and often referred to as compressed similes because it is like simile with the ‘like’ or ‘as’ omitted” (Ogunyemi, 24). In the sentence, Obi Okonkwo is the one referred to as the biblical “prodigal son” – wasteful.

In the portrayal of Obi Okonkwo as the protagonist of *No Longer at Ease*, repetition of sentence structures, simile, metaphor, rhetorical questions and onomatopoeia are used in revealing him as a villain and an antihero who needs reorientation and civilization.

Odili is the hero of *A Man of the People*. He is also the narrator of the events of the story. By the virtue of the combined roles of Odili, the narrative is seen to be presented from the first person point of view. This means that Odili is not only the narrative consciousness but also a participant or a character in the novel.

In the course of portraying Odili as an elite of his society, Chief Nanga addresses him using an epithet – “Odili the great” (8). An epithet is “a word or expression, usually adjectival, used to attribute qualities” (Moody, 206). By the reference to Odili as “the great”, the quality of greatness is attributed to him by virtue of the adjective, “great,” qualifying Odili, a proper noun.

Further, Odili is not only seen as a man with potentials to be great but is equally associated with those playing prominent roles in his place of work, Anata Grammar School. Mr Nwege describes him as “... one of the pillars of this school” (8). The expression is metaphorical. By Odili being referred to as “one of the pillars,” it is suggested that he is one of those responsible for the development and progress of the school.

Odili’s feeling and disposition to the decision of the proprietor and principal of the school are revealed through his use of figurative expression in the following passage:

1(a). I had objected vehemently to this standing like school children at our staff meeting, (b) thinking to rouse the other teachers. 2. But the teachers in that school were all dead from the neck up. 3. My friend and colleague Andrew Kadibe found it impossible to side with me because he and the Minister came from the same village. Primitive loyalty, I call it (7).

In sentence 1(a) is observed the use of simile, “standing like school children.” Odili through the use of the figurative expression registers his displeasure over teachers standing as school pupils in a line to receive Chief Nanga. Comparing the teachers to the school children clearly shows Odili’s objection

The expression “dead from the neck up” is idiomatic. According to Anele (82), “[i]dioms denote phrases or expressions that cannot be translated word for word directly into another language either because the individual words are not used in their literal sense or because the grammar of the sentence is untranslatable”. The idiomatic expression suggests not being reasonable or mentally alert, which explains the inability of Odili’s colleagues to understand and appreciate his objection of their “standing like school children.”

There is the use of Pidgin English language in the novel. Pidgin English “is not a variety of Nigerian English but a contact language that developed between Nigerians and European traders on the coast and, which grew with urbanization and became important in some towns” (Josiah and Essien,70). Mrs Eleanor John, in Pidgin, objects to Odili being corrupted by Chief Nanga. She tells Odili:

1. Make you no min am, sha-a. 2. I kin see say you na good boy. 3. Make you no gree am spoil you.... 4. If he tell you stand make you run (18).

There are four sentences of Pidgin English expression in the passage above. Our concern is sentence 3, “[m]ake you no gree am spoil you....” Which suggests that Odili is a man of good character who should not allow himself to be corrupted by Chief Nanga. The statement also urges Odili to maintain his high moral standing.

Before the end of the novel, Odili degenerates from his moral standing. His behaviours characterise him as barbaric and savage. These anti-social behaviours are captured in the language of the novel. In a dialogue with Chief Nanga, Odili comments about his seriousness with his girlfriend Elsie:

1. You mean about marriage..... 2. Good Lord, no! 3. She is just a good-time girl (59).

In sentence 1, Odili tells us the topic of discussion – marriage with Elsie. In sentence 2, he negates the possibility of marrying Elsie with emphasis. And in sentence 3, Odili qualifies her as “a good-time girl.” The adjective, “good-time” is a cliché and a commonplace expression for unimportant object of pleasure. Elsie’s description and perception in this light is very derogatory. The expression shows the low impression of Odili about Elsie. Apart from demeaning Elsie, the sentence also shows how callous and mean Odili is.

Note further when Odili confirms: “Yes, sort of” as Chief Nanga tries to know from him if Elsie is “kabu kabu” (54). The expression “kabu kabu,” a non-English word and Pidgin is a metaphor for a public facility. The expression is called reduplication or repetition of lexical items which “is the

repetition of parts of words or whole words or lexical items in a given language” (Mbarachi, 439). In the context in which it describes Elsie, it means a girl of easy virtue or a prostitute.

Odili’s boys engage in a violent encounter with Chief Nanga’s thugs. Because the thugs are Odili’s boys, he is also associated with violence. Odili narrates the event thus, employing similes.

1(a). Boniface reached out and (b) grabbed two of their leaders, (c) brought their heads together like dumb-bells and (d) left them to fall either side of him. 2. You should have seen them fall like cut banana trunks. 3. It was then I acquired my first trophy – (b) the placard with my name on it. 4(a). But I lost my windscreen which (b) they smashed with stones (113).

Sentence 1 is made up of four clauses, (a) to (d) controlled by one subject, Boniface. However, our clause of interest is 1(c), “brought their heads together like dumb-bells.” “[L]ike dumb-bell” is a simile. The expression elucidates the clashing of two human heads.

The outcome of the bringing of the two heads together in sentence 1 is presented in sentence 2. Sentence 2 is the consequence of the action in sentence 1(c). Like sentence 1(c), sentence 2 makes use of simile, “like cut banana trunks.” The fall of the leaders of the thugs of Chief Nanga, after their heads had been brought together, is compared to the fall of banana tree trunks. This comparison gives a vivid insight into the impact of the clash. From Odili’s narrative and his delight at the development, he presents himself as a sadist, barbaric and a violent man.

Sentence 3 defines the positivity and benefit of the actions of Boniface. They are seen as victory over Chief Nanga’s thugs, worthy of reward of a trophy. This victory and the attendant reward of a trophy is further made clearer by 2(b), an adjectival phrase.

Sentence 4 is like structure 3(b). In clause 4(a) Odili informs that he lost his windscreen and goes on in clause 4(b) to explain how he lost it, “they smashed with stones.” The use of similes and detailed descriptions through the use of adjectives add to the clarity of the meaning of the passage. The account of the scene of violence involving Odili’s boy, and witnessed by Odili, by extension, implicates Odili as violent, brutish and barbaric.

Further, Odili presents himself as a victim of violence in the hands of Chief Nanga and his thugs.

1. He [Chief Nanga] walked up to me and slapped my face. 2. Immediately hands seized my arms... 3. He slapped me again and again... 4(a). By this time blows were fallings as fast as rain on my head and body (b) until something heavier than the rest seemed to split my skull... (c) my cracked cranium took a little time to mend – to say nothing of the broken arm and countless severe bruises of (d) one of which all but turned me into a kind of genealogical cul-de-sac...

5(a). I remember the first time I woke up in the hospital and (b) felt my head turbaned like an Alhaji... 6(a). I tried to feel my turban but (b) the pain followed my thought to the arm – and (c) I went off again.... 7. A [Chief Nanga’s] thug had ransacked my car, (b) overturned it and (c) set it on fire; (d) then after I had been brought to hospital (e) I was placed under arrest ostensibly (f) for having

weapons in my car but (g) really to prevent me from signing my nomination paper (140–142).

Once more, is seen the use of synecdoche in sentence 2, “hands seized my arms.” This is the use of human parts, “hands” to represent a whole human being (Ogunyemi, 30). Sentence 3 shows the frequency of slaps through the repetition of the word “again” in “again and again”. It does not only show frequency but also the intensity and the pain suffered by Odili.

Although sentence 4 is made up of four segments, a – d, our focus is on (a), “[b]y this time blows were falling as fast as rain on my head and body.” The frequency and rate of the falling of blows are compared to the falling of rain as in “as fast as rain.” The figurative element used here is simile. Subsequently, sentence 5 harbours another simile in segment (b) “feel my head turbaned like an Alhaji...” The bandage on the head is compared to the turban head gear of an Alhaji.

Sentence 6 continues the image of “turban.” Imagery “mental pictures”... experienced by the reader of a poem, to the totality of the components which make up a poem (Abrams and Harpharm, 2012:p169). The mental picture of the turban of Alhaji is carried from sentence 5(b). The bandage around Odili’s head is now considered a “turban”. This is the use of metaphor. In clause 6(b) is the expression of personification, “the pain followed my thought to the arm”. The subject, “pain,” an abstract noun is seen engaged in the action word, “followed”. The figurative expressions employed in the passage are designed to intensify the torture and pain Odili suffers in the hands of Chief Nanga and his thugs. They include personification, repetition, simile and imagery. By Odili’s portrayal, he is an antihero, and by his punishment, he is a victim of vendetta and beneficiary of violence.

In *Anthills of the Savannah*, a number of literary techniques are applied for the purpose of enhancing meaning in the novel. One of these is eulogy – speech or piece of writing praising something or somebody very much (Hornby 500). The use of this technique is evident as the Attorney-General praises Sam as a hero.

1(a). As for those like me, your Excellency, poor dullards (b) who went to bush grammar schools, (c) we know our place, (d) we know those better than ourselves (e) when we see them. 2. We have no problem worshipping a man like you. 3. Honestly I don’t. 4. You went to Lord Lugard College where half of your teachers were Englishmen (24).

The eulogy passage contains four sentences. Sentence 1 is a compound-complex sentence made up of five segments of (a), (b), (c), (d) and (e). The sentence demeans the addresser, the Attorney-General. Apart from degrading himself, as one of the “poor dullards” his articulation of the component parts of the sentence shows his lack of the understanding of the rules of grammar which seems to support his inferior education and academic background. In segment 1(d) “we know those better than ourselves”. The use of “ourselves”, a third person plural reflexive pronoun is inappropriate as it is an intensifier and does not belong to the subjective or nominative case and position. According to Uba, “[t]he reflexive pronoun is a personal pronoun which refers to the subject” (57). In the case of 1(d) the pronoun expected to occupy the position should be in the subjective or nominative case. Considering the person and number of the addresser, the pronoun should be the first person plural pronoun, “we”. This means that 1(d) should read, “we know those better than we (are) when we see them” and not as he stated.

Both the self-confession of the Attorney-General of his lowliness and his poor English language construction portray him as an inferior person compared to his principal and superior, President Sam.

In placing premium on the importance of demeaning himself, he puts the whole idea in the first and prime sentence 1. This shows the import of his inferiority. The sentence is followed by sentence 2, which recognizes the superiority of his principal, the President, while sentence 3 is only a confirmation and an emphasis on the issue raised in sentence 2. And sentence 4 is only a confirmation of issues and attributes of the superiority complex of President Sam. In all, the passage is geared towards eulogizing President Sam as a hero.

Subsequently, the moral deterioration of President Sam is captured in Beatrice's report of her experience at the Presidential Guest House at Abichi Lake. His amorous escapade is revealed through the use of figurative expressions.

1. And then came the master's voice summoning me to have my turn in the bedchamber of African Polygamy!... 2. So I was locked in combat again with... the sacred symbol of my nation's pride, such as it was.... 3. I literally *threw* myself at him like a loyal batman covering his endangered commander with his own body and receiving the mortal bullet in his place.... 4. And was I glad the king was slowly but surely responding!... 5. The big snake, the royal python of a gigantic erection began to stir in the shrubbery of my shrine as we danced closer and closer to soothing airs (80 – 81). (Italics as in the novel).

Specifically, there is personification in sentence 1, "the master's voice summoning me" and "in the bedchamber of African Polygamy". While "the master's voice" an abstract noun performs an action, "summoning", "African polygamy" also an abstract noun is shown to possess or own a "bedchamber". In "the master's voice summoning me", voice, an abstract part of the whole, "masters" body, is used to represent the "master". This is an example of synecdoche.

In sentence 2 is observed the use of metaphor, "the sacred symbol of my nation's pride", referring to President Sam. In sentence 3 is seen the use of simile, "like a loyal batman". The addresser, Beatrice, compares herself to a loyal batman". "[R]oyal python" is an endocentric compound: "In an endocentric compounds, the whole compound is a hyponym of the head element where the head is in the syntactically obligatory lexical category. The head and the non-head of the compounds have linguistic classes where they belong" (Uduk and Udom, 433).

The "king" in the expression, "the king was slowly but surely responding" of sentence 4 is a metaphor for President Sam's phallus. The Phallic image is further extended to sentence 5 where in a metaphor the organ is referred to as the "big snake" and the "royal python" in the expression, "[t]he big snake, the royal python of a gigantic erection began to stir in the shrubbery of my shrine as we danced closer and closer to soothing airs." "[T]he shrubbery of my shrine" is another metaphor in which "shrubbery" represents pubic hairs while "shrine" represents the pubic area of Beatrice's private part.

The same sentence 5 also embodies repetition as observed in "closer and closer." The structure expresses proximity in terms of closeness between Beatrice and President Sam at the dance scene. The repeated words also embody alliteration in their first letters producing consonant sounds. The choice

of figurative expressions in the passage conveys a pornographic image as well as reveals the amorous nature, the savage, the barbaric and antiheroic character of President Sam.

CONCLUSION

By the application of the theory of deconstruction in the analysis of the language (semantic, syntactic and figurative expressions) which enhances the delineation of the protagonists of Achebe's novels, the characters are earlier presented as heroes, and subsequently deflated as antiheroes in the same works. This brings the paper to conclude that Achebe either purposely or inadvertently delineated the protagonists of his novels as antiheroes.

Recommendation

In the light of the above, it is therefore recommended that since Achebe's portrayal of the protagonists of his novels as antiheroes, reinforces colonialist ideology, the novels they appear in, should be re-considered and identified as colonialist literature

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